

## Brainwashed - Francisco López, "A Bunch of Stuff (1980-2020)"

Written by Creaig Dunton

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Francisco López has been active and rather prolific for 40 years, and *A Bunch of Stuff (1980-2020)* is the first true retrospective release he has assembled thus far. While there have been a multitude of compilations or boxed sets, those consisted largely of thematic releases or previously unreleased works. This 12 hour USB drive, consisting of uncompressed excerpts from 138 pieces and categorized by style, acts as probably the best, and most thorough, introduction to his staggering discography. Standing alone as a diverse and compelling compilation, it also serves as a gateway work for anyone looking to further explore his lengthy career.

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I was immediately surprised by the title of this release. Given his usually austere presentation of untitled, numbered pieces and stark packaging, *A Bunch of Stuff* has an almost cavalier ring to it, but his approach to art is anything but. I suppose

#### *Greatest Hits*

would probably be too tongue in cheek, and

#### *A Young Person's Guide to Francisco López*

would be leaning a bit too much into prog rock pretentiousness. Given its career overview nature, either one would have been justified. The casual title and clever classification of pieces certainly makes this collection more inviting to the neophyte, especially given his run of CDs in empty jewel cases and only the slightest of on-disc printing to discern them.

The drive is split into 15 folders, each collecting a series of excerpts that range mostly from between three and six minutes. The folders are all thematically categorized by either their source materials or their overall sound/concept. For example, "Delusional Cinematic" is made of pieces that are pseudo film soundtracks (in some cases complete with simulated sound effects) while "Mutated Locations" are field recordings that have been otherwise processed or treated. López does an exceptional job in creating these edits as well, since most sound like stand alone pieces rather than, in some cases, only four minutes of an hour long composition.

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Each segment also is an excellent means of showcasing his stylistic and technical evolution as well. The earliest piece under "Delusional Cinematic," "Untitled (1984)," has more in common with early noise recordings with its overdriven analog roar and cut up layers. However, the metal scrapings and what seems to be recordings of airplanes have a film sound effects quality to them. This compared with 2020's "DSB," which is a narrative unto itself; from its radar ping openings to its engine sounds into dramatic space is the perfect audio presentation of a missile being shot from a submarine into the cosmos.

The "Nice Noise" folder balances these complex narrative-like works, which is essentially his harsh noise side. From 1985, "Messor structor" is pure hollow waterfall wall noise, with no apparent underline theme other than sound for the sake of sound. "KRMN-FL" from 2009 is a sustained symphonic swell of what sounds like an army of insects, blended with elongated tones and layers that stay harsher throughout, but have a distinct, unified flow to them. On yet another end of the spectrum, the "VirtuAural Machines" section of processed machinery sounds and field recordings make for a handful of rhythmic works that range from the nanoscale clicks and scrapes of "Klokken" to the layered industrial factory rhythms within "Labs" to the mechanic shuffle beat of "Fabrikas." The end product is a series of works that sound not far removed from *Esplendor Geométrico*, which is not too surprising given López's project with Arturo Lanz as BioMechanica.

The most impressive thing here is simply the wide range of works he has recorded thus far. "Untitled #241" (part of the maximalist "All In" category) is one of the most non-organic recordings I have ever heard, with odd beeps and a tactile crunch that, at times, I thought may have been physically damaging my headphones given the intense sub bass that rhythmically throbs throughout. Conversely, 1996's "Paris Hiss" (part of "Medium With No Message") has subtle warmth to it, consisting solely of dubbing one blank tape to another hundreds of times and leading to a gentle white noise hiss and slow frequency sweeps.

At 12 hours, there is simply a massive amount of compositions to absorb in here, but the classification makes jumping in and out depending on mood an easy option. There are also detailed liner notes included, in some cases explicitly detailing how the pieces were created, and at other times only the most sparse of details. There may be a handful of people out there who own Francisco López's entire discography who would see this collection as unnecessary, but I doubt there are many. Instead I figure there are a lot of fans (such as myself) who pick up an album here and there not knowing what to fully expect, or others who are familiar with his name but have no idea where to start. *A Bunch of Stuff* is aimed at the latter two groups. Hearing isolated sections of a work is certainly a motivator to seek out the full album, but even as a stand alone release, it covers a lot of fascinating territory and showcases a singular artist who continues to put out fascinating and innovative works four decades in.

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[Samples Available Here.](#)