

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

There is a curious, yet electrifying mix of light and dark in this month's new album releases! For every piece of sunny Balearic brilliance there is an angry scream into the night. For every slice of languid chill-out there is a funky guitar lick, or a hammering techno beat. All of which makes June a fantastic time to own a working pair of ears. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Among the top new albums reviewed this week are the return of ambient pioneers **The Orb**, the thrilling indie rock of **Wolf Alice**, **Sarah Cracknell's** soft folk, the eerie soundscapes of **Voices From The Lake**, the indie dream-team pairing of **FFS**, **Jenny Hval's** strange electronic pop, the emotional electronic of **Stephan Bodzin** & **Kölsch**, the shoegaze shimmer of **No Joy** and one or two surprises to keep you on your toes.



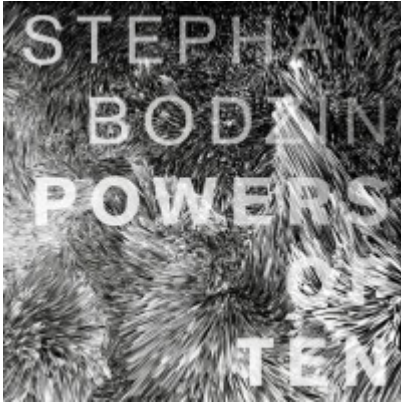
This week we'll begin with the return of those kooky masters of the ambient groove **The Orb**. *Moonbuilding 2703 AD* is the duo's first new album proper since 2012's collaboration with **Lee Scratch Perry**, *The Observer In The Star House*. *Moonbuilding* finds the band working alone and sees them step confidently back into form. The record contains four (six on the special edition vinyl version) long, languid cuts which move from ambient, to dub and house with perfect ease. Opening track *God's Mirrorball* begins with a cheeky sample before moving into some *A Huge Ever Growing Brain*-style dub textures, while *Moon Scapes* is a beat heavy (for **The Orb** anyway) house gem which utilizes a constantly shifting groove to hypnotic effect. *Lunar Caves* is the album's shortest track at nine minutes, and it is the most traditionally ambient of the four. It works perfectly as a build-up to the title-track, a gloriously funky trip hop affair. Leaving the best to last, *Moonbuilding* finds the acid house survivors in sparkling form. **8/10**.



This June finally sees Britain unleash a guitar album by a group of young pretenders which is actually every bit as good as *NME* would have you believe. **Wolf Alice** are a London-based quartet whose *Blush* and *Creature Songs* EPs won them both a fervent fan base and broadsheet critical acclaim. While some bands would have rush-released a piss-poor album full of dull filler following the frenzy which greeted *Blush* back in 2013 **Wolf Alice** did the right thing and decided to take their time. All of which brings us to the effortlessly great *My Love Is Cool*. By turns folk-infused and pastoral, others raw and grungy, the album finds a band who are completely in control. Single *Bros* isn't an ode to the 80s boy band, but a sublime piece of dream pop, and an early highlight. Yet it isn't until the **Smashing Pumpkins**-style alt pop of *Your Loves Whore* and the spiky grunge of *You're A Germ* (a compliment I assume) that things really kick off. From here on in we are treated to an abundance of alt rock delights, with vocalist **Ellie Rowsell** in fine voice throughout. A killer record for both angry teens and nostalgic dads. **9/10**.



Speaking of great guitar music, **No Joy** have been releasing wonderful shoegaze inspired noise since *Ghost Blonde* first entranced us back in 2010. Second album *Wait To Pleasure* saw the Canadian band really hit their stride and prove that even hipsters can show remarkable taste from time to time. Out now on the label *Mexican Summer*, *More Faithful* sees the group sounding more spiky and angrier than we might have expected from their previous output. Less dreamy, and more rugged, some of the tracks really pack a punch, with the band expanding and deconstructing their sound to integrate garage rock and punk into their usual hazy, feedback heavy grooves. Alternating between the rock snarl of the likes of *Remember Nothing* and *Corpo Daemon* and the **Mazzy Star**-style psychedelic haze of *Moon In My Mouth* and *Rude Films* with ease, this is one of the most thrilling collections of guitar music you will hear all year. **9/10**.



If, like me, you like your house music with depth, melody and feeling then you will probably already have a huge shrine dedicated to **Stephan Bodzin** in your house (so, just me then?). Late June sees the esteemed producer bring out his new long-player *Powers Of Ten*, after I threatened to torture his beloved cat should he not release any new music soon. Full of soaring synths, heart-stopping melodies and a driving techno groove, this is dance music to accompany life, laughter and love. Of the album **Stephan Bodzin** himself mused “ It is a homage to **Bob Moog**, full of techno beats and sounds and space and party and ecstasy and dancing and listening, and crying and feeling.” With the likes of *Singularity*, *Ix* and *Wir* being up there with the best he has ever done, I couldn't have put it better myself. **9/10**.



Danish producer **Kölsch** also deals with a similar type of emotional house music, and is responsible for producing some of the most beautiful and uplifting tracks you will ever hear. His new album *1983*, out now on Cologne institution *Kompakt*, is a brilliant collection of melodic house which will appeal just as much to the heart as the feet. For instance, the aching melancholia at the centre of dance floor bombs such as *Two Birds*, *Die Anderen*, *Moonface*, or the quietly pounding *Unterwegs* ably display all that is great about dance music in 2015. Combining the emotional vulnerability of **Sigur Rós**, together with the club-based dynamism of **Paul Van Dyk**, this is an album which woos the listener until they just can't refuse. **9/10**.



