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Cloud Cult's Minowa album channels loss, pain

By ANNA PAIGE
CD Review

Cloud Cult

The Meaning of 8

Earthology Records

When Craig Minowa's son died suddenly in the night at the age of 2, Minowa's world must have come to a crashing halt. What came out of that tragic death is his divulgement, an 18-song eulogy titled "The Meaning of 8."

Founder, singer, songwriter, guitarist and keyboardist of Cloud Cult, Minowa became a recluse on his organic farm in Northern Minnesota, writing more than 100 songs in an effort to deal with the loss that occurred in 2002.

"I just needed the medicine that writing music provides me," Minowa said. What came out of that intense period were 2005's "Advice from the Happy Hippopotamus" and 2007's "The Meaning of 8."

The music on "The Meaning of 8" ebbs and flows, crescendos into an explosion of angst, loss and lonely passion. Each song is a calculated peak of emotion, backed with Minowa's indie folk sound and poignant storyteller lyrics.

Incredibly personal, the songs on "The Meaning of 8" have the ability to appeal to a wide audience with their approachability and honesty.

Minowa attributes the album's name to Carl G. Jung's belief that no matter where you are in the world or at what time in history you lived, the shape of 8 has similar meaning. The number 8 symbolizes the moment where death and rebirth coincide.

"This is the meaning of the number 8," Minow states in the song "2x2x2." "Shape the pain into something great. Disintegrate and reintegrate. Let's go live like Sunday morning cartoons, grow Christmas trees from tombs."

"Your 8th Birthday," a heavy song celebrating and mourning his son's birthday and death, ebbs and

flows with the pain, relying heavily on rigorous guitar strumming and sing-scream lyrics.

"You make traffic jams feel like parades/You bury the dead with the faith that makes lightning bolts warm as if it was graduation."

And with simplistic honesty, Minowa expresses gratitude in "Thanks."

"I give thanks to my youthful days of grass-stained knees and trick-or-treat face/ I pray I'll find as innocent a place when I am 88."

Cloud Cult was established in 1995 by Minowato to create "not-for-profit music" focused on environmental and philosophical movements.

Minowa released the low-budget album "The Shade Project," which was recorded in a closet and included the use of buckets, pans and couch cushions. He released "Who Killed Puck" in 1996, adding cellist Sarah Young and drummer Eduardo Vaz.

After the birth of his son in 2000, Minowa spent the next two years with his family and creating studio recordings, until February 2002, when his son unexpectedly died.

During the time Minowa was in seclusion on his farm, he formed the band's label, Earthology Records.

The label is one of the first not-for-profit eco-friendly labels in the country. Minowa decided to pair his musical and personal beliefs into an environmentally conscious label that focuses on "working to revolutionize the music industry into operating in an ecologically sustainable manner."

The label uses recycled and reclaimed jewel cases, recycled content papers with nontoxic soy inks and uses a CD replication process that recycles the cut scraps into milk cartons. "The Meaning of 8" album jacket is made of 100 percent postconsumer recycled paper and wrapped in nontoxic shrink-wrap.

Playing a handful of shows around the country to promote "The Meaning of 8," Cloud Cult will launch their 2007 national tour in September. They are slated to play Sept. 15 at the Monolith Festival at Red Rocks.

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