

Brainwashed - Spiral Wave Nomads, "First Encounters"

Written by Creag Dunton

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In an unexpected flip for their second record, the duo of Eric Hardiman (Rambutan, Century Plants, Burnt Hills) and Michael Kiefer (More Klementines) improvised live. With the self-titled debut being the result of asynchronous file sharing and collaboration, *First Encounters* was exactly that: the first time the two had actually met in person in any context. That's anything but apparent from the sound though, as the duo play off of each other perfectly, making for a free form trip through psychedelic spaces with the verve of long time collaborators, even though that is not the case.

[Twin Lakes Records](#) / [Feeding Tube](#)

Lengthy opener "Evidence of New Gravitation" is immediately indicative of the album: rich guitar, nuanced drumming, and an overall complex sound considering it is only two instruments in play. The sound is clearly loose and free flowing, but it is also deliberate, as if the duo know exactly what they are planning to do next while simultaneously playing off of each other. There is an excellent sense of propulsion via Kiefer's punchy drums and Hardiman's noisy pre-grunge 80s noise rock guitar, with wildly varying dynamics. The same feel runs throughout "Radiant Drifter," where shimmering, chiming guitar is cast out over low rumbling drums that swell up to some excellent freak-outs, which then calm down again. The other two songs on *First Encounters*

feature the duo in a more understated synergy. The less structured "Fitful Embers" is all far away rattling percussion and erratic guitar drills, never coalescing into a solidified rock piece, but never coming off as directionless, either. Lengthy album closer "Of a Similar Mind" is a slower burn, evolving from open spaces, subtle melodies, and sparse cymbals. The growth is slow, but eventually erupts into rapid fire drumming, loud wah-heavy guitar outbursts, and a brilliant heavy psychedelic sensibility.

It is hard to not appreciate the backwards way that Michael Kiefer and Eric Hardiman have approached Spiral Wave Nomads. Waiting until the second record to actually meet in person is certainly not a strategy most artists would attempt, but they manage it perfectly here. Given how different its inception was from the first album, *First Encounters* has a rawer feel, but there is still a strong sense of consistency, and it is certainly the work of the same duo. With two LPs

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that complement each other so well, I am curious what collaborative approach a third will bring.

Samples can be found [here](#).