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Bio information: **UNIVERS ZERO**

Title: **HERESIE** (Cuneiform Rune 313)

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / NEW MUSIC / CHAMBER ROCK / CLASSICAL

“Chamber music for the Apocalypse. This talented quintet finds the right balance between post-Schoenberg and postmodernism. ...the group’s trademark gloomy sound...compositional resources...and idiosyncratic ensemble work mark Univers Zero as a group of admirable, though dark, vision.” – Keyboard Magazine

“...an incredibly powerful listening experience...Heresie is a stunning one-of-a-kind item which has never been duplicated by anyone -- including Univers Zero.” – All Music Guide

Univers Zero conceptualize the Europe of the late 20th Century... dense, desperate and dark; nevertheless...above all beautiful and dramatic, strongly marked by the cultural traditions of Europe.

... Univers Zero...may be classified somewhere between Bach and Bartok, Magma and Stravinsky...They represent something new, monumental, and important.” – Puls (Norway)

The Belgian group **Univers Zero** is legendary for its ominous, unsettling and uncompromising musical vision – a sound and stance that *Keyboard Magazine* described vividly as “**Chamber music for the Apocalypse**”. *Keyboard* was reviewing Univers Zero’s second album, **Heresie**, when it coined that resounding music-for-the-end-of-the-universe phrase. **Heresie**, ever since it was first released over thirty years ago, has served as a lightening rod for those fascinated by the darkness that coursed through the band’s astounding music. Dark and elegantly beautiful, Univers Zero’s music, with its hybrid nature – a perfect melding of classical music and rock – and its mysterious duality – simultaneously medieval and modern – was shockingly unlike anything else on the rock or classical stage. Around the time of **Heresie**’s first release, the young band augmented its aura as dark horsemen of a musical apocalypse, and, under the co-leadership of **Daniel Denis**’ and **Roger Trigaux**, dressed in black as they galloped across European stages, with oboes, violins, bassoons and harmoniums, and guitars, drums and bass their instruments of destruction. First released on lp in 1979 by the French avant garde label **Atem** and repeatedly reissued, **Heresie** was the album that launched Univers Zero’s reputation as purveyors of the darkest, most menacing music on earth. It was also the release that launched them front-and-center as one of the five founding members of the **Rock-In-Opposition (RIO) Movement**, a European coalition of rock bands, led by **Chris Cutler** of the UK’s **Henry Cow**, who sought alternatives to the mainstream music industry and Anglo-American rock. Transcending musical genre while tapping into European musical roots, the music on **Heresie** aligned the Belgian band to RIO’s avant garde while remaining dramatically distinct. Today, the music on **Heresie** remains unequalled in the canons of rock or classical music, and sounds as timeless and fresh as the day of it was born.

This reissue by **Cuneiform** transforms and updates what may be Univers Zero’s most infamous work, introducing **Heresie** to 21st Century audiences. A stunning, new, digipak cover designed by **Thierry Moreau** incorporates bits of images from the original packaging, fragments from past reissues and new elements. Cuneiform’s 2010 CD reissue also sonically transforms **Heresie**, by featuring a striking, clear remix made from the original, 1979 multi-track tapes. Done by engineer **Didier de Roos**, who has worked with Daniel Denis since the mid 80s, the remix defines and focuses the instruments with a greater clarity than any prior editions. The 2010 CD reissue is also accompanied by a 16 page booklet containing a history of the band during the years surrounding **Heresie**, written by music historians **Renato Moraes** and **Aymeric Leroy** and illustrated with archival photos. The work on packaging, remixing, and documenting is befitting **Heresie**’s landmark status: a seminal, notorious and influential album in the history of avant-garde rock, as well as a lodestar for the adventurous future of 21st Century classical music.

Heresie was the band’s second album. Univers Zero is world renown for its role in the creation of a potent new musical genre which emerged from the Francophone world more than 30 years ago and today blazes new frontiers for classical and rock music alike. In 1977, after working together for several years, the then 7 French speaking members of Univers Zero gathered in a small basement studio to record their first album, which they self-released in a tiny edition of 500 copies. Their album, self-titled **Univers Zero** (reissued with bonus material by Cuneiform in 2008) is acknowledged to mark the birth of “**chamber rock**”: a new and startlingly original musical genre – a perfect hybrid of classical music and rock – that may conceivably be the Francophone world’s most significant contribution to late 20th Century New Music. Featuring music that was simultaneously medieval and modern, merging influences from early 20th century classical composers such as **Bartok** and **Stravinsky**, with the power and iconoclasm of rock music. By the close of the 20th century, chamber rock’s influence on avant-garde rock would extend beyond the French-speaking world to the rest of Europe, Scandinavia, North America, Japan, and beyond. Today, the classical music world has begun discovering Univers Zero, whose music reveals a new direction for classical music, injecting new vigor, attracting new audiences and breathing new life into the scene.

