

# SURPLUS 1980

Stereo Embers website, May 2015



## The Fifth NEXT Twenty Post-Punk Bands You Should Know About

Written by: [Dave Cantrell](#)

Oh my, has it really been four months since the last NEXT list? Hard to believe but it's been our experience the calendar doesn't lie. Suppose we should believe it regardless of how it seems, given the virtual deluge of new candidates that have poured in since late January. What's kind of scary and inspiring is how quickly it will become obvious how many bands we missed *this* time and how great they are. But that's what keeps us going around here, the incessant, determined, and interminable march toward relative greatness that so many young bands seem to be intent on, regardless of genre. Thing is, this post-punk/darkwave/etc thing is just going crazy. Nearly all these bands, in fact, were extant when the previous list was published, had produced a full-length (or an album's length worth of EPs) as required for inclusion on these lists, but were either undiscovered by us at the time or fell victim to the 20-count limitation. And, naturally, a similar amount of bands, champing at the bit, await list number six. As always, if there are bands we missed in this or previous lists (all of which can be found here), don't hesitate to let us know. We thrive here at SEM on reader input, especially when it comes to the NEXTs. In the meantime, we give you numbers 81-100, listed in alphabetical order and including place of origin, presented with the usual short, hopefully helpful accompanying write-up providing context. Though we fully realize it goes without saying, we'll say it anyway: Enjoy.

### SURPLUS 1980 (Oakland, California)

Exhibiting (and representing) the more avant side of post-punk – think Akron and Kent around 1980, coincidentally enough – how shocking is it (not at all) that Surplus 1980 is supporting the Nightingales on a soon-to-be West Coast of the USA tour? If you don't mind us saying so, we could use more of this spirit in the scene. As much as we're as seduced by the deep bassline and arched shadows as the next person, having a little experimentation would not go ill-placed. Bring it on, we say, bring it on.

### The Wire, 2013

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#### Surplus 1980

##### *Relapse In Response*

Dephine Knormal Musik CD

The work of percussionist Moe! Staiano, amongst multi-room compositions and siren-wielding orchestras, includes a stint with Oakland outfit Sleepytime Gorilla Museum. The influence of Bay Area underground rock on his group Surplus 1980 is obvious – the group's slanted, hyper-synco-pated style rubs elbows with Beefheart-lapping San Franciscans like Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 and Deerhoof. But *Relapse In Response's* piledriving attack most closely echoes the hardened post-punk of The Ex and Dog-Faced Hermans. Andy Moor and GW Sok from the former group both play roles in this morphing ensemble, but even when they're not involved, Surplus 1980 are closer to the Dutch unit's muscular workouts than Deerhoof's lighter swing.

*Relapse In Response's* coiled power is impressive, but it could do with some lightness. Songs such as the machinic title track or the churning, eight minute "Ed Saad" outlast their initial inspiration. It's as if the

group were assigned mandatory figures and decided to carry them out regardless of the endurance required to listen. Staiano bleaches the mood by adding circus-like elements, particularly Liz Albee's trumpet, but even Surplus 1980's goofiest songs are less like a carnival than an exhausting and nerve-shredding daredevil act.

Administer *Relapse* in small doses and rewards emerge. "The Mechanics Of Mathematical Courtings" sums up Surplus 1980 better than any comparisons might. Here, the grinding drums and dizzying loops teeter on the edge of tedium but never fall in, creating a tension that justifies sticking through all the curves and angles. And for once, the tension actually does resolve, into a pool of static drone. Inside *Relapse's* endless energy, even a drop of calm feels like an oasis.

Marc Masters

East Bay Express, June 11-17, 2015

## PICKS

### Surplus 1980

Moe! Staiano insists on that exclamation point. Drummers are expected to mind the beat and all, but Staiano – a collaboratively promiscuous avant-garde percussionist – took it a bit further and dictated emphasis in his own name as if it were a score in progress. That eccentric and punctilious bent colors his music, whether in improvisatory jazz ensembles, as a member of the mighty Mute Socialite, or as bandleader of Surplus 1980, a post-punk outfit for the music conservatory set. *Arterial Ends Here*, the group's 2013 full-length, sets dissonant melodic phrases to frantic, technical grooves and oblique lyrical sentiments. It's a jarring and disjointed listen, united mostly by its reluctance to respect the usual edicts of rock 'n' roll. In that vein, Surplus 1980 is scheduled to appear not at a rock club per se, but at longstanding Irish pub the Starry Plough (3101 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley). Someone tell Staiano about Celtic accent marks. — *Sam Lefebvre*