



ON BALANCE: TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST EVER COIL RECORDINGS

On Balance: *Tracing the history of the first ever COIL recordings, the real origins of the band name, the previously unknown first “public appearance” of COIL (with exclusive details) and an aural exploration of the band’s abandoned debut single (see Resources page 12 for additional information).*

By Phil Barrington
May 5th 2019

Happy 37th Birthday, today, to COIL.

Or is it?

I have referred to COIL's inception date in a past COIL-related project as being May 11th 1983, and I do stand by that view. This date is stated in both the 1985 'Feverish' fanzine that gave probably the first good overview of COIL's early existence and the date is noted on the Brainwashed mini-site for COIL (although another section of that site states 1984 as the conception year for COIL too). However, it cannot be ignored that some of Balance's recordings that pre-date 1983 are now seen as COIL canon.

So, whilst it would take until May 1983 before COIL truly existed *as a band*, it was 37 years ago today - on May 5th 1982 - that the track 'On Balance' was recorded solo by Geoff Rushton under his "John Balance" persona (with alternative spellings to his moniker happening later), which was essentially rebranded as a COIL track nearly two years afterwards.

Back in 1982, during the quiet times in Peter Christopherson's home studio in London (when they weren't working on early Psychic TV tracks), Geoff would take advantage of the down time, take over the studio equipment and experiment with his own sounds. Rushton had obviously recorded instrumental tracks for himself before, under the guise of both Murderworkers and Stabmental but, compared to those crude bedroom efforts, the equipment now at his disposal gave him a massive step forward in all aspects. Compare his recorded output from 1982 to that from 1979-1980 and you couldn't get more of a contrast in sound quality if you tried. Here's Geoff speaking in 1997 about that first completed track, 'On Balance', his words lifted from the LOCI CD13 release of 'Transparent':

"It was me playing around in the studio at home [Peter's house in London] - it was very rudimentary with a Fostex 4-track cassette recorder - the same one [Peter] recorded the music for PTV's 'Twisted' on. Anyway 'On Balance' was sent to Gary Levermore's label Third Mind, Tone Death or whatever they were called at that point, for inclusion on 'Rising From the Red Sand' but he didn't release it for some reason, so he missed out on releasing the first ever Coil recording."

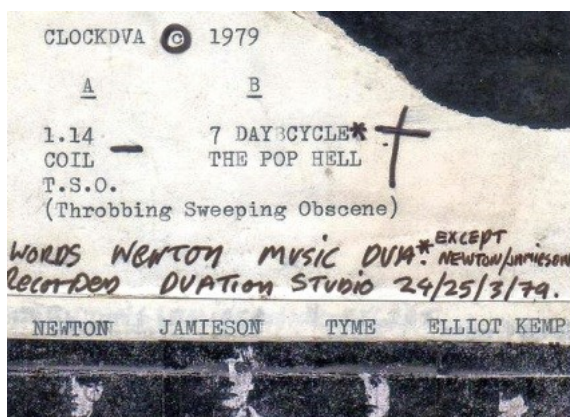
Back in November 1983, however, Geoff would state in an interview with Grok Magazine that 'On Balance' and the later 'Comfortable' were *not* actual COIL tracks, but merely solo recordings under the John Balance name. The difference being that COIL, to him, was a collaborative project and not a solo venture:

"Coil is anyone who I am working with at the time, to suit mood, circumstances and intent. A nebulous flux with J.B. as the only continuous element. So far people that have been involved in Coil have been Sleazy; John Gosling; Marc Almond; Jim Thirlwell."

Regardless of Geoff's protestation at that time, history soon identified those two early tracks as part of COIL's own discography.

Geoff had certainly come up with the COIL name by Autumn 1982 (as noted on the original textbook-like 'Scatology' LP front cover), here mentioning the *supposed* sources behind the band name to Grok magazine a year later:

"I came across the name by instinct. There are certain words and phrases that I call 'Hidden Universals'. They seem to mean and to represent things that are much greater than themselves. The word 'Coil', in short is a key word. There are so many aspects I've found to it. The coils of a snake, a watch coil=time, a female coil=sex and the female cycle, a metal coil, an electrical coil, DNA coil, the fact that coil means a 'noise', according to the dictionary... a fact I found out only recently. A coil is a spiral and the spiral is a universal shape, from a DNA spiral to a tornado to the shape of galaxies."



from fragments remaining... sound which are on record already. I'd also like to see selections from 'white souls in black suits' as they are and also im desperate to include stuff like 'P...ists' and '1.14', 'coil', 'ISO', 'Seven Day Cycle', 'P... other material from that era. please tell me this idea - a lot would have to be discussed. I constantly changing idea and forward is the

I say "supposed sources" behind the band's name, but Geoff had written about "Coil" in a letter back in 1980 (see previous page) - though it was in glowing reference to the 1979 track with that exact same name by Clock DVA. Whether or not you choose to believe Geoff nabbed the standout cool-sounding name from that band's then-rare track for his own new group in 1982, then expanded upon the meaning of it over the following year is probably up to you to decide.

