

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

With Brexit looming ever closer, and the idiots in society having, somehow, taken control, we need escapism now more than ever. Cause let's face it, with the media indulging in ever more divisive rhetoric, Trump and Kim Jong-un having a nuclear pissing contest, and **Robbie Williams** being an ongoing concern, it seems that reality has nothing to offer but misery and dismay. By **JOHN BITTLES**

This is why great films, books and records are so important. We need something, anything, to help us avoid the fucked-up satire of our daily lives.

In this week's article I will be reviewing some new albums which have made me smile and made me forget that the outside world was even there. We have the twisted pop majesty of **Zola Jesus**, some fathoms deep bassquakes from the *Telrae* crew, the emotion rich house **Maya Jane Coles**, and *Kompakt's Total* comp, and lots more.

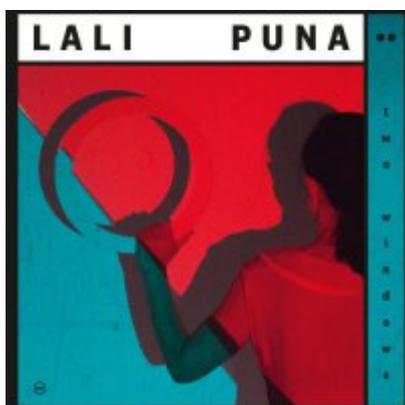
So, turn off your newsfeed and let us begin...



Out now on *Sacred Bones Records*, **Zola Jesus**, new album *Okovi* successfully merges lyrical flourishes, gothic imagery, ambient atmospherics and a devastating broken techno pulse to create a stunning piece of art. With a voice that could chill or seduce a thousand hearts, **Zola Jesus** seems to reside within a powerful world full of thunder ridden storms, anxious soul-searching and just a tinge of furious anger. Opener *Doma* sets the scene nicely, its gospel tinged vocals sending shivers down the spine. From here, *Exhumed* contains a ferocious electronic throb, its fractured beats and potent lyrics sounding like the turmoil of a tortured soul, while *Soak* sounds like a **Nine Inch Nails** track given a gentle dollop of funk. Also be sure to check the heartbreaking melancholy of *Witness*, the deep synth pulses of *Veka* and the beautifully bittersweet *Half Life*, which closes the LP on an awe inspiring high. Unapologetically emotional, *Okovi* is a thrilling example of what is possible when a talented musician refuses to compromise. **9/10**.



Next up we have an album of sublime dub techno from Cologne bass experts *Telrae*. Containing nineteen slow and sexy tracks mixed with aplomb by the duo of **Salz**, *Slapback 1* should be considered a must for anyone with a fetish for low end sounds. With a line-up full of new and talented artists this is an album you will want to wallow in for months. Opener, *Sobre* by **Rick Fox** quickly sets the mood, its sombre air and unhurried pace merging perfectly with the more traditional dub techno thump of **Duplicator's** *Hypothesis* and *Distance* by **Sibling** to create an opening sequence which is close to divine. Other picks include the conscious lyrics and stunning depth of *The 304 Dub* by **Starskie & Hagi**, the melancholic groove of *Silent Memories* by **Tim Kossmann**, the hypnotic bass squelch of *Shoreline* by **Overcast Sound**, and the lush injection of funk that is **Salz's** remix of *Third Moon* by **Stanny Franssen & Ortin Cam**. As deep as the Atlantic ocean, any self respecting bass freak needs this in their life. **9/10**.



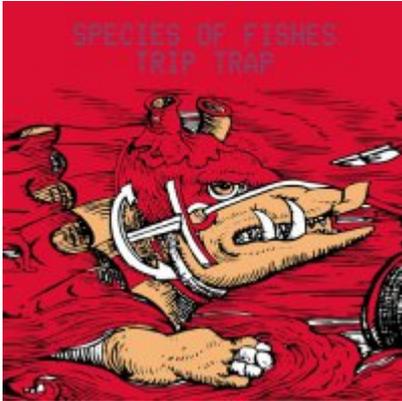
Seven years after *Our Inventions*, **Lali Puna** make a welcome return to our stereos this month with the warm electronic pop of their brand new LP. *Two Windows* is out now on the always reliable *Morr Music* imprint and features twelve dreamy, yet kick heavy songs. Their first album since the departure of **Markus Acher**, *Two Windows* finds the Munich-based band licking their wounds and coming back with a point to prove. With vocalist **Valerie Trebeljahr** in fine voice throughout, songs such as *Come Out Your House*, *The Frame* and *Wonderland* bring to mind the optimistic electronica purveyed by **Caribou** or **Four Tet**. Yet, the album is at its best during the more introspective numbers. For instance, *Wear My Heart* is quietly gorgeous, Valerie's wistful lyrics merging perfectly with twinkling keys and soft synth pulses to give us a track which sticks in your heart for days. Other picks include the mournful **Mary Lattimore** collaboration *Bony Fish*, the disco house throb of the title track and the **Johnny Jewel** style disco swoon of closer *Head Up High*. Whether you consider yourself a lonely romantic, a house disciple, or someone with a longing for sophisticated pop music, *Two Windows* is sure to have something for you. **8/10**.



