

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

With a cruel arctic chill threatening to overwhelm the country, it's time for any sane person, or maybe just me, to consider giving up on the outside world and indulging in an extended duvet break. This week's selection of albums will make the perfect soundtrack to cosying up in a home-made blanket fort with either your loved one or yourself. By **JOHN BITTLES**

We have the heartfelt electronica of the **Kasper Bjørke Quartet**, the lonesome beatscapes of **Long Arm** and **dBridge**, the bass heavy drama of **Throwing Snow**, hot compilations from *Fabric* and *Cultivated Electronics*, and lots more.

So, start gathering those blankets, and let us begin...

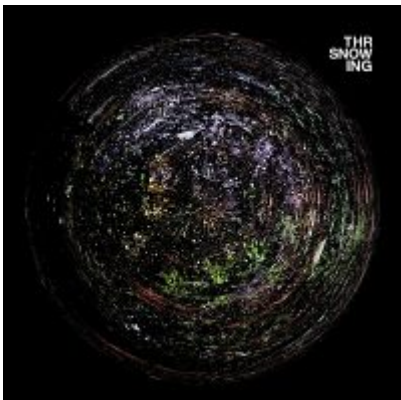


Kasper Bjørke's new album, *The Fifty Eleven Project*, marks a milestone for the artist, in that it was released on the second anniversary of the producer being given the all clear from cancer. The resulting long-player is a personal and moving collection of classical inspired ambiance. Released under the name **Kasper Bjørke Quartet**, the album sees the Danish producer collaborate with **Claus Norreen, Davide Rossi** and **Jakob Littauer**. It contains moments so exquisite they almost take your breath away. According to the press notes, the record "interprets and evokes the emotional rollercoaster Kasper experienced, from his cancer diagnosis and throughout the five years of regular check-ups". The results are heart-rending and close to sublime. Opener, *Line Of Life (Prologue)* is full of optimistic wonder, the moment the violins enter the fray towards the end will reside in your heart for a long, long time. Other gems include the gorgeously gentle lullaby of *CT*, the swoon-inducing piano melody of *50 11*, the so fragile sounding you're scared it might break *Dur For Vitus*, and the melancholic strains of *061016*. The whole album is divine though, meaning *The Fifty Eleven Project* is an LP to cherish and to love. **9.5/10**.



Conceived in 2015 as an album for the piano, Saint Petersburg based artist **Long Arm's** new magnum opus is a delicate and enticing collection of music for the soul. Out now on *Project Mooncircle*, *Darkly* is the type of record which immediately sounds like a long lost friend. Bittersweet melodies combine with slo mo hip hop beats to create a rich, coherent record which just might be Georgy Kotunov's best yet. After a short *Prologue*, *For All The People With Broken Hearts* merges stuttering beats, cottony keys and the sound of a baby gurgling to create a track which brings to mind DJ Shadow, Blockhead, or vintage *Mo'Wax*. Next up, *I Walk, I Fly* is a mournful piano track which utilises minimal instrumentation to conjure a vast array of emotions. Other picks include the Cinematic Orchestra style late-night jazz of *Sleepy Bird*, the achingly beautiful ambiance of *Lullaby*, the gorgeously stirring *Flight Through Thunderclouds*, and the nostalgia inducing twinkles of closer *Prince*. At times achingly beautiful, *Darkly* is an album you never want to end. 9/10.

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London imprint *Houndstooth* is one of those labels which constantly manage to catch even the most vigilant of listeners by surprise. For every dance floor 'banger' you get the glacial vocal ambiance of Penelope Trappes or the lush IDM of Vester Koza. Throwing Snow's third LP for the label, *Loma*, is one for the clubs, formed as it is of nine beat heavy grooves. Opener, *Simmer* is a glorious statement of intent, rough jungle rhythms merging with amen breaks and some elastic sounding acid lines to give us a track

which gets hearts pumping from the off. The subtle trance melodies of *Myriad* follow, building slowly but surely until you find yourself completely lost in its softly rising riffs. Also worth checking are the *Harthouse* style thump of *Trébucher*, the Four Tet gone paranoid anthem *Subtitles*, and the spacey half step acid of *Minotaurs*. The star of the show though is Octo Octa's stunning ten minute take on *Simmer* which closes the album in impressive style. One of the dance floor moments of the year, this will be the highlight of many sets for months to come. 8.5/10.



A full decade after the celebrated *The Gemini Principle*, English producer **dBridge** returns to the album format with *A Love I Can't Explain*. Was it worth the wait? For those who like their bass deep, their techno atmospheric and the odd vocal number or two the answer is a resounding 'Yes'. Our now on *Exit Records*, the LP is the sound of a producer willing to go wherever the songs need to go. Opening track, *Gen 19* starts off with some lush ambient before morphing into a dense dubstep/techno hybrid, its shadowy soundscapes a treat for the mind. Next, *Broadcast Pain* sounds like its being played at the wrong speed, conjuring a sense of urban menace which works its way right under the skin. From here the album takes in the **Burial** style nocturnal dubstep of *Syncofated*, the head-mangling mix of melancholy and noise that is *Your Bit Crushed Heart*, and the deep house romanticism of *Filtered Scenes*. With a winning mixture of trip hop, ambient, dub and drum n' bass, *A Love I Can't Explain* is an album not just for Christmas, but the rest of the year. **8.5/10**.



