

Brainwashed - Zebu! “Chill Wave”

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I don't know if there is much surfing in their Massachusetts location but Zebu!'s eighth record is mainly powered by waves of surf-instrumental tunes. *Chill Wave* twists a retro beach party vibe into something more bracing, brooding, and raw: as suggested by the LP cover with overcast sky and big lump of rock sticking up out a cold, dark stretch of ocean.

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The core duo of Steve D'Agostino and Ted Leo are joined by bass players Jonathan Granoff and Stephen Surrect along with Peter Van Sicien on saxophone and they all whip up a trash aesthetic that thankfully avoids annoying slovenliness. Not everyone enjoys the saxophone in rock music but Zebu! combine guitars well with the abrasive honking for a sound that is refreshing and exciting without seeming over-muscled.

A couple of contrasting slower pieces allow for vocals and “Crown Heights” might even be described as country-surf, but generally Zebu! keep things brisk and succinct. Ultimately it doesn't matter if this record were recorded by people with sand in their hair and fresh out of a wetsuit. We can't all be Dennis Wilson, and elements of surf music are audible across the last 50 years of popular music from Phil Spector and Joe Meek to Jesus & Mary Chain, none of whom have been anywhere near a surfboard.

This broad context is where the odd out-of-time *Chill Wave* fits, if anywhere, and certainly more so than a music sub-genre of calming neon-club repetitive beats which the title might appear to indicate. The LP is in an edition of 300 and a fine reminder of how great it is to hold a piece of vinyl, to admire decent-sized cover art and not have to squint to read miniscule words on a CD booklet.