

reviews

albums

ADULT ****

Detroit House Guests (Mute)



In this day and age, song-based collaborations can be signed off with the click of a mouse from the other side of this planet. Adult took a different route and invited collaborative guests to their Detroit studio for three weeks at a time. Nitzer Ebb's Douglas J McCarthy adds his vocal menace to a couple of tracks, while other guests include Michael Gira from Swans and Light Asylum's Shannon Funchess. The 12 tracks are immaculate slices of innovative and twisted electro. **DN**

BARDO POND ***

Under The Pines (Fire)

These insanely cool underground psychedelic dreamsludge Philadelphians have now existed for as long as The Rolling Stones had circa 1990, and have probably necked almost as many drugs. They don't sound a day older than when their combo of somnambulant fuzz guitar, meandering flute and Isobel Sollenberger's wailing vocals first hit the scene, either; although the six songs on *Under The Pines* aren't quite as heavy and churning as days of yore. Not one of their classics, but Bardo Pond can still hit pleasure points. **NG**

CRAIG FINN ***

We All Want The Same Things (Partisan)

In the absence of Craig Finn's main band, The Hold Steady – they still exist, but their last album was over three years ago – the frontman's third solo album should partway scratch fans' itch for rollicking punky Springsteenisms and evocative storytelling. *We All Want The Same Things* is steeped in nostalgia: *Preludes*, the first song to emerge ahead of release, was described by Finn as "what I remember 1994 being like," and *God In Chicago* spins a spoken-word reminiscence over languid piano pop. **NG**

DEPECHE MODE ****

Spirit (Columbia)

Depeche Mode are clearly troubled by the changes that are currently happening globally. *Spirit* touches on the shockwave of anxiety and anger that can be felt worldwide: *Backwards*, *Where's The Revolution* and *Poorman* are apt. *Spirit*'s multi-layered sound has a similar sonic attack to John Carpenter's *Assault On Precinct 13* score meeting

Boom Boom via *The Message*. Arctic Monkeys and Florence + The Machine producer James Ford has helped the Mode make an album that will definitely rank amongst their best. **DN**

DIRTY PROJECTORS ****

Dirty Projectors (Domino)

Church bells toll, mournfully morphing into the downbeat opening lines of Dirty Projectors' eighth album: "I don't know why you abandoned me, you were my soul and my partner...", setting the tone on a record indelibly marked by the breakup of main-man David Longstreth from longtime bandmate, Amber Coffman. Cutting through the post-relationship fug, however, Longstreth demonstrates his undeniable talent for writing higher-level hooks: *Death Spiral* could be a cut from Justin Timberlake's debut, with flamenco guitar, grinding synth and falsetto vocals. **HR**

GOLD ****

Optimist (Ván)



You Too Must Die starts the third Gold album as it means to go on – dark and foreboding. The vocals may be gentle but the music escalates like a threatening storm. The Dutch experimental post-rockers know exactly how to create mood and atmosphere. Bass, drums and guitars work together seamlessly. Some songs, such as *I Do My Own Stunts*, are lighter than others but the heavy bassline runs through each track like a lifeline. **LN**

GRANDDADDY *****

Last Place (30th Century)



It's been 11 years since Granddaddy released *Just Like The Family Cat*, but at last year's Green Man festival, new tracks and the promise of a new LP featured in a set that was one of the weekend's highlights. Opening track *Way We Won't* would be at home on *The Sophtware Slump*, and is Granddaddy at their most joyful. Jason Lytle's lyrics display their characteristic cadence, equal parts bleak and heartwarming with a sonic patchwork quilt of instrumentation. One of the good things to happen in 2017. **GT**

HAUSCHKA ***

What If (City Slang)

What If is Hauschka's rumination on how the world may look in 30 years. Based on some of the uneasy listening within it, I can only speculate that Bertlemann has imagined a world where Bieber is the prez, the *Police Academy* franchise is classic cinema and Kinder Buenos are banned. *Familiar...* and *We Live* are rich compositions, but much

like the Brexit debate, the background noise can become a bit of a circus and the variations on the same old tune appear designed to irritate. **CS**

IDLES ****

Brutalism (Bataly)



Take the sociopolitical rantings of Sleaford Mods, the drive and energy of Slaves, give it a less minimalist feel with crashing guitars and pulsating drums and you get this ferocious debut from Bristol's Idles. Aggressively tearing through topics such as the NHS, working class struggles and pop culture, this politically charged, adrenaline-fueled post-punk riot is so infectiously bitter you'll want to go straight outside and slap a Tory, or possibly Mary Berry after listening to *Well Done*. **GT**

JAZZANOVA ****

The Remixes 2006-2016 (Sonar Kollektiv)

