

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

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 Semenov [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*

“The ongoing musical adventures of Daniel Denis continue forward into new territory with *Implosion*... 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 is...known for their monolithic, extraordinarily dark and moody brand of instrumental rock; but more and more they 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...and the expanded instrumental palette already evident in *Rhythmix* is used to even better effect here. ... 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*

“...Today three decades later Denis continues to push the boundaries of music, crafting challenging and yet ultimately satisfying musical compositions. ...*Implosion*...in many respects continues their relentless quest in creating dark and moody atmospheric pieces that on one hand summon images of gothic horror...and on the other play off spacious, almost funky rhythm... Univers Zero never cease to challenge the listener one moment, startle the next and still exude a satisfying smile at the musicianship. ...They're magicians at utilizing musical space Listening to *The Hard Quest* and the new *Implosion* have broadened my musical appreciation skills in ways I could never have imagined.”
– Jerry Lucky, *Ghostland.com*, Oct. 12, 2004

UNIVERS ZERO RHYTHMIX CUNEIFORM 2002

This album features: Michael Berckmans [oboe, english horn, basson, voice, glass, gong, belltree], Aurelia Boven [cello], Ariane De Bievre [flute and piccolo], Daniel Denis [drums, percussion, keyboards and harmonium], Dirk Descheemaeker [bass clarinet], Bart Maris [trumpet], Eric Platain [bass], Christophe Pons [acoustic guitar], Bart Quartier [marimba, glockenspiel], and Louison Renault [accordion]

“Univers Zero may be the best band you have never heard... 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 rhythms, drumming, use of electric guitars and short pieces are definitely rock oriented, but they add in instruments characteristic of classical music which are rarely if ever used in rock: woodwinds, harpsichords, cello, marimba, glockenspiel...Their musical vision is unremittingly ironic, full of deliberately sour passages, black humor, industrial evocations, and surrealistic fantasies...listening to Univers Zero is a glimpse of something very special, out beyond our familiar shores.”
– Hannah M.G. Shapiro, *Eclectic Earwig Reviews*

“This sublime CD's one of the primest exemplars of the fact that... progressive music's long held hidden some of the finest neoclassical works available... With this work, UZ indisputable pushes effortlessly into the front ranks.Denis was superb before, he's unbelievable now. One of the decade's masterworks, in any genre.”
– Marc Tucker, *Exposé*, #25, August 2002

“Earlier this year I wrote about ‘Crawling Wind’ ..their latest release...[is] in the same unique dark style and with the same imaginative mix of instruments. ...The album begins with a bright, loud, rock-type number called *Terres Noires* with Celtic and French influences. ...A timpani solo with percussive effects turns into a troubadour number – a track that could almost be early music, and this is followed by *The Invisible Light*... with a beautiful oboe solo from Michel Berckmans ... The CD... finishes with a tiny repeat of *Reve Cyclique*, fading back in for just a few seconds, and then out again – presumably to send us away with the sound of that cyclic dream, tumbling on through the cosmos...”
– Keith Bramich, *Music & Vision: The world's first daily classical music magazine*

“...daring, contemporary, strangely melodious and attractive. To be explored, undoubtedly, by all who fear not the challenges of the art.”
– Luis Loureiro, *Progressive Rock Portugal*

“...the feel of a conceptual opus is achieved. ...The results are...an excellent rewarding album, full of variety and invention, in fact a veritable feast for the “twist and turn” fanatic, and one that is both familiar and fresh. There are old themes, and also unheard diversions, sounding like classic *Between* at one point, almost *Henry Cow* at another. It's not so dark as some, yet I'd almost guarantee that fans of this Zeuhl/RIO hybrid form should not be disappointed.”
– Alan Freeman, *Audion*, #46, Summer 2002

“...Denis surges onward with an extended ensemble. ...the chamber and goth feel presides but the added instrumentation offers a polytonal outlook, comprised of a multi-layered slant. They pursue darkly hued textures amid weaving chamber-like passages and melodically-tinged themes. ...There’s a whole lot of goodness going on... The musicians instill a sense of urgency and motion throughout, whereas the album title effectively suggests a rhythmic matrix! Either way, this recording marks a significant milestone for this time-honored aggregation! (Zealously recommended.)”

– Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, Aug 2002

“To get a picture of UZ’s sound, imagine if in the middle of their Red or Starless and Bible Black phase, King Crimson was transported back to medieval times and had to play their music with period instruments. ... The music is so complex, so tightly played, that it is obvious each note from the ensemble was meticulously crafted and placed by Denis, yet it rounds a compositional turn, paradoxically carrying the feel of avant-garde freeform improvisation. With this musical strategy, Univers Zero offers a continuous stream of delightful listening surprises from each of the CD’s 13 compositions through many, many plays.”

