

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

After a short break, were I sailed around the world in an inflatable dingy, taught myself seven different languages, wrote the next great Irish novel (again), and shut Mr. Trump up for a while by giving him a piece of very sticky gum, it's back to the day job, namely writing music reviews. BY **JOHN BITTLES**

To get us started, this week I'll be highlighting some of the fabulous albums which were released while I was away. We have **Helena Hauff's** rough and ready electro, the rich electronica of **bvdub** and **Francis Harris**, the lo-fi house goodness of **Ross From Friends**, the bratty indie funk of **Pop Will Eat Itself**, and the return of the legend that is **Neneh Cherry**.

So, without further ado, let us begin...



First up we have the atmospheric soundscapes and dub techno grooves of **Brock Van Wey's** latest opus. Released on long-running ambient imprint *Apollo*, *Drowning In Daylight* sees the producer return to his **bvdub** alias and consists of four long, drawn-out tracks full of emotion and soul. The album is available now and contains, in opening track *Drowning In Daylight, Never Ending*, one of the most beautiful passages of music I have heard in years. When the soaring strings and plaintive vocals enter the fray on the four minute mark even the most stony hearted will struggle not to shed a tear. While the record is more than worth the price of admission for this one track alone, the other three songs are every bit as good. *Waves From Above, Never Ceasing* is a fantastic slice of mournful nostalgia, *Seas Of Shores, Forever Sweeping* conjures images of wide lonely landscapes before a deep, steady beat arrives, while *You And Me, Forever Reaching* is simply stunning to behold. A record to lose yourself in for weeks at a time, *Drowning In Daylight* is an album you owe it to yourself to track down. **9.5/10**.



Released back in August on the always reliable *Ninja Tune* imprint, *Qualm*, the new album from electro icon **Helena Hauff** is a fast, furious beast which is so exhilarating that, at times when listening to it, you almost forget to breathe. According to the press notes, the record finds the artist “trying to create something powerful without using too many instruments and layers”. The results are incredibly visceral, an unapologetically raw, hardware infused set which simply begs to be played loud. Opener, *Barrow Boot Boys* is the kind of song your mum warned you about when you were young, a brash slice of electronic funk. Dense and hypnotic, this is the type of head-fuck dirge which could catch on. Next up, *Lifestyle Guru* in an old school style acid track, made to be played at that time of night when your friends have already headed home and the drugs are starting to go wrong (the best time). Other picks include the loose bass-quake of *Fag Butts In The Fire Bucket*, the 808 squelch of *Hyper-Intelligent Genetically Enriched Cyborg*, and the rich ambiance of the title track. Every song’s a winner though, making *Qualm* an album any self-respecting electro freak will be playing for years. **9/10**,



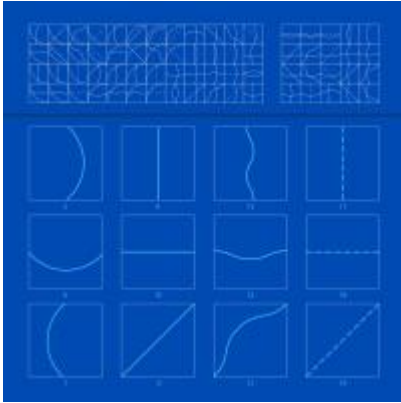
The multi-talented **Francis Harris** returned to his own *Scissor & Thread* imprint late October with the lush melodies and deep house grooves of his third LP, *Trivial Occupations*. Made over the course of four years and mixed at **Jack White’s Third Man Studios**, the album spans many moods and genres over its hour plus running time. *At First A Wide Space* starts proceedings with some spacious ambiance, before the 12 minute long *St. Catherine And The Calm* introduces warm beats into the mix. Shuffling percussion merges with mournful keys and an almost dub techno pulse to give us a track of startling emotional resonance, something you never want to end. *Song For Aguirre* and the title track lose the beats almost entirely, the latter’s jazz-tinged electronica a welcome balm for the soul. Album stand out *Dalloway* picks up the pace again with an **Aphex Twin** style bassline merging with gentle horns and the vocals of **Kaïssa** to enchanting effect, while *Recital Of Facts* and *Minor Forms* will sound heavenly on open-minded warm-up floors. At times heartbreakingly beautiful, *Trivial Occupations* is a record to love and cherish. **9/10**.



Late October also saw **Neneh Cherry** return with her first album since the excellent *Blank Project* back in 2014. Formed of 12 songs, *Broken Politics* is, as the name suggests, a record concerned with the state of the world today. It is also a beautifully formed album with the *Buffalo Stance* singer in fine form throughout. Producer **Kieran Hebden (Four Tet)** wisely keeps the backing music simple, allowing the vocals ample room to shine. For instance, *Fallen Leaves* makes for a gorgeously bittersweet opener, its gently plucked strings giving Neneh's rich voice all the space it needs. Next, **Kong** enters the fray with some crackly dub style bass, before a gentle piano adds melodic resonance which takes you unaware. Another early highlight is *Poem Daddy* which finds the singer intoning "blessed are those that struggle, oppression is worse than the grave. Better to die for a noble cause, than to live & die a slave". Other gems include the late night jazz of *Deep Vein Thrombosis*, the dark nightmare rap of *Faster Than The Truth*, the dancehall funk of *Shot Gun Shack* and the gospel style closer *Soldier*. Go buy! **8.5/10**.



