

Brainwashed - Githead, "Landing"

Written by Creag Dunton

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Having kept both Githead and Wire active in the past couple of years, it is unsurprising that there has been some cross-pollination of style due to Colin Newman's presence in both bands. Last year's *Object 47* pushed out some of the more aggressive elements from Wire Mk. 3's sound and instead embraced a more ethereal pop sound parallel to that project's classic *A Bell is a Cup* album. Similarly, this new full length from Githead retains Wire's sharp and dynamic rhythm section, but brings in a greater pop sensibility along with Newman's unabashedly wonderful angularity.

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From the opening of "Faster," Githead channels both other projects and their contemporaries: the sharp drums and bass that open the track, later met with some post-punk influenced guitar chords could very well be the precision of Githead tackling Mission of Burma's *Vs*

. "Take Off" continues this early 1980s by way of 2000s electronic sense but adds in disconnected vocals courtesy of Malka Spigel that gives the perfect balance of nostalgia and progression, with guitars by Newman and Robin Rimbaud.

Other points of reference abound in the ten tracks that make up this album, but never do they feel lazy or out of place, instead they just simply work. The heavier riffs and snotty, agitated vocals of "Over The Limit" put it in a place where it could be a lost out-take from Wire's *Send*, though the lighter, ambient production colors it differently than the digital aggression that permeated that disc. Similarly, the drum 'n' bass tinged rhythm section and heavily processed vocals of "Displacement & Time" puts it in league with some of Newman's late 1990s work, though filtered through a real live band rather than a battery of

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sequencers and synths.

It wouldn't be Githead without a significant amount of unexpected turns, of course. The title track has the propulsion of bar band blues rock, but the gentle textures and effects on Spigel's vocals are much more shoegazy in nature. Immediately following is the jazz of "Ride", which cruises along on a beatnik coffee shop bassline and sparse percussion, the vocals alternating between singing and spoken word, before collapsing into a more traditional "rock" motif.

The overarching theme is unabashed pop music, which has been a frequent *modus operandi* of Newman's since the beginning, "Lightswimmer" is all lush, digital guitars and thick electronic production, while never sounding overtly electronic, the presence of machines is definitely felt. The simple "From My Perspective" is a short little piece that is pure ear-worm pop, the kind of song that at first seems too sparse, yet sticks around in one's brain much longer than the song's duration.

The closing "Transmission Tower" in some ways could be the "sore thumb"; I lamented not being present on *Object 47*. Clocking in at nearly eight minutes, it is a pensive, melancholy track that channels the best moments of late 1980s/early 1990s alternative rock, but in an entirely different, modernized framework. It uses its longer duration to its fullest, shifting from sparse sadness to aggressive, raw sounds and closes with a storm of heavy guitar textures. Its complexity and diversity make it stand out compared to the other tracks, but in a totally wonderful way.

Unsurprisingly, given their lineage, Githead has produced another album of complex pop music that is both comfortable and inviting, but confounding and obtuse beneath the surface. Listening to the album again as I complete this review during a cold North Eastern US weekend, the warmth and familiar atmosphere of the album mixed with the innovative elements could not come at a better time. Few bands are able to wrap up such a complex enigma in such a beautiful, infectious package.

samples:

- [Landing](#)
- [Over the Limit](#)

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- [Transmission Tower](#)