

Brainwashed - AF Jones, "A Jurist For Nothing"

Written by Creag Dunton

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As a former electronics specialist aboard a naval submarine and currently an audio engineer at his own Laminar Audio studio, AF Jones is clearly well versed in the world of sound design and audio processing. This becomes abundantly clear on *A Jurist For Nothing* given its nuance and production. Various electronic sounds and heavily processed field recordings are of course no surprise given the genre, but the subtle way in which Jones blends in conventional instrumentation, culminating in a Townes Van Zandt cover, is what makes this record most unique.

[Gertrude Tapes](#)

Ambience and not fully identifiable field recordings form the foundation of pieces such as "Anna Politkovskaya," named for an assassinated Russian journalist. Here Jones keeps a largely subtle backdrop, blending together rhythmic swirls and other layers of synthetic sound, tone and texture. The result is rather tense, but also captivating. "Landover is Not the Same" has a similarly collaged feel to it. Jones uses the hollow spaciousness as the setting for incidental, distant conversations and heavy electronic undercurrents. To this he blends in some surging tones, never allowing the mix to become too sparse but never hitting the point of overload either.

The other pieces on the album start from a similar framework, but it is Jones's inclusion of acoustic guitar that brings a more conventional musicality to them. "Renouncer" begins from a clearly electro-acoustic basis with the sound of water going from a light drip into heavy, torrential surges, paired with a harsh buzzing industrial drone. Amidst a blend of lower and higher frequencies and a mysterious thumping sound, he introduces a passage of clear, strummed guitar that adds an entirely different character of sound.

For "Miserere Mei" he introduces the guitar earlier in the piece, casting over hushed noises and elongated tonal passages. The electronics surge in dramatically and retreat just as quickly, with Jones punctuating the unending flow of sound with his guitar. "Implicate Order" features a

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muted, but buzzing electronic passage at the onset, but it soon becomes a guitar-centric song. There is a bluesy repetition to his playing on "Lamps Are Stars," but the plodding electronics and subtle noise textures give it anything but a traditional feel.

Pure acoustic tone also opens the title piece, but accompanied by a slowly swelling magma crunch. With some bizarre outbursts, controlled feedback, and jerky pseudo-rhythms, the non-guitar parts call to mind some of Cabaret Voltaire's earliest experiments while still sounding completely unique. The closing song, "Rake," differs significantly from the remainder of the record. Not just because it is a cover of fellow Texan Townes Van Zandt's work, but because of its faithfulness to the source material. Pared down to just Jones's guitar and voice, with cello accompaniment from Judith Hamann and Lori Goldston, it is an intentionally sparse, emotional, and extremely human note to close the record on.

On paper, I would be suspicious of electro-acoustic collage experimentation that features prominent acoustic guitar given the stark, drastic contrast between those sounds, but Jones makes it work beautifully. The abstract, occasionally frightening, and consistently inhuman sounding electronics end up grounded perfectly by the guitar. Like a guiding hand helping to navigate through bleak darkness, it results in *A Jurist For Nothing* having a distinct, inimitable character that comes together perfectly.

[Samples Available Here](#)