

Brainwashed - Mark Van Hoen, "Invisible Threads"

Written by Creag Dunton

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Mark Van Hoen's latest album is the result of a series of live performances with other Touch luminaries, such as Simon Scott and Philip Jeck, that he participated in all throughout 2016. This experience manifests itself in a somewhat different than expected way on *Invisible Threads*, because this final result is purely a solo work. However, it was these previous collaborations and performances that lead to Van Hoen approaching the record from different perspectives and with a variety of instrumentation, resulting in a diverse, yet overall uniform sounding album.

[Touch](#)

While he intentionally avoided using one of his staples on *Invisible Threads*, vintage analog synthesizers, Mark did utilize modular synthesis throughout the record. Right from the opening of "Weathered" this can be heard: a rich bed of layered electronics set the stage as he patches in some occasionally shrill tones and a pleasantly dissonant crunch, but with a tasteful level of restraint. For "Opposite Day," he follows a similar pattern, blending mostly elegant ambient electronics with just the right amount of heavy low end vibration.

Even some conventional piano sounds appear on "Aethēr," culminating in a melodic progression that continues and builds throughout the piece. The combination is one that, once a bit of dissonant ambience comes in as a contrast, makes for a rather conventional, song-like sounding piece of music. The shimmering, sustained electronics that are the focus on "Dark Night Sky Paradox" also have a nice pleasantness to them, and fits in with Van Hoen's experience doing sound design for films given the end result's film score mood. Later, a bit of drama comes from the heavy electronics that enshroud "Flight of Fancy" and, with the piece's dense and brittle electronics have a cinematic quality as well.

Like any good album, however, *Invisible Threads* has some more sinister moments to balance out the more pleasant light ones. The varied electronics and processed field recordings on "The Yes/No Game" make for a different sounding piece of music, one punctuated by a sense of bleakness in its light drift. Compared to many of the others here it is a more sparse mix, but

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what is there carries a significant amount of emotional weight. The album closer "Instable" also especially stands out with its ghostly haunting sound. There are some large electronic swells throughout, but Van Hoen blends transient layers throughout like passing spirits, resulting in a spectral, ghostly closing to the album.

There does not seem to be any specific conceptual theme linking the seven pieces of *Invisible Threads*

other than his intentional use of different instrumentation, but Mark Van Hoen's latest work definitely has a cohesive feel to them sonically. As an album, it has a great sense of variation and diversity from song to song, with a strong blend of pleasant, ambient electronics and heavier, darker passages. Consistent from beginning to end,

Invisible Threads

is an excellent record of electronic music.

samples:

- [Weathered](#)
- [Aethēr](#)
- [Instable](#)