

## Brainwashed - The Dead C, "Rare Ravers"

Written by Anthony D'Amico

Sunday, 20 January 2019 00:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 20 January 2019 12:19

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The Dead C have been on an impressive hot streak in recent years, so it was a reasonably safe bet that I would be delighted yet again by *Rare Ravers*. However, I was definitely not expecting such a revelatory leap forward this deep into the band's career. Immodestly described as "recorded and burned through a thousand galaxies of dust and doubt and endless infinite wonder, transforming both time and space," this album feels like it was conscientiously sculpted to ravaged perfection in an actual studio and it sounds absolutely amazing. As it turns out, The Dead C's long history of rehearsal tape-level sound quality and shambolic, messy self-indulgence concealed the fact that they were secretly an extremely tight band capable of unleashing firestorms of howling guitar noise with the precision of a scalpel. I imagine some fans are still holding out hope that the band will someday return to writing actual songs with lyrics and vocals, but this album is an instant classic as far as I am concerned.

### [Ba Da Bing](#)

Much the recent *Armed Courage* and *Trouble* albums, *Rare Ravers* is roughly composed entirely of 20-minute pieces that each fill an entire side of vinyl, though in this case there is a two-minute interlude ("Waver") separating them. The opening salvo, "Staver," erupts with a characteristic snarl of distortion and feedback, but Robbie Yeats' insistently steady and unwavering snare and high-hat rhythm quickly cuts through the maelstrom and drags the song forward through the buzzing, crackling wreckage. That howling mass of distorted ruin never goes away (this is a Dead C album, after all), but in this case it turns out to be the mere foundation for something more structured and compelling rather than the sole *raison d'être*. That said, the omnipresent snarl and sputter still play an absolutely crucial role: if I saw a cool art show where the gallery was shuddering and collapsing around me, that context would be every bit as memorable and essential to the experience (if not more so) than the art I was ostensibly focused on. In this instance, the nod to structure and an overarching vision is quite a modest but effective one, as "Staver" is anchored by a repeating bent note that sounds like a deep, anguished moan. Notably, the piece briefly seems to collapse into directionless noodling around the halfway point, but that proves to be a cunning feint, as the smoldering ruins soon spring to life with a flurry of atypically sharp and audible drumming. The resurgent piece then goes on to finish in strong fashion, as Yeats' return signals the beginning of an unexpected second act in which the hollow animal moan of the first half slowly converges with a wobbling, pulsing, and insistent swell of distorted feedback.

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Following a brief descent into the shuffling, sputtering psych-murk of "Waver," the album's superior second half is ushered in with the sputtering sludge avalanche of "Laver." Again, that is fairly well-covered Dead C territory, but searing howls of strangled feedback soon start viscerally streaking through the chaos as a ramshackle groove lazily starts to cohere. The recording quality plays an essential role here, as the recurring blasts of snarling guitar noise are beautifully intense and physical. That proves to be fortunate, as the rest of the song completely drops out for a while, leaving only a series of howling noise eruptions punctuated by stretches of near silence. After that, it briefly dissolves into an interlude that sounds like a panning and undulating shortwave radio transmission. The piece soon lurches back to life though, cohering into a slow, heavy groove of muscular drums and snatches of clean, melodic guitar. The roiling entropy underneath is the real show, however, as it sounds like there are blood-thirsty noise demons attempting to tear their way through the veil of distortion. Again, the crispness and clarity of the recording plays a major role, as creaking of strings and the intricacies of the feedback squalls are able to gradually seize the foreground from both the beat and the melody. That is optimal, as Michael Morley and Bruce Russell unleash an absolutely glorious tour de force of screaming and distorted noise squall. Lest anyone get too concerned that The Dead C are approaching perfectionism or compositional rigor, however, "Laver" ends by being abruptly cut off mid-note. Maybe that actually *is* perfect though, as the only appropriate way for this album to end was probably for an amplifier to explode or the recording desk to short out from signal overload.

It feels very wrong to describe a Dead C album as flawless, as the band's aesthetic has always been a fundamentally broken, corroded, and deconstructed one, so I will instead say that *Rare Ravers*

is an album that is impressively devoid of any wasted time, directionless meandering, unrealized potential, or half-baked ideas. I was similarly struck by the volcanic power that this threesome can unleash when they are focused and allow some degree of professionalism to creep into their recording process. The Dead C have always been great at sounding like a shambling, jagged, and brilliant mess of a band, yet the occasions where they could rightfully be described as "face-melting" have been few and far between.

*Rare Ravers*

is legitimately face-melting during its howling crescendos. Similarly, the sheer ingenuity of Morley and Russell warrants praise as well, as the two have somehow managed to avoid repeating themselves again and again despite their hyper-constrained palette of blown-out bass and feral feedback squall. It is like watching a magician keep pulling rabbits out of a hat that cannot possibly contain any more rabbits. The Dead C have been a fitfully great band for decades, but they have truly defied the odds and blossomed into a reliably formidable and tirelessly evolving unit over the last several years. For now,

*Rare Ravers*

feels like a high-water mark, but I have no doubt that Morley, Russell, and Yeats will soon surpass it if they continue on their present trajectory.

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Samples:

- [Staver](#)
- [Laver](#)