

## Brainwashed - Helena Hauff, "A Tape"

Written by Creag Dunton

Sunday, 22 February 2015 20:17 - Last Updated Tuesday, 03 March 2015 15:47

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A prolific DJ with a number of singles out, the descriptively titled *A Tape* is German artist Helena Hauff's first full length release. A combination of stripped down minimal techno, house beats, and industrial dissonance, it is a gripping tape of heavy percussion, noisy synth, and extremely memorable rhythms.

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The songs I found myself coming back to most are the ones where Hauff turns the volume up and adds in a hint of distortion and noise. A piece like "c45p" is heavily built upon deep stuttering drum machine (from the sound I would guess the house music standby TR-707 is in there somewhere) and deep, sinister analog synth sequences. "ff297-3" sits on the other side of the tape as its more menacing counterpart. She utilizes a similar heavy bassline and drum program, but pushed into the red for a nice overdriven sound. Both pieces have a sort of classic electro vibe to them, but with a more menacing edge.

Not all of the pieces on here are as oppressive, however. "!#+#!" has Hauff using a pulsing synth and 808 cowbell to excellent effect, with the song coming together with a slightly sunnier atmosphere. "hdowed" has the same lighter mood about it, with a more spacy edge that works in heavily flanged beats and an organ synth lead. The organ also features heavily in "split scission," amidst tight synth arpeggios and heavy thumping drum machine.

Both halves of the cassette end with Hauff stepping outside of the intentionally stiff, robotic rhythms and taut sequences and instead showing her adeptness at creating less conventional electronic sounds. "for I am dead" is immediately a more distorted endeavor, with bitcrushed melodies and fuzzy electronics dueling it out before a bit of heavy bass drum appears at the end. "\$§"\$43" is all dark, sweeping synth pads with the occasional blip or pulse. There is a mystery and darkness about it that would work excellently in a film score setting, but stands strongly on its own.

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With a noticeable uptick in the amount of artists in this minimalist techno field, Hauff stands out strongly with her ability to weave together sharp drum programming with memorable synth patterns. Her work retains enough of the static nature of electronic music, but she is also an expert at slowly building and disassembling the music, resulting in an album that is entirely danceable, but is compelling to listen to intently on its own.

samples:

- [c45p](#)
- [for i am dead](#)
- [ff297-3](#)