

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT THINKING PLAGUE:

EARLY PLAGUE YEARS

CUNEIFORM

RUNE 121

2000

A Thinking Plague lineup: Sharon Bradford (vocals), Bob Drake (bass guitar, drums, etc), Harry Fleishman (keyboards), Mark Fuller (drums), Mike Johnson (guitar).
Guests: Mark Bradford (vocals, misc sounds)

Moonsongs lineup: Suzanne Lewis (vocals), Bob Drake (bass guitar, drums), Mark Fuller (drums), Erik Moon (keyboards), Mike Johnson (guitar), Mark McCain (drums). Guests: Fred Hess (alto sax), Glenn Nita (soprano sax)

"It's nice to get the early original Thinking Plague on CD after all this time. ...Cuneiform to the rescue, with both crammed onto 1 CD. ...their 1984 debut album A THINKING PLAGUE in which... the roots of their influences are obvious, copious amounts of Henry Cow and Art Bears fuse with abstract but powerful King Crimson-like rock fragmentation. ...Innovation was the key to Thinking Plague not being purely copyist... I find *How to Clean a Squid* a bit punky and grating, but it's still radical. ... *The Taste That Lingers On*, which seems to be a parody of radio advert music... After this, the rest of the album gets dark and explorative again, venturing from powerful offbeat rock to pure bric-a-brac avant garde..."

With MOONSONGS they had a more defined sound, largely due to Susanne Lewis joining as lead singer. ...she refocused their style, defining a new American genre of RIO... Notable here is the presence of an extra drummer, enabling the band to achieve some phenomenal multi-percussion work-outs, and extraordinary complex inventions. A great value disc, wisely including the original *Moonsongs*, completing the historical documentation of this important band."
- Alan Freeman, *Audion*, #43, Autumn 2000

"The recent resurgence of Thinking Plague has finally yielded the reissue of their (rare) first two albums (both included on this one CD in their entirety), showcasing the beginnings of one of the more adventurous bands of our era. ...*A Thinking Plague* and *Moonsongs* show that Plague's creative energies and talents were already highly developed, even at this early stage... the remastering that went into this issue gave added great depth and dynamics to the sound... a great bargain as a twofer, and well worth the attention of those interested in more plague."

- Steve Robey, *Exposé*, #21, March 2001

"The disc kicks off with one of my favorite Plague songs, "Warheads"... a real rocker. ...track two, "Etude for Combo"... this particular song sounds like an 80s King Crimson song played backwards. Great stuff. ...this track was recorded "live in the studio", and the production makes it sound like you're right there with them. ...Overall, the *Early Plague Years* disc is a must-have for fans of avant-prog and music that is "progressive" in the dictionary sense rather than the genre-name sense."

- Bob, *roundtable reviews, Ground and Sky*

"The album opens with the rocking "Warheads", which at times is relatively straightforward: loud, consistent bass playing, precise picking from Mike Johnson, and everything else a fan of hard-rock prog would want... King Crimson vibes, a bit more skewed, obviously, but a similar feel. ...*Moonsongs* is by far the Thinking Plague album that grabbed me the quickest and the hardest, and it still hasn't let go. I'd recommend it to pretty much anyone with adventurous tastes."

- Brandon, *roundtable reviews, Ground and Sky*

"Truly defining the word "eclectic, Thinking Plague touches on progressive, folk, punk, world music and jazz. This music is often labeled as Rock in Opposition - a movement started in the 1960s by Henry Cow. It is the avant-garde/free jazz of the rock and roll world. Just as Albert Ayler and Art Ensemble of Chicago abandoned traditional jazz characteristics, Thinking Plague has abandoned stereotypical rock and roll characteristics such as chorus, break beat and overall structure. The one characteristic that is retained is the breakdown..."

...Bob Drake explained...the band's moniker: "...Thinking Plague means the disease of thinking in a society where too much thinking is considered...out of touch with the "real" world. The disease of the dreamer be she/he a scientist or a poet."

The album *Early Plague Years* is a collection of the band's first two albums *Moonsongs* (1986) and ...*A Thinking Plague* (1984). Bob Drake re-mastered and repackaged the two original LPs into one fine CD package. ... The album ranges from the hard rocking, sonically pungent, politically motivated "Warheads" and then moves into the ethereal, percussive, chant laden tracks...

This album is for those who are looking for a fresh look at what can be created within...rock and roll. ... " - Brian L. Knight, *The Vermont Review*

"... Thinking Plague had...lanky melodies right down to the saccharine-saturated Ultravox drum machines. However, their major flaw stemmed from the fact that their influences were one too many...mix of Frank Zappa, Lydia Lunch, early Sonic Youth and ritual music for esoteric new age religions."

- Roman Sokal, *Exclaim!*, December 2000/January 2001

"Thinking Plague is one of the most progressive bands...always balancing on the edge between extremely technical musicianship and total madness, blending Art Rock, Avant Garde, Jazz, experimental Progressive Rock and RIO. There aren't many bands that can equal them when it comes to originality. Their music is a blend between Suu's, Art Bears, Gentle Giant, Henry Cow, King Crimson, Slapp Happy, U Totem and Frank Zappa. Thinking Plague's first two LPs..."-*A Thinking Plague* (1984) and "*Moonsongs*" (1986) ...finally re-mastered and released on one CD. ... The music is highly recommended if you're into intricate progressive rock.

- Greger Rönnqvist, *prog-reviews/Yahoo! Music, Launch Groups*, May 22, 2001

"... Combining both *Moonsongs* and...*A Thinking Plague* on one CD has given listeners an opportunity to finally hear these long out-of-print gems that introduced the band to the prog world. ... Combining the complexity of Henry Cow with the power of early King Crimson and the overall weirdness of Frank Zappa, Thinking Plague conjure up a musical maelstrom that is easily identifiable yet tough to describe.

Band leader and guitarist Mike Johnson has some serious chops, and his metallic playing is smattered throughout the 12 tracks... On "Etude for Combo" he lays down complex riff after riff...tasty runs that would make Robert Fripp or Gary Green smile. ...

"..."*Moonsongs*" ...is a bizarre piece that is as brutal as it is beautiful. ... Imagine a...nightmare that seemingly never ends ... and yet you don't want to wake up. ...

...tracks from the second album...more bouncy material...more lively and less dark. ...culmination for me is the fantastic "Possessed," a complex piece that features some furious guitar/keyboard exchanges before changing over to a wonderful and haunting vocal piece highlighted by the singing of Sharon Bradford. ...this was how Gentle Giant would have sounded with a female vocalist.

...this is highly recommended for those who want something different, adventurous, and definitely not commercial."

- Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, Issue #6, Fall 2000