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myMUSIC: *features*



biography "I wanted to do music that reflects the times," says Meg Lee Chin, explaining why her solo debut *Piece And Love* sounds like Manhattan at rush hour.




albums Keyboards whoosh through the mix like taxis, guitars wail like car horns, Chin's voice is doubled and tripled and sliced and diced into the clamor of sidewalk chatter, and her computer does the rest-- whipping electronic and acoustic elements into a whirl that bristles with hooks, melodies and endearing beats.

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"That's what pop music is supposed to do," she continues. "As much as the so-called alternative experimental musicians want to raise this music to high art, the field we're in is pop and it's supposed to be a little slice of the times we live in."

-  "Nutopia"
-  "Swallowing You"
-  "Heavy Scene"

Chin, who sings and speaks in sonorous twists, has for the last few years been the main vocalist in producer/ programmer/ drummer Martin Atkins's shifting collective Pigface, a group that is a gleefully anarchic fly in the precious ointment of industrial rock. During her tenure, she's met plenty of pretentious musicians. She's got little patience for them, or, for that matter, anything that smacks of artifice.

"Thing" opens *Piece And Love* with a slap at the fevered buy-sell pitch of our consumption-mad culture. "Heavy Scene" zaps "paperback gurus" and other dispensers of fakery. In "Nutopia," Chin follows an initial burst of noise with a chant, high-stepping her voice over a bedrock of smacked drums and dive-bomber guitars. "I've seen the best minds of my generation running on MT," she prods, "hallucinating media reality" and "memorizing PIN numbers

MT," she prods, "hallucinating media reality" and "memorizing PIN numbers and secret codes" in "cities wrapped in plastic" where "synapses collapse and bridges snap to a restless Nutopia."

Somehow Chin makes the song's stinging verses sweet, reaching down in her range to a warm soulful purr, then spiking the choruses with rage-dipped roars. It's a matter of balance. Chin's lyrics and dense digital overload give her numbers nasty fangs. Yet her playful voice and gently groove-y sensibility make them bounce like perky pets on a tight leash.

"Scratch the surface of the cynic I appear to be and you'll find an extreme idealist," she says. "I'm eternally optimistic about the future, so it's important for me to express myself in my music in a way that my words can't. And yet, if I were Beethoven I wouldn't be happy. I'd find a wrong note somewhere. That's just my temperament."

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It's not surprising that Chin's always been a loner. "When I was a kid, I was quite isolated," she explains. Her father was a U.S. Air Force engineer; her mother was Taiwanese. And Meg grew up in a lovely house--surrounded by broken-glass-crowned walls in the middle of a Taipei slum. "The rest of the town was starving in bamboo huts. I couldn't leave my home alone or I'd get kidnapped."

Her teen years in San Francisco were warmer. There, she bought a four-track and recorded the first demo of her friends Faith No More. It was the beginning of a passion for recording technology that's made her proudly self-reliant.

"Because I'm five-foot-two and have a whimsical nature, I've gotten the kind of respect in bands and studios that they'd give the pizza delivery girl," she says. "It takes me about four years to get to the point of having any respect--when people realize that when they listen to Meg's ideas, things sound better." So it went in her last band, Crunch, an all-woman rock outfit that broke up just as Chin was getting her due within the group. Then she auditioned for Garbage, pre-Shirley Manson, but saw the future when the band's überproducer members told her exactly how the vocal nuances of each song should play out.

So Chin chose to work alone. She holed up in her London flat's homemade studio until the raw material for *Piece And Love* was completed. Then she passed it to Atkins, who mixed the album and enhanced the punch of its braying guitars and snapping beats with his knack for sample manipulation. But the result is pure Meg Lee Chin: bitter and whimsical, venomous and charming, complicated and fun.

Ted_Drozdzowski

more on the artist

*Check out **ebay™** for groovy goods & collectibles from Meg Lee Chin, Martin Atkins, Pigface, Faith No More, and Garbage.

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