
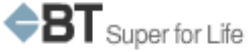


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AXXONN 'Let's Get It Straight'



by [AndrewMcMillen](#) on Dec 18 2010, 06:00AM

AXXONN
Let's Get It Straight
 (Useless Art Records/Inertia)

Once a duo featuring No Anchor (and ex-Iron On) bassist (and sometime TheVine contributor) Ian Rogers, AXXONN now exists solely as an outlet for Brisbane artist Tom Hall, whose spectral sounds are captured on *Let's Get It Straight*, Hall's debut full-length under the AXXONN moniker.

Stylistically, it's a surprisingly mixed bag: where past releases consisted almost exclusively of noise and electronica-based compositions, here, Hall displays a willingness to step outside his comfort zone. He experiments with layered acoustic and electric guitars in 'Golfini', and a clean piano tone in '10 Pound Trouble', which opens with an extended sample of sparrows chirping. It's unexpected, and almost laughable at first; then, cute. It's the only moment that could be construed as humorous across nearly 50 minutes of furrowed-brow concentration. This isn't to say that the album isn't enjoyable - it is - but while it's a tough record to hate, it's even tougher to love. Diverse though the sounds contained within *Let's Get It Straight* are, there's few highlights, in the true sense of the word. Instead, the album works best as just that: a document to be observed in full. If just one track appeared on your iPod Shuffle, you'd probably skip it.

But if you began with 'Slave Driver', the album opener, and let it play through to 'Nai', it works. 'Slave Driver' opens with less a roar than a glacial synth yawn; it evokes imagery of deep space, or an arctic tundra, or somewhere desolate; somewhere free from mankind's greasy fingerprints. This feeling of isolation is why I return to the album: gradually, Hall's soundscapes seem to increase in both density and volume until you find yourself lost in the mix. This sense of disorientation works best on the slower tracks; the more upbeat creations, like the title track, suffer from a lack of subtlety when compared to the soothing toms of 'Cod & Chips'. Yet halfway through the latter, Hall kills the mood by injecting an obnoxious 4/4 bass beat out of nowhere, thereby smothering the unlikely beauty he'd concocted. Is this a decision of a restless creative mind, or just one trying to fit too many ideas into too few tracks? Hard to say.

The only human voice to appear on the album appears during 'Choc Milk Addiction', wherein Hall's disembodied voice repeatedly intones three words ("*Words fall down*", I think) amid trip-hop-style beats. The interweaving synths of 'Frosties 2L' are more grating than pleasing, due to the almost-painful dissonance that Hall happens upon. On the other hand, the dirty electronica passages in 'The Second Death' - which, at nearly eight minutes, is the longest track by far - fit right in, because they're given enough time to inhabit a mood. The track's momentum is slowly gained, earned, and maintained; happily, the same can be said for *Let's Get It Straight* - for the most part.

Andrew McMillen

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