One of the most unique and important music ensembles on the planet, Univers Zero remains highly active today under the leadership of composer/drummer **Daniel Denis**. (Denis has been the sole leader since **Roger Trigaux** left Univers Zero after **Heresie**’s 1979 release, to form his own band, **Present**). The band continues to record and release new material on Cuneiform, including a recent, critically acclaimed studio album, **Clivages** (2010). Besides **Heresie**, Cuneiform has also recently released other Univers Zero archival recordings and reissues, including **Relaps: Archives 1984-1986** (2009) and **Univers Zero** (2008).

Univers Zero frequently performs at music festivals worldwide. On September 25, 2010, Univers Zero will perform for the first time ever in Washington D.C., where it will headline at the **10th Sonic Circuits Festival**, DC’s premier festival for experimental music. The concert, at which the Montreal band **Miriodor** will be the opening act, will be held at La Maison Française, at the French Embassy in Washington, DC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON UNIVERS ZERO, SEE:

www.univers-zero.com - www.myspace.com/universzero

Univers Zero was founded in 1974. It evolved out of **Necromicon**, a group founded by drummer/ percussionist **Daniel Denis** and trumpet player **Claude Deron** and named after a locale in **H. P. Lovecraft**'s work. By May 1974, desiring to celebrate its European roots, the band had renamed itself **Univers Zero**, after a novel by Belgian writer **Jacques Sternberg**. During its first five years, Univers Zero was co-led by composers **Daniel Denis** and **Roger Trigaux** and released 2 albums: **1313** and **Heresie**. Its first album, **Univers Zero**, has been called "1977's darkest musical vision" [*Alternative Press*]; continually in high-demand, it was frequently reissued. In 1979, Univers Zero became one of the five founding members of the hugely influential "**Rock In Opposition**" [**RIO**] movement, alongside **Henry Cow** (UK), **Etron Fou Le Loublan** (France), **Stormy Six** (Italy), and **Zamla** (Sweden). Led by **Chris Cutler**, RIO began as a European-wide coalition for alternative music; RIO later became a stylistic term to describe composition-intensive music that transcended traditional musical genres and included influences from folk musics. The year of RIO's founding, Univers Zero released its second album, **Heresie** [1979-Atem, 1991-Cuneiform] widely considered to be one of the darkest and most menacing albums of all time. After **Heresie**'s release, Trigaux left the band to found **Present**. Univers Zero continued on with Denis at the helm to release "their most comprehensive catalogue of horrors" [*Boston Rock*], **Ceux Du Dehors** [1981-Cryonic, 1992-Cuneiform]; **Crawling Wind** [1983-Eastern Works-ReR Japan, 2001-Cuneiform], and **UZED** [1984-ReR, 1988-Cuneiform], whose "violent sound...writhes with a sinister energy" [*Goldmine*]. Distinctive but never stagnant, UZ's sound evolved and progressed with each release. In 1987 UZ released its first CD on **Cuneiform**, beginning a long term relationship with the label. The Cuneiform CD, called **Heatwave**, featured a more electric sound, prompting *Option* to comment that "the band sounds much like a mating of **Stravinsky**, **Bartok**, the **Art Bears**, mid-period **King Crimson**, and **Anthony Davis**' *Episteme*." Shortly afterwards, in 1987, Denis disbanded Univers Zero for a decade.

During the 1990s and very early 2000s, **Cuneiform** reissued Univers Zero's entire back catalogue on CD. The music proved timeless; the reissues received an astounding amount of critical acclaim and helped expand the band's fan base worldwide. In 1990, *Keyboard* remarked: "It's stunning how well Univers Zero's 1977 debut holds up, musically and sonically, compared to...anything else happening in so-called new music." With UZ dormant, **Denis** released two solo albums – **Les Eaux Troubles** (1991) and **Sirius and the Ghost** (1993) – in the US (Cuneiform) and Europe (Musea). As the decade drew to a close, he reformed Univers Zero for a single, sold out appearance at 1997's **FIMAV** (Festival International Musique Actuelle **Victoriaville**) in **Canada**.

Denis revived UZ at the close of the 20th Century, and proceeded to release a series of recordings that thrilled rock and New Music/classical audiences alike. The first of these recordings, 1999's **The Hard Quest**, was greeted as a "Brilliant comeback album by an important avant garde band" [*Crohinga Well*]. UZ's next release, 2002's **Rhythmix**, featured UZ's largest lineup and marked a return to more acoustic palettes. It was praised as "a postmodern work of the first order" [*Pulse!*] and "One of the decade's masterworks, in any genre." [*Exposé*] UZ expanded this acoustic palette with electronics, experimental and jazz elements, and more spacious, melodic compositions for its next, 9th CD, **Implosion**, released in 2004. *AMG* noted that "UZ has been producing dark-side chamber music for thirty years, and 'Implosion' shows that they've not lost their focus or fire." *Implosion*'s cover was designed by Belgian filmmaker **Philippe Seynaeve**, who had begun working on various multimedia projects with the band, one of which was featured at the 2003 **Belgian Film Festival** at Paris' Forum des Images. In 2004, in celebration of Univers Zero's 30th anniversary, Denis assembled a sextet lineup of top-notch musicians and returned the band to regular to performance. Two years later, Univers Zero released its 10th recording and first-ever live CD on Cuneiform, called **Live**. Reviewing it, *Music Street Journal* commented: "The first live album from Univers Zero, as good as this one sounds it begs the question, "why did they wait so long?...This disc shows that the band is a force to be reckoned with in the live venue."