Taking a break from the day job, **Saint Etienne** vocalist **Sarah Cracknell** retreated to the countryside for two weeks to record a collection of pastoral folk songs and relaxed pop. The resulting album *Red Kite* is an enchanting and wistful ode to youth, nostalgia and the joys of the natural world. After *On The Swing's* pensive opening, **Manic Street Preacher's Nicky Wire** joins Sarah for the regret filled country noir of *Nothing Left To Talk About*. Other stand-outs include the organ-led *Underneath The Stars*, the tongue-in-cheek pop jangle of *Hearts Are For Breaking*, the smooth sensuality of *I Close My Eyes* and the sixties stomp of *I Am Not Your Enemy*. While, occasionally, the album does gently pass you by, there are more than enough top songs on here to keep anyone coming back for more. **7/10**.



Reminiscent of a horny **Björk**, **Jenny Hval's** songs give an honest and frank assessment of modern-day sexuality and life. Her previous album *Innocence Is Kinky* (see what I mean?) examined various issues surrounding identity and gender while beguiling the listener with some densely layered pop. The follow-up, *Apocalypse, Girl*, sees the Norwegian artist explore similar themes to bewitching effect. The production, which is characterised by spooky electronica and hushed folk, sits perfectly with Jenny's softly sung and spoken vocals. Forget opener *Kingsize*, which gets annoying even during the very first play, and dive right into the glacial beauty of songs like *Take Care Of Yourself*, *White Underground* and *Angels & Anaemia*. The real star of the show though is ten minute closer *Holy Land* which sounds like a stoned **Jesus & Mary Chain** crafting a dirge-like jam. **7/10**.



Next up we have some deep, dark ambient atmospherics in the form of *Live At MAXXI*, the new album by **Donato Dozzy** and **Neel** under their **Voices From The Lake** guise. Composed of a live set, the record's seven techno-infused tracks maintain the high quality of their debut while pushing the duo's focus into a new industrial direction. *Intro* opens proceedings with a fear-inducing soundscape that could be the soundtrack of some particularly disturbing dream. Maintaining the unnerving air, *Sonia Danza* introduces clanking percussion and choral voices to chilling effect, while *Dreamscape Generation* is the sound of an unseen figure breathing menacingly down the back of your neck. It's not all spooky corridors though, as we also get the spacy krautrock of *Orange Steps*, the 'nails down a blackboard' squeal of *Scintille* and the **FSOL**-style urban ambience of *Max*. Top notch electronica for darkened minds. **7/10**.



This week we finish with the sun-kissed Balearica of *So Many Colours*, the brand-new LP from Ibiza's own **José Padilla**. A bona fide legend, during the 90s it was not unheard of for people to travel all the way to the Balearic Isles just to crow about hearing one of his legendary sets at *Cafe Del Mar*. Now affiliated with the like-minded *International Feel* label, his new album sees him collaborate with the likes of **Mark Barrott**, **Telephones** and more to create eleven tracks which sit perfectly at that point where chill-out meets house. With summer having finally decided to reach these shores, *So Many Colours*' quiet reflective beauty, and slo mo beats make it the perfect accompaniment to lazing in the sun. **7/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Feels Like* by **Bully** - As we all know, no-one likes a bully! Yet, when they deliver viciously gnarly grunge in an album which contains short, sharp slabs of art-rock, then I think we can forgive, **8/10**, *New Day* by **Satoshi Tomiie** - 25 years after releasing the seminal *Tears* with the much missed **Frankie Knuckles**, this June sees the Japanese DJ/producer bring out his second LP full of lush, emotional house, **7/10**, *Fabric 82 mixed by Art Department* - The latest in *Fabric's* long-running mix series sees *No. 19 Music* boss **Jonny White** blend a hypnotic selection of deep, techy house grooves, **8/10**, *Changing Lights* by **Labasheeda** - Elements of post-rock, grunge, art-rock and more combine in an album which recalls the louche cool of **Sebadoh** or **Balthazar**. Available now from the band's *Bandcamp* page, **7/10**, *Deaf Safari* by **Felix Laband** - The South African producer gives us a furious mix of samples, synths and playful beats with *I'm So High*, *I Swear I Could* and *Righteous Red Berets* being the two to check, **7/10**, *Drifting* by **Jacek Sienkiewicz** - The gorgeously deep bass and the snaking synth line on *230km* is just one of the stand-outs on a techno album of surprising depth, **8/10**, *Miami Vice* by **DJ Cam** - With his new album the 90s trip hop survivor re-imagines the soundtrack to TV show *Miami Vice*. The result is a cheeky, yet quality beat homage, **6/10**, *Other Dimension* by **Magit Cocoon** - I'm a bit late on this one, but the timeless techno and electronica to be found on the Tel Aviv-based artist's debut LP meant I just had to include, **8/10**, and *FFS* by **FFS** - This pairing of **Franz Ferdinand** and **Sparks** release an album that is just about as good as you would expect from a record named after a pun, **3/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)