

## Brainwashed - Bruce Gilbert, "Oblivio Agitatum"

Written by Creag Dunton

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Some nine years into this millennium, this former Wire member has released his first album's worth of new material (*Ordier* was technically an archival release from 1996) just as the decade winds down and another begins anew. Here the sound harkens back more towards his earlier work for dance and installations rather than the full force electronic noise of

*In Esse*

or the more electronica based sounds of

*Ab Ovo*

[Editions Mego](#)



Sequenced across three tracks, with two short (around four minute) pieces around a 26 minute centerpiece, *Oblivio Agitatum* is more of a dramatic work rather than just a collage of electronic music. The opening title track begins with pulsing low end oscillations that are almost metallic in nature, scraping along until they eventually lead into more subtle territory. The shift goes from the abrasive sounds of before into calm tones that were always there from the beginning, but obscured underneath the surface by the obtuse scraping textures.

The long "Zeros" begins with a mix of processed buzz over softly rolling tones, each ebbing and flowing to alternately dominate the mix, as some dynamic low frequency rumbles like thunder across the night sky. The track is constantly moving, with the occasional alien stab or crackle off in the deep dark night. A sense of industrial menace is omnipresent, with mechanical and digital ambient noises all around but never fully perceptible. Various electronic squeaks and groans rise to resemble some sort of foreign language that is imperceptible, but still trying to express something tangible. The second half of the piece is more sparse, pulling away the more domineering sounds to let the quiet ones rise, leaving pieces to sustain on and on that otherwise were not as clear. Gently rolling tones and meditative passages are more characteristic of the closing half of the track, contrasting the dense, alienating mix of the first part.

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The closing &quot;Isopyre&quot; is more aquatic in its delivery while the prior piece was more astral. Burbling water and slowly drifting passages mimic the sounds of sinking in a deep, dark ocean with nothing but most faintest glimpses of light to illuminate the darkness around, the occasional rush of the oxygen tank calmly punctuating the abnormal with the reassuring sense of normalcy.

*Oblivio Agitatum* proves that even with his long silence, Bruce Gilbert is still an expert at shaping mini dramas and landscapes out of the raw clay of electronic music. While I've been a fan of essentially all of his solo work, it is here I am most reminded of his 1980s music for dance such as *The Shivering Man* or *Insiding*, which have always been among my favorites in his discography. It is a perfectly encapsulated sonic audio drama that is only too short in its duration.

samples:

- [Oblivio Agitatum](#)
- [Zeros](#)
- [Isopyre](#)