

Brainwashed - Tim Hecker, "Haunt Me, Haunt Me Do It Again"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

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Newly reissued on Kranky, *Haunt Me, Haunt Me Do It Again* was Tim Hecker's remarkably fine debut album under his own name (he had previously been releasing techno as Jetone). Revisiting it now as a long-time Hecker fan, I find it still stands up as a great album, yet there is surprisingly little about it that presages the visionary career that would follow in its wake. At the time of their release, both

Me

(2001) and its follow-up (

Radio Amor

) merely felt like a couple of the better albums to emerge from a thriving generation of glitch-inspired, laptop-wielding artists centered roughly around Mille Plateaux. As such, *Haunt Me*

was very much an album of its time, but that time was truly a golden age of experimental music: this debut was just one of many enduring gems from a period where it seemed like the flood of crucial albums from Fennesz, Colleen, Jim O'Rourke, Oval, Ryoji Ikeda, Alva Noto, and others was never going to end.

[Kranky](#)

It was interesting to go back and read about how *Haunt Me* was initially received upon its release, as it feels quite bizarre in hindsight to view Tim Hecker as a techno producer or an experimental guitarist. Nevertheless, he was both of those things and there are some overt shades of each swimming around Hecker's warmly stuttering and skipping drone bliss. The opening three-part "Music for Tundra," for example, sounds very much like the dreamily indistinct thrum of E-bow drones. While Hecker's background as a guitarist is certainly responsible for the enveloping, soft-focus heaven of languorously sustained chords at the album's core, the true magic of the album lies in how he disrupts and manipulates that idyll with an ingenious arsenal of hisses, crackles, crystalline bubbles of synth-like tones, and a host of more aggressive and gnarled intrusions. There is also a very free-wheeling and kaleidoscopic sense of experimentation that runs throughout the album, as if Hecker had a rough idea of how he wanted to sound, but was still testing the boundaries of that vision. For example, the third part of "Arctic Loner's Rock" sounds like an ephemeral radio transmission of a pop song that that has been stretched and reversed by mysterious atmospheric forces. Elsewhere, "Border Lines (Part Two)" resembles a time-stretched fire alarm that gradually gets consumed by a

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chorus of alien insects. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Hecker nods to his techno roots with an understated beat in both "Boreal Kiss" and "Night Flight To Your Heart." Notably, it is the same beat each time, which illustrates another curious feature of

Haunt Me

: extremely unusual sequencing. There are multiple song suites that seamlessly segue into one another and motifs from one piece often resurface again elsewhere. That sense of looping familiarity adds nicely to the album's fever dream atmosphere.

Most of *Haunt Me's* highlights come in the middle of the album, the best of which is the sole piece that is not part of a song suite: "The Work of Art in The Age of Cultural Overproduction." Clocking in at over seven minutes, Hecker's wry Walter Benjamin homage is the album's heart and centerpiece in both duration and inspiration, transforming the album's usual drones into something more viscerally churning, roiling, and machine-like. Rather than feeling like another gently lysergic meditation, it instead resembles a rumbling and lumbering juggernaut that keeps relentlessly moving forward despite its individual components constantly splintering, skipping, and dropping out. Hecker continues that hot streak with the gorgeous two-part "October" that follows, in which a lovely, shimmering, and submerged-sounding loop slowly wends its way through a sea of tape hiss. The following "Ghost Writing" is similarly beautiful, as warbling and indistinct snatch of melody lazily drifts like smoke until it gets transformed and obliterated by something resembling an electromagnetic storm (albeit one featuring an unexpected cameo from Regis Philbin). While those pieces are the most memorable ones to my ears,

Haunt Me

does not feel like a series of discrete pieces so much as a sustained, flickering, and dreamlike spell. Moments of sublime beauty continue to surface throughout the entire album—the aforementioned handful of pieces just happen to stand out because the album's hallucinatory flow reaches a crest around the halfway point.

While the broad strokes of *Haunt Me's* aesthetic have lingered throughout Hecker's career and make it instantly recognizable as his work, it is quite a bit less distinctive than his later fare. The reason for that has a lot to do with scale and heft, as the understated

Haunt Me

aesthetic of gently skipping ambient warmth resembles an established milieu far more than the blown-out, sensory overload onslaught of his more recent work. There is nothing remotely as harrowing as

Virgins

or as rapturous as

Love Streams

on

Haunt Me—

just the quiet pleasures of sublimely shimmering and ephemeral dronescapes. As such,

Haunt Me

is kind of a curious entry in Tim Hecker's discography, as it is classic of a genre and is

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frequently hailed as a Tim Hecker classic as well (primarily because it was most people's first exposure to his work), but it is arguably a mere shadow of the more staggering albums that came further down the line. Or maybe not, as plenty of people prefer this more vaporous and haunted side of Hecker's work and miss its lightness of touch (art is subjective as hell, it seems). In any case,

Haunt Me

is a stellar album and I am genuinely thrilled to see it back in print. While Hecker's ambitions were considerably more modest back in 2001, his intuitive genius for harmony, texture, mood, emotional depth, and craftsmanship were present right from the start.

Samples can be found [here](#) .