In the past six years, Univers Zero has been an extremely active live presence on the world stage, performing on multiple continents, in addition to composing and recording new music (2010's **Clivages**) and releasing numerous archival recordings and reissues on Cuneiform. Since 2004, Univers Zero has performed (often headlining) at many of the world's most prestigious festivals of New Music, world music, progressive music, and jazz. Performing in Eastern and Western Europe and North America, Univers Zero has played in the Czech Republic (**Alternativa Festival** 2006, Prague's **Palac Akropolis** 2009); Poland (Wroclaw's **Energy & Sound Festival** 2009); France (**MIMI Festival** 2004; **Les Tritonales** 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008; **Winter Festival** Le Garric 2005, Cap Decouverte **Rock in Opposition Festival** 2009, Nancy's **Jazz Pulsations Festival** 2009); Germany (**Art Rock/ Freakshow Festival**, 2004, **Linz Posthof** 2009, Dresden's **Jazzwelten** 2009); Mexico (**Baja Prog Festival** 2007, Mexico City's Teatro de La Ciudad 2009, Ecatepec 2009, Puebla's **Baroque Fringe Festival** 2009); Portugal (**Gouevia Artrock Festival** 2005), Canada (**Le Festival des Musiques Progressives de Montreal** 2008) and the USA (**NEARfest 2004**, The Netherlands (**Music Meeting Festival-2004**).

It has also played numerous recent shows in Belgium, including at **Brussels' Centre Culturel Jacques Franck**, **Les Halles De Schaerbeek**, Hasselt' **Belgie Kunstcentrum**, Mouscron's **Centre Culturel M. Staquet**, La Louvière's **Théâtre Communal De La Louvière**, Verviers' **Spirit of 66**, Courcelles' **Centre Culturel "La Posterie" 2008**, Nivelles' Centre Culturel Le Waux-Hall (2009), Saint-Gilles' **Centre Culturel Jacques Francq**, and festivals at **Bruxelles Chapelle Station**, **Audi Jazz Festival**, **Prog Festival**, and 2010's **Alter Ego Festival** in Soignes. On Sept. 25, 2010, Univers Zero will headline at the **10th Sonic Circuits Festival**, Washington DC's premier festival for experimental music.

More than three decades after it was first formed, Univers Zero continues to evolve, expanding and experimenting with the boundaries of New Music, and, to quote *Exposé*, ceaselessly "proving themselves to be one of the best and most important groups on the planet."

The more you know about modern "classical" music, the more you will appreciate Univers Zero's references: to Stravinsky, the French Impressionists, and the twelve-tonal or atonal music which dominated much of the twentieth century. ... Their musical vision is unremittingly ironic, full of deliberately sour passages, black humor, industrial evocations, and surrealist fantasies. ... This is what Europeans can do: they can wrap the millennia of their grim history in the millennia of their musical heritage. ... there is nothing like it here, and listening to Univers Zero is a glimpse of something very special." – Eclectic Earwig Reviews

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution / Color] versions of these images and more are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com in the "Press" section.



WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT THIS ALBUM:

UNIVERS ZERO

HERESIE

ATEM 1979, CUNEIFORM REISSUE 1991/2010

This album features: **Michel Berckmans** [oboe, bassoon], **Daniel Denis** [drums, percussion], **Patrick Hanappier** [violin, viola], **Guy Segers** [bass, vocals], **Roger Trigaux** [guitar, piano, organ, harmonium]

“...as exemplified by Side One’s “La Faulx,” this is “Gothic Chamber music” at its best...by any standard, I hold this band in the highest esteem...”
– Glenn Hammett, *Sounds Like*, #8

“Chamber music for the Apocalypse. This talented quintet finds the right balance between post-Schoenberg and postmodernism...a group of admirable, though dark, vision.”
– *Keyboard*, 5/92

“UNIVERS ZERO’s music is sometimes defined as “gothic Chamber rock”, and indeed its ominously dark atmospheres with growling voices and creeping drones will hurl you way back in the dark ages when the inquisition reached its most terrifying status. Intense fear licks from loud speakers, you hear kneecaps splinter, you feel pain screaming...absolutely not fit for children, young adults and musical lightweights...”
– Ernst van Dinter, *Background*, 8/92

“Widely regarded as the darkest, most sinister album ever recorded, “Heresie” has earned a reputation which is somewhat exaggerated and misunderstood ...Not really as dark as it is usually perceived, “Heresie” is a passionate, expressive, purposeful, and important album.”
– Dan Casey, *Gibraltar*, v.4, #17

