

Brainwashed - Current 93, "Baalstorm, Sing Omega"

Written by John Kealy

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This, the final part of David Tibet's trilogy of revelations that began with *Black Ships Ate the Sky*, is his most dizzying and hallucinatory work yet. Stripping back the heavy guitars that have been creeping steadily into Current 93's music, the songs here instead sound like they have been passed down through generations of Middle Eastern folk musicians. From the image of a young Tibet standing in front of Stonehenge on the back of the album to the lyrical themes of eternities, the weight of time hangs heavy around

Baalstorm, Sing Omega

. This is a surprising and rewarding change in tone for Current 93 that certainly ranks amongst Tibet's finest work yet.

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Each of the three albums in this series focus on different facets of Tibet's visions; the black ships destroying the heavens of the first album, the titanic Adam/Aleph character's bloodstained features and now the cataclysmic Baalstorm sweeping over the horizon. While Tibet's lyrics are rarely transparent, the songs on *Baalstorm, Sing Omega* are particularly dense in their imagery. Obviously Tibet is drawing even more on his vast readings not just in Coptic but also on a wider range of topics. The fallout of the nuclear "bikini blast" from *Aleph at Hallucinatory Mountain* manifests itself here with the repeated references to ions and aeons; "the infinite leak" having a half-life many times longer than the full lives of humanity.

The other striking aspect of *Baalstorm, Sing Omega* is how feminine it is; battles being waged by Amazonian warriors and an almost Joycean incorporation of women from Tibet's life into symbolic beings throughout the album. Magical Molly Blooms and apocalyptic Anna Livia Plurabelles take on the aspects of gods and divine symbols. The idea of motherhood, fertility

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and a new world gestating in an amniotic sea permeates the album: "Pulling down the moon and sun/From the thighs of the queen... The bump, the bribe, the breasts."

The music itself is also less masculine than on the previous albums; the electric guitars replaced with more graceful and limber strings. In particular, Eliot Bates' oud brings a sinuous element to the music, exotic and ancient melodies emerging from the bowels of the instrument. On "With Flowers in the Garden of Fires," his gorgeous playing combined with percussion (which appears to be a combination of Alex Neilson on a traditional kit and Eliot Bates on erbane and daf) creates a mesmerising musical arabesque. This is a long way both in time and space to Current 93's usual western folk influence and, unlike the previous two albums, the music is gentler. Despite the obvious power of the electric guitar, the haunted waves of *Baalstorm, Sing Omega* will erode Aleph's hallucinatory mountain.

Most of the album lacks the violence of the Aleph songs but that is not to say that this album remains completely sedate. The thumping piano refrain of "Baalstorm! Baalstorm!" propels an urgent Tibet as a mixture of Andrew Liles' electronics and guitars create a fuzzy fog around the lyrics. This tempest gives way to the peaceful and utterly beautiful "Passenger Aleph in Name." James Blackshaw's simple but bewitching glockenspiel motif repeats itself as the rest of the ensemble add texture and detail around it. As the music ripples outwards, John Contreras' cello swells up like the calm tide after a maelstrom.

Yet this is not some seasonal bout of bad weather, this is a flood of mythological proportions (biblical is too restrictive a term considering the breadth of Tibet's lyrics). Tibet's Baalstorm appears to be occurring on a scale that is either too small ("the split of an atom") or too large to be fully comprehended. This epic is so layered and personalised (though Tibet thankfully includes some explanatory information in the sleeve notes) that it is impossible for me, after only a week, to fully come to grips with what is going on this album. However, by the end of the album, the feeling that something large, black, and revelatory is on the horizon is impossible to ignore. The thunderclaps, the sound of waves both oceanic and apocalyptic and Baby Dee's fabulous electric organ come together on "I Dance Narcoleptic" to finish off the album (and perhaps the world) in style. Tibet's insistent lyrics might be hard to believe but the conviction is frightening. Interspersed with children singing Omega, the music starts to spin as I am caught in a whirlpool and drown in the deeps of Tibet's dreams. In the wake (or as I wake), the sound of Bill Fay's voice drifts through the murk like a messenger from the heavens. Suddenly I am free to take a breath again.

samples:

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