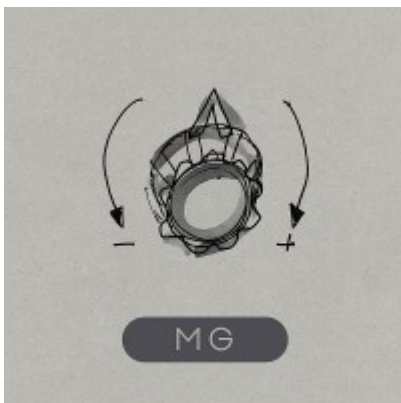


Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

After what felt like the drought of all droughts May has produced a wave of killer releases that stir both heart and soul. While previous months have seen this writer retreat into the nostalgic warmth of late 70s post-punk and mid 90s trip hop, May has convinced me to come out of my self-imposed exile and embrace the joys of the new with glee. By **JOHN BITTLES**

This has been helped by the string of excellent albums that are still hot off the press. In this week's article alone we have reviews of shit-hot new LPs by **Martin Gore** of **Depeche Mode** and **Beth Jeans Houghton's** new project **Du Blonde**. We've also got lush house with **Dave DK**, **Patrice Scott** and **Jupiter Jax**, hazed psychedelic musings with **The Holydrug Couple**, the spellbinding instrumental hip hop of **Nosaj Thing**, and lots more.

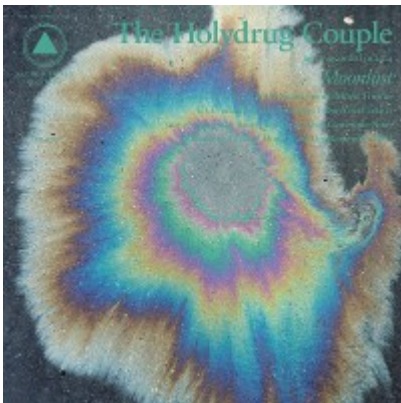
And you had best start saving your pocket money right now, as next week we have reviews of **Hot Chip**, **Man Power**, **Dasha Rush**, **Terranova**, **Knxwledge**, **Mikal Cronin** to name but a few.



This week though, we'll begin with **Martin Gore** of **Depeche Mode** fame. Having long been a champion of house music in its various forms, his self-titled LP under the **MG** alias sees him journey far into the realms of the machines. Sounding like a marriage of mid 90s **Black Dog** and **LFO**, the album's sixteen tracks can move from the creepy to atmospheric to driving and then pounding in the blink of an eye. Make no mistake, this is a dark, dark record, with some tracks resembling the sound of someone standing behind you breathing down the back of your neck, or nails scratching along a blackboard. Yet, just when the darkness seems unrelenting we get a brief ray of light in the gentle textures of *Exalt*, *Islet*, *Featherlight*, or the achingly beautiful *Europa Hymn* to remind us that everything will be all right. Overall this is a quality album of IDM style electronica that will be adored by those who have an open mind and enjoy walking alone in the dark. **9/10**.



For fans of melodic techno the names **Dave DK** and *Kompakt* uttered in the same breath has the effect of a particularly vivid wet dream. One listen to *Val Maira*, **Dave's** third LP, and first for the label, is more than enough to prove this point. Melding the mellow trance dynamics of **The Field** with the techno-funk of **John Tejada**, the album is chock-full with moments of awe-inspiring wonder. *Halma* is deep and driving, yet always maintains a dreamy edge, *We Mix At Six* is a mid-paced *Innervisions* style house bomb, *Immer Gut* has a twinkling melody to recall **Kaito** at his very best, while *Kronsee* finishes things off in daringly euphoric style. Epic and cinematic, this is house music unrestrained by the demands of the club. Immaculately produced, and with real emotional core, this is an excellent albums for those who like to close their eyes on the dance floor. **9/10**.



Existing within their own smoke-filled haze, **The Holydrug Couple** create the type of lazy soundscapes perfect for allowing your mind to simply wander for a while. In fact, *Moonlust*, the follow-up to the duo's 2013 debut *Noctuary* should be fitted with a warning sticker stating „Warning! May cause listener to drift into space.“. A fully immersive affair it is hard not to get lost within the album's welcoming fug. *Dreamy* recalls the likes of **Sonic Boom** or **Spectrum** at their woozy best, *If I Could Find You (Eternity)* channels 60s girl-group psychedelia and an inner sense of cool, *I Don't Feel Like It* is aurally overpowering, while *U Don't Wake Up* could convince even the most stoned of listener to nod their weary head. Drenched in enough echo and reverb to make a **Jesus And Mary Chain** fan blush, *Moonlust* is a contemplative and quietly stunning album that will greatly enrich your life. **9/10**.



Beth Jeans Houghton's previous album *Yours Truly Cellophane Nose* was an enjoyably kooky affair. This May sees **Beth** make a welcome return with a new alias (**Du Blonde**), an in your face attitude and a new raw, rock sound. *Welcome Back To Milk* is a startling collection of dirty garage rock that is so filthy you would think twice before shaking its hand. Surprisingly playful and fun, the album revels within the noisy mess espoused by the likes of **Sonic Youth**, or **The Libertines**. The opening salvo of *Black Flag* and *Chips To Go* are like a quick slap to the face, and are as thrilling as that first moment you heard **Arctic Monkeys** let rip. In contrast songs such as *Raw Honey* and *After The Show* slow things down to lend the album a surprisingly intimate and honest heart. With *Welcome Back To Milk* resembling a breath of fresh air, **Du Blonde** illustrates just how vital and exciting music can be. **8/10**.



