

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

Sometimes, when life is getting you down, there is nothing better than losing yourself in a great album for a while. Sure, we should be engaged with life and fight back against whatever is bothering us, but every so often it's necessary to hide away from the horrors of the world. In this week's column I will be presenting some great new albums which are perfect for getting you through the day. By **JOHN BITTLES**

We have the cinematic soundscapes of **Leon Vynehall** and **Airchina**, the electro squelch of **Morphology**, the indie rock experimentation of **Girls Names**, and lots more.

So, remember that reality is but a product, and let us begin...



This week we'll start with an album which has kept me company during many a lonely hour. A deeply engrossing journey filled with a clear sense of wonder, *Nothing Is Still* by **Leon Vynehall** is the type of record which reminds you why you fell in love with music all those years ago. Out now on the legendary *Ninja Tune* label, *Nothing Is Still* was inspired by the story of Leon's grandparents' emigration from Britain to New York in the 1960s. Vivid and absorbing, the results are brimming with both emotion and soul. *From The Sea/It Looms (Chapters I & II)* opens proceedings with evocative strings merging with an orchestral swell on a song which gently tugs at your heartstrings. *Movements (Chapter III)* meanwhile oozes a detached sense of melancholic cool, its loose jazz strut recalling the glory days of *Mo'Wax* or *Acid Jazz*. Other highlights include the glitch hop ambiance of *Drinking It In Again (Chapter IV)* and the **Cinematic Orchestra** style grandeur of *Envelopes (Chapter VI)*. Accompanied by short films and a novella, *Nothing Is Still* might just be one of the best albums you will hear all year. **9.5/10**.



To say that UK label *Firescope Records* are on a bit of a roll right now is such

an understatement it's a bit like saying that the Conservative party are making a bit of a hash of this Brexit malarkey. After a fantastic long-player of melancholy electro and vintage sounding IDM from label head **Steven Rutter**, the imprint keeps standards sky high with *Traveller*, **Morpholgy's** stunning new LP. With previous releases on forward thinking labels such as *Central Processing Unit* and *Cultivated Electronics* the Finnish duo have been on most clued up people's radar for a while. Opener *Distant Signal* is a bittersweet piece of electronica with a soft bass pulse and redolent synths. *Second Light* meanwhile is classic sounding electro, a low-end throb merging with beeps and bleeps to create a song which thrills to the core. Further in, *Hidden Variable* sounds both mournful and ominous, *Detached* adds a welcome dose of erratic 303s to the fray, *Pod Boy 8* will have you jackin' for days, while closer *Dueteros* is pretty damn divine. Please consider *Traveller* absolutely essential for anyone with a passion for emotion rich electro. **9/10**.



Belfast band **Girls Names'** reputation has steadily grown over these last few years, with a string of superb albums and live shows winning them an ever growing legion of fans. This summer the group make a welcome return to our stereos with the post-punk urgings of *Stains On Silence*. After a short break, **Cathal Cully** and co's new LP finds them sounding both revitalised and refreshed. The loose dub strut of 25 gets things off to a stunning start, as mournful synths merge with a slow guitar riff which gets hearts racing even before Cathal's treated vocals enter the fray. Next, *Haus Proud* emerges from its predecessor's shadow with disco claps, eerie electronics and a **New Order** style beat. With out of key vocals and a fab bassline it both unsettles and excites. From here the slow build majesty of *The Process* is the sound of **Public Image Ltd** on crack, *Fragments Of A Portrait* is a slow, sinister ode to the night, while the title track may just be the best thing the band have ever done. Tired of the identikit posturing which characterises the majority of rock music in 2018? *Stains On Silence* is the album for you. **8.5/10**.

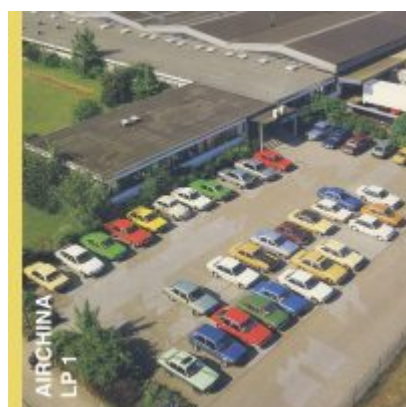


Since its launch back in 2012, Berlin label *Maeve* has been responsible for unleashing a series of fantastic house heavy 12s by the likes of **Ripperton, Baikal, Mano Le Tough, Ed**

Davenport and more. Now they present *Heavy Rotations Vol. 1*, an eleven track showcase full of electronic funk and soul. Covering the full gamut of house and techno the album is available as a digital download, or as a wonderfully packaged triple LP. The lush melodies and light ambient house of *PT4* by **Mattheis** make for a wonderful opener, winning any reticent listener over with ease. Next, *Glass Channel* by **Aera** is a shiver inducing slice of dub techno with just a hint of jazz, while **Isolée's** *No Let* is a fresh sounding piece of leftfield house. Also be sure to check the techno head trip of *Come For You* by **Dokumm**, the cosmic disco swoon of **The Drifter's** *Three Words Max*, and the melancholy melodies of **Keve Sheridan's** *Samhain*. Every tracks a winner though, making *Heavy Rotations Vol. 1* a thoroughly satisfying aural treat. **9/10**.



