

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

Usually when I am sitting on the street with my placard reading 'I write about music for a living, please give generously' people will take pity and throw a few coins in my lap. The other day though, someone took umbrage at my sign, demanding that I follow them home. After a hearty meal of pot noodle and chips he insisted that I watch coverage of the BBC Radio 1 Big Weekend Festival. 20 minutes of charmless pop later he switched the TV off, turned towards me and barked 'You write about this crap?'. In response I asked if I could use his shower, in part so I could use the time to compose myself. By **JOHN BITTLES**

Stepping back into the sparsely decorated living room while also drying my hair I told him this, 'You don't find great music by listening to daytime radio, same as you don't find a soulmate by entering a pub and talking to the loudest person there. The keepers are usually sitting quietly in the corner having sociable drinks with their friends. The same is true with music! You must look in the margins to find the gems.'

In keeping with this ethos, this month I will be raving about some great new music which has been released recently with little noise or fanfare. We have the dirge-ridden techno of **Territroy**, the deep house grooves of **Kapote**, some atmospheric bassquakes by **Dolenz**, the spacious ambiance of **Thomas Ragsdale** and **Synkro**, the introspective pop of **Maps**, and lots more.

So, make sure you've let the cat in, and let us begin...



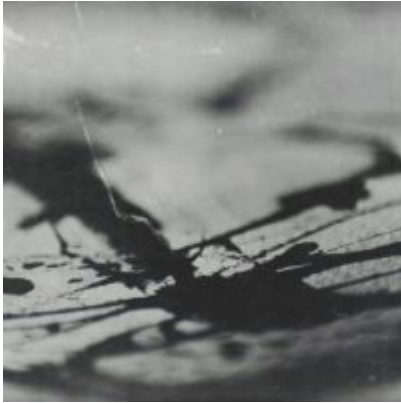
For a while now Dutch label *Dekmantel* have been releasing some of the finest electronic music known to man, records by artists such as **Palms Trax**, **Palmbomen II**, **Vakula**, **Fatima Yamaha** and more helping cement the imprint's reputation as one of the finest in the game. A fact ably supported by the release of *Skulls & Plants*, Greek duo **Territroy's** debut LP. Formed of **Larry Gus** and **Stathis Kalatzis**, the band specialize in stodgy psychedelic tinged techno, the likes of which you would expect to hear at Düsseldorf's revered *Salon des Amateurs* club. Opening track *Delirium Vivens* gets things off to a spectacular start, with a slow, steady throb, heady beats, samples and lots of echo merging to form a track I could listen to on repeat for days. An album which creates its own mood throughout its duration, the urge to lose yourself within its murky world is all but impossible to resist. Picking highlights therefore is futile, yet the angular funk of *Non Sayers*, the **Nitzer Ebb** style dirge of *Upside Down Sinner* and the dub techno skank of *Prosopagnosia* are all worthy of special praise. Do yourself a favour and check this out now. **9/10**.



Another label which has been on fire recently is the German house imprint *Toy Tonics*. Killer EPs by **Phenomenal Handclap Band**, **Mangabey** and **Dimitri From Paris & DJ Rocca** have already made 2019 a year to remember, while this month sees things get even better for the label with the release of their debut artist LP. *What It Is* by label head **Kapote** is available in all cool record shops and download stores now and is full of lush house grooves. *Jaas Func Haus* opens proceedings with some smooth jazz licks, soft beats and a distinct sense of groove. Next up, *Delirio Italiano (Extended Version)* is a raw and sexy slice of disco house, sounding like vintage **Prince** one minute, **Chic** the next. From here, the sunshine swell of *Fusion 79* brings on the Balearic spirit, *Fuck Music (Short Version)* recreates the French Touch sound to stunning effect, *Spacedrum's* laidback jazz is a joy to behold, while *Get Down Brother (2019 Version)* is a gorgeous piece of classic sounding house. With a liberal sprinkling of samples, a deep understanding of funk, and a cheeky sense of humour, *What It Is* is already looking like one of the house albums of the year. **9/10**. Also, from the *Toy Tonics* crew, be sure to check *Munk Presents Teutonik Disaster*, a superb collection of edits and reworks of German new wave classics, **8.5/10**.



