

Brainwashed - Four Tet, "Sixteen Oceans"

Written by Eve McGivern

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Sixteen Oceans is sixteen tracks of the innovative and varied explorations Kieran Hebden is known for, weaving danceable and airy, meandering sounds—and everything in between—into a colorful sonic tapestry. For this album, he creates a sweet retreat of wistful reverie, wavering between fragile notes and jubilant grooves, serving up a suite of tunes that offer a welcoming release and leveraging music's power to restore. Like the oceans referenced, it's a fresh breath of fresh, invigorating air, soothing and uplifting in a way that requires little in the way of listener participation other than to sit back and enjoy the ride—a welcome change from much of 2020.

Text

It may have been unintended at the time, but there is a feeling of healing throughout this album: harps, chimes, sitar, dulcimer, flute, timpani, bells, harpsichord, and more are strewn through dreamy synthesizer sounds. The interspersions of bird calls further add to this effect. The primary tracks are held together by the infrequent ambient interlude that make for peaceful listening, but even the lively tracks are buoyed by underpinnings of "peace through movement." Have a listen to "Something in the Sadness" for reference, a track exuding dancefloor energy with a persistent zen-like beat, but bubbling with sensuality and gentleness by way of a subtle strike of twinkling keys, calculated rhythm of background chimes, and a soft layering of harpsichord.

From the outset, the album starts strong with the energetic "School." There are five other "physical" movers: "Baby," "Teenage Birdsong," "Love Salad," "Insect Near Piha Beach" and "Something in the Sadness." Yet, with all the subtleties at play in these tracks, they are candidates for cross-overs to the more "mental" movers like "Harpsichord," "Romantics," "Bubbles At Overlook 25th March 2019" (a fairly self-explanatory title), and especially "4T Recordings." This track is an ambient mantra, an electronic raga of atmospheric proportions, that takes time to get into but is rewarding as it builds. It strikes a polar opposition to the more

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physical tracks, but is a prime mental mover that encourages the listener to get lost in. My only complaint is that 4T ends too abruptly, waking me from my reverie; thankfully, it is followed by the gorgeous "This is For You," a modulated piano-driven interlude populated with bird and water sounds, eventually flowing into the closer "Mama Teaches Sanskit" which further repeats themes of nature and fully retreats into the mental model of movement, moving far from the dancefloor and into the ears.

This album was released in March of this year, so why write about it in November? This review follows one of the most contentious and divisive elections in American history, and Four Tet's blissful, dancefloor music is exactly the cure for what ails after a long, arduous journey. This is a prime example of the power of music to lift spirits, and Four Tet's music serves as a reminder of the power to unite people on the dancefloor, exuding an optimism of it's return.

[Sound samples available here.](#)