

Brainwashed - Abul Mogard, "Above All Dreams"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

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It was quite an unexpected and delightful surprise to get a new Abul Mogard full-length, as the unprolific Serbian composer seems to only record one or two new pieces each year (ones that get released, anyway). Apparently, *Above All Dreams* took three years to make though, so I guess that fits with Mogard's extremely considered approach and rigorous quality control.

Characteristically, *Dreams* is yet another absolutely wonderful release, but it is a bit of a departure from what I expected in some ways and it took me several listens to fully warm to it:

Dreams

feels more like an immersive, slow-burning epic than a batch of instantly gratifying individual highlights. As such, this release is probably not the ideal entry point to Mogard's vision for newcomers, but devotees will find a lot to love about these transcendent reveries, as this album packs a lot of quiet intensity once its depths are fully revealed.

[Ecstatic](#)

It feels weird to bring up hooks when describing Abul Mogard's work, yet I am hard-pressed to think of a better or more inclusive term for the rhythmic, textural, and melodic elements that pervaded his earlier releases. There are not many of those elements to be found on *Above All Dreams*

, which is a crucial point to address in understanding and appreciating how Mogard has evolved since his early days of trying replicate the sounds of a factory (according to lore, anyway). Since those oft-brilliant industrial beginnings, Mogard's vision has slowly blossomed into something almost rapturous and divine, at times more closely resembling a spontaneous natural phenomenon than painstakingly crafted human compositions. In fact, his career can almost be read as an endless march towards self-erasure. The opening "Quiet Dreams" is a particularly fine example of that, as is the following "Where Not Even," though the two take very different forms. On "Quiet Dreams," it feels like a blood red sunrise is slowly burning through a mass of dark and brooding clouds. "Where Not Even," on the other hand, resembles a woozily swooping and distorted deep space transmission that seems to feed back on itself and distort into something quite sinister (and also quite heavy in an understated way). In neither case is there much evidence of Mogard's hand, though "Quiet Dreams" features a few well-placed sliding synth tones. Instead, both pieces feel like strange and vivid dreams that a machine might have (particularly "Where Not Even"). If they feel like compositions at all, they certainly

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do not seem like ones that were created on a human time scale.

It is not until the third piece, "Upon The Smallish Circulation," that Mogard starts to creep into more musical territory (in this case, burbling deep space synth psychedelia a la prime Tangerine Dream). I suppose that makes it the closest thing the album has to a single, as there is structure and melody in its trance-inducing central theme, but it does not otherwise diverge from the album's aesthetic in any kind of significant way: the arpeggio pattern is cool, but it is still just a backdrop for alternately hollow and sizzling rumbles from the cosmic void. While the slow-moving and elegiac "Over My Head" briefly continues that melodic trend, the two lengthy pieces that close the album return to more dreamily languorous drone territory. The title piece captures Mogard at his most elegantly sublime, as his sustained synth tones feel like steadily massing and intertwining tendrils of smoke. Gradually, the piece builds to a somewhat conventional bit of whooshing, spacey ambient-drone, but Mogard displays some truly remarkable lightness of touch and harmonic ingenuity on the way, weaving a gorgeously swaying, fluttering, and oscillating cloud of overtones as the piece slowly coheres into its final shape. Mogard saves his finest moment for last, however. The foundation of "The Roof Falls" is a lazily winding and heavenly organ-like melody that drifts through a haze of drones. As the title suggests, however, that lushly beautiful idyll seems like it is taking place inside a vast building that is slowly collapsing, though the creeping ruin stays just far enough away to remain an omnipresent and threatening undercurrent rather than the focus. Still, some of the textures definitely take on a fried, corroded, and gnarled character as the piece unfolds, which adds some welcome visceral bite.

While no single piece quite recaptures the aching beauty or churning, mechanized heaviness of Mogard's best work, *Above All Dreams* nevertheless feels like a legitimate creative breakthrough of sorts (or at least an inspired lateral move—he certainly is not repeating himself). There has not been a change in quality so much as a change in compositional approach: Mogard's earlier work sought to distill his vision to glittering perfection while this release stretches and slows that vision into infinity (or at least an approximation of it). As a result, I am not floored, but I am entranced. There is a sense of total immersion and steadily building cumulative power here that makes this *Dreams* a unique entry within Mogard's oft-stellar canon: he casts a beguiling spell and sustains that dream state masterfully.

Samples can be found [here](#) .