

Brainwashed - Lycia, "A Line That Connects"

Written by Creag Dunton

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Lycia's reappearance after an eight year hiatus with 2013's *Quiet Moments* was a surprise for me, having heard very little about the legendary Projekt band for quite some time. That album was more than a mere blip, however, as it has been followed up with *A Line That Connects*, and the return of former band member David Galas. The result is a record that has a richer, more fully fleshed out sound than its predecessor.

[Handmade Birds](#)

Quiet Moments featured Lycia as the core duo of Mike VanPortfleet and Tara Vanflower, with the latter only appearing on two of the 11 songs on the album. Because of that I felt the album had a more sparse, almost solo album quality to it, which is one of the ways this one is set apart from that work. A good parallel is how Swans' *My Father* was a great record, but *The Seer* felt like more of a complete, realized work.

The 14 songs of *A Line That Connects* almost seemed to be grouped into three distinct moods or themes that all connect beautifully to one another. The first third are the slower, more pensive and sad pieces. Right from the immediate opening of "The Fall Back" there is a slow, funeral pacing that slowly propels ghostly vocals and beautifully processed guitar and synthesizer melodies. "Monday is Here" has an even more powerful sound with a Peter Hook-esque melodic bassline and Vanflower's vocals taking the focus in the chorus. The intimate mood and pacing work, but thankfully the trio decide to keep things fresh.

The mood shift happens distinctly about two thirds of the way through "An Awakening," from a somber to a heavier one. The first few minutes sounds like a recorded thunderstorm meshed with passages of guitar and synthesizer, eventually accented with drums and female vocals. The final minute, however, is dramatic and near-metal sounding heavy guitar riffs, bringing in a completely unexpected but welcome bit of intensity and force.

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The following segment of the record has a more brisk pace but not necessarily a lighter mood. "The Rain" is a stomping piece of near synth pop, with a fast tempo but dark and dramatic vocals, really emphasizing the gothic elements of the Lycia sound. Big, heavy guitars dominate "Bright Like Stars" and mixed with the brilliant distorted bassline and shifting male/female vocals, it is a memorable and dynamic piece.

The concluding songs of the album return to the dirgy pace of the beginning, but from a more experimental and diverse sound than the melody focused approach that opened the record. On "A Ghost Ascends" the trio lurches with a distinct darkness, using a chugging riff as their propellant, shifting between atmospheric and heavy ambience. Ides of Gemini vocalist Sera Timms makes an appearance on "Hiraeth", a piece that has the same chiming, slow melodic sound of the beginning of the record, but a more atmospheric, spacious sensibility to it.

At 14 songs and nearly 70 minutes, *A Line That Connects* is a heavy record. The shifting dynamics keep the album from getting into any ruts, but the bleakness and overall moody atmosphere at times can be a bit overwhelming. While

Quiet Moments

was a great record, this one has a more complete feel that harkens back to the band's rich heritage, as well as the whole nexus of gothic-inspired subgenres that reigned strongly in the 1990s but too quickly disappeared. It is a distinctly contemporary album, but one that beautifully brings a healthy bit of nostalgia to make a beautiful, haunting record.

samples:

- [The Fall Back](#)
- [Bright Like Stars](#)
- [Hiraeth](#)