

Brainwashed - Small Color, "In Light"

Written by Creag Dunton

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On the surface, it seems odd that this album would be put out by Taylor Deupree's 12k label, one that is known for its challenging, often esoteric, output of heady clinical electronic sounds. Small Color is a band that leans far more into the realms of pop than expected from the label. However, by putting this album in the context of the label's discography, it both shows that 12k does not want to be pigeonholed and that there is far more going on with this band than only pop sounds: there's a world of complexity that fits right in on the roster.

[12k](#)

Perhaps it's not that absurd of a proposition, given that the short lived Happy sublabel channeled Deupree's love of Japanese pop music, but the more organic (and vocal based) material here is a bit different than I'm used to hearing from the collective. Now, different is good, and I must say that while normally this may not be my cup of tea, it is so well done that there's few complaints I could have.

Songs like "Daisy" combine the two worlds of acoustic and electronic music seamlessly, with ethereal, breathy female vocals from Rie Yoshihara delicately floating alongside swirling keyboards and stripped down beat boxes. "Hikari No Hana" is similar in approach, but the it shifts from acoustic pop to electronic ambience very subtly, when it fully locks into one extreme it begins to change its spots again.

Other songs stay more directly in the acoustic realm: "Hideaway" is a melancholy track that features chiming guitar and some extremely sad accordion playing that is lightyears away from the squawking polka sounds that is usually associated with the instrument. "Amaoto" takes a different feel, with Spanish guitar melodies and melodica working together, with almost no digital technology in sight.

"Life," however, is squarely in the realms of electronic pop, with keyboards and drum machines becoming almost dance friendly, but staying extremely restrained, allowing the sparse textures to be heard. "Lemmy" (doubtfully referring to Mr. Kilmister) also focuses more on the world of technology, using skittering electronic tones and rudimentary synthesizers with warm Wurliizer and accordion, a combination that, in this track, constantly changes and varies while sounding

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cohesive.

While it has elements from both complex electronica and delicate chamber pop, it never fully commits to any genre, which is an asset in Small Color's case. Far away from the world of so-called "J-pop," *In Light* is a beautiful little album that is perfect for a rainy day or any relaxed, intimate setting.

samples:

- [Daisy](#)
- [Hikari No Hana](#)
- [Lemmy](#)