

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

Supergroups don't work! We all know this, right? At times it can seem as if forming a supergroup is nothing more than an excuse to get together with some mates, dick around, consume copious amounts of drugs, and issue the results of a farting contest on deluxe vinyl while wanking on in interviews about how you have created 'great art'. This need not always be the case though! By **JOHN BITTLES**

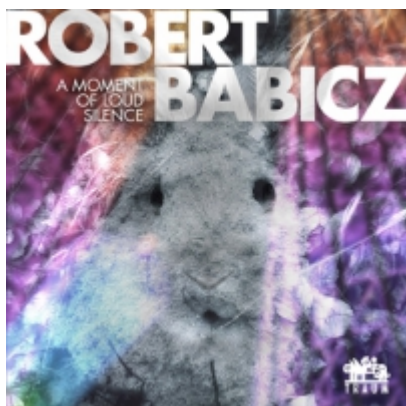
For instance, the sublime pop created by members of **Friendly Fires** with **Jon Brooks** of **The Advisory Circle** for their *Peel Away The Ivy* LP. Soft, subtle and beautifully seductive, the album shows that a meeting of minds can be a wondrous thing.

In this week's reviews I will be telling you exactly why you need this album in your miserable lives, while also highlighting other gems by **Robert Babicz**, **Grischa Lichtenberger**, **ISAN**, **SURVIVE**, **Fluxion**, **Slam**, **Rain Dog**, and more.

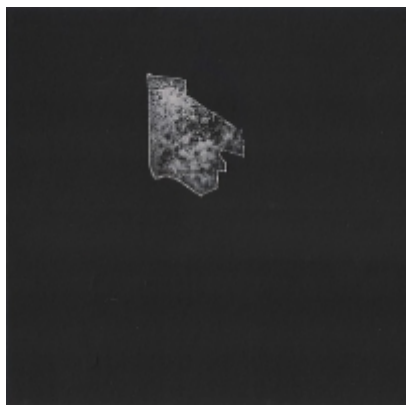
So, whether you consider yourself a techno devotee, a funky house fiend, or someone who likes their music as gentle as can be, read on to discover some music for you.



This month two thirds of indie dance disciples **Friendly Fires** (**Ed Macfarlane** & **Edd Gibson**) join forces with **Jon Brooks** of **The Advisory Circle** fame for a leftfield pop album which is so good that listening to it might just be the highlight of your life. Donning the alias **The Pattern Forms**, which the trio first adopted for *Ghost Box's Other Voices* singles series in 2015, the band make a welcome return to the label with the synth heavy melancholy of *Peel Away The Ivy*. **Ed Macfarlane's** vocals feature heavily in a mostly downbeat record which still manages to radiate with moments of pure disco joy. As mentioned earlier, team-ups and supergroups don't exactly have a strong track record when it comes to making music, yet at times *Peel Away The Ivy* soars towards the heavens to look upon the divine. *Black Rain* is an early highlight, its slow bassline and 70s style synths merging perfectly with the vocals to create a track which sounds as timeless as the sun. Other picks include the tearful sigh of *Don't Let Me Dream*, the wistful nostalgic haze of *Daylight*, the gorgeous slow build of *Polymer Dawn*, and **The Orb** style *First In An Innocent World*. Perfect from beginning to end, you owe it to yourself to hear this LP. **10/10**.



Robert Babicz is a producer whose career has taken in all manner of genres and beats. This October he surfaces on Cologne imprint *Traum* with the warm ambiance of his new LP, *A Moment Of Loud Silence*. Returning to the downbeat feel of *Desert*, his seminal album released on *Mille Plateaux* in 2000, his latest album collects ten previously unreleased tracks which work together to create one beautiful shivery haze. The record opens with the slow steady beats and melancholy synths of *We Fly To the End Of The World*, a song likely to bring a tear to all but the driest of eyes. *Curious Heart* meanwhile, maintains a slo mo house pulse over an evocative shimmer to form a track which recalls the glory days of ambient house. Other highlights include *Lonely Prophet*, a track which would make the perfect soundtrack for falling in love, the warm electronica of *Where Are You?*, and the pensive *Circles Of Thought* which ends things on a melancholic high. The package is completed by seven remixes from various members of the *Traum* family, the pick of which keep the emotional air of the originals, but gently edge them towards the floor, **9/10**.



Hypnotic, woozy and disorientating, the output of **Grischa Lichtenberger** could be summed up as techno music which takes great delight in messing with your head. His fabulous new release collects together three EPs, *Spielraum*, *Allgegenwart* and *Strahlung*, with the result being over 80 minutes of the deepest, trippiest techno known to man. According to the press sheet the release was first "set up as an experiment". Each of the records is guided by a word that could be described as phantasmagora". Don't let this put you off though, as from the off this is truly excellent stuff! It's out now on the always on-point *Raster-Noton* to download, or via limited (500) signed and stamped vinyl copies. For any techno connoisseurs out there, purchase of the vinyl boxset should be considered a must. Recalling the musical electronica of **B12** one minute, the deep rumbling techno of **Ø** or **Perc** the next, this is a collection tailor-made for playing on top quality soundsystems in darkened rooms. **9/10**.



