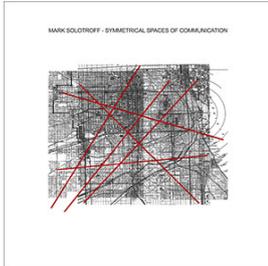


## Brainwashed - Mark Solotroff, "Symmetrical Spaces of Communication", "Social Objectives"

Written by Creag Dunton

Monday, 11 February 2019 00:06 - Last Updated Monday, 11 February 2019 13:07

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Mark Solotroff's contributions to harsh electronic music cannot be overstated. Beginning with the adult bookstore sleaze of the 1980s power electronics project Intrinsic Action into the present day psychologically disturbing noise of Bloodyminded (which, in a live context, becomes the perfect deconstruction of rock performance) and the doom metal tinged Anatomy of Habit, he has been an influential force for the past 35 years. This does not even take into account his multitude of solo and side projects, such as these two recent cassettes. All of his work is joined together by a single, distinct thread: a love of analog synthesizers that borders on the obsessive. Here those synths are used to create the perfect soundtrack to city isolation.

### [Self-released](#)

One of Solotroff's most ambitious projects of the past was Super Eight Loop: 100 hours of just the rawest analog synth improvisations possible. Completed over the span of 25 years, albeit with a ten year hiatus thrown in there, it is a perfect distillation of his obsessive love of the instrument. Super Eight Loop was intended to capture the New York City of old, the one full of seedy movie theaters and an omnipresent sense of danger. His latest work follows this same line of abstract soundtracks for urban spaces, but reoriented to the contradictory sense of loneliness and isolation that arise from a large, heavily populated city, in this case his current home of Chicago. *Symmetrical Spaces of Communication* and *Social Objectives* are the two most recent installments this series of recordings joined by themes of the intersection between sociological theory and distinct urban spaces.

Compared to the Super Eight Loop works, there is less aggression and filth to be had, but instead replaced with sounds of corrosion, decay, and isolation. "Ego Machine", on *Symmetrical Spaces* opens with an industrial grind and acidic, rust laden electronics slicing through concrete decay. Eventually Solotroff arranges the sounds into a sustained drone, not unlike a humming power generator or far off airplane passing through. He does an exceptional job at capturing bleakness, casting out cold sheets of sound like frigid rain falling in a vast, deserted space.

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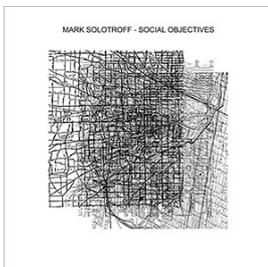
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On the other side of the tape, "Achievement Society" features Solotroff keeping the same isolated mood and cold concrete spaces, but here awash in echo and hollow drone. Non-specific rumbles appear far away, just far enough out of focus to be forceful. At times, he blends in what almost sounds like a bit of melody distant in the mix: an appropriately desolate bit of delicate beauty in the otherwise cold and inhospitable mix. Even amidst all of that bleakness the melody adds in that tiniest bit of hope, as remote as it may seem.

[Samples Available Here](#)



In comparison, *Social Objectives* exemplifies a bit more of Solotroff's noisier tendencies. For "Emotive Issues", he sets his synths up to just below the noise threshold, keeping things to a shimmering burst blended with a duller mechanical hum. He again captures the sense of despair via distant echoes and lower register, haunting tones. There may be a lingering sense of harshness, but he keeps the mood much more to depressive than anything on the violent end of the spectrum. "Population Advisor" is less textural in comparison, but is instead an excellent approximation of the dull noise of the city. The whole of the piece is a nicely dull machinery hum, with passages approximating the sounds of power lines, florescent lights, or other malfunctioning equipment. There may be the occasional fragment tone that passes through, but as a whole the piece is the perfect audio accompaniment to being alone in a city late at night.

Solotroff has been extremely active as of late, digitizing and remastering older works (including the aforementioned Super Eight Loop project), releasing some archival performances as Bloodyminded all the while working on a new album, and keeping up with his other projects. Even with all of this other activity he has still found time to indulge in his analog synthesizer fetishism. The long form pieces on these tapes never meander or drag on, but instead make for the perfect imaginary soundtracks to the urban landscapes that inspired them. Even spread that thinly across his multitude of projects, this work is obviously a labor of love. The sound is grey, bleak, and isolating, but in the most fascinating and beautiful of ways.

[Samples Available Here](#)