

Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

With the Olympics failing to inspire, it can seem as if the only way to spend the long summer months is by playing endless rounds of tiddlywinks, or consuming copious amounts of Jammy Dodgers. But, that doesn't have to be the case. There is a better way! For instance, you can take up ant farming, as my good friend Jeffrey has recently done, or immerse yourself in the wealth of fantastic new music which has recently come out. Personally, I would recommend the latter. By **JOHN BITTLES**

In the following column we review some of the best new albums hitting the shelves over the coming weeks. We have the shadowy electronica of **Pye Corner Audio**, pop introspection by **Angel Olsen**, the post dubstep blues of **Zomby**, some sleek house from *Komarkt*, **Kornél Kovács** and **Foans**, the experimental genius of **Gudrun Gut** and **Momus**, and lots more.

So, before someone starts chucking javelins in my direction, we had better begin...



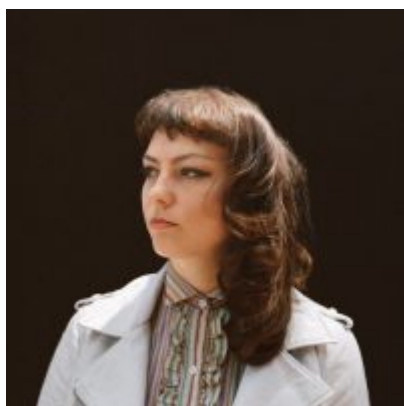
Back in 2012 *Sleep Games* by **Pye Corner Audio** quickly established itself as one of the most engaging and enthralling albums of modern times. On the record, ghostly electronica, **John Carpenter** style synths, and epic, ambient soundscapes converged to create a body of work which still sounds awe-inspiringly beautiful today. After the melancholy acid of his **Head Technician** reissue last month, **Martin Jenkins** returns to his **Pye Corner Audio** alias late August with the haunted landscapes of the *Stasis* LP. Conceived as a sequel of sorts to the aforementioned *Sleep Games*, *Stasis* is a rich, evocative listen that already seems destined to sit proudly as one of the albums of the year. Just listen to the low bass throb, vocodered vocals and ominous air of early track *Lost Ways* to hear exactly what I mean. Deep, dark and immersive, this is electronic music that speaks directly to the soul. Other highlights include the hazy ambiance of *Ganzfeld Effect*, the 80s style pulse of *At the Heart Of Stasis*, and the mid-paced acid swell of *Pulse Threshold*. Yet, from start to finish the standard never once slips, ensuring *Stasis* is an album in which you can happily lose yourself for hours on end. **10/10**.



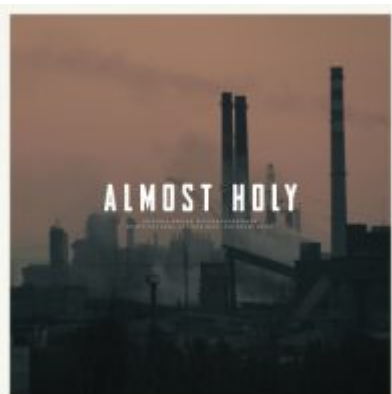
Every so often an artist will come along who appears to, almost single-handedly, make music seem fresh and exciting again. Such was the case back in 2008 when enigmatic producer **Zomby** first surfaced on the label *Hyperdub* with a pair of dark and dangerous dubstep EPs. While both were undeniably excellent, if anything *Dedication*, his debut LP, was superior in every way! Combining the best of dubstep, bass, house, techno and elctronica, the album was a spell-binding home listening experience which would still sound epic at a rave. **Zomby** returns to the *Hyperdub* imprint this September with the scuzzed-up beats and low-end wobble of his long awaited new LP. While previous album, *With Love*, was a little too ‚coffee table‘ for some, *Ultra* sees the producer once again embrace the power of the club. *Reflection* opens the record with a warm, futuristic sheen, setting us up nicely before the stop/start garage of *Fly 2*, the dark techno stomp of *E.S.P.*, and the liquid drum n’ bass pressure of *S.D.Y.F.* raise the quality sky high. While the collaboration with **Burial** will receive the bulk of the early attention, *Ultra* is a fully-realised return to form, and will make the perfect soundtrack to electronic dreams. **9/10**.