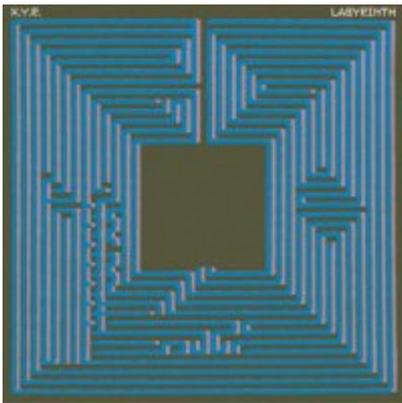
Maya Jane Coles' *Comfort* was one of 2013's best. Fulfilling the promise of her early EPs, the record saw the artist utilise her own vocals over lush deep house grooves to give us a collection of songs which took themselves very seriously, yet still managed to be an awful lot of fun. This month the artist returns to the long-player format with the two hour opus *Take Flight*. As ever with an LP of this length, there are some instance of filler, yet, overall it is an eclectic, moody and rewarding listen which integrates the best of her house and bass personas with aplomb. Opener, *Weak* sets the mood, soft breakbeats merge with **Maya Jane Coles'** own vocals to produce a contemplative slice of house music equal parts **Art Department** and **Larry Heard**. Other picks include *Bo & Wing*, which recalls the post dubstep sound of her **Nocturnal Sunshine** alias, while the title track is dark and sultry, and *Unholy* sounds like a paranoia induced **Tricky** instrumental. With fluctuations in style and pace throughout, *Take Flight* is a brave, challenging and at times, disjointed listen. Yet, there are more than enough gems here to cheer up any dance fan's day. **7.5/10**.



Usually when a compilation series reaches double figures it is best avoided like a group of topless men walking down the street chanting En-ger-land. Not so *Kompakt's* respected *Total* series though! Throughout the label's lifespan its yearly round-up has successfully merged elements of pop, techno, ambiance, house and trance. Early September saw the release of *Total 17*, a double disc compilation of exclusives and hits. CD1 is packed full of new tracks by **Weval**, **Superpitcher**, **Jürgen Paape** and **Voigt & Voigt**. Big on emotional resonance and classic trance motifs this will suit anybody who likes their dance music to possess an abundance of heart and soul. The second CD is, if anything, even better! Full of the big hitters, the epic rush of **Sasha** feat. **Polica's** *Out Of Time* sits next to the woozy techno kick of **Laurent Garnier's** *1-4 Doctor C'est Chouette*, the **Vangelis** on speed elation of *PUSH* by **Kölsch**, and the gorgeously euphoric *Hard Times* by **Christian Nielsen**. Unless you are cold and heartless, and consider yourself too cool for this type of thing, buying this should be considered a must. **8.5/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Trip Trap* by **Species Of Fishes** - **Nina Kraviz** launches her new *Galaxiid* imprint with a reissue of this lost classic. Originally released in 1996 the album explores dense electronica and heady ambiance recalling *Warp* icons **Boards Of Canada** and **Autechre**. It is also a stunning listen from beginning to end, **9/10**, *Stories From Far Way On Piano* by **James Heather** - Released on **Coldcut's Ahead Of Our Time** label, these contemplative piano pieces feel like a warm hug for the soul, **8.5/10**, *Lucid Locations* by **Second Storey** - Playful bass patterns, cerebral programming and skittering percussion work together to form a scintillating listen which rattles around the brain like a pesky fly, **8/10**, *Love On High* by **Juan Hoerni** - Rich, organic house music with impeccable pedigree that will sound fantastic on a quality soundsystem while dancing with friends, **8/10**, *Beast Epic* by **Iron & Wine** - Hushed and passionate, the new album by **Samuel ,Sam' Ervin Beam's Iron & Wine** project merges warm vocals, spiky lyrics and soft Americana to winning effect, **8/10**, *Decadent Yet Depraved* by **Belief Defect** - Like a living, breathing slice of darkness, **Belief Defect** commune with the spectre of techno to create something unnerving, yet strangely enticing, **8/10**, and *Summer Eyes* by **Full Moon Fiasco** - A trippy and inspired album of leftfield pop gems by a group of Berliners who don't let their passion for dirges get in the way of a good tune, **8/10**.



And let's not forget: *Labyrinth* by **X.Y.R.** - LA label *Not Not Fun* come up trumps yet again with an album of atmospheric electronica which nestles like a gentle purr in the mind, **9/10**, *Exit Strategies* by **The/Das** - Arriving this month on the label *Life And Death*, Berlin pair **The/Das** create a sixty minute soundtrack full of emotion, melody and warmth. *Innervisions* fans take note!, **8/10**, *Woman 5000* by **Acid Castello** - Inspired as much by the sci-fi soundtracks of the 80s as the cool electro squelch of techno pioneers like **Drexcia**, these hardware infused jams contain a satisfying crunch, **8/10**, *The Water We Drink* by **Khalil** - With their auto-tuned vocals, deep bass squelches and deconstructed techno pulses, these ten tracks sound like a deranged **Justin Timberlake** jamming with **Burial** and **Marcel Dettmann**, but in a good way, **7/10**, *TFCF* by **Liars** - Art rockers **Liars** return to our lives once again with an aurally dense and eclectic

record sure to entice any fan, **7/10**, *Again And Again* by **Haustuff** - Nine club ready house tunes designed for the movement of feet, **7/10**, and *Trobbb* by **Kutmah** - Composed of 31 short aural sketches the debut album by Brighton artist **Justin McNulty** is hugely inventive and an extremely enjoyable sonic beast, sure to seduce ladies and impress friends, **8.5/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)