

## Music | Bittles' Magazine

As part of my New Year's resolutions I was going to give up listening to music, and take up dog-walking instead. Then I realised that I didn't actually have a dog. And the cat rather unhelpfully refuses to be walked, claiming to be too embarrassed to be seen with me in public. So, a little sheepishly I have immersed myself back within the forgiving world of rhythmic sound. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Thankfully, there have been some amazing singles and EPs so far this year that give far greater joy than getting pulled around by a huge hound on a lead and picking up dog-shit ever could. Killer tunes from the likes of **Plastikman**, **Petite Noir**, **Dan Shake**, **Sebastian Mullaert**, **Purity Ring**, **Låpsley**, etc more than make up for the fact that there is no one there to wag their tail when I walk through the door (the cat is indifferent). But rather than dwell on my inherent loneliness perhaps it is time for the reviews to begin.



This month we'll start with the luscious torch songs of the hotly tipped **Låpsley**. Now signed to *XL Recordings*, January saw her follow up the well received single *Station* with the emotionally wrenching *Understudy EP*. The four tracks are reminiscent of the introspective electronic soul music of the likes of **London Grammar**, **Banks** and **FKA twigs**. And, while there are any number of vulnerable, sonically adventurous singers around right now, **Låpsley** does manage to stand out in an oversaturated market through sheer talent alone. *Falling Short* swells behind a rich bass and sombre piano motif while **Låpsley** sings as if her life depends on her expressing every last bit of anguish in the world. The backing track on *Brownlow* resembles *Selected Ambient Works II*-era **Aphex Twin** and helps create a rich density for a song that ably brings a tear to the eye. For hipsters with hearts, or those who are sick of the day-to-day functionality of pop, the *Understudy EP* exposes a singer to cherish, nurture and make one of our own.

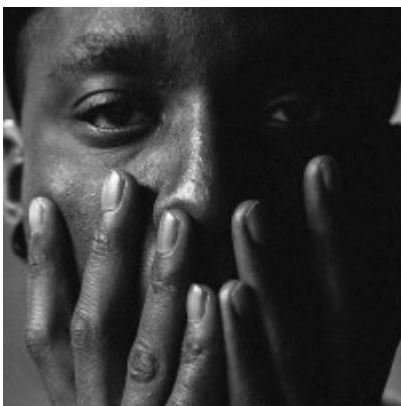


**Ritchie Hawtin's** return last year to his **Plastikman** alias with *EX* may have

proved a disappointment for some, but *EX Club Mixes* may well arrive just in time to save the day. **Dixon**, **Recondite**, **Tale Of Us** and **Dubfire** all step up to revamp four cuts from the LP and turn them into bona fide dance floor nirvana. Pick of the bunch is **Dixon's** gloriously sensual version of *EXhale*, which works in tandem with the excellent **Tale Of Us** refit of *EXpand* to inject some *Innervations*-style melody into the slightly monochrome originals. Maintaining the downbeat tone, both cuts add a healthy dose of warmth to create something that is perfect for early evening sets, or listening to on headphones at home. In contrast **Recondite** preserves the cold, industrial edge on his mix of *EXplore*, while **Dubfire** finishes things off with the pounding techno assault of *EXposed*. A top package for dance floor hedonists everywhere.



Every bit as essential is the latest edition of *Kompakt's* club focused *Speicher* series. *83* sees **Hunter/Game** take a break from **Sasha's** *Last Night On Earth* imprint to hit us with two tracks of tech-house goodness that positively squelch within their lavish underlying currents of funk. The Italian duo have been hosting parties from Milan to New York for a while now, and their knowledge of working a club comes strongly to the fore here. On the A-side, *Hexagon* maintains a sense of rising menace with a brooding techno groove that has the power to hypnotise should you make the mistake of letting it into your head. Perhaps a bit too one-dimensional for stimulating home listening, this is much better suited to DJs rather than relaxing evenings curled up in front of the fire. On the flip, *Bermuda* is a little bit special, and is by far the better of the two. A relentless builder, this is so good that when it finally ends it physically hurts. Similar to the best works of **Audion**, this is the type of techno which could convince even the most timid amongst us to get up and dance.



