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Cable Ties Offers an Audacious Second Set

John Amen · Wednesday, March 18th, 2020

On their 2017 self-titled debut, Cable Ties showcased a mix of spirited riffs and rhythms, hook-filled melodies, and expressive vocals, alternating between tense restraint and cathartic abandon. The Australian band's new/second release *Far Enough* shows the trio expanding their musical scope, featuring infectious jams, torqued vocal deliveries, and lyrics that address such ineluctable issues as climate change and the lingering prevalence of patriarchal norms.

The album opens with "Hope," a diaristic take on the global environmental crisis (particularly the air in Australia), Jenny McKechnie's vocal tone ranging from mournful to indignant: "My uncle Pete he's / complaining about the greenies / he says they have gone too far / I say Pete they don't go far enough." Shauna Boyle on drums and Nick Brown on bass join McKechnie at the two-minute mark, the piece shifting from quasi-ballad to uber-diatribe, driven by McKechnie's piercing vocal. On the sludgy "Tell Them Where to Go," Brown's distorted bass part mixes with McKechnie's feedback-laden guitar, Boyle's steady drums serving as a rhythmic bedrock. The driving riff on "Sandcastles" is a radio-friendly cross between Björk's synth-y motif on "Army of Me" and The White Stripes' lo-fi refrain on "Seven Nation Army," Boyle's shouty back-up vocals a simple but effective touch.

At over seven minutes in length, "Lani" is a significant venture for Cable Ties, demonstrating the band's compositional prowess. Around the three-and-a-half-minute mark, the trio embarks on a two-and-a-half-minute jam, Boyle and Brown sustaining a metronomic rhythm while McKechnie explores trebly chords, melodic runs, and jangly arpeggios. "Self-Made Man" is a vitriolic snapshot of the exploitive corporatist; a wry encapsulation, perhaps, of the vitriolic pushback Barack Obama received from conservative-minded commentators when he suggested that "if you've been successful, you didn't get there on your own."

"Anger's Not Enough" features waves of feedback and distorted rhythm, McKechnie's voice stretched to a breaking point. As with "Lani," the longish "Anger's Not Enough" epitomizes the band's adept use of tone, accents, and fluctuations in volume. The track begins to disintegrate around the six-minute mark, the feedback-y truncation occurring a minute later. "I know that I'm only twenty-five / my mother says my future's bright," McKechnie sings on the final track "Pillow," "but I can't stop thinking how I fucked it up," bringing to mind an adrenalized Courtney Barnett. As the song wends toward closure, the guitar part grows more frenzied and McKechnie's vocal more strained; concurrently, and in contrast, Brown's bass and Boyle's drums grow more euphonic and bouncier, the album's ending an apt illustration of the band's affinity for noise,

melody, and harmonic flux.

Grounded in prototypical templates and attitude, *Far Enough* is punk for a politically, ethically, and socially informed generation, one galvanized by Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, among others. Jenny McKechnie, Shauna Boyle, and Nick Brown embrace the existential and pragmatic threats of their age, integrating swagger and presence, nihilism and message, articulate outrage and visceral prognostication.

8.2/10

Top photo courtesy of Spike Vincent

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