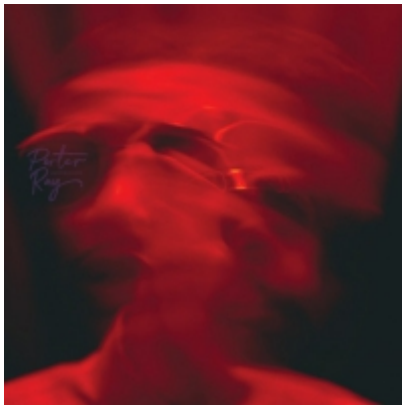


Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

Don't you just love March? Spring has finally reared its head, people begin to remember that it doesn't hurt to smile, and there is a horde of great music appearing in your local record shop. This week we'll be highlighting some great new albums which only a complete and utter fool would dare to miss. We have the rap brilliance of **Porter Ray**, the classic house grooves of **Octo Octa**, the deep ambiance of **Anjou** and **Marc Romboy**, the languid rock of **Real Estate**, and lots more.

So, before all this sun goes to my head, we had better begin...

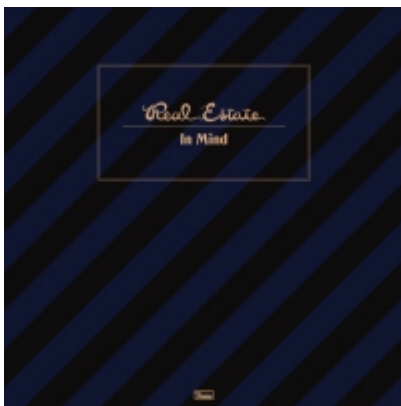


Every so often a rap album comes along which illustrates how fantastic and exciting this most abused of genres can be. Last year fabulous long-players from **De La Soul** and **A Tribe Called Quest** showed all the new kids how proper hip hop is done. After a slow start to 2017, March heralds the arrival of *Watercolor* by **Porter Ray**, the year's first essential rap LP. Out now on iconic grunge label *Sub Pop*, the album follows releases by **Shabazz Palaces** and **Clipping**. to demonstrate how the Seattle label isn't just about slacker vocals and crashing guitars. Gloriously laidback, yet with many tracks containing a welcome bass crunch, *Watercolor* is a record which looks to the highs of the past while striving to create something vital and new. With guests including **THEESatisfaction**, **Nate Jack** and **Shabazz Palaces**, the album is a blast from beginning to end. Fresh sounding and funky as hell, *Watercolor* is a hip hop album which utilises a full palette of colours to craft something which will illuminate even the dullest of days. **9.5/10**.



Fans of house music with soul are in for a treat this month with the release of **Octo Octa's** brand new LP. *Where Are We Going?* is out late March (April 7th on vinyl) on the always

excellent *Honey Soundsystem* and is sure to delight any fan of the producer's previous work. Over the course of nine emotion drenched dance floor grooves **Maya Bouldry-Morrison** shows why they are one of the most hotly tipped artists around. Opener, *Where Are We Going? Pt. 1* gets the party started with some fluttering synths, blurry melodies and a beautifully Balearic air. Next up, *On Your Lips* injects tough Chicago beats into the fray, which underpin gloriously mournful vocal samples and a melody which seems to soar to the sky. Other gems include the 80s style bass strut of *Until The Moon Sets*, the breakbeat infused rave of *Move On (Let Go) (De-Stress Mix)*, the tribal dance floor throb of *Preparation Rituals* and the spine-tingling trance of *Adrift*. The whole album is excellent though, ensuring that *Where Are We Going?* will keep you dancing long after other records have faded away. **9/10.**



