
soundcheck

Radio Osaka

X Fade

BECAUSE OF YOU CDO 23 CD

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Broken Symmetry

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Reviewing bands with many obvious influence can be a problem. There are all sorts of notions like individual identity to handle, plus the question of whether or not we are all simply blotting-papers of things heard in the past. Can we learn to revise the scripts we have learnt, etc?

Let's face it: if things are always like other things, they lose their own shape, their own form. Except, maybe, when the manifold influences are as diverse as they are here: then the questions become different again, and Radio Osaka spend two hours on these two compelling discs trying to provide answers.

It's difficult to know where to start with this otherwise unknown Swiss (!) outfit; they definitely breathe the atmosphere of a post-rock planet but filter it through some pretty odd apparatus. From the opening of "Words Disguise Reality", the declamatory frontman becomes Peter Hammill (although later he changes his mind and puts his Lizard King head on). The Van Der Graaf echoes are blasted to the fore again when mad saxman Tommi Meier is let loose in the music. The looping, delay-heavy magic-carpet of space-funk ("She Is Sleeping") recalls anyone from Popol Vuh to Labradford, and "Alphaville"'s roadworks riffs see a fight break out between King Crimson's Fripp and Megadeth's Dave Mustaine. Some of those riffs can grate (cf the long, climatic "Memories") and the trancy astronomies can pall ("Skysoaring"), but all is never lost with a drummer like Andy Brugger around, who provides not only snare-shot brutality of sound but genuine subversion of all manner of rock, HipHop and fusion metres in his rowdy wake.

This emphasis on deranged dance rhythms comes into its own on the companion disc, *Broken Symmetry*, which claims to be a collection of loops, samples and remixes from *X Fade*. In the somewhat antediluvian mix (of a kind quite popular on Fourth And Broadway records ten years ago) it's hard to work out exactly where the material is derived from

and it's really only DJ Crazee Bo's "Something For The Radio" which freshens up proceedings. Taken together or separately, however, these represent a stunning achievement; Prog with attitude.

PAUL STUMP