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F*ck Buttons

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Yahoo! Music Review

F*ck Buttons - ICA, London

(Tuesday February 5, 2008 3:28 PM)

Gig played on 30/01/08

Now, of course, the proliferation of bands with the word "f*ck" in their name has pretty much done for transgressive possibility, but former Bristol-based duo **Andy Hung** and **Ben Power** have added a charming, nursery-like twist with "buttons". It's possible that the pair have seriously taken against these fastenings, preferring instead zips, toggles and the like, but we rather suspect hours in the studio spent cursing their gear when it failed to respond.

Happily, there are no spanners in their machinery tonight. Not that **F*ck Buttons** rely exclusively on electronics; one of the features that marks them out as a very bright hope indeed for 2008 is their blending of the live and the organic with the pre-programmed and the sampled. **Hung's** box of mechanical tricks is built inside an old suitcase and he alternately hunches over and lopes around this throughout, while **Power** adds both a stand-alone drum to his digital arsenal and a range of kids' plastic instruments, the most effective being a tiny megaphone which distorts his yowled vocals to frequently terrifying effect.

Tonight, they're here to showcase upcoming debut album, "**Street Horrrsing**" (sic), due out in March and the mood is both curious - word on the **Buttons** is spreading fast - and excited, building to techno-rave euphoria by the set's close. Their no-stops-until-the-end-of-the-line trip includes "**Bright Tomorrow**", which burbles along like **Kraftwerk** for a good three minutes before exploding in a filthy riot of super-fuzzed noise and unhinged vocal fury and "**Colours Move**". It's the **Buttons'** poppiest moment, but all things are relative; it's poppy as a troupe of rabid chimps dancing to a hybrid of **Steve Reich**, **Hot Chip** and **The Fall** against a fetid jungle backdrop.

"**Sweet Love For Planet Earth**" summons memories of **Fischerspooner**'s mighty "**Emerge**" in its marriage of a sweetly tinkling synth motif and melodic line of moody electro, but carves out chunks of super-fuzzed bass more monstrously heavy than anything **Justice** could manage. That segues straight into the thrillingly malevolent "**Ribs Out**", in which **Power** hammers out a tribal rhythm that pulses with unspoken danger while **Hung** takes up a heavily effected vocal mic and begins jabbering into it like a deranged baboon, bounding around the floor with such animalistic intensity you fear he might suddenly bend over and bare his arse.

It works as a disturbing epic, fast-forwarding from a dark, pre-linguistic history brimming with our collective primal fears to a vast, unknowable future - equal parts "*The Blair Witch Project*", "*The Exorcist*" and "*2001, A Space Odyssey*". That **F*ck Buttons** manage all of this without recourse to retroism or recent trends and without sacrificing physical thrills and communal connectivity to intellect says a lot. Just watch them go.

by Sharon O'Connell

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