

Brainwashed - Craft Spells, "Idle Labor"

Written by Stephen Bush

Saturday, 02 April 2011 21:00 - Last Updated Monday, 11 April 2011 13:36



The cover art of Craft Spells' debut resembles a blurred close-up of one of the flowers adorning the sleeve of *Power, Corruption and Lies*. While this album is distinctly less stadium-sized than New Order's first of many masterpieces, it is no less riddled with reverb, nostalgia and vibrant hooks.

[Captured Tracks](#)

Image

Craft Spells is essentially one man, Justin Paul Vallesteros, who spent the winter months of 2009-10 in his bedroom working on the dreamy songs that adorn *Idle Labor*. The album evokes both the warmth of bouncy Balearic pop and the irresistible glow of mid-'80s New Order. Justin's songs have a distinctly handcrafted feel to them, yet he has pop smarts—it's easy to tell he has sanded down any possible rough edges on these songs, streamlined their synth and guitar melodies, and submerged them in bright, hazy production. Most of his lyrics are riddled with the nervous joy and excitement (and, as the album progresses, the uncertain ache) of newfound romance: "As we walked into the night / you kissed me and it felt right / all the lights follow closely behind / 'cause you and I will hold out 'til the morning light." Like many of my favorite lyrics, they often sound worthless on paper, but work well in context because they are so instantly relatable.

Idle Labor may not hit on anything groundbreaking, but I'm hardly bothered—I haven't heard '80s-styled new romanticism this evocative in some time. I want to see how Craft Spells evolve in the coming years (especially with a full touring band), but for now, this is a solid debut that I'll be playing often as summer approaches. Its best songs, most notably the massively catchy "After the Moment," are shot through with the starry-eyed bliss that Sumner & Co. perfected long ago—and all the better for it.

Brainwashed - Craft Spells, "Idle Labor"

Written by Stephen Bush

Saturday, 02 April 2011 21:00 - Last Updated Monday, 11 April 2011 13:36

Samples:

- [Party Talk](#)
- [From the Morning Heat](#)
- [After the Moment](#)