

## Brainwashed - Asteroid No. 4, "Northern Songs"

Written by Eve McGivern

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The tenth full-length from Asteroid No. 4 finds this group of professed musicologists flowing between a myriad of musical styles, each tinged with the band's brand of psychedelia, with a balance between jangly and anthemic melodies. Having relocated from Philadelphia to the Bay Area, their sound takes on a less grungy east coast feel, opting for a more open, "cool" west coast feel, extra bass added to offset the lighter notes with heavier undertones. While less drenched in lysergic reverb, their romance with the past still runs deep, nostalgia a key thread throughout the album.

[Cardinal Fuzz](#) (Europe) / [Little Cloud Records](#) (USA)

Part of the independent psych scene since the mid 1990s, the group has a penchant for textured guitars and reverb-drenched harmonies reminiscent of the British indie sound of the 80s and 90s, with doses of late 60s jangle that inspired their music. *Northern Songs* finds them truly DIY, entirely in their own studio with no guest appearances, and mixing and mastering entirely by the band for the first time since 2006. The title itself refers to the location of the newly located band to their northern California studio in San Rafael. Yet their latest offers a more polished sound, trading reverb for atmosphere, and dialing up the bass for a more polished but haunting effect, as on "Swiss Mountain Myth." The song was inspired when inclement weather stranded the band in a small Swiss town with their tour bus driver, with whom relationships were already strained, and whom had taken to carrying around a machete-sized knife. The band attributes the event as their personal version of *The Shining*. While polished, this does not mean the album is refined of all edges; there are bangers like "All Mixed Up" and "Hand Grenade" that take no prisoners, and fuzzed out spacescapes like the riffs-heavy "No One Weeps."

Their reverence to 80s-90s reverb can be heard on "No One Weeps," with a bass line reminiscent of *Psychocandy*, but musical elements aren't limited to this era alone; in fact, "Paint it Green" could potentially be mistaken for a reworking of David Bowie's "Heroes." The group pulls from their musical knowledge to incorporate homages across decades, from 60s pop and beyond, but is not bound to any decade, timeless pop hooks that find a home just as easily in 2020. Lyrically, the album is scattered with current social and political commentary. Hooky, well-crafted melodies provide an air of pop-driven nostalgia, hearkening back to what may feel,

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to many, like a more normal time compared to today.

[Samples available here.](#)