Monsieur Pompier's Travelling Freakshow

Teatime Terrors

Cleopatra DL/LP

The title *Teatime Terrors* suggests a comfortable and familiar setting transformed into something unsettling and strange. To achieve that effect, Monsieur Pompier's Travelling Freakshow create a world that's populated with weirdos and grotesques, but a surrealism that might have registered as well-worn and twee is sharpened by the queasy, fairground whirl of their music that rolls like a hardened and hyper Mr Kite.

The Dublin based group have developed a live show that lies somewhere between performance art and circus act, an aesthetic captured on this debut release. It begins with "Banana Boy", its synthetic bounce matching the manic tendencies of its main protagonist. Combining twisted parables with broken waltzer electronics renders the songs creepy and disorientating, like an episode of *Sesame Street* soundtracked by The Residents.

"The Ear Fairy" appears initially as a regular fairy tale or children's story. But as the song progresses, it transcends the normal details of gross behaviours or the violent payback dished out to a malevolent baddie. Surrounded by a Mark Mothersbaugh-like Casio waltz, the narrator describes a character who uses various tools to extract ear wax with the barely veiled threat of what he might do to any child who hasn't behaved well. While kind of gruesome, its grim charm and macabre humour makes it hard to dislike.

There are moments during *Teatime Terrors* where the dark surrealism recalls the weirdo lounge music of fellow Dubliner Paul Murnaghan's Wollow project. But where Wollow's sound is wrapped in a dinner jacket and cigarette smoke, the music of Monsieur Pompier's Travelling Freakshow comes with top hat and a ringmaster's jacket.

Spenser Tomson