The music of Brooklyn band **Real Estate** tends to waft out of speakers like a soft summer breeze. Since their self-titled debut in 2009 they have excelled at creating warm guitar pop filled with a sense of wistfulness which could enchant even the bitterest of souls. The group return this month with the hazy reflections of fourth album *In Mind*. With the majority of the songs written by vocalist and guitarist **Martin Courtney**, *In Mind* finds the band overcoming the departure of founding member **Matt Mondanile** in some style. If anything, the change in line-up has revitalised the band, with them sounding as content in their blissful contemplation as they ever have. Songs such as *Serve The Song*, *Stained Glass*, *Holding Pattern*, and *Same Sun* may not rewrite the rock/pop template, yet they are undeniably lovely all the same. Offering a much-needed respite from the awfulness of the modern world, *In Mind* is wonderfully indulgent, and offers a delightfully pensive high. **8.5/10.**

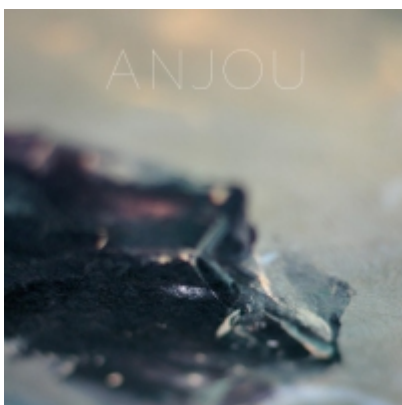


The label **PAN** has long become the go to place for any electronic music fan with an open minded attitude and adventurous ears. Previous releases by the likes of **Visionist**, **Lee Gamble**, **M.E.S.H.**, **Objekt**, and **Afrikan Sciences** explore a techno-shaped world completely removed from the tyranny of the 4/4 beat. This month the imprint unleash their first ever compilation in the ambient mood swing

of *Mono No Aware*. Maintaining a delicate balance between beauty and noise, the album is largely beatless, yet still manages to pack a mean punch. The record opens with a flourish in the spellbinding beauty of **Kareem Lotfy's** *Fr3sh*. Further in, *Limerence* by **Yves Tumor** merges stolen moments with soft synths to stunning effect. Other gems include, **Ayya's** *Second Mistake*, which revels within its unsettling air, *Huit* by **SKY H1**, which recalls **FSOL** at their most forlorn, while *Zhao Hua* by **Hvad & Pan Daijing** ends things with a breathtaking flourish. While not everything on here works, there are more than enough moments of sonic brilliance to make tracking this down a must. **8/10**.



Disco house label *Eskimo Recordings* present the latest in their colour-themed compilations this month with the mellow funk of *The Red Collection*. For those who appreciate the more subdued or melodic side of house music these yearly albums have long entered the realms of the 'must buy'. So it is with *The Red Collection*, which contains thirteen songs by the likes of **Max Essa**, **Satin Jackets**, **The Soft Machine**, and numerous people so cool even I haven't heard of them before. Evoking images of shimmering sunsets, sandy beaches, and breathy sighs, this is music to conjure the spirit of the Balearic isles in anyone. *Solitaire* by **Hermigervill** gets us off to a wonderful start, its sun-kissed synths and glossy melodies recalling **Aeroplane** or **Prins Thomas** at their most relaxed. Other picks include the **Jam & Spoon** style trance/pop of *Closer To Life* by **Atella X Frøder**, the RnB flecked *This Time/Remember* by **Else Born**, the slo mo groove of **Blue Motel's** *LWTK* and **Atella's** *Sand In Shoe* mix of *The Beekeeper* by **Horixon**. Perhaps too cheesy for some, *Eskimo's* latest will make the perfect soundtrack to lounging in the sun. **8/10**.



