

Bittles' Magazine

Once again it's that time of year when everyone apart from the frustratingly organised is frantically striving to get just the right presents for all their friends and family. And as there is no better way to show someone that you love them than to embrace your part within a consumer society I thought I would use this week's article to highlight some excellent new releases which will make the perfect gift for yourself and your family. By **JOHN BITTLES**



For instance there is nothing your dear old Granny would like more in this world than the return of national service and an album of deep-as-you-like house. Aunt Lucy would love that new record by psych-rock upstarts **Toy**, while your Mum would love the new LP by **The Fauns**. As for your Dad, err, I guess there are always socks.

Festive Treats For Your Nearest and Dearest?



First up though we have some skewed French pop with more than a hint of Gallic cheese with *Costa Blanca*, the third full-length from boy/girl duo **The Lininanas**. You do get the feeling that only the French could ever get away with a name like that. Yet the record contains thirteen little slices of joy with enough **Serge Gainsbourg** references, pop hooks and an overlying air of cool that could convince even the most committed of Francophobes that the French are actually pretty great. Songs like *My Black Sabbath* and *La Melancolie* sneak up on the listener to seductively blow in their ear until they simply can't help but swoon. There is a real wit and invention at play here lending the album both a contemporary and timeless feel that makes it perfect for those unbelievers who had previously thought that modern guitar music had nothing new to offer.

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Also well worth dedicating your life to is the second album by Bristol-based four piece **The Fauns**. Arriving as if to prove wrong all those naysayer who had predicted the death of the shoe-gaze resurgence, *Lights* features guitars that positively crackle with energy within a wall of sound like instrumentation, while Alison Garner's dreamy vocals manage to entice and beguile. Tunes such as *Give Me Your Love* and *Seven Hours* are highlights even as the entire record resembles a long drug-induced jam. With enough pace and bombast to recall the mighty **The Jesus and Mary Chain** or **My Bloody Valentine** the record also contains the fragility of **Slowdive** and the dreaminess of **Ride** making this a very fine listen indeed.



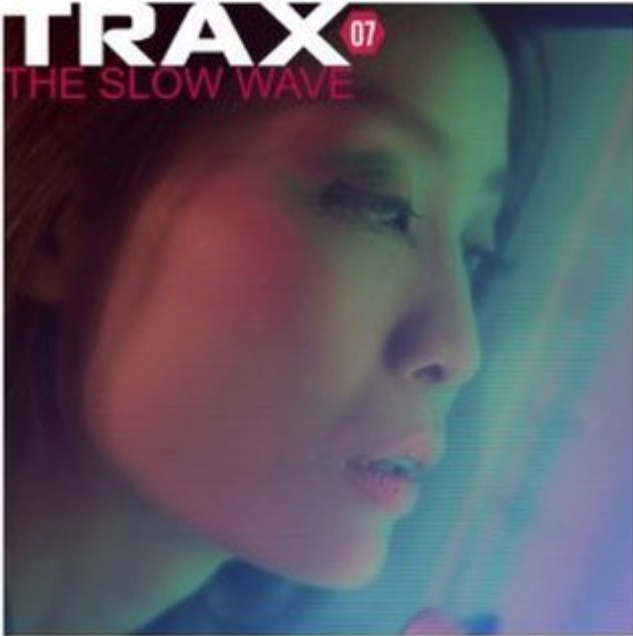
If your cat is more of a fan of house music and can't

stand the sound of bass, drum and guitar then I would heartily recommend the debut album by **Abstraxion**. *Break of Lights* should be out about now and cements Harold Bove's name as one to watch. Plaudits have already arrived from such luminaries as **James Holden** and **Erol Alkan** and illustrate just what a talented producer this guy is. With the album we get ten tracks of laid-back house and techno that erupt with heart stopping sweeps of melancholy. *Every Night I'm Lying* resembles a vintage **Jam & Spoon** cut with its trance-like build, while *We Used To* has a lush melody that feels gorgeously bittersweet. If you desire an album that is perfect for those eyes closed moments on the dancefloor when you feel gloriously abandoned and alone then this is the one for you.



