



It is with incredible sadness that Brainwashed acknowledges the passing of Gil Scott-Heron, aged 62; poet, author, activist and musician; one of the most original, enduring voices in soul, blues, jazz and spoken-word music I have been blessed to hear.

Scott-Heron stepped into music in 1970 with his debut album, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, a first shot at addressing a variety of difficult topics—superficial consumerist culture, political hypocrisy, middle-class ignorance of the black man's struggle. His next two albums on Flying Dutchman Records, and his first two with keyboardist and long-time collaborator Brian Jackson, are among the most essential of Scott-Heron's recorded work:

*Pieces of a Man*

and

*Free Will*

, released in 1971 and 1972, respectively. There are far too many incredible tracks to cite from these records: his most recognized piece,

["The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,"](#)

is an effective representation of his spoken-word style, but merely the tip of the iceberg as far as his breadth of talent.

Scott-Heron struggled openly with drug addiction in recent years. In a sense, perhaps we were fortunate to have him with us for 62 long ones. His most recent work, last year's tremendous, gripping *I'm New Here*, was his first album in 16 years. It introduced a new generation of listeners to his voice, by then weathered and broken; with further investigation, it was an ideal gateway to explore his life's work and influence. If you haven't heard his swan song, lead tracks

["Me and the Devil"](#)

(originally by blues legend Robert Johnson) and

["New York Is Killing Me"](#)

are as good a place as any to start—if not

["I'll Take Care of You,"](#)

the album's assured, emotional centerpiece.

Scott-Heron was a brilliant musician and lyricist. Beyond his latest work, I would encourage listeners to start by seeking out the mournful rumination of ["The Get Out of the Ghetto Blues,"](#) the self-examining balladry of

["Pieces of a Man,"](#)

the funk blueprint of

["Home Is Where the Hatred Is,"](#)

## Brainwashed - Gil Scott-Heron, 1949-2011

Written by Stephen Bush

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and the smart social commentary of

["Whitey on the Moon."](#)

The joyous

["I Think I'll Call It Morning"](#)

is especially resonant in the wake of his passing—a more fitting obituary than any I could write him:

*Why should I survive on sadness  
And tell myself I've got to be alone?  
Why should I subscribe to this world's madness  
Knowing that I've got to live on?  
Yeah, I think I'll call it morning  
From now on*

*I'm gonna take myself a piece of sunshine  
And paint it all over my sky  
Be no rain...*

Let us always remember Gil Scott-Heron's legacy and influence: through his incalculable influence on hip-hop, soul, blues and spoken-word musicians of today, of course, but more importantly through Scott-Heron's own recordings, his timeless music and the valuable messages behind it.