

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

After a short break where *Titel Kulturmagazin* went on an 18-30 holiday by mistake, we return this week with more album reviews than any sane person could ever need. After having to endure the tortured strangulations of EBM, and the hen party screeches of Ibiza for the last fortnight, fantastic albums by **2814**, **Wild Beasts**, **Bryan Ferry**, **Dinosaur Jr.**, **Conduct**, **Gerd Janson**, **John Roberts**, **Riley Reinhold**, **Carl Craig** are like manna to our ears. By **JOHN BITTLES**

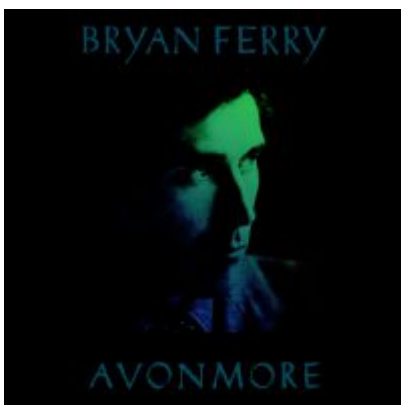
So, before we start trying to show off our sunburn, pass on an STD, or bore you with our holiday snaps, we had better begin...



Last year's *Birth Of A New Day* was an album which succeeded in immersing the listener within its own retro-futurist world. Overflowing with melancholy and wistfulness, it took the sounds associated with the burgeoning vaporwave scene, and created something visceral and real. This summer the duo of **Telepath** and **HKE** once again don their **2814** moniker to release the eagerly anticipated follow-up LP. Poignant, and dripping with a vivid sense of nostalgia, fans of *Birth Of A New Day* will be delighted to find that *Rain Temple* is every bit as good. *Before The Rain* opens proceedings with a feeling of hushed longing, somehow conjuring the image of standing lost within a cold metropolis where nobody knows your name. Further in, *Guided By Love* sounds like hearing long forgotten, but once beloved childhood songs coming from some far-off place, *This Body* can cause the unguarded to break down in tears, while *Inside The Sphere* brims with quiet resonance. Resembling the soundtrack to a lovelorn science fiction romance, *Rain Temple* is a record which will live long in the heart. **10/10**.



Since 2008 Cumbrian band **Wild Beasts** have constantly altered and adapted their sound to create some of the most thrilling 'indie' music around. While bands such as **Blossoms**, **Mumford & Sons**, and **Biffy Clyro** seem happy to peddle the same tired old rock n' roll clichés, **Wild Beasts** are the masters of reinvention. From *Two Dancers*' pervy rock, to the shivery electro flourishes of *Present Tense* the band are never content to rest on their laurels. So it is with their brand new album *Boy King*. The record finds the band lyrically exploring concepts such as masculinity, decadence, and loneliness over gloriously funky guitar riffs and dirt-encrusted grooves. The LP starts with a bang, with lead singer **Hayden Thorpe's** soft falsetto soaring above disco beats and filthy basslines, helping make early highlights such as *Tough Guy* and *Alpha Female* unadulterated fun. Other picks include the 80s new wave grind of *Celestial Creatures*, the **Hot Chip** electro throb of *2BU*, and the technoid sleaze of *Eat Your Heart Out Adonis*. Whether you consider yourself a fan of house, indie, rock or pop, it's pretty much certain that *Boy King* will have something for you. **9/10**.



Released back in 2014, **Bryan Ferry's** *Avonmore* album saw the one time **Roxy Music** member hit peak form. Recalling the air of romantic longing and quiet reflection that made the legendary *Avalon* LP such a mesmerising listen, *Avonmore* exposed a veteran singer who still had something to say. While it would be fanciful to suggest that the world has been waiting with bated breath for a remix-heavy companion piece, the results of said album are pleasing just the same. Containing twenty refits in total, *Avonmore (The Remix Album)*, includes reworks by disco and house legends such as **Leo Zero**, **Ray Mang**, **Man Power**, **Idjut Boys**, **Prins Thomas**, **PBR Streetgang** and **Ulrich Schnauss**. Edit legend **Leo Zero's** wistful version of *Loop Di Li* gets the record off to a great start, with Leo merely adding a gentle dollop of funk to the original to create a fantastic slice of dance floor joy. Further in, **Idjut Boys** turn *Midnight Train* into a disco soundtrack for romantic clubbers everywhere, **Johnson Somerset** maintains an irresistible emotional

air on *Driving Me Wild*, while **Leo Zero's** *Dub Mix* of the same song is nothing short of sublime. With only the occasional duff track, *Avonmore (The Remix album)* is the sound of new wave kids getting their disco kicks. **9/10.**



