

**COMMUNE**  
**Jim Cohn with Dan Groves**  
**MusEx Records, 2013**

A teaching assistant to Allen Ginsberg at Naropa University in 1980, Jim Cohn was inspired by Ginsberg's belief in spontaneous utterance and his sense that to divorce poetry from music was a big mistake. Spontaneous utterance, first observed by the Beats in American Jazz Bebop and later reformulated by Trungpa Rimpoche, Naropa's founder, and oft-mentioned by Ginsberg as the emotional, naked, and truthful poetics practice of "First Thought Best Thought."

Jim began recording in The Abolitionists, a North Bay Area collective that featured his long-time musical collaborator Mark Rennick and guitarist Steve Kimock. Together, they made *The Road* (Rudy's Steakhouse, 1995) at Rennick's Prairie Sun Recording studios in Cotati, California.

Jim's solo recordings followed: *Unspoken Words* (MusEx Records, 1998), *Antenna* (MusEx Records, 1999), *Emergency Juke Joint* (MusEx Records, 2002), *Trashtalking Country* (MusEx Records, 2006), *homage* (MusEx Records, 2007), and *Impermanence* (MusEx Records, 2008), a two CD compilation set.

Cohn returned to the studio in February 2013. *Commune* (MusEx Records), a collaboration with guitarist Dan Groves, was the result.

If the poet is the dirt farmer in the hierarchy of American Art, *Commune* explores equally imperiled and re-emerging lives and the art and danger of living these lives. On this recording, mass reinvention is a form of time traveling. Feedback is wired into *Commune*, but it is the means, not its subject. The subject of *Commune* is the energy of reinvention. The recording features poems with successively anomic emotional ambiguity and space. The poem and the guitar are perfectly conjured, perfectly strange.

The essence of any Music and Poetry that matters is communing. The sacred nature of communing is the cutting through disassociation. *Commune* consists of nine new Cohn poems brought to music by Boulder guitarist and bassist Dan Groves. The record was conceived as an minimalist artifact of the acid rock era.

The 1993 spoken word-electric guitar sound of the minimalistic William S. Burroughs and Kurt Cobain album *The "Priest" They Called Him* was a model. Groves' guitar work conveys an emotional spaciousness appropriate for Jim's unadulterated phrasing-in the way he gets the poem said. Engineered by Joe Turse at San Luis Studios on February 9, 2013, Cohn and Groves cut fifteen tracks in four hours. David Glasser mastered it on March 5.

The nine tracks that came to be called *Commune* are "Jayne Cortez," "Changed Everything," "Dark Horse Cloaking Device," "They Say You Can't Wage Peace,"

“Symbol Of Repeat,” “Every Once In A While,” “My Double,” “One Black Hole, Straight Up,” and “You Of Very Subtle Mind.”

“Jayne Cortez” celebrates the true life of one of America’s greatest civil rights poets, spoken word recording artists performers, and one of Jim’s poetics influences. Her death was the occasion of the poem. “Changed Everything” speaks of “houses with no beams, no walls.” “Dark Horse Cloaking Device” is a meditation on the world besieged. Turn up “They Say You Can’t Wage Peace.” “Symbol Of Repeat” incorporates a reoccurring musical shuffle. “Every Once In A While” has weird juxtaposed images—“...fox / Sits like Buddha / Across the alley / From a meth lab.” “My Double” conveys a memory from a Grateful Dead concert between sets. “One Black Hole, Straight Up” begins with lines of the times—“Maybe they’ve written you off, locked you away, / Locked you out, locked you down, / Given you no opportunity to show you were better, / Taken away any chance to illuminate.” “You Of Very Subtle Mind” could be taken as a legacy poetics.

*All* Jim Cohn’s recordings, with integrated lyrics and audio from his entire catalog, are at [www.poetspath.com/jimcohnhomepage.html](http://www.poetspath.com/jimcohnhomepage.html). Cohn’s recordings and books can be purchased at the MAP store: <https://www.poetspath.com/store/>. Jim Cohn lives in Boulder, CO, with his daughter, and can be contacted at [jameslewiscohn@gmail.com](mailto:jameslewiscohn@gmail.com).