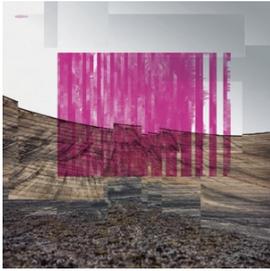


Brainwashed - Schnitt, "Wand"

Written by Duncan Edwards

Sunday, 29 September 2019 15:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 October 2019 18:43



On their second album, Schnitt (the duo Moritz Illner and Markus Christ) arrange distinct units of brass, silence, scratchy art-installation noise and sparse deep bass into a tuneful, compelling post-rock collage. Given that Illner's sole instrument is a vinyl record-cutting machine it is perhaps remarkable that *Wand* is so musical. Via headphones the dynamics of this recording come alive, and I love that nothing is overdone or (10 tracks in 27 minutes) overlong.

[Alien Transistor](#)

Since Schnitt were in the business of cutting master lacquers and vinyl one-offs they already had a t560 record cutting machine. This tool is integral to their creative process. When they perform in concert, Illner records sound sources live before using those recordings as loops, adding richer layers and wilder texture. This amazing approach to sampling, using the tools at hand, might meet with the approval of John Cage or Walter Gropius. For a show the group use three turntables and effects, in the studio they use up to five. Initially, I understand that when the project began, in 2012, noise elements were to the fore, with a somewhat chaotic sound as a result. The process has now evolved to the point where *Wand* is very much a composed album.

The aforementioned sound sources come from Markus Christ, who plays trumpet, bass clarinet, prepared flugelhorn, rhodes, pedals, turntables, drums. Honking squalls of brass on the opening title track remind me of living in New Orleans, hearing occasional blasts of trumpet or tuba from schoolchildren meandering home in the humid afternoon. Then blocks of scratchy atmospheres enter, the horn samples repeat, and a poignant tune blows over the top of the mix. "Unwucht" translates as "dynamic unbalance" and for its duration things are indeed awash in brief confusion, before "Splitter" brings an air of steady measured march, albeit through how I imagine it could feel to stroll along a path of squares across a Dadaist board game. "Raus" could pass as minimalist lounge music and "Torso" is a scratchy stuttering fanfare akin to the death throes of several wheezing vacuum cleaners. "Konstrukt" has a floor of satisfying rubbery bass over which scramble funky layers of nimble horn and bleeping synth.

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If my descriptions thus far depict *Wand* as in any way messy and cluttered, then I must say it is actually crisp, clear, spacious, and warm. The challenging track may be "Tumult," with a section of intense woodwind, lonely-sounding bass-clarinet, and thrashed drumming. Then again, this short dense blast contrasts well with the following piece "Saum" which could easily be a brilliant television theme for a cult spy or sci-fi drama. The album ends on a high with the aching melancholy crescendo of "Fragment" a final reminder that an unorthodox approach can create truly beautiful music.

Schnitt are well-named, since their name translates as "Cut." Equally Wand in English means "Wall" which is a good description of the building-block approach compositional approach which works so well here.

samples available [here](#)