– Michael Hopkins, *The Scene Online*

UNIVERS ZERO THE HARD QUEST CUNEIFORM 1999

This album features: **Michel Berckmans** [bassoon, oboe, english horn, melodica, piano], **Daniel Denis** [drums, keyboards, percussion, melodica, voice], **Igor Semenoff** [violin], **Dirk Descheemaeker** [clarinet, bass clarinet], and **Reginald Trigaux** [electric bass, voice and acoustic guitar]

“The Hard Quest...is an important event... Those stumbling into their gothiky universe for the first time may find their compositions... involve a studious unraveling of classical rock themes, where not a chink of improvised light is allowed into the group’s creative chamber. Once your ears become accustomed to the gloom, though, Univers Zero’s music can be blindingly illuminating.”

– Edwin Pouncey, *The Wire*, #190-91, Jan. 2000

“The fall of Rome? The parting of the Red Sea? What else can compare with the monumental occurrence (after 12 years!) of a new slab of Univers Zero?... The Hard Quest is a masterwork!...this CD will take top position on my Best-of-'99 list at year’s end.”

– Mike Ezzo (roundtable review), *Exposé*, Nov. 1999

“Dark, complex, and full of compositional fury, the latest release from the legendary “chamber rock” band will surely be remembered as one of the best albums this year...are filled with all the dark splendor and rich arrangements that this venerable outfit is known for. If Stravinsky were alive today, he’d be in a band like this one.”

– James Bickers, *Leo Magazine*, v.9, #45, Oct. 13, 1999

“Brilliant comeback album by an important avant garde band.” – Louis Behiels, *Crohinga Well*, Oct. 2000

“‘The Hard Quest’ is as much classical music as rock... The overall sound is quite dark and ominous, the imagery gothic. Always atmospheric, the feeling is of a relaxed Enid meeting American minimalist John Adams... In the broad spectrum of what progressive music should be, this is cutting edge... Excellent.”

– Bernard Law, *Wondrous Stories*, #94, Nov. 1999

“...my admiration for Univers Zero was total because they seemed to be able to conjure that awful sense of existential dread we enjoyed from King Crimson...but...did not require electric instruments and Marshall speaker cabinets to do it. ...The secret was musical architecture and selection of weapons...After 5 records that never let a fan down...here’s a new CD, once again a solid, brilliantly ugly addition to the band’s C.V. ...turn it up! ... the Univers Zero franchise is alive and well in Denis’ capable hands...Welcome back, messieurs, we did miss you.”

– Frank Wertheim, *Tone Clusters*, #74, 12/1999

“With vice-grip concentration and unnerving audacity, this Belgian quintet offers the forbidden fruit of classical music by performing diabolic dervishes, sabre dances, and tantalizing tangos... And while ensembles like the Kronos and Brodsky quartets have filtered into the rock world by way of guest appearances or loosely adapting rock music, Univers Zero have been single-handedly bridging the two disparate worlds by integrating a frontline rhythm section into their dark scores. And what a powerhouse pulse machine it is... The theme music for horror films from the likes of Dario Argento may be the closest links, yet Univers Zero are wise to the ways and minimalist means of Reich, Riley and Glass (and most the of the 20th century’s finest composers.) ...their music has a mystery and a power that’s yet to be discovered by the outer stretches of goth and gloom lovers. Daring and delightful.”

– Virginia Reed, *Focus*, Oct 14-27

UNIVERS ZERO HEATWAVE CUNEIFORM 1987

This album features: **Daniel Denis** [drums, percussion, voice], **Michel Delory** [guitar], **Dirk Descheemaeker** [clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano sax], **Christian Genet** [bass, nailsake], **Patrick Hanappier** [violin, viola], **Andy Kirk** [piano, synthesizer, voice], **Jean-Luc Plouvier** [piano, synthesizer, voice]

“Heatwave ... is an intricate and monumental piece of work...Univers Zero play the most complex, rehearsal-intensive music since the heyday of progressive rock...The band remains as morbid as ever... Univers Zero, without any overt politics, stick to an extreme program: mulling over the choice between survival (for whatever it’s worth) or destruction (that’s all, folks) as close as music can capture it.” – Michael Bloom, *Boston Phoenix*, 8/21/87

“...the band sounds much like a mating of Stravinsky, Bartok, the Art Bears, mid-period King Crimson, and Anthony Davis’ Episteme. Throughout their existence, Zero has played this highly uplifting material with an ear for stunning orchestration.”

– Russ Summers, *Option*, Nov/Dec 1987

“I’ve been salivating over the very thought of this record ever since I received word of its imminent release. When it arrived, it proved to be every bit as good and then some...For fans, Heatwave is a must; for the uninitiated, it is a superb introduction to the music of Univers Zero.”

