

With clubbing and live music in serious jeopardy it is more important than ever to support the artists, mavericks, and all those twisted individuals who make it their lives work to bring us strange yet bewitching sounds. The entire world economy is still struggling to recover from Covid-19, and many involved in the arts are fighting to survive. While new records by **The Killers**, **Ronan Keating** and **Biffy Clyro** might make you want to give up on music entirely and leave it to its well-deserved fate, there are more than enough fresh, vital and funky new records to save the day. By **JOHN BITTLES**

This month I'll be bringing you some great new releases which are fully worthy of your support, your money and your time. We have the lush house grooves of **Jupiter Jax**, **Romare**, and **Cinthie**, the spectral hip hop and soul of **Tricky**, the political funk strut of **Sault**, the emotion fuelled electronica of **Rival Consoles**, and lots more.

So, pop on that music appreciation hat once more (the fluffy one), and let us begin...

Dee-Life Mix by Jupiter Jax



Amanda Brown's always excellent *100% Silk* imprint is a label which never quite receives the respect it deserves. Since its formation as a housier sister to *Not Not Fun* back in 2011 the label has brought us the funkier, dirtier and downright essential house music to tickle a mind. Case in point is the excellent *Dee-Life Mix* by **Jupiter Jax**. With new album *No Such Thing* due in September, the *Dee-Life Mix* finds **Rudi Agius** sifting through the remnants of the short-lived *Dee-Life Records* imprint to give us a 40+ minute ride full of deep and dusty house grooves. Most of the names on here will be unknown to all but the most committed of diggers. This only adds to the excitement! Who doesn't love that tingle you experience upon discovering something fresh and new? Combining melancholic synths and a thought-provoking spoken word sample, *The Way It Is* by **Lifeless** is deliciously intense and does a great job of preparing the listener for the upcoming grooves. From here the BPMs remain at an optimum pace, with many of the tunes begging you to lose yourself on an imaginary dancefloor. A hint of nostalgia, and heavy doses of funk help ensure that *Dee-Life Mix* is damn close to sublime. **10/10**.

Key Track: The entire mix

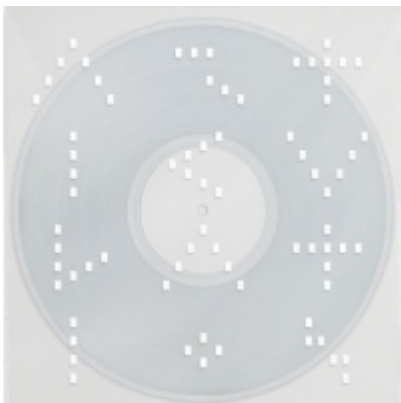
Untitled (Black Is) by Sault



With all proceeds going towards charitable projects in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, UK band **Sault's** new long-player is an angry, yet funky collection of dub heavy jams. The group's identity is still a bit of a mystery to everyone but their mums, while their new album merges soul, funk, post-punk, dub and more with aplomb. Opener, *Out The Lies* starts with the line "The Revolution has come", a timely and cathartic call to arms. Just as we find ourselves lost within the groove, a contemplative piano line is joined by whispered vocals and a rich gospel backing to form a fusion of sounds sure to send shivers racing down the spine. Next, *Stop Dem* uses a dirty electronic bass strut to create a stunning piece of vintage funk. If you aren't dancing to this within the first minute get yourself to hospital quick! Also worthy of special mention are the Bristol style dub of *Hard Life*, the furious funk jam *Don't Shoot Guns Down*, the vintage soul swoon of *Black Is*, and the space echo voyage of *Monsters*. Everything here is top notch though, meaning a trip to **Sault's** [Bandcamp Page](#) to support should be considered a must. **9.5/10**.

Key Track: Stop Dem

Articulation by Rival Consoles



Ryan Lee West returns to his **Rival Consoles** alias this month with the slow burn melodic techno of his latest LP. Richly textured, orchestral and aurally stunning, *Articulation* may just be the best thing he has ever done. Recalling the likes of *Kompakt* or *Innervisions* as much as **Jon Hopkins** or label mates on *Erased Tapes*, all six tracks work perfectly for any DJ wishing to add a little emotion into their sets. *Vibrations On A String* opens proceedings with a majestic flourish, a metallic, ever shifting throb merging wonderfully with skipping beats and a rising sense of drama to form a track you never want to end. The standard remains sky high with the slow build percussion of *Forwardism*, a track all the better for the introduction of some *Bladerunner* style strings at its midway point. Further in, the title track utilizes angular

beats, soaring synths and some subtle trance flourishes to stunning effect, *Still Here* is a gloriously cinematic slice of ambiance, while the atmospheric techno clout of *Sudden Awareness Of Now* ends things in style. Evoking more feelings than lesser mortals can handle, *Articulation* is a vividly moving listening experience with the power to take your breath away. **9/10.**

