

Gnod

Just Say No To The Psycho Right-Wing Capitalist Fascist Industrial Death Machine

Rocket CD/DL/LP

Temple Ov BBV

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Rocket DL/LP

Gnod have been making their trippy, unpredictable racket for a decade now, veering from heavy pseudo-krautrock to noisy techno to intricate, layered drone. The title of their latest album suggests a straightfaced attack, and that's exactly what you get; a record that aims to match the thrill of a brick through a window. Vocalist Paddy Shine strikes a pose somewhere between David Yow and Mark E Smith, the Deep South sleaze of The Jesus Lizard replaced by something altogether more Northern English; gobby, harsh and relentless. There are still hints of Gnod's more psychedelic aspect, but these tracks feel lean, stripped back and sharp-edged.

The lengthy closing track "Stick In The Wheel" is perhaps the most Touch & Go of the lot. Spat rapidly over roomy drums and rhythmic shards of up-stroked guitar, the opening lyrics – "Take a look at these hands/ They're the hands of a real hard worker/ Got fingernails of steel/ Still I'm never really sure how I feel" – could be lifted directly from a Jesus Lizard song. After a couple of minutes however, the restraint slips away and the song rises into waves of distortion and screaming. It's a moment of release before a six minute coda that could be spliced in from another universe for all the similarity it bears to what came before. Overtone heavy percussion is accompanied by a loopy, wandering piano in a raga-like passage; the negative space left in the wake of all that expended energy.

Temple Ov BBV is a collaboration between Gnod and Dutch psychedelic instrumental rock band Radar Men From The Moon. The quintet of ten minute tracks on *Temple Ov BBV* were recorded in 2016 ahead of a joint performance at Tilburg's Roadburn Festival. The combination is impressive: long passages of atmospheric, textural work (brushed cymbals, distant saxophone) are interspersed with great rushes of monolithic riffs and floor-shaking bass. The intensity never drops, regardless of the pace or volume of the song in question. The spoken word vocals of "Your Party" add a deliciously dark, seedy element that then lingers through the rest of the record like a bad smell. It's not friendly, but there's something compulsive about such concentrated deviancy.

Ian Maloney

Growing Disorder

Important LP

Having pumped out a record every 12 months in their early days, it's hard to believe that it's been almost six years since the last Growing album. *Disorder's* two tracks of heavy, noisy drone are less pastoral than much of the trio's past work, with each side-length excursion pared back to little more than phasing tones and distant, ornamental waves. The sense of focus is palpable: the

individual sounds occupy their own space, uncluttered and unobstructed, lending a sensation of maximal return on minimal inputs. Shifts in mood or colour, when they happen, happen immediately. There is no hanging around, no fudging and little fading, just clarity and precision. *Disorder* is a record that feels strongest played loud, over speakers. It's much more gripping that way, more physical. It's rare to hear a drone record which feels so damn urgent.

The opening side is the nastier of the two, in a subtle way. It centres on a slightly distorted wave that beats against itself, phasing in and out like the nightmare of a drunk on a tugboat. Overhead, a slow moan makes its way into the picture, giving the track a nauseating sense of space. An ominous clicking-clacking sound emerges from the deep, in case the paranoia wasn't strong enough already. That shifting centre never holds, beating and undulating and at one stage cutting out suddenly. The vacuum it leaves in its wake is even more unnerving.

The second side is no picnic, but it's brighter than the first. There is, hidden deep in its core, possibly even a sense of peace. The sound in the beginning is one of carefully controlled feedback, with deep, ringing bass splattered with ghostly flecks of grey noise. Eight minutes in, a sound like a switch being flicked, and a buzzing emerges on either side of the spectrum, present but spread strangely thin. There's a new rumble in the deep too, which quickly swells and merges into the existing plane. For the first time on the record, there is a real sense of steadiness, of holding fast, of being able to absorb and integrate whatever might come next. It's not permanent, but there is peace in that all the same.

