

CEX
with Love of Everything and Echo
21 June 2005 @ The Aquarium
10pm / \$5 / 21+

High Plains Reader
June 15, 2006
Volume 12, Issue 40
Fargo, ND

Cex in the Aquarium
Industrial trip-hop to get over hump day

By Mitch Marr

Dust off your prophylactics and your dancing shoes, everyone, 'cause there's going to be Cex at the Aquarium. Next Wednesday, Cex (a.k.a. Rjyan Kidwell) is bringing his show on the road to give a boost to hump day. Love of Everything, who collaborated on Cex's latest release, and local one-man band Echo will open.

The latest Cex album, "Actual Fucking," has all ready received loads of critical acclaim and has fans foaming at the mouth for the Kidwell's famously intense live-show. It's been a year since the last release, and this album is Kidwell's most cohesive work to date.

Cex albums have always been teasing, obvious talent with glances of brilliance. "But the talent was often clouded by sneering sarcasm and general funny-business. Then "Maryland Mansions" came along, giving us a pissed off Kidwell. Apparently, angry Cex is better Cex. "Drive Off a Mountain," for example was a moment of Reznor-referencing, industrial laptop transcendence.

Kidwell has been tagged as many things: IDM producer, electro-pop provocateur, indie rapper. On "Maryland" the one thing you could peg him as was solitary. The nihilistic record was a stark LP from a laptop loner, a big shift from previous tongue-in-cheek recordings. Even the scene-snobs at Pitchfork gave "Maryland" an 8.2, calling it a cohesive and mature work. And it was. But, comparatively, "AF" blows it out of the water. No one can call this Kidwell ADD, indecisive, or undecided. On "AF", another larger transformation has taken place. The album is immediately more focused, dark and urgent than the last. Still, he hasn't moved away from any of the genres he's dabbled in thus far. They're all here; they just belong to a more focused sound.

"AF" is Kidwell coming into his own. With a little help from his friends (the collaborator list is longer than the track list), he's taken his various influences and sewn up a seamless album from them. All the faces of Cex are present: industrial trip-hopper, indie MC, sample junkie, pop-natural—hooks are everywhere between track-long electric noodling.

“Chicago” is pure pre-“Fragile” NIN— you remember, when the king of industrial mope actually had a sex drive. True to the title, this album, entirely and literally about sex, is actually sexy. “Denton” will make you dig out your Portishead discs and pray for a reunion tour. He’s maintained the agitated feel of previous work (see: “Los Angeles” and some of the basically instrumental tracks), while managing a more polished product. Not bad for a kid.

With this album, Kidwell claims to be asking about question art versus entertainment by making an album full of sex. So are there any answers? You have to judge for yourself. The album avoids rhetoric, the most revealing lyric coming at the close: “Nothing must be perfect, nothing must be clear.”