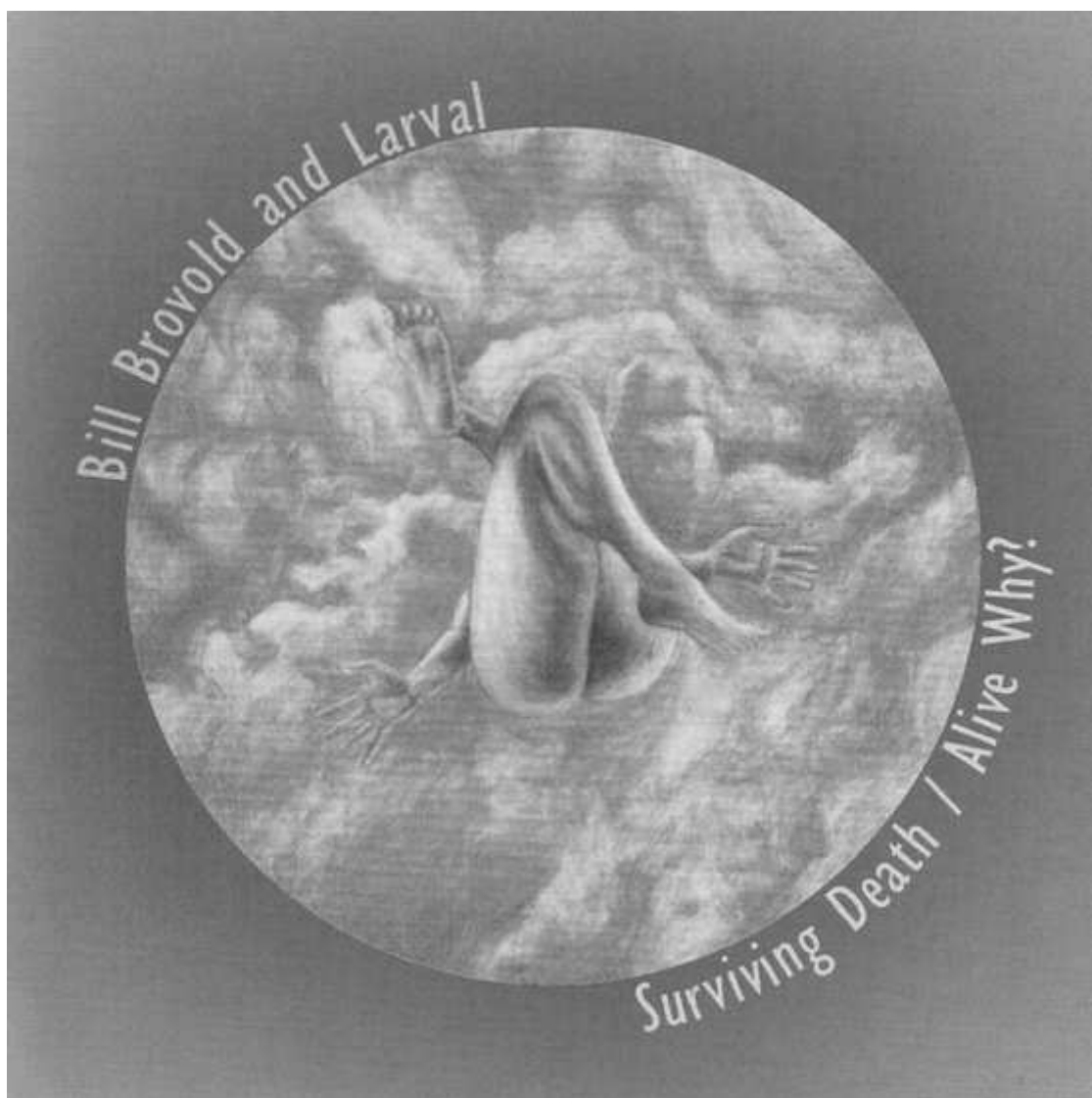


Music

Bill Brovold & Larval

Surviving Death/Alive Why?

by [Cheryl K. Symister-Masterson](#), June 25, 2008



The two-disc album builds industriously on themes, expressions, and impressions.

Could death be more inspiring than life? You'd have to ask guitarist and recent Kingston transplant Bill Brovold, who survived five heart attacks within 18 months back in 2003. He's lived on to produce the suitably titled double CD *Surviving Death/Alive Why?*, his fifth release with his Detroit-born avant/progressive rock ensemble Larval and his second for Cuneiform Records. Comparatively, Larval scrapes up against King Crimson and shards of Captain Beefheart, expressing as much love for

experimentation as for high-decibel output.

Disc one, *Surviving Death*, is a swatch from Larval's 13-year existence and references events surrounding Brovold's heart attacks and recuperation (see the title tune, "The Hospital Visit," and "The 300-Pound Nurse"). "It Was a Puny Plan" is a rocker that intermittently becomes thumpy and texturally thick while "Scottish Blood," with its parlor room-polite piano sound, is quietly rapturous as it simmers and boils continuously upon its theme.



Alive Why? documents concert performances between 1999 and 2006 and features band members past and present; Larval has an "evolving-door" policy with its members. The recorded material is subjectively upstaged by the very loud and dramatic live shows, as exemplified in "Last Ditch," a rampage of fuzzy noise. But, like other prog rock groups that have pushed beyond the hearing loss of their audiences, Larval also shows off its soft side with the lazy-metered "Long Lake."

Repetitiveness may get the best of a few cuts on *Surviving Death/Alive Why?* as Larval builds industriously on themes, expressions, and impressions. But it's heartfelt, for sure. www.cuneiformrecords.com.