

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

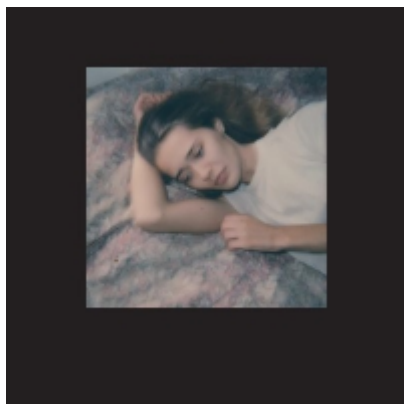
This week has seen Putin unleash his new weapon against the West in the shape of the merciless »Beast From The East«. Of course, there is no better way to last out a snow storm than with a warm blankie and some good tunes. Therefore, this week I will be singing the praises of some new records which are not only shockingly good, they will make you feel all cosy inside. By **JOHN BITTLES**

We have some gorgeous ambiance from **Recondite** and **Kenneth James Wilson**, the lo-fi house delight of **Palmbomen II**, some dreamy indie from **Soccer Mommy**, the dub techno atmospherics of **Shorelights**, and lots more.

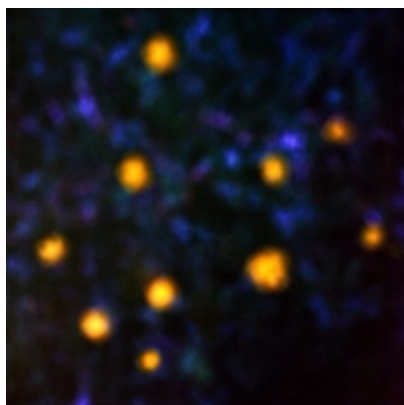
So, before the Beast starts breeding, we had better begin...



After his excellent *The Evening Falls* album, **Kenneth James Gibson** returns to Cologne label *Kompakt* with the melancholy drenched soundscapes of his new LP. Originally conceived as an imaginary soundtrack, *In The Fields Of Nothing* is out on the 9th of March and according to the press release was inspired by "the steep ridges and stony paths of the San Jacinto mountains, staring at the star-studded dome or gazing into the quiet horizon of dawn". The results are a rich, varied record full of depth and soul. Opener *Hearing Unheard* sounds dense and uneasy, a tension sitting heavy in the air. Much like **Nick Cave** and **Warren Ellis**, wonderful soundtrack for *Wind River* the song conjures images of open landscapes and claustrophobic lives. Next up, *Far From Home* is a mournful, yet beautiful track which suddenly springs into song halfway through. Other picks include the drone and piano interplay of *Her Flood*, the string-soaked strum of *Further From Home* and the heartbreakingly poignant eleven minute closer *Unblinded*. In short, *In The Fields Of Nothing* is a keeper, the type of record you want to take home to meet your mum. **9/10**.



In 2017 **Kai Hugo** aka **Palmbomen II** released four 12" EPs on the *Beats In Space* imprint entitled *Memories of Cindy Parts 1-4*. This February saw **Tim Sweeney's** record label return to the tracks, rebranding them as a double CD package. While the aforementioned Cindy's identity is still something of a mystery, the songs dedicated to her memory focus on tender, unhurried house music with a beautifully retro sounding lo-fi air. *Pure Tibet* is an early highlight, gentle vocals over a one note synth line allowing the soft focus melody pride of place. Gorgeously atmospheric, this is the type of track which risks bringing on tears and outbreaks of hugging when played at any house party or warm up set. Further in, *Seventeen* sounds like a loved up **Boards Of Canada** after a night at *Love From Outer Space*, *Pyrotechomarco* is a spooky acid laced groover, *Ultimate Lovestory Fantasy* is a fantastic slice of **Larry Heard** style deep house, while *Are You Friends With Amber?* is a bleep heavy take on shoegaze. Beautifully realised from beginning to end, *Memories Of Cindy* is full of misty eyed nostalgia and the lushest of beats. Do yourself a favour and treat yourself to a copy or two. **9/10**.



Best known, perhaps, for emotive 303 laced jams on *Acid Test* and smooth deep house for labels like *Innervisions*, Bavarian producer **Recondite** changes the pace somewhat for his fifth LP. Full of melody rich ambiance and shuffling hip hop grooves, *Daemmerlicht* is out now on **Lorenz Brunner's** own *Plangent Records* and finds the artist in reflective form. Rarely moving away from the sedate, the record is superbly focused and melds together wonderfully to create a body of work which entrances, taking the listener into a fully formed aural world. The title track opens the record with gentle, stuttering beats, unhurried percussion and a heartfelt melody. Resembling the subtle house purr of **Leif**, this is a track which demands repeated plays. Next up, *Durch Den Hohlweg* moves into soundtrack territory, its beat free sonics steeped in detail and atmosphere. Other picks include the spooky trip hop of *Hoehlenlichter*, the spectral beauty of *Am Tag Danach* and *Unten's* tension heavy dirge. While the record will have limited appeal as a club based tool, *Daemmerlicht's* melancholy tinged soundscapes act like a massage for the mind. **8.5/10**.



