

INTERVIEW TO HIGH-FUNCTIONING FLESH

High-functioning flesh is a project which first release was released only in 2013, but that quickly became one of the most interesting electro californian projects of 2014, with their first album released by **DKA records**. Now they've come back with **Definite structures**, released by the well-known **Dais Records** (who has released **Youth Code** too), and here they present to the public a weird electroindustrial influenced post-industrial music, plus disco elements, with a punk attitude. The duo composed by **Greg Vand** and **Susan Subtract** has grown its popularity and now we want to present this project to the Italian **FLUX** followers who don't know it or simply who want to know something more about this interesting project.

1) Hi Susan, hi Greg! The first question is aimed to present your project to our readers. Who are High-Functioning Flesh and what's your story? How the project started and, in particular, in which musical/cultural context? We know that now loads of (i would call them post-industrial) bands are appearing in California.

High-Functioning Flesh is Greg and Sue. We were two weirdo punks with history in the hardcore and art-punk scene. We had our first practice in a bedroom here in L.A in 2013. We didn't know how to use a sampler yet but Sue had 3 of them.

2) Let's get deeper talking about your records. Between your first work **A Unity of Miseries - A Misery of Unities** and your last album **Definite Structures** a year has passed; what happened in this time? Has your vision somewhat changed in between? In particular, in which way do you think that the title itself, **Definite structures**, could be the right title to express your idea of music?

There was a year and a half between recording the first record and the second. We played out a lot during that time and were able to use live performance as a means of refining our approach to making music; our goal being to have material that translates into a physical experience. The vision remains largely the same, our first song *Video DNA Gestalt* for example having just as strong an intent as *Mistakes Were Made*.

3) What has inspired your name, High-Functioning Flesh? I remember reading an Industrial Music book which expressed the relation between the role of the body and the industrial music (especially EBM). Do you consider the most your music and your attitude interested into the perfection of the body or about its intrinsic progressive decay?

Our name and music are equal measure atrophy and ascent; both of these are concepts the body is essential to.

4) What do you think about the sort of revival of the 80's electro-industrial/EBM scene in L.A? There are many quality bands like **3 Teeth**, **Youth Code**, and yourselves, that are rising attention toward the scene. Do you consider your project a part of this "wave"? I don't consider this wave as a number of acts who play similar music, but, much more, a number of acts who want to express a basically retrò music building new shapes and ways of composing it, paying a tribute to the cultural theories of writers such as **Burroughs**.

There is a lot of music coming from this mindset in Los Angeles right now. I think **Pure Ground**, **Human Particle**, **Oil Thief**, **Doses**, **Granite Mask**, **LFA**, **Hive Mind**, **Lower Tar**, **Pod Blotz**, and **Silent Servant** all deserve mention here too (there are certainly a lot more that aren't mentioned here). The truly interesting aspect of this "wave" as you've defined it is the reality that everyone has arrived from entirely different starting points.

5) From what I can understand about the lyrics, my opinion is that you try to create something that could wake up the people and make them think about the dogmas and the society which surrounds us and which, in some cases, enslaves us. What can you tell me about your lyrics? I find, for example, a similar approach, if I think about the topic of religion, between you and the Belgian EBM act **Front 242**. You're going to make a tour with them, isn't it?

The lyrics are about our experience in this world; reconciling reality and negation. They aren't meant to enlighten as much as to simply observe what is already there in plain sight. "As long as necessity is socially dreamed, dreaming will remain a social necessity. The spectacle is the bad dream of a modern society in chains and ultimately expresses nothing more than its wish for sleep. The spectacle is the guardian of that sleep."

6) Your music is pretty interesting because you merge different styles and approaches: you could hear electro-industrial influenced by the Canadian masters, especially in the use of sampling, old school EBM acts such as **Nitzer Ebb**, synth pop as well as some typical USA disco-like tunes. What are your musical influences and what shaped, musically and culturally, the idea of what you do and the way in which you express your "vision"?

We both are shaped by our background in punk music and in many ways this defines our approach to making the music that we do. We've got some more direct influences which we really don't need to go over, but when we sit down to write a song, there's no filter to our depth of pooled experience. Sure, we are making body music influenced by the genre's rich history but it can hardly be called derivative of any established artist or genre. Our context is different, our reality is different, and hopefully this is what makes what we're doing relevant now.

7) When I first listened to "Definite Structures", I've suddenly thought about the Burroughs and **Gysin** theories about the "third mind" and the "control machines" I've thought about this because they've used the cut-up practice to build holes in the system and as ways of escaping from it. You use exaggerating the practice of sampling, if I think about the electro industrial bands who used this practice before you. Could we consider your use of sampling thinking about these two huge theorists' ideas? Does a relation exist?

The samples on Definite Structures were specifically chosen in relation to our experiences growing up and living in Southern California. They are grounded in context and of course become something else in the context of the songs. So sure, these theories are something we consider and are influenced by; even if we weren't influenced by these concepts, the nature of sampling itself is a reference whether conscious or not.

8) In the 90's, California hasn't been so well known for its electro musicians, but now we're seeing this revival. In the early years of industrial music, there were loads of weird and particular artists who built

ideas through music, arts and literature. I think that your sound is extremely fascinating because it's different. It sounds new! Why do you think that, before you, Youth Code etc... started your projects, there wasn't a well-known post-industrial music scene in California? What has happened between the '70s/'80s and now? Why?

Between the 70s and now around 40 years have happened. Tastes and contexts are always in flux which has caused us to arrive where we are now and inevitably will lead us somewhere else.

9) Do you think that the increasing number of electro acts could change the trend that sees the instrumental distorted music and the harsh EBM much more popular on people's music tastes than electro and that the Californian example could influence and change the trend in Europe too, or do you think that the Californian wave it's a thing on its own who doesn't have so many relationships with what people like to listen and to support outside the US?

It seems like people outside of the US are interested in what is happening in the LA right now. An exciting aspect of what's happening now is that you can have an electro-punk band like us play with an industrial band and an EBM band and a **John Foxx-y** synth-pop band and the people there will be stoked about all four acts. We can play a show with some hardcore punk bands and kids with mowhawks will be dancing. The distinction between the genres is at once perpetuated and dissolved.

10) What do you think about the live dimension? How do you live that and have you ever thought to make some gigs in our country, Italy?

Performing our music live is very essential to its purpose and goal. While in the studio even, execution of the physical performance is key. We haven't made it over to Italy yet but hope to soon.