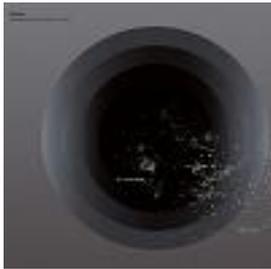


Brainwashed - Ultralyd, "Conditions for a Piece of Music"

Written by John Kealy

Saturday, 11 August 2007 17:00 -



Its dark grey sleeve depicting a black sphere is an aberration in Rune Grammofon's usually bright and cheerful aesthetic and indeed the third album from Ultralyd promises to be a much more intense ride than most of the label's output. The sleeve does not mislead: this is the long night of Norway made music and this is a powerful and brilliant album that is as far cry from the usual merry styles of Ultralyd's label mates.

[Rune Grammofon](#)

From the get go, Ultralyd build up a threatening atmosphere on *Conditions for a Piece of Music* but never give over entirely to creating a mood. The music here never becomes just a soundscape or noodling; they can put out a solid groove when they need to. "Comphonie III" has a fantastic (albeit simplest) saxophone line that captures my attention from the first note blown. It is only later that the textures being played on the guitar and bass underneath the sax become apparent. This is a common motif to the album; a powerful groove handcuffs the listener to a proverbial radiator and from there the rest of the band terrify the listener into submission with squalls of feedback and reverb drenched howls.

There is a dichotomy at the heart of Ultralyd's music. On one hand, they can be very, very funky—the drumming and sax on "Comphonie V" could have been lifted from a classic James Brown track—on the other hand, on pieces like "Musica Imperativa," they explore the outer regions of music where things are darker and very unfunky, creating full pieces of music out of blasts of music that would be the freak out in any other artist's work. The combination of these two different approaches makes for a unique experience. The label makes a big deal over the jazz side of Ultralyd but it is not jazz nor rock by any stretch of the imagination, it is the twisted wreckage of music being bent into new and exciting shapes. Listening to *Conditions for a Piece of Music* makes me think of the phrase used to describe Nurse With Wound: "Think jazz, think punk attitude."

Ultralyd have created a beautiful monster on this album, blowing their previous releases out of

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the water (which is some feat!). *Conditions for a Piece of Music* is by far one of the most unique sounding albums of this year, providing a challenging but utterly satisfying body of music.

samples:

- [Comphonie III](#)
- [Musica Imperativa](#)
- [Pentassonance III](#)