Jumping back a little and taking note of Geoff's mention of 'Rising From the Red Sand' for a moment (a March 1983 2-cassette release), I have to say that it is a truly superb compilation - including early tracks from Chris & Cosey and Nurse With Wound (the compilation featuring two tracks from each) alongside tracks from Lustmord, Section 25, Legendary Pink Dots and lots more from that contemporary power electronics scene. The only thing that would've made it an even stronger curation would indeed have been the inclusion of that landmark (though fairly basic-sounding) 'On Balance' debut track.

A copy of Geoff's historic cassette submission of 'On Balance' still exists, this first-ever recording given under the COIL name transferred by Peter and Thighpaulsandra in 2010 for the proposed Brainwashed Archives re-release schedule.

For those that like minutiae when it comes to COIL history details (and my eternal apologies to those that don't), the cassette of Geoff's failed submission of tracks to the label was simply hand-marked "*For Tone Death*" and actually contained *another* COIL track for his submission too. The tracklisting of this cassette submission of COIL's first recorded music to Gary Levermore is:

- 'On Balance' (version #1)
- 'On Balance' (version #2)
- 'Comfortable'

It should be noted that 'Comfortable' was also recorded on Peter's home equipment setup, but taped at least 8 months after 'On Balance' was recorded (making the conception date of 'Comfortable' around January-February time of 1983).

Geoff's cassette tape is marked as copied/sent to Tone Death in 1983. Considering the 'Rising From the Red Sand' compilation was only released in March 1983, I suspect the main reason why 'On Balance' (and, indeed, 'Comfortable') missed the final compilation tracklisting was that the tape's submission to Tone Death was just too late to make the release's production schedule (with the grey tapes, red plastic wallets and gold font lettering hardly making this release your usual tinpot cassette culture fare).

It is also the case that Geoff was a little confused when recalling that Tone Death compilation a few months later - for he produced the collage artworks and (fake) news about COIL along with the freshly-made 'Red Weather' track for the 'Bethel' cassette release in July 1983, stating in the box set release material that the two tracks took their rightful place in that 'Rising From the Red Sand' release (also mentioning at the time that he is ploughing on with the 'Poisons' album - ultimately becoming 1984's 'Scatology'). Geoff would once again mistakenly mention, in the autumn 1983 Grok interview, that the two submitted tracks *did indeed* appear on that compilation, undeterred by the actual fact of the matter.

It goes without saying, of course, that both 'On Balance' and 'Comfortable' have since surfaced on different official compilations, the former's first appearance being on Nekrophile Records' February 1984 cassette edition of 'Transparent' and the latter track appearing years later, on COIL's 'Unnatural History (Compilation Tracks Compiled)' release from 1990. According to the sleevenotes of that COIL compilation CD, 'Comfortable' first appeared on a 1980s cassette by the "Premonition Label" called

"Raw Like Sewage", but I can find no information about that cassette compilation ever being publicly released. The label noted in those sleeve notes was likely Premonition Tapes, ran by Paul Mills from 1986-1988, who released a small series of C60 cassette compilations of obscure alternative electro music (and early-era Pulp tracks). But, as I say, I can find no traces of such a compilation ever being in public existence. Thus, in my view, 'Comfortable' was officially first released on the 'Unnatural History' collection in 1990. Email me with details if I am wrong and I shall update this essay pdf accordingly.

Taking stock of band interviews, fanzines (especially 'The Feverish'), sleeve notes and DAT/Cassette transfer lists I have been kindly given for essay purposes over the years that refer to this time, the first year or so of COIL recordings (from Spring 1982 to Summer 1983 only) without any overt links to Zos Kia are as follows:

Early COIL Recordings (Spring 1982 – Summer 1983)

- 'On Balance' [recorded May 5th 1982 originally as John Balance - later attributed as COIL on 1984's 'Transparent'].
- 'On Balance' (Version 2) [recorded May 5th 1982 originally as John Balance - later attributed as COIL. Unreleased].
- 'Stealing The Words' [recorded August 3rd 1982 originally as John Balance - later attributed as COIL on 1984's 'Transparent'].
- 'John Balance Demo' [Undated recording, though likely late 1982-early 1983. The C-90 tape case lists 5 tracks, all untitled and unreleased].

