

Bittles' Magazine

2013 really has been an excellent year for music! Not that you would know it from a quick perusal of the official charts, mind you. It seemed this year, more than others that the truly great music was hiding, needing to be coaxed out and into our ears. Yet just below the surface of the usual banal MOR type crap that pacifies the nation there was a wealth of fantastic albums vying ever more eagerly for the attention of the discerning listener.



For those who like guitars we had the rock bombast of The **Arctic Monkeys**, the fluid indie vibes of **Girls Names**, the epic return of **My Bloody Valentine**, or the EDM style noise of **Nine Inch Nails**. From the ever inventive world of house and techno came the gorgeous synths of **Stellar Om Source**, the twisted dubstep of **Machinedrum** and the noisy crunch of **Daniel Avery**. Of course there were also the little gems that fitted no easy category yet wooed me in all manner of unique and interesting ways. We had the stilted beauty of **Agnes Obel**, the lush soundtrack haze of **Mogwai**, the twisted IDM of **Huerco S.**, and the smoke-filled vibes of **Tricky**.

These twenty albums have accompanied me through the hard times, comforted me when I was unhappy, wiped my tears when I was sad and enticed me to leap up and down in delight. Some will seem so obvious you will sigh in dismay, while others will be so esoteric you will want to slap me in the face! As a special prize anyone who has previously listened to all these records please forward your address so I can send you my utmost respect (and maybe even a sticker, too).

1. **Charlie Boyer and the Voyeurs - Clarietta**

It took a few listens, but when these songs started to make sense they joined together to create one of the most essential and exhilarating albums of the year. Recalling **Television**, **Toy** and so many other great bands whose names begin with T what makes the record special is that even with these various influences each song sounds exactly like **Charlie Boyer and the Voyeurs**.

2. Arctic Monkeys - AM

Yes, I know it's a predictable choice! But have you ever thought that the reason it might seem such an unoriginal selection is simply because it was easily one of the best albums of the year? Yeah, think about that as you listen to your **Ballet School** b-sides. Ok?

3. E.M.M.A. - Blue Gardens

Dubstep, footwork, house and calypso combine in a fearlessly funky feel-good album that makes you want to hug strangers in the street.

4. Huerco S. - Colonial Patterns

Bastard house and outsider house are both pretty lousy genre labels. Yet with **Huerco S.** they definitely have their own very talented figurehead. Epic dubscares combine with a house aesthetic to create a dense personal record that sounds like it was created in another world.

5. Filthy Boy - Smile That Won't Go Down

Listening to this album you can't help but think these guys really need to get laid. Dirty and sleazy rock that sounds like **Franz Ferdinand** with a hard-on.

6. Tricky - False Idols

A welcome return to form for the master of the languid rap, or trip-hop if you please!

7. Girls Names - The New Life

Punk funk from talented Belfast band that sounds so vital you want to tell the world! How all rock music should sound in 2014.

8. Daniel Avery - Drone Logic

We always knew this guy would come good! With *Drone Logic* he has very kindly given us the stand out dance album of the year. Thank you, good sir!

9. Mogwai - Les Revenants OST

Mogwai tone down the noise for this soundtrack to the hit French TV series, and in doing so, they have created their most enjoyable album in years.

10. Foxygen - We are the 21st Century Ambassadors of Peace and Magic

An album quite literally unlike any other released in 2013. Sixties influences abound in a collection of songs that contain more ideas in one minute than most bands manage in their entire careers.

11. Nine Inch Nails - Hesitation Marks

A brutal growl of an album that has a surprisingly groovy side. The sound of an old rocker taking the foundations of EDM and twisting them into something crucial.

12. Blouse - Imperium

In a great year for guitar music *Imperium* by **Blouse** soared above most of the competition to firmly win its place within my heart. Poppy, preppy and with an awful lot of soul this is indie reminiscent of the heyday of the C86 period.

13. Crystal Stilts - Nature Noir

With a lazy drawl and an acoustic air this is a leisurely album that still manages to contain enough punk rock attitude to make your mother feel uncomfortable.

14. Still Corners - Strange Pleasures

A strange, bewitching classic that recalls the majesty of shoe-gaze in its spectral appeal!

15. Wave Machines - Pollen

Highly experimental rock music with an accessible pop edge shouldn't really work. In the assured hands of **Wave Machines** though, anything is possible.

16. Agnes Obel - Aventine

With most tracks containing no more than a simple piano and vocal this could have been so dull and stark that you prayed for death. The fact it has become 2013's most complete comedown listen is due to the yearning heartfelt nature of the songs that brim over with emotion and repressed rage.

17. DJ Sprinkles - Queerifications and Ruins

Who would have thought that a double disc collection of remixes could sound so good! If you like house music then you need this in your life. If you love house music you already have.

18. Clara Moto - Blue Distance

Hazy electronic vibes abound in a down-tempo album that is spectral and beautiful in equal measure with a sound so rich it melts in the ear.

19. Vampire Weekend - Modern Vampires of the City

Modern Vampires sees the group in reflective and sombre mood with lyrics about getting older and music that is tinged with regret! In doing so they've created their best album yet!

20. Maximillion Dunbar - House of Woo

Glorious house-based goodness to liven up your days and nights. Each track's a killer and well worthy of repeated plays.

And there we have it! Special mentions must also go to *Cold Spring Fault Less Youth* by **Mount Kimbie**, *mbv* by **My Bloody Valentine**, *Vapor City* by **Machinedrum**, *Tomorrow's Harvest* by **Boards of Canada**, *One Track Mind* by **Psychic Ills**, *Joy One Mile* by **Stellar Om Source** and the jaw-droopingly good *Rival Dealer EP* by **Burial**.

'Till next year!

| JOHN BITTLES