Next up we have the gloriously ethereal *Glass Bird Movement* by Morr Music veterans **ISAN**. Full of shimmering electronica and melody rich ambiance, **Antony Ryan** and **Robin Saville's** eighth studio album is a thing of melancholy wonder. Recalling the blissful tones of the best of *Warp's* intelligent dance music scene, this is a record which will live long in your heart. Unhurried, and relaxed, the duo's first album in six years is full of moments of sonic beauty. Opener *Cuckoo Down* starts with some gentle chimes, which are soon joined by smooth bass and just the hint of a groove to form four minutes of music which will tickle your very soul. Further in, songs such as *Parley Glove*, *Leonardo's Formula* and *Linnaeus* retain this calming vibe to stunning effect. *Glass Bird Movement* is such a wonderful listen that if you haven't got a warm glow in your heart by the time it reaches its conclusion then I can only wish you and your robot army every success in your plan to overthrow the human race. **9/10**.



Fans of the smash television series *Stranger Things* will, no doubt, already be familiar with the music of **SURVIVE**. With two of the band's members responsible for the 80s synth soundtrack which helped add an air of warm-hearted nostalgia to *Netflix's* latest hit it seems like the perfect time for the group to bring out their latest LP. *RR7349* is composed of nine instrumental pieces which recall the disco chug of the label *Italians Do It Better*, the scores of horror supremo **John Carpenter** and more. *A.H.B.* opens proceedings with a 70s sounding slice of disco noir. If someone were to tell you this was a lost **Giorgio Moroder** nugget it wouldn't be a surprise! Further in, *Dirt* ups the drama with an almost industrial growl, *Wardencllyffe* is emotional and lush, *Copter* couldn't sound more 80s if it tried, while *Cutthroat* is a widescreen epic, grabbing the listener's attention from the off. At times sleazy, others conjuring images of being lost and alone, *RR7349* is a record to make you long for forgotten dreams. **8/10**.



Earlier this year the label *Subwax Bcn* re-released **Fluxion's** seminal dub techno album *Vibrant Forms II* to great critical acclaim. First available on *Chain Reaction* way back in 2000, the record provided ample proof that dub techno need not be monotonous, one paced, or grey. This month **Konstantinos Soublis** returns to his **Fluxion** moniker with the warm, bass heavy sounds of *Vibrant Forms III*. With most tracks sounding as if they were created under a thick haze of funny smelling smoke, *Vibrant Forms III* should be considered a must for anyone with a fetish for all things *Telrae*. The hushed pads and subdued beats of *Regional Shift* work in tandem with the dense dub pressure of *Uncontained* to set a marker for the rest of the LP. Other picks include the industrial bass groove of *Hordes Descent*, the awe-inspiring depth of *Gradual Approach*, and *Variant's* epic slowed down funk. Chilled enough to send a screaming child to sleep, yet deep enough to give any bass freak the horn, *Vibrant Form III* is an album which will make your speakers smile. **8/10**.



After a string of highly regarded EPs and remixes of artists such as **Scuba**, **Fort Romeau**, and **Avalon Emerson**, the duo of **Tuff City Kids** finally get round to releasing their debut LP. Out now on Munich powerhouse *Permanent Vacation*, *Adolescent* sees **Gerd Janson** and **Phillip Lauer** team up once again to give us an album full of pop hooks and sunshine filled grooves. While never quite matching expectations, there are still some musical gems to be found here. After the soundtrack inspired *Ophmar*, the disco guitars and thumping beats of *Wake People* gets us off to a funk strewn start. Other highlights include the 80s synth pop strut of *Labyrinth Feat. Annie*, the acid surge of *Boilered*, and the epic **Depeche Modeism** of *Scared Feat. Jasnau*. Not everything works though. *Tell Me*, their collaboration with **Hot Chip's Joe Goddard** comes across as a little flat, *R-Mancer* is a tune with little or no point, while *Aska Feat. Kelly Polar* looks to the past and decides ,that's good enough'. Lacking the depth and musicality of their solo output, there are still ample funky house gems here to keep the Saturday night masses amused. **6.5/10**.

