

## Brainwashed - Bob Mould, "Blue Hearts"

Written by Eve McGivern

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Bob Mould's career stems from a raw rock aesthetic full of fury, but he has never limited himself to it, as can be attested to as recently as his 2019 album *Sunshine Rock*, awash in joyful power pop melodies. Cue up 2020 and almost on a complete turnaround, he fully unleashes on *Blue Hearts*

, holding nothing back of the raw emotions that many of us have been experiencing. Utilizing a power trio format that is his earmark, Mould has crafted a raging slab of mobilizing brilliance that is both a reactive and proactive rallying cry for our future, dialing in to anger, disbelief and disorientation that transcend the current headlines, filtered through Mould's own storied past.

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Mould gets the mildest track out of the way immediately with "Heart on My Sleeve," but lyrically, he clearly sets the stage for the ride to come with this track: "The West Coast is covered in ash and flames / Keep denying the winds of climate change," seething with disgust at the current administration fostering a culture of climate change denial. "The rising tide of a broken government...don't know who to believe, don't know what to believe anymore." Unlike the first track, the rest of the album is melodically a frontal blast to the heart, fury turned to maximum and no critical topic left untouched. Apart from the aforementioned climate change, Mould addresses the future we are leaving for the "Next Generation," the decay of free speech, the reintroduction of anti-LGBTQ policies, lambasting the current narcissistic U.S. administration, pseudo-Christianity, aging in a time of crisis...phew. If that is not enough, Mould questions how one can not only maintain one's humanity through it all, but continue to grow.

There is much raw anger throughout the album, but *Blue Hearts* also finds Mould opening up about his personal life as well, as he does on "When You Left," a heartfelt and vulnerable look at a past relationship. "Little Pieces" is a naked assessment of overcoming the challenges of aging. "The last few years have been so frustrating, I lose little pieces of myself each day. The lines get deeper on my face each season, say I don't care as I weather away." "Everything to You" offers optimism in spite of our failings ("We get there somehow with not much know-how") and "Leather Dreams" is a provocative and honest look at his sexual preferences.

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Lead single "American Crisis" was originally written for *Sunshine Rock* but left off for stylistic reasons. *Blue Hearts* was an album written around it. "Wake up every day to see a nation in flames, we click and we tweet and we spread these tales of blame. It's another American crisis, keeps me wide awake at night." The key word here is "another." Mould lived through the 1980s as a young, gay man touring in an America that was chillingly mute on the AIDS crisis. "Silence = Death" was true then, just as it is now, and Mould reminds us that we are experiencing a tragically parallel chain of events in continuing to treat so many tragedies with denial and inaction.

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