

= Cryptograms (album) =

Cryptograms is the second album from Atlanta , Georgia @-@ based indie rock group Deerhunter , released through Kranky Records on January 29 , 2007 on CD and vinyl . Following the 2005 release of its first full @-@ length album Turn It Up Faggot , Deerhunter began recording material for its next record at Rare Book Room studio in New York . This initial recording session failed , due to the physical and mental state of lead singer Bradford Cox , as well as malfunctioning equipment in the studio . The band returned to Atlanta , only giving recording a second try after encouragement from members of the band Liars . The final version of Cryptograms was recorded in two separate day @-@ long sessions , months apart , resulting in two musically distinct parts ? the first includes more ambient music while the second contains more pop music elements . Cox sang most of the record 's lyrics in a stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness manner ; they include themes of death , companionship , and Cox 's experiences with his genetic disorder Marfan syndrome . Cryptograms was generally well received by critics , and several publications placed the album on their lists of the top albums of 2007 .

= = Recording = =

Deerhunter first attempted to record their second album in 2005 with folk musician Samara Lubelski at Rare Book Room studios in New York . This recording session failed , due in part to the physical and mental state of lead singer Bradford Cox , who had influenza and walking pneumonia at the time . The group was also working with malfunctioning equipment , including an out @-@ of @-@ tune piano and an uncalibrated tape recorder . Cox later described the results of these sessions as sounding like " if you listen to Loveless on mushrooms , and I mean that in not a complimentary way " . In an interview with Pitchfork Media , Cox said that the music was " on a scratched CD @-@ R under my bed " , which " nobody will ever hear " . These tracks were later made available , in mixtape form , on the Deerhunter blog .

Following the failed session Deerhunter returned to Atlanta . The group became acquainted with punk band Liars , who encouraged them to give recording a second try . For their second attempt , Deerhunter returned to the same rural Georgia studio in which they had recorded their debut album Turn It Up Faggot . This time successful , the album was recorded in two parts : the first half was recorded over one day @-@ long session , completely filling the reel of tape the band had brought with them . The last song of this recording session , " Red Ink " , ends with the tape spinning off the reel . The second half , recorded months later over a single day in November , begins with the song " Spring Hall Convert " . During this recording session Cox had the flu , and his congestion caused his voice on the album 's pop tracks to sound " really weird [?] I always thought I would go back and redo them , but we never did . "

Cryptograms was followed four months later by a four @-@ track extended play , Fluorescent Grey , which was recorded while Cryptograms was being mixed . Cox indicated that each new track was worthy of being a single ; one music critic characterized the EP as being less " dreamy " than Cryptograms . When Cryptograms was released on vinyl as a double album , the Fluorescent Grey tracks took up the fourth side .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Cryptograms is more " subdued and introverted " musically , according to Cox , than Deerhunter 's first release Turn It Up Faggot . Cox has shown disdain for that record in interviews , saying it " sounds like 2002 ? angry , post @-@ hardcore dance punk . We were really young and angry . " In contrast , Deerhunter 's new album is " not the punk attitude " characteristic of Turn It Up Faggot . While Cox does not consider Cryptograms a " reaction " to its predecessor , he noted in an interview with Stylus Magazine that the group 's new record " developed out of different circumstances , altogether . "

Deerhunter 's two recording sessions produced two halves of the album with distinct musical styles

. The first half of the album is more ambient in style and includes four ambient instrumental tracks . With the song " Providence " , the band aimed to create a feeling of solitude . The idea for the song came about when , while in Providence , Rhode Island during a 2005 tour , Cox had an argument with other members of the band . Having left his bandmates to cool off , Cox " walked around Providence at dusk " feeling " totally alone " , while admiring his " meditative " surroundings . In the instrumental track " Red Ink " , Cox and drummer Moses Archuleta worked to create an atmosphere in which the listener is dreaming he or she is dead and the experience of death feels like reality .

The second part of the album , which begins with " Spring Hall Convert " , contains more elements of psychedelic and pop music . In an interview with L.A. Record , Archuleta remarked that the band often received letters from fans who had listened to their music while stoned . He noted the negative connotations that come with being called a " psychedelic " band , and considered the group to be " pretty clean ? [and] sober " in contrast , adding , " That ' s funny that that ' s people ' s idea of what we ' re into . " " Spring Hall Convert " originates from a demo Cox first recorded in October 1998 when he was sixteen . On the Deerhunter blog , Cox wrote of two girls he knew from his school as one day being " bathed in this golden spring light in the hallway " . He described himself feeling as close to them as if they were his sisters . The same day he recorded " Spring Hall Convert " on a karaoke machine ; Cox wanted the song to reflect the " acid trip " he experienced seeing his friends in this light . He calls the song ' s drum track characteristic of his " stonedness " at the time , adding that " Hydrocodone was [also] a factor . " The lyrics of the track reflect Cox ' s experiences with his genetic disorder Marfan syndrome . As a teenager he underwent " extensive " surgeries for his chest , ribs , and back . The lyrics reflect the experience of someone moving in and out of consciousness during chemotherapy , while missing their friends and memories of a normal life . The original lyrics of the song written in 1998 were not changed when the track was re @-@ recorded for Cryptograms .

