

Brainwashed - Band of Pain/SRMeixner, "Priti Deceit"

Written by Creag Dunton

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Taking a cue from the politicization of the COVID pandemic, Band of Pain (Steve Pittis) and Contrastate's Stephen Meixner teamed up for this collaborative single, with each taking the lead on a solo piece, and then a balanced collaboration to conclude. Heavily based on samples of speeches and news reports, it is certainly a politically charged work, but one that remains heavily rooted in both artists' post-industrial and absurdist sensibilities.

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Band of Pain's "Priti Vacant" is pretty overt in the target of their ire: UK Home Secretary Priti Patel. A self-described right wing hardliner, Patel was involved in a lobbying scandal around COVID-19 contracts, which is where most of this disgust comes from. The piece itself is a myriad of echoed speech samples and bent electronic tones. The droning, open spaces are unrelentingly bleak, with an insincere sounding sample of "sorry" punctuating the less identifiable moments. In the closing minutes Pittis brings in a thin, distorted rhythmic thump that is all too short.

On the other side of this 10", the Meixner helmed "Deceit" opens up with some pummeling drum programming, but soon the focus is shifted to some American evangelical preacher's ranting about the disease and vaccination as a noisy, somewhat melodic passage is paraded through. What sounds like even further treated voice samples become an additional element, and Meixner utilizes an intentionally jerky stop/start dynamic throughout. The concluding collaboration "End Result" features less in the way of obvious voice samples but instead fragments of speech or other sounds, pulled apart and reconstructed into something entirely different. The layering is complex and the ambiguity is unsettling, bordering on creepy.

Contemporary political and social criticism aside, the two Steves have created a compelling single that certainly falls in line with their other works as Band of Pain and Contrastate. Idiosyncratic processing, heavily treated samples, noisy outbursts and even the occasional hint of rhythm feature heavily here. Tempered with just the right amount of black humor (fitting the

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topic at hand perfectly), the final product reminded me of the unconventional and challenging sample heavy music that was coming out of the UK industrial scene during the mid 1990s (which makes sense given the inception of these projects), but still sounding completely contemporary, nicely hinting at nostalgia while staying modern and fresh.