

Bittles' Magazine

If it is great music you are looking for then I must commend you for your intelligence and inform you that you have come to the right place. And whereas [last week's selection of new releases](#) had some amazingly good records it's, if anything, an even better selection this week. We've got the superior house of **Mark E**, the languid guitar grooves of **Coves**, the experimental pop of **Maria Minerva** and lots more. So, pour yourself a nice glass of wine, open up a packet of crisps and prepare yourself for some of the best music you may ever hear. By **JOHN BITTLES**



Ever since news first leaked of a new album by house music maestro **Mark E** fans of quality electronic music have been living with a sense of anticipation not seen for years. ›The Black Country Roots‹ EP and ›Bog Dance‹ single whetted appetites even further. And now, finally, his second long-player for ›Spectral Sound‹ is here. And I am very happy to announce that said album, ›Product of Industry‹ is everything fans might expect, and more. Changing his production style to a more analogue approach has allowed Mark to throw off the shackles and get completely lost within the groove to devastating effect. Released as a homage to the industrial history of the Midlands the album has a lot more of a dancefloor focus than previous work and isn't scared to clank and thunk with the best of them. ›Kultra Kafe‹ is a sensual soundtrack-style opener that elegantly leads into ›Persia‹ with its trance-like groove. ›Bog Dance‹ has synths which hark back to the early days of rave, ›Eganix‹ is a stop-start bastardized form of Chicago house while ›Leaving Osaka‹ finishes the album off in a gorgeously laid-back vibe. House music lovers go get this now!



Those allergic to house beats, or just seeking a bit more guitars in their lives should check out ›Soft Friday‹ by hot new band **Coves**. And can I just say that the album is a hell of a lot better than the rather unremarkable title makes it sound. Various elements are used to create a gorgeous wall of sound that combines beautifully with singer Beck Woods' beautifully expressive vocals. There are a lot of cool

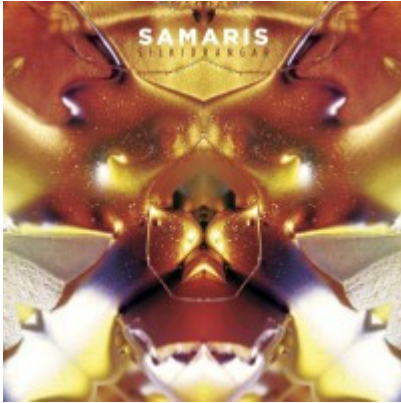
duos right now all being proclaimed as the saviours of rock. Yet, while most aim for a derivative **White Stripes** style blues rock sound, **Coves** aspire to a much more expansive dreampop vibe. Not an album of killer singles, ›Soft Friday‹ functions splendidly as a complete entity with each song working well as part of a lush, slightly psychedelic whole.



If it's some next level electronics that you're after then may I recommend ›Drop The Vowels‹ by **Millie & Andrea** which is the rather playful nom de plume adopted by **Andy Stott** and **Demdike Stare's Mike Whittaker**. Exploring the boundaries of machine music within the confines of techno and dub this is an album of stunning depth that also packs a pretty hefty punch. ›Stay Ugly‹ reverberates with heavily distorted beats and synths to create a track to stimulate and mess with your head. ›Temper Tantrum‹ is like a more mature form of hardcore that still manages to contain a breakdown to stir the very soul, while ›Corrosive‹ sounds like a twisted form of dub before it explodes into some killer alien type of rave. A great album that is a hell of a lot more fun than it sounds.



On the 9th of May comes ›My Little Ghost‹, the new Tokyo-inspired long-player from 'Tokyorkshire' based producer **Kidkanevil**. Lush ambience and smooth beat mastery permeate together with a real sense of naivety and yearning. Some of these songs are almost enough to bring a tear to even my sad and cynical eyes. ›Inakunaru feat: **Phasma**‹ is mesmerisingly lovely and instantly brings your mind back to when you were a child. ›Escape Pod‹ recalls **Autechre** if they had a wistful smile on their faces, ›Butterfly/Satellite‹ has a lush piano line and stuttering beats that meld majestically with **Cuushe's** vocal interplay, while ›Oyasumi‹ creates images of childhood walks through towering cities. To sum up, this is one of the most beautiful and affecting albums I have heard in years. Also, be sure to check out the great cover artwork too.