If, like me, you were of a certain age in the 90s, you will have fond memories of giving yourself strange haircuts, reading *Deadline* to a rave soundtrack, and listening to bands with very unusual names. It was a time when long-haired punks such as **Ned's Atomic Dustbin**, **Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine**, **Senseless Things** and **Pop Will Eat Itself** ruled the world. Combining the best of rave music and hip hop with a gritty, rock edge, **Pop Will Eat Itself** scored hits with songs such as *Cicciolina*, *Very Metal Noise Pollution*, *Def Con One* and *Can U Dig It*. These and more aural nuggets can be found on *Def Comms 86-18*, a meticulously compiled 4CD retrospective combining hits, misses, rarities, remixes, and all kinds of fantastical sonic funkiness. Personal highlights include *Dance Of the Mad*, *X, Y And Zee (Electric Sunshine Mix)*, *Nightmare At 20,000 Feet*, *Radio PWEI*, and *Wise Up Sucker*. As always with this type of endeavour, there is the odd clunker, yet there are more than enough gems on here to keep misty eyed fans and new listeners happy for months on end. **8.5/10**.



This week we'll finish with a compilation which has been my go to headphone album for a while now. Released at the start of October, *Air Texture VI* is helmed by long-term friends and collaborators **Steffi** and **Martyn**, and sees the pair present 26 tracks which touch on electro, techno, IDM and more. More beat based than previous incarnations in the series, *Volume VI* is no less essential than earlier selections by the likes of **Loscil**, **bvdub** and **Spacetime Continuum**. Things start gorgeously sedate with **Synkro's** ethereal *Observatory*, before **Appleblim** introduces some broken beats and dubstep swagger with *Unfound*. From here, the two CD set takes in the crunching techno of **Answer Code Request**, **Shed** and **Barker**, the bass heavy urgings of **dBridge & Lewis James** and **KiNK**, some swoon-inducing electro from **Herron**, **Steffi** and **214**, and the rich electronica of **Novocanemusic**, **Actress** and **FaltyDL**. The result is an eclectic but coherent listening experience which fully rewards repeated plays. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Recordings 1969-1988* by **Ursula Bogner** - To celebrate their tenth birthday the good people at *Faitiche* reissue their very first release, a stunning album of electronic experiments which still beguile today, **9/10**, *Mind Field* by **Idealist** - *Echocord* come up trumps yet again with a gorgeous new album of dub tinged techno, **8.5/10**, *Working Class Woman* by **Marie Davidson** - Raw, hardware infused jams with self-reflective and, occasionally tongue-in-cheek lyrics, in an album that will cause devastation on most dance floors, but still has enough humanity to work at home, **8/10**, *Future Sound Of Jazz Vol. 14* by **V/A** - Compiled by *Permanent Vacation* heads **Benjamin Fröhlich** and **Tom Bioly**, the 14th edition in *Compost's* long-running series contains a bumper collection of jazz-tinged disco and house, **8.5/10**, *Heaven Is A State Of Mind* by **Markus Suckut** - Out late September on *Rekids*, **Markus**, third LP is full of tight, techno grooves, **8/10**, *Beautiful Swamp* by **Ah! Kosmos** - Ten electronic pop songs with an experimental edge. Those seeking a dancier **fka Twigs** should dive right in, **8/10**, *One Hundred Billion Sparks* by **Max Cooper** - Emotion rich techno and ambiance with a gloriously melodic feel, **8/10**, and *Sichten 1* by **V/A** - **Frank Bretschneider** brings together a heady and diverse array of artists including **MimiCof**, and **Benjamin Brunn** to launch the *Raster* imprint's new series in some style, **8.5/10**.



And let's not forget: *Family Portrait* by **Ross From Friends** - On most taste-makers' radars for a while now, the 'lo-fi house' producer's debut LP is a wonderful sonic collage full of melody and humour, **9/10**, *Acid Friend* by **Tin Man** - An awesome 29 track compilation of remixes and collaborations featuring the king of modern acid **Tin Man**, **8.5/10**, *Wanderer* by **Cat Power** - The long-awaited follow-up to 2012's *Sun* sees **Charlyn Marshall** sounding like someone with a world full of stories to tell, **8.5/10**, *Upstream Colour* by **Iron Curtis** - A record of deep, melodic house music perfect for when you want to get lost in the groove, **8.5/10**, *Infinite Moment* by **The Field** - As always with **Axel Willner's** music, patience is the key, as each track slowly unfurls over its 10 minute plus running time to give us something which haunts both heart and mind, **8.5/10**, *FabricLive 100* by **Kode 9 & Burial** - With 39 tracks spread across one CD, the final *FabricLive* mix is a full-blooded affair, **7.5/10**, *Basic Volume* by **Gaika** - Deep, heady and trippy as fuck, these 15 sonic vignettes couldn't sound more 2018 if they tried, **8/10**, *Anohito* by **Spirit Fest** - A Super Group of sorts, **Spirit Fest** make lush, emotional soundscapes which make for perfect company on long, lonely days, **8/10**, and *House Of Love* by **House Of Love** - If ever an album deserves a five disc reissue it is the sublime debut album by *Creation* legends **House Of Love**. Still sounding fantastic after all these years, this is well worthy of your time, **9/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)