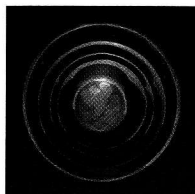


THE PENNY BLACK REMEDY
Inhale... Exhale... OK, Now You Can Panic!
 SOUNDINISTAS

6/10 London-based festival favourites hit cross-cultural sweet spot

On the follow up to TPBR's 2009 debut, *No One's Fault But Your Own*, Keith M Thomson's deadpan compositions often recall the wry worldview of Loudon Wainwright. Emboldened by hearty live shows, the dynamically primed arrangements blend music hall, folk and Balkan influences in a swishly calibrated fashion. The archness in some of Thomson's topical observations is offset by the sprightly tempos and welcome brushes of colour. Mellifluous Croatian singer Marijana Hajdarhodzic adds warmth to Thomson's world-weariness. A diverting, nicely rounded cabaret that emphasises the personalised approach.

GAVIN MARTIN



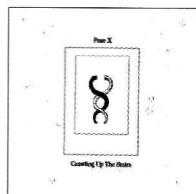
DUANE PITRE
Bridges
 IMPORTANT

Just Intonating, brother – beautiful modern minimalism

8/10

Duane Pitre's career trajectory is fairly unique – from professional skateboarder through to minimalist composer is a big leap in some respects, though both do share a love of, to paraphrase minimalist guru La Monte Young, 'drawing a straight line and following it'. On *Bridges*, Pitre works the mathematical precision of the Just Intonation tuning system into two side-long, gorgeously free-floating compositions, full of arcing, swooping strings that accumulate and disperse like tides of fog. His move from New York to New Orleans has obviously done him the world of good, opening his music to the seductive properties of relative quietude.

JONDALE



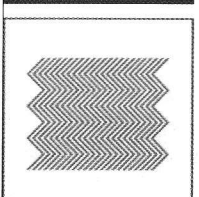
PURE X
Crawling Up The Stairs
 MEROK/ACEPHALE

Austin psych wanderer gets lost in music

7/10

At a time where psychedelic rock is being made over in rugged fashion by Ty Segall, Thee Oh Sees, et al, Pure X seem content with being out of time and out of phase. Their second album, *Crawling Up The Stairs*, takes a spacier, more ambient approach, a lava-lamp swirl of effects-soaked guitar and bubbling electronics through which frontman Nate Grace's falsetto floats untethered. It is a wispy thing, not always easy to grip. But its more soulful moments can be quietly transcendent: the languid jazz-funk bassline that undercuts the zonked acid babble of "I Come From Nowhere", or the excellent "I Fear What I Feel", a sort of tie-dye cousin to The xx's "Infinity".

LOUIS PATTISON



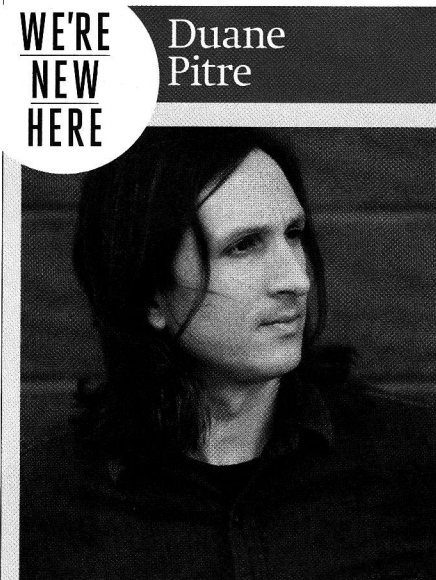
PET SHOP BOYS
Electric
 X2

Veterans christen new label by taking Springsteen to the disco
 A splashy reboot to launch their own x2 label, *Electric* finds Neil Tennant and

8/10

Chris Lowe working with former Madonna producer Stuart Price, who turbocharges these club-friendly tunes with analogue synths, fuzzy Vocoders and amped-up digital euphoria. Price's maximalist approach is largely successful, producing vivid, neon-lit dancefloor monsters like "Axis" and "Fluorescent". Tennant also indulges his signature brainy wit on "Love Is A Bourgeois Construct", a heady cocktail of lush techno, classical samples and tributes to Tony Benn. Even the potentially satirical disco-tronic cover of Springsteen's "The Last To Die" exudes real passion, invoking the Bruce-meets-PSB sound of The Killers.