- 'Comfortable' [recorded Jan/Feb 1983 originally as John Balance - later attributed as COIL. On 'Unnatural History'].
- 'Very Early Casio Doodles Feb 1983 4-track' [recorded February 1983 - unreleased].
- 'John Balance - Demo Rough Mixes: Red Weather and S Is For Sleep' [recorded February 1983 - unreleased].
- 'Backing Tracks - Rough: Unknown/Untitled' [likely recorded Feb-Mar 1983, part of a C-30 tape containing 3 tracks. Unreleased].
- 'Backing Tracks - Rough: S Is For Sleep' [likely recorded Feb-Mar 1983, part of a C-30 tape containing 3 tracks. Unreleased].
- 'Backing Tracks - Rough: Mental Organ Loops' [likely recorded Feb-Mar 1983, part of a C-30 tape containing 3 tracks. Unreleased].
- 'S is For Sleep' [final master recorded from May 11th - July 04th 1983 - released that year on 'The Elephant Table Album'].
- 'The Leading Edge (aka Red Weather)' [final master recorded by July 04th 1983 - released that year on 'Bethel'].
- 'Here to Here (Double Headed Secret)' [recorded May 11th (or possibly October 5th 1983) - released that year on 'The Beast 666'].

- 'Live At The Magenta 4th Aug 83 - Master Copy' [recorded live in Brixton August 5th 1983 - COIL, not Zos Kia. Unreleased, though a bootleg of the concert exists].
- 'Silence and Secrecy (section)' [recorded live in Brixton August 5th 1983 and released in 1984 on 'Transparent', remastered in 2017 on Gosling's version of 'Transparent'].
- 'A Slow Fade to Total Transparency' [video/audio recorded live in London's Air Gallery August 24th 1983 - advertised in flyers as COIL, *not* Zos Kia].

As you can see from the above list of early COIL recordings there was a flurry of activity in Peter's London studio from January 1983 onwards, with Geoff really hitting his creative stride from that point. Bear in mind that I have not included any possible Zos Kia and Psychic TV-related work from

that period too. Lest we forget that, during the same time that Geoff recorded 'Comfortable' and 'Red Weather', both he and Peter were heavily involved in the recording of PTV's 'Dreams Less Sweet' masterpiece, whether in the same home studio or in several other locations.

But what are all these early COIL tracks *really* like? Have they stood the test of time to the point that diehard fans can convincingly say "*COIL? Oh, I prefer the really early stuff*"? Well, on the one hand, the relics we have are all quite basic in their composition and recording but, on the other hand, Geoff's ideas and intent behind them are often quite complex and challenging. It's safe to conclude that none of the early COIL tracks are Jhonn Balance's equivalent of Lou Reed's 'Do The Ostrich' or Pink Floyd's 'Lucy Leave'. No, there's far more going on here than the ironic pop, pub folk or primitive blues numbers that you often find in the murky formative years of other classic bands.

Hitting the ground running, 'On Balance' is certainly competent in its driving synth lead and drum machine rhythms - actually quite uplifting and hopeful in its John Carpenter-on-MDMA sound palette. 'Stealing The Words', on the other hand, strives to be a more atmospheric piece, using field recordings and found sounds to create an uneasy child-like Disney versus Louis Wain soundscape, easily seen as the first sketch of what would ultimately become 'Silence and Secrecy' (more on that track later). If 'Stealing The Words' was the initial idea for 'Silence and Secrecy' then 'Red Weather' finally introduces us to those swarms of cicadas that went on to be the layered foundation for that epic track. The title ominous-sounding (sharing its name with the 1969 psychedelic rock album by Leigh Stephens), the music more resigned in its bassy meanderings, 'Red Weather' is more of a prelude to 'S Is For Sleep' in its tempo than having its own distinct identity.

'Comfortable' is a brief chillout synth track with late night vibes, charming and sweet in its simplicity. A bit like a testcard jingle for a new TV channel from the 1980s (let us call the station 'Zenith Comms') that never launched due to the programming team being too stoned to care. Appropriately (given the title - though perhaps more to do with early low levels of confidence in his own voice), John almost whispers his way through the soft plodding jitter of 'S Is For Sleep', sounding like there's a bloody great corkboard wall between him and the microphone.

'Here to Here (Double Headed Secret)' is reminiscent of a hissy cassette recording of an old Hollywood movie set in Roman times, a stark minimalist exercise in suspended tension seemingly always destined to be the backing track which it eventually became (adopted for Zos Kia's 'Rape' aka 'Violation').

The early, live version of 'How To Destroy Angels' (from the August 1983 'A Slow Fade to Total Transparency' show) bears little resemblance to the version recorded seven months later in the studio. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that the music itself was purposely designed to be fairly non-descript, the soundtrack being third in line of importance at the event: Marc Almond's niggly narration of his diary entries about ex-lovers and COIL's own repeat performance with fake blood enemas (the first being Geoff's performance with the blood douche in PTV's 'First Transmission' tape a year earlier) being far more important than the meandering music. This recording is bookended by samples, the first two minutes or so of which is lifted from a tape of the notorious dinner scene from Pasolini's 'Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom' (1975) and the last minute of the track is probably sourced from the same scat porn tape ("*That's really good... What?... On your face...*") that was sampled for 'The Sewage Worker's Birthday Party' and/or the start from 'Godhead ~ Deathhead' ('The Sewage Worker's Birthday Party' itself going on to be recorded in the studio during the same February 1984 sessions as the 12" stereo and mono versions of 'How To Destroy Angels', the LAY5-A vinyl version of which has the runout groove message "*Shut up, it's good for you*").

