



CUL DE SAC

Strangler's Wife CD – Strange Attractors
It's surprising Cul de Sac haven't composed for cinema until now. When the band first began performing, short films were included as part of Cul de Sac's stage show. And Cul de Sac's instrumental material, a combination of Krautrock, Middle Eastern tones and drifting soundscapes, certainly seems appropriate to comment or accentuate film scenes. Soundtracks are generally meant as background music, so this album cannot hope to match previous Cul de Sac studio outings. However, *Strangler's Wife* is not a throwaway release. Taking their cue from *Death of the Sun*, Cul de Sac again mixes electronics with organic elements, while also exploring a lot of interesting auditory territory. The violent, noisome "First Victim (Apple)/Main Titles" sets the mood, and is balanced admirably against calmer, fluid titles such as "Mirror II (Mae and Elena)" and disquieting, cybernetic tracks like "Second Victim (Shower)" and "Fifth Victim (Aerobics)." Cul de Sac get kudos for finding an intelligent way to introduce their personality into another context (motion pictures) while avoiding the usual pitfalls of low-budget soundtracks, namely robotic electronics or pseudo-orchestral trappings. (Doug Simpson) www.culdesac.org

HARRIS NEWMAN

Non-Sequiturs CD – Strange Attractors
Few artists have created a new paradigm, shifting a musical genre to a different pattern or model for others to follow. Instrumental acoustic guitarist John Fahey was one such individual. But not many have had the intelligence or focus to implement Fahey's ideas while maintaining a personal perspective or inclination. Canadian guitarist Harris Newman is part of a rare fellowship of likeminded guitarists (Robbie Basho, Leo Kottke, et al) who have, at one time or another, become

immersed in Fahey's compositional matrix. Each found unique ways to work within or subvert Fahey's groundbreaking methodology. Newman has returned to Fahey's slightly psychedelic era, augmenting stark, introspective steel string finger picking against expansive, dancing passages. Opener "Around About Thirty-Six" could have dropped off an early Fahey or Kottke album. Newman's fingers flash sprightly across the fret board, splashing the melody like liquid metal. That sunny mood is juxtaposed against bleaker titles such as "The Bullheaded Stranger," one of several duets with percussionist Bruce Cawdron (Godspeed You Black Emperor!) that evokes Sandy Bull's quasi-jazz explorations, or aptly named "Feral Blues," a dark-hued, angry respite. Newman's debut is out of step and out of place with current instrumental releases. But that's its charm. *Non-Sequiturs* is an atypical collection rich in coloring, texture and acoustics that arrives from an unexpected direction. (Doug Simpson) www.harrisnewman.com