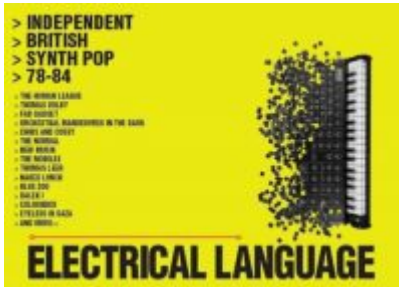
London artist **Dolenz** lands on **dBridge's** excellent *Exit Records* imprint this May with the dystopian sci-fi atmospherics of his brand new LP. Written as a soundtrack to an imaginary film, *Lingua Franca* features sixteen bass heavy tracks which work as well on headphones as the dancefloor. After the eerie ambiance of *Helium I*, *Yottabyte* introduces some low end pressure with one of the filthiest basslines you are going to hear all year. Next up, Middle Eastern inspired samples join forces with the remnants of drum 'n bass on *Geminus*, a track which does strange, but wonderful things to your head. Further in, *Contains Syncrolon* is a nostalgia-tinged slice of futurism, *Introducing Spacebody* is a body-shaking piece of gothic funk, *Evesdrop* merges samples and deep rumbles with aplomb, while *Main Theme* is a gorgeously trippy swirl of dilapidated IDM. Containing more ideas than most peoples' careers, *Lingua Franca* is an album full of next level bass and beats. **9/10**.



Next, we have the introspective ambiance of **Thomas Ragsdale**. *Sonder*, his latest LP is [available now](#) on his own *Soundtracking The Void* imprint and contains four long, lingering mood pieces which slowly but surely lead you by the hand into their own vividly realised world. Sounding grand and majestic, opener *Opia*'s deep undulations recall both the deconstructed rave of **Burial** and the minimalistic ambiance of **The Caretaker**. Next, *Gnossienne* clocks in at almost 14 minutes, as fractured pianos struggle for air amongst waves of static and discordance. The effect is both soothing and unsettling. The haunting melancholy of *Lumine* continues this theme, soaring strings rising above a sea of fog to gently tug at the heart, while the soft bass pulse of *Silience* brings things to a poignant close. Perfect for when you want to close your eyes and let your mind drift away, *Sonder* is an album for those moments when you are perfectly happy that there is no one else around. **8.5/10**.



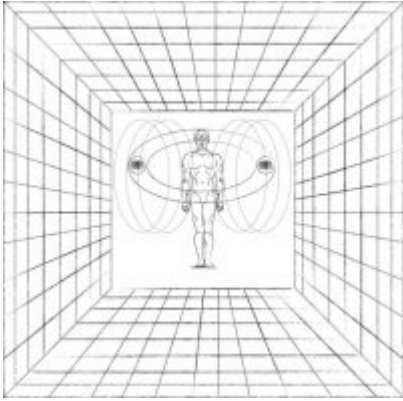
UK artist **James Kenneth Chapman** returns to his **Maps** alias this month with his highly anticipated new LP. Out now on *Mute*, *Colours. Reflect. Time. Loss.* finds the one-man band rediscover the form which made his *Turning The Mind* debut one of the highlights of 2009. A beautiful mixture of shoegaze, electronica and wistful vocals, the record's sense of optimism washes over the listener like a hard-won hug. The epic sounding *Surveil* gets things off to a great start, a slow build beginning gradually developing into a swirling crescendo which reminds you of **Doves** at their very best. Next, *Both Sides* sounds like a poppier **Slowdive**, its sweeping synthscapes rewarding repeated plays. Other gems include *Wildfire*'s exquisitely executed widescreen pop, the touching ballad *She Sang To Me*, the melancholic grandeur of *Sophia* and the **War On Drugs** style swoon of closer *You Exist In Everything*. A record which simply begs to be listened to from beginning to end, *Colours. Reflect. Time. Loss.* immediately feels like a lifelong friend. **8/10**.