“...a dark and menacing listening experience... the closest comparison I could come up with is “The Devil’s Triangle’ on King Crimson’s second album. Univers Zero are unsettling and uncompromising in their approach...the Gothic Governors. The instrumentation is used effectively in a sort of Armageddon chamber-music style, all topped off with some strange growled vocal effects. An intriguing and absorbing band...”
– Mike Dillingham, *Ptolemaic Terrascope*, v. 3, #1

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT SOME OF UNIVERS ZERO’S PREVIOUS RELEASES:

UNIVERS ZERO

CLIVAGES

CUNEIFORM

2010

This album features: **Michel Berckmans** (bassoon, English horn, oboe), **Kurt Budé** (clarinet, bass clarinet, alto sax), **Pierre Chevalier** (keyboards), **Daniel Denis** (drums, sampler), **Dimitri Evers** (bass), **Martin Lauwers** (violin) with guest **Andy Kirk** (guitar)

“...over the last three decades the ensemble has lived up to the dictionary meaning of avant-garde: those in the arts who create or apply new or experimental ideas and techniques.

Clivages...coalesces what has made Univers Zero such a unique and demanding group for the past 30 years but the record also yields new inclinations. For one, compositional responsibility has been split to different band members... This allows for both familiarity and surprise. Denis furnishes four pieces...Michel Berckmans pens three...Kurt Budé wrote two and guest guitarist Andy Kirk – a Univers Zero compatriot from the late seventies and on and off during the eighties – brings in one expansive work.

Univers Zero fans...will find Denis’ material...gratifying and galvanizing. Opener “Les Kobolds” has an accessible, major-key arrangement... The melodies and tonal colors render a slightly Renaissance feel but harmonic shifts impart an underlying ominous persuasion. ... Denis references his previous achievements on the funereal and desolate “Les Cercles d’Horus,” with ashen drums, comparative keyboards and bass, and minor-key piano and cello.

Berckmans “Vacillements” focuses entirely on wind and strings and has a neo-classical slant... Berckmans’ final tune, “Retour de Foire,” has a splendidly shadowy arrangement akin to Bernard Hermann...

Budé supplies two adventurous compositions. ...

Like earlier Univers Zero outings, *Clivages* has a live-in-the-studio approach with minimal overdubs, superb instrument separation, bright EQ and frequency modulation that is impeccable. This is music that has outstanding sound realization, recommended for a high fidelity system.”

– Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, April 23, 2010, www.audaud.com

“I first learned of...Univers Zero when its drummer and founder, Daniel Denis, was featured in *MD*’s February 2010 issue. I was drawn in immediately by Denis’ carve-your-own-path aesthetic and the fact that he seemed to give equal weight to composition and spontaneity.... The thing that struck me immediately about UZ’s wonderful slow-burning new album, *Clivages*...is that this is no attempted merger of “polite” chamber instrumentation with “nasty” rock ‘n’ roll, as so many “let’s tack a kit onto an orchestra” projects turn out to be. No, the music is at its very core conceived for a sensitive, versatile unit – a *band* – that happens to contain a quirky blend of instruments. *Clivages* prowls the low end with electric bass, bassoon, and Denis’s big drum sound. On the storm-bringing “Warrior,” Denis works huge tom blasts and cymbal-crash thunder... He’s full of surprises throughout and never short of compelling.”
– Michael Parillo, “What We’re Listening To,” *Modern Drummer: Wire*, 4.4, April 2010

“...this is Univers Zero’s best record ever since the band’s reformation in the mid-‘90s. ...this one...grabs me and moves me: more troubling, more experimental ...with a strong human elements. ... Top-rate avant-prog and a great Univers Zero release by any standard. ...”

– François Couture, *Monsieur Delire*, January 7, 2010, blog.monsieurdelire.com

“...this is one of their more accessible releases. Don’t get me wrong, it’s still Univers Zero... it seems to be fairly easy to latch onto melodies and something resembling a hook throughout the disc. I like this a lot and it might have two of my all time favorite Univers Zero tracks on it. Warrior ...is a real scorcher and one my favorites of all time from the group. ... a more jazz like movement that reminds me of Henry Mancini goes RIO. ...

Straight Edge ... is quite a dynamic and powerful piece of music that has jazz, funk, classical and pure prog all woven into it. There are some cool bits of retro keyboards... This could fit well into a movie soundtrack and despite its strangeness is quite compelling. ... This composition is definitely another highlight of the disc, and...qualifies as one of my favorite Univers Zero tracks.” – Gary Hill, *Music Street Journal*, musicstreetjournal.com

UNIVERS ZERO**RELAPS-ARCHIVES 1984-1986****CUNEIFORM****2009**

This album features: **Michel Delory** [guitar], **Daniel Denis** [drums], **Dirck Descheemaeker** [soprano sax, clarinet, bass clarinet], **Christian Genet** [bass], **Patrick Hanappier** [violin, viola], **Andy Kirk** [keyboards], **André Mergen** [cello, alto sax, voice], and **Jean-Luc Plouvier** [keyboards]

“...what a collection: selected from four gigs in Germany and Belgium, captured with great quality live sound that does justice to both the five-piece and later seven-piece version of the ensemble.