The German DJ/producer collective serve up another batch of nu and house jazz remixes from various artists. Cool but with dashes of funk and soul thrown in, Jazzanova definitely improved so-so songs by Malika Ayane and Furry Phreaks by 100%. Choice selections made more upbeat include *Ordinary Guy*, *Skybreaks* and *Parallels*, even if the originals have a certain something that sets them apart. Forgotten gem *Naze* has gone from jazz/folk to electro, and kudos for taking on Hugh Masekela's iconic *Stimela*. **RLR**

JUTE GYTE ****

The Sparrow (X-Ray)



Jute Gyte is an American musician called Adam who self-produces, and mostly self-releases, albums of experimental, microtonal black metal and creepy ambient electronics at a prolific rate. *The Sparrow* is the first to be issued on vinyl and comprises two side-length tracks: a blurry, blackened symphony of tremolo-flecked industrial brutality (*The Sparrow*) and tectonically shifting ambient guitar that builds in disorienting layers (*Monadanom*). Not one for BM purists, Jute Gyte is more akin to, say, Glenn Branca and most intriguing for that. **NG**

KARRIEM RIGGINS ****

Headnod Suite (Stones Throw)

The second offering from influential drummer/hip hop producer Riggins is flush with fleeting instrumentals, akin to contemporaries such as the late J Dilla. These ditties don't make a lot of sense on their own, but if you experience the record as one, you'll doubtless appreciate the journey it takes you on. The fact that each track is so short is highly provocative, allowing just enough time

to appreciate the nuances of each groove before swiftly moving on. Proof that the album concept still works. **CPI**

LAURA MARLING ****

Sempa Femina (More Alarming)



It was her project exploring feminine creativity that inspired me to give Laura Marling some attention. Drawing on Laura's experience of the lack of female engineers, she started looking at why this was. (There's a series of podcasts on the theme; the final one, a conversation between Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris is a joy – seek it.) Her sixth album is an ode to females, an empathetic exploration of gender and sexuality with a rich, fingerpicking guitar sound meets off-kilter pop. **GT**

LEWIS WATSON *****

Midnight (Cooking Vinyl)

Oxford's Lewis Watson doesn't have to try too hard to please. His voice is effortless and his music isn't in any hurry. *Midnight* is a collection of songs that are relaxing and full of emotion; even when he sings about love his lyrics are intelligent. Stand out track is the heart-felt *When The Water Meets The Mountains* but the single, *Little Light*, has a catchy riff and deserves airplay. In a world full of trite and stress, Lewis is a much-needed antidote. **LN**

THE PIGEON DETECTIVES ***

Broken Glances (Dance To The Radio)

Don't go into this album expecting another catchy singalong collection from The Pigeon Detectives: *Broken Glances* is an eclectic collection of melodic sounds and soft echoing synths. Lyrics are dark and touching in places, transporting the listener into their world. Opening track *Wolves* is aggressive and brooding, filled with pain and angst. *Enemy Lines* most resembles The Pigeon Detectives we are familiar with, whereas *Falling In Love* is beautifully arranged, understated and haunting. **DC**

THE RESIDENTS ****

The Ghost Of Hope (Cryptic)



Little bit of politics, folks? Sorry if the title led you to assume that, but nope – this latest album by clandestine pop conceptualists The Residents sets grim tales of old time train disasters to music. Music which is uncomfortably jaunty, electronics and ersatz-sounding brass lending a vaudeville feel (*The Great Circus Train Wreck Of 1918* is especially Tom Waitian) to lyrical nuggets of spilled brains and blackened corpses. These guys, lineup alterations notwithstanding, have been at it for 45 years and are yet to lose their hardcore. **NG**

SHERWOOD & PINCH ***

Man Vs. Sofa (On-U Sound/Tectonic)

Second album of machine unease from, respectively, longstanding On-U producer/avatar Adrian and Bristolian dub pup Rob Ellis. *Man Vs. Sofa* menaces gently, 40 minutes of stark bass music that's sweatily claustrophobic but – bar the nervy, niggling *Itchy Face* and *Gun Law*'s rambling skank – oddly mannered. Highlights: a refracted, dreamy cover of Sakamoto's *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* theme, while Martin Duffy's piano splashes lend colour sparingly, most notably on the elegaic, Lee Perry-featuring *Lies*. **WS**

SPOON ****

Hot Thoughts (Matador)

Spoon are undeniably consistent when it comes to solid song writing. The Austin, TX outfit's ninth long-player doesn't reach the heady heights of

GAMES REVIEWS



SEMISPHERES ***

Vivid Helix, PS4

Meditative indie puzzler *Semispheres* utilises minimalist art, audio and mechanics in smart, unique ways to produce a strangely compelling, chilled experience. Using both sticks, players manoeuvre a pair of peculiar little orbs through increasingly complex stealth puzzles. Mechanically, it does take a little getting used to, however, the difficulty is thankfully pitched nicely; levels are short and sweet and challenge you just enough to give your brain a workout without you pulling your hair out. **DYLAN CHAUNDY**

