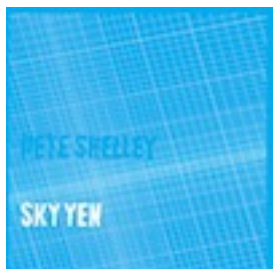


## Brainwashed - Pete Shelley, "Sky Yen"

Written by John Kealy

Sunday, 22 April 2012 14:34 - Last Updated Monday, 23 April 2012 01:15

---



Aside from his role as the lead singer of The Buzzcocks, Pete Shelley briefly operated his own label, Groovy Records, devoted to strange electronic music. Drag City have reissued the full Groovy catalog including this mesmerizing solo album by Shelley. Consisting solely of shifting oscillator patterns, this is a far cry from the short, choppy punk he is best known for yet is just as engaging as his more famous efforts.

### [Drag City](#)

Itunes

Recorded in 1974, *Sky Yen* pre-dates any of Shelley's or his contemporaries' forays into punk. The music falls closer to Cluster or Tangerine Dream than to The Sex Pistols or The Clash. It is hard truly pin it down as it never settles into the easy drones that many

*Kosmische*

groups often employ. This material remained shelved until 1980 when The Buzzcocks had peaked (and were beginning to decline) and Shelley had the means to create his own label. I can only imagine how Buzzcocks fans reacted to the lengthy, abstract sounds contained within the grooves of

*Sky Yen*

The music is surprisingly aggressive; the tones Shelley generates are at times piercing and linger for longer than is comfortable. Yet for all the sharp edges, *Sky Yen* is quite engaging. Throughout the first part, Shelley creates a solid, unyielding force field of high-pitched waveforms. He holds some of them for a long time and they form a relentless resonant backbone for the piece. More chaotic whirrs and whistles scatter from the speakers, invading the room like nimble, miniature spacecraft.

## Brainwashed - Pete Shelley, "Sky Yen"

Written by John Kealy

Sunday, 22 April 2012 14:34 - Last Updated Monday, 23 April 2012 01:15

---

The second piece unfurls in much the same way though has more in common with air raid sirens than music. While this would normally be alarming, it is so insistent that it captivates me and holds my attention far beyond expected. While Shelley does not rein himself in, he also does not aim for the volume and frequencies the likes of Merzbow or Whitehouse employ. His goal is total immersion, not hearing loss. By the end of *Sky Yen*, my ears feel cleansed in a way rarely achieved by any medical intervention. I honestly do not know whether I will come back to this album often but I do feel that it will be occasionally be spun when I need to clear the cobwebs from my mind.

samples:

- [Part 1](#)
- [Part 2](#)