

CLASH

Still House Plants - Fast Edit

An extraordinary listen...

By Eden Tizard,
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Once you're done with linear motion, what next? For many minimalists, a kind of cyclical repetition has great appeal. **Still House Plants** may take the repetition route, but it's a crooked kind. If minimalism focuses on the fluidity of the river's surface, Still House Plants seem more intrigued by craggy networks below, the flow of water through choppier terrain.

Then there's the free jazz impulses. On 'Fast Edit', the group play with pattern and spontaneity, enamoured by the way both tactics coexist. Let cycle fold in on itself, then make cycle out of schism. Drummer David Kennedy has a more succinct way of putting it. In a talk with The Wire, he describes his playing style as "repetition to the point of exhaustion".

They seek the erasure of a clear distinction between disciplines. As key influences Deleuze and Guattari say: to deterritorialise, to follow a line of flight.

Still House Plants have a bare bones feel. Aside from Kennedy, there's only Finlay Clark on guitar and Jessica Heckie-Kallenbach on vocals; a rewiring of the band setup in some ways akin to an older era of splintered guitar music. You might think of Scritti Politti, The Raincoats, or back further to The Shaggs. But there's also a love of UK garage, R&B, slowcore. Still House Plants engage in the sense of possibility these styles open up.

'Fast Edit' is all possibility.

New methods take hold on the album. Where before the live recording style was untampered with, here clips of crude jams and recent stints on tour spill out; a sampler ethos to the band setup. They capture a diffuse haze, but also hone in on points of clarity and brief ruptures of pleasure.

Clark lets out Sonny Sharrock ricochets on the aptly titled 'Pleasures', over which Hickie-Kallenbach stretches and toys with each and every syllable. The song is a jolt out of jet lag into the present tense.

If they sound at all like an indie band then they're a stark counterpoint to twee dogma. Even at their most orderly, things are a touch more than slightly off on 'Fast Edit', a stop-start lurch always on the cusp of something. 'Shy Song' has the least of this stub-your-toe shronk. There's faint background chatter, two slightly out of sync guitars, drums slack to an absentminded tempo. It's a pop song yet to be stitched together, left as tone plateau.

In Bison they've found an ideal home, a label with a faultless track record and a loose agenda of "experimental song", acts who gnaw at structure in a very productive way. You could argue Still House Plants try to spoil song, or sound like a shreds video of Life Without Buildings. I like to think of them as in construction, much more so than deconstructed. 'Fast Edit' is a key document of this open ended process. Who cares about the finished article?

9/10

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