

Brainwashed - Brothertiger, “Paradise Lost”

Written by Eve McGivern

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I was having a conversation with someone the other evening about what defines “pop” music, and if it can be considered good music. This is a loaded question since there are many varieties of music that could potentially fall into a pop category; the term means many different things, carrying both positive and negative connotations. As this isn’t meant to be an essay arguing the definition, let me simply say this: I enjoy what moves me. There exists simple, straightforward music which has the power to reel me in, winning me over with charming, catchy melodies, making my heart soar. With his sincere delivery, dreamy heartfelt melodies, eighties pop sensibilities and impressive vocal range, the talented John Jagos won me over as Brothertiger on his latest, *Paradise Lost*.

[Satanic Panic](#)

There has been a wave in recent years of capitalizing on '90s shoegaze and '80s new wave sensibilities—some have termed this combination “dream pop” or “synthwave”—with varying success. Brothertiger mellows it out, unabashedly coating the sound in smooth electronics and hefty homage to '70s pop. This is immediately evidenced on the opening track “Found” as dreamy electronics build to make room for cool, but danceable rhythms, Jagos’ voice reminiscent of an alto choir boy soaring over the unassuming melody. It’s like a little slice of paradise.

But all is not well in paradise. The album is filled with beautiful moments like this, a “happy little tree” that may joyfully be consumed without effort. But listen more carefully to the lyrics, and the title begins to hint at the layers of this album. At first glance, “Mainsail” starts out like a guilty pleasure, a familiar sunny tune from the '70s, reminiscent of a warm sail on clear waters—but Christopher Cross’ “Sailing” never started out with “Can’t you recognize my face in a crowded room? Living in the Empire State, I’m lost sometimes.”

The album is nearly impeccable, growing on me with each listen. The first time hearing “Livin’” was a warm welcome, but I wasn’t quite sure to make of what I initially deemed a “pop ditty.” On

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further listens, the song seemed darker than I remembered it. More layers were uncovered after I read the lyrics: "Honestly, I can't keep my head up high / Honestly, I can't get a hold on life."

The album's title is indicative of the album as a whole. The music is crafted to sound like pure sunshine, a window into paradise, warm and relaxing, but with enough layers to make things interesting, getting lost in deceptively simple melodies. "Shelter Cove" is my favorite track, offering warm solace, a comforting melody and hopeful lyrics: "The silence / We'll find it / In our hideaway / The fog lifts / Beyond us / Open out Pacific bay." Enjoy it for what it is; it is fine to stay right here, cuddly and warm. Freud once said that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, but there is more than simply meets the eye to Brothertiger.

[Samples available here.](#)