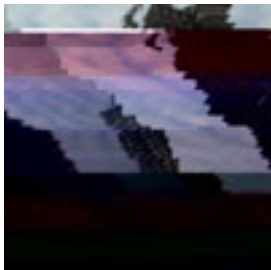


Brainwashed - Locrian with Christoph Heemann

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Locrian has spent the better part of the last four years distinguishing themselves from the also-rans of the post-Sunn O))) drone scene, crafting their own distinct sound and identity amid many less engaging acts. While much of their recent work has been focused on the deconstruction of metal symbolism, paired with a more conventional rock bent, here the trio go back to their dissonant, abstract roots, with help from legendary audio and visual artist Christoph Heemann.

[Handmade Birds](#)

image

On their most recent albums and collaborations, the trio of Terence Hannum, Andre Foisy and Steven Hess demonstrated a distinct turn in shaping the heavily treated synths and rapid guitar work into more traditionally song-like structures, without ever fully embracing conventionality. Here that is not quite as much of a noticeable feature, with the album divided into four 11 to 15 minute tracks that lead to longer, more experimental compositions.

Even the artwork shows some variance from the norm: the band's penchant for using the signifiers of metal are all but gone, replaced by what more closely resembles a corrupted jpeg file. The sound, however, is clearly the work of Locrian, though the contributions from Heemann expand on their shared themes and approaches to sound.

"Hecatomb" is perhaps the most familiar sounding. The drums are notable but low in the mix, with electronic loops and acoustic guitar strums almost giving a Morricone like soundtrack vibe to the sound. The layers are piled on, each one more complex and intertwined with the one before, all the while generating an almost imperceptible melody hidden in the detritus. Eventually it focuses on the droning guitars and keyboards, feeling more in league with the

earlier, more abstract Locrian works.

One characteristic Locrian has never traded in is the intentional, and usually overwrought, "evil" sound that other artists have embraced. Which is, I have always felt, a good idea. It helped them to develop their own identity without letting cliché overshadow content. However, on "Loath the Light," there is a horrifying sensibility via the crashing cymbals and bent synths, magnified by Hannum's tortured, guttural screams. Do not be mistaken: this does not come across as pseudo demonic high school metal bullshit. This is much more in league with *Nature Unveiled*

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Dogs Blood Rising

era Current 93, a hallmark of terrifying recordings, and transcends any corniness usually associated with such approaches.

The second half of the album is less visceral and more reflective, such as the layered guitar and propulsive low-end parts of "Edgeless City," which is by no means a lighter piece, but just feels dark, rather than overtly malignant. "The Drowned Forest" takes on a more monastic feeling, with chanted vocals starting out as the focus, with a subtle amount of musical accompaniment that eventually peaks into a complicated wall of sound. There is no sense of movement or propulsion to be heard, it instead makes for a slowly decaying piece that just looms imposingly.

It is hard to tell where the separations are between Locrian's and Heemann's contributions, and that is one of the hallmarks of an effective collaboration. Neither artist seems to overshadow the other, but both retain their own identities perfectly, with Heemann's gloriously concrete tones and post-industrial chaos matching with Locrian's metal tinged guitar and electronic layers. Both artists step a bit out of their comfort zones on this album, and the result is a glorious success.

samples:

- [Hecatomb](#)
- [Loath the Light](#)
- [The Drowned Forest](#)