That may be the sound of all of the available early COIL tracks in a nutshell, but how about Geoff's first set of lyrics written for the band? Geoff stated at the time that 'S Is For Sleep' is a hesitant track

"*about illness and history*", though the words and motifs lifted from a selection of his early written pieces hint at a literal sense of transition - of being on a mystical crossroads in changing or improving one's own life and history regardless of illness, perhaps defiantly so:

- "...*Dreams that we keep, lost between were and shall be*" (lyric from 'S is for Sleep').
- "*Here to Here (Double Headed Secret)*" (the title making reference to Janus, the two-headed Roman god meaning vigilance and new beginnings, as in the word "*January*").
- "*COIL is...constant change. We are Janus Headed. Past impositions...reassembling into OUR order. Open and Close. Coil exist between Here and Here.*" (Excerpts from 'The Price Of Existence Is Eternal Warfare', the 1983 COIL Manifesto).

It is tempting to say that Geoff is actually writing symbolically here about his 1982-83 personal transition from his old life (family, old high school friends and university) to a creative and subversive new life as The Artist Balance, running amok on the neon streets and debauched dancefloors of Thatcher's yuppie capital, though I fear that may well just be my somewhat simplistic view. After all, the concept of "change" (whether it be personal, health, alchemical or magickal) runs through Geoff's entire canon of written work, not just in his formative years. Indeed, the constant changing of environment was almost all that the younger Geoff Rushton knew when growing up, his family living the lifestyle of an often nomadic armed forces family adapting to move from base to base without a sense of permanence or true home until much later in his life. For an example, you just have to take note of his return addresses in the Stabmental fanzines and early correspondence to confirm that, over the course of 18 months in education, he hopped residences from Oxford to Germany (his transitory family home at the time) to Brighton, then on to London.

In early 1983, at the very same time as Geoff was truly beginning to find his voice as "John Balance", Peter was delving ever more into complex sound production with producer Ken Thomas, especially with the Zuccarelli Holophonic recording device. A tape remains in the COIL archives of Peter's holophonic experiments purely with machine gun sounds (the best results ultimately appearing on Psychic TV's landmark second major studio album). Whilst the COIL tracks from 1983 don't really possess the same immersive sound themselves, the band's 'Dream Photography' track the following year features relatively complex layers of immersive sounds surely influenced by Peter's holophonic experiments from 1983.

During the Summer of 1983 Geoff/John (though now also apparently known by the performing name of "Legion" too) was splitting his time between his Psychic TV duties, Zos Kia and the first live COIL performances (four live concerts that year, if you include the Zos Kia-linked gigs). By this time Gen had taken to referring to Geoff/John/Legion/Raymond-Luxury-Yacht (I'm joking about that last one) with a new nickname - "Eden" (or "Eden 2"). This was reflected on Psychic TV's 'Dreams Less Sweet' trilogy of 'Eden' songs - the first track featuring a very brief laugh by Geoff as he is being tattooed by the legendary Mr. Sebastian.

Believe it or not, COIL's very first planned live performance was cancelled by the organisers, the event itself becoming an important milestone gig for Current 93 instead. COIL were due to perform their debut set at the 21st June 1983 Equinox Event in Camden London (the very first mention of COIL on any publicity material being on this event poster). The organiser's removal of COIL from the evening's programme in the days leading up to the show provoked Geoff's anger for many months to come afterwards - indeed, five months after the band was booted off the event, Geoff remarked to Grok magazine:

"Coil were due to play at the summer 'Equinox Event', at the London Musicians Collective [aka the Kensington Market Musicians Co-op] but [co-organiser and performer with Operation Muzak] Mary

Dowd fucked us around and blatantly lied and misled us over several things. This was due to be Jim Thirlwell and I doing something together."

Obviously livid at the rejection, Geoff still adamantly turned up at the Camden venue on the night and, according to Sean Dower (from Death Magazine 52 - the last band of the evening), did a non-musical performance "on the steel staircase outside the venue". I caught up with Sean recently and he kindly expanded upon his memories of Geoff's performance outside the venue for this essay:

"There was a lot of activity and intrigue going on just outside the venue on these stairs, not least because things were quite fractious and chaotic inside. I have a picture in my mind of Jhonn crouching down doing something with a box/case on these stairs, though that could be a constructed memory! I had a conversation with Jhonn on the matter in question (around 2002) when we met at a friend's wedding. This meeting was remarkable in many respects, but the short of it was that we discussed the Equinox Event that we were both involved with and he said that this was the first official performance/manifestation of COIL. That was how Jhonn described it, though I'm not sure if the performance was concrete or more symbolic."



