

Brainwashed - HALOU, "WE ONLY LOVE YOU"

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Although the popularity of bands featuring phat beats and female vocals has risen immensely, few artists have been able to perfect the style and display enough originality in doing so to stand out amongst the more mediocre of such acts. The California duo Halou, one of the newest acts on the Bedazzled label, is the latest to accomplish this feat with the release of their debut album *we only love you*. Far beyond being just another trip-hop record with a female vocalist, the album is flawlessly produced and features beautifully written songs that are incredibly diverse in style: "loop in blue" is a dreamy ballad, "la mer" and "you are one of us" are impossibly catchy electro dance tracks, and "clip" is a multi-layered drum 'n' bass masterpiece. The vocalist, Rebecca, uses her voice to take on a different persona with each song. She is a fragile and silvery-voiced angel in the stunning "halfbreath," yet becomes a throaty, sultry diva in "ifish." In other songs, she displays the ability to be both at once. *We only love you* absolutely defies conventional genre. Melodic and dense, heavenly and melancholy, blissful and intense - however one tries to define this album, Halou has found a way to marry the best elements of trip hop, drum 'n' bass, and ethereal pop to produce one of my favorite albums of 1999.