Celebrated leftfield electronic artist **Gudrun Gut** has come up with an unusual idea for her latest LP, remixing eight traditional folk songs in her own unique style. With the original tracks on *Vogelmixe* (Bird Mixes) originating from Turkey, Cameroon, Morocco, Croatia, Cuba, Portugal etc, the album is more than a mere musical delight, helping re-confirm the positive effect immigration can have on culture and the arts. Opening track *Heyder* by **Mesk** is given a groove-laden bass bounce by the German artist, to create a song which recalls the smoky, laid back vibes of **Gotan Project** or **Kid Loco**. Next up, **Gudrun Gut** adds an ominous low-end throb, spooky samples and the ghost of dub to the south Cameroonian rhythms of *ZaNeYen* by **Njamy Sitson**. Other picks include the glitch-filled cerebral shuffle of *Marhba* by **La Caravane Du Maghreb**, the Spanish guitar licks of *La Sombra Del Ayer* by **Ricardo, Rafael Y Pedro**, and the dubstep bass quake of **Heide's** *Ein Kleines Wildvögelein*. With the package also containing a bonus disc of original versions, *Vogelmixe* is both an excellent idea and a fabulous album. **8/10**.



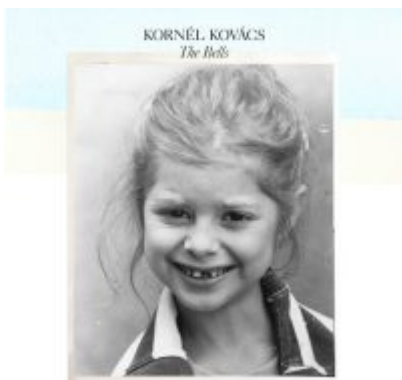
Angel Olsen's debut album, *Burn Your Fire For No Witness* was a record of stunning sound design and sonic depths. The singer's confessional and personal lyrics worked together with a rich musical backing to stirring effect. *My Woman*, the eagerly-awaited follow up LP is released on the 2nd of September, and is every bit as good. In the accompanying press release **Angel Olsen** suggests the album is about "the complicated mess of being a woman", and over the course of ten songs she investigates the many ups and downs that can befall a sensitive person in the modern world. With the singer, at times, sounding so fragile that her voice might break at any second, (*Intern, Heart Shaped Face, Those Were The Days*), at others like she wants to punch you in the face, (*Shut Up Kiss Me, Not Gonna Kill You*), or, as if she's far too cool to even give a damn, (*Never Be Mine, Give It Up*), she runs the full spectrum of emotions on here. So, whether you are in love, have been betrayed by love, or, are wondering if you will ever find love at all, *My Woman* is the record for you. **8/10**.



A collaboration between brothers **Atticus Ross, Leopold Ross** and British artist **Bobby Krlic** who is, perhaps, better known as **The Haxan Cloak**, *Almost Holy* is a soundtrack which doesn't need a visual element to resonate within the mind. The score has been designed to accompany **Steve Hoover's** documentary *Almost Holy*, which is set in Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union and features pastor **Gennadiy Mokhnenko** who the press release suggest "saves street kids, at times by forcible abduction, and brings them to his *Pilgrim Republic* rehabilitation center". With the film highlighting the drug and homelessness problems besieging the young, together with a system that is too corrupt or overrun to care, the music skilfully conjures images of dejected souls and urban decay. Songs such as *Punching Bag, Intervention, Pharmacies, and Graves* are ghostly, haunting, and emotionally wrought. Incredibly moving from beginning to end, *Almost Holy OST* is a stunning aural journey which stays with you long after the credits have rolled. **9/10**.



At times, the disposability of dance music can get a man down! There are too many labels and producers prepared to release functional tracks which, on their own, have absolutely nothing to say. Timeless classics such as *Can You Feel It*, *Promised Land*, and *Let The Music Use You* succeed because they marry funk, melody and, most importantly, soul. It is this vital ingredient that is usually missing from the simple 4/4 DJ tool, something Cologne-based label *Kompakt* know all too well. Over a long and distinguished career they have been responsible for releasing any number of bona fide anthems that you are happy to play year after year. This month, they present volume 16 of their annual compendium of gems from the previous twelve months. Featuring contributions from a string of house heroes such as **Weval**, **The Orb**, **Dave DK**, **Frankey & Sandrino**, **John Tejada**, **Michael Mayer**, **Maceo Plex**, *Total 16* will bring a smile to even the most jaded of house fans. Over the course of 25 songs we get dynamic house, swoon-some techno and lush ambiance which sounds positively divine. Marrying pop hooks with the sounds of the underground, please consider *Total 16* a must buy. **9/10**.



