

## Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world: March New Album Reviews.

After the colossal disappointment of *Anti*, together with the bloated arrogance of *Life Of Pablo* you could be forgiven for coming to the conclusion that these are dark times for music. I mean, **Ed Sheeran's X** has just spent over 80 consecutive weeks in the official charts for fucks sake! And there does seem to be a dearth of great albums in the charts right now. **Adele, Justin Bieber, Ronan Keating** or **Little Mix** are hardly names to get your aural sense tingling with delight. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Yet, as always, there are still a few musical nuggets to be found. For instance, this week we review an electric riposte to modern society by **Fatima Al Qadiri, Prins Thomas'** kosmische meanderings, the rock dynamism of **Heron Oblivion, Andrew Weatherall's** cocky swagger, the trip hop flavoured jazz of **Submotion Orchestra**, and lots more.

So, pop on your spectacles, open your ears, and let us begin...



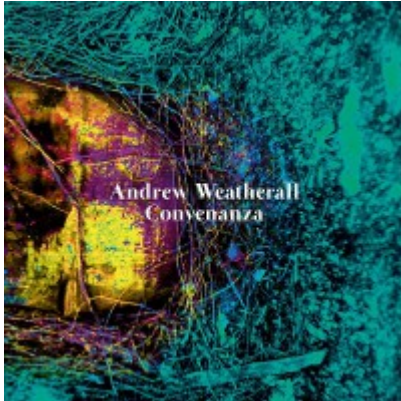
This month we'll start with **Fatima Al Qadiri's** second album *Brute*. While last year's *Asiatisch* was inspired largely by ideas of a future China, for her sophomore LP the artist explores »the theme of authority, the relationship between police, citizens and protest worldwide, particularly of her adopted home in the United States«. The result is a deeply immersive electronic odyssey which, thankfully, is filled with as many moments of glacial beauty as righteous rage. Containing sampled dialogue from urban protests, *Brute* is a chilling portrayal of a modern society which has sleepwalked into a police state. Tracks such as *Breach*, *Curfew* and *Blows* are angry, stark and paranoid, yet still contain remnants of funk. In contrast, songs such as *Blood Moon*, *Fragmentation* and *Power* are slow ambient pieces filled not with anger, but despondency and despair. It is this sense of opposing forces working in tandem which makes *Brute* such a powerful listen. With only her second LP **Fatima Al Qadiri** has created an important, visceral and, at times, graceful record which you owe it to yourself to hear. **9/10**.



After the excellent *Toransu* double pack got 2016 off to a flying start, Scandinavian cosmic icon **Prins Thomas** quickly follows it up with *Principe Del Norte*. Composed of nine long, lingering tracks which ably recall the ambient delights of **The Orb**, **Tangerine Dream**, or **Manuel Göttsching**, this is an album in which you can get lost in for days. Like vintage **Andrew Weatherall**, **Prins Thomas** is a producer unafraid of giving songs room to develop and breath. As such many of these tracks run over the ten minute mark. While this may give the average **Sophie** or **Skrillex** fan recurring nightmares, for the rest of us it makes for a luxurious listening experience which over time soaks into your very soul. For the most part the album leaves the producer's trademark »cosmic disco« sound behind to explore a world of Balearic minimalism and ambient grooves. Containing moments of stately tranquillity and outstanding beauty, the pace and BPMs gradually increase over time to bring to mind **Sasha** and **John Digweed's** acclaimed *Northern Exposure* series of mix CDs. In short, it's an unmitigated joy! **8/10**.



By turns gentle and dreamlike, frantic and twisted, **Heron Oblivion's** self-titled debut LP is a glorious piece of rock n' roll noise. Grand and ambitious, the album explores a range of sounds which the press-sheet describes as »pastoral pummel«. Featuring a lot more than a simple quiet/loud dynamic, the record makes the perfect antidote to all those guitar bands furiously peddling a tired rock sound. *Beneath Fields* opens the album with a lush piece of **Cocteau Twins**-style dream pop, vocalist **Meg Baird's** ethereal vocals pushed firmly to the fore. One of the strongest songs I have had the pleasure of hearing this year, the track manages to make its seven and a half minute running time seem far too short. Other highlights include the dirt-riddled guitar racket of *Oriar*, the **Deus**-style lounge of *Rama*, the slow-build drama of *Seventeen Landscapes* and the tripped out dirge of *Your Hollows*. An album to savour from beginning to end, be smart and get this record so you too can act smug when the band become huge. **9/10**.



Hot on the heels of his excellent **Woodleigh Research Facility** project, acid house legend **Andrew Weatherall** once again teams up with partner in crime **Nina Walsh** for what is only his second ever solo album. *Convenanza* should be in all good record shops and download stores right about now (If not, politely ask »Why«?) and finds the **Lone Swordsman** delving deep into his musical roots. Balearic, house, punk, krautrock, post punk and more combine in a record which is never content to sit on its laurels or resort to tired old sounds. After an all too brief *Introduction*, *Frankfurt Advice* gets *Convenanza* going with funk-filled rhythms, some slapdash bass and a strangulated trumpet to create a heady, yet groove-laden jam. Further in, *Confidence Man* introduces Andrew's assured London drawl and a nonchalant air, *Disappear* is a strange and mutated version of indie, *We Count The Stars* sounds like nothing else around, while *Thirteenth Night* is a beautiful jingle for the soul. By turns bratty, indulgent, funky and divine, *Convenanza* is the perfect album to soundtrack 2016's fractured times. **8/10**.



