

Brainwashed - Keith Hudson, "Brand"

Written by Gary Suarez

Sunday, 08 July 2007 19:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 February 2010 06:20



The 21st century has been quite good to the dark prince of reggae, with labels such as Basic Replay, Blood And Fire, Pressure Sounds, and Trojan all jostling with one another to bring his visionary work back into print. Based on the vital *Rasta Communication* album, this reissued dub set shows precisely why the late artist's catalog undeniably warrants such attention.

[Pressure Sounds](#)



In the arts, dying before one's time commonly inflates his or her legacy disproportionate to actual contribution. In the case of reggae producer and vocalist Keith Hudson, who by 1984 (only in his late 30s) succumbed to cancer, nothing could be further from the truth.

While he enjoyed Jamaican chart success early in his career for Big Youth and Ken Boothe, to name just a few, the music scene there never fully embraced his uniquely deep and gothic sound.

Nonetheless, Hudson persevered with so many potent cuts for a number of his own imprints, the " singles from which continue to be highly desirable to collectors today.

Virgin, which signed Hudson to a multi-album deal in the 70s, wanted to turn him into the next Bob Marley, though his work mined far murkier depths in significant contrast to that legendary singer's sunnier style. While the thematically constructed

Pick A Dub

ranks as the pinnacle of his dub releases,

Brand

is possibly the most worthy contender for that title.

Also known as

The Joint

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, this album was peculiarly released in advance of its corresponding vocal set, the aforementioned

Rasta Communication

, still available from its original label Greensleeves.

Therefore,

Brand

could alternatively be treated as a standalone album of subspace bass and subterranean echo, flecked with delectable bits of Hudson's arresting vocal.

The album kicks off with Hudson mournfully crooning about absent parentage on "Image Dub," whose walking bassline, restrained percussion, and wizened guitar and piano embellishments hold together the strained, weighty atmosphere spiraling above. "National Anthem" and "National Anthem," both dubs of "Rasta Country," present parallel options for the choosy selector, the latter of these more emaciated than actually versioned.

The highlight of an already formidable album, "Felt The Strain Dub" takes an anthemic snippet of vocal and layers it over dripping melodic keys and a few perfectly timed snare hits.

Compared to the rest of this set, "Musicology Dub" appears deceptively bright, as does "Highter Hights" which features a killer melodica melody and the welcome toasts of deejay President Shorty.

The decent booklet that accompanies this release offers a neat history lesson as well as quick guide for those familiar with Rasta Communication, indicating which versions come from tracks off that release.

In addition, two heretofore unreleased vocal tracks separate this version from Pressure Sounds' previous reissue.

Regrettably, several of Hudson's full lengths remain unavailable, including

Torch Of Freedom

(the hardest of hardcore New Order fans will know "Turn the Heater On") and later albums like

Steaming Jungle

.

Continued healthy competition from reggae reissue labels will hopefully fill in these noticeable gaps.

In the meantime,

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should tide over devotees as well as introduce curious newcomers to the heavy overcast sounds of this dub dissident.

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samples:

- [Image Dub](#)
- [Musicology Dub](#)
- [Felt The Strain Dub](#)