

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

The life blood of DJs everywhere, my love of the humble 12-Inch began in the 80s, with extended versions of the hits of the day. From **Madonna** to **Duran Duran** via **Frankie Goes To Hollywood** and **Luther Vandross** (seriously, the extended version of *Criticize* is dance floor gold), my teenage years were spent tracking down overly long mixes of well known songs. In 2018 it can seem easier to purchase a mail order bride with a bad attitude than a slice of wax, but creatively at least, the 12-Inch is in rude health. By **JOHN BITTLES**

This is a point proved by this week's selection of singles and EPs. We have the sublime house of **Serena Butler** and **Frank & Aakmael**, the messed up dubscapes of **Primitive Art**, the big room pomp of **Solomon** and **Sascha Funke**, the techno thump of **ASC** and **T.Raumschmiere & Reinhard Voigt** and lots more.

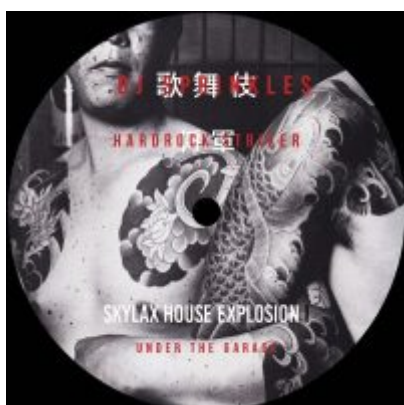
So, take a deep breath, and let us begin...



As I've been playing it almost non-stop lately it seems only fitting to start with the philosophical techno of **Serena Butler's** fantastic *We Want Neither Clean Hands Nor Beautiful Souls EP*. In the press notes the artist claims that the record embodies "the explicit, organized effort to repurpose technologies for progressive gender political ends". The results are stunning to behold! Containing four tracks which combine mid-paced grooves, politically charged samples, hushed beats and the ghosts of Detroit, the EP is a truly mesmerising listening experience. Opener *If Nature Is Unjust, Change Nature* merges an elongated sample with minimal synths and the mere spectre of a beat to craft a piece of music which actually makes you think. *Globular Hymen* meanwhile ups the pace slightly, its trance-like riffs and cymbal led rush sure to have even the most reticent of dancer hurrying to the floor. The package is completed by the deep dub techno pulse of *Science Is Not An Expression But A Suspension Of Gender* while the sample led *And With Fire Came Disparity* has a bassline to die for. Honestly, I can't recommend this enough. **10/10**.



When I discovered that *Scissor & Thread* label head **Francis Harris** had teamed up with American icon **DJ Aakmael** as **Frank & Aakmael** I did a deeply uncoordinated jig of joy. For those of you who haven't already purchased a copy, *Mercy Of Means* is formed of five tracks of the most succulent, melodic house music known to man. The gentle jazz/electronica of **Aakmael's Deep Muzik** creates a soft tranquil buzz, before **Francis Harris** adds fizzing percussion and a mild synth throb on **Frank's All that Light Mix**. Flip over for the mid-tempo loveliness of *Mercy Of Means*, which sees both producers working in tandem to craft a delicious slice of warm up gold. Further in, **Frank's Part Song** is a bittersweet little groover, while **Aakmael** ups the snare kicks and introduces some cuddly melodies to the same tune on a remix dripping with beauty and soul. Go buy! **9/10**.



Released to celebrate two decades of *Skylax Records*, the *Skylax House Explosion* double mix CD saw label head **Hardrock Striker** pair up with the legendary **DJ Sprinkles** as **S.H.E.** to present more than two hours of disco flecked deep house gold. Spread across three separate slabs of vinyl, exclusive tracks from the LP are now available on wax for any DJs out there. The first is out now and features four tracks all but guaranteed to entrance any self-respecting clubber. **Move D** gets things off to a stunning start with the drugged up house of *Outer Rim 64*. Gloriously lethargic, this is pretty darn close to divine. Next, **Jason Grove & Merwyn Sanders**, *Deep In Your Heart* picks up the pace with a classic sounding Chicago groove. Yet the fun doesn't end here, as California native **An Espresso's Club Called The Garage** is shiver inducing and sure to kick things off in any club, while *Bongo Trax* by **Signal ST** ends things in a flurry of percussive noise. While the hefty price tag will put off some, this is well worth tracking down. **9/10**.



Also worth checking is the fantastic new EP from *Warp* offshoot *Arcola* who constantly keep fans guessing with each release different from the last. From the glacial ambiance of *Dream Catalogue* legends **2814**, the tough as nails gabba bounce of **Nkisi**, to the psychedelic techno of **Ethiopian Records**, the only similarity to be found between any two release on the fledgling imprint is that they will be suitable strange. A prime example can be found in the heady dub soundscapes to be found on *Crab Suite* by **Primitive Art**. Dislocated vocal snippets merge with dense atmospherics, a rampant post punk attitude and a healthy dose of bass on a four track EP which holds you spellbound from beginning to end. Limited to 500 copies you'd better get one for your Grandma quick to avoid a clout around the ear. **8.5/10**.



Next we have some Italo house and tongue in cheek techno with German native **Sascha Funke's** fresh and fruity new EP. Following celebrated releases on labels such as *Kompakt*, *BPitch Control* and *Turbo Recordings*, Sascha arrives on the excellently named *You And Your Hippy Friends* imprint with the heady grooves of his new EP. *Acatenango* is out now and finds the producer heading straight for the floor. A-Side *Aggravate* merges cosmic disco synths with an *Italians Do It Better* style bassline and discreet trance touches to craft a track full of atmosphere and funk. Next up, the title track is a disorientating slice of leftfield genius, just when you think it is settling into a routine, it blasts off to worlds both fabulous and new. *Surumu* brings things to a close with a fucked up electro flourish which will leave any eager beaver overjoyed. **8.5/10**.



