

Brainwashed - Contrastate, "An Exercise in Defascination"

Written by Craig Dunton

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Functioning as a preview for a work-in-progress record, the two songs that make up *An Exercise in Defascination*

(which will appear as different mixes on the album proper upon its completion) herald the theme of deconstructing giallo films that will appear there. Drawing from film soundtracks, as well as the overall themes of that specific style of horror film, Contrastate distill those very essences into a brief teaser of terror and surrealism perfectly.

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Giallo has always occupied its own niche of horror film due to some general stylistic consistencies: mystery and detective plots, over the top violence, and soundtracks that draw heavily on prog, hard rock, and jazz styles. With a healthy mix of supernatural tinges and mental illness, it is a distinct type of film and, like the predominantly American slasher films they inspired, are often extremely similar to one another and perhaps not the most unique of movie experiences.

Contrastate capture this right from the cover: yellow (which is what giallo translates to, referencing a type of pulp novel with yellow covers) with blood red, and a sickly yellow record contained within. The band wastes no time setting the stage on the title piece: haunting synth strings, creepy echoes, and unsteady tape effects make for an entirely unsettling start. From there the soundtrack references are immediate: pummeling drums, jagged guitar stabs, and decaying keyboards appear at times, sounding like a deconstructed and cut up take on Goblin's scores, with the addition of some scraping blades and what sounds like power drills to add a bit of Foley work to really drive the point home.

On the other side, "Spasmo" features Contrastate working with traditional spooky organ sounds at the onset. With fragments of vocals and prominent bass guitar (anyone who has seen Dario Argento's classic of the genre *Deep Red* knows how integral the instrument is to the mood of that film), the overall sound lies somewhere between synth soundtrack and noir blues.

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Compared to the other side of the record, there is more space and a tense, though less terrifying mood throughout.

Contrastate succeed brilliantly in their attempt to create a sonic counterpart to the giallo style of film on this too-brief 7". Not only are their obvious references to the distinct soundtrack work associated with the films, but they also capture the non-musical elements as well. Violent sound effects, supernatural growls, and an unsettling sense of un-reality pervade. Although the style of film they are paying tribute to may not be known for its originality, the music they have made is anything but cliché. It is an excellent piece that stands on its own, but it admittedly has me extremely excited to hear what the complete work will be.

samples:

- [An Exercise in Defascination](#)
- [Spasmo](#)