Hailing from the sunny climes of Cape Town, **Petite Noir** has a rich, sonorous voice that could add gravitas to the reading of a shopping list. Long hailed as a name to watch by people who do that type of thing, *The King Of Anxiety* sees our hero explore a world which has already been christened as »noir-wave« by the cunny funts at the broadsheets. Don't let that put you off though, since the EP's five tracks

are chock full of passion and are a curious mix of blues, indie and soul. *Come Inside* is a bit like **George Ezra** with balls, *Chess* has Yannick's beautiful voice over an arrhythmic beat, while *Shadows* swirls within a heartbroken air. One to watch? You better believe!



Just as good is the excellent *Lindholz EP* by **Timboletti** (Tim Reichelt) which is out now on my new favourite record label *Acker*. *Murrakus* opens the record with a deep, driving groove before some oriental style strings kick in to instantly move things up a notch. *Wüstenlauf* meanwhile is a stately mid-paced affair that sounds exceptional when played extremely loud. The star of the show for me though is the strangely uplifting tone of *Markovic*, which manages that feat of sounding both alien and beautiful simultaneously. You have to hold onto your heart during the song's six minute running time or you could lose it for good. Also, be sure to check out the **Mollono.Bass** remix of *Barfuss Bravo*, a tune so good you can get lost in it for months.



Also mixing trance melodies within a house framework is the surprisingly good *Paper Mill* by **We Need Cracks**. I say 'surprisingly good' because my first thought upon receiving the file was, what sort of band name is that? Yet, as soon as you hit play all thoughts of rubbish names are put aside as you quickly enter a world of deep musicality that sends shivers up the spine. Opening track, *Signals* is gorgeously lush and sounds like it should be sound-tracking some art-house movie scene where two protagonists finally and agonisingly fall in love. This sky-high standard is ably maintained throughout the EP's duration with *Crimson & Azure* engaging with its twinkling melodies and synth lines, *Con Moto* swirls within an exquisitely deep groove, while *Sailplane* finishes things off with five minutes of heart-stopping ambience. The remixes by **Citizen Kain**, **NHB** and **Claws SG** also hit the spot. Yet, it is the originals you will keep coming back to again and again.



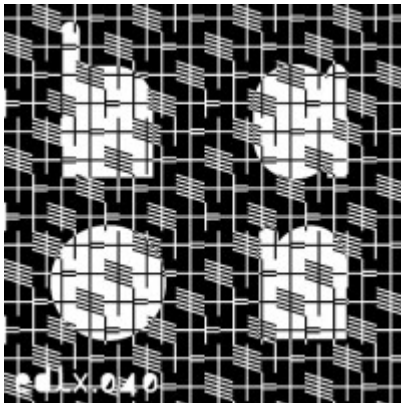
When you are the first none-Detroit native to release on **Moodymann's Mahogani Music** label then you may be entitled to rest on your laurels thinking »Look at me, Ma. Top of the world!«. Not so **Dan Shake** who, this February, followed up *3AM Jazz Club* with an excellent two-tracker of classic deep house that has had those lucky enough to get a preview copy salivating for months. *Out Of Sight* is a lush, low-slung groove which is not afraid to bring its jazz elements to the fore. If there was a club in heaven then this is the type of house music Jesus would probably play. Also worth your time is the b-side, *Traders II*, a collaboration with **Rennie Foster** which is extremely feckin' good. If you, like me, long for a bygone era before **Disclosure** bastardised the term deep house then this is the record for you!



