

I told myself I was over this, that I had retired from the world of music reviews. I had moved onto bigger and better things (mostly staring at the wall and wondering why nobody calls me anymore). Yet here I am, a mere few months after burning my bridges, giving up on new music and making a world of enemies, back in the game. Did I miss the constant abuse, the being paid in soiled pennies and the lack of recognition which writing this unremembered column entailed? Funnily enough, I did! It was listening to the post punk genius of the new **Dry Cleaning** record that did it. I thought to myself 'someone has to take it upon themselves to tell the world just how good this album is'. After a moment of quiet reflection where I drank a glass of lukewarm Ribena to calm the nerves, I decided that that person may as well be me. By **JOHN BITTLES**

So, here we are. **Bittles' Magazine**, like some particularly bothersome zombie with a bad haircut and worse breath, has been reborn. And what a re-introduction we have! In this month's reviews there is the art heavy punk funk strut of **Squid**, the melancholy dream pop of **White Flowers**, **Thomas Fehlmann's** rich ambiance, the return of living legends **The Coral**, the skewed pop of **Dntel**, and **Dry Cleaning** of course.

So, tell all your friends, phone the tabloids, and let us begin...

New Long Leg by Dry Cleaning.



After creating a stir with their *Boundary Road Snacks And Drinks* and *Sweet Princess* EPs, London band **Dry Cleaning** entered the world of grown-ups early April with the release of their debut LP. Driving and propulsive, the record's ten tracks merge post-punk rhythms with frantic guitar work and **Florence Shaw's** spoken word delivery to create one of the most vital albums you will hear this year. *Scratchcard Lanyard* opens proceedings with a chugging guitar led groove while random lyrics about bouncing balls, knitting circles and bazookas suck you straight into the songs surreal, yet invigorating world. Next up, *Unsmart Lady's* louche swagger is the epitome of rock cool. Lyrics such as 'If you like a girl, be nice. It's not rocket science.' enthrals, and if you're not nodding your head within the first minute then you should probably check it's still there. From here, *Strong Feelings* is a laid-back groover, sure to get you in the mood, *Her Hippo* sounds like **The Smiths**, but in a good way, *John Wick* seems tailor-made for losing your cool in a dark, packed room, while *Every Day Carry* ends things with a blow out of epic proportions. In short *New Long Leg* is an album so good I have already started my own fan club for it. And yes, you can join! **10/10**.
Key track: *Scratchcard Lanyard*.

Day By Day by White Flowers.



With Covid, corrupt politicians and your granny constantly sexting you by mistake, it might seem as though there is nothing to look forward to this summer, that the future is but a particularly disturbing dream. This is not true! A fact proven by the upcoming release of hotly tipped British band **White Flowers'** debut LP. Out in June, imagine a widescreen version of **The XX** with hints of shoegaze thrown in and this will give you some idea of what to expect from *Day By Day*. Formed of **Katie Drew** and **Joey Cobb**, the duo effectively merge dusky introspection with thoughtful lyrics and effortless cool. After the atmospheric scene setting of *Intro*, the dark-hued romance of *Night Drive* opens the record with a deep, driving groove and a wistful sense of yearning. Aurally rich and heart-wrenching, this is a song you will find yourself listening to again and again. Next up, *Daylight* almost sounds like the **Cocteau Twins** gone dub, and is every bit as beguiling as that sounds. Further in *Help Me Help Myself* is gently devastating, building up slowly but surely to stunning effect, the title track recalls the glory days of trip hop, while *Nightfall's* twanging guitar and soaring vocals could make even a hard-hearted badger swoon. Rich and mesmeric, beat the rush by pre-ordering this at your local record emporium today. **10/10**.

Key track: Day By Day.

Bright Green Field by Squid.