Key Track: Variations On A String

Home by Romare



London producer **Romare's** sample heavy house music is, to put it simply, a beautiful thing. Moving from *Black Acre Records* to set up home at UK institution *Ninja Tune* has seen **Archie Fairhurst** refine and develop his signature sound. His new album *Home* sees the artist appearing huger than ever, taking the **Caribou** and **Four Tet** template of melodic yet funky dance music and making it his own. Lead single *Gone* gets things off to an excellent start, soft house melodies merge with a driving synth line and rich vocal samples to create a summer tune which begs for repeated plays. *Dreams* retains the warm vibes of its predecessor, the beats a little more pronounced, and every bit as good. Other picks include the jazz tinged funk of *The River*, the melancholic torch song *Deliverance*, the deep dub/house masterpiece *High*, and *Heaven's* piano heavy blast of optimism which seems to reach right into your soul. Full of big, bright melodies and sunshine infused beats, **Romare's** latest might just be the blast of positivity we need to get us through these troubling times. **8.5/10.**

Key Track: Gone

Fall To Pieces by Tricky



Released on his own *False Idols* imprint, trip hop survivor **Tricky's** latest missive is conceived as a series of sketches, each track short and abrupt, a brief bellow of emotion before the next song enters the fray. Recorded in his own Berlin studio in late 2019, the album is dense, melancholic, and gloriously hypnotic. *Thinking Of* gets things off to a slow, sultry start, mournful vocals combining with a sparse electronic backing to form a song which recalls his work with **Martina Topley-Bird** on *Maxinquaye*. Next, *Close Now* is dark and claustrophobic. Just when you are expecting a beat to kick in, or for the song to develop, it comes to a brusque end. Rather than leaving you feeling frustrated, its brevity merely leaves you hungry for more. The same is true for *Running Off*, where harsh beats and an industrial throb form the backing for soft vocal flourishes. While the shortness of many of *Fall To Pieces'* tracks can be grating, overall the effect is like listening to a pirate radio station back in the day, each song moving sharply unto the next to form an intoxicating aural stew. **8/10**.

Key Track: Chills Me To The Bone

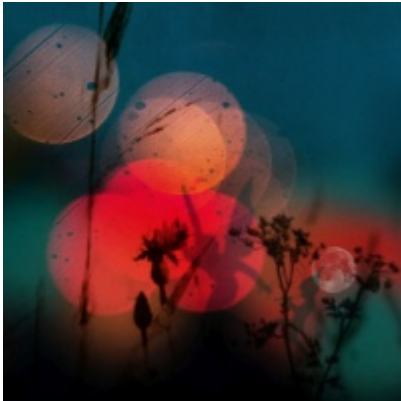
Skylines - City Lights by CINTHIE



Finally available on vinyl, Berlin resident and house legend **Cinthie** returns to UK label *Aus Music* with her debut long-player. With a string of top EPs for *Key Vinyl*, *803 Crystalgrooves* and rousing DJ sets played to devoted crowds, the time seems right for the artist to develop her repertoire with a personal yet funky set of tunes. *Skylines* opens proceedings with a deep techno groove. Hints of Chicago and Detroit merge to form a mid-paced nugget with flickering keys and a bassline to die for. Next up, *Houze Muzik* sounds like a previously undiscovered acid house bomb. If someone told you it was released on *Trax* back in the day you'd nod your head as if you already knew. Further in we have the French Touch romanticism of *Concentrate*, the anthemic *No One Can Take You From Me*, *Bassline's* raw house thump, and the Balearic

tranquillity of *Flashback*. With so many styles and genres represented not everything works, but there are more than enough musical flourishes and downright filthy tracks on here to keep anybody with a love of house music enthralled. **8/10**.

Key Track: No One Can Take You From Me



A special mention must also go to: *The Gone Away* by **Belbury Poly** - Inspired by tales of British folklore, *Ghost Box* founder **Jim Jupp's** latest album is a gloriously serene electronic journey into small town whispers, eerie ditches and haunted fields, **9/10**, *Ship* by **The Notwist** - After an absence of six long years, **Markus Acher** and co arrive back at *Morr Music* with three fantastically hazy pop tunes, **9/10**, *Sour Cherry Bell* by **MJ Guider** - **Melissa Guion** makes a welcome return to *Kranky* with the follow-up to *Precious Systems* from 2016. Darker than its predecessor, *Sour Cherry Bell* plays like a vividly realised aural dream, **8.5/10**, *Backstage* by **Gui Boratto** - This deep, driving house and techno live set is proof, if ever it was needed, that live dance music works, **8/10**, *PHB Remix EP* by **Phenomenal Handclap Band** - Head straight for the loose disco strut of **Danny Krivit's** sublime edit of *Let Out On The Loose* for some goodtime grooves, **8/10**, *Wu Hen* by **Kamaal Williams** - **Cinematic Orchestra** style electronics merge with rich jazz textures on the London producer's sophomore LP, **8/10**, *Healing Is A Miracle* by **Julianna Barwick** - Quiet and contemplative, this is the perfect listen for when the pace of modern life seems a bit too much, **7.5/10**.

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