In " Octet " , Cox sings " I was the corpse that spiraled out into phantom hallways " . The imagery of this song was inspired by the cover art of the Grove paperback edition of the Dennis Cooper novel Closer . In the album ' s closing track , " Heatherwood " , Cox tells of the house he was born in , where he believes he will return to die . " Strange Lights " is a song about " companionship , and facing uncertainty with someone " . The song was written by guitarist Lockett Pundt , and is based on a dream he had in which himself , Cox , and a third person " walked into the sun together , knowing it was going to kill us " , as described by Cox . The idea for the song " Lake Somerset " came from a trip Cox took to the zoo while hung over , during which he saw a turtle eating carrots . " It was cool and adorable ? It had this cute neck and was very small . It chewed slowly . " When video producer James Sumner approached the band to make a music video for " Lake Somerset " , Cox told Sumner he " wanted a video of a turtle eating a piece of pizza . " Several days later , Sumner posted his video to YouTube ; it consists of a man in a turtle suit eating pizza for four straight minutes . Cox has said that the band ' s greatest achievement with Cryptograms was " evoking a feeling of someone who ' s woken up after being strung out one too many nights ? It ' s the feeling of being lovesick and very spaced @-@ out . "

= = Reception = =

Cryptograms received positive reviews from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 77 , based on 17 reviews , indicating " Generally Favorable Reviews " .

Pitchfork Media awarded the album the publication ' s " Best New Music " accolade , and later placed it fourteenth on a list of the fifty best albums of 2007 . Pitchfork staff writer Marc Hogan wrote that Cryptograms " is alternately murky ... ethereal , amorphous and incisive " , calling the second half of the album " vastly more accessible " than the first . Mike Diver of Drowned in Sound found the album ' s two halves " absolutely coherent ; the sequencing allows the listener space to breathe at the most opportune moments , and its leaps from ambiance into adrenaline @-@ soaked enthusiasm ... are worthy of celebration . " Tiny Mix Tapes ' s Paul Haney enjoyed the " psych @-@ crazed pop " found in the second half of Cryptograms , citing " Spring Hall Convert " , " Heatherwood

" , and " Strange Lights " as exemplary tracks . Nick Sylvester of The Phoenix considered the first half of the album to be irregular in style and quality , but found that this gave the transition between its two halves " a black @-@ and @-@ white @-@ to @-@ Technicolor moment (or TV to HDTV , if you prefer) : " Spring Hall Convert " combines Deerhunter 's come @-@ up and come @-@ down into the most uplifting rock song I 've heard in a while , an explosion of gritty Velvet downstrums and swirling vocal harmonies . "

The first half of Cryptograms was called " the problem child " by Kevin Elliott of Stylus Magazine , characterizing this child as having been " medicated at a young age to subdue constant anxiety and the fear of death , overly mired in thoughts of regret and anguish , overwhelmed with ideas and insight . " Mike Schiller of PopMatters found that because the second half of Cryptograms " fixate [s] on examples of Deerhunter 's songcraft , which is actually somewhat average " , the use of delay effects " mask [s] whatever deficiencies in musicianship Deerhunter might choose to hide " . He believes the potential seen in the first half of the album is lost in the second . Allmusic writer Marisa Brown felt the band 's ambient music is used to the extent that it becomes " commonplace , despite its avant @-@ garde leanings . " The writer found that when Deerhunter " aims for the provocative and the esoteric " , the band often " overreach [es] and end [s] up hitting something much more ordinary , predictably " experimental " ? in a genre that 's supposed to be anything but . " Dom Sinicola of Cokemachineglow stated that all of Cryptograms " sounds , as a whole , too coherently cold " , the tracks " Providence " and " Heatherwood " being exceptions .

The album placed high on lists of the best albums of 2007 of several publications , earning spots in the top twenty with Tiny Mix Tapes , The Phoenix , and Drowned in Sound . An article by Pitchfork Media gave musicians the opportunity to publicize their favorite records from 2007 . Cryptograms received praise from Ed Droste of Grizzly Bear , ranking the album as his third favorite of 2007 . Klaxons 's James Righton and Black Lips 's Cole Alexander placed the album on their own top tens as well .

= = Track listing = =

Music written by Moses Archuleta , Bradford Cox , Josh Fauver , Colin Mee and Lockett Pundt , except where noted . Lyrics by Bradford Cox .

" Intro " ? 2 : 50
" Cryptograms " ? 4 : 17
" White Ink " ? 4 : 59
" Lake Somerset " ? 3 : 49
" Providence " ? 4 : 08
" Octet " ? 7 : 50
" Red Ink " ? 3 : 40
" Spring Hall Convert " ? 4 : 29
" Strange Lights " ? 3 : 38 (music by Lockett Pundt)
" Hazel St. " ? 3 : 48
" Tape Hiss Orchid " ? 1 : 12
" Heatherwood " ? 3 : 37

= = Personnel = =

Deerhunter

Moses Archuleta ? synth / pads , drums , electronics , treatments

Bradford Cox ? vocals , electronics , tapes , drum , acoustic slide guitar , bell set , accordion , electric guitar

Josh Fauver ? tremolo bass , bass guitar , reverse guitar , vocals

Colin Mee ? guitar , tapes , electric guitar

Lockett Pundt ? synth bells , guitar , acoustic slide guitar , hammond organ , vocals

Production

Susan Archie ? layout design
Chris Bishop ? production , engineering
Jennifer Munson ? mastering
L. Somerset ? author
Nicolas Vernhes ? mixing