

Brainwashed - Hecq, "Steeltongued"

Written by Matthew Jeanes

Saturday, 20 June 2009 14:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 June 2009 14:12



The latest release from Berlin-based sound designer and producer Ben Lukas Boysen is an ambitious two disc opus. On the first disc, he once again works with precision more than melody and space more than structure but on the second disc, his remixers take Hecq's original in a dozen different directions.

[Hymen](#)



I like Hecq's music and find it interesting but I have a hard time connecting to it emotionally. In some way, that may be part of the point. Hecq is detailed and precise in the way that he puts sounds together, but his approach creates some distance from any emotional core. He's a bit like a master draftsman who can render a beautifully complex drawing of a building that elicits awe or even careful reflection, but a perfect drawing can often be more detached than something rougher and more impressionistic. Sometimes I want a quick scribble that tells me how the artist feels about the building, but that's not much of a part of Hecq's work.

Steeltongued is another fine example of digital drums and atonal drones poking out of the darkness to create tension. That tension is rarely resolved, so the album overall feels a bit uneasy. Part of me wants to say "get to the point," but then when I listen to the album as a whole, I realize that the point may well be this vague discomfort. Nowhere is this notion better supported than in the track "I Will Survive," featuring Nongenetic from Shadow Huntaz. From what I can hear of the vocal, Non has delivered a strong anthem about creative persistence in a music industry riddled with sameness, but the vocal is so abused, tweaked, scattered, and removed from its natural habitat of a hip hop track that it feels like a struggle. It's as if Hecq has found the disembodied voice from a hip hop record and he has dissected it, rearranged it, and run some tests against it to see how it works. The result is fascinating if bizarre, and even when the beat kicks in, it always feels alien and disturbed. Maybe this is what hip hop would sound like if the vocals were left in time capsules for some future race of producers to play with.

Brainwashed - Hecq, "Steeltongued"

Written by Matthew Jeanes

Saturday, 20 June 2009 14:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 June 2009 14:12

On the other hand, the second disc of *Steeltongued* is a completely different story. By handing the title track over to a cartel of remixers, Hecq effectively gives up his style and perspective and lets others bring some variation. I'll admit that a single disc featuring twelve remixes of the same song didn't sound like a good idea when I saw the liner notes, but because Hecq's original is so vague in its intent, the remixes sound nothing alike and for the most part they sound nothing like the original--and that's a great thing. The remix disc winds up sounding like a great mix curated by Hecq instead of a self-indulgent tribute to a single song. Xabec turns in a strong and melodic take on the theme while Mothboy's grimey bass and Team Doyobi's complete reworking are both fantastic. Oddly, the remix disc may give us a little more insight into Hecq the man and the artist than the disc of originals. Together, the two discs add up to something more than their parts, and for once the remix album serves a purpose beyond being mere promotional filler. I needed something more human than Hecq's detached lens on the world provided, and in the remixes, I found it. I'll be interested to see if any of that energy translates into Boysen's future work, or if he'll continue to peer at us through his particularly controlled pinhole.

samples:

- [Steeltongued](#)
- [I Will Survive](#)
- [Steeltongued - Mothboy remix](#)