

folkie Douglas E Powell ('Broken Folk' is not unlike John Foxx circa *Metamatic*, whilst 'My Morning Ritual' furthers the dystopian, futuristic chills). Bar the vocal numbers, which are only marginally lighter in tone, *A Rest Before The Walk* is a much bleaker album than *Around The Folly And Downhill* with a less pastoral feel and a starker, colder '80s mood befitting the Sheffield bands or apocalyptic sci-fi and slasher movies scores of the same time.

It's far from easy listening, but, like many of the Ghost Box releases, it washes over you like a fever dream and captivates the senses.

Jon 'Mojo' Mills

THE SELF HELP GROUP

Dead Stars

★★★★

UNION MUSIC STORE CD



Listening to The Self Help Group is like stumbling across a bunch of hippies who've been cut off from the outside

world for decades. Their sound is mid-70s Fleetwood Mac infused with musicals such as *Hair*. Literally everything is sung in three-part harmony on this, their second album, but dip below the surface and the Brighton-based ensemble are not quite what they seem.

Songwriter Mark Bruce has a hearty appetite for strange-but-true tales, so we get songs like 'The Box,' about a dad so desperate to return home for his daughter's birthday that he mails himself to Australia; and the young boy who persuades a world-famous architect to design a dog kennel, which his beloved pooch promptly rejects ('Eddie's House'). Forget Aquarius - this is the age of the Antiquarian!

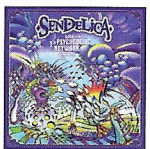
Chris Twomey

SENDELICA

Live From The 7th Psychadelica Network Festival 2014

★★★★

SUN-HAIR 2-LP



Arguably the acme of UK festival bands these days, Cardigan-based Sendelica limber up for their 10th

anniversary next year by releasing this live set which captures Pete Bingham and company in full flight.

Muscular, extended instrumental workouts and the jazzy skronk of saxophone will inevitably draw comparisons with classic-era Hawkwind and, on the evidence of the two-sider 'Master Benjamin...', that would be a fair assessment. Ah, but these are no mere stowaways on the Silver Machine. The groove is more subtle and cerebral, owing much to Pink Floyd, old festival favourites Here And Now, even The Orb, and centred on ex-Surf Messenger Glenda

bass lines, which allow Bingham's guitar and Lee Relfe's reeds to soar freely and expressively. While 'Master Benjamin...' will garner most attention due to its sheer mass, in terms of quality you'd be hard-pressed to fit a Rizla between any of the tracks.

Ian Fraser

SOFT HEARTED SCIENTISTS

Whatever Happened To...

★★★★

FRUITS DE MER 2-CD



Vinyl single specialists FdM deviate from script by releasing this double CD compilation of the (Cardiff) Softs' best bits up to and

including 2013's *False Lights*. Cue a succession of often beautiful and sometimes intricately crafted tunes combining Syd Barrett eccentricity, pastoral psychedelia, lysergic nursery rhymes, gothic horror, Welsh whimsy and much more besides.

'Wendigo' establishes the template of repetitive, mantra-like verse over lush, shimmering keys while 'Brother Sister' nods towards a recurring Caravan complex.

It's all fine and dandy but goes up a notch once we hit 'The Strangest Scene', the rest of the *Scarecrow Smile* cuts and beyond, by which time we are transported to somewhere very rarefied indeed. Reliance on Nathan Hall as main songwriter means that song patterns inevitably repeat themselves but then when your song's this good, why bother changing it. Oh, and there's great fun to be had in spotting the Welsh place names.

