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AXXONN Let's Get It Straight

10 Track, LP (2010, Useless Art Records)
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Somewhere along the corpse-strewn road of "experimental" heavy music, among the rabid dogs and Viking reapers, Brisbane's Tom Hall stands awkwardly with a digital synth and a crate full of foreign sonic apparatus. AXXONN's recent Bedroom Suck cassette, along with his first EP *Should You Fear Hell?*, were rulebook clutching specimens of the drone-metal variety, the type that so enthused the general non-metal listening public a couple of years back. But if you can imagine fiddly electro-pop harassed by guitars, and ridden with the offhand humour of Severed Heads, you're close to where AXXONN's head is at nowadays.

Let's Get It Straight doesn't sound like an attempt to subvert any of the styles it executes. It sounds like a music fan making music that pleases him. Popular style/substance correlations are severed here: there's no rock narrative or emotional underpinning during the guitar driven 'Golfini', which begins at dawn and ends, all distortion ablaze, in the midst of a forest fire. Similarly, the poker machine techno-pop of '10 Pound Trouble', with its rigid piano arpeggios and passive synthetic bounce, doesn't sustain a mood of space-age jouissance. Everything sits awkwardly with what surrounds: the foreboding church organ crawl of 'The Second Death' and the near sub-audible bass pulse of 'Perfect For Acid' - the best song on the record, because it's legitimately scary - is negated by the oddly breezy title track, which is as threatening as a kitten gnashing it's teeth, but not as cute.

Let's Get This Straight proceeds like a meal eagerly slopped from an all-cuisines smorgasboard, and its sonic flavours are swallowed without being chewed. The opening track 'Slave Driver' is a long textural build-up which, maddeningly, abruptly disappears before climax. Hall is maybe too restless, or too taken by the next offering, to draw out the ever-elusive pay-off, or to let his narrow dalliances widen enough to let the listener in. The result is that *Let's Get It Straight* sounds like a practice in sound for its own sake, with no real agenda or purpose. It's hard to invest in these very formal outings, and harder to know what kind of world Hall is trying to create. It's great that he's not loitering in hell anymore, but he'll improve once his vision has adjusted to the light.

by **Shaun Prescott**

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