– Dean Suzuki, *Ear Magazine*, 2/88

“Univers Zero take the rock/chamber music foundation laid by Henry Cow in the early ‘70s and build upon it...the instrumentalists’ adherence to classical technique composition precludes categorization as fusion....Challenging, but never difficult, aggressive, but never abrasive, Heatwave is a complex, densely textured, and electrifying work of art.”

– Michael Draine, *Sound Choice*, #10

“Hard to say exactly what tradition the extraordinary LP arises out of. Some of the odd-meter riffs on electric guitar and trap set are reminiscent of mid-’70s British progressive work by Gentle Giant and others, but the kaleidoscopic development of the phrases through meticulous orchestration is almost Stravinskian, the willingness to repeat simple material is a tip of the hat to minimalism, and some of the sounds throughout might have been borrowed from the Residents. The mood is dark and intense throughout...a tightly controlled developmental logic is always at work... A must for lovers of adventurous music.”
– J.A., *Keyboard Magazine*, Oct. 1987

UNIVERS ZERO UZED CUNEIFORM CRYONIC 1984; REISSUED 1989 BY CUNEIFORM

This album features: Daniel Denis [drums, percussion, synthesizer], Dirck Descheemaeker [soprano sax, clarinet, bass clarinet], Christian Genet [bass, balafon, bowed Guitar, tapes, whistle], André Mergen [cello, alto sax, voice], Jean-Luc Plouvier [electric and acoustic pianos, synthesizer, piano strings, percussion], Michel Delory [guitar] and Marc Verbist [violin] on "Célesta"

“...one of the most important groups of the 1980s ...dense, desperate and dark; nevertheless, the music of UZ is above all beautiful and dramatic, strongly marked by the cultural traditions of Europe...UZED is a rare, intense, and magnanimous piece of work, and it is absolutely compulsory for everyone who’s had enough of the monotony of Laibach, who’s played their Magma records to shreds, and/or who would have wanted there to be a bit more electric bass and drums on Bartok’s string quartets.”
– Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Puls* (Norway), Feb 1989

“Univers Zero is a showcase for the compositions of percussionist Daniel Denis. ...One thing that separates these artists’ work from the work of more conventional composers is the absence of filler...we’re not sure where Cuneiform Records is finding this stuff, but we hope they reach some sort of audience with it.”
– J.A., *Keyboard*, May 1989

“This is not polite chamber music... but an intense, often violent sound that writhes with a sinister energy...The opening “Presage” may remind listeners of King Crimson’s “Larks’ Tongues in Aspic” series, but...Univers Zero’s musical vision is truly dark, lacking the romanticism that hides withing Robert Fripp’s compositions...Not music for the faint of heart, which is probably as a good a definition of rock ‘n’ roll as any.”
– Michael Dawson, *Goldmine*, 1/13/89

“an inventive quintet who never fail to impress with their jagged time lapsed piano, dramatic time signatures, bass, reeds, deep cello and busy drums. The music drives along moonless avenues, soundtracks to a world beyond tomorrow.”
– *Outlet* (UK), #36

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], Dirck 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*

UNIVERS ZERO CEUX DU DEHORS RECOMMENDED/RER 1981, CUNEIFORM REISSUE 1992

This album features: Jean Luc Aime [viola, violin], Michel Berckmans [bassoon, oboe, english horn], Daniel Denis [drums, percussion, voice, harmonium], Patrick Hanappier [viola, violin], Andy Kirk [harmonium, organ, voice, piano, Yamaha CP70], Guy Segers [bass, clarinet, voice], and Guests: Jean Debefve [hurdy-gurdy], Ilona Chale [voice], Thierry Zaboitzeff [cello]

“If Stravinsky had a rock band, it would sound like this. Blazing, white hot, medieval.” – C.W. Vrtacek, *Advocate Newspapers*, 1/28/93

“...a dark record, utilizing the triple-fusion approach of the Rock-in-Opposition sound (jazz, rock and classical avant-garde), with the classical influence being the most dominant. The tense and brooding influence of the baroque school is felt on every track...The erratic rhythms created by the bass and percussion, as well as the complex arrangement provided by the exceptional composition, give this otherwise medieval sound its twentieth century flavor.”
– Michael C. Mahan, *Alternative Press*, #54, Dec. 1992

“...this is probably their most comprehensive catalog of horrors, from the ominous minimalist pedal points in “Combat” to the ghostly improvised droning of “La Musique d’Erich Zann”...to the grotesque bassoon/viola tradeoffs in “Bonjour Chez Vous.”
– Michael Bloom, *Boston Rock*, #133, July/Aug. 1993

UNIVERS ZERO HERESIE ATEM 1979, CUNEIFORM REISSUE 1991

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