

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

This week I will be highlighting some albums which may just make your hearts go aflutter and your feet do little leaps of joy. With Winter preparing to nestle down for a good long rest there is a string of new records coming out which will put a spring in anybody's step. We have some lush house sounds from *Strictly Rhythm* and **John Tejada**, the disco-tinged indie of **Franz Ferdinand**, the lovelorn acoustics from **Robert Earl Thomas**, and lots more. By **JOHN BITTLES**

So, cast your hot water bottles and cardies aside, and let us begin...

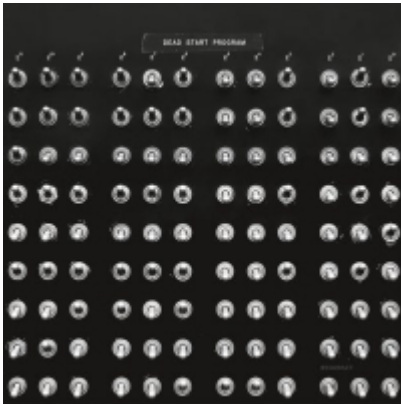


For those who grew up in a cave raised by overprotective beavers let me explain that *Strictly Rhythm* is a legendary record label adored by anyone with a love of all things house. Since its formation back in 1989 the New York based imprint has brought us some of the greatest records to grace a dance floor. This month sees the release of a three disc retrospective collecting some of the tracks which won our hearts many moons ago. *Strictly Rhythm Underground 90-97* is available from the 23rd of February and is full of gospel vocals, funky beats and raw acid jams. There are so many bona fide anthems here that you almost don't know where to begin. There is the jazz-heavy groove of *Luv Dancin' (In Deep Mix)* by **The Underground Solution**, *Can You Feel It (In House Dub)* by **CLS**, **Hardrive's** seminal *Deep Inside*, and *Reach* by **Lil' Mo' Yin Yang** to name but a few. Other picks include the wonderfully atmospheric *The Warning (Inner Mix)* by **Logic**, the **Mr. Fingers** style deep house of *Just A Touch (Jazz Element Mix)* by **Essence**, and the joyous gospel house of the timeless *Love & Happiness (Yemaya Y Ochun) (12" Club Mix)* by **River Ocean**. Every track's a winner though, making *Strictly Rhythm Underground 90-97* a timely reminder of just how good music can be. **10/10**.



This month sees the return of Indie rock survivors **Franz Ferdinand** who

employ the production nous of **Philippe Zdar** of **Cassius** fame for their long-awaited new LP. *Always Ascending* should be in all good record shops now and finds the Scottish band in sparkling form. Replacing guitarist **Nick McCarthy** (who left by mutual consent) with **Julian Corrie** seems to have reinvigorated the band after the disappointment of their last LP. While *Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Action* saw **Alex Kapranos** and co revert to their default settings, *Always Ascending* is full of big choruses, spiky guitars, nonsensical lyrics and disco joy. The title track opens proceedings with a slow patient build before bursting into life with a the catchiest of grooves. From here, *Lazy Boy* is a tongue in cheek ode to sloth, *Finally* will have you gleefully shaking your ass and singing along, while the synth pop fever of *Lois Lane* sounds like **Soft Cell** jamming with **The Libertines**. Recorded in super quick time after months of rehearsals, *Always Ascending* is the sound of a band rejuvenated and full of ideas. **8/10**.

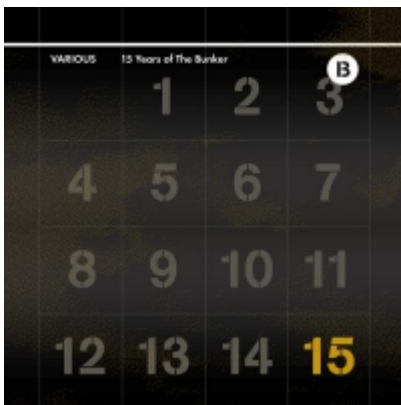


**John Tejada** is a veteran of the house music scene, who, over the years, has released a succession of great albums and EPs. After a trio of offerings for *Kompakt* the US producer returns to the Cologne based label for the bleep heavy techno of his 13th LP. Formed of eleven short, dense tracks *Dead Start Program* is full of melodic flourishes, jerky rhythms and angular funk. Opener *Autoseek* is exactly how a reformed **Orbital** would love to sound. Containing echoes of Detroit techno and an underlying air of melancholy, this is the sound of someone who knows how to work the machines. Next up, the **Derrick May** style rhythm track and emotion rich melody on *Detector* recall the optimistic enthusiasm of the early days of acid house. Other gems include the rave-tastic synth pressure of *Hypochondriac*, the gorgeously elastic bass line on *The Looping Generation*, the bleep heavy house of *All At Sea* and the emotion drenched closer *Quipu*. With a similar ethos as **Bicep's** much lauded self titled LP from last year, *Dead Start Program* gazes affectionately to the past to give us a record full of warmth and soul. **8/10**.

