

## Brainwashed - My Cat is an Alien, "The Sky With Broken Arms"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

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This latest opus from the Opalio brothers continues their restlessly experimental hot streak, taking inspiration from a characteristically bizarre event: two years ago, Roberto discovered that a bunch of his records were corroded by an "inexplicable oxidation process." After some time, he decided to listen to one of them anyway and found himself fascinated by the way the listening experience was transformed by the surface noise. Naturally, the instantaneous composition that resulted from that revelation is considerably more bizarre and idiosyncratic than a mere celebration of crackle and hiss, but the added layer of noise beautifully adds an evocative textural layer to *The Sky With Broken Arms'* sublime and eerily otherworldly reverie.

### [Elliptical Noise](#)

Every now and then, I come across an album that has uncannily perfect cover art that not only conveys exactly the tone of the album, but seems to exist as an absolutely crucial part of the whole. *The Sky With Broken Arms* is one such album, as Roberto Opalio's blurred and mysterious photograph of a tree and a streetlight is a window into the similarly blurred and mysterious world that this blarily languorous longform piece inhabits. I should note that "longform" in this case means a mere 36 minutes, so this is actually a comparatively concise and distilled dose of the Opalio's lysergic sorcery, given their recent run of double-, triple-, and sextuple-album epics. Aside from that brevity and the omnipresent crackle and hiss of Roberto's ravaged vinyl, however, this release shares a lot of stylistic common ground with some of the Opalio's more sustained plunges into deep-drone psychedelia. All of the expected elements (the alienronics; the eerily floating, wordless vocals; the surreal loops) are in place as always, yet *The Sky With Broken Arms* has its own very distinct character, as it paints an extremely vivid picture of a very specific scene (for me, at least).

If this album were a movie, it would be a grainy home video of a sleepy rural town at night: the streets are empty, the one stoplight gently sways in the wind, and the church bell in the center of town hollowly resonates, announcing the time. Something is not quite right, however, as the bell continues to calmly ring again and again long after it has passed any possible earthy hour: time seems to have either frozen, slowed, or gotten stuck in an endlessly looping moment.

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Also, the bell is not the only sound, as the very air itself seems to have come alive with a crackle that resembles the sparking of a downed power line. And it sounds like a nearby radio has suddenly come to life as well and is now picking up mysterious, swooping transmissions from unknown sources. In fact, it seems like the entire town has been completely enveloped in some kind of unexplained electromagnetic disturbance and I seem to be the only one awake to witness it. Characteristically, things only get stranger from that point, as *Broken Arms* is essentially just one long, slow descent into escalating weirdness. First, Maurizio's queasily rippling guitars make it feel like reality is dissolving into a dizzying fever dream. Then, Roberto's unnervingly spectral vocals start to creep over the piece like a dense, lysergic fog. Or like a sickly green light emanating from a UFO hovering right above the town. Needless to say, there is nothing else on earth quite like this album (or like *My Cat is an Alien*). Ostensibly, this is music, but that feels like a hopelessly reductive term for the transcendent, reality-disrupting spell that the Opalios cast. This album is roughly as disorienting as unexpectedly waking up in another dimension. Or at the bottom of the sea.

I suppose there are other *My Cat is an Alien* albums that I like more than this one, but that kind of earthbound thinking truly misses the point of the Opalios' artistry. A new MCIAA album is never just a fresh batch of songs—it is both a legitimate event and an invitation to share the Opalios' hermetic, otherworldly headspace for a brief time. Notably, that headspace is never the same twice, as the Opalios' music is an evolving ritual. It is quite remarkable how the brothers are able endlessly combine and rearrange their unconventional and minimal sound palette into new experiences with their own distinct personalities. Some albums are like a deep trance, some are like an extradimensional nightmare, some are like a plunge into the subconscious, and some make me feel like I am losing my goddamn grip on sanity. This one is a bit different, as it feels like living inside an especially haunting and surreal episode of *The Twilight Zone*

. On one level, it is a bit less "alien" than some of the duo's more expansive releases, but the few recognizable touches from our physical world arguably make it one of the Opalios' more unnerving and striking releases to date, as the border separating reality from the Opalios' darkly lysergic vision now feels ominously porous.

Samples:

- [excerpt one](#)
- [excerpt two](#)
- [excerpt three](#)