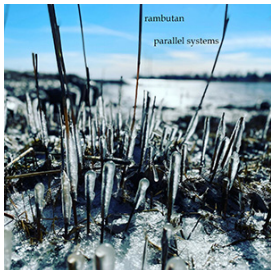


## Brainwashed - Rambutan, "Parallel Systems"

Written by Creag Dunton

Sunday, 06 June 2021 12:24 - Last Updated Sunday, 06 June 2021 16:49

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As his primary (and solo) project, Albany's Eric Hardiman's Rambutan is always in flux. Some of his many other projects are a bit more predictable: Sky Furrows is 1980s indie noise rock inspired, Spiral Wave Nomads is more free improvisation, etc., but Rambutan has always been something different. Sometimes the work is harsher, other times more subdued and atmospheric, and instrumentation can vary significantly from release to release. For this more conceptually album, there is even less predictability. Featuring 69 contributing artists across 33 pieces and over two and a half hours in length, it is fully encompassing of Hardiman's body of work, solo and in collaboration with others, and reiterates what a multifaceted and gifted artist and performer he is.

### [Sedimental](#) / [Tape Drift](#)

For *Parallel Systems*, Hardiman solicited a multitude of participants: friends, collaborators, and personal heroes, to submit recorded contributions that he collaged and blended over the past two years. There are a vast array of collaborators here: representatives from the local Upstate New York/Western Massachusetts scene (Mike Bullock, Rob Forman, Mike Griffin, Matt Weston, plus more), some legendary noise artists (Anla Curtis, John Olson, Howard Stelzer), and even the likes of Guy Picciotto of Fugazi/Rites of Spring, Mission of Burma's Peter Prescott, and Mike Watt.

The liner notes list what artists contribute to what songs, but even with Hardiman's intentional avoidance of over-processing the recordings, who is contributing what is not always clear. In some instances it is somewhat obvious: Hardiman's partner in Spiral Wave Nomads Michael Kiefer appears on drums for multiple pieces, and Mike Bullock's upright bass playing is rather distinct as well. Karen Schoemer, of Sky Furrows, contributes some obvious spoken word as well, although the songs that she appears on are far less rock-like in their execution compared to that project.

Regardless of who is doing what, the music runs the gamut across these two CDs. "System 2"

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is an excellent paring of idling hums and distorted, fuzzy melodies. Drums delicately punctuate the pleasant distortion and melody that snakes through he mix. For "System 14," Hardiman blends a backwards melody and crunchy abstractions with conventional bass, building layer upon layer into a strange combination of noise and structure. "System 6" also blends a sense of chaos with structure via mutated sounds, metronomic drumming, and lovely distorted bass guitar.

Other pieces sit more closely in either the noise or music ends of the spectrum. The droning buzzes and found sounds of "System 15" make for a slightly unsettling and harsher experience, while the overdriven, sputtering tapes and fragments of what sounds like a metal band's rehearsal cut in and out of the collage heavy "System 25," which comes across as intentionally disjointed, but somehow works perfectly. On the other hand, "System 7" is a mass of clattering sounds and what sounds like far off drum machine, but the rhythm, bass, and synths that appear morph into a unique, but clear form of melody. "System 20" is surprisingly traditional, with liquid bass guitar and distinct drumming coming together in a taut piece of dubby funk that make for a piece that stands out distinctly.

With so many artists and so much material on *Parallel Systems*, it is a lot to take in, but covering so many different styles and structures, it never feels like too much. Having the liner notes specify who contributes to which pieces certainly leads to the desire to identify who is doing what, but this certainly is not a case where the concept of the record outlines its content. Hardiman's approach of collage, rather than processing, those contributions is perfect since it results in the equal contribution of the participants, as well as his own, to the end product. Perfectly encapsulating the diversity of his own work, Hardiman's brilliance certainly does not take a backseat to this multiple collaborators but instead shines through even brighter. It is simply an amazing work on a massive scale that I find something new in each time I listen to it.

Samples can be found [here](#) .