

## Younger Brother - The Last Days Of Gravity (Twisted)

Contributed by damion psyreviews

Music that softens life's impact on your central nervous system

No matter which rock you may have been hiding under this year, chances are you'll have heard all about this release. And for once the hype is more than deserved: Simon Posford and Benji Vaughan have gone some way to creating something so astoundingly unique that it might well prove to be this genre's defining moment.

It isn't quite the cohesive journey that A Flock Of Bleeps was; but then it becomes apparent pretty quickly that the two albums really aren't meant to be compared. If Flock was an experiment within the area between Shpongle and Hallucinogen, Gravity is an experiment to see just what can be done when you take psychedelic electronic musicians and place them in the familiar setting of a band of musicians.

The Last Days Of Gravity has scant echo of either artist's previous work. Subtle production tweaks remain, but those signature Posford lines and Promethean thunk are almost nowhere to be seen. You'll find more in common with a thread of psych, prog and indie bands: Radiohead are there, there's a fleck of Sigur Ros, old Verve, Marconi Union, even Teenage Fanclub. Even more flippant comparisons — The Cure and Brian Eno covering Pink Floyd — don't go quite far enough in describing what's going on here.

Younger Brother have become fans of big, pronounced chord changes. The sort of changes that shoegazing indie bands would have been proud of (hence the above mention of Teenage Fanclub) and that you might find in mid-90s dream house. In the case of Happy Pills, these changes take the shape of gorgeous twists and turns accompanied by bright harmonics. Add to that an underlying bottomend that never sits still and morphs and changes under your feet, and you're onto a bit of a winner.

All I Want is a glitchier Pink Floyd with what sounds like the pedal steel from KLF's Chillout as the melodic lead. It's effortless — the musical progression is as gently as a lullaby, and peaks reminiscent of Jean Michel Jarre, but in a good way. And what sounds like Michele Adamson speaking in backwards Latin is, I am told, not Michele Adamson speaking backwards in Latin. This has to be a good thing.

Elephant Machine sounds like it has holidayed in Shpongle territory, the twilight shpongle of And The Day Turned To Night. It is key to disrupting the album's flow; skip past it as you listen and you're experiencing a more rounded, balanced whole experience. Much better is Your Friends Are Scary: astonishing movement and progression, wonderful changes of bassline and mode, and a genuine atmosphere of capturing an experience from "up there" and laying it out "down here". An awful sentence I know, but how else is one supposed to explain the inexplicable; another point for Music against Language in the eternal game of metaphysical Pong.

I Am A Freak is the one track that sounds like it could have been somewhere on A Flock Of Bleeps; it's a breaksier track that gives space for the electronic past-lives of Posford and Vaughan to strut their lysergic stuff. It's all kept nicely in order and swept under the rug; and when the bassline changes to open out into a cruisy, fresh-air plateau it's one of those Wonderful Moments of Electronic Music.

Perhaps the most compelling, fascinating track here is Ribbon On A Branch. The vocal lullaby hangs in your head and follows you around all day, and the lyrics are poetically obtuse to the point of being almost I-Ching-like; they seem to suggest different themes and feelings with each listen. Musically it is expansive, rewarding, orgasmic. It pulls on your emotions and plucks at your strings, all with exceptional subtlety.

The two parts that make up Sleepwalker are a shimmering indulgence. Starting out as shuffled dub that threatens to sound like a post-Shpongle Madness, the vocals soar and float above a mesmerising crystal of guitars. The second part drops into 4-4 for the first and last time on the album, sounding like a housier Hallucinogen with a breakdown that will have you reaching for the drugs cupboard and partying like it was 1988 all over again.

To top all this off, Psychic Gibbon is as damn near to a perfect piece of music I've ever heard. The guitar line may be all Robert Smith, and the chord changes may once again be those big, emotive steps mentioned above, but by christ is this a goodun. The production is squarely aimed a good few feet above your head, the movement is organic and the overall vibe seems to sum up life, death, rebirth and everything in between. It actually is that good.

The Last Days Of Gravity is an album that's difficult to review. Normally on these (web)pages we analyse what the producer was trying to do, whether they succeeded, and whether they annoyed the hell out of us in so doing.

Younger Brother have turned this on its head. If dance music is music that's supposed to make people dance, then it's a craft. Not an art. It's music that's designed to have an effect; art is designed to have no effect other than itself. The difference is similar to a joke being designed to have the effect of making you laugh, while a story is just a story from which you can draw whatever messages and meanings you can find.

This album will mean as many different things to as many different people as hear it. It is an emotional, expressive journey that's valid whether you listen to it in the background with some mates round, or you listen intently to every note and frequency-tweak with pointed trainspotter ears.

If it alienates the trance public, then bloody good show. After this album, you don't really want Hallucinogen 3 and you're not really all that fussed about Shpongler 4. It would seem, contrary to what we were busy believing in recent years, that this genre may just come up with something that people remember in 25 years time.

Which will probably mean that when your kids hit 17, they'll be asking you whether you saw Younger Brother and using your response as a benchmark to determine how cool you are.

At least they won't be asking us about Infected Bloody Mushroom.