

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

With the Brexit referendum looming most people in the UK are asking themselves, 'How would a separation from the rest of Europe affect the price of vinyl?' The simple answer is that the price will rise! The main reason for this is that most of the pressing plants are based on the mainland, (and that's not even figuring in having to pay import duty on those desired new 12inches on *Kompakt*, *Workshop* or *Ostgut Ton*). A convincing argument if ever there was one for any music fan in the British Isles to vote REMAIN. By **JOHN BITTLES**

But, enough of politics! This week we have reviews of great new albums by **Lone**, **New Order**, **James K**, **Lawrence**, **Jessy Lanza**, **Kris Wadsworth**, **Stabil Elite** and more. So, without further ado, let us begin...



After the gorgeous house tones of *Reality Testing*, electronic maverick **Lone** AKA **Matt Cutler** makes a welcome return to the album format with the rave and breakbeat inspired *Levitate*. Out now on *R&S Records*, the album is a short but sweet listening experience. Containing nine tracks with a total running time of just over 30 minutes, no one could ever accuse *Levitate* of outstaying its welcome. Apparently inspired by aural hallucinations caused by a severe fever, the album is a fast, frantic 90s inspired blast. Yet, *Levitate* never resorts to bland programming, or resting on the laurels of a 4/4 beat, as each and every track contains both musicality and warmth. For example, the opening salvo of *Alpha Wheel* and *Backtail Was Heavy* feature frenetic breakbeats and rave stabs, yet they also have a glorious sense of melody which can't help but raise a smile. This is a theme continued throughout the record; *Vapour Trails*, blissed out techno is a joy to the ears, *Triple Helix* recalls the glory days of drum n' bass, while the fab *Sea Of Tranquillity's* laidback breaks bring the likes of **LTJ Bukem** to mind. Available now on limited blue vinyl, this is pretty much essential for any music fan! **9/10**.



As close to a bona fide popstar as you are ever likely to hear on UK electronic

label *Hyperdub*, **Jessy Lanza's** reverb-drenched production and pitched vocals are both aurally thrilling and catchy as hell. Debut LP *Pull My Hair Back* utilized the spaciousness of the post dubstep sound and an outsider pop sense of the surreal to create something fantastically trippy, funky and strange. To record the follow-up LP Jessy returned to her home town with production partner **Jeremy Greenspan** of **Junior Boys**. The result, *Oh No*, is a record which finds the artist in playful, confident form, with the tone shifting from introspective electronica to **Prince**-style funk jams with aplomb. Opener *New Ogi* is a light, airy, electronic sonic dirge which recalls the alien pop music created by the likes of **Grimes**. From here, *VV Violence* is a funky-assed beast built for *Hoxton* basements and *Oceana* dance floors alike, *It Means I Love You* sounds simultaneously deranged and cute, while *Could Be U* recalls the stilted majesty of **FKA Twigs**. Leftfield pop music which touches on techno, RnB, funk and soul, *Oh No* is undeniably ,different', yet it's also inviting, and great. **9/10**.



Hamburg label *Dial Records* may be best known for releasing sublime deep house music by the likes of **Efdemin**, **Pantha Du Prince** and **DJ Richard**, but they are also prepared to pitch the odd curve ball from time to time. Case in point is the **Grouper**-style electronic folk stirrings of *Pet*, the stunning debut solo album by **James K**. In a recent interview with electronic mag *Resident Advisor* the artist claimed "*Pet* reflects my mental state during its production. As a person, I was owned, objectified and hurt by others and that wound I then unwittingly internalized. I turn to my music as a way to dissect these thoughts". The results are magnificently evocative, conjuring vividly realised worlds in all but the most unimaginative of souls. With some songs sounding simultaneously intimate and grand, the album's electronic soundscapes merge perfectly with the desolate, almost gospel-style vocals to create something which lingers long in the mind. The minimal musical backing which amounts to a bass pulse here, a strange clank there, allows **James K's** voice to take centre stage in an album within which you will happily lose yourself for days. **9/10**.



Speaking of *Dial Records*, mid-May saw label boss **Lawrence** serve up the deep, textured and beautifully melodic *Yoyogi Park* to finish off his trilogy of albums for Japan's always wonderful *Mule Musiq*. The series, which began in 2009 with the smooth house of *Until Then, Goodbye* reached its pinnacle in 2014 with the lush ambiance of *A Day In The Life*. For the trilogy's closer **Lawrence** re-introduces the beats to explore more dance floor-focused waters. If you like your house music melodic, subtle and mid-paced then you have probably already purchased this LP. *Marble Star* opens the record in fine style, its shimmering synths underpinned by a deep bass throb. *Nowhere Is A Place*, *Tensui* and *Ava* up the melodic factor and hush the beats to create a calm, tranquil vibe, and successfully pave the way for the dramatic swirl of *Nightlife*, an undisputed highlight of the LP. From here, *Simmer* is a glacial shot of electronic beauty, *Clouds And Arrows* is the stuff of warm-up DJs wet dreams, while *Illuminated* ends things with some gorgeously romantic keys. Ambient music you can dance to? Yes, please! **9/10**.



