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Landing

Brocade
Strange Attractors
2005
B+



It takes only a few seconds of listening to *Brocade* to realize that this is not the same band that fluttered all over 2004's *Sphere*. On that record, torrents of spacey, dreamy melody manifested itself sharply and brightly before slowly fading like the wispy remains of a spent firework hanging in the air.

The album was one great shimmer, a prism for sound that never seemed like something that could be grasped or refocused. With a year behind them and a slight shift in personnel, *Landing* seems slightly closer to the ground than they have in some time, but it is still a mere flirtation.

Unlike the band's name—which has always seemed a tad improper for a band that spends so much time floating away from the ground—*Brocade* seems quite fitting for this collection of songs, evoking not only the richness, depth, and beauty of *Landing*'s sound but also the tighter and more patterned compositions at work in their new endeavors. The songs on *Brocade* each seem to emphasize a central leitmotif, a core arrangement that serves as the solid foundation for further elaboration. These patterns tend to seriously anchor the songs, shrinking the available universe in which the band can deploy their sound and forcing them to create the illusion of boundlessness with intricate weavings.

As such, the unrestrained dreaminess of their more recent work is hemmed in, the warm, often messy human elements replaced with a respect of finer details. The music no longer crashes into the senses like a wave but encourages attention to each pinprick note and overlapping arc of sound. These are the sounds of construction, of creation at a microscopic level and arouse the mind in a profoundly precise way.

The opening track, "Loft," is perhaps the most minimal of all the pieces, and certainly the one that borrows the most from the band's obvious Krautrock ancestors. Perhaps no more than ten notes loops back and forth with gyroscopic energy, constant motion and a buzzing expenditure of energy that retains its shape and orientation in a remarkable demonstration of skill and restraint. What initially appears to be stagnant and repetitive instead reveals itself to be an intensely potent and complex force capable of great power. Soon, what once sounded remote and cold envelops the listener within its expanding orbit. The tightness of "Loft" is thinned out as "Yon" emerges, leaving greater space and room between spikes and smoothing out the rough edges into a glassy, artful landscape.

Along with "Spiral Arms," "Yon" comprises the center of the album, a spectacular expanse of moody, interlocking parts from each of the three musicians. The delicate care taken with each note makes it seem as if they were constructing an ornate quilt or shawl and evokes images of patient, enraptured audiences watching an ensemble engage in a painstaking crochet session, their knitting needles somehow rigged to produce tones and colors relating to the paths of their hands and the interaction with the fabric. While it may be an odd scenario, "Spiral Arms" truly arrests the senses, demanding the observer's respect for the effort and inspiration that went into the final product.

The only vocals on *Brocade* struggle to find their way to the fore on "How to Be Clean," which seems to be their mold-breaking stab at heavy, spaced-out rock in the vein of Kinski while still retaining their distinct charm. It's a sludgy, thick fusillade of static that is as welcome as it is unexpected—demonstrating the versatility of the musicians as they traverse the entire spectrum of sound.

The final piece, "Music for Three Synthesizers" is somewhat overshadowed by the break of rhythm in "How to Be Clean," and while it doesn't reach the level of impact that the core of *Brocade* does, its brooding undertones signal the album's inexorable end. They slowly but surely overtake the track's pattern, which flickers out amidst the deep, resonant drone that serves as its canvas. The twisting of *Brocade* is more than just ornament and pomp; it is the result of work, the result of fingers and hands which shape the smallest pieces in order to achieve the stunning textures of the larger whole. The whole is there to appreciate, but those same hands invite you in deeper, to see every moment and movement that contributed to its creation.

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