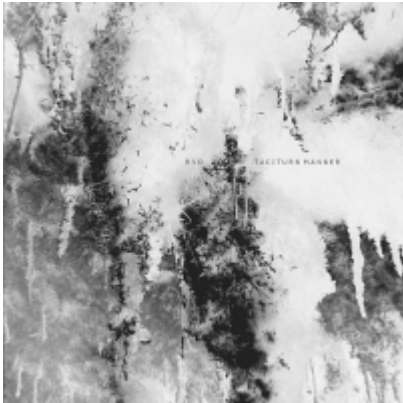


Throughout a long and distinguished career Scottish legends **Slam** have played numerous stunning DJ sets, released a sting of fantastic singles, yet have never quite managed to craft an essential LP. While they have come mighty close on numerous occasions, (*Headstates*, *Human Response* and 2014's *Reverse Proceed*), they have yet to release an album which grabs hold of your heart and refuses to let go. *Machine Cut Noise* is the duo's latest attempt to master the art of the long-player form. Yet, it comes across more as a collection of club bangers with the odd ambient track thrown in for good measure than a coherent and enjoyable way to spend an hour of your time. While the majority of these tracks will sound awesome played to a heaving crowd and will be beloved by the tops off brigade, a little more variety and warmth would go a long way. While we may still be waiting for a perfect album from **Slam**, *Machine Cut Noise* contains more than enough techno bombs to entice long-term fans. **7/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *There Be Monsters* by **Rain Dog** - *Project Mooncircle* have long released electronic music with an abundance of soul. This October standards are maintained with the stunning new album from **Rain Dog**. So beautiful it could make a stone cry! **9/10**, *Permanent Vacation 4* by **V/A** - I'm a little late on this one, yet the lush house grooves on tracks such as *Dreamless* by **Young Marco**, *Pelame* by **Man Power**, and *Interstellar* by **Hush Mane** meant I just had to include it, **8/10**, *Strands* by **Steve Hauschildt** - Recalling the glory days of ambient music when it wasn't scared of emotion and wasn't content to disappear up its own arse, this is gloriously downbeat, sounding all the richer for the absence of beats, **8/10**, *D-Votion* by **System Of Survival** - After a few years in the wilderness, one time label du jour *Get Physical* return to form with the melodic house of the Italian duo's second LP, **8/10**, *Great Pile Of Nothing* by **Mozes And The Firstborn** - Dutch four-piece ditch the garage rock of their debut to embrace the glories of the 90s alternative scene. Recalling **Deus** at their most affecting, the results are surprisingly fab, **8/10**, *I'm Made Of Stars/Journal* by **Time Traveller** - Head straight for the bass heavy claustrophobia of *Alpha* in an album which is comes as close as most of us would ever care to get to a techno DJ's wet dream, **7/10**, and *Cocoon Compilation P* by **V/A** - **Sven V  th's** techno behemoth returns

with this year's selection of tough house grooves. Picks include the twisted electro of *Porridge* by **Alex Smoke**, the vintage R&S thump of *n.2guts* by **Einzelkind & Robon Scholz**, and the gorgeously funk-filled jam of *You Fill Me* by **Jacob Korn**, **8/10**.



And let's not forget: *Taciturn Manner* by **Reggy Van Oers** - Released on his own *Telemorph* imprint, **Reggy Van Oer's** debut album is dense, deep, and so good it could make even the most committed of techno-phobes see the error of their ways, **9/10**, *Zen Travel* by **Kaazi** - *100% Silk* do it yet again with the languid house of *Zen Travel*, which hits the spots other records just can't reach, **9/10**, *Mykki* by **Mykki Blanco** - Funky, heady and extremely rude, this is hip hop moving beyond the boundaries of gangsterisms and misogyny towards something you could take home to your mum, **8/10**, *Kindisch Stories: Presented by Bedouin* - Brooklyn duo **Bodouin** mix eleven exclusives for German label *Kindisch*. Lush and melodic, **Sasha** or **John Digweed** fans take note, **8/10**, *1(LP)* by **Voyeur** - Late October sees **Benson Herbert** and **Leo Picking** release an album of classy house grooves on **Kerri Chandler's** *Kaoz Theory* imprint with the African rhythms and spoken word samples of *Nina* the pick for me, **8/10**, *Spaceland* by **Sin Fang** - Sounding a little like **Coldplay** jamming with **James Blake**, these nine songs may be too syrupy for some, but there is no denying they pack an emotional punch, **6/10**, *Liquefy* by **IOKOI** - I'm always wary of artists with unpronounceable names! Yet, the dark, disturbing post pop to be found here blends RnB vocals with eerie electronics to pleasing effect, **7/10**, and *Expert Knob Twiddlers* by **Mike & Rich** - Back in 1996 electronic legends **Mike Paradinas** (**µ-ziq**) and **Richard D. James** (**Aphex Twin**) released this strange and at times marvellous LP. Twenty years later it gets a welcome reissue with an extra disc of out-takes, **8/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)