Once again, there’s no moment of filler from Univers Zero. A rich stew of beautiful classical instrumentation...each complex, driving composition is alive with dangerous energy and crackling tension from beginning to end. They’re the seething antidote to the twee and complacent in rock/classical crossover, the Stravinsky- and Ligeti- influenced blast of reality that makes even King Crimson sound like Andrew Lloyd Webber. Other avant-rock bands dabble in dark, 20th-century passages: Univers Zero dive right in, exploring danger and menace and foreboding in all possible nuances...

... They’re one of the great unsung rock bands of the last 30 years, and good enough to earn hesitant respect from the contemporary-classical world too. ...”
– Sean, **Organ** [UK] #298, March 13, 2009, www.organart.demon.co.uk

“... It’s always amazing how dark, brooding, and often times heavy this ‘RIO/chamber rock’ institution can get, most of the time utilizing acoustic instruments... ..the world of Univers Zero... is often times unsettling, chaotic, and ominous music, yet there lies a uncurrent of extreme beauty... This is amazing stuff, more proof of just how unique and powerful this Belgian band always was, and still is for that matter. ...make sure you add this one to your ‘must have’ list.”
– Pete Pardo, **Sea of Tranquility**, www.seaoftranquility.org

“... It’s a good reminder that Univers Zero was ahead of its time, even if it was (and remains) lost between serious and popular music.”
– Brandon Wu, **Washington City Paper**, v. 29. n.4, Jan. 23-29, 2009

“...*Relaps* is an essential piece of work showing that the band’s most exceptional moments were indeed live. Roughly the disc is made of two main chunks of three tracks... The first ... includes mostly tracks from my fave album of theirs: *Uzed*... ..the last chunk comes...mostly from the future *Heatwave* album with ...the 9- mins *Heatwave* and the 18-mins *Funeral Plain* are both outstanding versions... Great stuff!!”
– Sean Trane, **Progarchives.com**

“...First up are a pair of performances from a quintet version of UZ ...What is so striking about these tracks is the stark difference between this band and the previous version that recorded *Ceux du Dehors*. This is a much more electric UZ. ...more powerful range of dynamics, without changing the overall sophistication and scope of either arranging or playing. The latter version of UZ, recorded in 1985 and 1986...is the ultimate version of UZ in a live context. The contrasting keyboard sounds...offer a much more sinister and menacing quality to the music. The transformation of “Emanations,” from the *Uzed* album, is simply shocking. ... For anyone who has been interested in this band, this set is simply indispensable. ...well worth investigating.” – Thom Jurek, **All Music Guide**

“...this disc ...contains live performances by the angriest incarnations – the 1984 quintet and the 1985-86 septet – of Daniel Denis’ creature, one of the defining entities of Rock In Opposition... The material, mastered from clear enough archival tapes, comprises exciting renditions of classics such as “Présage” and “The Funeral Plain”, pieces delivered with a mixture of high-level technical proficiency, exquisite classical sensitiveness and...scarcely repressed fury...I feel older by the minute, yet the goosebumps that came up during some of these executions, most notably in the fantastic rhythmic unassailability of “Heatwave” (the tune), are the same of a couple of decades ago. What a group. And they’re still here... “
– Michel Ricci, **Temporary Fault**, June 28, 2009, temporaryfault.blogspot.com

“...Belgium’s Univers Zero have always been at the forefront of the progressive rock scene. ... This is the “electric” UZ, far removed from the acoustic chamber rock found on their debut. The fidelity is amazing... the group’s dark, moody arrangements have been reproduced with exceptional clarity. ...it’s bizarre that Univers Zero aren’t mentioned greater frequency. ...”
– Bryon Hayes, **Exclaim!**, February 2010, www.exclaim.ca

“... Recorded over twenty years ago, this music hasn’t aged a bit. In fact, it is hard to think of something that surpasses it in terms of modernity! ... This is music that constantly strikes you, ...a true storm ... (9.5/10)”
– Avi Shaked, **Maelstrom**, www.maelstrom.nu

“...like some sort of malevolent creature from the underground, they keep coming back. ... Univers Zero...relentlessly experimental, and this set captures a glimpse of them at one of their many musical peaks. On one level, *Relaps* is an amazing juxtaposition of some very disparate musical genres. More importantly however, it is a record that is thoroughly engaging, at times stunning, and absolutely fascinating all the way through. It is one of the rare ones that rewards repeated listens.”
– Greg Barbick, **Blogcritics & We’re An American Blog**, Jan 1, 2010 & January 6, 2010

