

The Ajna Offensive

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INFERNAL PROTEUS

Price: \$40.00



TRACKLIST

- * AH CAMA-SOTZ (Belgium): Morning Glory
- * ALIO DIE (Italy): Borage
- * ALLERSEELEN (Austria): Edelweiss
- * ALRAUNE (USA): Mandrake
- * AMBER ASYLUM (USA): Kelp
- * APOPTOSE (Germany): Oak
- * AUBE (Japan): Chrysanthemum
- * BARADELAN (Germany): Bonsai
- * CHAOS AS SHELTER (Israel): Bellflower
- * CIRCE (Spain): Myrtle
- * COLECLOUGH & HILL (UK): Beech
- * JASON H CRABAN (USA): Yarrow
- * YANNICK DAUBY (France): Sundew
- * ENDVRA (UK): Hops
- * HEKATE (Germany): Cornflower
- * HU (Israel): Tea
- * IGOR18 (Russia): Venus Flytrap
- * IN GOWAN RING (USA): Dandelion
- * INADE (Germany): Ginkgo
- * ISRAFEL IN NECROPOLIS (USA): Sycamore
- * DAVE KNOTT (USA): Redwood
- * LOTUS EATERS (USA): Marijuana
- * KAWABATA MAKOTO (Japan): Equinox Flower
- * MANIA (USA): Poison Ivy
- * MNORTHAM (USA): Salvia Divinorum
- * SETH NEHIL (USA): Birch
- * NERTHIAGH (Portugal): Belladonna
- * NUMINOSUM (USA): Lily of the Valley
- * Ô PARADIS (Spain): Lotus

- * RAIN (USA): Milk Thistle
- * THE RED KING (USA): Opium Poppy
- * STEVE RODEN (USA): Pine
- * TROUM (Germany): Khan Arachnid
- * ULTRA (USA): Yohimbe
- * UNTO ASHES (USA): Sunflower
- * VENEREUM ARVUM (UK): Hawthorne
- * WALDTEUFEL (USA): Yew
- * WOLFSKIN (Portugal): Thornapple
- * DAVID WOODWARD (USA): Calea

From an issue of UNRESTRAINED

Infernal Proteus-A Musical Herbal (Ajna) Without doubt the most ambitious and exciting project emerging from the genre in 2002, this brilliantly crafted hardbound book-cum-four CD set arguably represents the culmination of artistic intent in the neofolk/neoclassical/experimental scene in terms of both music and conception. The most jaded listener cannot help but gape at the array of artists Ajna's Tyler Davis has managed to rope into this visual-musical catalogue of flora. With respected underground figures like Mnortham and Ultra standing alongside the usual greats like Inade, Waldteufel and Allerseelen in putting their chosen flora to music, the book's lengthy table of contents reads like a veritable who's who of the scene. Amber Asylum grace the first disc with a suitably ethereal, sub-aquatic hymn to "Kelp," while Alraune (no less than Michael Moynihan and Annabel Lee) steal the show a few tracks later with their typical flair, serenading the twisted "Mandrake" with Moynihan's martial drumming playing perfect counterpoint to Lee's violin and her dulcet tones. Waldteufel's characteristically traditional chants lead pleasantly into Venereum Arvum's brilliant interpretation of the familiar English May Carol that, listened to with closed eyes, evokes frighteningly realistic atmospheres of medieval English country life that threaten to explode into lush colour, sound and smell. As expected, In Gowan Ring deliver a soft pastoral ode to the "Dandelion," as ritualistic/ambient masters Endvra show true involvement in their tribute to "Hops" with an uncharacteristic, shockingly chirpy beer-drinking ditty. Troum and Inade both reinforce their uncontested positions as the Teutonic masters of dark ambient, with the former opting for a whispering deadliness in contrast to the latter's expansive demonic majesty. Kern and Van Pelt's stunningly evocative ode to the "Pomegranate" brims with nostalgia and longing, as soft feminine murmurs are layered over the vaguely impassioned strains of a violin (a famous aria, I forget which) played through an old gramophone, creating one of the most beautiful moments on the entire four-hour set. Trying to describe the entire experience is futile; the range of artistic styles over the four discs is mind-boggling, from the vertiginous swirls of Ah Cama-Sotz to the strange oriental-occidental mysticism of Baradelan, the organic minimalism of Steve Roden's pinecones (Jeph Jerman, anyone?), or the mind-numbing psychedelia of Lotus Eaters. True to its original intention, the book itself is a visually stunning treasure trove of pictures and writings, showcasing wildly different yet complementary modes of representation (drawing, engraving, photography), often side-by-side. Next to Blood Axis/LJDLP's costly "Absinthe" vinyl set, this gem is certainly the most exquisite (and certainly the most comprehensive) piece of art in the genre in the past year, setting an impossibly difficult standard for all future endeavours. This is art in its absolute form, and despite the cost, an essential purchase if there ever was one. -10-

Terrorizer No. 102

Never one to skimp on all things aesthetically extravagant, The Ajna Offensive has quietly built a sturdy reputation for lavish 'n' inventive packaging and music in kind to back it up, and with their latest ante-upping 'Infernal Proteus' compilation, it looks like the label's worthy rep won't be fading anytime soon. Housed in a stunningly beautiful full-color, 100-page hardbound book are four lengthy CDs spanning the spectrum of all things 'experimental'. But here's the clincher: Chronologically ranging from O Paradis' 'Lotus' to Dave Knott's

