

Brainwashed - MERZBOW, "RATTUS RATTUS"

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Everyone pretty much knows by now that it's pretty useless to review a new Merzbow album. Merzbow is Merzbow, and he'll always be Merzbow, and he "does" Merzbow better than all of the Merzbow copyists out there, and it will probably always be that way. Aside from a few minor quibbles over whether digital-era Merzbow is better or worse than the original analog Merzbow, there really isn't a whole lot of critical division over Merzbow's output.

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It's almost always noise, loud and aggressive, often with loud percussive slaps to the face thrown in for good measure. *Rattus Rattus* is certainly no exception, a cyclone of atonal, shrieking digital clamor with buffeting, battering ram beats that explore every level of the audible range of sound in an attempt to assault the listener on all fronts. The CD seems to have a concept of sorts, the title and the cover art being suggestive of everyone's favorite household pest rodent. This is very different from Matmos' rat concept album (2004's

Rat Relocation Program

), as instead of sampling said creatures as Matmos did, Masami Akita opts merely to suggest the presence of the creatures with a series of tiny claw-scratched noise attacks and high, trebly shrieking. Masami also provides the address of the PETA website on the back of the disc's sleeve, suggesting that perhaps the album has something or other to do with animal rights. It would be hard to say where the vegan message really comes into

Rattus Rattus

, unless the album were to be taken as a noisy screed against scientific experimentation on rats. Your guess is as good as mine in this respect. I've come nowhere close to hearing every Merzbow record, and in fact I probably only own five or six CDs, so I'd have a very hard time coming up with a good comparison to any of his previous works. This one does have a very nice quality that might warrant repeated listens, however. All three tracks contain enough rapid shifts in tone, frequency, tempo and aggression enough to keep things dynamic, as opposed to past Merzbow records that have easily fallen into a background of white noise. There is no chance of being lulled into complacency while listening to this CD, especially during the final lengthy "Rattus Rattus Suite," which variously suggests an Alec Empire DHR-style cyberpunk explosion, an early Whitehouse album, something from the noisier end of Ant-Zen, and a digitized grindcore version of an Anal Cunt record or some other such throwaway splattercore. This is not to suggest that there is anything here that noise fans haven't heard a million times before. As Merzbow records go, this is definitely one of them.

samples:

- [155](#)
- [166](#)
- [Rattus Rattus Suite](#)