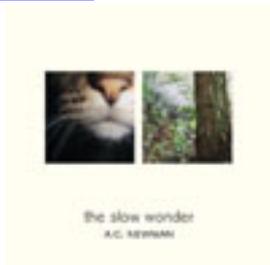


Brainwashed - A.C. Newman, "The Slow Wonder"

Written by Michael Patrick Brady

Saturday, 24 July 2004 20:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 August 2005 05:32

[Matador](#)



A is a definite article, a method of distinguishing an individual from a group, singling out the one particular subject that deserves all the attention. I don't know the true origins of that particular A, the above definition would certainly make Carl Newman's self-amended designation quite the aptonym. *The Slow Wonder* is an A, a defining article that raises Carl Newman from the crowded house he built for the New Pornographers to his very own center stage. Newman is out this time with a collection of even newer rock and roll pornographers who are every bit as dig-deep tenacious and blissfully sonorous.

The Slow Wonder

is a further refinement of the ideas swirled across

Mass Romantic

and honed on

The Electric Version.

Newman has emerged from behind the curtain with a slab of pop perfection, matching the heights of those previous records while showcasing a more personal stake in the music, as opposed to the communal conceptualism of the Pornographer records. "The Miracle Drug" is an assuring opener, almost alarmingly familiar with vocalist Sarah Wheeler backing up to fill in the Neko Case role (with such quality as to arouse curiosity as to what she might sound like out in front). The sonic similarities only serve to demonstrate Newman's persisting talent in knowing what makes a great song and the ability to do so freshly, at will. The melodious "On The Table" politely drips across the piano keyboard with a dignified reserve before soaring into a kaleidoscopic rush of unbridled enthusiasm in the chorus. Amidst the crowd pleasers is "Come Crash," a gorgeous ballad that slowly probes the inner workings of an obscure relationship. While never revealing too much in direct statements, the song instead pieces the story together through the shadows cast by the firework bursting bridge and shards of conversation that slowly flicker and fade. It is a wonderful centerpiece to the album, and a more introspective side of Newman than most of us have been treated to. "The Town Halo" rockets the album sky high once again, thickly rooted in a repeating loop of strings, surging forward in a thrust of accusatory questioning and boundary marking. Along with the closer, "35 In The Shade," the song surrounds Newman with a throng of background singers, lending their collective voices to the music he has crafted. This aspect of the album seems perfectly natural, as it is hard to resist joining in. Newman is a songwriter of the highest caliber, one who is capable of implanting a song deep within the psyche and coaxing it back out once again through the voices of listeners.

The Slow Wonder

outputs nothing but unabashed joy through song and demands nothing less back.

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samples:

- [Miracle Drug](#)
- [Come Crash](#)
- [The Town Halo](#)