

Brainwashed - loscil, "Clara"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

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This latest release from Scott Morgan's long-running loscil project is a bit of a conceptual detour from his usual fare, as the entire album was "sourced from a single three-minute composition performed by a 22-piece string orchestra in Budapest." That is not all, however, as that brave composition's unconventional journey also included an intermediate stage in which it was "lathe-cut on to a 7-inch, then 'scratched and abused to add texture and color.'" Despite those unusual origins, *Clara* still sounds exactly like a loscil album, as Morgan is nothing if not consistent. In this case, that basically translates as "a slow-motion dub techno album lurking behind a grayscale ambient fog," but the magic lies in the execution (as always) and Morgan has never been a slouch in that regard. In fact, he succeeds on two fronts with this release, as *Clara*

is both another fine loscil album and an impressive feat of inventive de-/ re-construction, as Morgan managed to transform three minutes of music into a varied, absorbing, and dynamically satisfying album-length statement (and he made it all seem effortless and natural to boot).

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The opening "Lux" rolls in like a thick fog of slow-motion melancholy, as deep, exhalation-like chords swell and dissipate around a steadily intensifying core of shimmering drones. It is exactly the kind of piece I expect from loscil, which is generally a good thing, but there are a handful of other pieces that feel like something considerably more transcendent. The first such piece is "Lumina," which basically feels like the rough draft of "Lux" heard several drafts later, as it is centered around a similar theme of slowly billowing clouds of ambient murk. This time, however, there is a hissing and shuffling rhythmic undercurrent and a quietly bubbling arpeggio melody to elevate it into something far more memorable. It also seems to get better and better the more I listen to it, as Morgan is a master of textural nuance, as the bleak grandeur of "Lumina" is a feast of frayed, rippling, hissing, and billowing sounds that complement each other beautifully. The following "Lucida" is also noteworthy, as it delves into a brighter, warmer strain of glacial dub-inflected ambiance, but also has a subtly disorienting pulse that feels like a lonely buoy fading off into the distance of a sun-dappled sea. It is the two-song run that comes next that feels like the heart of the album, however, as "Stella" feels like an especially cinematic and noirish incarnation of *Clara's* themes, calling to mind a lovesick John Le Carre character brooding at a desolately beautiful beach in the winter, while "Vespera" is unexpectedly sensual and twinkling. Later, "Orta" is another strong candidate for the album's best piece, as slow,

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beautiful chords form a languorous, dreamlike pulse while submerged field recordings subtly enhance that blissful sense of unreality. Elsewhere, "Flamma" feels like another glimpse into the same haunting beach noir as "Stella," while the radiant thrum of the closing title piece feels like an angel giving a drone performance from inside a cloud. *Clara*

is more than a fresh batch of strong individual songs though, as the various pieces form a beautifully meditative and constantly evolving whole that feels akin to watching distant thunderstorms darken the skies (and then slowly dissipate) from the inside of a cozy seaside home.

Samples can be found [here](#) .