[The metal stairs opposite the Kensington Market Musicians Co-op venue in Camden London, where Geoff performed as John Balance/COIL for the first time (the building complex containing the venue for the actual music of the 'Equinox Event' evening seen in the background)]

Perhaps COIL's removal from the Equinox Event band list itself was a blessing in disguise for Geoff after all, with reports of a rowdy and confrontational audience, bottles being thrown at bands alongside scuffles breaking out between musicians and audience members (including a drunk Steven Stapleton) also halting some of the performances that evening before the police turned up and pulled the plug. Current 93 didn't seem to have too much of an issue there, though - check out the band's own debut performance at the gig on the 'Dogs Blood Order' live EP, technically appearing under that DBO name on the bill. David Keenan's 'England's Hidden Reverse: A Secret History of The Esoteric Underground' (Strange Attractor Press, 2003/2015) goes into more detail about this chaotic gig with regards to both Nurse With Wound and David Tibet and is a highly recommended read.



[The promotional poster for the ill-fated June 21st 1983 'Equinox Event' featuring COIL]

Instead of that officially cancelled Camden appearance COIL would go on to hold their first (musical) performance, as a John-Peter duo, on August 4th 1983. The gig was an extended live art-music concept of "an exercise in extended tension" at a themed art event night called "Club Magenta" within the versatile Ritzy Cinema venue in Brixton London. Derek Jarman and most of the Camden Equinox Event performers also supplied films or gave performances for this event's programme. Given the fact that Sleazy was fresh from his holophonic experiments at the time (which shaped the overall sound production of PTV's 'Dreams Less Sweet' album by Spring 1983) the combination of the constant and increasingly oppressive amplified sounds of cicadas from 'Silence and Secrecy' filling and flowing around the large red room, the erratic strobe lighting, the screeching violin and the heady fog of Frankincense all promised both a troubling and memorable evening for the assembled audience - an evening that carried on, *and on*, late into the night (indeed, COIL's master tape of the concert has handwriting on it stating "Actually 1am 5th"). Well, it *may* have been planned by Geoff and Peter to have been a troubling and memorable evening for the audience but, truth be told, the audience gave no reaction at all on the night. The band were basically looking out towards line upon line of blank, all-knowing art crowd faces in that cinema hall during their performance and, indeed, post-performance. Geoff despaired (again to Grok) at this lack of reaction and total absence of feedback at the important debut gig for *his* band:

"When we played at Brixton and the Air Gallery there was no challenge and I ended up very depressed as, for the most part we seemed to be doing it for a jaded, apathetic crowd of art groupies. That's how it seemed. The whole thing was so incestuous and every move you made, everything you did or said was noted and compared to something previous. I feel Coil can move out of that area and I want it to."



[Amplified sounds of cicadas reverberating around the room, strobe lighting, screeching violin and a fog of Frankincense at COIL's debut concert performance at The Ritzy cinema venue in Brixton London on August 4th 1983 – though, technically, John and Peter eventually performed at 1am on Friday August 5th]

As for Geoff's other band, Zos Kia's own flurry of activity would really hit a couple of months later, in the Autumn of 1983, with versions of 'Sewn Open', 'Sicktone' and 'Truth' all recorded during October 1983, the follow-up band rehearsals (existing as unreleased tape recordings in the COIL archive) from October to December 1983 for the Zos Kia live performances.

January 1984 was the most decisive time in COIL's early history. This was the month that the band became the one true musical focus for both Geoff and Peter; the month that they severed all ties with Psychic TV; the time when Geoff's work with Zos Kia ceased (Nekrophile's cassette release of 'Transparent' in February 1984 handily bookending his involvement); the path swept clear in that first month of the year for their total focus on Geoff's band. It should be noted, however, that COIL's first major project (their first vinyl single) was ultimately cancelled, scrapped, binned, or otherwise left pushing up the daisies. From autumn 1983 onwards Geoff had expressed every intention that COIL's first non-compilation release would be a double-sided 12" single of 'Silence and Secrecy'/'How To Destroy Angels', initially to be released on Temple Records, PTV's own label that would've launched with the COIL release in early 1984, before the duo's acrimonious split from Genesis's band.

Speaking to Grok magazine, John describes the first planned track:

'Silence And Secrecy'... 15 minute piece with amplified insect noises pushed to deafening pitch, with violins and various other tapes - a deliberate attempt to create a vacuum, to maintain a tension, a sense of expectancy that is never fulfilled. The importance of the piece was that nothing happened - it was suspended uneasiness. The idea being that in a lot of cases of secrecy the secret that people are searching for is that there is no secret. Crowley points this crucial idea out in several instances. It ties in with the idea that the state of absolute enlightenment is to experience total nothingness; that this concept of absolutely identifying yourself, totally absolving being is the key to the so-called occult organisations. It's crossing the 'abyss'.'

