

Title: Squid crawls into your crevices on “Cowards”
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“I’m evil too,” echoes out into a void of nothing before being faced with a hellish onslaught of satanic strings and raspy keys. This moment falls roughly halfway through Cowards, the latest release in the catalog of Squid, a Brighton-based post-punk band known for their daringly experimental, krautrock sound.

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What Squid does on Cowards is make the listener uncomfortable. Unlike their welcoming debut Bright Green Field (2021), which topped the UK charts, or their spastic synth use on O Monolith (2023), Squid makes it clear that their comeback is not one to bop your head to.

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If the opening track titled “Crispy Skin” wasn’t enough of a hint, take a glance at the lyrics:

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“We love their crispy skin / ‘Cause it’s something that we crave / One hit right between the eyes / It’s become so easy / That’s no surprise / One hit right between the eyes / It’s become so easy to take a life.”

If casually eating people isn’t your thing, turn back now—evil sounds so good on Squid that it’s almost tasty. Through its embodied hatred, Cowards elevates drummer and lead vocalist Ollie Judge’s already slightly strange yet iconic vocals into a new category: making your skin crawl.

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Judge’s vocals deliver the lyrics of Cowards in a way that makes you flinch as he whispers lines such as “Blood on The Boulders” in his ghoulish timbre. It’s not just the vocals that make Cowards frightening; Squid dusts off their instrumental mastery to conduct an experience that oscillates between navigating the slums of medieval poverty and observing a busy day at the torture chamber.

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The instrumentals can be summed up in one word: foreboding. The horns exude sorrow, while the guitars create distortion with ambient notes reminiscent of being lost in Germany’s Black Forest. Meanwhile, the bass drum thuds like a mysterious sound echoing from a dark cave.

The feeling of walking through a haunted house doesn’t falter, as almost every song flows into the next. Cowards is a seemingly not-so-relaxed attempt at a concept album. In a crawl through horror, Squid gives each song moments of a creepy lullaby and a dash through the underworld.

“Showtime!” starts with an alluring vibe that justifies the wickedness before slowing down into a spiral of fear for its outro. A byproduct of the energy *Cowards* brings to the table is that public listening to any of the tracks is bound to be met with disgusted side eyes—monsters are usually unwelcome in a car ride or social gathering.

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The ominous odyssey culminates in “Well Met (Fingers Through The Fence),” an eight-minute behemoth that encapsulates the eerie atmosphere through whispers, horns, strings, and cryptic promise of “nothing else to see.” Ultimately, the track fulfills this promise by fading into silence, leaving the listener feeling cold and alone.

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