

## Brainwashed - Stars of the Lid, "Music for Nitrous Oxide"

Written by John Kealy

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Many (if not most) artists get maybe two albums out before falling into a rut and losing whatever magic they had. In the case of Stars of the Lid, the opposite occurred with their creativity only truly taking momentum a couple of albums into their recording career. This reissue of their debut shows the initial staggering steps that would eventually grow into the sure and elegant music that the duo now creates. This album may be patchy but it is here that the foundations for the unique Stars of the Lid sound are laid down.

### [Sedimental](#)

Though this is far from being the jewel in Adam Wiltzie and Brian McBride's respective crowns, it is worth listening to this album to hear how the duo have honed their craft; the leap between this and the subsequent album, *Gravitational Pull vs. The Desire for an Aquatic Life* is a big but logical one. While some of the music feels like a mere sketch when compared with what was to come, it can be clearly heard on pieces like "Before Top Dead Center" that the SOTL magic was present from the start. On "Tape Hiss Makes Me Happy," the layered and reverbed guitar drones mark the first time that McBride and Wiltzie really gel on record and it marks the highlight of the album.

Unfortunately, *Music for Nitrous Oxide* is smattered with heavy handed use of sampled dialogue (the human-race-as-alien-seed conspiracy theory bit on "Lagging" sounds especially hokey now). In addition, some of the pieces sound very flat in comparison to the stronger pieces on the album. It sounds like Wiltzie and McBride were still exploring how to create their powerful drones on "Madison." Similarly, the collage work and looping on the aforementioned "Lagging" sounds clumsy, as if they were still working out how to fully exploit their hardware. Yet when I step back and consider the album as a whole, these flaws do not in any way ruin the album.

*Music for Nitrous Oxide*

is still a good album, it just would not be one I would recommend as an introduction to the band.

For those who already own the original release, there is nothing here to warrant buying *Music*

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*for Nitrous Oxide*

again. It has been remastered and the sleeve has been changed to a digipack but the differences are not huge (the limitations of the 4-track tape recorder is still obvious but it adds a nostalgic air to the music). Still, it is nice that this is back in print again considering it was the only element in the SOTL back catalogue to be unavailable since the

*Carte-de-Visite*

compilation came out in 2007.

samples:

- [Before Top Dead Center](#)
- [Down](#)
- [Tape Hiss Makes Me Happy](#)