

Brainwashed - Michael Begg: The evolution of a voice.

Written by John Kealy

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Forming half of Human Greed, Michael Begg has been releasing increasingly exquisite nocturnal music for the last ten years. Along the way, he has joined forces with Clodagh Simonds' group Fovea Hex and has been dabbling with Colin Potter in various manners. John Kealy caught up with Michael via email to discuss his duo with Deryk Thomas, the changing course of his music and the role that a long-dead Egyptian played in the formation of *Fortress Longing*.



John Kealy (JK): How did Human Greed come about?

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Michael Begg (MB): Deryk [Thomas] and I have been creating recordings, albeit privately and under various names, since 1980. It was our main activity alongside nocturnal hill climbing and very petty crime until I left Edinburgh to go to Chelsea Art School in the mid eighties. We kept the habit up independently of each other right through the 1990s. I was trying to get established as a writer throughout the nineties and that had led to me into closer ties with theatre. There was a strong narrative tradition in Scottish theatre that I actually found uninspiring - suffocating, in fact, and so I began to take a deeper interest in more physical forms; Russian and Polish in particular. At this time my own musical vocabulary was beginning to stretch through one or two serendipitous introductions, and this, coupled with my growing doubts over the written and spoken word, my own grasp of it, its decreasing currency value, led to me trying to evolve an approach to narrative that didn't require text. It just so happened that the theatre show that I was working on at the time – 1999 – was called *Human Greed: A Mortality Play in Three Courses*. It just somehow stuck as the name. I am not particularly fond of it. It has always misrepresented what I'm about, but that kind of validates my doubts about language, I suppose.

When it looked like Human Greed was going to get a recording deal in 2000 I asked Deryk to come along. Who wants to have all that fun on one's own? "All that fun" – if only I knew!

JK: How do you feel Human Greed has changed over its lifespan? The last two albums seem to push far beyond what you achieved previously, is that reflected in your own creative processes?

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