With stand-out releases by **Max Cooper, Egokind & Ozean** and **Nick Dow** it is pretty safe to say that **Jacqueline and Riley Reinhold's** record label *Traum* had a pretty special 2014. If anything though this year is shaping up to be even better. After the fab **We Need Cracks** EP (reviewed earlier) up steps **Sebastian Mullaert** to kick-start 2015 in style. Sebastian may be better known as one half of electronic funksters **Minilogue**, but *Direct Experience* sees him slip firmly into the spotlight with an epic **Sasha**-like progressive house groove. The track slowly builds until its halfway point whereupon it breaks down into a spoken-word vocal, before exploding back into action with such a sense of purpose it, literally, takes the breath away. The package is completed by numerous remixes, yet it is the original version that you need in your ears.



Hamburg institution *3000Grad Records* do it again this month with the wonderful house sounds of the *Salto Mortale EP* by **Dole & Kom**. The title track reaches right into your chest, pulls out your heart and threatens to never give it back (in a good way of course). The low-end bass throb works perfectly with a marvellous use of melody to create a song which will stay with you for months. Luckily the rest of the record ain't too bad either: *Silence feat. Kollmorgen* is a lush, donwbeat gem, while *Fly Bar* with **Seth Schwarz** has a delicious echoing bass. And, if that isn't enough **Mollono.Bass** turn in their second stellar remix of the month, sculpting *Silence* into a deep, trippy, dub-house groove. If this label is new to you then please don't hesitate to let them into your life.



For those who like their electronic music of a tougher, more obscure and experimental persuasion the clanking techno of *Haon* may make you clap your hands in glee. The six track EP (only four on the vinyl) sees **Dara Smith**, better known as one half of **Lakker**, adopt the **Arad** guise to highlight some cerebral and ferocious slabs of electronic noise. *Basswave* is a dance floor mood-piece that relentlessly worms its way into your head, *Grand Job* has a scattering synth at its base that is hypnotic in the extreme, while *NCS* is the messed-up soundtrack to all your nightmares come true. Not every track stimulates though, as the likes of *Fourty Four* and *Gedup Awa Dat* pound themselves into something of a creative cul-de-sac. But for those who consider themselves musically adventurous, or who simply wish to cultivate a personality of being a »little bit weird« there will be much to enjoy here.



Somehow it only seems fitting to finish with the delectable house melodies of producer du jour **John Daly**. *The Shine EP* is out mid-February on *Love Fever Records* and features three tracks that mix slo-mo melodies with warm Detroit-style synths. The title track is a ten minute long throb that resembles something **Âme** and **Derrick May** would create should some evil genius lock them together in a room. *Desake* meanwhile is a solid club tune but is easily the weakest of the three songs. Which leaves it to *Journey's End* to finish things off with a flourish, its crisp beauty conjuring up images of all sorts of emotions and lovelorn scenarios. And, if you don't have John's *Sunburst* album yet, then do yourself a favour and go get it now!

A special mention must also go to: *Begin Again* by **Purity Ring**- a welcome return for the duo that is the prelude to *Another Eternity* out in March, the *Mr WOOD EP* by **Fold** - Three tracks of house music so good they could make a believer of your Nan, *Shona* by **Jake Chudnow** - A stunningly beautiful piece of trance that positively drips with emotion, *Natural EP* by **Reptare** - Three tracks of spaced-out house music with the dreamlike **Iori Asano** remix of *Natural* the pick for me, *Drumparti/Niteanat* by **CATFM** - Recalling the majesty of **DJ Sprinkles** or **Carl Craig**, this is shit hot house music that is impossible to listen to without experiencing a little swoon, *Objects Remixes EP1* by **Kito Jempere** - Four cuts from the excellent *Objects LP* get the remix treatment with the **HNNY** remix of *Typewriter* being the best of a solid bunch, *Vaporizer EP* by **Gathaspar** - Head straight for the **Lowtec** mix of *Ocelot29*; a fucked-up groove which messes with the head even as it commands the body to move, and *Walhall EP* by **Luc Angenehm** - Five tracks of emotional electronica that is perfect for fans of **Petar Dundov**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)