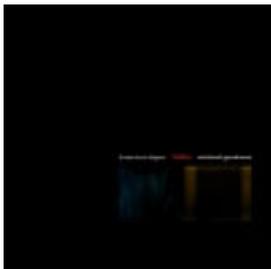


Brainwashed - Francisco Lopez & Michael Gendreau, "TDDM"

Written by Justin Patrick

Sunday, 22 February 2009 02:59 - Last Updated Friday, 22 May 2009 14:33



This release from eminent sound ecologist Francisco Lopez and Michael Gendreau—member of *Crawling With Tarts* (1983-1998)—is less a collaboration between the two than a pairing together of similar pieces culled from recordings they each made in the Far East. Lopez created his tracks from original recordings of machinery in Singapore, China, Taiwan, and Japan, whereas Gendreau's microphone captured sounds from inside the factories of Taiwan and Malaysia. Together as a two CD set, the musical pieces presented by each artist are quite complimentary of each other.

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Michael Gendreau starts the first disc off with "T921." Quiet at first, volume shifts occur in a manner that resembles walking up a long flight of steps. A landing is reached the volume steadies out for a rest. Subtle oscillations buzz, panning between the speakers, before dropping back down to the previous level. It's a chilling effect. A brief melody appears out of nowhere, followed by a voice on a loudspeaker, before it recurs. What follows appears to be the shuffling of feet and the muffled voices of the workers. A loud fizzing ring takes over and continues unabated, until, with a sudden alarm, something slams; and then with another slam the ringing reasserts itself, all enveloping. The beep-beep-beep of a truck being backed into a dock is heard and it ends with the sound of a door closing and the bell ring of someone summoning a clerk.

Sounds of clunking machines are rarely as engaging as they are on Lopez's "D156." The beauty to be found in these oil greased behemoths is in the lulling tintinnabulation and rattle of the metal. It's an immersive sound world, hypnotic, and locked in a groove of time. Screeching whines creep in over the top of deep thumps. Steam hisses as the pressure starts to build. All is released in a torrent of a fluttering staccato.

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"D138" sees Lopez opening the second disc with low end pulsations that rumble the speakers. Hiss slithers to the foreground; it seems to be a primary ingredient for both artists. The feeling is like a valve about to burst as grumbling motors shake. Abrupt transitions are the norm on this track: a wavering tone of uncertain origin pours out over a desolate warehouse floor. Ruffles of white noise criss-cross back and forth across the stereo field. The engines must have been reorded from far away, as it seems to resonate down a long corridor. The sounds leaking out are calming, something I didn't expect, but it doesn't last. Underneath the dust an ominous wind stirs. The fuzz shifts, growing louder, more manic, more frantic, giving way to chattering tics, bleeps, scratching and rustling. Again, clean breaks are made. My speakers have become vacuum cleaners sucking me into a long silence.

Persisting for a few minutes this silence is cleansing for the auditory palette. Michael Gendreau breaks it with a scream on "M928." A trill buzzes with abject treble turning into an abysmal bass. It might as well be emerging from my third eye: that is where I feel it, in the center of my forehead. Workers are heard talking and walking around, using air tools and power electronics. I hope they are wearing ear protection. Luckily for me the volume fluctuates. The extremely loud parts do not outstay their welcome. Strange tones and percussive textures blanket the rest of the piece in their resonant glow.

Part of the fun, as a listener, with these types of compositions made from industrial field recordings, is that it is left up to me to interpret and intuit what exactly it is going on. I will probably never know whether or not I am right or wrong in my assumptions about a given sound source. In the end I take them of their own accord, enriched by my experience of arm chair traveling, an eager to journey further. Lopez and Gendreau are invaluable tour guides.

samples:

- [T921](#)
- [D156](#)
- [D138](#)