

Bittles' Magazine

Those fallow months of June and July have, over time, become notorious for their lack of key musical releases. It seems that with the onset of the holiday and festival season, record companies are wary of the fact that most people are saving up for overpriced drinks in Ibiza or a muddy field. In light of this most artists seem content to hold their albums back until late August or September in the knowledge that by then we'll all be sunburnt and craving new sounds. For the music lover though it can make finding new releases during this time a futile and exasperating experience. For example new albums by **Jay-Z**, **Robin Thicke**, and **Editors** are massive right now even though they have the musical merit of a disgruntled toad. There are some gems out there to be found though, for instance... By **JOHN BITTLES**



First up comes some glorious house action from the hot as me Gran **Maya Jane Coles** whose debut album *Comfort* has been thoroughly rocking my sad little world. Made up of twelve lush and mostly down-tempo tracks that heavily feature Maya's own soft vocals, this is not the bass heavy garage influenced release that would be guaranteed to send her career into the stratosphere. What it is though is a collection of stunningly produced tracks that make for a superior listening experience. Lead single *Easier to Hide* stands out with its gorgeously deep groove as does *Wait For You* with the enigma that is Tricky on vocals. Yet this is an album that demands to be listened to from beginning to end and enjoyed as such. You could even dance to it if you really tried.



Also on a luscious house tip is **Amanda Brown's** latest genius discovery **James Booth**. Imagine **Mr Fingers** jamming with **Virgo** while **Carl Craig** knowingly looks on and you are getting close to imagining how the ten tracks that make up *Reunion* sound. There is the Chicago sounding *Automat*, the Detroit deepness of *Seeing Voices* and the simple beauty of *Be Slow*. With *100% Silk* you are always assured quality, and with the after-

hours delights of last months **Octo Octa** album, 2013 is shaping up to be the label's best year yet. It would be rude of me not to also highlight *Hands Together*, the seven track EP coming out by **Cosby** on the same label. It won't cure cancer, but it is fucking ace.



Anyone that has been be-spelled with the French TV series *Les Revenants* will have noticed the wonderfully eerie and sinister music lurking in the background. Created by Scottish instrumental noiseniks **Mogwai**, the soundtrack sees the band casting aside their usual ferocious peaks of noise to concentrate on the gentler side of their music last investigated on the score for documentary *Zidane*. Opener *Hungry Face* is quite simply one of the most stunning pieces of music you will hear all year. It really is that good! Luckily the rest of the album is no slouch either with tracks like *Jaguar* and *This Messiah Needs Watching* delighting the ears while sending a warm chill down the spine.



For those of you, like me, who like a bit of rock with their moping I can heartily recommend *Spacehopper*, the debut album by Reading shoegaze revivalists **Tripwires**. The record's twelve tracks positively drip with rock n' roll swagger and maintain an arch, insolent air that makes being a bit down seem impossibly cool. *Plasticine* has the hooks to be a hit should the record downloading public allow a few guitars to worm their way into their hearts. *Love me Sinister* is a heartfelt drone of a track that would make **My Bloody Valentine** almost crack a smile while *Slo Mo* makes you long for the return of **Mazzy Star** (it is happening folks, they are recording as you read!). Yet the record easily manages to be more than just the sum of its influences with a sound that you can listen to and enjoy whatever your mood.



Sometimes when I'm bored in Shoreditch I will taunt the locals by asking them to explain what type of music the label *Hyperdub* releases. Somehow it always warms my heart to hear them stumble over genres such as dubstep, footwork, and bass music before they finally give up, knowing that none of these are right. *Beyond* by **Walton** continues the 'What the fuck type of music is this I'm listening to?' thread of your average *Hyperdub* release. *Need to Feel* is house music with a dirty bass that recalls **Drexciya** in their prime, while *Help Me Out* sounds like some particularly disorientating dream. *Every Night* grooves like a lost **Todd Terry** 12inch, while *Frisbee* and *Can't U See* bite with the aggression of inner city grime. Make no mistake this is a stunning debut for the adventurous listener that's jam packed with melody, experimentation and some rather handsome beats.



Managing to sound as UK as possible without covering the National Anthem while sampling a cockney geezer asking for a 'fag' and 'fish and chips' is the debut long-player from rising star **E.M.M.A.** Out right about now on uber-hip *Keysound*, *Blue Gardens'* tracks combine the ghosts of grime, dubstep, r&b and house beautifully to create a joyous, sensual listen that will haunt your stereo with its funk filled delights. If *Dream Phone* or *Cherry Flavour* don't get you dancing then please check in with your local hospital as I fear you may be dead.



