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Fuck Buttons - Street Horrrsing

Before I start my review, I have to point out that unlike every other article about Fuck Buttons in the last year or so, this is not a serious go-between of noise and pop music. When we achieve this feat, the world will end with Merzbow and Madonna sitting atop an atom bomb, flinging their Stetson's around their heads. In the meantime...

Fuck buttons do fill a void that has been missing; it is unusual to find music that is simultaneously accessible to the ears, whilst still exploring new sound properties... at least without the reliance on guitars or laptop based technology. It's interesting too to see the popularity and success they are getting for what they are doing in era where anyone with a fringe can't wait to grab a guitar and myspace account and take on the world.

With that proviso, lets take a look at the first track, 'Sweet Love for Planet Earth'. With the combination of sweet chimes hitting brutal distortion, and indeed continuing through the track without a clear narrative or harmonic development, you realise that this is something unusual. The sound clamours, 'No!', battles to hold your attention and the fact it does suggested to me that the rest of this album would be outstanding.

It's obvious that these guys have spent many a long night working at the upper end of noise spectrum. The overriding impression is that earlier recordings, those without the fuck buttons name attached, would have sounded more alike to Prurient and Whitehouse, rather than the highly enjoyable, sonic powered sounds we hear on this record.

Fuck Buttons' vocals are unintelligible, indecipherable and add another layer of complex sound to the band. The feeling this creates is one of two muso's tinkering with their signature sound, rather than a bunch of kids shoving keyboards through pedals, which detractors of the band frequently mention. Their skill also comes across in the way the music crosses genre boundaries, seamlessly blending the tracks together for one long DJ-esque set of ear bleeding fun. 'Ribs Out' is my personal stand-out track, with just minimal drums and vocals; it's haunting, and unearthly but cool, full of frantic energy and human power that some of the other tracks lack. Again, they marry together potentially disparate ideas into a cohesive whole.

'Okay, Lets Talk About Magic', does not sound unlike Orchestra or Wolf Eyes. The track is a mesmeric drone, which has both rhythmic properties and an abundance of hearty feedback. It starts off nasty and colourful, and with the addition of percussion, becomes a full monster of a track. The screaming Fisher Price effected vocals seal the deal. It is one of those tracks where you know if you ramp up your headphones one decibel louder things will start to become inhuman, and you risk destroying your hearing in the process.

On the flip side, 'Colours Move' is a poorer track, which accumulates ideas from the previous tracks and adds only a cheap and repetitive synth riff to distinguish it from what has come before. This process of repetition upsets the album a little from being a masterpiece as it does feel at times like your stuck in there loop pedal hearing the same signature sound over and over.

The main downside to this record is the lack of real replay value. Just as Fuck Button's claim to fame is their unique sound, it is also their downfall. 'Street Horrrsing', by blending many different influences and styles, lacks the intensity of a real noise record and also the melody of a singles record. It's hard to hold it against them though as 'Bright Tomorrow' is possibly the single of year. A brilliant first effort, I can't wait for more.

Robin Van Rijn