'Sequoia Redwood', the 40 artists selected here respectively choose his/her/their favorite flora and compose a song based upon it – be it as inspiration, ode, whatever – and are afforded a full page's worth for corresponding artwork. Intrigued? Read on.... Heavy on the harmonium and strings and conspicuously lacking any 'rock' rhythms, the first (and arguably best) disc of 'Infernal Proteus' favors the neoclassical/apocalyptic-folk side of the fence, with the likes of In Gowan Ring, Amber Asylum, Unto Ashes, Hekate, and Waldteufel putting in particularly inspiring performances; of especial note is Allerseele's 'Edelweiss', throbbing along to an equally haunting rubbery bass-line and potentially diabolical accordion loop. From there onward, things get (mostly) more ambient starting with the second disc on to the third – the choicest cut being Kern and Van Pelt's wonderfully maudlin 'Pomegranate', the disorienting detour being the Skinny Puppy-gone-sympho-BM of The Red King's 'Opium Poppy'. With the likes of Aube and Chaos as Shelter, the fourth disc brings things to a close by veering further down the (purely) ambient path, with nary a vocal track in sight and plenty o' noise to go 'round; not surprisingly, Lotus Eaters admit their 'musical herbal' with 'Marijuana'. Normally, most various-artists compilations are nothing more than guileless marketing tools aimed at clueless trainspotters, offering next-to-no value-for-money and mostly throwaway tracks that've already been released. 'Infernal Proteus' offers neither, which is both a good and unique thing: For \$45, not only do you get a thematically unified art-piece to pretty up your coffee table, you also get four equally unified and wholly satisfying discs of music to get you outta your mind whilst absorbing the book's contents. Act fast, though, because this is a limited edition of 2000 copies. [8.5] NATHAN T. BIRK

Church Of Satan website.

This art object is a 96 page hardback book (cover above) which also contains four compact discs of music. Various musicians, inspired by a catalog of herbs, crafted character pieces to embody responses to their floral subjects. Inside the book, each artist presents a visual image of the subject as well, which accompanies information about the musicians on the facing page. The music itself is very wide-ranging, from acoustic ballads and instrumentals, to electronic collage pieces and even rather avant-garde means for generating sound. It is truly a fascinating aural and visual journey.

Some other responses from friends, comrades and strangers alike.

GOT THE BOOKS ! OH MAN, WONDERFUL !!! I listened to 2 of the 4 CDs by now and found some great stuff from bands I didn't know before. Stefan/Drone Records and Troum

Wow!! This is one of the most beautiful cd packagings I ever bought. If you open the book and listen to the music, you have access to the "secret live of plants". I also love the diversity of the music, not only folk or ambiente, but also experimental stuff. Harold/proud owner.

Thank you so much for the book/CDs you sent!! It is honestly one of the most beautiful things I have seen in my life, and definitely outshines anything Misanthropy has ever done. WOW! Well done! Tiziana/Misanthropy & Elfenblut Records

In the Garden (in jeans and a pink shirt) 2002.08.22 So I'm all excited and mentally turned on right now about something I just heard on my favorite radio show—Infernal Proteus is a musical herbal comprising book + CD, with 40 some-odd artists choosing a favorite herb and interpreting it in sounds and images. The website doesn't list much info about the project, unfortunately, but the pieces I heard today were mind-blowingly true to the spirit of the plants. In particular, "Tea" involved bowing (like with a violin bow) on tea leaves and deep masculine humming and chanting ... very unusual and very beautiful. I also heard a piece based on myrtle

that was really nice. http://kinnarium.diaryland.com/020822_79.html

"Infernal Proteus" is a luxurious compilation, released by the very young label The Ajna Offensive, who almost directly hit the target with this ambitious release. Most compilations give you the feeling that they are just a cheap means of filling the pockets of the label, but with this compilation that is certainly not the case. The whole thing is packed in a luxurious book (a musical herbarium, as labelboss Tyler Davis calls it) containing 4 cd's, as a whole it certainly looks stunning. The music is highly varied and ranges from neo-folk to dark ambient and avantgarde. As the main theme each artist was asked to select a flower or plant which has a special meaning to him or her, and to compose a musical composition around it. This gives this compilation a big added value, because all of the material is exclusive! Some of the artists who have cooperated are for example Apoptose, Allerseelen, Aube, In Gowan Ring and Endvra (though you would not recognize them from the uncharacteristic medieval traditional about the hops plant which they contributed). Further present are Alraune, Inade and many others, including many surprising unknown acts. Somewhat of an obstruction for some people will be the price of this compilation, but in return you receive an essential document, which will stand up against the course of time with splendour.(Funprox.com site)

Tyler, It was the most inspiring, intelligent, professional and fucking BEAUTIFUL publications we have ever experienced...Breath taking! Being publishers ourselves through the Glass Throat vehicle, we are honored to know that you, the AJNA OFFENSIVE is out there setting the tone, creating truthful inspired art...You have such a vision...dont ever loose sight of it!!! May I continue with the ranting and raving...Yes?...Good, the way the artists involved captured and conveyed the herbal vision was simply stunning! I was inspired by many of the compositions, I took the liberty of contacting a few artists, in hopes of sharing my work with them...You rock Tyler...Great job! :-) Chet/Ruhr Hunter

A truly amazing, and impressive compilation, featuring 40 different artists, and over 4 hours worth of music. Some of the artists involved include Allerseelen, Amber Asylum, In Gowan Ring, Alio Die, Endura, Ultra, Troum, Steve Roden, Seth Nehil, Inade, Ah Cama-sotz, Mnortham, Mania, Aube, Chaos as Shelter, and many, many more. Each artist was asked to create a musical piece based on a plant or there choice, as well as include some artwork of the plant, and some text information. The results are collected in a beautiful 96 page, full color hardbound book. One of the best looking (and sounding) works I have ever seen. Highly recommended (SA Records catalog description)

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