

Brainwashed - Jack Rose & Glenn Jones, "The Things That We Used To Do"

Written by Lucas Schleicher

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Collecting two albums worth of in-studio performances, six live songs split between Jack Rose and Glenn Jones, a pair of duets, and one superb interview, *The Things That We Used To Do* is an exceptional and insightful document into the talents and personalities of both guitarists. Professionally filmed, recorded, and mastered, it's like the ultimate bootleg for fans and admirers, providing excellent sound and video of two masters at work, as well as copious amounts of information about their backgrounds, their experiences with legends like John Fahey and Robbie Basho, song-writing, and something Jack liked to call "pussy chords."

[Strange Attractors](#)

The Things That We Used To Do does an excellent job of bringing both Jack Rose and Glenn Jones into the room by keeping its presentation simple. Patient camera work and editing are the focus throughout, so that nothing distracts from the music or the way Glenn and Jack play. Much of the film's focus is directed at finger work and facial expressions, giving the viewer a chance to study both guitarists or to sit back and listen without needing to watch at all. For my first couple of viewings, it was fun and helpful paying attention to how Glenn and Jack interacted when playing together or noting the differences in their individual approaches. But, because I'm not a guitarist and because the music is more important to me than seeing it reproduced, I now put the DVD sometimes just so I can hear it.

The 23 songs featured are pulled from various points throughout both artist's careers. Music from *Raag Manifestos*, *Dr. Ragtime & His Pals*, the self-titled record, *Luck in the Valley*, *Kennington Blues*

, and

The Black Dirt Sessions

all make an appearance on Jack's half of the collection. Glenn offers up a couple of songs from

Against Which the Sea Continually Beats

and

This is the Wind that Blows It Out

, but gives most of his time and effort to a nearly complete performance of

Barbecue Bob in Fishtown

, which had not been released at the time this documentary was recorded. Several of his renditions are substantially different from the studio versions and could probably offer the curious viewer some insight into his writing process. Of the 23 songs, two are duets, nine belong to Glenn, and the remaining 12 are from Jack. Both guitarists employ at least two

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instruments, with Glenn playing his 12-string most frequently and Jack using his beautiful Weissenborn lap slide about half of the time. Glenn's playing is the most ornate, as his song selection features a couple of complex ragas and is, overall, the most flashy. Jack is no slouch, however. His playing on "The World Has Let Me Down" is stellar, and he turns out an 11 minute version of "Cross the North Fork" that is just as demanding as anything Glenn lays down. Both guitarists make what they do look very easy, though, which is frustrating and surprising. Hearing the duo play "Linden Avenue Stomp" is one thing, but watching them do it is altogether different.

Having their music situated so close together emphasizes just how different both musicians are, both as writers and players, and it also demonstrates just how diverse the music they play is. Both of them work from the same influences and employ many of the same finger picking techniques, yet they have very different sounds that issue from very different places. Listening to them play reminds me just how diverse and perfect an instrument the guitar is, and it spells out how complex and beautiful their brand of music can be. And almost nobody plays it as well as they do.

Included with the all the music is an in-depth interview conducted by Byron Coley. It's an awesome, insightful, and frequently hilarious conversation that Coley lets Jack and Glenn run all by themselves. Both interviewees must have been feeling especially conversational that day, because all Byron had to do was ask basic questions or request the tiniest bit of info and either of them would provide responses that every interviewer dreams of recording. There's lots of talk about both John Fahey and Robbie Basho, including Glenn's experience with both legends, their opinion of Robbie's lyrics, and Glenn's comic impersonation of Fahey's voice. Substantial time is spent discussing contemporary and lesser known players, too, including Bola Sete, Peter Walker, many pre-war blues men, Baden Powell, and George Stavis. At one point, Coley asks Glenn to describe Jack's playing and vice versa, which is a little awkward, but interesting insofar as it gets me inside the brains of two master guitarists. The conversation eventually turns from their playing and a definition of unresolved "pussy chords" to why John Fahey's playing and writing is so unique and powerful. None of this would matter if both Jack and Glenn weren't such good storytellers, but I'm convinced either one of them could talk about wallpaper and make it entertaining.

My only complaint is about the packaging Strange Attractors chose. The artwork and photographs themselves are excellent and of a high quality, but the sleeve where the disc goes is just a cardboard slot, which easily rips and offers ample opportunity for picking up scratches and dirt. A booklet with all the artwork (and maybe some extra photographs) could have resolved this problem, but keeping costs down is another concern, and Strange Attractors does a decent job balancing optimum presentation with economy. The content is the most important part, after all, and it is replete with excellent music and genuinely interesting information. Of course, it helps that Glenn Jones and Jack Rose are so compelling in the first

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place. Their character and talent makes this collection essential, and all the other parties responsible for putting it together and making it happen did well to stay out of the picture as much as possible.