

## Brainwashed - Jandek, "The Ruins of Adventure"

Written by Scott Mckeating

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This album's combination of morose humour, disappointment, genetic misfortune vocals and the sole accompaniment of an electric bass have him not just wallowing, but drowned in and then dredged up from the murky bed of self pity.

### Corwood

Being bummed-the-fuck-out for nearly 30 years can't be good for someone's health, but Jandek still continues to haunt the release schedules regardless. It won't be a surprise to anyone even vaguely familiar with Jandek's recordings to know that this latest solo effort isn't going to be anything too unanticipated.

This is another long bleak night of a charred soul, much more so than any of his live releases, but no real shock to anyone familiar with his bass / vocal modus operandi. At the end of the day it's a Jandek album, it does what it says on the side of jewel case, and we can't really expect much else. This is down a darker path than his usual guitar-based solo albums, and even tops his recent bass/vocal efforts for wretchedness. The bass work on 2004's *Shadow of Leaves* seemed to be a lot looser in retrospect, the strings hanging just a little too much, here they're almost noose tight. The methodology of his bass playing is remarkably similar to his guitar work. Fingers slide up and down the strings drifting between faraway mechanical strumming and choosing runs of notes seemingly with great purpose. The instrument is the perfect accompaniment for the morose and croaky wandering scales delivery he's chosen for *The Ruins of Adventure*

There's an amazing similarity to much of the bass sound here to the bass on a 1981 Cure B-side called "Descent"; I'm sure this won't trouble the majority of listeners, but it nags at me throughout the whole black affair. There's hardly a moment on this LP that doesn't feel like its heading towards that song's falling melody line. For those not still lost in the woolly grip of early commercial goth-pop, the low slung undulating murk of these strummed frequencies will probably find the air unremittingly bleak. Towards the end of "Completely Yours"; he plays it a little more violently, forcing the strings to near breaking point. It's this bass playing that makes this Jandek release worthy of picking out from the steady inundation of slippery Corwood product. As for the peculiar album title, apart from being a Dungeon & Dragons module, it seems to be just another summing up of Jandek's regret at having even bothered trying to get involved with other humans in the first place.

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Lyricaly it's no giant leap for mankind, but still it works. It's only on the opening "The Park" where it feels like he's riding the steed of a good idea into the abattoir at full pelt. This slightly Greta Garbo seasoned piece sees Jandek planning to build a park where nobody else is even allowed to visit, not even on a day-pass; now that's just plain mean. The rest of the lyrics, as expected, are highly intense and personal declarations of rejection, self-disgust and love, the latter sounding more like threats with his delivery here. When he claims 'I'll be with you at night and forever long,' I feel like checking the locks on the windows. His vocal on-the-verge-of-collapse drawl is like being in a room lit with a single black light bulb, cracks of light forcing their way through the still viscous tar-like blackout paint of the music. Any expected trickle-down of evolution from his playing as part of an improvising group isn't evident here. He's continuing down his singular route, seemingly unaware of the how close he can sometimes to slipping into the ditch of cliché.