Out now on *Ninja Tune* offshoot *Counter Records*, *Colour Theory* is **Submotion Orchestra's** soul-drenched new LP. Featuring a warm production style which lovingly caresses the ears, fans of the laidback hip hop of **Bonobo**, **Nosaj Thing** or **The Cinematic Orchestra** will find much to admire in the album's gentle trip hop, lush orchestration, and melancholy jazz. Opener *Jaffa Feat. Still* utilizes a warm bassline, some chopped-up vocals and a sensual air to create an inviting introduction to what is to come. From here we get all manner of downbeat gems. *Kimono* is a sparkly piece of euphoric house, *Red Dress* a throbbing **FKA twigs**-style RnB jam, *Amira* brims with heart and soul, while *Ao Feat. Catching Flies* is a haunting piece of music which brings a tear to the eye. While the album's more singer-songwriter style songs (*More Than This*, *Needs*, etc) don't always work, there are still enough aural nuggets to be found here to

keep even a posse of gangster rhinos nice and chilled. **7/10.**



It is one of life's little rules that any album which opens with the gorgeous piano refrain of *Life Story* by **Nils Frahm & Olafur Arnalds** has to be good. A case in point is *Journeys Season 2: Escape. Sleep. Relax. Repeat*, the second volume in *Needwant's* collection of all things chilled and sedate. Merging classical, ambient, indie, folk, house and more into a beautifully relaxed set, the album is all the better for never rising above a gentle pace. Tracks by **Heathered Pearls, Happyness, Christian Löffler, Mutual Benefit, Howling** and more make *Journeys Season 2* a great way to spend an hour of your time. For instance, *Veiled Grey* by the aforementioned **Christian Löffler** is one of the most stunning pieces of music you will ever hear, while *Montreal Rock Band Somewhere* by slacker kings **Happyness** is stunningly good. While some of the folk elements on here can occasionally lead to snores, this is still a fine mix that will enchant idle daydreamers, part-time philosophers, and lovelorn fools alike. **8/10.**



Next up we have some experimental pop in the form of *Scanni*, the debut LP by the pairing of **Scanner and Anni Hogan**. Featuring a wealth of guest vocalists such as **Kate Smith**, former **Kraftwerker Wolfgang Flür, Jarboe** from art rockers **The Swans** and more, the album contains songs which sound like pop music as reimagined by superior minds. *A Life Well Lived* opens the record with a welcome wave of optimism, **Kate Smith's** voice recalling the aural delights of **Saint Etienne** in their prime. From here, *Future* utilizes a twinkling piano refrain to wondrous effect, *Mine Was Full Of Tears* is chock full of heartache and remorse, *Cinecittà (Feel Everything)* is like an emotion-filled ode to the power of love, while *Alone's* fractured beats and eerie electronics recall the smoke-filled melancholy of **Massive Attack**. In short,

Bringing down the System one song at a time

*Scanni* is a richly produced album which uses alien melodies and numerous twists and turns to create something which sounds vital and new. **8/10**.



Tired of the staid, boring pop music which clogs up the radio and the charts? If so, **Choir Of Young Believers** may be the band for you. Following a short break after the success of their previous album *Rhine Gold*, the band are back with the melodious sincerity of *Grasque*. Originally conceived as a series of experiments made using a small pocket sampler **Jannis Noya Makrigiannis'** mother got him for Christmas, these sketches were then fleshed-out and developed to create a rich, absorbing LP. Full of both the joys and heartbreaks which make up life, this is the type of music all our pop stars could make if only they were allowed to feel. With lyrics sung in English, Danish and Greek the record investigates a tranquil, almost post-rock style. At times recalling the grand melancholy of **M83**, *Grasque* is a rewarding listen which will make the perfect companion through lonely spring days or cold winter nights. **7/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Eternal Delight* by **Purple Pilgrims** - Strange, spooky dream pop with synths so soft and smooth they feel like velvet on the ears, **8/10**, *Sirens* by **Ben Abraham** - The world needs another confessional singer-songwriter like it needs a hole in the head. Yet, give them a chance, and these songs could become firm friends, **7/10**, *Sheer Rocks - Music On The Rocks Vol. 1* by **Various** - If you can get past the awful **Chris Rea** cover which opens the album, there is some nice disco-tinged balearica to be found in a mix which includes goodies by **Jose Padilla**, **Private Agenda**, **Telephones** and more, **6/10**, *Trembling Air* by **12z** - Twelve tracks of experimental electronica, some of it unlistenable, while some are very pleasant indeed, **6/10**, and *On Vacation* by **CFCF** - A mini album of superior elevator

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music out now on *International Feel* which will find fans in those who are still young at heart, **6/10**,



And let's not forget: *Arcology* by **Thug Entrancer** - The follow-up to *Death After Life* will give any fan of the glorious squelch of acid numerous wet dreams. Heavily analogue, and made with both heart and soul, this is a keeper for sure, **8/10**, *Lukarne* by **DNGLS** - Head straight for the **Autechre**-style electronica of *Cube*, the type of track you can happily listen to on repeat for days, **7/10**, *Painting With* by **Animal Collective** - Overly busy pop music with an experimental, **Beach Boys** indebted edge. It's not awful. It's not great. It just is! **4/10**, *Neo* by **So Pitted** - Fast and furious punk music for those who like banging into people at gigs. **6/10**, and *Hyperboreal* by **Nuel** - Bit late on this one, but its dense electronics and, at times, brutalist beats mean I had to include, **7/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)