Over the last few years, US label *Kranky* have been bringing out some of the most potent and enthralling ambient music to be found. Records by **Loscil**, **Earthen Sea**, **Forma** and **MJ Guider** were deep and penetrating, with more than enough going on to ensure that listeners are never in danger of dropping off to sleep. In mid March the label continue their hot streak of form with the release of *Epithymia*, **Anjou's** sophomore LP. Across six long, languid tracks the duo of **Mark Nelson** and **Robert**

Donne conjure vividly realised aural worlds which linger long in the mind. Opener *Culicinae* is stunningly beautiful, yet strangely disquieting, and acts as the perfect introduction to the joys to come. Further in, *Soucouyant* recalls the downtempo excursions of **Global Communications** in its melodic majesty, *An Empty Bank* shifts from bleary jazz to discordant threat with ease, while *Georgia* ends things on a horror score style high. Far more than mere background music, *Epithymía* is an album of deep listening which takes great delight in sending the odd shiver racing up your spine. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Structures And Light* by **Group Zero** - Belfast lad **Cathal Cully** takes a break from **Girls Names** to give us an LP of glistening electronica and vintage synths. Resembling something you'd hear from *Ghost Box*, it's spacey, sleazy and great, **8.5/10**, *Subtropics* by **Unknown Me** - Inspired by an imagined trip across the globe, *Subtropics'* serene ambiance washes over the listener like balm for the soul, **9/10**, *Sensorimotor* by **Lusine** - **Jeff McIlwain's** gorgeous house music is a treat for both head and soul. A point well proved with the heart-stopping soundscapes on his new LP, **8/10**, *Imaginary Boys* by **Golden Diskó Ship** - On her third album Berlin artist **Theresa Stroetges** adds a vital component to her electronic drenched pop, bass, **8/10**, *Brand New Day* by **Mr. YT** - Featuring tracks originally released in 1997/98, this compilation of **Yuji Takenouchi's** work brings to mind the lush deep house of **Larry Heard**, **8/10**, *Sinister Mind* by **Marc Houle** - Kicking off a three album cycle for his own *Items & Things* label, *Sinister Mind* features dark, 80s inspired techno which isn't afraid of the odd vocal or two, **8/10**, *Dys Functional Electronic Music* by **V/A** - A triple vinyl release of tough techno beats which seems like the perfect way to celebrate five years of *Repitch Recordings*, **8/10**, and *Hyper Flux* by **Herva** - Out now on *Planet Mu*, hyper beats are joined by a nostalgia-tinged haze to create a body of work which calls to mind the rave inspired electronica of **Lone**, **7/10**.



And let's not forget: *Voyage De La Plane* by **Marc Romboy** ☐ Released on his brand new label *Hyperharmonic*, **Marc Romboy's** first solo album in eight years is a largely beatless record

which will reside in your heart for a very long time, **9/10**, *Cinderland* by **High Plains** □ **Loscil's Scott Morgan** teams up with cellist **Mark Bridges** on a wonderfully atmospheric and introspective LP, **8/10**, *BLD* by **Acid Pauli** □ Laidback shuffles and ambient textures combine in an album which takes a few listens before it sets up residence in the mind, **7/10**, *Detroit House Guests* by **Adult** □ **Nicola Kuperus** and **Adam Lee Miller** return this month with a spooky electronic record featuring collaborations with **Douglas J McCarthy** from **Nitzer Ebb**, **Swans' Michael Gira**, **Shannon Funchess** from **Light Asylum**, and more, **7.5/10**, *Memories (2008-2011)* by **Synkro** □ After the chilled brilliance of his *Changes* album *Apollo Records* collect highlights from the producer's early EPs, **8/10**, *Hyper Opal Mantis* by **Kangding Ray** □ Dense, hypnotic techno music which speaks to the gut as much as the floor, **8/10**, *Africa Gets Physical* by **V/A** □ With gems by **Ryan Murgatroyd**, **Jazzuelle & Lazarusman**, and **Floyd Lavine** this collection of South African artists by *Get Physical* is full of house music sure to woo any dance floor, **7.5/10**, *Harbour* by **Dapayk & Padberg** □ Trance melodies, vocal harmonies and chilled house combine on an album which will make the perfect soundtrack to a lazy day, **7/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)