

Bittles' Magazine | Record Review

When I tell you that there is lots of great music coming out this month I am not just saying this because I have been given lots of huge bribes. It is actually true! That is why, this month, the new album reviews will be spread out over two whole weeks instead of the usual one. By **JOHN BITTLES**

And what a line up of fantastic records there is! This week alone we've got the raucous rock of **Royal Blood**, the psychedelic weirdness of **The Wytches**, the lush house of **Roman Flügel**, the strange, techno atmospherics of **Ital** and tons more. So get your ears ready, your headphones on your head, and let us begin.

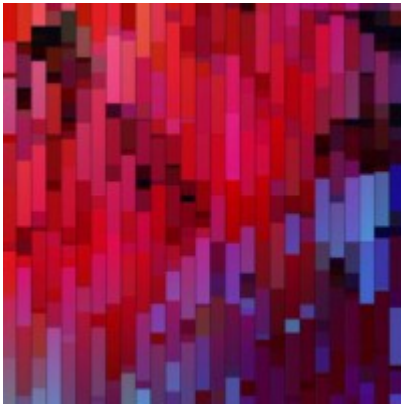


Since I have been obsessed with this record over these last couple of weeks it is only right to start with the gorgeous house stylings of *Happiness is Happening* by techno legend **Roman Flügel**. The follow-up to 2011's excellent *Fatty Folders* has been a long time coming, yet it is more than worth the wait. With a light house feel the record's ten tracks touch on ambient, shoegaze, acid and just about every style of music you would care to name. Opener *Connecting The Ghost* is a beautiful chug of a tune recalling **M83** in its spectral majesty. *Friendship Song* quickly follows, with a laidback italo-style groove that leads us into the first half of the album which is stuffed full of gently chilled delights. The second half is more dancefloor-based, but is every bit as good. We have the rave-like air of *Parade*, the acid style bounce of *We Have A Nice Life* and the spine tingling trance of *Occult Levitation*. There are moments of heart-stopping brilliance on here, so good they could end wars.



Next up we have some high-octane rock in the form of the self-titled debut album by the heavily over-hyped duo **Royal Blood**. One thing is for sure, these two really know how to make a lot of noise. Songs like *Come on Over*, *Blood Hands* and *Little Monster* are the perfect collision of pop and rock. The crunching guitars, strangled screams and pounding drums are always accompanied by a catchy

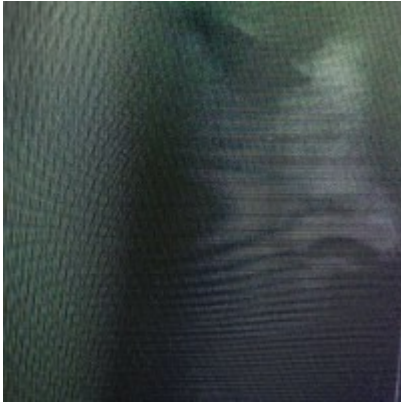
chorus and a couple of hooks making this the most accessible, yet noisy album of the year. The fact that there isn't a single original idea on the entire LP doesn't necessarily detract from the enjoyment, in a fast and furious set which is fun while it's on and easily forgettable when it's not.



If that all sounds a bit too noisy for you then the lush, ambient drones featured in *Weaving*, the new release by relative newcomer **Jo Johnson** might serve to soothe your ears. Coming out on the 8th September on Seattle-based imprint *Further Records* the album's five tracks explore a deeply hypnotic, all enveloping world. Strikingly beautiful, songs such as *Ancestral Footsteps*, *Words Came After Music* and *In the Shadow Of The Workhouse* really do take your mind on a journey to other lands. Those not convinced should check out the title track which is so moving it very quickly reduced me to tears.



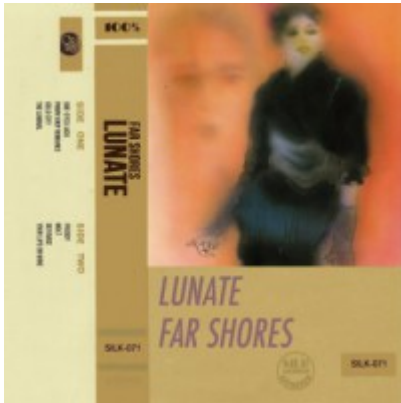
With two overly packed discs containing so many wonderful tracks that you really don't know where to begin, the *Total 14* compilation from Cologne's *Kompakt* records is something that every dance music fan needs in their life. Tracks by **Dauwd**, **Superpitcher**, **Blond:ish**, **Maceo Plex** and **Partial Arts** are so good that your jaw will actually hit the floor. There are very few duff tracks on here, with everything united by the standard *Kompakt* sense of warmth and emotion, making this a generous collection that will make even the firmest of haters fall madly in love with house. If you don't believe me then just have a listen to the joyously melodic haze of *Atlantis* by **Coma**, and feel those tingles going up and down your spine.



