

Foxy Digitalis, January 2011, Travis Bird (<http://www.foxydigitalis.com/foxyd/?p=6447>)

Rotterdam, “Cambodia”

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By Travis Bird

Viennese duo Rotterdam, in their own way, wants to pare things down. Their chosen method is an intriguing one, a synthesis of electronic processing, loops, and acoustic instruments. The result is very repetitive, at times tribal, but the electronic elements in the sampling and loops create an interesting juxtaposition. The duo of Susanne Amann (cello, flute, electronics) and Michael Klauser (acoustic guitar, electronics) tend to keep things rhythmically simple, based mostly around quarter notes. This strategy, avoiding becoming too polyrhythmic, leads to some interesting trancelike moments and, somewhat surprisingly, only occasionally limits the music’s engagement.

“Sup sup” has shades of early krautrock in its devotion to hypnotic repetition, but doesn’t always seem to have an overarching goal except for the juxtaposition of the elements. Aside from being quite simple, these are odd grooves—they’re not often danceable, but are almost on a different time-wavelength, although “Cambodia” is a bit more familiar, beat-wise. “Rotterdam” incorporates feedback, taking it into noisy territory, but still the electronic percussion pulse doesn’t let up and almost weaves the fabric of the pieces a bit too tightly. “Zimzike” is uniquely evocative, with the cello grinding feedback like steam rising off a swamp, lights cutting through darkness. It also refrains just enough from falling into a chord progression, retaining the abstraction of the set. Overall, the set is well-executed, even if its intentions are purposely reined in.

Everest Records

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