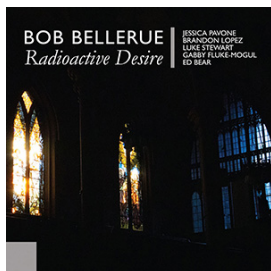


Brainwashed - Bob Bellerue, "Radioactive Desire"

Written by Creag Dunton

Saturday, 21 August 2021 22:40 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 August 2021 13:06



Described as "free chamber music in feedback environments," this massive double CD from New York based artist Bob Bellerue is a perfect blend of structure, improvisation, and chance. Based around rough compositional structures, but left wide open to improvisation, the five instrumentalists, along with Bellerue helming electronics and production, create a massive noise that distinctly reflects the time, place, and conditions in which this material was recorded.

[Elevator Bath](#)

Recording in two sessions on July 29 and 30 of 2020 at the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn, the physical space in which the performance occurred works like another piece of the ensemble. The players, including saxophonist Ed Bear, double bassists Brandon Lopez and Luke Stewart, violinist Gabby Fluke-ogul, and viola/organist Jessica Pavone all appear together on three of the six pieces (two of them are Bellerue solo, and one features just him and Pavone on organ), but even in these three works, it is often hard to discern specific players.

The expansive, bleak "The Longest Year" does have some identifiable buzzing strings from Fluke-Mogul and Pavone, but the space and production give it an unnatural, otherworldly color to the sound. The scraping and grinding sounds build into dense clusters not unlike some of Hermann Nitsch's early scores. "Bass Feedback" is, unsurprisingly, bass heavy, but also has some painfully shrill sections as well. Instrumentation is obvious at times, but the focus is on the abstract tones. The title piece shifts from harsh, distorted sax to scraped strings and a nasal insect buzz, later bouncing between horror film strings and dense noise walls.

"Organ Feedback," featuring just Bellerue and Pavone, is the closest to melody that *Radioactive Desire*

gets. At times almost synth-like, the layered tones blend together beautifully through the rather steady overall dynamic. On the other hand, Bellerue's two solo pieces are far closer to harsh noise than anything else. "Empty Feedback," which is just room noise and unattended

Brainwashed - Bob Bellerue, "Radioactive Desire"

Written by Creag Dunton

Saturday, 21 August 2021 22:40 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 August 2021 13:06

instruments, builds from hissy buzzes to machinery like hums to painfully shrill feedback. Everything from stabbing high frequencies to dense steady walls of sound appear. The near 40-minute conclusion "Metal Gambuh" is just that: a suling gambuh flute, metal, and feedback. Bathed in heavy natural reverb, it is a violent outburst of frustration, with oppressive sub bass underscoring the fuzzy crackles and droning noise.

Radioactive Desire is by its very nature an intense work. Recorded in a massive space, in oppressive summer temperatures after a long stretch of lockdown, and spreading out over two hours, there is a lot to absorb. With Bellerue leading the five performers in their improvisation, the intensity of this work is not just in the composition, but in the performance, as well as the space in which it was recorded. Everything is huge, but with such nuance that it never becomes too much to take in, with Bellerue's guiding hand beautifully guiding the material through all its disparate facets.

Samples can be found [here](#) .