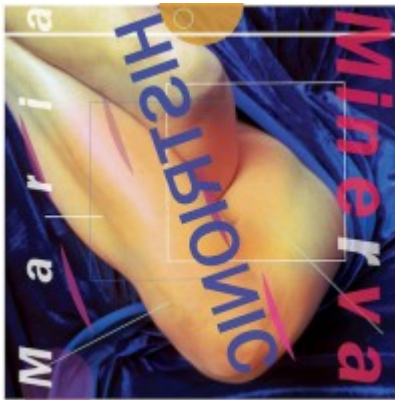
Following up their self-titled debut, the Icelandic three-piece **Samaris** give us the rather snappily titled ›Silkidrangar‹ which is coming out on ›One Little Indian‹ this May. Sounding stunningly otherworldly and containing a beautifully relaxed air the album is about as far removed from the hustle and bustle of London as it is possible to get. The record is a lot more than mere chill-out music though, with the bewitching vocals and hushed electronics combining beautifully to create a sound that is experimental yet still fits the general definition of pop. Maybe it's just because I'm feeling a little fragile right now, but, to me, the record resembles a heart-stoppingly glacial listen that is full of love's loss and regret.



In a perfect world the people at Munich-based record label ›Permanent Vacation‹ would have received all manner of awards for their services to house. Each and every release so far has been pretty damn special and their compilations have long since reached the stage of buy-on-sight. This May they bring us ›If This Is House I Want My Money Back III‹, the third volume in their excellent series made up of specially commissioned exclusive tracks. The gorgeous strings of ›Rubies, Riches and Crowns‹ by **Kim Brown** are a glorious way for any album to begin. From there things get even better with killer tracks by **Axel Boman**, **Mano Le Tough**, **Octo Octa** and more entertaining with their groove-based delights. Fans of house music with soul and a lot of heart need this in their lives.



Hailing from the sunny climes of Spain comes ›1974‹ the six track mini-album from Flavio Tortora, aka **DJ-F**. With all six tracks containing a solid thunk of a beat the record exists as much in the world of techno as in that of dub. ›Control‹ is a gentle mind-rub that worms its way into your subconscious while ›Lightyear‹ ends proceedings with a Balearic-like glow. While not exactly essential the album is still a warm and luminous techno record that is more than worth thirty minutes of anybody's time.



Sonic pioneer **Maria Minerva** has built herself quite a sizable fan base through the consistently high quality of her output over these last few years. Her latest album ›Histrionic‹ has just come out and continues her foray into excellent and disturbing vocal-led experimental pop. Maria's strong and treated vocals are very much to the fore on the record's eleven tracks and manage to snake their way into your brain where they nestle and make themselves right at home. It is her production work which has really progressed with this record though being enough to give even the most celebrated of producers numerous jealous thoughts. ›Spirit of the Underground, Runaway‹ and ›Deepest Darkest‹ all stand out in a rather fab album that will be perfect for anyone that fancies some skewed sonics with their pop.



A collection of remixes of the work of a sample and collage artist (**James DINA4**) may not sound that exciting to most. Yet when you realise that all ten remixes were created by sonic composer **Jan Jelinek (Farben)** then it must be worthy of your time. ›Heimkehr der Vulgaren‹ has a dub disco-style swing while ›Lucifer Rising‹ has a gorgeously skanking groove. But that’s not all since ›Please Excuse My Face‹ explores an extremely messed-up version of jazz and ›Helfen im Sitzen‹ enters a world of fathoms-deep dub. Not easy listening, but feckin’ fantastic all the same.



Recently released on my new fave record label ›Project Mooncircle‹ is ›Menoko‹, the debut long-player by Argentina-based **Barrio Lindo**. For the album he has utilised many of his own hand-made instruments together with a warm electronic feel to stunning success. ›Libres‹ is simply lovely, with its tranquil vibe, while ›La Cueva‹ sounds like a lost track from 90s crusty ravers ›Planet Dog‹. Maybe a little too new-agey sounding to impress your cool-as-›The Muppets‹ mates, this still manages to be a mighty fine listen indeed.



Anyone not excited about the return of **Howie B**, quite frankly, doesn't

deserve to have ears. That the album ›Down With The Dawn‹ is excellent should really go without saying. But for any unbelievers out there one listen to the record should be just about all you need. What we get with his first album in too many years are 12 fearlessly funky tracks of skewed sonics that constantly surprise and delight in their cheeky chicanery. Sounding like no-one else except **Howie B** the album recalls the twisted splendour of ›Turn the Dark Off‹ with its electronic trickery and depth of production. So, whether you are nostalgic for the return of trip-hop or not, you are hereby advised to give this a go.

And, please don't forget about these: ›Drum Machines & VHS Dreams‹ by **Aim** - a best-off from a supreme beat master that will appeal to trip-hop lovers everywhere; ›Ridmik‹ by **Luke Vibert** - easy listening 303 music and just as beautiful and frustrating as that sounds; ›Unita‹ by **Monochrome** - cute indie-pop that deserves a lot more attention than it has received; ›Prisoner Of Your Love‹ by **Faze Action** - a string packed disco delight; ›The Art of Acid‹ by **Hardfloor** - **Hardfloor** doing what they do best (acid revival anyone?) and ›Everyday Robots‹ by **Damon Albarn** - the sound of bum fluff floating in the wind. Though not as interesting as that may sound.

| JOHN BITTLES

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