

Brainwashed - Tu M', "Monochromes"

Written by Creag Dunton

Sunday, 02 August 2009 08:55 - Last Updated Sunday, 02 August 2009 13:10



Consistent with the 12k sublabel's aesthetic, Tu M' are a duo of multimedia artists that work not only in the realms of sound, but in the video arts as well. Monochrome is four long tracks of laptop improvisations, recorded live by the duo. The video accompaniment is available via their Web site, but is unnecessary to enjoy the music. The album lives up to its title and is an intentionally minimalistic piece of ambient sound.

[Line](#)

The opening "Monochrome #01" drifts glacially on gentle reverberated string tones. The tones are offset by some lower frequency bass pulses and what sounds like the occasional slow, quiet cracks in an arctic ice floe. There are the occasional moments of denser layered sound, but it stays mostly soft and melodic throughout. The change and variation is present, but it's not a dramatic shift at all, and it has a consistent feel from beginning to end.

"Monochrome #02" is even more stripped down than the first, a buried ambient melody far, far in the distance that slowly comes into focus, but never dominates or becomes forceful. Instead, the swirling notes are content to haunt in the background under a gauzy layer of sound, like a thick fog around the entire piece. "Monochrome #03" is the shortest piece, clocking in at just over seven minutes. Unlike the prior two, it is a bit more forceful in its opening, with overt organ like notes swelling and then retreating like waves on a beach. There is less of a sense of sprawl here, as it feels more concise and rhythmic in its structure.

The closing "Monochrome #04" is nearly half of the album at almost 30 minutes. Dynamically, it follows the first two pieces more than the third, opening with almost pure silence, only the most miniscule tones lurk far off in the distance. The long, quiet opening resembles Bernhard Gunter's hyper-minimalistic compositions, but constructed with more melody and musicality rather than digital glitch fragments. Through the slow build, bass textures and reverberated space enter, the former like thunder far in the distance, but never really become loud. The sound begins to peel away about 2/3rds through the track, fading away into a glassy silence.

There are some very beautiful sounds here, but Tu M' seem almost intentionally set on keeping

Brainwashed - Tu M', "Monochromes"

Written by Creag Dunton

Sunday, 02 August 2009 08:55 - Last Updated Sunday, 02 August 2009 13:10

them in the distant background rather than being a captivating force. Perhaps that is the intention all along, given that this is music intended for gallery installations. It is extremely difficult to listen to this while devoting full attention to the music. However, in the background while doing other activities, the frigid ambience seeps in subtly, but is not easily ignored.

samples:

- [Monochrome #02](#)
- [Monochrome #03](#)
- [Monochrome #04](#)