

## Brainwashed - Todd Anderson-Kunert, "Conjectures"

Written by Creag Dunton

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Compared to the first release I heard from Australian composer Todd Anderson-Kunert, *Conjectures*

is a significantly different piece of work.

*A Good Time to Go*

, from 2018, was an excellent tape of that drew from all different forms of abstract electronic sound art, from elements of rhythm and heavily processed sounds to more conventional synthesizer expanses. For

*Conjectures*

, he takes a more reductive approach. Using only the massive Moog System 55 modular synthesizer, the result is a very focused, yet dynamic work that showcases both the instrument and the artist.

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As a fan of electronic music in general, I will admit I have some questionable feelings about modular synthesis. It is a fascinating technology that shows the extent of what hardware can do, and in a way very different than laptop DSP software. In the wrong hands it sounds like an unfocused mess of blips and squeaks that are less about any sort of artistry and more a showcase of how many esoteric modules a person can buy. *Conjectures*, however, demonstrates none of that.

Instead, Anderson-Kunert's work is sparse, but in a deliberate manner. Focusing on using the one complex beast of an instrument, he coaxes out the variety of sounds it is capable of in two slow building, side-long pieces of introspective sound. "I See What You Mean" first features clean, heavy low frequency tones that vibrate whatever speakers being used quite nicely. To this he adds a tasteful amount of white-noise tinged buzz to contrast the smooth with the rougher and uglier sounds.

The piece develops at a deliberate, but distinguishable pace. Electronic pulsations increase the

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sense of movement, balancing out the slow creep of the heavy tones. New elements are introduced, such as electric-like crackles and passages of what sounds like radio interference. By the end, however, he has carefully weaved in gentle melodic elements that, even with the occasional errant buzz, make for a rather beautiful conclusion to the first side of the record.

Everything takes on a darker sheen on "It Feels Right," however. From the onset the synthesizer takes on a bleaker timbre: a heavy rumble that is out of focus just enough to be menacing. Some lighter, shimmering layers of synth seep in akin to the occasional sunbeam briefly penetrating the dark sky, but the sound stays rooted in murkier spaces. There is a prominent cyclic structure and sense of repetition throughout, keeping things grounded, never becoming self-indulgent, and staying nicely diverse. Melody appears once again, but in a grimmer, funereal context, before Anderson-Kunert ends the piece with the sort of sub bass that opened the record.

The combination of Todd Anderson-Kunert's ear for structure and mixing, with the specific focus on one synth and none of the modular masturbation, results in *Conjectures* being a beautifully nuanced, amazing work. I imagine the multitude of knobs and patch bays on the Moog he used may have been tempting to go a bit wild with, but that is anything but the case. The level of attention he pays to the individual tones and sounds carries over quite well, and being able to focus my attention on all the fine details made for an excellent pair of compositions.

[Samples Available Here.](#)