On a more introspective yet no less thrilling note is *Glynnestra* by those rather odd and wonderful chaps **Grumbling Fur**. Please ignore opener *Ascatudaea* which is the aural equivalent of having a toothache and you will discover a brave and adventurous album that's by turns ambient, folk, rock, jazz, and **Aphex Twin** style noise. This could be considered the perfect record for those who thought Thom Yorke's **Atoms For Peace** album was too mainstream. Instrumentals such as *The Hound* and *Harpies* mix well with the more vocal led numbers to create a woody, twilight listen where repeated plays make you feel like you're on drugs. A

recommendation if ever I heard one!

✘ Back into the world of house music and you would think that by the time a mix series had reached its 71st release, it would have long run out of steam. Yet with the *Fabric* collections this seems to be very far from the case something the new mix by **Cassy** ably proves. Opening with the dislocated drums and state of the nation address that is *Tune In* by **Arttu feat DiamonDancer** is a fantastically funky statement of intent from our DJ. From then on **Cassy** showboats her mixing and selection talents to great effect by blending gritty house by **Basic Soul Unit, John Talabot, Emptyset** and more with consummate ease. Dark, druggy, yet with just a hint of sunshine playing this at home is the closest you'll get to dancing on *Fabric's* dancefloor with ample room to move. The fact that it's also cheaper than the cost of entry to the club is why home-clubbing is currently where its at.

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If you are a fan of electronic dance music yet you've never heard of **Blondes** then please feel free to hang your head in shame. Last year's self-titled double album was majestically melodic while their live shows are the stuff from which legends are made. New record *Swisher* opens with the paranoid melodies of *Aeon* to send a warm sense of anticipation down the listener's neck. With its hissing percussion and industrial synths *Bora Bora* meanwhile drags the album kicking and screaming unto the dancefloor. *Poland* is a bit more laid back with soft house beats and a euphoric air, something that is comprehensively developed throughout the rest of the set to heart-warming effect. Sure, the music is nothing new, yet if you are looking for dance music with soul and passion then look no further.

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Something that is completely different to anything you may have heard before is the really rather strange and delightful *Grupo Zygoté* by **Dr Zygoté**. Coming out on *Black Acre* and sounding like a *Mo Wax* era **DJ Shadow** if he had ingested way too much acid the record's eight tracks may be hip hop based yet maintain an anything goes psychedelic air. Horror soundtracks mix with library music and other strange sounds to head-nodding effect. You really don't know what you're gonna get from one track to the next, something that can only be a good thing in my book. Fun and highly addictive, if you want to shock and surprise your conservative friends then this might just be the album for you.

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As indie-press tabloids furiously champion the next pretty young white boys with guitars in the hope that this one might just be the saviour of rock music we are presented with this week's entry **Swim Deep**. Part of the ridiculously named B-town scene from Birmingham their debut album *Where The Heaven Are We* manages to surprise due to the fact that it's actually rather good. The record's eleven tracks include singles *Honey*, *The Sea* and *She Changes The Weather* and makes for a joyously lovelorn listen where the band actually sound as if they mean what they say (something all too rare in today's fickle world of music). It's far from challenging, yet the album is life-affirming and doesn't drag or bore even after repeated plays. Sure, it may not save indie-rock, yet it is certain to make a loyal and humble companion through both happy and hard times.

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There are more heartfelt lyrics to be found in *Square Moon*, the third and (sadly) final album by those lovestruck Londoners **The Crimea**. Containing a whopping twenty tracks over ninety minutes may be a bit indulgent and reckless yet as soon as frontman Davey Macmanus starts to sing in that husky emotional voice

you realise that you can forgive the band anything. Even track titles such as *Petals Open When Reached By Sunlight*, *Listen To Seashells They Know Everything* and *You Never Smile For The Camera* which would usually have me running for the hills don't seem quite so hideous as they ordinarily would. Maybe I'm getting soft with all this sun but there is something about these songs that I can't help but find deeply affecting.

And on that note I bid you farewell. Next week we'll have an interview with the rather fantastic **Fuck Buttons** where we'll discuss their new album *Slow Focus*, the problem with THAT name, and how the Olympics changed their lives.

| JOHN BITTLES