Late May finds the good people at *Cherry Red Records* coming up trumps yet again with the lovingly compiled eclecticism of *Electrical Language: Independent British Synth Pop 78-84*. Across four jam-packed CDs, the album chronicles what was to prove one of the most fertile and imaginative periods in music. While big hitters of the time such as **The Normal**, **Colourbox** and **The Human League** all feature, most of the artists on here will be new names to all but the most devoted of fans. Picks include the mournful alt-pop of *Science Fiction* by **Alan Burnham**, the head-melting pop of **100% Manmade Fibre's** *Fantasy*, the tongue-in-cheek new wave anthem *The Planet Doesn't Mind* by **New Musik**, the melodramatic swoon of *Xoyo* by **The Passage**, and the art pop wonder of **Chris And Cosey's** *October (Love Song)*. While some songs haven't aged particularly well, *Electrical Language* is a lot more than a mere historical document of a time long past. Whether you are revisiting your youth or discovering these songs for the very first time, there is a lot of fun to be found here. **8/10**.



This month we bring things to a close with the spacious soundscapes of **Synkro**. Inspired by a trip to Japan, *Images* finds the UK artist exploring the new age music of the 80s and 90s using an assortment of vintage synths. The results are decidedly awesome! Warm and welcoming, the album's twelve tracks evoke a sense of wide-eyed wonder, their unhurried pace and classic instruments inducing feelings of nostalgia and awe. After the lush, **Brian Eno** style ambiance of opener *Piano/Voice*, the title track introduces a soft Balearic pulse, as shuffling beats and subdued synths join forces to create a track which seems to almost scoop you up in its arms. Also worthy of special attention are the collision of gentle breakbeats and trance motifs on *Realize*, the achingly beautiful stirrings of *Fields*, the playful, yet bewitching tones of *Never* and the sun-kissed loveliness of *Running*. Every track is a winner though, making *Images* an album I'll be listening to for a very long time. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Non Virtual Reality* by **Jonas Kopp** - Dark and unsettling, these spacious and hypnotic ambient masterpieces recall the electronic grandeur of early **Biosphere** in their ambition and scope, **9/10**, *ReSEQ* by **Space Dimension Controller** - Out now on *R&S*, these three electro driven tracks are so funky they should come with a health warning, **9/10**, *Anoyo* by **Tim Hecker** - The lush ambiance of opener *That World* is quite possibly one of the most beautiful pieces I have heard all year, **8.5/10**, *Return To Telepathic Heights* by **A Sagittarium** - **Gerd Janson's** *Running Back Incantations* imprint bring on the summer with **A Sagittarium's** deep and cosmic sounding third LP, **8/10**, *Diviner* by **Hayden Thorpe** - The **Wild Beasts** frontman goes it alone this May with ten tracks of atmospheric soul and pop, **8/10**, *Signals Bulletin* by **Asuna & Jan Jelinek** - Recorded over three years in Berlin, Kyoto and Kanazawa, *Signals Bulletin's* harmonic ambiance is full of moments of aural wonder, **8.5/10**, *Family Tree* by **Oh Land** - The beautifully emotional title track is a song which could melt even the hardest of hearts, **8/10**, *Debt Begins At 30* by **The Gotobeds** - Pittsburgh band **The Gotobeds** return with the glorious rock n' roll racket of their third LP, **8/10** and *Detroit Love Vol. 2* by **Carl Craig** - With appearances by **Kevin Saunderson, Waajeed, Mr. G, Rhythm is Rhythim** and more, **Carl Craig's** loose and funky selection is a blast from beginning to end, **8.5/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)