

Brainwashed - Boy In Static, "Violet"

Written by Gary Suarez

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Bearing a sound ideal for the next sentimental Michel Gondry or Zach Braff film, this proficient artist's second album suckles at the fleshy yet noticeably sagging teat of '90s shoegaze while concurrently seeking a way out of the trappings of that tempting template.

[Mush](#)

My first experiences with this curious little subgenre came during my teens when the disaffected young ladies I surrounded myself with turned me on to groups like Mazzy Star and Cranes. Axiomatically different from the grunge and metal I was then deeply infatuated with, these and other like-minded artists occasionally found their way into my listening, particularly during those depressive late-night hours of adolescent confusion.

My appreciation for this music grew deeper when later, while still blissfully underage, I began to frequent certain New York City goth clubs, where I both heard and saw live performances from many acts in the Projekt stable.

While those days are long gone, I still find time every now and again to enjoy a few of these sonic thrills and chills from my own restlessly pensive youth.

Violet

, Alexander Chen's new album as Boy In Static, recalls for me this strange time with an authenticity that gives me pause.

Opener "First Love" emerges like a sunrise slowly revealed in those hazy meaningful early morning minutes that most people hardly ever find cause to witness. This style sets a precarious tone for these ten tracks, as if the feelings evoked at that time have somehow been frozen or considerably slowed into a bleary-eyed fugue.

"Where It Ends," the designated single, falls comfortably in line not with some of the most recognizable tunes in the subgenre, but also with the electronically derived highlights of acts like The Postal Service.

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Here, contemplating either the dusk of day or of man, Chen sings of a past love that he longs to reclaim over a tenebrous post-punk bassline and desperately muted programmed percussion.

His delicately poetic and sometimes cryptic lyrics, while not very clear in delivery, suit not just the far out music, but also his light, effeminate voice.

It is reasonable to suspect that the words to sublime tracks like "December" and "Leave You Blind" were scribbled reflectively just as the undaunted dawn began to rise.

Naturally, the main problem that Boy In Static faces is that shoegaze and dream pop have not evolved much over the past decade, resulting in a crop of painfully similar artists eager to absorb their influences while never quite breaking free of them. Although I'm willing to concede that Chen does it better than most, I suspect that he is still looking for a new curve in the road, one less crowded than his current location.

Even if he doesn't quite realize that himself, Chen's music subconsciously exudes unrest that will hopefully be resolved in future recordings.

Still, those who dig on sensitive, edgy music will find
Violet

an unobjectionable and welcome, as well as more than a few directionless teenagers.

samples:

- [Where It Ends](#)
- [Tear Down](#)
- [Leave You Blind](#)