

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

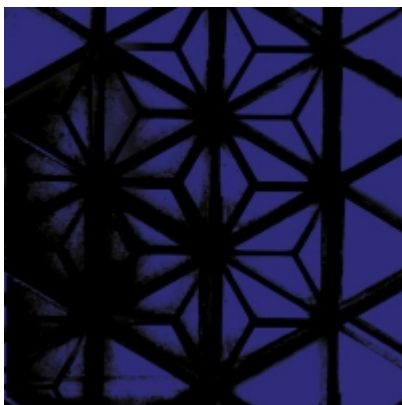
With the world seemingly moving ever further away from the realms of plausibility, sometimes it is all you can do to keep from just giving up and burying your head in the sand. By **JOHN BITTLES**

As the people around us appear to be hell-bent on voting for the most obnoxious and divisive option available we need art, music and laughter more than ever. Apart from a few knock knock jokes, I can't do much about the laughter part I'm afraid! In recompense, I have used this week's article for *Titel* to highlight some albums which, over the last couple of weeks, have allowed my mind to reside in a much better place. There is the acid techno of **Romans**, the glacial electronica of **Sine Sleeper**, the trippy grooves of **Nina Kraviz**, **Ryota O.P.P.**, and **SMD**, and tons more.

So, before **Trump** and the *Brexit* brigade declare a war on reading, let us begin...



This week we'll start with **Romans**, a duo comprised of New York provocateur **Gunnar Haslam** and the Vienna based purveyor of mournful acid, **Johannes Auvinen** (or **Tin Man** as he is perhaps better known). For their excellent debut album, *Valere Aude*, they combine plaintive electronica, techno rhythms, lonesome 303s and an awe-inspiring sense of depth which stirs both feet and soul. The emotion drenched sigh of *Cirta (6:23)* gets things off to a stunning start. Reminiscent of **Tin Man's** sublime *Neo Neo Acid* album, it is a song which can catch the listener unaware, quickly reducing all but the most cold hearted to tears. Next up, *Legia* pairs ominous synths and Detroit style beats to create a track which brings to mind the *Assault On Precinct 13* soundtrack given a cool techno sheen. In a record jam-packed with highlights the head-fuck dirge of *Aquila*, the glacial ambiance of *Cyrene*, the warehouse throb of *Dura Agameia*, and the lovestruck rhythms of *Oeviodunum* are all deserving of special praise. Wonderfully paced, and fabulously realised, with their very first LP, **Romans** have crafted an album which any music lover will be happy to give a home. **9/10**.



Anyone out there who hasn't danced to a *Meda Fury* record over the last few years probably hasn't danced at all. Since its inception as a housier cousin to the techno dynamism of *R&S*, the

imprint has been such a success that each and every record it brings out should be considered a must buy. This theory is proved beyond doubt this December with the release of Tokyo based producer **Ryota O.P.P.'s** brand new LP. *Pale Lux* is full of gorgeous rhythms, spine-tingling melodies, leftfield flourishes, and sees **Ryota Arai** further develop the twisted disco and bleep-filled house which made his *Future Life* EP such a delight. After *Beautiful Sun's* atmospheric stirrings, the album really gets going with the woozy head nodder that is *Moon Is A Woman*. From here the record takes in the emotional mid-paced house of *Wood* and *Summer Synth*, the hazy tranquillity of *Esa Tsuiban*, *Origin* and *Drops*, the Chicago thump of *Birds Flying Over The Rainbow*, and lots more. In what has turned out to be a vintage year for electronic music, *Pale Lux* is as good as it gets. **9/10**.



In the early/mid 80s **Adrian Sherwood's** *On-U Sound* imprint released some of the most futuristic and downright dirty reggae music known to man. Heavy on the dub, the label's output was instrumental in introducing a generation of white kids to the power of bass. This month four classic albums from the label are revisited in *Dread Operator From the On-U Archives: Produced By Adrian Sherwood*, a lovingly compiled boxset which presents a fascinating overview of the British dub sound. Disc one contains the bass-heavy riddims of *Leaps & Bounds* by **Singers & Players**. First released in 1984, the LP includes contributions from the likes of **Prince Far I**, **Mikey Dread**, **Bim Sherman**, and an assortment of reggae greats. Disc two and three meanwhile collect *Threat To Creation* and *Lows & Highs* by **Creation Rebel**. The former, made with **New Age Steppers**, is a twisted take on dub culture, every bit as thrilling as it sounds, while the latter sees the band adopt a more vocal based style. The package is completed by the industrial crunch and experimental twists of *Wild Paarty Sounds Volume One*, a compilation which still sounds as gloriously strange today as when it was first released in 1981. **8/10**.