Best known for his fun and playful productions, one third of the *Studio Barnhus* crew, **Kornél Kovács**, steps up a gear this month with the release of his funk-filled debut LP. *The Bells* is full of fresh sounding, groove-filled house tunes which glide like a soft summer breeze, and maintain a buoyant, mischievous air. With a lightness of touch, and an unhurried ambiance, the album recalls the likes of **DJ Koze**, **Röyksopp**, or even some nostalgia-inducing *Trax* tune from back in the day. Picks include, *Dance...While The Record Spins*, which will instantly have you throwing shapes on the floor, *Szív Utca*, which sounds a little like **Deee-Lite** rediscovering their groove, while the title track is a euphoric piece of mid-paced trance that brings to mind the glory days of label such as *MFS*. *Studio Barnhus* label head **Axel Boman** claims

that *The Bells* is “one of our best, most innovative releases to date”. Having had the pleasure of listening to the record on repeat over these last few weeks I can only agree. **8/10**.



Techno maverick **Alex Smoke**'s fifth album, *Love Over Will*, which was released back at the start of the year, exposed a seedy underworld where the producer's own treated vocals merged with ominous clicks and clanks to create a dark and unsettling take on synth pop. Sounding like a fucked-up **Joy Division**, or **Bauhaus** with beats, the album was deep, political, and wasted no time in sucking the listener right into its unsettling world. The album resurfaces this August with the release of the *Love Over Will Remixes* LP. A game of two halves, the record is made up of six remixes by artists such as **Lakker**, **Tale Of Us**, and **Tessela**, and five dub versions created by **Alex Smoke** himself. Of the remixes, **Lakker**'s refit of *Dire Need* utilizes a gorgeous bass throb over disorientating samples to open the album in stunning style. Other picks include, the two epic house/techno versions of the same track by **Tale Of Us**, and the thumping, bass heavy dirge presented by **Tessela** on their take on *Dust*. Yet, as good as some of these remixes are, the real stars of the show are the quintet of dub versions which sit on the second half of the LP. Sounding like some gloriously messed-up take on 90s IDM, they are so strong in fact that you can't help wishing R&S had commissioned an entire album like this. **7/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *International Dance Record* by **Harmonious Thelonious** - Breezy electronica and exotic beats sit next to African rhythms and eccentric house on a record which finds the Düsseldorf producer in sparkling form. Recalling the tripped-out funk of the likes of **DJ Sotofett**, these eight hypnotic grooves are full of adventure and fun, **9/10**, *Schaum* by **Masayoshi**

Fujita & Jan Jelinek - Vibraphonist, **Masayoshi Fujita** joins forces with electronic explorer **Jan Jelinek** for an album of cerebral ambiance and sonic wonder, **8/10**, *Rose & Thorn* by **Wendy Bevan** - Recalling the Gothic splendour of **Siouxsie And The Banshees**, or **Zola Jesus**, these electronic torch songs herald the new Queen of the dark, **8/10**, *Jumping the Shark* by **Alex Cameron** - An album of singer-songwriter style synth pop which may be hard to place, but is very easy to like, **8/10**, *Far Islands And Near Places* by **Quentin Sirjacq** - Nine light and airy instrumental pieces from the Parisian pianist, composer and multi-instrumentalist which will bring a nice warm glow to your heart, **8/10**, and *Vicarious Memories* by **These Hidden Hands** - Uneasy listening, fractured beats, and deconstructed techno can be found in a strange, but rewarding album from the duo of **Tommy Four Seven** and **Alain Paul**, **7/10**.



And let's not forget: *Frontier* by **Foans** - After a quiet couple of months **100%** *Silk* come back stronger than ever with this rather fabulous cassette. Featuring eight warm, analogue proto-house tracks, this is a must buy for anyone who likes their music passionate and quirky, **9/10**, *Mystre* by **LA Femme** - Synth inspired psychedelic pop which merges icy French vocals with electronic twists and turns, **8/10**, *Astronaut Meets Appleman* by **King Creosote** - Fife artist **Kenny Anderson** follows his breakthrough album *From Scotland With Love* with the warm folk nostalgia of his new LP, **7/10**, *Marini's On 57 - Sunset Hours Vol. 3* **Compiled By Simon Mills** - Head straight for the *Dub Version* of *What About This Love* by the legendary **Mr. Fingers**, and the melodic skank of *Huldra* by **Gidge** for some quality Balearic grooves, **7/10**, and *Public Intellectual: An Anthology 1986-2016* by **Momus** - A three disc compilation of some of the finest moments of Scottish artist **Momus'** career so far. Unashamedly leftfield and cerebral, songs such as *The Hairstyle Of The Devil*, *Murderers*, *The Hope Of Women* and *I Was A Maoist Intellectual* combine philosophy and alt-rock with aplomb, **8/10**.

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