It seems that in-studio work for this first major COIL project did not progress beyond the concept, with the only known recording of 'Silence and Secrecy' that we have for this ultimately abandoned debut COIL single being the Brixton live recording - of which there are now four versions:

- 'Silence and Secrecy' [recorded live in Brixton August 5th 1983, on COIL's unreleased 'Master Copy' and the bootleg recording].
- 'Silence and Secrecy (section)' [4:55. Recorded live in Brixton August 5th 1983 and released in 1984 on Nekrophile Rekords 'Transparent' cassette].
- 'Silence and Secrecy (section)' [2.05. Recorded live in Brixton August 5th 1983 and released in 1997 on Threshold House's 'Transparent'. Edited version].
- 'Silence and Secrecy (section)' [4.51. Recorded live in Brixton August 5th 1983, remastered and released in 2017 on Gosling's 'Transparent'].

When it came to the band looking back at 'Silence and Secrecy' in 1997 (for the Threshold House release of 'Transparent'), they did not look kindly upon the recording, brutally cutting the soundscape down to a mere 2 minutes running time, for the listener to barely get the gist of the track's purpose before moving on. This edit was evidently not done to keep the running time down for the album, as the whole collection of tracks on Threshold House's 'Transparent' lasts for less than 48 minutes. In other words, COIL had come to see the ideas and rough sounds for their first projected single release as totally insignificant. A true example of the band's in-house quality control, though in action from the very start of the band's existence.

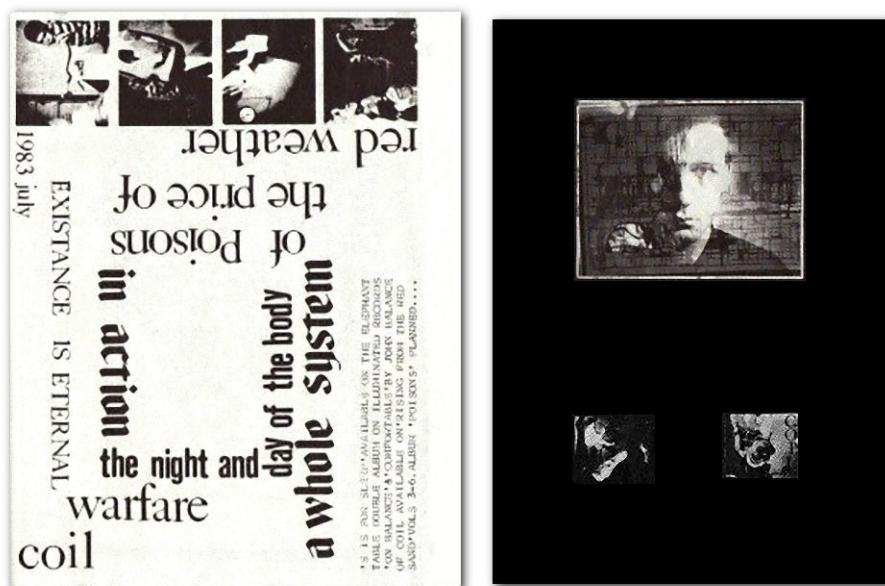


[What could have been – my fabricated mock-up cover of the COIL debut release that never was]

The very early COIL tracks (including 'On Balance' from May 5th 1982) are certainly not "classics" in any way: the recordings are rough around the edges, simple in their construction and perhaps forgettable to most COIL fans. But from these basic foundations the band rapidly sprouted an astonishing run of classic ground-breaking albums (and one momentous music video, amongst others) for the remainder of the 1980s. From that very first moment of COIL's first breath, Geoff's conceptual ambitions for the band were defiantly subversive, expansive though immersive, experimental yet accessible. The germ of the band we came to love and be inspired by was, in hindsight, evident almost from the very start of COIL's 22-year lifespan.

Phil Barrington
 May 5th 2019

Resources



[An early Peter-less promotion of COIL, just featuring Jhonn, dated July 1983, from the summer '83 art box release of the 'Bethel' cassette compilation containing COIL's 'Red Weather' and, of course, Boyd Rice's 'Black Light District' track]

COIL's First Year Compilation

If you wanted to make a personal "First Year" COIL compilation album for yourself, the best sources for each of the available tracks are:

