

Fuck Buttons

Street Horrnsing

(ATP Recordings)

I've seen their name mentioned on many press releases and club flyers and they are with uber-cool promoters ATP, so this Bristol duo must be as hip as it gets (Bristol too... home to so many introspective home-spun scenes they make Brighton seem like merely poor 'Championship pretenders')? With that 'up yours' punk nametag too I'm expecting something confrontational. They are touted too as 'one of the more exciting things to happen to experimental electronica in some time...'. The sad truth is I just don't know what is going on in that aforementioned genre so am certainly NOT going to pass judgements on this debut album in that criteria. They do however have some punk rock credentials amongst the assorted recordists involved in this 'Street Horrnsing' project.

For starters, being electronica you do have to wait for several minutes into each track for something to happen beyond the switching on of the chosen fuzztone synth sound and riff. When that something does occur it isn't the wham-bam of a rock'n'roll thrash or post-rock power surge, it is the subtle additional layering of fuzz. By then the warm three note bass drone has sent out its barbed tentacles, in through your defenceless eardrums, and lodged itself like a bacteria firmly into your cranium. Once there, a 'tune' is free to divide, multiply and conquer and that's pretty much what it does. This means that once the close or fade is reached it is a monumental DNA replica of the opening notes that bore it.

There are some vocals, which are sadly too closely related to an angry Metal band horsing around to be taken seriously, but then again it's hard to tell how seriously The Buttons want to be taken. There's also the sporadic use of tribal percussion and pounding house bass drum (but thankfully sparingly). Perhaps the most magical moments are the occasions when the white noise subsides to allow Farfiscum-Vox organ riffs to give us more spaced out and melodic interludes akin to Stereolab or Spiritualised.

Experimental electronica is so often presented by cold hearted and po-faced bedroom technicians but I get a warm and welcoming feeling from this album. Bollocks to the press release's reference to a 'mythical urban equestrian sport', I'd prefer to assume the album title is about playfulness. After-all, even if the great Julian Cope claimed the same for some of his Queen Elizabeth space drones he'd sure as hell have his tongue firmly planted cheek-wise too.

I wish I had seen them recently at The ICA, I bet it rocked. I'm sure both hosts and visitors were more than well aware of the musical similarities with previous noise sculptors Throbbing Gristle's legendary performances there.

Paul Artrock

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