

## Brainwashed - X, "Alphabetland"

Written by Eve McGivern

Sunday, 13 September 2020 18:17 - Last Updated Sunday, 13 September 2020 20:51

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Since 2016, I maintained there would be the advent of a new mantra: “Make Music Great Again.” Sometimes the reference became more specific, replaced with Punk or Deathrock depending on my mood, but the message remained the same: the impetus for music with a message would be opened. We’ve seen legends returning to take advantage of the era to release new work, so there was a mix of both surprise and lack thereof when, completely unannounced, legendary punk band X dropped *ALPHABETLAND*, their first studio release in 27 years (and the first with their original line-up in the past 35 years) to coincide with the 40th anniversary of their classic 1980 debut

*Los Angeles*

. A fresh blast from the past that looks to the future, X come racing out of the gate with the same ferociousness and insistent melody of any of their classics.

### [Fat Possum](#)

It is worth checking out the cover of *ALPHABETLAND*, a work from L.A. artist Wayne White titled *Curdled American Dream*. The most prominent visual is the brightly painted title, primary colors in large block letters, with a large X underneath. This may well be the only thing a casual viewer sees. A closer look reveals the brightly colored title is worn, with an underlying scene showing a run-down rural house in the background. The house sits near an overgrown yard filled with broken boats and wagons that lie near an idyllic pond, while to the side, men prepare to fish, and a small gathering of people can be seen on the home’s porch. The grandiosity of the letters proclaim the positivity of the “American Dream,” but closer investigation reveals the dream in decline, with X as the messenger.

The band is said to have written most of the tracks in the 18 months leading up to its release, but the messages here are timeless. Probably the most poignant of all tracks is “Water and Wine” which gets to the meat of the matter: “The divine that defines us / The evil that divides us / There’s a heaven & a hell / And there’s a live to tell / Who has to wait at the end of the line / Who gets water & who gets wine.” *ALPHABETLAND* touches on some powerful topics throughout, starting out with the title track that seems to address gentrification and the

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dangerous changes that come with it. X deliver smart punk lyrics for tough topics: the quest for individual American liberty regardless of the consequences; powerlessness in the face of authority; squelching of the freedom to protest; the influence of media; support for the "Me Too" movement.

Not entirely political, X also takes the time to be nostalgic, taking time to reflect on their past as in "Star Chambered." Closing track "All the Time in the World" has a sense of finality about it, a heartfelt track that has X looking back on friends and family who have gone before, and touches on why the band still does what they do:

"And why do we still care enough about  
Or even too much  
To make words  
In the hope that someone in the future will hear  
History is just one lost language after another,  
After another  
And when they're all taken together  
We still can't decipher the past  
Or decode the future  
We're just lost without a map

We are dust  
It's true  
And to dust we shall return  
Me and you  
But it was fun while it lasted

All the time in the world  
Turns out  
Not to be that much"

Thank you X, for making music great again.

Sound samples may be heard [here](#) .