

Brainwashed - Matt Elliott, "Farewell to All We Know"

Written by Eve McGivern

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On the eighth solo album from the French-based British musician behind Third Eye Foundation, it is impossible to not compare Elliott's delivery to late bard Leonard Cohen. Elliott's accomplished Spanish guitar craft further add to the resemblance, particularly if followed by Cohen's final album *Thanks for the Dance*. Working as a solo artist since 2003, Elliott has achieved a new aural mastery on his latest work. At the start of the new decade, we face anticipatory grief, a collective loss of safety, and ultimately have been forced to bid *Farewell to All We Know*

. Many artists use songwriting as a way of making sense of a bewildering world, and Elliott has crafted a perfectly timed accompaniment to grief, offering resignation and renewal with his heartfelt message "Maybe the storm has passed and devastated everything, now we just have to rebuild and live again."

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This is bleak but warm folk, embellished with gorgeous classical arrangements of composer David Chalmin, Katia Labèque's minimalist piano, Gaspar Claus' cello, and bass of Jeff Hallam. The album works its way through different stages of grief, presenting first the opening instrumental "What Once Was Hope" before segueing into the title track. In it, Elliott offers "...cheers to all that we had and to all that's now gone, say goodbye and so long as we dance on," as we collectively experience anticipatory grief of an uncertain future, but press on, finding power in acceptance. And there is acceptance in "The Day After That" as Elliott professes "...I'll seek to grow, although, although, right now I'm really low, so tomorrow, or perhaps, the day after that." Acknowledging and embracing grief empowers Elliott and he resolutely declares that "From this day on until they come to take me, life won't break me or crack me down."

One mechanism experts suggest to manage grief is to let go of what can't be controlled. "Guidance is Internal" seems to have been inspired from the phrase uttered by Jack King during the launch of Apollo 11. Prior to launch, a spaceship must make a transition from navigating based on the fixed point on earth to space-guided navigation; this "letting go" of the fixed point of earth is known as Guidance Reference Release (GRR). When Jack King said, "Guidance is internal," he was announcing that GRR had occurred, and it was at this point Saturn V

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transitioned from an earth-bound device to being a space vehicle. With nothing but acoustic guitar broken by staccato viola, the group's wordless unearthly wailing seeks to unearth the listener and encourage a switch to an internal guidance system. "Bye Now" feels the pull of gravity and acknowledges "reality is sinking deep." When things get really rough, it's easy to want to get out of the game. Elliott accepts this in "Hating the Player, Hating the Game," offering "Just look at where we're coming from, and where we seem to be heading toward." Nobody knows what the future will hold, and our sense of safety has been destroyed. "Those lights, what are they, flames? Or are they lights sent to guide away? No way of knowing until we get to them. But when we then arrive, perhaps we will burn or perhaps bathe in light." He swoops in for a lyrical kill by informing us that the game ends when we "take our place amongst the graves like good little slaves, no longer play, no longer a game."

There are many poignant moments here that describe the human condition. We want to rewind, to bypass the present moment, but alas, we "Can't Find Undo." "Aboulia," defined as a lack of will or initiative, can be a symptom of depression or dementia, and Elliott wants the listener to know he has been there, asking "Is this what it's like to crash, emotional whiplash? I know that you've crashed too. I know your pain and I feel you, and those who're just like you." "Crisis Apparition" draws us into a dream, where the dream is entranced by the eyes of a beautiful dancer, before waking to realizing the room is on fire. Like his home, his heart has been "reduced to ashes and [my] soul reduced to tears" but cautiously advises "Do not fear your death my friend, fear the pain that's yet to come." But ultimately, there is a realization all things must pass as the chorus of voices chant "perhaps the worst is over, over now, over forever" in the closing track "The Worst is Over."

With so much collective grief in the air, many of us will seek to push away these feelings because we fear that if we let one feeling in, a rush of other feelings will invade and it will never go away, but by acknowledging and letting the feelings move through, we can feel the grief and move forward. Artists use music and poetry to connect and inspire, and I encourage listeners to let this music flow through them. In moments of despair, the mind can conjure foreboding possibilities, but it can also dream up creative solutions and inspire great art. It's absurd to think we shouldn't feel grief right now.

And keep going.

[Sound samples can be found here.](#)