

Brainwashed - Moss, "Sub Templum"

Written by John Kealy

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A lot of artists find inspiration in the works of H.P. Lovecraft but very few capture the essence of his horror. Metallica's "The Call of Ktulu" is a classic piece of thrash but it comes nowhere close to the cosmic terror and unease of Lovecraft's prose. Similarly, Alexander Hacke and The Tiger Lillies' *Mountains of Madness* was a loving but ultimately camp tribute to the author. However, here the Southampton trio have honed their sound to create the same sense of dread that made Lovecraft's stories so disturbing.

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Obsessed with Lovecraft, ritual and recreating the atmospheres of an underground temple, it is easy to see how Moss arrived at their musical aesthetic. After the eerie Hammond organ, barely audible vocals and distant percussion of "Ritus" provide an unearthly start to the album, the ground opens up with a swell of guitar and swallows the victim whole. The drums and vocals both sound like they are coming from a chasm deep within the earth, the howls of a beshrouded priest and the percussive rhythms of the ceremony he is performing.

Listening to this album during the day is a futile endeavour, *Sub Templum* is all about context. Sitting down at night with the detailed sleeves in your hands and turning the volume up is the only way to do it. The arcane symbols and darkly psychedelic imagery of the sleeve make this less of an album and more of a grimoire. It would not surprise me if you could conjure up some foul demon by knowing the right gestures at the right points of the music. The three piece suite "Gate III: Devils from the Outer Dark" which takes up the second half of the album is how imagine such a moment would sound like, only in reality I doubt it would be as frightening.

Most of the descriptions and reviews of Moss I read treat them as just another doom band and while they are indeed as doom as fuck, they have made an album that manages to transcend the doom genre that spawned the band. *Sub Templum* is a dizzying and upsetting sonic journey that just happens to have massive riffs. There is a lot going on between the grooves and it is not all just Sabbath worship. Since their debut, they have sculpted their blackened

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sound away from genre clichés and have managed to develop a unique sound that on the surface is metal but this only hides in its depths a portal to a weird and foreboding dimension.

This review was made from the vinyl version of the album so unfortunately no mp3 samples.