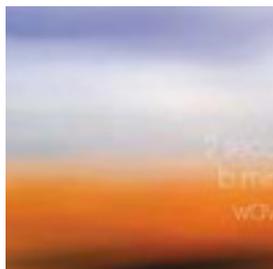


## Brainwashed - Michael Pisaro/Taku Sugimoto, "2 Seconds/B Minor/Wave"

Written by Lucas Schleicher

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Time of the metronomic kind gives shape to music. It defines the tempo of a song, fixes when sounds should and shouldn't be played, and determines mood as surely as major and minor keys do. On *2 Seconds/B minor/Wave*, Michael Pisaro and Taku Sugimoto reverse that relationship and employ sound to illuminate the physical shapes and vaulted spaces of time. The product of independent performances, this album comes together in an astonishingly cohesive way, meaning that besides being a perspective-bending and aleatoric success, it is also a beautiful 60 minutes of music. Listen closely or let it pass over you, either way it furnishes many rewards.

### [Erstwhile](#)

Pisaro and Sugimoto pull back the curtains on their first collaborative record with the pellucid ring of a sine wave and the clink of some unidentifiable objects. This sound reaches into the room and drifts like smoke into the corners, where it finally resonates and settles like a thought. And then the next glassy wave of sound rolls out behind it and the show has begun. What follows are three pieces that were recorded separately, in Japan and California, and combined afterward. Beyond agreeing to record without hearing each other, Pisaro and Sugimoto came up with some basic rules to help guide their performances. They decided that each song would last exactly twenty minutes, and that each would be shaped by a simple concept, which each title explains very well. "2 Seconds" indicates a unit of measure or pulse from which to begin, "B Minor" dictates a key, in which Michael provides the melody and Taku the harmony, and "Wave" suggests just a wave, whatever that might mean to them as performers. All else was left up to chance, including which instruments were to be used.

The resulting pieces are quiet and surprisingly accessible, filled with melody, and punctuated by seamless bouts of motionlessness and silence. These silences aren't so long or frequent that they dominate the music, but they do alter its sense. On "2 Seconds," with Taku regularly tapping objects together and sometimes utilizing what sounds like a power drill, Pisaro drops his tones into the near-silence the way someone might drop pebbles into a pond. Dropped one at a time, these tones bloom like a flower and give shape to the space and time into which they fall, in just the same way that a dropped pebble would send ripples across a pond's surface.

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Because a sine tone's shape and duration are wound together so inextricably, and because Pisaro and Taku's performances work so well together, the music ends up giving a tangible shape to time. As Michael increases the complexity and sends more tones crossing and quivering into each other, the normal sense of time also increases in complexity, until it finally explodes. Minutes and seconds cease to be adequate indicators of its quality, and things like density, color, and emotion take their place. And listen closely, because even Taku's seemingly regular contributions work to subdivide and mince time's typical forward crawl.

"B Minor" is also a quiet and inward song, and thanks to the silences and the sense of space that infuse its melodic and harmonic phrases, it too feels like a song that is in control of time, rather than the other way around. But, its main attraction isn't this feat, it's the almost impossible sympathy that shows up in Michael and Taku's playing that takes center stage. Their performances are so complementary that it's hard to believe they were recorded in isolation. Pisaro and Sugimoto lace consonant harmonies with bouts of dissonance, half-bluesy progressions, and broken rhythms as if they were listening to (or maybe even watching) one another very closely. In places, the affinity is so strong that the music sounds composed. Of course, their restrained playing goes some way in explaining why two such performances might blend so well, but it doesn't account for the almost impossible rapport they so obviously share.

The closer, "Wave," ventures into entirely different territory, with Pisaro providing field recordings of waves from the California coast and Sugimoto laying down a time-freezing drone. Here, the sympathy they built over the course of the album breaks down a little. Both their contributions sound like they could be standalone pieces, and besides the obvious conceptual connection, there isn't much going on in the way of integration. Instead, there remains the still hum of Sugimoto's drone and the surge of the ocean. Whether they contrast or not is left entirely, and appropriately, up to chance and whoever is listening. Once they both stop, the album ends and the curtains close, but that more robust sense of time sticks around for much longer, as does the beauty of the entire record.

samples:

- [2 Seconds](#)
- [B Minor](#)
- [Wave](#)