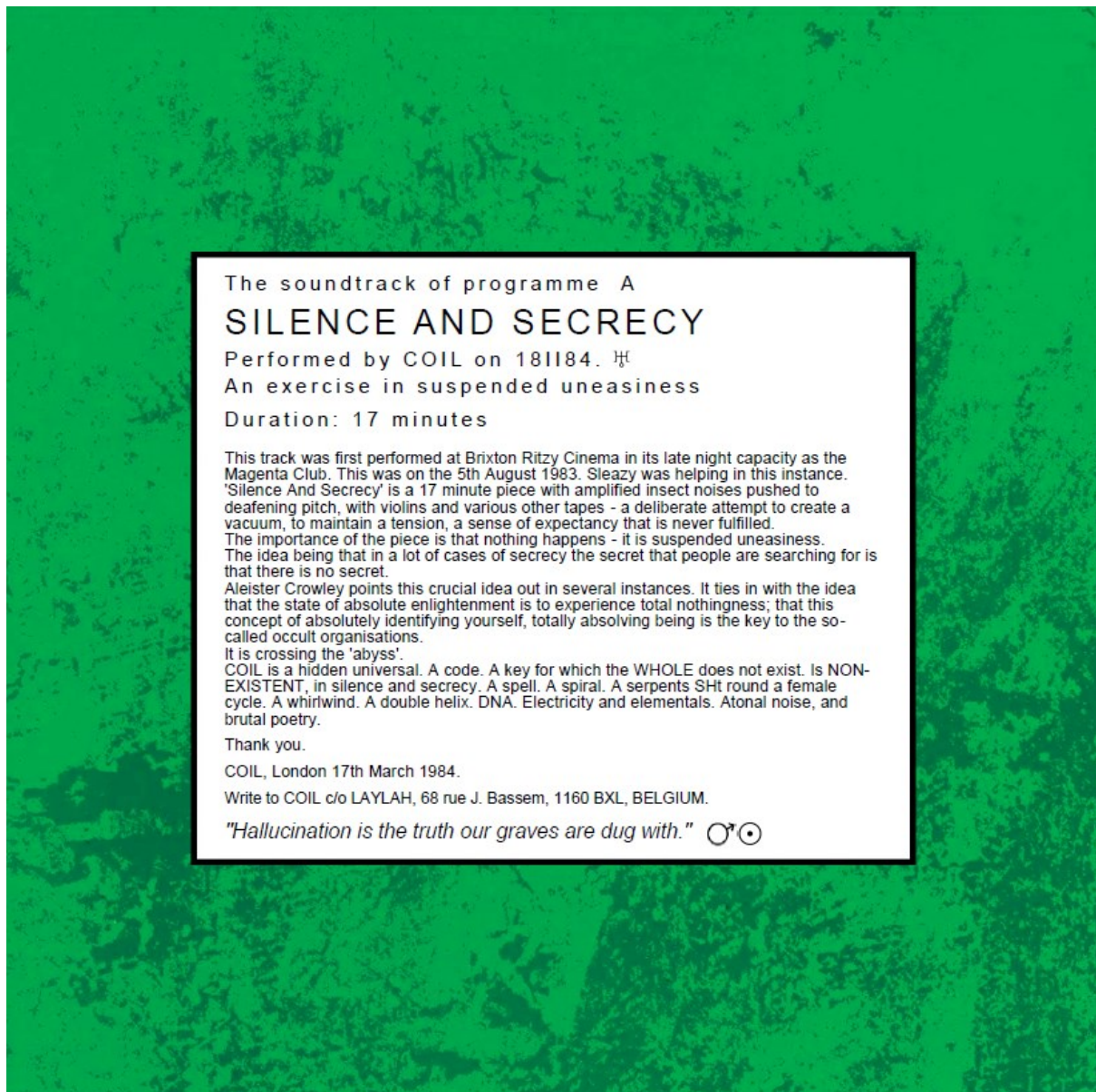
1. On Balance - John Gosling's remaster: <https://coldspring.bandcamp.com/track/on-balance>
2. Stealing the Words - John Gosling's remaster: <https://coldspring.bandcamp.com/track/stealing-the-words>
3. Comfortable - on COIL's 'Unnatural History (Compilation Tracks Compiled)' album.
4. S is for Sleep - on COIL's 'Unnatural History (Compilation Tracks Compiled)' album.
5. Red Weather - on COIL's 'Unnatural History II (Smiling In The Face Of Perversity)' album.
6. Here to Here (Double Headed Secret) - on COIL's 'Unnatural History (Compilation Tracks Compiled)' album.
7. Silence and Secrecy - John Gosling's 2017 remaster of a section: <https://coldspring.bandcamp.com/track/silence-and-secrecy>
8. How To Destroy Angels (backing track for 'A Slow Fade to Total Transparency') - John Gosling's remaster: <https://coldspring.bandcamp.com/track/how-to-destroy-angels>

Grok Magazine - probably John Balance's first major interview:
<https://archive.org/download/Grok567/Grok%2006.pdf>

Premonition Tapes - who *didn't* release COIL's 'Comfortable' after all:
<https://www.discogs.com/label/101349-Premonition-Tapes>
<http://premonitiontapes.blogspot.com/>

Equinox Event - the initially-planned COIL live debut before being kicked off the event bill, though still performing, *sans* music, outside:
<https://www.discogs.com/lists/Equinox-Event/186134>

'Silence and Secrecy' – The COIL Debut Single That Never Was



[My fabricated 2019 mock-up design of the cover of the 1984 COIL 12" EP that doesn't exist, in my head the back cover being the existing red cover design to the 1984 'How To Destroy Angels' vinyl release that, of course, did happen (making up the double-A EP/single of 'Programme A' and 'B'). This design uses Geoff's original description of the track]

