

Brainwashed - Jemh Circs, "(untitled) Kingdom"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

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I still optimistically cling to the hope that Marc Richter will someday release another masterpiece in the vein 2009's *Alphabet 1968* or 2014's *Black to Comm*, but his Jemh Circs project seems to be sticking around for the long haul and is proving to be quite an intriguing diversion in the meantime. Much like the first Jemh Circs album,

(untitled) Kingdom

is a deranged and fractured rabbit hole of cannibalized and re-purposed YouTube clips, though it feels like Richter has gone a bit deeper down that uniquely post-modern path this time around: this is very much a disorienting and lysergic playground of gleeful experimentation and deconstruction from start to finish. As such, much of

(untitled) Kingdoms'

appeal lies in its sheer otherworldly mindfuckery. However, the album's second half occasionally allows some unexpected vistas of alien beauty to break through Richter's stuttering and kaleidoscopic fever dream.

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If I had to describe the overarching theme that defines *(untitled) Kingdom* and possibly Jemh Circs in general, I would probably choose "obsessiveness," though the project is also a place where Richter allows himself the freedom to let his weirdest impulses go unchecked. That is not to say that *(untitled) Kingdom*

is unfiltered or lazily edited though, as it is definitely neither of those things. However, it would be fair to say that most (if not all) of these 24 pieces are each constructed from just one or two small details unrecognizably excised from Richter's found YouTube footage. Also, the source material has a curiously unpredictable feel, as if Richter deliberately chose clips at random and challenged himself to make something compelling from whatever fell in his lap. Sometimes, those clips inspire something that feels like the warm, woozily dreamlike beginnings of a *Black to Comm* piece ("Lac Dali"), yet Richter's mercurial muse is equally likely to steer him towards something that brain-fryingly resembles a demonic herd of extra-dimensional cows ("20/20"). Both directions have their appeal, obviously. It is the latter that feels more like Jemh Circs's *raison d'etre*, however: this is the place to go if I want to hear Richter contort and recontextualize the mundane into something truly challenging and alien. Another fine example of such a plunge into the unknown is "PG/YY/A," which feels like I have been transported to a

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whimsical cartoon world, but I am damned to experience it from the inside of an active washing machine. Elsewhere, "SFW/ii" feels like a queasily broken hip-hop banger recorded by a bunch of drugged, incoherent elves. "CRISPR/Cas9" is yet another manic mindfrazzler, resembling a mangled VHS copy of an aggressively cheery children's show that only plays at the wrong speed and constantly skips.

While being playfully wrong-footed again and again is certainly a welcome treat for my jaded ears, Richter's psychotropically chopped, stretched, and stuttering fantasia also coheres into some striking passages of otherworldly heaven. My favorite piece, "Milch," takes a page from classic Oval, building a sublime chord progression from obsessively skipping micro-loops, but augments it with a bleary haze of floating harmonies that almost feels like an avant-garde orchestral work. Soon after, Richter makes an especially unexpected detour into weirdly soulful territory with "Doyg," marrying a tender and twinkling piano melody to a decontextualized yet heartfelt "ooh" sample. It is definitely one of Richter's more fascinating feats on the album, as he manages to evoke the essence of a great soul ballad, but turns that experience into something quite disorienting and novel: the piece seems unable to ever move forward, damned to endlessly stumble over the same phrase as hallucinatory snatches of crowd noise gradually bleed into the periphery. On the other end of the spectrum lies "Gn0sis," which sounds like a *P ortrait of Dorian Gray*

-style perversion of the Black to Comm aesthetic, transforming heady drones into something sickly, gnarled, shrill, and confused. Another particularly unusual piece is the closing "Persian Knives," which takes a lovely motif of gently wriggling and dreamlike synth tones and steers it into a surreal fog of crackling and cacophonous radio transmissions.

The only caveat with *(untitled) Kingdom* is the obvious one: Jemh Circs is where Richter's most absurd and whimsical impulses live and thrive (his more majestic and essential work lies elsewhere). That said, Jemh Circs is still an intriguing entity in its own right and it is not impossible to imagine that some people might genuinely prefer this endearingly chaotic and unpredictable vein. There is certainly a lot of naked experimentation for the sheer joy of discovery, yet for all of its candy-colored lunacy, there is a deep, coherent, and thoughtful vision that runs throughout the entire album. It is almost forensic in a weird way, taking an extremely focused and exacting dive into our ceaseless torrent of instantly forgotten pop culture detritus in a sincere attempt to find and isolate elusive snatches of real beauty and wonder. Perhaps an even better analogy would be to say that Richter is like a quixotic lepidopterist attempting to rescue rare butterflies that somehow wound up in a blinding blizzard: there is absolutely no telling what the hell is going to find its way into his net, but the results of his efforts can be improbably lovely and exotic when he gets what he is after.

Samples can be found [here](#) .