A new addition to **Riley Reinhold's** respected *Tour De Traum* mix series is, quite rightly, considered a highlight of any music lover's year. Taking in atmospheric ambient, melody rich house, club slaying techno and more, each edition is practically guaranteed to have at least a few tracks to make you swoon. Such is the case with *Tour De Traum XIII*! If you are not convinced, then one listen to the deep bass pulses and subdued melodies on early highlight, *Ametist* by **Anders Rosengren** will leave you feeling so ecstatic you will resemble a hyper-active child after a sugar gorge. Spine-tinglingly good, it pulls at the heart as much as the feet, and sets the tone for the entire album in majestic style. From here, the two lengthy mixes, (two and a half hours and two hours respectively), take in a myriad of electronic delights from a host of new and relatively unknown names, including *Traum* luminaries like **Mario Hammer And The Lonely Robot, Dovim, Dominik Eulberg, Ryan Davis/Microtrauma, and Max Cooper**. At times deep and heady, others driving and propulsive, the 45 tracks on offer never shy away from melody or emotion, and are all the richer for it. **9/10.**



After years spent in the doldrums, drum n' bass has undergone something of a renaissance of late. Top releases by **ASC, Ancestral Voices, and Kiyoko** mutated what used to be the standard drum n' bass template to create something vital and new. In doing so, they have managed to revitalise an entire music scene! *Borderlands*, the debut album by **Conduct**, out now on *Blu Mar Ten Music*, is

yet another record within this genre which is sonically divine. Dense, atmospheric, and punishing, it is also one of the most challenging, and rewarding electronic albums you will hear all year. Created by the duo of **Robin Andrews** and **Chris Edwards**, the album's eleven tracks merge icy ambiance, futuristic techno, and urban jungle with aplomb. From the deep, crunching breakbeats on opener *Meraki*, to the rave-inspired squelch of closer *Divergence*, *Borderlands* combines the technical, the cerebral and the body rocking to magnificent effect. While the record will undoubtedly sound outstanding in a club with a quality sound system, it's when played on headphones at optimum volume that it really comes into its own. **9/10**.



Frankfurt's funkiest son **Gerd Janson** spins a fun, groove filled club set for the latest offering from London club *Fabric's* long running series of mix CDs. Jumping from classic to exclusive, and smooth to acidic with aplomb, *Fabric 89* is a 76 minute long snapshot off everything that is good about club music in 2016. Opening with **Luke Abbott's** cerebral remix of **Todd Terje's** *Snooze 4 Love*, the album tenderly increases the pace, with the lush euphoria of *Voices* by **John Talabot** and the deep bass groove of *Love Yeah* by Giegling regular **Traumprinz** getting both mind and body in the mood. From here, the mix takes in the raw acid of *Severed Seven* by **Boddika & Joy Orbison**, the jazzy house of **Glenn Underground's** sublime refit of *Mess Of Afros* by **Q-Burns Abstract Message**, the thumping techno crunch of **The Black Madonna's** remix of *Relate* by **Nick Höppner**, and tons more. Yet, like any good DJ should, **Gerd Janson** keeps the very best to last, with the emotion-rich house of *Finished* by **Scott Grooves** merging seamlessly with the epic trance of **Prins Thomas' Diskomiks** version of **Caribou's** *Sun* to end things on a smile-inducing high. So, whether you are dancing or not, give this a play. **8/10**.



Best known for releasing sumptuous deep house for Hamburg label *Dial*, **John Roberts** is one of those rare breed of producers who have entered the realm of 'buy on sight'. While his previous two LPs (*Glass Eights* and *Fences*) saw the artist utilize crisp beats, smooth bass and soft melodies to add a sense of wonder and depth to dance floors worldwide, his brand new record, *Plum* is an altogether different kettle of fish. Mostly eschewing the beats to concentrate on oriental-themed ambiance, at its best the record recalls the playful electronics of **Oneohtrix Point Never**, or the ghostly soundscapes of *Selected Ambient Works II* era **Aphex Twin**. While *Plum* sees the producer move away from the deep house created by *Dial* luminaries such as **Efdemin**, **Lawrence**, or **Pantha Du Prince** there is still enough of a satisfying house crunch to satisfy long-time fans. Opener *Six*, brings to mind the harmonic electronica of **Four Tet** or **Caribou**, *Wade* is deliciously deep, and *Plastic Rash* is gorgeously erratic. While the levity and looseness of some of the tracks here can make *Plum* feel more like a series of sketches rather than a complete body of work, those with open ears and adventurous hearts should find much to enjoy. **7/10**.



Like the 60s, people who were involved in the 90s grunge scene claim that if you can remember the time then you weren't really there. And, while much of the UK music press (Hi there *NME*) would have you believe that grunge began and ended with **Kurt Cobain** and **Nirvana**, this couldn't be further from the truth. Case in point is **Dinosaur Jr.**, a band rightly regarded as being godfathers of the genre. They make a very welcome return this month with the grizzled rock posturing of *Give A Glimpse Of What Yer Not*. If truth be told, **Dinosaur Jr.**'s sound hasn't changed much over the years, yet they play with such energy and conviction it is hard not to admire their stance. Highlights include lead single *Tiny*, which creates a mighty racket, combining crashing guitars with a Cobain like ear for a pop chorus to pleasing effect, *Love Is...*, which illustrates how, when done right, MOR CAN be cool, and *Knocked Around*, which utilizes a quiet/loud dynamic to create a five minute gem likely to have you howling at the moon. Having been plagued by break-ups and

infighting throughout their early career, *Give A Glimpse Of What Yer Not* is proof that a happy and content **Dinosaur Jr.** is a mighty fine thing. **8/10**.

