

Brainwashed - Mika Vainio, "Áineen Musta Puhelin/Black Telephone of Matter"

Written by Creag Dunton

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On his fourth solo album for the label, one half of Pan Sonic passes on the bare minimalist techno pulse of that band, as well as his own Ø side project, and instead focuses on pure electronic sound that has all of the austerity of an art gallery installation with Dadaist sound cutups and a comfort in drifting into painful noise, as well as near silent sonic territory.

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The cut-and-paste randomness is most evident in the opening piece, "Roma A. D. 2727." While the title sounds like it could be a very bad sci fi movie from the 1970s, the sound is a variety of sweeping digital lines of static, shrill sine waves that morph into sputtering white noise, and the occasionally regal orchestral sweep of synthetic sound. Sometimes roaring and harsh, and other times it drops to near pure silence, it shambles without any particular flow, for better or worse. It doesn't have a sense of tight composition, but instead feels like random pastiches slapped together.

"Silencés Traverses Des Mondes Et Des Anges" has a more consistent structure to it, beginning with bird squawks, noise, and rain, like a post-apocalyptic soundscape. These sounds subtly segue into gentle stuttering waves of white noise. Occasionally these blast into more forceful territory, and occasionally matched with what sounds like an actual or synthetic didgeridoo, before dropping out to silence and then miniscule found sounds.

Dedicated to John Duncan, "Hautaa Hevosen Pää" ("Bury a Horse's Head") is a more rhythmic composition, beginning with icy ambience and static laced scrapes, there are buried melodies and reverberated textures that are more overt throughout.

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The psychedelic low frequency pulses and phased static buzzes give it a much different sound quality than those that preceded it. "In A Frosted Lake" is a very descriptive title: being the most reserved of the tracks, its subtlety causes it to slip into the background when listening, but its glacial sound are never fully ignorable.

"Ylimääräisen Antenni Lämpötilan Mittaus 4080 MHz: SSÄ" ("A Measurement of Excess Antenna Temperature at 4080 MI/S"), besides sounding like an electronic engineer's doctoral dissertation, features ultrasonic hums and buzzes with chiming distant loops far off in the distance. At the very end small bursts of what could be popular music appear, though so heavily filtered and effected to render them unidentifiable.

"Swedenborgia" and "Hengityttäjä" ("The Breather") are the most aggressive of the pieces. The former opens with field recording sounds but adds in power drill like bass tones and warm, fuzzy static. The volume drifts into harsh territories at times, and the end features what may be an actual real live cymbal, or a digitally modeled equivalent. The latter demonstrates a lot of quiet metallic rattling and pinging before massive static squalls and reverb buried crashes max out the intensity of the sound.

While demonstrating Vainio's love for clinically sparse digital textures, I think it is somewhat of a weaker album than his work with Pan Sonic, where the staunch minimalism is wrapped around sparse beats rather than here, where it is presented anomalously. It is a good album for sure, but it doesn't have the same unique or individualist sound that it could have otherwise.

samples:

- [Roma A.D. 2727](#)
- [Hautaa Hevosen Päänsäädin \(Bury a Horse's Head\)](#)
- [Hengityttäjä \(The Breather\)](#)