It has been over a decade since **Gui Boratto's** debut LP *Chromophobia* shot the Brazilian into the limelight. Since then he has toured the world, started his own record label and released a series of well received albums and EPs. This summer the producer returns to his spiritual home of *Kompakt* with the emo house strains of his new LP. *Pentagram* is available now and is full of hooks, catchy melodies and dance floor nous. Opener, *The Walker* is an 80s new wave inspired slice of euphoric house/trance. Reminiscent of vintage **Chicane**, it sets the listener up nicely for what's to come. Further in, lead single *Overload* features *Beautiful Life* vocalist (and **Gui Boratto's** wife) **Luciana Villanova** adding her voice to an atmospheric piece of club magic which never apologises for its pop core. Other picks include, the main room drama of *Forgive Me*, the alt-pop squelch of *The Phoenix Feat. Nathan Berger*, and the spine-tingling techno rush of *Spur*. While the music may be a little too polished for some, *Pentagram* is full of emotional crescendos and is an awful lot of fun. **8/10**.



Next up we have some lush ambiance in the form of **Airchina's** dreamy and beguiling debut album. **Airchina** is the new solo moniker of the multi-talented **Nikolai Szymanski**, who is, perhaps, best known as the lead singer of Düsseldorf band **Stabil Elite**. Gorgeously tranquil sounding, hazy synths and glacial atmospherics abound on the functionally titled, but emotionally inspired *LP1*. *Cars* makes

for an evocative opening number, its soft synth swells and meandering air capable of soothing even the most stressed of souls. *Concorde* retains its predecessor's sense of calmness, its gently plucked guitar and innocent sounding electronica making it resemble a soft, summer breeze. *Blackbox* offers a welcome dose of discordance, before *The Call* and *Clouds* return us to the equanimity of before. Recalling the likes of **The Orb**, **2814** or **Ryuichi Sakamoto**, listening to *LP1* on repeat is the perfect way to spend any lazy day. **8/10**.



As anyone who has heard the seductive house strains of their breakthrough single *Rej* will attest the duo **Âme** know their way around a melody or two. Since then the band made up of **Frank Wiedermann** and **Kristian Beyer** have become synonymous with a unique style of deep house which successfully merges emotion, techno and art. The aptly named *Dream House* finds the pair pushing the boundaries somewhat for a surprisingly eclectic ride full of peaks and troughs. Released on their own *Innervisions* label, the album finds the duo introduce vocals, industrial ambiance, Italo soundtrack inspired creepiness and more to their trademark subtle house grooves. The result is a mellow, rich, sometimes discordant LP which wins the listener over due to the high standards of musicianship to be found. And, while *Dream House* may not be the all-conquering album expected by some, there are still many moments of wonder to be found. **7.5/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Free For All* by **Sami Baha** - Out now on *Planet Mu*, the London based producer's debut album is full of trap style beats and lashings of bass, **8.5/10**, *The Pool* by **Jazzanova** - Collaborations with **Rachel Sermanni**, **Ben Westbeech**, **KPTN** and more stand out on a vocal heavy LP of future soul, **8/10**, *Poema* by **L_cio** - Engineered and produced by **Gui Boratto**, *Poema* contains eight tracks of emotion rich house grooves, **8/10**, *Ignis* by **Mike Vaino & Vigroux** - Dense and complex, these six dark ambient pieces possess a strange type of sinister beauty, **8/10**, *Lageos* by **Actress X** **London Contemporary Orchestra** - **Darren Cunningham's** venture with the **London Contemporary Orchestra** has led to the creation of a haunting and beautiful album which sounds gorgeously surreal, **8/10**,

Constant Image by **Flasher** - Out now on the always reliable *Domino* imprint, the Washington DC based post-punk trio make a glorious racket which sounds great to these ears, **8/10**, *Silver Eye: Deluxe Edition* by **Goldfrapp** - A must for collectors, or those who missed it first time round, last year's *Silver Eye* album is lovingly repackaged with an extra disc of remixes, **8/10** and *Modeselektion Vol. 4* by **Modeselektor** - Acts including **Brainwaltzer**, **Actress**, **Lone**, **Vatican Shadow** and **Skee Mask** contribute tracks to the Berlin duo's eclectic new comp, **8.5/10**.



And let's not forget: *Folks & Fanfare* by **JPatterson** - The *Acker Records* regular creates a type of dub and reggae tinged techno full of warmth, humour and soul, a point proven by his excellent new LP, **9/10**, *The Return* by **Kamaal Williams** - An album of jazz instrumentals dripping with a sense of urban cool, **8.5/10**, *Double Fantasy (The Club Versions)* by **M.A.N.D.Y.** - With **Philipp Jung** on a sabbatical, **Patrick Bodmer** revisits the duo's *Double Fantasy* LP, beefing it up for maximum dance floor satisfaction, **8/10**, *Single Rider* by **Jenn Champion** - Eleven tracks of open-hearted pop music awash with wistful melancholy, **8/10**, *Pinned Down* by **C.A.R.** - **Chloé Raunet's** second LP *Pinned* receives the remix treatment from acts including **Peaking Lips** and **Fantastic Twins**, **8/10**, *Shapes* by **Diamond Dancer** - The duo of **Nacho Marco** and **Paul Roca** craft a series of out there sounds on their mesmerising debut LP, **8/10**, *Hippopotamus* by **Belp** - *Schamoni* label head **Sebastian Schnitzenbaumer's** new album is full of rich ambiance and club ready beats, **7.5/10**, *Across The Meridian* by **PRAM** - Maybe the strangest record you will hear all year, the band's first album since 2007 mixes jazz, pop, trip hop and lots more, **8/10** and *Sleepless* by **Immersion** - **Malka Spigel** and **Colin Newman's** latest long-player as **Immersion** is composed of rich atmospherics and widescreen instrumentation, **8/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)