If Lawrence's romantic house fills you full of horror then the rugged beats on *Infiltrator*, the new album by techno veteran **Kris Wadsworth**, may well be more your cup of tea. Out now on **Jimmy Edgar's** *Ultramajic* label, the LP's eight tracks are raw, tough, analogue and devastatingly good. Seriously, if you aren't dancing your pants off by the end of Side A then your poor legs deserve a new brain. The title track gets us off to a blistering start, its vocodered vocals, deep, echoing beats and electro crunch recalling the likes of **Transparent Sound** or **Radioactive Man** at their best. Further in, *Gearbox* builds slowly but surely until it reaches a thrilling finale, *Rhumba* proves once and for all that robots really do understand funk, while *Milano* is a playful stomper which bangs in all the right places, and then it bangs some more. In short, this is a fantastic album where electro, funk and techno collide to create a dance floor-focused delight. Go Buy! **9/10**.

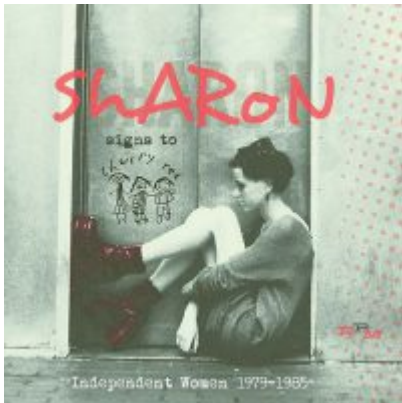


Having made a re-energized and revitalized return last year with *Music Complete*, indie legends and acid house pioneers **New Order** are sounding both essential and relevant once again. Even minus the smooth bass lines of **Peter Hook**, the album is the perfect example of a band who have rediscovered their groove. With *Complete Music* (see what they did there?) the band revisit said LP, releasing a bumper 2CD set of extended versions of its songs. Maintaining and enhancing the electronic feel of the source material, *Complete Music* is a pretty special release in its own right and is not just for completists or **New Order** diehard fans. *Restless* sets the pace, it's stadium-sized guitars working in tandem with **Bernard Sumner's** lyrics to create an epic slice of indie rock. From here, *Singularity* is a dark electronic post-punk groove, *Tutti Frutti* has a disco bassline to die for, *People On The High Line* couldn't sound more vintage **New Order** if it tried, while *The Game* is 80s inspired synth-rock. Proving once and for all that bigger really is better, *Complete Music* will enliven anybody's day. **8/10**.



With their debut album *Douze Pouze*, German art-rockers **Stabil Elite** created a stand-out record which successfully combined the heady beats of techno with the drugged-out arrogance of rock to produce a strange, yet thrilling brew. For their long-awaited follow-up, *Spumante*, the band rein in their more outlandish moments to give us an album which is mid-paced and, whisper it, relaxed. Opening track *Fairlight CA* for instance has a funky bass strut which lends the track a sedate, almost disco feel, bringing to mind **Can** lost in a disco ball. Next track *Alles Wird Gut* introduces a **Kenny G** saxophone halfway through and STILL manages to sound cool, while, most surprisingly of all, *Tief Im Westen* would actually sit quite nicely on an Ibiza chill-out comp. From here, *4D* introduces some **Autechre**-style IDM glitches and beats, *Zeitzone* recalls the melancholy rock of **Deus**, *Jugend Ohne Gott* could be a lost **Pet Shop**

**Boys** song, while *Welt Hinter Glas* has a great dub reggae feel. More focused and, perhaps, less adventurous than their celebrated debut, yet with *Spumante*, **Stabil Elite** reconfirm that they are one of the most exciting rock bands around. **8/10**.



Born from the demo cassette and DIY culture of the early 80s indie music scene, *Sharon Signs To Cherry Red: Independent Women 1979-1985* is a jam-packed 2CD compilation of lo-fi, guitar led gems. Containing a wealth of obscurities which will be unknown to all but the most dedicated of aural geeks, the album's 45 songs contain a naivety and charm all but eradicated from today's money and success obsessed music world. Just listen to the dub skank backing to **Jaqui & Jeanette's** teenage elegy on *194 Radio City*, or the smooth guitar jangle of *Little Miss Rainbow* by **The Candees** to hear exactly what I mean. This isn't music designed to appeal to a certain demographic, or to sound like this band, or that fad. This is music which has been created for the simple joy of making music, or jamming with your friends. With the glut of over-produced, cynical and airbrushed pop music around today *Sharon Signs To Cherry Red: Independent Women 1979-1985* is like a breath of fresh air. **8/10**.



