

## Brainwashed - MJ Guider, "Sour Cherry Bell"

Written by Eve McGivern

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The third release from musician and DJ Melissa Guion was recorded largely in her home, with only limited studio time, and is truly a step forward from her earlier releases. Where 2018's *Precious Systems*

had heavy emphasis on ethereal moodiness,

*Sour Cherry Bell*

delivers a bigger punch, one that is more forceful and up-front — raw power. The release is filled with dark synthesizers and demanding drum machines, balanced by airy, angelic vocals and atmospheric soundscapes for a moody and dreamy effect that suggests movement: mental, emotional, and physical. This quickly became a 2020 album of the year for me.

### [Kranky](#)

Layered with cascading sounds, awash with reverb and modulated vocals, Guion crafts emotionally charged soundscapes that come from a place of heartfelt experience. The music reinforces a sense of open space, both of expansive landscapes, as well as the clubs and dance floors that used to be active pre-pandemic.

Looking forward post-pandemic, if I were to pick this album off the shelves, I would expect written notes from DJs to span a wide gamut, beginning with "The Steelyard:" 'cold, dreamy, heavy, persistent drum machine.' But reading further, the notes 'moody, dreamy, ethereal -- let's get lost!' written elegantly next to "FM Secure" suggest this is not music exclusive to the dancefloor. Inky scrawlings next to "Sourbell" read 'crushingly emotive vocals, driving beat' while below, scribbled next to closing track "Petrechoria" reads 'somber, sparse, dark, dearmy.'

My first listen to "Quiet Time" suggested a feeling of ocean waves crashing to the shore, pulling back in retreat, then returning to crash on the beach again. The track starts off with a throbbing and metallic synth beat into an entirely pulsating rhythm akin to powerful waves, pulling back and softening about halfway and allowing Guion's airy vocals to be lost in the mix — only to have the music shift about halfway and return forcefully with a vengeance, reinforcing a forceful

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return. Hurricanes are a common occurrence in New Orleans, and Guion has noted that the song reflects the eye of the hurricane, the retreat of the onslaught and the destruction that comes after. Both interpretations offer the sense of movement that may be expected from this album.

New Orleans is known for many things, but not for a burgeoning scene of electronic music. There are a couple electronic names that come to mind: Telefon Tel Aviv being the most well-known, and the less well-known (but personal favorite of mine) Marker, who tours as part of her live band. *Sour Cherry Bell* is worthy of recognition, and with such a strong showing may prove to change New Orleans' standing in that genre. This is a welcome release for 2020, and I can't wait to see what else MJ Guider has in store.

Sound samples may be heard [here](#) .