Also sure to appease those loveable house-heads out there is *Roofs*, the debut album by **Mooryc** out on one of my fave record labels *Freude Am Tanzen*. The record is a short, highly emotional affair with many of the songs featuring **Mooryc's** own mournful vocals. Yet the record has a delicious house thump that means it is never allowed to completely wallow in despair before the kick-drum urges you to move. First track *Open It* is a tear tugging instrumental while *Jupiter* and *Day No More* maintain the introspective tone throughout the disc. Overall this is the type of melodic techno that can only give the world of electronic music a very good name, and is something Grandpa would be more than happy to see in his Xmas stocking!

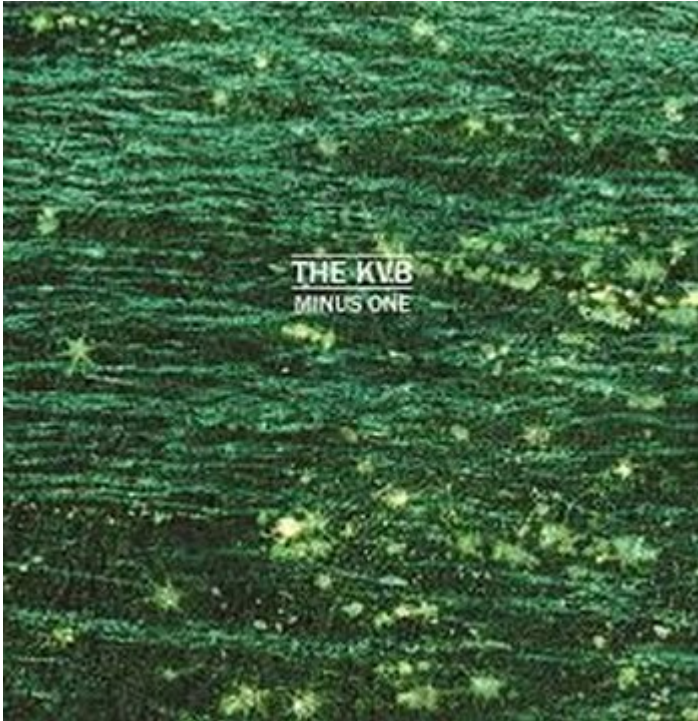
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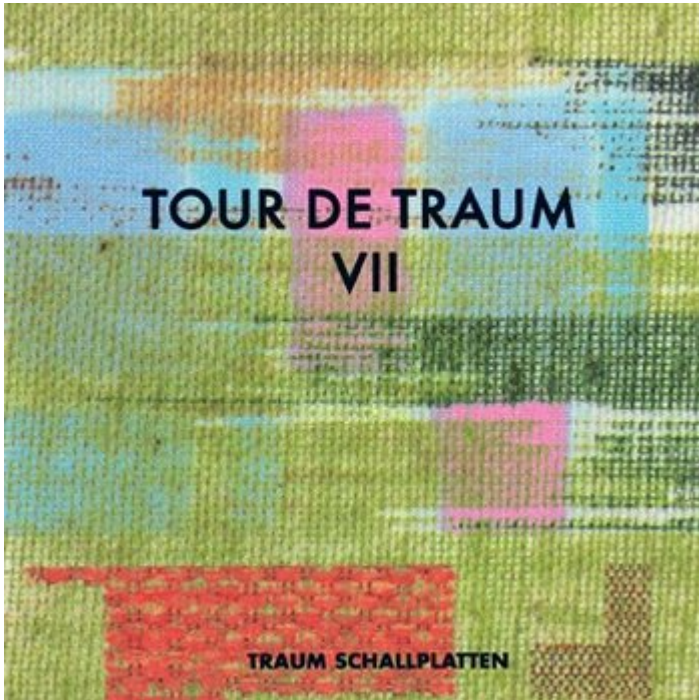
Over the last few years the *Trax* compilations brought out on the label *Pschent* have grown to be huge favourites of mine. This might have something to do with the fact that they contain numerous nuggets of laid-back house goodness that isn't afraid of a quality vocal and possess just the right balance of underground cred and cheese. *Volume 7* comes compiled and mixed by **Eric Pajot** and is every bit as good as fans of the series would expect. Tracks by **Thomas Barford**, **Cosmonaut** and **Machinedrum** sweep by in a wave of lushness and represent a type of music that is very rarely heard in this little town of England anymore. That factor alone should make music lovers everywhere overly keen to give this collection a listen and a lot of well-deserved love.