This month sees tech house legend **Solomun** release his first 12-Inch record in three years with the big room dynamics of *Customer Is King*. Formed of three melody heavy bombs, the EP is the 100th release on the highly respected Hamburg imprint *Dynamic Music*, and finds the label head in fine form. The title track gets us going with huge trance riffs mixing with deep house sensibility on a song tailor made for dancing in the sun. *Dre* meanwhile is a deep electro throbber whose squelchy bass and out of control bleeps build to a marvellous crescendo. Closer *Ich Muss Los* wouldn't sound out of place as the highlight of a **Paul Van Dyk** set from back in the day and ends things on a euphoric high. While *Customer Is King* isn't exactly subtle, its components are sure to make any main room audience beg for more. **8/10**.



Over the years the mysterious producer know as **ASC** has pushed the boundaries of drum n' bass, ambient and techno until their music left all adherence to genre behind. This summer sees the release of *The Difference Engine* a punishing four track EP made for darkened rooms, echoing warehouses and those who dance with their eyes closed. *Silent Reign* opens proceedings with a K-Hole rush, its hypnotic synth line merging with repetitive beat sequences to give it a visceral, sinister edge. From here, *Dimensional Rift* is a thrilling piece of atmospheric techno perfect for when the club is just starting to wind down, *Vulpine* sounds like a *Berghain* anthem, while *Curvature* ends things with a welcome leftfield flourish. Consider *The Difference Engine* a must for those like their beats both cerebral and tough. **8/10**.



This week we'll finish with a pair of genuine bangers in the melody led techno rush of *Speicher 104*. Cologne imprint *Kompakt's* long-running series has graced many a dance floor over the years, and their latest missives are sure to do the same. On the A-Side *Augen Zu* by **T.Raumschmiere** is an electro-tinged bass heavy monster which is practically pleading to be played loud in a club. Minimal, melodic and bouncy, I could listen to this on repeat for days. My only complaint is that it is far too short! Over the flip, **Reinhard Voigt** delivers a superb piece of punkish techno with the aptly named *Drei Millionen Kölsch*. Heady and atmospheric, this has festival anthem written all over it, building slowly but surely with a deep, mesmeric throb. Also be sure to check **Marc Romboy's** brilliant May released two-tracker *Speicher 103*. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *The Bluff EP* by **Alex Albrecht Pres.**

Melquíades - Four tracks of mid paced melodies with a wonderfully melancholic edge, **9/10**, *So. Candy* by **So. Mind** - The *Berlin Bass Collective* label come up trumps with a fabulous EP of lo-fi house and techno jams, **8.5/10**, *River EP* by **Mary Yalex** - Merging slow burn house and soft focus ambiance, **Mary Yalex's** debut for Leipzig based imprint *Kann* is a rare and beautiful thing, **8.5/10**, *MVX/U41A* by **Minimal Violence** - Imagine your favourite soundtrack enveloped by tough techno beats and you're not far off the hardware infused sound of **Minimal Violence**, **8/10**, *On A Mission* by **Arthur Baker Feat. Rockers Revenge** - UK label *Crosstown Rebels* celebrate their 200th release with a powerful house track featuring remixes from **Michael Mayer** and **Francois K**, **8/10**, *Rondo's Return* by **Dudley Strangeways** - Deep, mesmeric and funky as fuck, lead track *Show & Tell* is a tune you never want to end, **8/10**, *Tusk/Aku* by **Cleveland** - *ESP Institute* deliver a pair of deep and heady tracks certain to move even the most jaded of floors, **7.5/10**, *Back Up Off The Wall* by **DJ Pierre & DJ Sneak** - Guaranteed to have a generation of acid casualties getting misty eyed as they throw themselves around the room, **7/10** and *The Night Land Remixed* by **Talaboman** - The deep, techno groove of the eleven minute long **Superpitcher** Remix of *Dins El Llit* is worth the price of admission alone, **8.5/10**.



And let's not forget: *A Says Hello EP* by **Alton Miller** - Detroit legend **Alton Miller** has, over the years, produced a body of work full of funk and soul. Long term fans and newcomers alike will find much to enjoy in the lush house grooves on his excellent new EP, **9/10**, *Thursdays (Be There)* by **DJ Counselling** - A triple-treat of lo-fi house brilliance from the up and coming **DJ Counselling**, with the euphoric strains of the title track the pick for me, **9/10**, *The Sound Of* by **Austin Ato** - **Man Power's Me Me Me** imprint strike gold yet again with an EP of funk filled delights, **8.5/10**, *Ab Initio EP* by **Abby Echiverri** - Head straight for the acid flecked groove of *Nadezhda*, a track of unrestrained brilliance, **8/10**, *Irafas EP* by **Lord Of The Isles** - Barcelona based imprint *Lone Romantic* present a quartet of emotion rich techno full of melody and heart, **8/10**, *4X4 (Remixes)* by **Bawrut** - Make sure to check the epic trance flourishes of **Lauer's** take on *I Hear Voices* and **Marlon Hoffstadt's** heads down classic house groove on his *Aloe Vera Mix of More Cowbell*, **8/10**, *SW:SVN* by **SW:SVN** - Following the reissue of **SW's** sublime LP, **SW** returns to *Apollo* with fellow *SUED* label head **SVN** with a dense and eerie bass filled six track EP, **7.5/10**, and *Drum Union Vol. 1* by **V/A** - The ever excellent *Drumpoet Community* label launch "a new series documenting the different shades of leftfield house" with an EP whose purchase should be considered a must for any *Sub Club* regular, **8/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)