

Inc. No World: Living EP

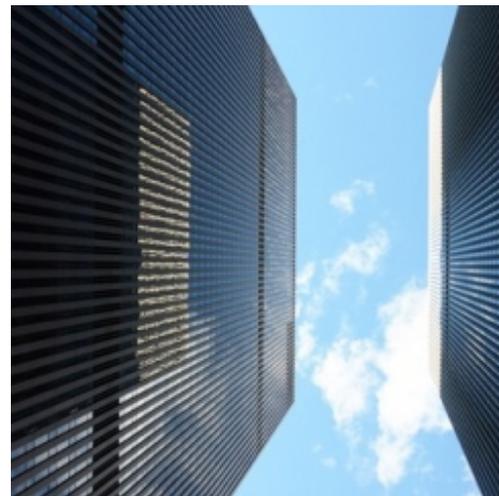
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Daniel Bromfield

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In the grand scheme of things, Inc. No World's new EP doesn't do much other than add an extra 23 minutes to the existing catalog of one of the great modern mood bands. These could be outtakes from last year's *As Light as Light*. It doesn't matter. In a world where we can choose from millions of artists at the click of a mouse, *Living* gives us what we crave when we choose Inc. At this point, it doesn't matter whether or not they refine or redefine their sound as long as they can still conjure that vibe.

As with *As Light as Light*, they've stretched their songs, relying less on electronics in favor of something more organic, more neo-soul. They're subtly funky in the way they might introduce a musical element so perfect it makes your heart stop and swell back up with appreciation. The Aged brothers are seasoned session cats who know what works, what doesn't and—most importantly—when to hold back.



Even when there are a lot of simultaneous moving parts, this is minimal music. It seems to sit at the intersection of every soul song ever written, and these songs are so artfully vague they can't possibly be about Andrew or Daniel Aged, but rather anyone who's ever felt what they sing about. This vagueness doesn't make it easier to relate, but it helps their lyrics sink into the fog. Lyric-conscious listeners might initially recoil at all the clichés here – many meteorological – and find this music requires a holistic approach.

It's hard to pinpoint the trick behind the illusion, but Inc.'s music seems to conjure something greater than itself. Perhaps it's because the Aged brothers have thoroughly removed themselves from the music. If the lyrics aren't about them, neither are the vocals. They're not one to break into show-stopping melisma. Their voices are hushed and soft, as if in prayer. God isn't mentioned, but "spiritual" is a key word here; and if they're praying, perhaps the music represents the void they're reaching out into.

The changes since the last album feel more like caprices than clear steps forward. "Sent," the band's first instrumental, sprouts so organically from their sound it takes about two minutes to register no one's started singing yet. And a soprano, the smoothest of saxophones, wheedles wistfully through "Sowed" and "Sent." It's ripe for jokes, but Inc. seems too sincere to smuggle in a cheeky reference for cheap laughs.

If they want us to make associations with pop's past, they'll aim bigger—Michael Jackson, for instance, whose "Love Never Felt So Good" they plunder for the chord progression of "Sowed." Their music's also often compared to Prince, which would seem strange to anyone who's only heard *Purple Rain*, but make perfect sense to fans who know his underrated gospel work (see: "God," "4 The Tears in Your Eyes.")

Where can Inc. No World go from here? Though their signature sound hasn't worn out its welcome yet, it rarely yields results when a band stays on one tried-and-true formula for too long. An instrumental album, perhaps, or one with lengthier tracks along the lines of D'Angelo's *Voodoo*. A change of this magnitude might take years to boil over, but if they keep releasing music of this caliber until then, I'm along for the ride.

- Label:
No World/Quality Time/Handsome Dad/Big Oil
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