

# BERGERBOY'S BLOG

## **MUSIC: Moetjenou?! Translation: Days in the Life: wtf?!**

**Moetjenou?! Tinmen & the Telephone** (*Roem Records, 2010*)

This album is the perfect accompaniment to your daily commute, precisely because it fulfils none of the usual functions of such a soundtrack. It neither imitates the monotony of the train tracks, hypnotising you into justifying the mindlessness of the quotidian. Nor does it delude you with deafening bass-lines and hip hop testicles, allowing you to momentarily believe you are a pimp from the ghetto for that short hour before you sit back down in the office in front of the computer screen. Amsterdam's Tinmen & the Telephone have instead produced an ironic and genuinely funny commentary on the repetitiousness of modern life and the frustration of bland pop culture. Sounds profoundly suspect. I assure you, this analysis is not the product of a literature degree; it's the unpretentious and un-condescending reality of music that manages to be at once expressive and accessible. Somewhat of a paradox for those who associate jazz either with Jamie Cullum or with music that is alienating and purely intellectual, making obscure references or speaking in insider's code. If you put it like that Moetjenou?! is somewhat groundbreaking, and I'll tell you why, in the form of a story, such as the seemingly narrative structure of the album demands. Since we don't speak Dutch we'll attempt a translation and call this tale 'Days in the Life: wtf?!'.

It begins with 'Perpetuum' and its lonely abstract pattern on the snare which, through the almost human dialogue between drums and keys that characterises the album, becomes gradually more familiar, like one might tap along with the irritating sound of some distant dripping, or sing in harmony with the whirr of a machine to make it bearable. This is you, waking up, again. And this sensation dominates the album; a necessary expressive outlet for all the frustrations of modern life. From abstract to tangible, the following track 'Kpn' - the name of the Dutch telephone company -

expresses that irritation of being on hold, beginning with the voice of a characterless telephone answer service mimicked exactly in rhythm and intonation by piano and drums. The music grows in intensity and develops into a fever of beautiful madness out of the unchanging leitmotif of the telephone message. This is you, on the phone to a company for phones with only the phone to talk to. You experience mood swings in a series of waves, with moments of self-imposed patience as you stop growling and force yourself into long meditative sighs, until your mind's pleasant wanderings are interrupted again by that emotionless female voice, now the very locus of all your wrath. The piano, drums and bass trio have a short concentration span and each time they wander away they delve deeper into a forest of thick and wholesome harmony, so that their panicked return to the inertia of mimicry is increasingly funny.

But the inevitable swearing and slamming down of the phone occurs and, as if to prove that you can never really escape the monotony, the recorded message is allowed the last word before we move into "Danse De La Fureur, Pour Les Sept Trompettes". For those whose Frog isn't up to scratch that's "Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets", and by this point rage is quite a justified reaction but the expletives are less explicit. The specified seven trumpets never appear though. Just another joke to prove that these boys from Amsterdam really aren't the sorts to put their title in French just to sound cultivated. Their irony cheekily sneers at the pretentious tendencies of traditional jazz and classical music - the influences of which are infused into every layer, exploited and left behind in the determinedly forward movement of the album.

In 'Time's Up' this day of gritted teeth ends hopefully with about the most beautiful lullaby your slumber could hope to be prepared with. Each touch of Tony Roe's fingers on the piano has a controlled sensuality like the release of slow moans. Perhaps this is in fact a track for lovers at the end of a long day. And then you wake up to a rejuvenating breakfast of 'Drummersliketotalk' - a sexy fusion of hip hop and jazz with intelligent and unexpected melodies (from guest saxophonist 'Ben van Gelder') that play the role of those few minutes with the newspaper over coffee and a quick chat about politics before you run off, skipping, to start another day.

You have some opinions, the porridge oats are releasing their energy slowly and you're alert with caffeine. Things are looking up. So you put on the radio in the car: 'Tin Fm'. A showcase of the trio moving as effortlessly through genres as you turn the dial on the radio with one finger, between music that is all as familiar as that machine whirring yesterday. You opt for the football commentary and find 'De Bal' - inspired by the 2010 world cup. Chopped and cut up into a hilarious montage, the slight variations of the utterance 'the ball', over and over again turn the trio into your maddened subconscious again. With frantic drum rolls on glass jars and ADHD panic attacks on the piano, the bass creating disruptions in the continuum, this theme of perpetual motion is clearly present again.

Mental breakdown comes in the form of a tearful collapse in the undulating 'Ill Chord' which would, if they left it at that, make this a sort of bourgeois tragedy. But the album is inspirationally youthful and instead the comedy returns in a spasmodic and groovy hip-hop self-tribute as the Tin Men emerge with their name on the scratched record deservedly marking them out as little jazz gods from the murky monotony of the commercial mess. So the heroes are the musicians for all they have overcome, and the moral of the story must be hope of escape, for the listener, in the form of an hour of magnificent music. Or perhaps it's actually a sort of alternative romance that gains power on repeated listens, like falling in love again and again.