

Brainwashed - William Basinski + Richard Chartier, "Divertissement"

Written by Craig Dunton

Sunday, 13 September 2015 15:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 13 September 2015 19:55



Basinski and Chartier have collaborated a number of times in the past, and their disparate, yet complementary approaches to music have always complimented each other perfectly. An uncharacteristic vinyl release for Chartier (a digital loyalist), these two sidelong pieces embrace both loops and melody, coming together beautifully as a sparse, yet forceful piece of music.

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Basinski is fond of using vintage, sometimes obsolete sound sources and a distinctively analog feel to the music he makes. Conversely, Chartier's solo work may sometimes begin with field recordings or organic sources, but is most often subjected to a distinctively modern, digital toolkit to render the natural sound anything but how it began.

The first piece of *Divertissement* clearly carries Basinski's penchant for loops, creating the foundation for a distant rattling noise and simple, yet diverse sound structures that build and dissolve. The duo carefully mix in a fleeting melody that gives a bit of beauty to the otherwise sparse soundscape. The piece may be sparse, but never is it simple or delicate: the understated nature of the piece carries an unexpected force and presence. Big open spaces and deep bass thumps eventually appear, before they end the composition on a spacy note.

While the first side was pretty consistent, the second sees the duo mixing in odd elements that may sound out of place on paper, but manages to work beautifully in their more than capable hands. The piece opens forcefully, with an almost choral tinged expanse of sound that begins powerful, and is then reigned in to a more nuanced, subtle passage. The feel is bleak overall, but Basinski and Chartier introduce shimmering melodies that come and go, sounding as if they come from another world.

The alien melodies remain, weaving in and out of what becomes a wall of squawking, dissonant

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electronics. A recording of what sounds like a helicopter is added, along with what resembles distortion laden radio communications, creating a noisy, and very Earthbound, compliment to the melody. The result is a piece of brilliant depth and diversity, with the conclusion slowly fading away into darkness.

The worlds of analog and digital sound art come together splendidly on *Divertissement*, with neither side becoming too much the focus. Instead it makes for a rich, complex recording that uses both beautiful and ugly elements into a work that expertly showcases both William Basinski and Richard Chartier's proficiency in shaping sounds in consistently new and innovative ways.

samples:

- [Divertissement 1](#)
- [Divertissement 2 \(Excerpt 1\)](#)
- [Divertissement 2 \(Excerpt 2\)](#)