

Brainwashed - Chuck Johnson, "The Cinder Grove"

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The follow-up to Johnson's acclaimed *Balsams* LP, *The Cinder Grove* delves further into the compositional possibilities of the pedal steel guitar. This halcyon collection of tracks draws on a wider palette of sounds, adding strings and piano, to dive deeper into the sound bath of Johnson's meditative music.

The Cinder Grove is a profound, affecting statement on the nature of loss and irreplaceability as well as a major addition to the canon of Johnson's work. It's a suite of requiems for lost places. Many of the spaces that once fostered affordable living and creative work now only exist in sonic memory, like the echoes of ghosts. Like much of the California landscape in recent years, some of these spaces having succumbed to fire. Others, to the equally inexorable forces of gentrification. While his 2017 LP *Balsams* was intended to provide the listener with a space for respite and calm—even healing—

The Cinder Grove

seeks to remember what has been lost while celebrating the resilience of the human spirit and the natural world.

In making *The Cinder Grove*, Johnson dug through archival recordings from Oakland DIY performance spaces to digitally extract their reverb and echo qualities. He then applied these effects—as well as the digitally modeled reverberation of a redwood forest—to the tracks on *The Cinder Grove*

, allowing the pieces to bask in the lush virtual spaces, and in the process realized that these sonic re-constructions can only ever be approximations. We try to make spaces what we want them to be, whether in memory or in the material present.

More information can be found [here](#) .