

Brainwashed - Sult, "Svimmelhed"

Written by Lucas Schleicher

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Rhythm is often a matter of togetherness. It binds songs like mortar, measures melody and harmony, marks the entrances and exits of instruments, and draws distant ideas into close proximity, if not for the sake of a single voice, then for the sake of single performance or a unified work. Though they are a quartet of two contrabasses, percussion, and guitar, Sult rejects that mode of timekeeping on *Svimmelhed*. Repeated patterns and measured distances are supplanted by an anatomical focus, on the particulars of steel and nylon strings, plastic drum heads, and wooden bodies. Sult break the gluey qualities of their instruments into atomic elements, then separate and catalog them like isotopes or tints and shades of a mother color.

[Conrad Sound/Humbler](#)

iTunes????

Recorded in Oakland, California, *Svimmelhed* (Danish for “dizziness”) is a transatlantic collaboration between the Bay area’s Jacob Felix Heule and Tony Dryer, and Oslo, Norway residents Håvard Skaset and Guro Skumsnes Moe. All four have recorded together in the past, as part of the Bay/Oslo Mirror Trio, a sextet that also featured double bass, guitar, and drums. Their history goes some way in explaining why Sult sounds like such a meticulous and concise project. Their focus on the extra-rhythmic properties of rhythmic instruments explains the rest. Although they improvise throughout the album, the big ideas governing those improvisations are relatively clear, of which the primary guideline might be rendered as, “Disassemble your instruments into their component parts, then play those parts as if they were the album’s lead voices.”

Those voices get something close to a solo for the 17 minutes that constitute the middle portion of the album, from “Døren II” to “Uvel.” Bows are drawn heavily across strings, so that they sound like saws cutting through metal and drum heads are stretched and warped to the point of breaking—it’s a cacophony, but a surprisingly quiet and transparent one. The detail of each pop and raspy collision comes through even as they are played to match the volume of a pin drop. “Snylter” and “Uvel” are even more granular. Short, muted runs up and down the guitar

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combine with the sounds of shuffled paper and muted cymbals, some of which hover in silent space, and the crystalline ring of strings played near the pegheads fall around long, severely scraped bass performances so closely mic'd they sound esophageal. "Jern" and "Døren I" bookend the album with extended group improvisations, where the aim is more communal. The same techniques found in the middle portion are utilized across two 13-plus minute experiments that pull the point-of-view back, exposing not a band sound, but a musical continuum that begins with rhythm and ends someplace much broader.

samples:

["Fryst," via Bandcamp](#)