RESIDENT EVIL 7 *****

Capcom, PS4



What's most refreshing about Capcom's latest iteration of its critically lauded horror franchise is how much it still feels like a mainline *Resident Evil* game despite the series' bold and courageous switch to a first-person perspective. Traditional *RE* staples such as green herbs, bizarre puzzles, cool bosses, ammo conservation and safe houses, all make a welcome return, and it's because of this distinct re-focusing on its series' survival-horror roots that *REVII* makes such a triumphant return. In many ways, it's a modernisation of its old-school identity, cribbing ideas from other modern mainstream horror games, however, I'll make no bones about it: this is where *REVII* desperately needed to go next. And it's a bloody, harrowing classic! **DYLAN CHAUNDY**



their early 2000s material (*Girls Can Tell* thru *Gimme Fiction* are almost faultless) this slice of blues-influenced art-rock sees Britt Daniel and co returning to awesome form. The only hiccup on this record is *Pink Up*, a rambling, largely-instrumental jam which is thankfully sandwiched by plenty of stormers which will allow you to forget about it pretty quickly. **BG**

TRAGEDY ***

The Joy Of Sex (Beauty Rock)

Described as an "all-metal tribute to the Bee Gees and beyond," this Tragedy album is as wacky as it sounds. After the internet success of the parody video to *Grease* hit *You're The One That I Want*, Tragedy have released this collection of 11 new flamboyant covers including *Stayin' Alive*, *Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?* and *Never Gonna Give You Up*. Doesn't sound like it would work, but somehow it does; hard riffs and screaming vocals mixed with pop and disco gold can't help but make you smile. **DC**

WIRE **

Silver/Lead (Pinkflag)



Both the most influential and the best band to emerge from the punk era? Arguably so – but Wire aren't ones to rest on their laurels, always more interested in moving

forwards than looking back. Sadly, the legends' 15th LP *Silver/Lead*, the swift successor to 2016's stealthily impressive *Nocturnal Koreans*, is drearily workmanlike, plodding and non-essential – opening salvo *Playing Harp For The Fishes* and *Short Elevated Period* aside. A painfully pale shadow of former glories, I'm sorry to say. **BW**

singles

BOXIA ****

Colour Sequence (We Are The Brave)

"Cardiff's own Boxia!" exclaimed the subject header when this widescreen techno producer's publicity department emailed Buzz. Which is odd, as I've turned up no other evidence of him actually living here. Music like this – the chunky bass and gospel samples of *Black*; the hi-hat heavy and deep house-influenced *Orange* – can basically come from anywhere, such 'tis its beauty. **NG**

CURSOR MAJOR ***

Silent Disco Punch Up EP (Bellicose)



Is singing "I am the final solution" wise, in these Nazi-punching times? The kookiness is inbuilt here, as South Walian, ex-Crimea member Andy Norton's bedroom pop project aims

for skewed pop glory, only falling a little awkwardly between proper weirdness and melodic gold. It's a high-sheen EP, briefly memorable. **WS**

HALF WAIF ****

Form/a EP (Cascine)

This project of Pinegrove member Nandi Rose Plunkett is the polar opposite of that band. It's intensely personal electronica where she expresses her moods especially through sound over admittedly gorgeous but slightly distant vocals. Short songs on relationships, communication, isolation and uncertainty about belonging and home, with melodic Indian roots coming through on *Severed Logic*. **RLR**

MANU DELAGO ****

Freeze (Tru Thoughts)



A track from the celebrated *Metromonk* album, *Freeze* gently vents moody melodic patterns that skim freely across minimalist electronics to conjure a wistful, dreamy feeling. The

transcendental sound of the hang with the gifted Manu at its helm provides the central focus, its beautiful soft percussive tones makin' for a very intriguing listen. **CPI**

THE MARTINEZ BROTHERS & DAN

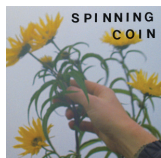
GHENACIA ***

Disco Jam EP (white label)

You'd be stretching a genre-based point to call either of these two tracks disco, really, but you can still get down to them with abandon. Two big room house specialists team up for some analogue-sounding early house-influenced tackle, with *Disco Jam 2* nudging into minimal techno, two-hour-set approaching-its-peak territory. **NG**

SPINNING COIN ****

Raining On Hope Street (Geographic)



Proving there's still the odd pearl in the worst of all, er, genre oysters – nice white boy indie – *Raining...* takes the lineage of all the swell bands of Spinning

Coin's Glasgow hometown (Orange Juice, Teenage Fanclub, you know) and adds new blood that's dreamy, off-kilter, and weirdly romantic. B-side *Tin* rattles too. **WS**

demos

CASHUW

[facebook.com/cashuwmusic](https://www.facebook.com/cashuwmusic)

