

Brainwashed - Merzbow, "Dolphin Sonar"

Written by John Kealy

Sunday, 28 September 2008 10:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 28 September 2008 11:10



There are the usual features that Masami Akita employs in his work: mastering at a face-melting volume, piercing high pitched noises, sand-blasting roars of sound, and, particularly in recent years, the obligatory *Save the *insert animal here** artwork. On this last point Akita is normally very heavy handed and just slaps a picture of the animal on the cover or some less than subtle point about vivisection (but then is there anything subtle about a man who has spent his life trying to deafen the world) but on *Dolphin*

Sonar he has made a far more concerted effort at a protest album. All of the sound here can be described as manmade violence or Akita's representation of marine life as envisaged by the dolphin; his anger is directed at where the two ideas meet.

[Important](#)

Across the three pieces, swirls of bloodied noise are pierced by Merzbowed sonar sounds (especially in "Part 2"). In the bubbling electronic squall, it is almost possible to see the pink foam on the red sea from the slaughter of the dolphins. As there is not really anything more that can be done with extreme noise in terms of aesthetics (no matter who is behind the laptop), the only thing that can be done is pair the noise with a meaning. Akita has never truly managed to link his ideological stance with his music prior to this and this consummation of that marriage between thought and sound is staggering. Considering Akita's work is usually so abstract, to find such concrete imagery in his composition is as shocking as that first time you heard his work.

[On a nitpicky note, I feel I must correct the "facts" about dolphin brains in the liner notes. Yes indeed dolphin brains are larger than ours (as are many creatures) but the jury is well and truly out as to whether they are more complex than ours. As for the notion that we have three-lobed brains and they have four, that is a complete fallacy. Both dolphins and humans have four lobes in each hemisphere (namely the frontal, parietal, occipital and temporal lobes). Yes the wholesale killing of dolphins is not something humans should be pursuing but please, get your neuroanatomy right!]

Brainwashed - Merzbow, "Dolphin Sonar"

Written by John Kealy

Sunday, 28 September 2008 10:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 28 September 2008 11:10

This is a fine example of why Merzbow is still relevant and how powerful he can be. It is also a rare instance of sound art being put to good use, I may not agree with him on all points but he has certainly got me on his side here.

samples:

- [Part 1](#)
- [Part 2](#)
- [Part 3](#)