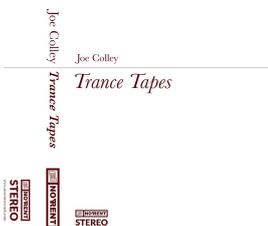


## Brainwashed - Joe Colley, "Trance Tapes"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

Sunday, 06 June 2021 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 09 June 2021 07:22

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Back in 2016, noise/sound art legend Joe Colley returned from a lengthy hiatus to release the solid *No Way In* on Jason Lescalleet's Glistening Examples, but he has been extremely quiet ever since, surfacing only to release a tape of a durational live performance last year. Happily, he is back again with another major statement and it is quite a monster. It is also unusually accessible at times, as *Trance Tapes* lives up to its name beautifully (though those trances inevitably curdle into nightmare territory). In some ways, this album resembles a classic noise tape on the more "industrial" side of the spectrum, as each of the four pieces is built from a foundation of relentless, obsessively repeating "machine-noise" to varying degrees. That is merely the starting point, however, as each piece rapidly blossoms into a vividly psychotropic mindbomb of viscerally buzzing frequencies and hypnotically repeating chirps, bleeps, throbs, and looping drones. I suspect many serious noise fans would roll their eyes or spit out their drink in disbelief if I had the temerity to proclaim this a career highlight, so I will refrain from doing that. However, it is extremely difficult to imagine a Joe Colley or Crawl Unit album in which he was able to realize his vision with more clarity and focus than he does with this near-perfect tour de force.

### [No Rent](#)

"Program One" kicks off the album with insistent, rapid pulses of machine-like hum that initially feel like a locked groove, but rapidly begin accumulating both momentum and layers of killer mindfuckery. By the time the piece is even one-third through, it has blossomed into a nightmare of gibbering, squirming, and clicking insectoid cacophony. It then dissolves into a throbbing and otherworldly coda of futuristic electronic chirps that accumulate high frequencies that make the air vibrate and my brain buzz. That sensation is an extremely familiar one with *Trance Tapes*, as Colley is quite adept at luring me into a numbed state with mechanical repetition while sneakily unleashing high frequencies that will relentlessly drill deeper and deeper into my consciousness. Anyone who makes it through that entire song at reasonably high volume will absolutely feel slightly insane by the end. I mean that as a compliment, but I suspect a person could easily be convinced that this tape was leaked from some secret CIA black ops project involving the weaponization of high frequencies.

"Program Two" gleefully keeps those more brain-burrowing frequency attacks coming (sharper than ever!), but also feels like an army of wind-up toys showed up as well. It is the album's

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greatest endurance test, but I feel like I am the one at fault for being too mentally weak to withstand the full force of Colley's merciless sensory assault. The second half is thankfully a bit less malevolently sanity-eroding, yet it is every bit as good. "Program Three" resembles a vast futuristic field of hissing sprinklers and robot lawnmowers that grows progressively more smeared and buzzy, while "Program Four" sounds like a couple of '70s synth guys attempting to mimic a (psychedelic) frog pond at night. Surprisingly, that final piece is almost semi-melodic at times, like a small but sweet reward for joining Colley in such a deep plunge down an oft-disturbing rabbit hole.

Samples can be found [here](#) .