Sync 24's excellent *Cultivated Electronics* label round off 2018 in some style with *From The Dark*, a three part compilation packed full of bleary eyed electro tunes. Over six slices of vinyl the trio of releases highlight everything that is great about the modern electro scene. With *Volume One* containing killer tracks by artists such as Jensen Interceptor X Assembler Code, 214, Delta Funktionen and Versalife, *Volume Two* has some big shoes to fill. Luckily it does so with aplomb! Opening track *I'm There* by The Exaltics is a slow burn shuffler, deep synth keys and hazy pads helping the song work for the mind as well

as the feet. French producer Maelstrom follows with the retro futurist jam Red Squares. Perfect for those moments when you want to introduce some deeper beats into your set, this is seven and a half minutes of aural gold. Also be sure to check the thunderous *First Install* by Sync 24 X Privacy, Zeta Reticula's funk-filled gem *Galactic Halo*, and the fabulous deep space groove of *ESQ* by Obergman. 8/10.



Fabric's long-running mix series comes to a close this year with its 100th instalment. Beautifully packaged as always, the much loved series' swansong features long-term residents Craig Richards and Terry Francis and co-founder Keith Reilly taking a CD apiece. First up, Craig Richards gives us a mix which swerves and sways like a heavyweight boxer. Knockout blows come from Monolake's bass heavy monster *Nmos*, the intoxicating electro of *Flying Buttress* by Setaoc Mass, the retro-tastic squelch of *New Machines* by Simulant, Craig Richards' own deep, heady trip *My Friend Is Losing His Mind* and Andrew Weatherall's excellent Italo take on *Azizi's Dance* by Nancy Noise. While Mr. Richards takes us on a journey, taking in many genres and moods, Terry Francis' selection is a bit more linear, giving us a gloriously trippy selection of bass and beats. Full of funk-filled grooves, this is the sound of those 3AM dance floor moments when your mind is tired, but your body still wants to move. Keith Reilly's mix may be the weakest of the three, missing those little nuances which make the preceding sets such delights, but it contains enough gems to make it worthy of your time. All in all *Fabric 100* is a fitting end to the series! 8/10.



A special mention must also go to: *Atonor* by **Nocow** - Russian artist **Aleksei Nikitin** follows up releases on *Clone Royal Oak*, *Figure* and *Fauxpas Musik* with a stunning LP of emotion heavy electronica and house, **9.5/10**, *Khonnar* by **Deena Abdelwahed** - Out now on *Infiné Music*, this collection of ethereal, yet filthy electronic vignettes genuinely sounds like nothing else around, **9/10**. *From The Dirt* by **Waajeed** - The **Slum Village** co-founder's debut solo album is a fresh and funky listen full to the brim with lush house grooves, **8.5/10**, *Mercurial Skin* by **Shlomo** - Containing 14 tracks of techno music made as much for the mind as the floor, this hotly tipped debut LP is well worth checking out, **8.5/10**, *This Is A Mind*

Trip by **Air Liquide** - **Dr. Walker** and **Jammin Unit** burst back into our lives with a stunning three track EP of deep, heady jams, **8/10**, *The Deep End* by **Saloli** - Out now on the always excellent *Kranky* label, **Mary Sutton's** solo debut is contemplative, introspective and full of synth heavy ambiance, **8/10**, *Ultraviolet* by **Kelly Moran** - A bewitching and bittersweet collection of classical pieces rich with a sense of melancholy and space, **8/10**, *Rising* by **Antigone** - An album of dark, atmospheric techno which never forgets the importance of a good groove, **7.5/10**, and *Lumière Noire Presents From Above Vol. 1* by **V/A** - With artists including **Markus Gibb**, **Drvg Cvltvre** and **Lauer** involved, **Chloe's** *Lumière Noire* imprint's first compilation is full of tracks sure to work wonders on the darkest of floors, **8/10**.



Let's not forget: *Plus* by **System** - Danish electronic trio **System** join forces with **Nils Frahm** for a deep listening LP full of wonder and soul, **9/10**, *Cosmos* by **Kittin** - With one of the most distinctive styles in music, **Caroline Hervé's** mixture of dispassionate vocal delivery and ice cold electro beats sounds as great as ever on her excellent new LP, **8.5/10**, *Unknown* by **Extrawelt** - Out now on **Sven Våth's** *Cocoon* label, the German duo's fourth album is a winner with the nightmare strains of *Die Vorahnung* the star for me, **8/10**, *Imagori II* by **Mueller_Roedelius** - The electronic legends join forces once again for an absorbing collection of downbeat tunes, **8/10**, *Romantic Fiction* by **Curses** - With hints of **Soft Cell**, **Depeche Mode** and more, the New York band's new record recalls the best of 80s new wave and post-punk with aplomb, **8/10**, *Resilience* by **Chrissy** - A huge blast of rave energy whose breakbeat inspired warmth sounds like it was beamed straight from the 90s, **7.5/10**, *Stalker* by **Ectomorph** - **Erika Sherman** and **Brendan Gillen** return to their own *Interdimensional Transmissions* label for a fast and furious full-length which finds the Detroit electro pioneers on top form, **7/10** and *Pop Ambient 2019* by **V/A** - This year's edition of **Kompakt's** annual round-up of all things tranquil includes note-worthy tracks by **Thore Pfeiffer**, **Kenneth James Gibson**, **Thomas Fehlman**, **Max Wurden** and more. **8.5/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)