Another hotly tipped band for 2021 is *Warp Records* signing **Squid**. With more ideas than might be good for them, the London based group's debut LP is full of twists, turns, and all sorts of aural hi-jinks. Recalling **Modest Mouse** one minute, some lost 70s krautrock band the next, this is intelligence rock music which never once forgets the importance of funk. While vocalist **Ollie Judge's** impassioned yelps might not be to everybody's tastes, even casual listeners will find a lot here to admire. Opener, *G.S.K.* jumps from louche alt-rock to frenzied jazz and back and yet it still sounds great. Make no

mistake kids, do not try this at home. Next up, *Narrator* sounds like a **Talking Heads Fela Kuti** lovechild, and may just be the best thing you will hear this year. Other gems include the dub house skank of *Paddling* which, halfway through, suddenly morphs into frantic punk, the blunted wonder of *Global Groove* and the joyous barrage of rock n' rock noise of *Pamphlets*. Full of moments of sonic wonder and surprise, *Bright Green Field* is an album you need to make your own before all the cool kids jump in. **9.5/10**.

Key track: Narrator.

Böser Herbst by Thomas Fehlmann.



A companion piece of sorts to the 1929 - *Das Jahr Babylon* album from 2018, *Böser Herbst*, the new long-player from **Thomas Fehlmann** is a truly wondrous thing. Available now via *Kompakt*, the record finds the one-time **The Orb** cohort creating a beguiling aural soundtrack which seems to enrich your senses with each and every play. Full of wistful melodies and hazy atmospherics, *Böser Herbst* is an album you want to immerse yourself in for weeks at a time. The pensive chimes of *Vergessen* gets things off to a stunning start, its warm ambiance acting like a balm for the soul. From here, the glockenspiel melody of *Karnickel* conjures a world of images in the head, *Umarmt* is heart-meltingly beautiful, a song almost impossible to get out of your mind, while the deconstructed dub of *Abgestellt* is deliciously heady. Full of warmth and personality, *Böser Herbst's* richly textured ambiance is simply stunning to behold. **9.5/10**.

Key track: Umarmt.

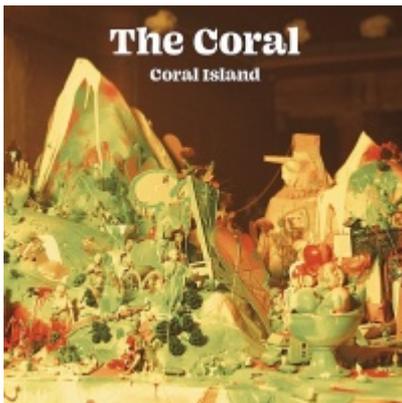
The Seas Trees See by Dntel.



Over you years German label *Morr Music*, who seems to specialise in an aural world where pop and electronica meet, has become a firm favourite of mine. Always willing to try something different and new, they are an imprint long revered by those in the know. Late March saw the release of *The Seas Trees See*, the new album by sonic experimentalist **Dntel**. Recalling label mates **ISAN** or **Múm**, the record's delicate soundscapes brim with a sense of wonder and warmth. There is a playfulness to early tracks such as *The Seas* and *Whimsy*, whose echoing tinkles and climes sound like they come from some half-remembered nursery rhyme and seem to envelop the listener in a heartfelt hug. Other picks include the 90s style ambiance of *The Man On The Mountain*, the emotion rich melodies of *Movie Tears*, the surreal pop swoon of *Fall In Love* and the intimate yet widescreen sounds of *Hard Weather*. A record with emotional resonance, yet which never takes itself too seriously, if you are prepared to put in the time, *The Seas Trees See* may just become a new-found friend. **8/10**.

Key track: The Man On The Mountain.

Coral Island by The Coral.



For most bands releasing a double LP as your tenth album would be something of a risk. Not so Liverpool band **The Coral**, who make a welcome return to our stereos this month with the warm tones of *Coral Island*. While **James Skelly** and co could be accused of losing their way somewhat over the last few years, *Coral Island* finds them rediscover the form which made a nation of music lovers become besotted with them all those moons ago. Wistful and romantic sounding, the songs which make up the group's first album since 2018 seem effortless, and even upon first listen, as if they were old faves. *Love Undiscovered* makes for a glorious opener, a tinge of psychedelia, a hint of folk and an awful lot of pop nous make for a song where it is impossible not to sing along. Next, the unbridled romanticism of *Change Your*

Mind gently warms the soul. Hardly putting a foot wrong over 24 songs, *Coral Island* is an album which, in a fair world, would make **The Coral** huge. **9/10**.

Key Track: Golden Age.

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