This month we'll finish with *Prime Numbers* label-head **David James Wolstencroft**, who dons his **Trus'Me** alias once again for the futuristic techno sheen of *Planet 4*. A seasoned professional, (*Planet 4* is his fourth **Trus'Me** LP), the record sees the producer move away from the sample-heavy deep house with which he made his name. With some of the tracks resembling the metallic machine music created by the likes of **Robert Hood**, **UR** or **Drexciya**, this is a record which is very easy to admire, but somewhat difficult to love. Yet, it opens strongly, with the subdued menace of *1979* and the ghostly dread of

*The Unexplained* showcasing a darker, more thoughtful side to the **Trus'Me** sound. Apparently inspired by the producer's interest in "Deep space, physics and dark matter" tracks such as *Ring Round Heart* and *Red Sun* manage to be cerebral while also convincing people to dance. Yet, with many songs lacking hooks or warmth, playing this at home may not bring out the best in *Planet 4*. On the right sound system, in the right club though, now that's another matter entirely! **7/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *World House Experience* by **JR From Dallas** - Containing eight tracks of deep, dirty house music with the odd cheeky sample thrown in, this is funky as hell and an awful lot of fun, **9/10**, *Spagat Der Liebe* by **Klaus Johann Grobe** - A fab collection of psychedelic, krautrock-inspired dirges and grooves which uses the sounds of the past to create something which sounds gloriously now, **8/10**, *X-Communicate* by **Kristin Kontrol** - Former **Dum Dum Girl Dee Dee** dons a brand new alias to give us an album of 80s leaning pop which, surprisingly, recalls the aural delights of **Tiffany** and **Belinda Carlisle**, **8/10**, *Beep My Boom* by **Oscar G** - Strange title aside, this sees the house legend and one half of **Munk** deliver a 2CD set of seriously pumping tracks, **7/10**, *Killekill Megahits II* by **V/A** - Tracks by **Eomac**, **Detroit Grand Pubahs**, **Jerome Hill**, **Cassegrain & Tin Man** and **Blake Baxter** highlight what an essential and forward-thinking label *Killekill* is, **8/10**, *Home* by **Mihai Popoviciu** - Deep, rhythmic house music which is perfect for losing your inhibitions on the dance floor, **6/10** *Union And Return* by **Torn Hawk** - Eleven tracks of lush, instrumental music which makes the perfect soundtrack to gazing into some far off distance, **7/10**, and *Folding Time* by **Sepalcure** - Soul-infused beats from the duo of **Travis (Machinedrum) Stewart** and **Praveen (Braille) Sharma** which never quite match the giddy heights of their self-titled debut, **6/10**.



And let's not forget: *Ullages* by **Eagulls** - The Leeds quartet return with their sophomore album, channelling the spirit of **The Cure** to create a record which brims with post punk intent, **8/10**, *Parallel Behaviors* by **Electric Rescue** - Recalling the dance floor funk and spacious techno of fellow Frenchmen **Laurent Garnier** or **Scan X**, this will find favour with those who like their synths atmospheric and their beats tough, **7/10**, *Remixes From The Other Side* by **Damian Lazarus & The Ancient Moons** - Last year's *Messages From The Other Side* album receives the remix treatment from **Juan Atkins**, **Kölsch**, **Gorgon City**, **Dixon** and more, **7/10**, *Australasie* by **Astrobal** - An album of dreamy pop music from **Emmanuel Mario** which is at times strange, disorientating, lush, and just a little bit cheesy, **8/10**, *Twisted Strangers* by **Curse Ov Dialect** - Surreal hip hop with a political bent which makes a welcome alternative to the likes of **Kanye West**, **7/10**, *Nowhere* by **New Rome** - Polish composer **Tomasz Bednarczyk** dons his **New Rome** guise for an album of thoughtful and stately ambiance, **7/10**, *When I Was 14* by **V/A** - Bringing to mind the head-fuck IDM of his *Rephlex* label, it's only fitting that **Aphex Twin's P-String** stands out in a curiously disorientating, yet enjoyable comp, **6/10** and *Madhouse Ibiza 2016* by **V/A** - Head straight for the laid back summer vibes of *Daze* by **Till Von Sein** and the lush house groove of *Vervain* by **La Fleur**, **7/10**.

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