After releasing an album as critically acclaimed as their self-titled debut, **Toy** must have approached the idea of a follow-up with more than a hint of trepidation. That *Join the Dots* is nothing short of a psych-rock triumph shows just how far the band have come in a relatively short space of time. Ok, so things may not have developed much since their previous long-player yet when you create songs as trippy, yet life-affirming as these guys then that becomes something to be applauded rather than booed from the aisles. *Conductor* opens proceedings with some spooky electronics that build into a majestic swirl of noise. As *We Turn* brings in that signature **Toy** sound of languid rock while the title track is an eight minute builder that almost feels like it is going to explode. If you get the chance please go and see this band live as they will blow your feeble little mind (in a good way of course). This is the album to get your cool older brother, or the uncle who wishes he was young enough to still take drugs.



In a very similar vein is *Minus One* by psych rock Gods **The KVB**. Rumours that the band are formed of former members of the KGB have been proven wrong and I've been ordered by a judge never to speak of this again. So, let's just talk about the music instead! With the album made up of eight songs that get the blood flowing, fists pumping and hearts rushing this is loud and dirty rock music that blows away all that MOR type shit that clogs up the airways and the likes of *NME*. Tracks like *Something Inside*, *Live or Die* and *Kill the Lights* will sound like the most vital thing you've heard in months which is no bad thing indeed.



Sounding completely different but no less essential is *Tour De Traum VII* the latest in **Riley Reinhold's** annual round-up of all that is great and good on the label *Traum*. Previous releases have explored minimal, techno, house and trance to delicious effect. This year Mr **Riley** presents us with a double mix that takes in all of these genres and more! If anything these mixes are even better than what has come before as we get spooky, hypnotic, driving and blissful music all held together with a splendid 4/4 beat seemingly designed to send shivers up and down the spine. Tunes by the likes of **Dominik Eulberg, Microtrauma** and **Max Cooper** stand out, but the overall quality is pretty damn high making this the perfect album to snuggle up to in these cold winter months.

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Also full to the brim of house-based goodness is *Somewhere Else It's Going To Be Good* by the surprisingly male pair of **Kim Brown**. Gender confusion aside the record is practically guaranteed to get lips-a-smiling, feet-a-shuffling and hands-a-raising at the downright funkiness of it all. Opener *Ternevej* simply worms its way into your head and refuses to ever leave! And the fact that the remaining nine tracks on the album are every bit as good marks this out as something you owe it to yourself to check out. It also makes the perfect Xmas present for underappreciated Mums everywhere!



This month sees London-based clubbing institution

WetYourSelf release their very first artist LP. Better known for tiring feet and creating euphoric rushes on the dancefloor at *Fabric* they now enter the murky world of full-lengths with the downright filthy and funky *Appiness* by **APP**. **APP** may be a new name to most but the duo of Peter Pixzel and August Jakobsen have made quite a name for themselves with releases on *Diynamic*, *Watergate* and more. The album's thirteen tracks exist in that plane between house, techno and something we don't quite understand and will cause instant devastation in the right club. Budding DJs and house-heads looking for something fresh and unique really shouldn't hesitate before giving this a few plays.



Finally, we end on a high with **Echologist** and his 10th (yes, tenth) album of dubbed-out techno grooves *Storming Heaven*! Released on uber-deep label du jour *Prologue* the LP's tough dub strewn soundscapes feature ample space between the textures to allow your mind sufficient room to dream in Technicolor. Brendon Mueller or **Echologist** as he is better known has been creating fucked-up headtrips for a while now and this LP finds him in sparkling form. Skittering beats, echoing pulses and sonic depths make up an album which fuses these various elements perfectly to create a fully immersive listening experience from which you never want to emerge. Oh, and it has a fantastically funky **King Kong** cover too!

And to think of all the excellent new music I didn't have room for! There is the new *DJ Kicks* by **Breach**; so classic sounding it could have been created anytime over the last 20 years (in a good way of course), **Oleg Poliakov** with *Random is a Pattern*; will have anyone into quality deep house squirming in delight, *Adamant* by **Avatism**; a pretty stunning album of techno brilliance and the *Requiem EP* by **Ten Walls**; three tracks of delicious house-based grooves.

| JOHN BITTLES