As mentioned on page 9, a 1984 studio version of the scrapped 'Silence and Secrecy' debut 12" EP does not exist. What would it have actually sounded like? Well, this fan-constructed MP3 I've made does *not* answer that question. Instead, this is a similar exploration that keeps Jhonn's descriptions of the track in mind, sketching out the 16min+ soundscape with a similar structure to the live version too. The contents of this mix, except for the walls of cicada sounds (with microphone noise left in - a sense of an adventuring individual recording a bizarre landscape) is *all* COIL music, in order: a sample from John Gosling's remaster of 4mins of the live version, an extended treated sample from another portion of the live bootleg version of the track, the bookends of 'Ergot' joined together and Take #4 of 'The Pope Held Upside Down' to mimic the final babbling section of the bootleg live version of 'Silence and Secrecy':

[http://www.barringtonarts.com/Silence_and_Secrecy_\(Fake_Studio_Edit_Fan_Construction_Using_COIL_Sounds_to_accompany_essay\).mp3](http://www.barringtonarts.com/Silence_and_Secrecy_(Fake_Studio_Edit_Fan_Construction_Using_COIL_Sounds_to_accompany_essay).mp3)

We don't have any video footage of COIL's first gig so why not play the above track - *loud* - in your darkened living room at 1am whilst firing off a strobe light in one corner, with plumes of frankincense smoke engulfing the room (turn off your fire alarm for the evening). You may well get 10% - at best - of the effect that the gathered audience may have experienced at COIL's debut gig in Brixton's Ritzy cinema. What have you got to lose? (disclaimer: this is not to be taken seriously)

A recording of the only full 'Silence & Secrecy' version available, as part of the whole August 4th/5th live COIL performance in Brixton, can be found here:

<https://archive.org/details/Coil19830804UKEnglandLondonV2>

COIL, of course, eventually decided to abandon 'Silence and Secrecy' and went full steam ahead with the recording of 'How To Destroy Angels' instead, an early 1984 test pressing of that debut release seen here:



The True Source of the COIL Band Name?

Clock DVA – 'Coil':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV9fjqkH5g>

The above 'Coil' track recorded March 1979 and taken from the Summer 1979 untitled bootleg cassette here:

<https://www.discogs.com/release/5953046>

Clock DVA don't seem to have had ruffled feathers about Jhonn choosing 'Coil' as his band name, Adi Newton here, instead, describing Jhonn and Peter as respected peers:

"...people doing their own label, people doing their own thing. We all thought, that's a good way of organising yourself, getting things done. Still good friends with them, all through the years we've been sort of mates, also with Coil, with John and Peter; we looked at each other's work, had a mutual respect. We all kind of came together in that time. John did a couple of interviews with me in Stabmental which was his own magazine – which he did off his own back while he was at school, he was into everything; trying to promote it. There was a lot of mutual help to get that scene to develop."

Adi Newton of Clock DVA – an interview - written by Richard Foster, 16th August, 2011.

<https://louderthanwar.com/adi-newton-of-clock-dva-an-interview/>

Jhonn's First Mention of Coil

Here is Jhonn raving about the 'Coil' track (highlighted by myself in yellow) in his circa 1980 correspondence with Adi of Clock DVA:

Adi - dva
good luck with the new incarnation - pulse at the ready and
show what dva can do. please write back concerning what im about
to propose to you. white stains records are releasing a TF bootleg
called assume power focus and there should be money back on this
give us the chance to release other material - we have got the TF
soundtrack to "In the shadow of the Sun" as one possibility - but what
would really like to do is release a clockdva retrospective - because of
lot of factors this would be difficult but with your cooperation it ca
work - details - id press 1000 at first - with 50% of the profits
divided between whoever it concerns ie earlier members of dva.
what you say. with maybe a repress if demand was great enough. The
material on it would be assorted - what id like to see is the material
from fragments reaching record except for bogarde and you're without
sound which are on record already. Id also like to include a few
selections from 'white souls in black suits' as this is no longer available
and also im desperate to include stuff like 'New Haag' - 'konstruktii
vists' and '114', 'coil', 'ISO', 'Seven Day Cycle', 'Pop Hell', 'Le Viol' are
other material from that era - please tell me what you think
this idea - a lot would have to be discussed. I realise dva is a
constantly changing idea and forward is the motion of it all but
history is important - dva music has magick - even as I write a car
crashed up the road - there is something undefinable a power i do
think even you can always understand - the LP would be packaged
especially with a booklet which we could work on together - the
jewels dva have left should ~~give~~ be given a chance to be heard.
won't overshadow new material because its essentially a new group
and retrospective will be the key word for the promotion - not dva and
people expecting the new LP or whatever - i promise you. i feel desperate
that old dva should be celebrated, shown to people as a lot of work
energy went into it - nothing is more timeless/powerful please Adi
negotiate dont negate love geff X
23

White stains:
Flat 2
4 Montpelier Terrace
Brighton
Sussex

[Clock DVA official website here: <https://armcomm.co.uk>]