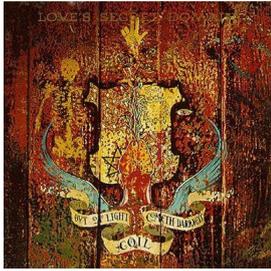


Brainwashed - Coil, "Love's Secret Domain" - 20 Years Later

Written by Jon Whitney

Sunday, 24 July 2011 23:43 - Last Updated Monday, 08 August 2011 01:07



Twenty years ago this month (July 1991) *Love's Secret Domain* was finally released by Coil. Ten years ago the album was remastered and reissued in time for Coil's first (and what was to be their last) US appearance and today the duo at the heart of it all are no longer with us in this existence. To honor the album's birthday, we're featuring reflections on the album this week and words from a few of those who were involved.

This article isn't so much a review (since I did a very amateurish review of the album ten years ago) of perhaps my favorite album ever released, but a bit of a reflection of what the album meant to me at the time.

[Threshold House](#)

I say the album was "finally" released as the work on the album began immediately after *Horse Rotorvator* was released, in 1986. Various working titles were used and scrapped, such as *The Side Effects of Life* and *The Dark Age of Love*, and numerous recordings surfaced in those five years including the unused *Hellraiser* themes, *Gold is the Metal*, and various singles and compilation tracks. The album was complete and ready to go by the end of 1990, when the "Windowpane" single and video first surfaced.

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It was my freshman year at college in Boston and I had landed a job at Tower Records, which was, at one time, the largest record store in North America. In the years prior to college I had been a DJ at WMUA in Amherst, where I discovered and became a fan of the whole WaxTrax!/Netzwerk axis (Meat Beat Manifesto, Skinny Puppy, KMFDM, Legendary Pink Dots, Front 242, Tear Garden) as well as the weirdos that seemed to be somewhat affiliated like NWW, C93, Diamanda Galás, and Non. When you're a college freshman far away from home, you didn't (at least back then) have your album collection with you, just a bunch of tapes you made for yourself. I remember being in a friend's dorm room late one Sunday night and hearing "Windowpane" on one of the local radio stations. I didn't know who it was but that vocal effect did remind me of that used on TGCD1, which was the only TG album available on CD in the US then thanks to Restless. When the Windowpane CD single arrived at Tower, I scooped it up and was absolutely floored that it was that same cool song I heard faintly from a tiny bedside clock radio. DJ Tim Ryan, who also worked in the same department with me at Tower, would frequently receive advance releases of WaxTrax! Music and by chance he had received not only the forthcoming Meat Beat Manifesto album, *99%* (which incidentally didn't end up coming out on WaxTrax!), but the advanced cassette of *Love's Secret Domain* from Coil. I had to not only hear it, but borrow it and duplicate it on my dual tape deck back in my room. I can even remember how much I begged him to lend it to me.

In the months following, I had listened to that tape endlessly, frontwards and backwards, and never grew tired of it. There was always something new to pick out of the music, something subtle, a reference here or there, or a sound I hadn't noticed before. The music was impossible to label: it defied all genres, incorporating tape-collage, drones, guitars, dance music, and completely non-western rhythms. While I owned the *Tainted Love* CD single and the *Hellraiser* CDEP, I had to seek out more.

Scatology

and

Unnatural History

were soon readily available on CD, but in Boston, there wasn't much else to be found. The tape wore thin over the seven months I was listening and, being a duplicate of a shoddy advanced copy, was already quite hissy to begin with. There was an almost indescribable sense that this was one of those secret prized gems that, since it hadn't surfaced for so long, I thought surely would never come out, and simply fade over time into obscurity.

In June of 1991 my freshman year was over and I moved to NYC to intern at a few different record labels while working at Tower Records in Lincoln Center. In July I was at Caroline distribution and WaxTrax! was finally issuing the album in North America on CD. I scooped it up the day it was available to me and was completely floored, despite knowing how the bulk of the music was going to sound.

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The CD was a different album than what I was so familiar with: there were new songs, longer mixes, transitional sounds and pieces in between songs. It was like listening to the album all over again through new ears. I could finally hear that there were actually words behind the ghostly sounds on "Teenage Lightning," this crazy new tune "Things Happen" was absolutely out of this world, and Flamenco guitars, probably one of the last sounds anyone would ever expect on a Coil recording, pranced around in the "Lorca Not Orca," the second reprise of "Teenage Lightning." I immediately wrote to the address printed in the booklet, not even knowing what a "BM Codex" meant, unsure if my letter would ever arrive. I do remember stating that I was an 18 year old who had first seen them years prior on *Night Flight* on the USA Network (when they did a Soft Cell feature and played the "Tainted Love" video) and in a letter that came back to my NY address I got a request for used underwear! The correspondence kept up and when I moved back to Boston I did get the notification of *Stolen and Contaminated Songs*, ordered it, and eventually received it, long past its due date of course, which is probably why I was so used to release delays from Coil and unfinished projects by the late '90s and early '00s...

I listened to *Love's Secret Domain* so many times that summer, along with a number of other albums that made 1991 such a memorable year in music, and continued to listen to it over the years on various sound systems in various settings. Even on conventional two speaker systems I swear I could hear objects moving in three dimensions, swirling around, with shapes and windows that were only what I could describe much like an aural experience of those magic eye images. For years I have placed it in my unwritten "top 20" or "top 10" albums of all time but two decades years later I can say safely it certainly is my favorite album of all time.

Despite going to work immediately on a cohesive Coil record, a true follow-up (the infamously ill-fated *Backwards*) ever materialized. Perhaps it was this anticipation that strengthened the power of *Love's Secret Domain*. What immediately followed were remixes (*The Snow EP*

, *How To Destroy Angels*

), the CD of outtakes (*Stolen and Contaminated Songs*

), singles like

Blue

,

Protection

,

Nasa Arab

/

First Dark Ride

, and the collection

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Unnatural History II

. The first full-length album of all new material by Balance and Christopherson was

Worship the Glitch

, released as ELpH vs. Coil in 1995. The next year

A Thousand Lights in a Darkened Room

surfaced but it was billed as Coil presents Black Light District. Even

Time Machines

didn't bear the word Coil printed anywhere on the sleeve. By the time

Musick To Play In The Dark

surfaced, all the promise of the

Backwards

album was forgotten. This was clearly not a follow-up as this was a new phase of Coil.