Following well received releases on *Orchid Tapes* and *Fat Possum Records*, the superbly named **Soccer Mommy** returns to the latter with the lo-fi slacker musings of her new album. Long held up as one to watch by those in the know (Hi Aunt Jean!) **Sophie Allison's** music as **Soccer Mommy** recalls the jangly pop of **Aberdeen** or **Blue Boy** one minute, the melancholic reflections of **Phoebe Bridgers** the next. Her first album proper, *Clean* retains the bedroom pop aesthetic fans have come to know and love. Quiet and intimate, the album's ten songs reflect on love, loss, anger and more with Sophie's distinct blend of world weary swagger. Early highlight, *Cool* combines a huge chorus with cutting lyrics and restrained ferocity to craft a winning slice of indie joy. Also be sure to check out the emotional guitar stirrings of *Flaw*, *Last Girl's* 60s sounding cool and the widescreen epic *Scorpio Rising*, which builds to a crescendo worthy of **Snow Patrol**. Like a friend who is always there for you when you lose your cool over a boy or girl, *Clean* is a record you will want to have by your side. **8/10**.



Over the last five years London imprint *Houndstooth* has become a byword for forward thinking dance music. Whether exploring bass heavy electronica through the low end assaults of **Akkord**, **Call Super** and **Kahn**, deconstructed pop music with the spectral beauty of **Snow Ghosts** and **Aïsha Devi**, or the futuristic house of **Second Storey** and **Marquis Hawkes**, everything the label releases is top drawer. This month *Houndstooth* celebrate their fifth birthday with *Houndstooth Five Years*, a bumper 15 track compilation of deep, heady tunes. Available now as a free/name your price download [here](#), the album collects hits, rarities and new tracks to give us a delicious sounding aural stew. Highlights include the motorik crunch of *Vetiver* by **Snow Ghosts**, the rich IDM of **Call Super's** *Black Octagons*, **Max Cooper's** glacial remix of *In Autumn Arms* by **Guy Andrews** and the gloriously epic *Deep Wave* version of *Glass Body* by **Soft As Snow**. It's all good though, making *Houndstooth Five Years* an enticing prospect for any electronic music fan. **8.5/10**.



This week we'll finish with the deep dub techno and spacial ambiance of **Shorelights**. A collaboration between **Rod Modell** of **Deepchord & Echospace** fame and **Walter Wasacz** and **Christopher McNamara** from the audio visual crew **Nospectacle**, **Shorelights** explore a nocturnal world of dense atmospherics and gently undulating bass. Out now on *Subwax BCN*, *Ancient Lights* is the follow up to the rural reflections of *Summer Cottage Soundscapes* which came out late last year. The opening salvo of *Lake Not Ocean* and *Ipperwash Beach* conjure a world of impressions, from isolated landscapes, breathtaking vistas and the quiet menace of walking hurriedly down darkened streets. *Hansen's Island* meanwhile, gives us our first sighting of a beat, as over gently lapping waves we get sucked into a deeply hypnotic groove. The pace picks up further on the spacey techno crunch of *Lighthouses*, before dropping right down for the final crescendo of ambiance which is *Love's Crashing Waves* and *Fell From The Sky*. A deeply immersive listening experience, *Ancient Lights* is tailor made for taking a break from your mind. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Lies Are More Flexible* by **Gusgus** - Icelandic veterans **Gusgus** make a welcome return to our stereos this month with their unique brand of melody rich pop and techno, **8.5/10**, *Closer To The Stranger* by **Ilyas Ahamed** - Trippy and undeniably dreamy, these eleven songs will keep you fine company during long, lonely nights, **8.5/10**, *Bosconi Stallions Vol. 2* by **V/A** - A triple vinyl compilation of good chunky house music featuring thirteen tracks of club slaying grooves, **8/10**, *No Fool Like An Old Fool* by **Caroline Says** - **Caroline Sallee's** sophomore album is full of laid back guitar led jams which will appeal to fans of **Jen Cloher** or **Kurt Vile**, **7.5/10**, *Red, White & Zero* by **East Man** - Out now on *Planet Mu*, this collection of bass heavy raps and beats from **Basic Rhythm's Anthony Hart** is brutal, electric and great, **8/10**, *Gordon Raphael* by **Gordon Raphael** - Psychedelic tinged rock music which merges elements of **Talking Heads**, **R.E.M.** and **Interpol** with aplomb, **7/10** and *The Biophonic Boombox Recordings* by **The Nightcrawlers** - Compiled from over 40 cassettes which the synth ensemble released over their long career, *The Biophonic Boombox Recordings* is a must for fans of spacey ambiance and early electronica, **8/10**.



And let's not forget: *My Way My Rules* by **Güero** - Out now on **Robolledo's** always excellent *You And Your Hippie Friends* imprint, **Güero's** debut LP is like a massive dose of Viagra for anyone partial to a bit of house, **9/10**, *Relative Positivity* by **Relative Positivity** - Not much is known about the creator, or creators, behind this album of deep, bass heavy house and techno grooves, yet the one thing I can tell you is that it's great, **8.5/10**, *Out Of The Dust* by **Hior Chronik** - An album of melancholy soundscapes which linger long after the record has come to an end, **8/10**, *Drown* by **Fritz Kalkbrenner** - Prolific Berlin native **Fritz Kalkbrenner** returns with an LP full of lush melodies, epic flourishes and emotion rich beats, **8/10**, *Ensenity* by **Emel - Emel Mathlouthi's** *Ensen* album receives the remix treatment from **Cubenx, Ash Koosha, AGF/Delay** and more, **8/10**, *Make Way For Love* by **Marlon Williams** - Lovelorn and romantic, these eleven tunes will make any **Richard Hawley** fan go a little weak at the knees, **7.5/10**, *Moaning* by **Moaning** - This much hyped LA trio burst onto the scene with the riotous swagger of their debut LP, **7/10** and *Music For The Long Emergency* by **Polica + Stargaze** - Berlin chamber orchestra **Stargaze** team up with American synth pop revivalists **Polica** for a rich, emotion drenched full-length, **8/10**.