

Brainwashed - Nurse With Wound, "She and Me Fall Together In Free Death"

Written by Jonathan Dean

Saturday, 28 June 2003 23:46 - Last Updated Monday, 28 April 2014 07:53



Far too much music being released these days seems to be utilitarian in nature. Albums are touted as "great driving music" or "after-club chillout music." I've actually heard certain critics suggest that an album is best heard in a particular time and setting: "Listen to this in the early morning hours after your girlfriend dumps you." Ever since Brian Eno developed the concept of ambient music, there seems to be a concerted effort to turn music into the equivalent of a backrub: something purely contextual that functions as an emotional salve if applied properly. Since the early 80's, Nurse With Wound has been pushing the opposite concept. Steven Stapleton's music is not made to make you feel better, or as something upbeat to play while doing crunches. Stapleton's music is designed for active, deep listening. You simply can't just play it in the background as you converse with friends. Even his most ambient pieces are not meditative; they are designed as a complex drama to make you FEEL something.

[Beta-Lactam Ring](#)

Steven Stapleton's newest release is a full-length LP on the incomparably interesting Beta-Lactam Rings label. *She and Me Fall Together in Free Death* is probably the most approachable, largely "musical" album that NWW has released since *Rock N' Roll Station*

. It's also one of his strangest concepts, a marriage of trance-inducing Krautrock grooves with a traditional jazz standard and some jarringly atonal musique concrete. Side A is the 20-minute title track: a slow-motion jam reminiscent of one of Can's sidelong tracks on *Tago Mago*

or the more avant-garde grooves of Tony Conrad and Faust's *Outside the Dream Syndicate*. The propulsive Jaki Liebezit drumbeat is the foundation for a long jam session with what sounds like a dijeridoo and layers of guitar feedback. It's a massive, heavy sound, the kind that Julian Cope would devote a whole chapter to in his "Kratrocksampler." Side B is one long piece with three distinct movements. Beginning with those familiar, World Serpent-trademark windchimes, the listener is quickly ushered into Stapleton's singing debut (!) in a rendition of the oft-covered traditional jazz ballad "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair." This was a

Brainwashed - Nurse With Wound, "She and Me Fall Together In Free Death"

Written by Jonathan Dean

Saturday, 28 June 2003 23:46 - Last Updated Monday, 28 April 2014 07:53

favorite of the recently deceased Nina Simone, and also of the avant-jazz screamer Patty Waters. Nurse With Wound's version is backed by cello drones, repetitive guitar strums and tambourine, sounding very much like The Velvet Underground's "Venus in Furs." It's such a treat to hear Steven Stapleton's multitracked vocals cover this classic song, and this eerie version rates as one of my favorites. This song and the title track prove to the naysayers that Nurse With Wound is equally adept at rock n' roll songcraft as he is at demented sound collages. The creepy jazz cover seques into "Chicken Concret (For Missy E)," a truly warped tape-edit job that juxtaposes chicken squawks and synthesized birdcalls with random bleeps, speaker hiccups and gongs. Could this be Steven Stapleton's tribute to Timbaland and Missy Elliott's incomparable use of musique concrete techniques on their major label hip-hop anthems? Hard to say, but I like to think so. Side B ends with the hyper-sexualized "Gusset Typing," in which a mutated woman's voice describes her masturbation and orgasm in intimate, anatomical detail. Her monologue is set against an intense rhythmic throbbing that builds as she reaches her climax. At the end, she blows her load and the record ends. This certainly qualifies as an active listening experience, and it's also a great make-out record!

[samples:](#)

- [She and Me Fall Together in Free Death](#)
- [Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair](#)
- [Chicken Concret \(For Missy E.\)](#)