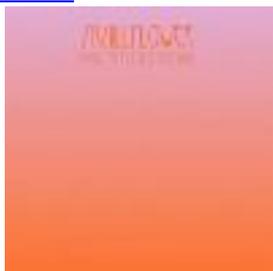


Brainwashed - SKULLFLOWER, "EXQUISITE FUCKING BOREDOM"

Written by Jonathan Dean

Saturday, 27 March 2004 20:41 - Last Updated Tuesday, 06 September 2005 09:19

Tumult



"Celestial Highway" is a massive, stomping heavy metal riff, a big hairy acid-drenched slab of fuzzy blues cribbed from the Blue Cheer handbook. The jacked-up shredding that twists around the central rhythmic stomp is directly inspired by the third-eye Satanic soloing of Glenn Tipton and Tony Iommi. That shit keeps cycling around, pulsating fuzzy tendrils of bombastic riffage, hairy to the Nth degree, lifting up to the clouds on a silver machine of over-amped guitar wreckage. And then it repeats. Over and over. For nearly an hour. Matthew Bower's newest album under the Skullflower banner earns its title. Not for the patience-challenged, *Exquisite Fucking Boredom* tests the limits of repetition. Applying the techniques of the avant-garde repetitive techniques of Steve Reich and Terry Riley to noisy psych-rock has been tried before, most memorably on Acid Mothers Temple's reading of Riley's monumental *In C*. But I must confess that Bower has done them one better with the four-part suite of "Celestial Highway," which sets a new record for trance-rock. Even more exasperating that Spinal Tap's wanky *Jazz Odyssey*

, Skullflower is pushing the envelope of acceptability in terms of musical content. I think it pays off brilliantly, but whether or not the average listener will agree depends upon their temperament. The nuanced production is by Colin Potter, the genius engineer and producer behind some of Nurse With Wound's best work. Potter's technique is to add sheets of compounding noise run-off to each successive riff, alternately burying the cyclical guitars in a pile of audio rubble, or uncovering and highlighting them by pushing out the borders of distortion. It's not for the faint of heart, but over the course of the album, it ascends to a hypnotic level of transcendence. Like a lot of ethnic and avant-garde trance music, the eventual goal is for the listener to ignore the central repeating theme, which fades like white noise to the background, focusing instead on the gradual evolution of sound, or in the case of Skullflower's album, the compounding noise, distortion and decay that creep in over the course of the four-part suite. Patience is a virtue, and in the case of *Exquisite Fucking Boredom*, it's a virtue that eventually rewards the listener with some of the most bizarre and unconventional "stoner rock" yet conceived.

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samples:

- [Celestial Highway I](#)
- [Celestial Highway II](#)
- [Celestial Highway III](#)

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