STEPHEN DALTON



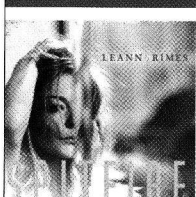
WE'RE NEW HERE
Duane Pitre

"I feel the essence of skateboarding, at a fundamental level, consists of seemingly 'unseen' elements such as pressure and finesse," reflects Duane Pitre, American skateboarder-turned-minimalist-composer. "And very minute changes in either can change the results of one's skateboarding. The same can be said of music that is rooted, in some way or another, in minimalism."

Pitre's transition from wheels to strings was a long, slow process – most appropriate for someone whose music rewards the long haul. "I started skateboarding in 1985, [but] I turned pro for Alien Workshop in 1991. The owners of the company certainly helped shape how I'd view the world, and art. Compared to the rest of the skateboard world, they were into far-out approaches to creating a skateboard company, their own ways that had nothing to do with the trends at the time."

After Pitre hung up his board in 1997, he spent almost a decade playing in experimental bands, but a shift in approach in the noughties had him studying modern composition, which led to his recent, gorgeous string of albums. "I wanted to write pieces that involved 'classical' string and wind instruments," he recalls, "I felt I needed to learn how to speak their language."

JONDALE



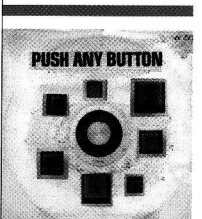
LEANN RIMES
Spitfire
 CURB

Country star lets it all hang out on swan song for her longtime label
 Interspersing originals that address her tabloid-exploited private life with

8/10

startling candor and thematically apt outside songs, Rimes delivers the most intensely personal – and rocking – album of her career. In an inspired move, producer/songwriting collaborator Darrell Brown has assembled a genre-transcending band that combines LA pros (Waddy Wachtel, Dean Parks) and country pickers (Union Station's Dan Tyminski, Paul Franklin), with the rock-steady rhythms of drummer Steve Jordan and bassist Willie Weeks. The grabber is "Gasoline And Matches", written by Buddy and Julie Miller, featuring Matchbox Twenty's Rob Thomas and Jeff Beck, who powers through a scintillating solo.

BUD SCOPPA



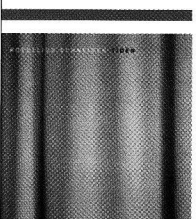
SAM PHILLIPS
Push Any Button
 LITTLEBOX

Dream-pop throwback: LA chanteuse's recording career enters its fourth decade

7/10

Surfacing from TV score work and her digital, subscription-only recording efforts of recent years (aka "Long Play"), California-born Phillips here rounds up beaucoup ace LA sessioneers – including string ensemble The Section Quartet and Heartbreaker Benmont Tench – in winding through a batch of moody, grey-day pop. It's an insinuating set, bordering on morose in places, but best on "When I'm Alone", which, with its choppy beat, staunch independence and magnetic melody, turns Brill Building-style songwriting convention upside down, "You Know I Won't", channeling Nancy Sinatra, and the creamy, atmospheric "See You In Dreams".

LUKE TORN



ROEDELIUS/SCHNEIDER
Tiden
 BUREAU B

More sci-fi lullabies from generation-spanning Krautrock duo

7/10

Two years after their first collaboration, *Stunden*, the 78-year-old Krautrock veteran Hans-Joachim Roedelius reunites with Stefan Schneider of ambi-tech texturalists Kreidler and To Rococo Rot for another pan-generational assemblage of agreeably soporific New Age lullabies. Though billed as a more focused affair, *Tiden* follows much the same formula of Satie-esque piano sketches nestled in softly lapping rhythms, muted electro shadings and vaguely lysergic drones. Stand-outs include "Umstunden", a canopy of melody that conceals a scuttling menagerie of digital noises, and "Toast", an ambient confection that unravels into electronic twinkles and jittery tropical percussion.

STEPHEN DALTON