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inately sullied
am skills.

fact an authorised arrangement of a Baby
Dee song, but "Hroan Of The Ceri Forest" is
nonetheless the highlight, matching the likes
of Richard Skelton for string shaded pastoral
pulchritude.
Tristan Bath

Paul Rooney
Futile Exorcise

Owd Scrat CD/DL/LP

A gothic shroud of metallic ambience
envelops Emily Dankworth's tender rendition
of the traditional ballad "Bay Of Biscay".
Her tale of a drowned sailor's ghostly
return is shadowed by the voice of Paul
Rooney, taking on the revenant's role.
Futile Exorcise, the brilliant new album from
Liverpoolian multimedia artist Rooney also
boasts a version of "The Cruel Mother", an
account of two murdered infants uttering
recrimination from beyond the grave, sung
with crystalline purity by the duo Lutine over
a skeletal folk-dub backdrop.

Rooney's contribution to the current folk
revival is part of a larger concern. Voices
bring words to life. Personality finds unique
expression through the generalities of a
shared vocabulary. At the same time, stories
we spin and songs we sing are haunted by a
past that is deeply encrypted in the ghostly
medium of language itself, a medium that
looms out of the past and stretches far
beyond any individual lifespan. On "Sunday
Best" and "Father's Grave" century-old
lyrics from music hall are resurrected in
fractious post-punk settings, refashioned
in the idiom of Rooney's own formative
years. The brazen spirit of The Fall and The
Wedding Present rumbles continuously
beneath the surface of his music, breaking
through notably on "Lost High Street" where
it punctuates the rambling observations of
a wayward soul stranded on an Edinburgh
tour bus.

But Rooney's narratives shape their own
accompaniment. A brash, melodramatic
soundtrack embellishes the lurid tale of a
Satanic poker game delivered in suitably arch
tones by actor Gregory Cox. A melancholy
lament sung by Rooney at the piano trails
in the wake of his young son's whispered
reflections upon a voiceover he provided for a
film made by his father, in the course of which
his pet stoat was unexpectedly savaged by a
neighbour's dog.

The narrator of "Spit Valve" has
undergone transformation into a blob of
condensation and saliva within a trumpet's

tubing. Framed with North Country brass
this Kafkaesque fantasy reverberates with a
distinctly Lancastrian sense of the absurd.
Futile Exorcise confirms that possession may
take many forms. It's a record to return to,
again and again.
Julian Cowley

The tone is sim
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