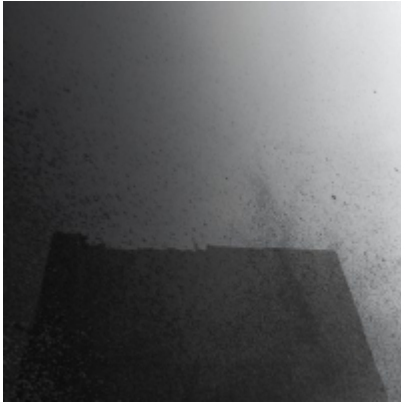
**Widowspeak's Robert Earl Thomas** ditches partner **Molly Hamilton** this month to bring us the hazy songcraft and lonesome murmurings of his assured debut solo LP. Out now on *Captured Tracks*, *Another Age* is a record full of self-reflection and heartfelt longing. Harnessing a beguiling sense of yearning the tracks on *Another Age* never scream for attention, perfectly content to sit in the background wooing us over time. The result is an album which is soft, invigorating and with all the richness of a **Raymond Carver** short story.



After the widescreen wonder of the title track, *I Remember's* sepia toned whisperings recall the languid rock cool of **Kurt Vile**. From here, *Cryin'* is eight minutes of slow burning indie, the wide-eyed innocence of *Winona Forever* always manages to raise a smile, while *What Am I Gonna Do* envelopes the listener like a heartfelt hug. Whether celebrating the joys of love, or picking over the wreckage when it's gone, *Another Age* is a record which reflects on the simple things in life. Believe me when I tell you this is no bad thing. **8/10**.



This week we'll finish with some low-slung, dirt encrusted house and techno with the fab *15 Years Of The Bunker* comp. The album is full of fuck you attitude and finds *The Bunker New York* celebrating a decade and a half of existence with a bumper collection packed with killer grooves. Since forming back in 2003 as a weekly party at *subTonic* *The Bunker* has grown and developed to become a leading advocate of leftfield jams, bass and beats. Composed of 26 tracks no matter your electronic music taste, there is something for your here. We have the raw hardware roar of **Mike Servito & Justin Cudmore** and **Ectomorph**, the mid-paced grooves of **Neel** and **Gunnar Haslam**, the drone heavy dirge of **Coward**, the twisted acid of **Jason Loveland** and **Function** and tons more. While you will probably never find yourself listening to this from beginning to end, *15 Years Of Bunker* recreates the sound of losing your mind on a dark, sleazy dance floor with aplomb. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Through The Dread Waste* by **Capac** - Out late February on the always excellent *This Is It Forever* imprint this is a spell-binding collection of dark, melancholy soundscapes. Mesmerising and deeply moving, any self-respecting late night dreamer needs this in their life, **9/10**, *Poet's Dream* by **Art Of Life** - The duo of **Oleg Makovskiy** and **Paul Twins** debut on *Kindisch* with a lush nine track LP of melodic house grooves, **8/10**, *Loma* by **Loma** - With an air of longing rarely heard in pop music today this collection of haunted torch songs makes the perfect companion to the those twilight hours, **8/10**, *Tidal River* by **Albrecht La'Brooy** - **Alex Albrecht** and **Sean La'Brooy** melt hearts the world over with a mini album of beautiful sounding ambiance out now on *Apollo*, **8.5/10**, *Last Night All My Dreams Came True* by **Wild Beasts** - Recorded live at the *RAK* studios in London, the band's farewell album captures them in fine, funk-heavy form, **8/10**, *Centrifuge One: New Dance Sound Of Moscow* by **V/A** - Those who like their dance music rough and ready should make a beeline for this beat-packed double 12", **7/10**, and *The City Is My Friend* by **Remember** - Six tracks of haunting beauty from London label *Dream Catalogue*, which conjure a world of images in the mind, **9/10**.



And let's not forget: *The Sky Looks Different Here* by **Paper Dollhouse** - Late night electronica merges with melancholic melodies and ghostly pop in a beguiling record which you will find yourself returning to time and time again, **9/10**, *Room Inside The World* by **Ought** - The Canadian post-punk band make a welcome return to our stereos this month with the jagged rhythms and jerky guitars of their excellent new LP, **8.5/10**, *Stop Making Fans* by **B.Fleischmann** - *Morr Music* strike gold yet again with a winning album of indie-electronica full of catchy choruses, leftfield flourishes and heart, **8/10**, *Natural Resource* by **Niko Marks** - A collection of slamming house and techno tunes beamed straight from Detroit, **7.5/10**, *The Sun Has No Money* by **Le Millipede** - Light and playful electronica recorded using real instruments, **7.5/10**, *A Body* by **Borusiade** - *Cómeme* start 2018 in fine style with an album of heady techno and trippy electronica which is like an aural massage for the mind, **7/10**, and *Wankelmoods Vol. 3* by **V/A** - Berlin native **Wankelmoods** compiles tracks by **Gerd Janson & Shan**, **Zoo Brazil**, **Animal Trainer**, **Joe**

**Goddard** and more to craft a melodic, vocal-rich house set which will keep you dancing long after you should have gone to bed, **8/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)