

Brainwashed - Dan Friel, "Ghost Town"

Written by Matthew Amundsen

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The first solo full-length from Parts & Labor singer Dan Friel is filled with electronic pop instrumentals built around distorted beats and blistering melodies. Concise and catchy, it is hard not to get swept away by the enthusiasm and energy flowing from these boisterous tracks.

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Awash in effects pedals, oscillator squeals and whining modulations compete for attention over punchy beats. These elements frequently pull against each other to antagonistic effect but their struggles are mediated by syrupy melodies that resolve the conflict peacefully and pleasantly. While the rhythms and some of the supporting electronics may be abrasive, it's Friel's pop instincts that ultimately guide these songs. Unlike a lot of other noise or beat-driven music, he never belabors the point ad infinitum.

Friel proves himself a master of the craft on the title track that opens the album like a switchboard anthem. "One Legged Cowboy" uses a pretty basic blip as its foundation but is carried along by its whirring accompaniment. "Appliances," appropriately enough, might be an interpretation of a washing machine's cycle, whereas "Buzzards" is like a video game soundtrack with its 8-bit leads and sweeping rhythm.

Because the songs essentially have pop structures, I occasionally expected a voice, though not necessarily lyrics, to enter the mix for a brief change of pace, but that never happened. Even so, there's enough going on that these songs never overstay their welcome.

Friel's ability to make pop candy out of caustic components is what makes his music so enjoyable. While *Ghost Town* has only eight tracks and runs just shy of half an hour, Friel packs enough fresh ideas into each song to make this album a bewildering head rush.

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samples:

- [Ghost Town \(Pt. 1\)](#)
- [Appliances](#)
- [Buzzards](#)