Out now on the ever-reliable *Planet Mu* label, *Endgame* is the sonically dense new long-player from Brooklyn-based experimentalist **Ital**. With ten tracks that take you into their own futuristic world the album is must-listen for all those who like their house music to sound completely fucked-up. For instance, the title track opens with some ghostly shimmers of synths before crashing hi-hats and a slightly deranged wind-chime melody enter the fray. What follows is a master-class in the build up of tension, where, by the end of the song, the listener is emotionally exhausted, yet strangely exhilarated at the same time. When you consider that there are another nine tracks on here, it makes the album a must have for those who like a bit of adventure with their groove.



If you aren't a fan of all that horrible electronic-type stuff and like a bit of psychedelic weirdness with your rock then may I introduce **The Wytches**, your new favourite band. Their debut album *Annabel Dream Reader* is a strange and twisted affair where the Brighton-based trio make a fearsome, yet bewitching racket that makes the world appear a dark, sinister place. Kristian Bell's impassioned croon sounds like it might break down at any minute, yet it adds a vital human cornerstone to the album's songs. *Digsaw* opens proceedings with a sexually compelling, stalker-ish air to immediately grab your attention. This sense of twisted danger continues in *Wide At Midnight's* head banging romance, and *Fragile Male* and *Part-Time Model's* unpleasant yet thrillingly visceral air. Not usually my type of thing, yet it sucks you in until you emerge feeling slightly paranoid but oddly exhilarated by life. This could well be one of the rock albums of the year.



For our next release we are back to the house-based goodies, with *Far Shores* by **Lunate** out now on LA based *100% Silk*. The album's eight tracks explore a twilight world of woozy house sounds which are perfect for when you're too tired to dance but don't want to leave the club. *Pawn Shop Romance* is a heady beast; rich, supple and like a groove-filled ode to house. Meanwhile, *The Liminal* is a druggy sounding dirge so good it hurts, *Molt* contains a delicious bass that commands the body to move and *Your Lips On Mine* is a gorgeously romantic sounding end to the set. Also be sure to check *Isolation Distorts*, a wonderful six tracker by rising star **Luca Lozano** which is also out on *100% Silk* now.



Wiggle for 20 Years is the cheekily titled and rather fab compilation that sees *Wiggle* mainstays **Terry Francis**, **Eddie Richards** and **Nathan Coles** celebrate twenty years in the game. The *Wiggle* brand has long been associated with the deep, tech-tinged house sounds which are perfect for losing yourself in on a Saturday night. What we get with the compilation are 20 new and exclusive tracks from the likes of **Pure Science**, **Just Be** and **Berkson & What**. With a firm understanding of what makes a dancefloor move the tunes are expertly mixed together to form a 74 minute journey that will have you dripping in good-time sweat, even in the comfort of your own home. Something which is a lot more appealing than it may at first sound.



Hailing from Sweden **Simian Ghost** release their third album *The Veil* this September. Full of wistful melancholia and thoughtful introspection, the record is perfect for those days when you feel all alone and in need of a nice warm hug. *Cut-Off Point* bursts into life in a sea of joyful harmonies, *The Ocean is a Whisper* meanwhile recalls the heydays of **Belle & Sebastian** while *Hidden In Your Leaves* could melt even the stoniest of hearts. There is a real sense of longing and wonder in most of these tracks, recalling **Everything But The Girl** one minute, **Sigur Ros** the next. What this adds up to is a quietly beautiful album that will stay with you for many months to come.



Frankfurt techno bastion *Cocoon* reach the giddy heights of the letter *N* in their celebrated annual alphabet-based compilation series. And mighty fine it is too! Featuring tracks by the likes of **Sam Paganini**, **Ricardo Tobar**, **Ripperton** and more, the comp builds slowly before erupting into some heavy beats near the end. The opener *Kolibri* by **Konstantin Sibold and Leif Muller** is a mellow house track that will bring a smile to anybody's day. Next track *Over the Rain* by **Julian Perez** is a rather lovely dub techno track which glides you into the deeply electronic world of *Cocoon* with ease. Other highlights include the soundtrack techno of *Va2* by **Aril Brikha and Vince Watson**, the echoing trippiness of *Wildness* by **Cavann** and the deep crunching beats of *Luminous* by **Lucy**. All of which makes *N* a surprisingly rich and varied collection of techno treats.

A special mention must also go to: *Listen* by **The Smoke Clears** - A wondrously deep ambient techno record from **John Daly**, *Shelter* by **Moiré** - A fantastic house based album, that constantly throbs with ideas and surprises, *Sea When Absent* by **A Sunny Day In Glasgow** - Lo-fi indie with a sonically adventurous edge, *Pay Close Attention* by **Various** - An uneven sounding round-up of 20 years of *XL Records*, and *Traum #Beatport Decade Techno* by **Various** - A rather groovy *Beatport* exclusive featuring ten classic tracks from the *Traum* back catalogue.

And if that isn't enough great music for you, next week we'll have new albums by **Interpol**, **NeonSchwarz**, **Danny Tenaglia**, **Lee Gamble**, **Tricky** and one or two more.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)