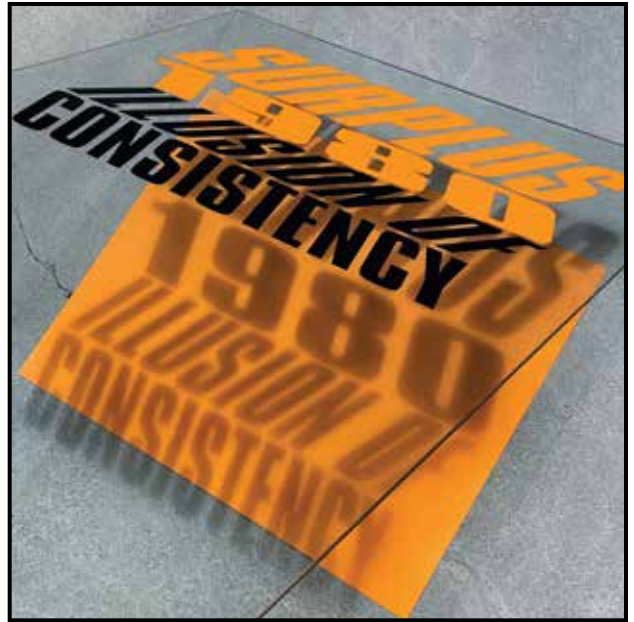


SURPLUS 1980



Illusion of Consistency, Surplus Industries, 2023

Masterminded by Sleepytime Gorilla Museum's former percussionist Moe Staiano, Surplus 1980 is a whip-smart, progressive post-punk art rock band from Oakland, CA. Surplus 1980 takes cues from the angular punk bands of the 1980s, fusing a fierce, muscular attack with experimental out-jazz and elements of progressive rock. A hallmark of Surplus 1980's music is the inclusion of timbres outside of the typical "rock band" realm, including orchestral instruments such as violin and oboe, as well as unusual sounds like glockenspiel or toy piano. These unexpected sounds add a unique texture to the music that sets Surplus 1980 apart. Coupled with Staiano's playful and introspective lyrics, Surplus 1980's music updates the post-punk aesthetic with their own kind of "maximal minimalism."

Surplus 1980 was originally created by Staiano as a studio-only collaboration, which resulted in the full-length record, "Relapse in Response" (2011, Dephine Knormal Musik). Although Staiano played most of the instruments on the album himself, the recording also features contributions from musical collaborators such as Fred Frith; Carla Kihlstedt, Matthias Bossi and Dan Rathbun (Sleepytime Gorilla Museum); Ava Mendoza (Mute Socialite, William Parker); Meredith Yyanos (Faun Fables); Andy Moor (The Ex); and G.W. Sok (The Ex, King Champion Sounds). This collaborative spirit carries through all of Surplus 1980's albums.

At the same time "Relapse in Response" was being recorded in 2010, a live band was assembled, and they began to play shows locally across the San Francisco Bay Area in support of the record.

In 2012, Surplus 1980 went into the studio again and recorded a 7-song 10" EP, "Arterial Ends Here" (2013, Dephine Knormal Musik). This release features six new original songs, including another collaboration with G.W. Sok in which he chronicles the saga of Staiano's missing (and later found) cat, a song about aluminum recycling and a cover of Fred Frith's "Cap the Knife."

2019 was a prolific year for Surplus 1980, with three releases. The first was "International Static Split" (2019, Tractor Notown), a 7" single shared with Dutch band King Champion Sounds. Surplus 1980 contributed the instrumental B-side, "We Don't Understand The Words."

The second was the CD "Forget All This" (2019, Musique à la Coque [Italy]) from Surplus 1980 Collectiv Ensembl with G.W. Sok. This release featured four new compositions by Staiano with lyrics and vocals by G.W. Sok, and played by an expanded large-ensemble version of the group that included all current and legacy Surplus 1980 members. The Collectiv Ensemble was fortunate to have the opportunity to perform this album live both in Oakland (The Uptown) and San Francisco (Bottom of the Hill), as synchronicity had lyricist/vocalist G.W. Sok visiting the United States at just the right time to enable the performance.

The third release, in August, was Surplus 1980's third album, "Pigeon Obstacle Course" (2019, Geomancy Records). This was the first album to be recorded live in the studio (rather than being a studio production). The band set up in the studio and played the songs together, as they would at a show. Then these basic tracks were embellished with other textures, such as marimba, sleigh bells, and the band members stomping on a wooden floor, as well as trumpet and piano added by collaborators. On this album were songs such as "261," a song about Kathryn Switzer, the first woman to run a marathon; a song that features various-sized bundt pans being used as percussion instruments, and a prepared-guitar version of John Cage's "Perilous Night No. 4."

In 2020, just as the band was rehearsing a music-and-dance collaboration slated for San Francisco International Arts Festival, the pandemic struck. The ensuing lockdown scuttled that performance, but didn't keep the band down. Since live performance was off the table, Surplus 1980 called upon their fellow cooped-up musician friends to participate in an adventurous remote recording project.

As the lockdown commenced, Staiano arranged to remotely record a batch of new songs using the "exquisite corpse" method. For this style of collaboration, each player is provided a partially-finished track, with instructions to add their own unique musical vision. Staiano recorded a set of drum tracks, and those tracks were then distributed for collaboration via the internet to Surplus 1980 members, and musician friends across Europe and the United States, including Fred Frith, Ajay Saggat, George Cremaschi, Aaron Novik, and many more. Once the musical foundation was completed, Staiano added lyrics. How each song would sound at completion was a mystery, but that was half the fun!

The new album, "Illusion of Consistency" (2023, Surplus Industries) is the result of those remote recordings. Releasing on December 15, 2023, the nine songs on the album include scathing commentary on current affairs and conspiracy theories, as well as musings on pandemic-induced emotions. As the musicians were free to contribute as desired, the songs include sounds from invented instruments, prepared piano, Moog synthesizer, pitched percussion, double bass, alto clarinet, baritone saxophone and percussion of all sorts—even an office-supply paper ledger.

Surplus 1980 is looking forward to presenting these new songs live in 2024, and will be appearing alongside Sleepytime Gorilla Museum in March, 2024 at three shows in both Colorado and California, and will embark on a tour in support of "Illusion of Consistency" over the Summer.

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