

# Chicago Tribune

## Joys of Love, Loss, and Clubs

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Mercurial Visions "**Joie de Vivre**" Wax Trax! 4-song EP *Five Stars*

Releases are rated on a scale of one to five stars

A debut release can be killed by misperceptions, especially when it comes from a label known for its hard-driving industrial bent. If it's Wax Trax! and the band's from Chicago, it's going to be Al Jourgensen, with an assortment of other musicians: Ministry, Revolting Cocks, 1000 Homo DJs, and now this one.

So it will play out like this: In the store, a disc from a band you think you've heard of catches your eye. It looks good in the rack. You think "Why not?" pick it up, flip it over, and see Wax Trax!. Then you either put it back because you hate industrial, or you plunk down your money for something you know you'll like, because you like Al and his projects. Later the CD tray closes and you press the play button, or the stylus lowers, and then ... something you never even imagined flows from the speakers—something you really, really like and never knew you did.

This is what the debut EP "Joie de Vivre" by Chicago's Mercurial Visions sounds like when you first hear it. Each track is utterly danceable—the first and last irresistibly so. More European club music than gritty Chicago industrial, the title track makes you need to dance to this passionate ode to a lover, to the lovers' physical rapture. Jonathan Stark's skills as a wordsmith excel here with lines that jump up and grab you, lines you wish you had thought to say to your ex before she walked away that last time, lines he sings with such emotional intensity you can feel her body next to yours. And there is not a dram of sugar—just beat and energy that will hook even the jaded.

This is no one-hit disc. The next track, "Walk Away," follows up physical embrace with kicking loose from someone you should never have slept with in the first place. It's a good-feeling song about feeling bad. Again the beat sinks into your body and makes it want to move, in anger or relief, for "sometimes it's best when it's over," as Mr. Starks reminds us.

By now you realize this is not Wax Trax! as usual. This band sounds like they left Chicago's industrial streets for a long stay in Belgium, with a stopover in Ibiza. It's Front 242's electronic body music to move to, with a dollop of postpunk attitude, another of industrial might, and ample poetry of the flesh.

The third track, "Amy's Face," reaffirms this is not a rehash of some other band but rather something new, real, and important. If you've gone to a dance club—and if you're reading this, you have—you know the scene: A stranger. Throbbing beats. Sweat. As the evening grows late, a face you've seen a thousand times before looks fresh, as if you're seeing it for the first time, but this time you know how it will end.

It's love in the rhythm zone.

Full of pummeling rhythms, the final cut is "The Ritual," *the* club ode to the potent lust—the desires that make us go out, stay up late, drink too much, and dance where it's safe to live as you want—out loud. It's a world where anything is always possible—a haven where the only rule is rhythm, and dance is the only work.

For those who passed it by, consider this opportunity knocking a second time. Keep your ears open and your body limber for that song from the band from Wax Trax! that doesn't sound like AI.



MERCURIAL VISIONS

Joie de Vivre

A M VI EP

1. JOIE DE VIVRE
2. JUST WALK AWAY
3. AMY'S FACE
4. THE RITUAL



WAX TRAX!  
CHICAGO

A  Release

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