UNIVERS ZERO**UNIVERS ZERO****CUNEIFORM****2008 REISSUE W BONUS TRACKS & REMASTER**

(alternately known as *1313*; originally releases 1977 by UZ, 1977 by Atem, numerous intervening reissues, 1990 by Cuneiform)

Cuneiform 2008 album features: **Michel Berckmans** [bassoon], **Daniel Denis** [percussion], **Marcel Dufrane** [violin], **Christian Genet** [bass], **Patrick Hanappier** [violin, viola, pocket cello], **Emmanuel Nicaise** [harmonium, spinet], **Roger Trigaux** [guitar], and **Guy Segers** [bass, vocal, noise effects]

“ALBUM OF THE WEEK...Released in 1977, it was astonishing then: today, it sounds like the hidden source for every one of today’s avant-garde rock bands. Chillingly beautiful, driven by the bassoon and cello more than the guitar and synth, each instrumental is both pastoral and burgeoning with terrible life. ... This is edgy beyond belief. ...Each piece magnificently refuses to deviate from its mood, its tense, thrilling, growling, restrained focus... The whole is like the rare, delicious bits of great film soundtrack that create menace and energy out of nowhere. ... Univers Zero are a revelation ...”
– Sean O., **Organ**, #274, September 18th, 2008

“UZ’s debut remains both benchmark and landmark. ...emerging out of nowhere with little history to precede it— UZ has been so vital in changing the way chamber music is perceived.

UZ’s music was an antecedent for the kind of instrumental and stylistic interspersions considered normal today by groups including Bang on a Can and Alarm Will Sound. Henry Cow’s complex, abstruse writing meets Bartok, Stravinsky, Messiaen and Ligeti, but with hints of early music, especially in UZ’s use of spinet and harmonium. ...

... This welcome reissue confirms, once again, that in 1977 a nearly unheard-of group was creating a new kind of chamber music that, in its inclusion of rock instrumentation and the occasional rock stance, would be a blueprint for classical music of the 21st century.”

– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, June 13, 2008

“Lately, many American groups, such as Zs, Kayo Dot and Normal Love, have been birthing *Tetsuo*-like sonic creatures — all metallic limbs and brash modern classical appendages jutting forth from a deformed prog rock body. *Univers Zero*’s 1977 debut cast a dark foreshadow on this recent trend. Spinnet, harmonium, bassoon and strings paint dissonant filigrees over a doom-laden and decidedly rock instrumental backdrop. The music is consistently ominous... when it occasionally gets dense, it’s a slab of strange, ingenious orchestration you hear, rather than a simple overdriven amp sound. ...UZ’s compositional structures surge and ooze. ... As with the younger generation that have inherited this approach, there are...psychedelic mystery and rough edges...”

– Nick Storrington, *Exclaim!*, www.exclaim.ca, September 2008

“...Many labels claim “Remastered!” only to disappoint... Here, the refurbishing could not be more obvious...”

The 2008 version of *Univers Zero*...is radically remixed. The stereo effects that pervade the original CD version from 1989 are gone, in favor of ...sound more akin to...performing live. ...the many interwoven lines of counterpoint are now much more discernible...

The disc is augmented by a live version of “Faulx,” ...alternately meditative and explosive, hinting at the visceralgia to come in Roger Trigaux’s offshoot band Present. A shocker that nicely complements the disc’s myriad subtle surprises.”

– Marc Medwin, *Dusted*, Jun. 6, 2008, www.dustedmagazine.com

“... *Univers Zero*, along with...Rock in Opposition peers Henry Cow and Mothers of Invention, forged a genre of music that might appropriately be dubbed post-rock, had the term not been coined 15 years too late. ...the Belgians’ craft at calculated pomp and nervous precision make *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*’s apocalyptic grandiosity seem like a Michael Bay movie in comparison. In fact, it’s a wonder sick minds from Kenneth Anger to Lucio Fulci never offered *Univers Zero* a film score. Maybe that’s because for all of its cinematic and theatrical potential, this is sure-fire listening music... Each song is its own instrumental narrative, puzzle, and invective rolled into one. ...[Rating 8/10]”

– Timothy Gabriele, *PopMatters*, September 8th, 2008, www.popmatters.com

“Dark, brooding, menacing, and unwilling to fit into any genre, that’s historically been the best way to describe the music of Belgium’s *Univers Zero*. ...Cuneiform...once again remind us just how important this album really is. Sure, other acts like Frank Zappa, Gentle Giant, Henry Cow, King Crimson, Bela Bartok, Can, and Magma were also pushing the envelope into dark territories as well at the time, but none were able to conjure up such seething menace as *Univers Zero*. ...

... The weaving bassoon, violin, viola, and harmonium melodies are quite unique, and way ahead of its time...”

