

## Brainwashed - Coil, "Love's Secret Domain" (Stephen Bush)

Written by Stephen Bush

Saturday, 30 July 2011 21:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 31 July 2011 19:15

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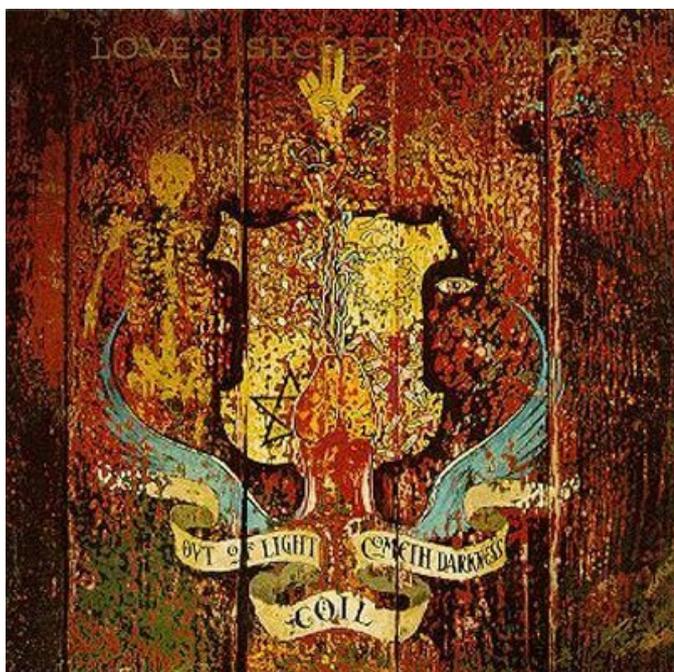
I'll never forget my first encounter with Coil. I was flipping through used CD bins in my hometown of Austin, TX, in 2005 and came across a pristine copy of *Horse Rotorvator*—the 1988 CD pressing on Force & Form, alternate cover art—it was *beautiful*

. I promptly went up to the register, paid the \$5.99 sticker price, raced home, and popped the CD into my stereo to ensure it played without skipping. This was a phenomenal find—Coil's *Horse Rotorvator*

! The next weekend, I went back to the record store and shopped again. On the way home, I swung by the Post Office and mailed

*Horse Rotorvator*

to some sucker on eBay who had paid me \$80 for the privilege of finding it for him. Yesssss!



[Threshold House](#)

Six years later, writing for Brainwashed as a full-stop Coil fanatic, I'd kill to have *not* sold that copy of *Horse Rotorvator*

. Turns out I was the sucker!

I was always an entrepreneurial kid. In high school, I offered my younger sister \$10 apiece for a few retired Beanie Babies from her toy shelves, then flipped them on eBay for \$50-100 each.

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Going into college, I kicked off my own eBay business to pay my tuition bills—a somewhat worthier cause—by reselling power tools, space heaters, faucets, and other gadgets that I cherry-picked from the Home Depot clearance shelves. I enjoyed working from home, and broken down into hourly-wage terms, the pay was fantastic.

In my spare time, between studying and selling and dating, I sank into music as a source of relief from my normal responsibilities. Looking back, it was probably the Cure's 2004 tour that sealed the deal. I'd endured my first big college break-up days before the show—and had discovered the Cure's *Disintegration* (which I thought was the *most depressing record of all time*) a few weeks earlier. It was

perfect timing. Hot on the heels of

*Disintegration*

, I melted down during a two-hour Cure set in Houston. I was awestruck, and I promptly bought everything I could find by the Cure. For years, I sought to replicate the intense feeling I got from

*Disintegration*

, and that one concert, by seeking out and consuming new music at lightning speed.

Music wasn't free, though, and I didn't have unlimited resources. Naturally, as a budding music geek *and* a young entrepreneur, it made excellent sense to resell sought-after CDs to fund my own purchases. All I had to do was keep an eye out in the used bins as I thumbed past each disc. Out of print CDs, deluxe editions, import singles—all of it was fair game. Pretty quickly, I learned which artists attracted a fanbase rabid enough to pay top dollar for CDs they hadn't yet acquired. Simple enough, right?

