



Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle

Simon Ford

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Comprehensive history of the performance art group COUM Transmissions and the industrial music pioneers Throbbing Gristle.

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From Reader Review Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle for online ebook

Pol says

I've only just begun this thing and it's already exciting. Mr. Ford has produced a massive volume full of newspaper and magazine clippings, journal entries from the subjects, and so much more. The cheapest I've seen a copy of this thing going for was \$80US in bad condition. I've got through my library who borrowed it from another library. This book either needs a reprint, a digital edition, or someone needs to find me an affordable copy. Dammit.

Bianca says

Odd perhaps, but decided to re-rate my original generous 5 star rating of this book after reading Cosey Fanni Tutti's excellent memoir 'Art Sex Music'. Still worth the read, but prefer Cosey's version of the COUM / TG history.

S.B. Stokes says

An amazingly in-depth and, for the most part, chronological telling of the philosophical and artistic evolution of a group of artists who shaped underground culture for nearly 30 years.

This group--known as Coum and later as Throbbing Gristle--worked for years in a variety of media (including popular music) updating and popularizing magickal practice and thinking, confronting the hypocrisy of social convention, and expanding the boundaries of what is called art.

This book is probably the only place you will find an accurate and detailed account of the Coum/TG story, as the band themselves tend to rewrite their own history periodically. It is, after all, just another media/format to be manipulated and rereleased as artistic output.

Brendan says

an absolutely essential document of both coum transmissions and throbbing gristle. dense with detail and information.

Kevin Cole says

What can I say? They changed my life.

Ian says

Recommended

Xander says

This is one of the most important books that I have in my library. I read this book once a year for inspiration. The one band that I honestly never get sick of. All of the living members stay current within the avant garde and still remain on the cutting edge of art and music. I honestly couldn't recommend this book highly enough.

Nicole says

I'll go ahead and say this is "amazing." Obviously, if you 1) don't care about Throbbing Gristle and/or 2) don't care about performance art, you might not get as much out of this book. Ford does a good job of not just summarizing what TG (and COUM Transmissions) did, but rooting it firmly in the context of what was happening politically and socially around them. If I ever doubted the power of art and the possibilities for making meaningful, politically-driven art, this book dispelled my doubts. I don't typically re-read biographies but I am finding that when I feel like I need artistic inspiration, this is the book I turn to. Some have "The Artist's Way." I've got this.

Mike says

I was incredibly impressed with just how much information there was on COUM transmissions in here. This is THE primary source to get information on the group. It's sad that there is no online source to get such information, especially since I don't believe this book was ever released in America.

Ford does a good job of covering all bases, and transcribes multiple viewpoints of the same situation whenever there was a conflict of memory between the members. One wishes there was more documentation on COUM's antics but Ford scrapes together as much as he can. The book is very well illustrated with lots of photos of actions. However the main form of documentation always seems to come from Genesis' vivid descriptions.

If you interested in an obscure controversial performance art group this is a great way to start. A study of provocation, community, art, and how they can all be fit into life.

Steven says

Obsessive documentation about the history of the once great Throbbing Gristle.

Kid says

An exhaustive and inspiring study of Throbbing Gristle and Coum Transmissions that tries to avoid the hysteria that surrounded both projects when they were active. Also a cool exploration of what it means to attempt to live off a creative project and keep one going in a hostile environment. Anyone not familiar with these projects will still get a lot out of this book and will be amazed at what they produced when they produced it. You get a sense of the performance art scene in Europe in the late 60s, early 70s. . .

Surfing Moose says

This was well worth the read. I was always interested in Coum Transmission and what they were about. The depth of history on CM was great and enthralling.

At the beginning of the book Genesis P. Orridge is quoted as saying (paraphrasing here), An artist's life is usually more interesting than their work. Not true with CM and TG. Both their lives and work are very interesting.

Helen says

I originally read this when it first came out, which was a time when Throbbing Gristle seemed all but forgotten except to hardcore acolytes, shortly after the exile to California of P-Orridge following bogus scandals set up by the UK tabloids. It's the story of the birth of Throbbing Gristle, COUM Transmissions and the early manifestations such as The Prostitution Show at the ICA; and of the early work of the core artists - Chris Carter, Cosey Fanni Tutti, Peter Christopherson [of Hipgnosis] and Genesis P-Orridge. Filled with eccentric and anarchic anecdotes, it also discusses how Industrial Records came into being; the first collaborations, and COUM's influences from psychedelia and the occult. Very well researched. Nice pix and memorabilia. MP Nicholas Fairbairn described TG.. "These people are the wreckers of civilisation" in Autumn 1976 when punk first started to enter the mainstream in the UK. Given their well-received recent comeback after a long hiatus on solo projects, it's a timely and very interesting reread.

SL says

Whoa! What a bunch of wacky nuts!

Vapor Trail says

TG all the way.

If nothing else, read the part where Genesis & Cosey do their "Cease to Exist" performance piece in Los Angeles. Never has so much been done with so many bodily fluids...