If you’ve never taken the dark journey into the world of *Univers Zero*, start here and work your way up. ...you’ll be glad you took that first step. [4.5 stars out of 5]”

– Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, www.seaoftranquility.org, July 21st, 2008

“Despite occasional stylistic links, *Univers Zero* always spoke (and continues to speak) with its own voice. This welcome reissue confirms, once again, that in 1977 a nearly unheard-of group was creating a new kind of chamber music that, in its inclusion of rock instrumentation and the occasional rock stance, would be a blueprint for classical music of the 21st century.”

– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*

“... 1313’s strength lies in the variety of emotional scenes portrayed... and in the ability of the compositions to transcend the repetition of melodic themes... This is... music, or...art in general...at its absolute best. It transports you to another place. ...

... one of my favorite UZ songs ever is the track “Docteur Petiot.” ... If one song ever truly embodied classical and rock ideals simultaneously, it would be this one. ...

...I should be judging it on a completely different scale than virtually anything else on this site. ...while it is undoubtedly complex, pushes on the outer boundaries of musical genre, and dares to moods far darker than teenage Goths even know exist, this music is good because it allows my inner critic to fall away. It creates scenes into which I am immersed, my imagination alive and absorbed.

Among the best of the best. 5/5 [stars]”

– Negoba, *Prog Archives*, www.progarchives.com

“...”UZ” is...a hallmark creation which set a whole new direction in contemporary music.

... One of the biggest as well as rarest diamonds in the crown of our beloved genre, one of the very first prog rock embodiments of magical realism, this dark, yet so beautiful and attractive fairy-tale was, is and will forever remain a classic...”

– Vitaly Menshikov, *Uzbekistan Progressive Rock Pages, Progressor*, February 9, 2009

“...It’s a classic, it’s ironic, it’s dark and spooky, the roots of a whole new genre of music. ...” – Alan Freeman, *Audion*, Issue #55

“... Sometimes compared to the...enormously influential King Crimson, *Univers Zero* was actually much more extreme. ...the earliest versions of *Univers Zero* were not only more purely classical in their instrumentation...but much more contemporary in their musical appropriation of the dissonant, jagged 20th century classical styles of Stravinsky, Bartók, Ligeti, and Penderecki... *Univers Zero*’s music... [is] never pretentious...and as for the gloom, there’s actually a kind of jaunty gallows humor in many of the pieces on this debut — particularly in the two by guitarist Roger Trigaux, which feature march rhythms somewhat suggestive of Shostakovich or Prokofiev. ...a challenging and highly distinctive listening

experience. [4 stars]”

– Bill Tilland, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

UNIVERS ZERO

LIVE

CUNEIFORM

2006

This album features: **Daniel Denis** [drums, percussion], **Michel Berckmans** [oboe, English horn, bassoon, melodica], **Kurt Budé** [clarinet, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone], **Martin Lauwers** [violin], **Eric Plantain** [electric bass], and **Peter Van Den Bergh** [keyboards].

“... this new live disc is simply the most revitalizing rejuvenating UZ experience I’ve had in years.

...I had certainly never associated raw unadulterated improv with the fastidious compositions for which UZ is deservedly respected... The live disc, recorded in June of last year, captures a band whose ability to stretch out meshes perfectly with astonishing precision. ...

Apart from monster playing and arrangements, the recorded sound could not be better. It’s immediate and lush, detailed and unified, giving free reign to timbre without sacrificing the clarity of any formal or structural concerns. Cuneiform deserves thanks and congratulations, both for this document and for its long championing of a band that I was afraid had lost its relevance.”

– Marc Medwin, *Dusted*, February 13, 2006

“This is arguably the most high-octane release ever for Univers Zero, a band that now has ten CDs to its credit and a history stretching back to the mid-’70s. ... *Live* is an indispensable release for anyone who believes that “Bartók” and “rock” can fit comfortably in the same sentence. [Rating: 4 & ½ out of 5 stars!]”
 – Dave Lynch, *All Music Guide*

“... This is as good as it gets folks, a live album from six superb musicians, playing music that is so far removed from mainstream culture, yet so accessible and enjoyable to anyone willing to give their complex yet rich style a chance. Highly, highly recommended! ... [5 stars]”
 – Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, February 17th 2006

“... At the time punk rock conquered the world, a bunch of Belgian musicians invented their very own musical universe that after all those years still is far from outdated... Univers Zero speaks first of all with a very original voice... for those who cannot visit their concerts let this new CD be a proof that Univers Zero still is a very hot band.”
 – Dolf Mulder, *Vital Weekly*, No. 518, Week 12

“... Univers Zero’s importance in the history of modern chamber music is once again confirmed by this, one of their overall best albums...”
 – Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, April 2006

“It is amazing to be able to hear a band like this in our times... Absolutely recommendable for fans of instrumental progressive, avant garde and experimental rock and fusion.”
 – Koldo Barroso, *Intuitive Music*, March 1st, 2006

