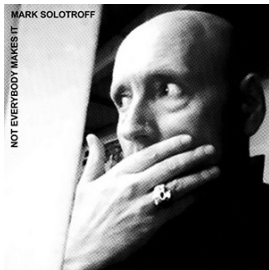


Brainwashed - Mark Solotroff, "Not Everybody Makes It"

Written by Craig Dunton

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Mark Solotroff could never be accused of taking it easy when it comes to music, both in terms of style and productivity. Since the beginning of 2020 he has been responsible for three side project releases (Nightmares, The Fortieth Day, and Ensemble Sacrés Garçons), two archival releases from his early Intrinsic Action band, and just a matter of weeks ago a BLOODYMINDED! live compilation. Add that to three volumes of compiled solo material and an album last year, and there's a massive stack of material that *Not Everybody Makes It* now sits atop. Even with all of that material, this new album stands out as distinct, and somewhat of an unexpected turn for Solotroff's work, but is still clearly his.

[Self-Released](#)

What makes this disc unique is the more significant restraint and lighter touch he employs on all six of these (exactly) ten minute pieces. I would be significantly concerned if he released anything that is not constructed around lo-fi analog synth noises, and that is certainly the foundation of everything here, but the mixes are less dense and the volumes are lower, giving everything a bleaker, more isolated sensibility.

Themes of isolation have been prevalent in Solotroff's recent work, with a series of eight tapes in the past few years (compiled earlier this year onto three 2CD volumes as the *Strategic Planning* series), but while those captured a sense of urban loneliness and anomie, *Not Everybody Makes It* is more personal and introspective. Besides the intentional imagery conveyed by the title, the hushed volumes and pseudo-melodies (not something often associated with his work) lock on to this sense of loneliness and despair.

Even with this more ambient (or isolationist, to borrow the fitting term for the 1990s ambient offshoot genre that never was) turn, certain staples from Solotroff's repertoire could never be abandoned: his love of heavy sub bass frequencies appears throughout, especially on

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"Charged Matter (The Problem from the Inside)" and "Suffering Sun (Barren Winter)." For both of these that low end is still prominent, but on the former it is an undulating passage beneath lightly drifting electronics and synths like bowed strings mixing with amplified hums. On the latter, it gives a slow, trudging propulsion beneath melodic sweeps and subtle white noise sheets.

The rumble also underscores most of "The Chaos of Objects (Tell Her to Follow Me)," paired with hissy metallic static. Even though the instrumentation never deviates from those basic elements, Solotroff effortlessly blends the basic parts into a piece with distinct movement and flow. This contrasts with the idling engine ambience of "Spatial Unrest (Irresistible Belief)," which is perfectly still and frozen. He saves the most peaceful piece for the end: "Return to Pleasure (Body Into Voice)" is a suite of droning tones that slowly drift away, making for the most peaceful work I have ever heard him have a hand in.

The shift of studying isolation from the spatial to the personal is pretty clear from this series of vignettes that complement Solotroff's *Strategic Planning* works. Emphasizing the incidental melodies and sounds that are usually obscured by distortion and noise in his discography, there is thematic linkage, but the end products are distinct. For that reason there is a sense of vulnerability to *Not Everybody Makes It* that is rarely so obvious in his many projects. When placed alongside his other recent releases, it exemplifies just how, in the hands of an expert, decades old electronic equipment can conjure such varying experiences and emotions. It may be a slight deviation from his normal approach, but the results are just as captivating.

Samples can be found [here](#) .