Ian Maloney

Hawkwind

Into The Woods

Cherry Red CD/DL/2xLP

A few bars of aimless tinkling on a concert grand open the latest offering from Hawkwind. Then that glaringly false lead is ripped up by a rush of churning gloom-laden metal, the hooting of an owl and lyrics that drool over torn flesh and blown minds. Beyond its trappings of lurid Gothic narrative, *Into The Woods* audibly draws on the same energies that have fuelled guitarist and singer Dave Brock's music since he first launched Hawkwind into a heady late 1960s context of earth magic festivals and intergalactic happenings. On the cover of their debut album, the group acknowledged their desire to approximate psychedelically modified states of consciousness, "using a complex of electronics, lights and environmental experiences".

Despite numerous changes of personnel Hawkwind's long strange trip continues, and Brock clearly still relishes the theatre and ritual of rock, its direct appeal and myth-making potential. Even their absorption of the elaborate cosmic fantasies of writers Robert Calvert and Michael Moorcock never concealed the fact that this group's space music is caked in grime rather than ethereal and pristine. Their new studio album embraces birdsong, poetic recitation,

tranquil interludes and an extraterrestrial hoedown complete with banjo, fiddle and steel guitar. But essentially *Into The Woods* clings to a quintessential Hawkwind combination of trippy electronics, motoric groove and clunky riffs. Bassist Haz Wheaton and drummer Richard Chadwick provide the solid underpinning, while Brock's knack of fashioning and delivering strong melodic and verbal hooks is plentifully in evidence – nowhere more so than on "Have You Seen Them", a truly solid sender entrusted to guest vocalist Mr Dibs.

The comic book qualities of Brock's storytelling have always been entertaining, no less than those of Daavid Allen's Gong or George Clinton's mothership. But Hawkwind's futuristic and neo-archaic obsessions, the spaceships and energy channelling standing stones, have also served as graphic pointers to the possibility of alternative ways to living. On "Ascent" Brock still sings of the need to "turn the tide and educate". Hawkwind's righteous mission stretches on, smuggling holy relics of imagination within their capsule of down-to-earth rock.

Julian Cowley

Robyn Hitchcock

Robyn Hitchcock

Yep Roc CD/DL/LP

From the artist whose fancy dealt up album titles like *Olé! Tarantula*, *I Often Dream Of Trains* and *Globe Of Frogs*, a self-titled record might suggest a creative reboot, an opportunity to take stock, even – and *Robyn Hitchcock* cannily messes with all those elements you would reasonably expect to find in a Robyn Hitchcock album. Two guitars, bass, drums and backing vocals consciously evoke memories of The Soft Boys, his landmark 1970s/80s ensemble in which he pieced together a folk based rock laced with psychedelia and concealing trapdoors of Spike Milliganesque unreality. *Robyn Hitchcock* skilfully teases expectations of time, bright waves of radiating colour suddenly switching to black and white.

The first half of the album presents a disparate sequence of songs, the punky "I Want To Tell You About Want I Want" mixing with a rather laboured piece about Virginia Woolf's and Sylvia Plath's suicides ("Virginia Woolf"); there's a gear change as the album enters its second half and "Detective Mindhorn", "1970 In Aspic", "Raymond And The Wires" and "Autumn Sunglasses" (with "Time Coast" as a coda) form a single-arc narrative.

Julian Barratt's film *Mindhorn* might have provided the scenario and inspiration, but Hitchcock's song is a characteristic meshing of melodic whimsy – the song opens with a harmonically free-floating chord that scrambles to find its context; the second syllable of "Mindhorn" springs free of the sung line – with imagery that develops from the idea of Detective Mindhorn's "caterpillar face" to full-on metamorphosis into a butterfly. A further line ("Every episode is true") then implies that this shaggy dog story is playing out as a 1970s cop show. This leads effortlessly into "1970 In Aspic", its oscillating, looping chord sequence symbolising a past and future

Ellen Arkbr

For Organ &

Subtext CD/LP

Swedish composer Ellen Arkbr has described her reduced blues as she's not music presented a Hall which late time which for his *Comp* software in a Braxton would make t from "ten mi

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