In his previous albums *Drift* and *Home* LA-based producer **Nosaj Thing** created the best downbeat hip hop I've heard since the glory days of *Ninja Tune* and *Mo'Wax*. This month the beatsmith returns with *Fated*, a fully realised record which sees him further develop his signature sound. The record's fifteen tracks work together perfectly to create a fully realised world of sonic ticks, blips and whirls. Yet, there is a real emotional resonance to be found here, with songs such as *Don't Mind Me*, *Realize*, *Let You* and *Moon* bringing to mind **Kid Koala** in a room full of samplers dejected and alone. *Fated* is a haunting and strangely beautiful album which resonates with the listener long after the music has come to an end. **9/10**.



Fans of sunshine-tinged house should already be familiar with *Eskimo Recording's* excellent colour-themed compilations. *The Orange Collection* is out this month and is so warm and cozy sounding that listening to it single-handedly prevented me from freezing during a fool-hardy dip in the Irish sea (Don't try this at home boys and girls. I am a professional. You are not!). As is often the case with *Eskimo*, it is the little known artists which stand-out. *Higher* by **Ary** is so soft and silky it feels like a gentle caress, *Riptide* by **NTEIBINT** could grace the coolest of 70s disco dance floors, while *Fernandez* by **Moscoman** is a funky low-slung gem. Star of the show though is the **Mees Dierdorp** remix of *Wear Out* by **Hydrogen Sea**, which is one of the most emotive pieces of music you will ever hear. With 80s vibes aplenty, this is house music tailor-made for the sun. **8/10**.



Benjamin Power of **Fuck Buttons** fame ([Interview](#)) has a history of creating dense, bowel-shaking sonics under his **Blanck Mass** guise. His previous two albums, *Blanck Mass* and *Whitemoth/Polymorph* were largely ambient affairs which pulsed with a sense of grandiose wonder that threatened to bite your hand off should you dare get too close. The follow-up, *Dumb Flesh*, is out now on *Sacred Bones* and is an altogether noisier, spikier beast. And while it may not be as instantly likeable as the former two LPs, it is still a rewarding listen that draws you deep within its strange aural worlds. *Loam* opens proceedings with some **Autechre**-style electronics, before *Dead Format* introduces itself with a wall of intense noise. *No Lite* constantly builds in complex patterns that continuously surprise, while *Atrophies* is brash and immediately in your face. Far from easy listening, *Dumb Flesh* is a complex and thrilling album that is like nothing else you will hear this month. **7/10**.



Tastemakers with a penchant for Detroit techno or quality deep house have been making a fuss about the output of **Patrice Scott** for quite some time now. After a wait that has felt like an eternity (the Detroit-based DJ's debut LP was originally scheduled for release last year), *Euphonium* is finally available to buy. Thankfully, the album is more than worth the wait! Containing nine tracks of electronic music so good it could convince a gathering of Tory politicians to consume ecstasy and dance, this is house music as God meant it to be. After an intensely hypnotic opener *Distr5th* engrosses the listener with wave after wave of unbridled funk. *Escapism* harks back to the glory days of **Derrick May**, while the title-track is the soundtrack to my dreams. Full of spine-tingling moments to make you thankful to have ears, this is an album that any fan of electronic music needs in their life. **9/10**.



Sometimes you can get a bit bored of house music. You think to yourself, »If I hear one more bassline set to a 4/4 beat I am going to scream!«. Then a record like *Visions* by **Jupiter Jax** comes along to make you fall in love all over again. Out now on the ever-reliable *100% Silk*, the album is so good it could reduce a grown man to tears. Recalling the melodic grandeur of **Virgo Four** (with whom **Rudi Agius** collaborates on the gorgeously deep *The Light*) or **Larry Heard**, *Visions* manages to move beyond its retro leanings by being really fucking good. Like a house party in a bag, this is the one album out this month that is guaranteed to bring a smile to your face. **9/10**. Also be sure to check out his fantastic *Visitors* cassette also out now on *100% Silk*.



A special mention must also go to: *TransTrax* by **Various** - A top-notch collection of classic house gems from the *Trax Records* vault. With the likes of **Mr. Fingers**, **Screamin' Rachael**, **The Nightwriters** and **Marshall Jefferson** involved you know you're onto a good thing, **9/10**, *Resilience* by **Maxime Dangles** - Strictly for the dance floor, the French producer's debut LP is made up of raw, jackin' techno that pounds in all the right places, but could easily give you a sore head, **5/10**, *Animal Hands* by **Will Samson & Heimer** - A richly detailed album which melds the disparate worlds of electronica and confessional song-writing to stunning effect, **8/10**, *No (The Relative Effect Of Explication)* by **XIII** - My old nan used to say „Don't waste your time listening to an album, if you can't understand the title“. Luckily, the outsider house available on here is ample proof that even nice old ladies can occasionally be wrong, **7/10**, *Love Songs For Robots* by **Patrick Watson** - An album of electronic torch songs, perfect for those moments when you feel sad and alone, **8/10**, *Xerrox Vol. 3* by **Alva Noto** - this has been out for a while, but its wonderful deep ambience meant I just had to include, **8/10**, and *Walk Dance Talk Sing* by **Crazy P** - The disco survivors formerly known as **Crazy Penis** prove they still got the funk with a fab album of dance floor grooves **8/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)