Tori Amos, among others, was a godsend—I distinctly recall selling a \$.99 promotional single from her 2005 album, *The Beekeeper*, for a hundred bucks. Tori was also a gateway to other collector's favorites: she led me to Nine Inch Nails, which led me to Wax Trax! and industrial music, which led me to Coil... or something like that. Soon, I found out when I sold

*Horse Rotorvator*

that Coil fans were quite the devoted bunch, not to mention

*weird*

. Coil was far weirder than Tori Amos, NIN, and most other music I'd heard at that time. I don't recall what

*Horse Rotorvator*

sounded like when I played it, except that it didn't decisively grab me. It was

*way*

over my head. I had no problem selling it that day.

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It turns out *Horse Rotorvator* would be the last Coil CD I would sell. Having made a small fortune on that sale (subsequently funding my own buying appetite for a week or so), I looked into Coil's discography, taking care to note the cover artwork, so that I wouldn't miss any gems in the used bins. Coil had a ton of flat-out weird, wonderful artwork, but one album took the cake that day:

*Love's Secret Domain*. An erect, ejaculating penis between a pair of blue angel's wings, a skeleton and a pentagram—"Out of Light, Cometh Darkness"—it was some of the most subtly disturbing imagery I'd seen on an album cover. Intrigued, I wondered how much it would sell for. I also wondered how it sounded.

A year later, in 2006, I found a copy of *Love's Secret Domain*. It was gently used, a few scratches on the disc, so I didn't sell it immediately. It sat around idly in my eBay stacks. Eventually, I played it. As with

*Disi*

*ntegration*

, and a small handful of other albums, my music listening has not been the same since.

I'm not sure which song caught my ear first. I would like to think it was the demented carnival stomp of "Teenage Lightning 1," the twinkling dark-ambient mastery of "Dark River," the throbbing, skewed acid-house of "Windowpane" and "The Snow," or perhaps John Balance's sordid, unforgettable vocal performance on "Love's Secret Domain." Certainly those were the high points when I re-listened to *Love's Secret Domain* this week, but it could have been anything. In any case, I remember being utterly transfixed by the sounds I heard that day. I could not stop listening.

A few attentive listens later, I was head over heels enamored. *Love's Secret Domain* was not going the way of

*Horse Rotorvator*

; in fact, it quickly found its way onto my shelf of personal favorites. No doubt many of those favorites are now gone. I have never been particularly nostalgic with music, and I have no problem letting go of albums I don't see myself ever playing again.

*Love's Secret Domain*

has stayed put. These days, it is sandwiched right in between Codeine and Ornette Coleman on a meticulously alphabetized, rotating CD shelf in my home.

As the years passed, I continued to seek out challenging sounds, even more so recently than in my college years. As such, Coil has been a trusted companion and guide. I have picked up Coil's albums as I have found them staring up at me from the used bins, and each time I hear a new one, I remember my initial encounters with *Horse Rotorvator* and *Love's Secret Domain*. There is much Coil I have heard that is indispensable, and much I have yet to hear, but none I

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remember so fondly as

*Love's Secret Domain*

, which remains my favorite.

*Love's Secret Domain* led me to hear Throbbing Gristle, Psychic TV, Nurse with Wound, Current 93, and other favorites of the Brainwashed community; a wide spectrum of industrial, electronic, ambient and experimental music; and plenty of odd sounds to which I'd have been less receptive without its influence. It's also safe to say that *Love's Secret Domain*, and the path of discovery I have traveled since, eventually led me to writing for Brainwashed this year. Most importantly, though, *Love's Secret Domain* remains its own thing: a massively successful piece of Coil's history; a brilliant, forward-thinking collection of industrial-dance tunes; and a perennial favorite listen in my home. (For me, at least, not my wife—she prefers when we play Sade.)

Six years later, I still haven't found a second copy of *Horse Rotorvator*. I haven't heard any of its songs since my pointless, inattentive listen in 2005, and it may be another decade before I hear it again. And that's okay. I can wait. I have my beat-up copy of *Love's Secret Domain*, and a half-dozen other Coil albums, to keep me company until the day it returns to my stereo.