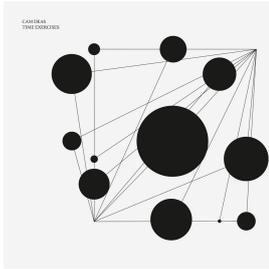


## Brainwashed - Cam Deas, "Time Exercises"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

Sunday, 17 June 2018 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 18 June 2018 08:25

---



I have been casually familiar with London-based guitarist Cam Deas for years through his many "post-Takoma" releases on Blackest Rainbow, but the Cam Deas of the past bears virtually no resemblance to the artist responsible for the visceral and deranged *Time Exercises*. Deas' campaign of radical reinvention appears to have begun sometime around 2011 with his *Quadtych*

series and fully blossomed (or so I thought) with 2014's *String Studies*

, in which his guitar became a mere trigger for squalls of atonal and spasmodic electronic chaos. With

*Time Exercises*

, Deas gamely ventures still further from his comfort zone, setting his guitar aside completely to focus on complex modular synth experiments. The album's prosaic/academic-sounding title is an amusingly huge and deceptive understatement though—a far more appropriate title would be "Nightmare Studies" or "Holy Fuck—What

is

This?!?," as

*Studies*

aesthetically resembles a cross between Rashad Becker's *Notional Species*

and a seething pit of digitized snakes from a hellish alien dimension.

### [The Death of Rave](#)

The five numbered "exercises" on *Time Exercises* feel very much like nearly interchangeable variations on a theme to human ears, so it is quite hard to differentiate them using any established/conventional musical vocabulary. That being the case, the opening "Exercise 1" lays down the template and effectively sets the album's hostile, undulating, and unsettlingly alien tone. The initial theme can be best described as "sputtering, incredibly dense synth tones shaken by seismic shudders from below and strafed by menacingly dissonant swoops from above." Very quickly, however, that motif is torn completely apart and the piece settles into a strangely lurching miasma of erratic percussion amidst massive, cacophonous snarls that feel like the very fabric of the universe is being brutally rended. It is the sort of scene that would have made HP Lovecraft weep in admiration, then probably stop writing forever, as mere words

## Brainwashed - Cam Deas, "Time Exercises"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

Sunday, 17 June 2018 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 18 June 2018 08:25

---

cannot come close to conveying the all-engulfing extra-dimensional horror that Deas unleashes. The following "Exercise 2" is comparatively understated, resembling a disjointed and deconstructed pile-up of primitive percussion that suggests an ancient tribal ceremony in a deep jungle that is conjuring forth menacing demonic shadows that block out the sun. That is just a mere prelude though, as the piece then erupts into a squirming smear of slithering, sickly, and grotesquely glimmering synths. To his everlasting credit, Deas then finds a way to get even darker, as that motif is disrupted by something that sounds like a massive appliance tumbling down an endless flight of stairs in extreme slow-motion with all of the resultant clanking and clattering warped nightmarishly. This album is so twisted that sound waves cannot even be trusted to travel through air predictably.

"Exercise 3" is yet another stunner, resembling a vast, squirming nest of impossibly massive, slime-coated serpents and perhaps a flock of hapless geese caught in their midst. Elsewhere, "Exercise 4" feels like a slowly building gale of howling winds, but then the skies suddenly clear...and the clouds open up to unleash a sky-obliterating swarm of massive, murderous hornets. I definitely did not see that twist coming. Unexpectedly, the closing "Exercise 5" betrays some rare hints of conventional musicality, as cosmic synth drones glimmer and streak across dark skies as the ruined earth shudders, smolders, and collapses beneath. It is a fitting end to a truly disturbing album, as it feels like I am getting one last glance from space at the final paroxysm of a world where hell has opened up to drag the living into its fiery depths.

Even that description feels tame though, which speaks volumes about the degree to which Deas has succeeded in crafting a visceral and disturbing horror of an album: *Time Exercises* definitely feels like hell has boiled up from the ground to consume the earth, but it does not even feel like

*our*

hell. Rather, it feels like some kind of incomprehensible extra-dimensional hell that I could not have previously imagined. Unsurprisingly, I am quite floored by that vision and the execution is quite stunning as well. I definitely did not expect anything like this to come from the mind of Cam Deas, nor would I have expected it from anyone else's (aside from perhaps Becker after a complete psychotic breakdown). That is probably the point though: these infernal and unhinged sounds likely were not Deas' explicit vision so much as they were the utterly unearthly fruits of an inspired attempt to leave established patterns behind through math and electronics. I would definitely say the exercise worked, as this does not sound like an album that came from our planet: Deas has ambitiously constructed a harrowing and vivid alternate world seemingly uninfluenced at all by humanity's accumulated wisdom regarding melody, harmony, and rhythm.

In lesser hands, such a feat might feel like noise or sheer randomness, but that is not the case at all here. If Rashad Becker's

*Traditional Music of Notional Species*

felt like field recordings of jabbering and chirping animals in an alien rainforest,

*Time Exercises*

goes one step further and exquisitely imagines their nightmares.

## Brainwashed - Cam Deas, "Time Exercises"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

Sunday, 17 June 2018 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 18 June 2018 08:25

---

Samples:

- [Exercise 1](#)
- [Exercise 3](#)
- [Exercise 4](#)