ELECTRI_CITY 2



ELEKTRONISCHE_MUSIK_AUS_DÜSSELDORF

If you are a fan of electronic music then the German city Düsseldorf is sure to be dear to your heart. Vitally important to the creation of electronic music, from the futuristic bleeps of **Kraftwerk**, to the eclectic rock stirring of **Neu!**, the city has given the world any number of strange, yet essential musical gems. Released back in 2014 as an accompaniment to the book *Electri_city: Elektronische Musik aus Düsseldorf* by **Die Krupps** member **Rudi Esch**, the sister compilation collected some of the undisputed highlights from this particularly fertile period. With the book receiving a welcome reprint and translation into English this August, the time seems right to unleash the follow-up LP. *Electri_city 2* is out now via *Grönland*, and features legendary figures such as **Neu!**, **DAF**, **La Düsseldorf**, **Liaisons Dangereuses**, **Michael Rother** and more. Perhaps the greatest thing about *Electri_city 2* is simply imagining how fucked-up most of these songs must have sounded in the 70s and 80s when they were first released. **7/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Alienation* by **Umberto** - LA label *Not Not Fun* do it yet again with an album of soundtrack-inspired electronica. Deep, dark and menacing, tracks such as *Drifters*, *White Night* and *Dawn Of Mirrors* create an all enveloping sense of mood, **9/10**, *Alan Abrahams* by **Portable** - A record of vocal rich post dance music from the South African producer best known for his releases on *Perlon* and *Live At Robert Johnson*, **8/10**, *Phoenixxx* by **Wwwings** - No, the name is not a typo heralding the return of **Paul McCartney's** former band. Rather, it is the sound of electronica and bass music joined together in an unholy marriage, and creating a glorious din!, **7/10**, *Motion Graphics* by **Motion**

Graphics - New York-based artist **Joe Williams** joins the *Domino* family this August with the woozy synth pop of his new self-titled LP, **7/10**, *Sinewaves & Butterflies* by **351 Lake Shore Drive Feat. Genius Jane** - **Zero 7** style ambiance is the order of the day in a record which will make a fine accompaniment to relaxing in the park, lounging by the sea, or cuddling with a loved one, **7/10**, *The Bigger Picture* by **Stee Downes** - Staying just the right side of cheese, and with many tracks containing a welcome *Permanent Vacation* house crunch, *The Bigger Picture* will sound just fine in the summer sun, **7/10**, *Bugger Me* by **Sam Coomes** - Genuinely ,out there' pop music which has been described by its creator as sounding like "**Suicide** meets **The Beach Boys**". And, who can argue with that? **6/10**, and *Sleep Not Found* by **V/A** - **Nina Kraviz's Trip** imprint returns with a seven track compilation of smoky techno, stoner house and messed-up grooves, **7/10**.



And let's not forget: *Cocoon Ibiza Mixed By Carl Craig & Sonja Moonear* - While most attention will be given to Detroit legend **Carl Craig's** soul infused techno/house mix, the deep, rhythmic minimalism of Swiss DJ **Sonja Moonear's** set is close to divine, **9/10**, *Bone Dry* by **The Living Gods Of Haiti** - Recalling the deep electronica of **Seefeel** as much as the glacial beauty of the **Cocteau Twins**, **The Living Gods Of Haiti** create spectral pop music with a cosmic edge, **8/10**, *Phase Zero* by **Morgan Delt** - Out late August on *Sub Pop*, these ten wistful vignettes recall the slacker alt rock of **Kurt Vile**, or **Mac Demarco** and will make the perfect soundtrack to sitting around getting stoned with your friends, **8/10**, *Ten Thousand Things* by **Afterlife** - When the pace of life seems too hectic, play this on your stereo and let those stresses and strains drift away, **8/10**, *System* by **Datach'I** - Released on **Venetian Snares' Timesiq** imprint, the soft melodies, alien bleeps and skewed time signatures on *System* bring to mind the days when *Braindance* and *Rephlex* threatened to rule the waves, **7/10**, *Mugako* by **J.C.** - Spanish artist **J.C.** continues to explore the outer realms of techno with the deep, atmospheric throb of his new seven track LP, **7/10**, *Which Way To Leave* by **John Chantler** - Uneasy listening and drone-filled ambiance feature heavily on the Stockholm artist's new record. Discordant yet strangely addictive, these nine pieces, if given time will work their way right into your mind, **7/10**, and *The Disco's Of Imhotep* by **Hieroglyphic Being** - **Jamal Moss** himself explains "*The Disco's Of Imhotep* is about creating frequencies and vibrations that are conducive for him or her to heal the mind and body and enrich the soul". The resulting record could well be his most rewarding work yet, **8/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)