“Belgian Rock-In-Opposition acolytes Univers Zero... encapsulate its sound and climactically centered tactics on this wondrously recorded live set. ... Spanning three decades, the sextet’s horns-strings-keys-rhythms makeup is largely about melodic overtones coupled with driving pulses and complex time signatures. The sextet blends a radical approach to familiar progressive-rock musings with horns and strings that occasionally drive the rhythmic pulses with booming unison lines. There are gentle moments... delicate chamber passages with ethereal treatments. No doubt, this newly issued disc will stand as one of the ensemble’s finest recorded documents to date.”
 – Glenn Astarita, “March 2006,” *All About Jazz*

UNIVERS ZERO IMPLOSION CUNEIFORM 2004
This album features: Michael Berckmans [oboe, english horn, bassoon], Serge Bertocchi [alto, soprano, sopranissimo saxes, tubax], Ariane De Bievre [flute, piccolo], Aurelia Boven [cello], Daniel Denis [drums, percussion, all keyboards, samplers], Dirk Descheemaeker [clarinet, bass clarinet], Bart Maris [trumpet, flugelhorn], Eric Platain [bass], Christophe Pons [acoustic guitar], Bart Quartier [marimba, glockenspiel], and Igor Semenoff [violin]

“... *Implosion* is a highly enjoyable and mature work from these master musicians, and a true progression of sorts for the band. ... Highly recommended! Score: 4/1/2 stars”
 – Pete Pardo, *Sea Of Tranquility*, June 21st 2004

“... Univers Zero returns almost entirely to their acoustic roots ... with a refined and tempered equivalent of the relentless, prolonged gloom of early releases such as *1313* and *Heresie*. ... Univers Zero's excellence lies in its continuing ability to synthesize medieval forms, instrumental prog rock and modern classical dissonance with a splash of jazz and a taste for the suggestively macabre. The group continues to produce creative, highly inventive music, and plays it with precision and panache. Highly recommended for the adventurous listener. [Rating: 4/5 stars]”
 – Bill Tilland, *All Music Guide*

“... It’s easily one of the top ten recordings and performances for this year.” – Jeff Melton, Roundtable Review, *Exposé*, #30, September 2004

“This CD... features 49 minutes of dark-side electrified chamber music. ... Univers Zero exists as a celebration of all that’s unsettling and unnerving... a reaffirmation that everything is just an inch away from collapse (or implosion). ... Belgian band Univers Zero has been producing dark-side chamber music for thirty years, and “*Implosion*” shows that they’ve not lost their focus or fire.”
 – Matt Howarth, *Sonic Curiosity*

“Lots of new directions here: Univers Zero have opened the doors to a more linear, almost elegiac juxtapositions of influences, yet they still hold on to their basic personality. “*Implosion*” optimizes the cohesion of the scores into an utmost gratification for the hearing... theirs is a path no other group will be able to walk on with the same intensity.”
 – Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, Aug. 8, 2004

“The band... more and more... have been ditching the creepy horror-movie atmospheres in favor of more dynamic electrified chamber music sound. The evolution is most clearly evident in *Implosion*... easily my favorite of 21st-century Univers Zero. Compared to previous efforts, it’s practically cheerful’ while some of the interludes are ominous noise experiments... the compositions proper are surprisingly – and addictively – melodic. ... Denis’ compositions have never been tighter... this is the most accessible UZ yet, and not at the expense of depth. ... Univers Zero is still a juggernaut of a band. *Implosion* is their best effort since those good old days.”
 – Brandon Wu, *Ground and Sky*

UNIVERS ZERO CRAWLING WIND 1983 BY EASTERN WORKS/RER, REISSUED 2001 BY CUNEIFORM
This album features: Daniel Denis [drums, percussion, voice, harmonium, violin, piano], Michel Berckmans [oboe, bassoon], Dirk Descheemaeker [clarinet, bass clarinet, casio], Andy Kirk [harmonium, organ, voice, piano, synth, viola, music box, percussion, radio], Guy Segers [bass, voice, violin, insible talk, flies talk], Alan Ward [violin], Christian Genet [bass], Patrick Hanappier [viola], André Mergenthaler [cello], Jean-Luc Plouvier [keyboards], Guy Segers [percussion], Roger Trigaux [guitar]

“... Univers Zero are beside Magma and Faust [as] one of the most influential European continental groups of so called intellectual rock. Their influence can be heard from the numbers of newer European groups like Maximalist, Pako Alto and Cro Magnon to American Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic and Miriodor.”
 – Stanislav Kovac, *Muska Magazine*, #5, Nov. 2001

“... Cerebral, complex and rewarding, this is a welcome reminder of the no-boundaries approach that informed the very best of the genuinely experimental bands that sprang up under the early-’70s progressive rock banner.”
 – John Sturdy, *Record Collector*, #269, January 2002

“The path of innovation and brilliance. It is a treacherous trail upon which precious few dare to tread... *Crawling Wind* is testimony to the courage of this Belgian unit, and to the many reasons why its music is one of the most important luminaries of sheer artistic creativity in modern times.”
 – Marcelo Silveyra, *ProgFreaks*