

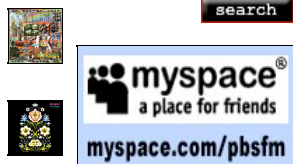


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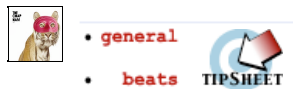
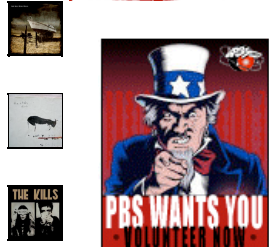
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The Moscow Coup Attempt - Insomnia (Capitalist Records)

The strength of some albums lies in the depths of mood they can create. *Insomnia* is one of these. So if you'll indulge me an anecdote, I'll try to explain the feeling it gives me. When I was a wee scribbler, I had this big ole purple book - The Reader's Digest of Strange Stories and Amazing Facts - which brimmed with tales of adventure and mystery. But some of the "strange stories" were so frightening that they led me to many sleepless nights, holding a bursting bladder until the safety of dawn. Two points here: *Insomnia* is just as fascinating, and occasionally unsettling; and I should probably sue Reader's Digest for those childhood years of urinary angst.

The Moscow Coup Attempt's Derek Whitacre lives in Los Angeles' sprawl, creating measured electronica that resonates with the wide spaces you might expect of an artist from the heartland. Frustrated by his previous output and a waning obsession with politics, Whitacre stumbled across "number stations", and a new direction for his music.

Numbers stations are shortwave broadcasts, usually of a single voice reciting a sequence of letters, numbers or alpha-nums. Often the voice is female, sometimes male; occasionally a child's voice is heard. It is widely believed that the sequences are codes, designed to pass information to undercover spies. Whitacre spent many caffeine and alcohol-soaked nights crawling up and down the shortwave band, and *The Moscow Coup Attempt* began as his way of attaching music to his harvest of samples.

Insomnia is a six track, 40-minute journey. On occasion it is beautiful - Vera Ostrava adds bewitching vocals to *Do You Fear Sleep?*, reminding you of how good trip-hop can be in the right hands. At other points, *Insomnia* is the soundtrack to breaking down on a godforsaken back road, far from the sanctuary of streetlights and hearing boots crunching in the gravel behind you.

The accompanying DVD sets the music to a montage of archival footage: the space-race, blank rooms, spinning machines, dustbowl farmers and San Francisco, before and after the 1906 earthquake. The last quarter of the visuals features a hypnotic dancer superimposed over a man's blurred, staring face - an image that will simultaneously delight and terrify stoners out there. There are undoubtedly themes in there (the fragile nature of humanity is a good place to start), but the visuals can be enjoyed as they were intended - a foil to Whitacre's live shows; as he said in a previous interview, "Who wants to watch a guy twiddle knobs and play keys, sitting in front of a laptop?"

Three tracks from *The Moscow Coup Attempt's* debut, *The Failure of Shortwave Radio*, are included as a DVD bonus.

Whitacre is, in many ways, a regular guy. He grows uncomfortable talking about himself, he's sick of explaining what numbers stations are and he thinks the world is a worse place without Bill Hicks. But *Insomnia* is a talented work, delightful on two levels - as a beguiling, disconcerting journey; and as a beacon to a legion of artists toiling on their own bedroom masterpieces. Just please make sure if you show it to any impressionable eight-year-olds before they go to bed, leave the lights on all the way to the toilet.

Rhys Tate

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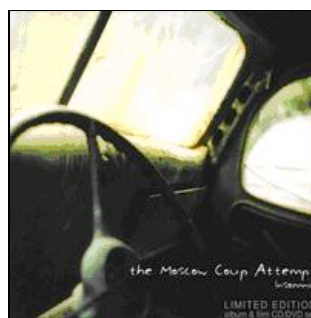
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THE MOSCOW COUP ATTEMPT Q&A

My Mother loves musicals and all that Andrew Lloyd Webber type of shite. I grew up listening to all of it subsequently. I fucking hate it. I hate show tunes. I hate musicals. And what really pisses me off is that I know all the music and half the lyrics to all of them. Kind of like how everyone knows Barry Manilow tunes, but no one with any taste actually likes them. [\[more\]](#)



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