

## Brainwashed - Mawja, "Studio One"

Written by Creag Dunton

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This is the companion piece to the live collaborations I previously reviewed here, however this has the artists collaborating in a studio setting as opposed to a live one. Considering the nature of improvisations, the differences between the two settings are relatively minimal. Recorded during the same period as the *Live One* disc, the sounds here are, interesting enough, a bit darker, more harsh and dissonant than the improvisations in the live setting.

### [Al Maslakh](#)

The raw, bass drones that open the first of the untitled tracks sets this mood early—later met with tightly controlled feedback from Michael Bullock, and other electronics, I'm assuming from Vic Rawlings—resemble an orchestra of power tools tuning up. The second piece as well stays in this rawer territory with its undulating analog noise rhythm and crashing percussion section of random objects being thrown about. Amongst all of this is some of the most pained, abused sounding trumpet playing courtesy of Mazen Kerbaj that I have ever heard on record.

The fourth untitled track, clocking in at over 20 minutes, is one of the more sparse, open tracks in this set. It is a track built more upon subtle electronics and frozen drones instead of the harsher, piercing elements of other tracks. With the exception of some rough bass string scraping, the track stays more in the spacious end of the spectrum. The closing track, also among the longer, is more into the realms of noise, with the sound of strings stretching and distant warbling electronics that are amplified in intensity by wheezing trumpet and the pulsating industrial noise.

The third and fifth pieces begin to cross that threshold from improvisation into much noisier territories. The former sounds like a dying robot: inorganic sounds throughout mixed with blasts of feedback and metal knocking percussion before all coming down into a crashing cacophony of ramshackle noise. The fifth piece is a bit more restrained in comparison, but includes feedback tones, improvised percussion and piercing mid-range electronic noise, that, in all honesty, would not be completely out of place as part of a Merzbow work. The stunted

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contrabass moments keep the harsher electronic moments more grounded in an organic base.

Although it would usually be expected that studio-based improvisations would be more restrained when compared to live ones, the inverse seems to be the case here. Neither is superior to the other and both represent differing sides to the same coin: a trio that improvise with each other just as well as any of the classic masters of jazz.

samples:

- [Take 2](#)
- [Take 3](#)
- [Take 5](#)