One of those bands whose name barely has any Everything about this EP's looks – jewel case with black tray, cheaply photocopied sleeve, even the Impact typeface – reminds me of how all demos were presented in about 2003, but Cashuw is actually a Cardiff University student named Rachel, so presumably too young to remember that era. Here, she crafts post-rockish ambience, slightly akin to Mogwai's lower key moments, across five sleepy songs – with the added hook of field recordings, sampled on or around aeroplanes and tube trains, then edited. Quietly impressive.. **NG**

DEMENTIO13

www.dementio13.com

Paul Poster, a Lancastrian long resident in Cardiff, has been making atmospheric beat-based electronic music for a quarter-century or more, and releasing it digitally as Dementio13 for some of that. Shamefully, *Broxen* – his latest 13-track album – is my first encounter with him. It has a few vocal guest spots, including Jo 'Laurence Made Me Cry' Whitby, and concludes with a rebuilding of Squarepusher's anti-Brexit *Midi Sans Frontières*; strongest, for me, are Poster's takes on snaky Brainsdance rave like *In Patterns* and *Voices*. **NG**

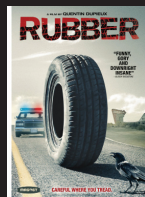
LA FORME

twitter.com/laforme80

This Newport duo didn't do a lot for me when I saw them live a year or so ago, but they emailed a couple of new songs before Christmas and I'm a sight more amenable to them. Was it the attempt to mildly flatter me by implying bands care about being reviewed in this section? Not really! Was it their take on icy, chart-minded 80s synthpop, equal parts Soft Cell and Pet Shop Boys and with bold, precisely enunciated vocals? Indeed it was! **NG**



WE'VE BEEN WATCHING...



RUBBER

Canal+ (available on Amazon Prime)

Robert is a murderous car tyre. With aesthetically pleasing *Hannibal*-like camera shots, and satirically funny character lines, this movie looks like it should be an indie masterpiece. One main character, Lieutenant Chad, explains to the audience the ideas behind 'no reason', and then precedes to do not-quite-random actions. 'No reason' means here to 'go diagonal' to preconceived ideas. *****MM**



MIDNIGHT DINER: TOKYO STORIES

Netflix (available on Netflix)

Based on the award-winning manga *Shinya Shokudo*, the Japanese Netflix original *Midnight Diner: Tokyo Stories* is a philosophical, funny, and thoughtful series that uses food to explore social issues in Japan. The diner, which opens at midnight, is tended by the Master, who makes whatever his regulars want provided he has the ingredients, with each episode centred around a different dish. ******LOB**



TRAILER PARK BOYS OUT OF THE PARK: EUROPE

Netflix (available on Netflix)

Following on from the cult Canadian mockumentary style series about three troublesome Nova Scotia trailer park residents, this spin-off sees the boys taken on a free tour around Europe where they have to complete a range of tasks in each stopover. This is much better stuff than their 'you probably had to be there' live shows, where it felt like they just kept repeating the same old jokes. *****LOB**



LOOK WHO'S BACK

Constantin Film (available on Netflix)

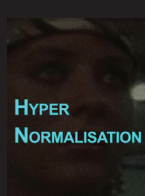
David Wnendt's adaptation of the German novel of the same name sees Adolf Hitler return in the modern age, and was a hit in German cinemas for a good reason. The film uses the premise of Hitler waking up in modern Berlin to interact with unsuspecting members of the German public in a very Sacha Baron Cohen-esque way, highlighting the dangers of populism. ******LOB**



TRANSPARENT

Amazon.com (available on Amazon Prime)

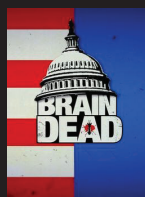
If you're yet to watch this Golden Globe-winning Amazon original series, I can't recommend it enough. It's an American comedy-drama based on one family's discovery that their father, Mort, is transgender. However, despite this being the crux of the series, the subsequent changes which occur in each of the other characters is tremendous. Poignant, raw, sad and brutally funny. *******EH**



HYPERNORMALISATION

BBC (available on BBC iPlayer)

If you're in the mood for a long watch and some intense reflection, this latest documentary film by Adam Curtis could be the answer. This gripping and often frightening political masterpiece presents the case that our world is no longer real and is instead a fake one built by politicians, governments and technological giants. *******EH**



BRAINDEAD

CBS (available on Amazon Prime)

Laurel, a young Capitol Hill staffer working for her senator brother, finds out that aliens have invaded Washington D.C. and are eating the brains of members of Congress, putting them under their control, and bringing D.C. to a standstill. Part comedy meets *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*, *BrainDead* has an acutely current script, worthy of a binge-watch. ******EC**