

Brainwashed - Bob Bellerue, "Music of Liberation"

Written by Creag Dunton

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In four lengthy segments, each inhabiting its own side of vinyl, Brooklyn based Bob Bellerue presents a record that draws from his multitude of styles, from carefully constructed drones and outbursts of harsh noise, to less traveled territories, such as subtle melodies. Combined with experimental strategies learned from Bellerue's work as a sound technician and *Music of Liberation*

becomes a fascinating work in the canon of experimental sound and music, exceptional from both its composition as well as the production.

[Elevator Bath](#)

The material that comprises this set was all recorded on a single day in Portugal, utilizing a combination of the expected (pedals, contact mic, amps) and less expected (shruti box, harmonica), but most of this is utilized in ways that render them almost unidentifiable in the swirling mass of sound. Beyond this, Bellerue re-recorded the material using the natural ambience of the Issue Project Room in Brooklyn to give an added sense of space and architectural depth to the already complex sound.

This album was in progress when legendary artist Z'EV passed and, as a friend and collaborator, Bellerue dedicated this work to him. This influence is clearly on display in the third segment of the album. Amidst an industrial metallic grind and wall of shrill feedback, rattling gongs and pounding metal is apparent, seemingly a direct nod to Z'EV's work. This chugging, rhythmic metal sound eventually dissipates to a wall of distortion and electronics: a purely vintage harsh noise sound that, also, is a fitting tribute to Bellerue's late friend.

There are precious few other moments where the instrumentation is obvious. In the opening bits of the first segment, what sounds like a bass guitar can be heard, generating a wobbling, distorted passage, but it is soon subsumed in a wall of harsh, buzzing crunch. Eventually the entirety of the piece is shaped into a churning mass of noise, the structure and dynamics continuing to shift and evolve until it takes on the sound of slowly bobbing waves. The fourth

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side of the set features another similar pairing of grinding harshness with distorted, yet shimmering tones. Imbued with a sense of menacing, subdued aggression, the buzzsaw noise and almost melodic droning passages swell and retreat, bouncing between chaos and order making for an exceptional mix.

The second piece takes the mood from malignant to mournful but keeps things just as complex. Buzzing layers are punctuated with piercing, sharp ones, not unlike the feedback equivalent of the *Psycho* soundtrack. A mix of meandering and stabbing noises continues throughout as Bellerue builds the piece up, and then strips it back down. The sadness that pervades the piece never relents though; eventually evolving into a slowly shambling dynamic that goes into a massive wall of sub-bass before concluding in empty, hollow dimensions.

The melodicism may be subtle, but it is a sensibility that pervades most of *Music of Liberation*. It is there, but nicely couched in spiky shards of electronics, and further obscured with Bob Bellerue's production wizardry. It is that subtlety, enmeshed in a detailed and nuanced world of distorted chaos, which gives this album an excellent sense of depth and complexity. The multitude of not just sounds, but also moods that Bellerue is able to convey within this abstract framework is a testament not only to his brilliance as a technician, but also as a composer.

samples:

- [Part One](#)
- [Part Three](#)
- [Part Four](#)