Nina Kraviz is an artist who appears to have been given a harder time by some armchair critics than most. With a lot of this down to blatant sexism rather than Nina's musical skills,

her treatment at the hands of online trolls is a part of dance music which I find hard to defend. This month the DJ, producer, and label head gives us the latest in London club *Fabric's* long-running mix series, taking the helm for a voyage into trippy techno and gloopy house. Here Nina blends exclusives, obscurities and lost classics to create an hour long trip which takes great delight in messing with your mind. Picks include, the breakbeat-heavy electronica of **Bedouin Ascent's** *Ruthless Compassion*, the acid tinged **Air Liquide** remix of **Drax Ltd II's** *Amphetamine*, and *Fate (As A Chasm)* by **The Detroit Escalator Co.** which is still, unquestionably, divine. With a total of 41 tracks mixed together, the pace can seem a little all over the place. Yet, all in all everything holds together surprisingly well, meaning *Fabric 91* is a sure fire hit with anyone who likes nothing more than getting lost in the beat. **8/10.**



Long-standing beat purveyors *Ninja Tune* continue their recent purple patch with the classic house and hip hop mash-up of **Letherette's** new LP. *Last Night On The Planet* is out now, startlingly good, and skips from languid hip hop a la **A Tribe Called Quest** to **Theo Parrish** style house jams with an abundance of style. The result is ten succinct tracks which positively drip with deepness and soul. On the press release the producer states "I've always had a fascination with being the last person on the planet - waking up one day and everyone is gone". Yet, anyone taking those words to heart and expecting a morbid album full of insularity will be pleasantly surprised by the variety of upbeat styles and genres to be found. Highlights include the **Mr. Fingers** style groove of *Wootera*, the seductive house majesty of **Frugaloo**, (yes, most of the songs on here have strange titles) and the clinking melodies and **Four Tet** swoon of *Rubu*. For anyone out there who hasn't had a taste of **Letherette** yet, *Last Night On The Planet* is the place to begin. **8/10.**



This week we'll finish with the lush atmospheric and beat free soundscapes of *Pop Ambient 2017*. If you are a fan of music so quiet you are barely aware it is there, then *Kompakt's* latest collection of chilled delights will have you emitting a long contented sigh. As always, this year's edition is full

of exclusives from *Kompakt* stalwarts such as **Jens-Uwe Beyer**, **Thore Pfeiffer**, **Leandro Fresco** and **Wolfgang Voigt**. Yet, it is the newer names who make the compilation really stand out. For instance, Tokyo based artist **Yui Onodera** opens proceedings with the gentle melodies of the gorgeously sedate *Cromo1* (*Cromo2* on the CD), while the ethereal stirrings of *Dekka* by **Anton Kubikov** is a beautiful thing indeed. Other picks include the emotional majesty of *Her Flood Knocked Me To The Ground (But I Was Already There)* by **Kenneth James Gibson**, the lush piano and rumbling bass of *Locus Solus* by **Scanner & Yui Onodera**, and the mournful urgings of **Jens-Uwe Beyer's** *Final 10*. For anyone looking to escape the rigours of everyday life, *Pop Ambient 2017* offers all the aural respite you could need. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Heritage* by **Sine Sleeper** - Blissful electronica and melody rich ambience make up a debut LP by a Düsseldorf duo who create perfect soundscapes to colourful dreams, **9/10**, *Welcome To Sideways* by **Simian Mobile Disco** - The band also known as **SMD** return with an album of spaced-out techno and groove-heavy house, so good it hurts, **9/10**, *Epoch Sinus* by **Pyur** - Munich artist **Pyur** arrives on *Hotflush* with the **Aphex Twin** style bass-scapes which forms the foundation of this strange and thrilling LP, **8/10**, *Live* by **Moderat** - From the twisted melodies of *A New Error* to the euphoric rush of *Rusty Nails*, the **Moderat** live experience is a thing of rare beauty indeed, **8/10**, *Compost House Selection Vol. 3* by **V/A** - Full of mid-paced house gems, this mix by **Rupert & Mennart** is a must for anyone who enjoys a little soul with their beats, **8/10**, *Hoop Earring* by **Sage Caswell** - Merging deep house with smoky ambience, the *Spring Theory* artist's debut LP is practically guaranteed to help you find your inner groove, **8/10**, *Out-Er 5 Years Anniversary* by **V/A** - Head straight for the juddering techno of **Terrence Dixon's** *Untitled* for a track you could happily listen to on repeat for weeks, **7/10**, and *Reality Disappears After Waking/Disrupted Sleep* by **Nokuit** - A double cassette of sleepy ambience, muted melodies and cinematic sounds. With only 50 copies available hesitation in purchasing this may result in disappointed ears, **8/10**.

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