Ian Fraser

KELLEY STOLTZ

In Triangle Time

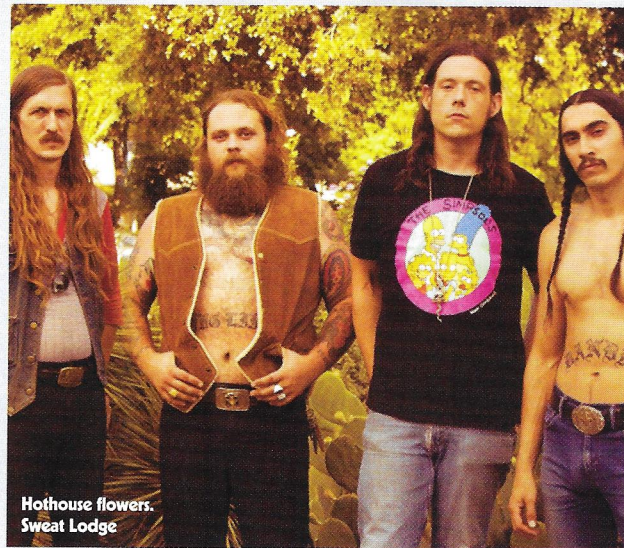
★★★★

CASTLE FACE CD/LP



Indie-rock veteran Stoltz's first full-length album since 2013's sublime *Double Exposure* is occasionally uneven but mostly sparkling. Stoltz is at his best when he combines rambling propulsion with haziness and melody, and he pulls off that trifecta often over this set. As on his other recordings, one might feel like they can name a handful of songwriters by whom he's been influenced, yet he remains elusively (and impressively) free of aping anybody in particular.

The clear standout of this album, 'Pyramid Of Time,' is powered by the same kind of driving feel featured on Stoltz's 2014 single, 'Cross Your Mind'. In other places we're treated to the same pleasant blurriness to be found on a stellar Stoltz track like 'Kim Chee Taco Man' from *Double Exposure*. Sadly, on a few of these cuts, he adopts affected singing styles that don't do him any favours.



Hothouse flowers.
Sweat Lodge

Heavy Sweat

DOCTOR DOOM

This Seed We Have Sown

★★★★

RIPPLE CD

SUNDER

Sunder

★★★★

CRUSHER CD

SWEAT LODGE

Talismana

★★★★★

RIPPLE CD

Doctor Doom. What a name and what an album cover! (Let's hope Marvel comics haven't copyrighted the name.) Expectations are high from the off with the first release from the American stoner-rock quartet. Strangely, the Hammer film qualities of the presentation seem at odds with the tunes that lie within, but you can't have it all I suppose. Rather more, *This Seed We Have Sown* exudes a strange blend of southern boogie-rock à la ZZ Top with some Gabriel-era Genesis psych progressiveness. Sounds strange? That may well be, but it works, and works well. Even the jazzier elements on 'So Jinxed' just naturally fall into place, but it is the driving rocker of 'Behind Your Shadow' that stands out as the highlight here. Takes a few listens, but is well worth sticking with.

Following their debut flexi-disc release of 'Cursed Wolf' earlier this year, French psych outfit

Sunder's eponymous debut is an upbeat, driving organ-splashed dose of simple harmonic and groovy hard-rock that seems over far too soon, sending you reaching for the play button immediately. Crossing a few borders, yet keeping it all wonderfully cohesive - 'Daughter Of The Snows' has the hook and melody reminiscent of two certain Mancunian brothers in the '90s, whilst 'Thunder And Storm' sizzles with a blues-driven chaotic MC5 respulence. With just enough of a modern edge on their retro canvas, Sunder are the Uncle Acid for the Spotify generation.

Coming three years after their debut 7" offering, Sweat Lodge literally explode onto the long player scene with the gargantuan sounding *Talismana* - a perfectly executed nine-song proto-metal definer. Phased-up and fuzzed-out, *Talismana* is comparable to a bar fight between Hawkwind and Electric Wizard with Ozzy himself stepping in to sort matters out. Kicking off with the ingeniously titled 'Tramplifier', things only get better as each movement in this little anthology of doom supersedes the last. By the time side two opener, 'Black Horizon', has you involuntarily reaching for the air guitar you are well and truly hooked. No other words will suffice: bloody brilliant.

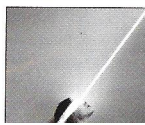
David Savage

TEETH OF THE SEA

Highly Deadly Black Tarantula

★★★★

ROCKET RECORDINGS CD/LP



Teeth Of The Sea had a busy 2014; remaking and performing live a soundtrack for

movie, *A Field In England*, performing audio-visual piece 'The Last Man' in Cern, home of the Large Hadron Particle Collider, and, more conventionally, playing shows at SXSW and Liverpool Psych Fest.

HDBT combines the brooding, shimmering soundscape of a David