

UNDERGROUND

BY ANDREW MALE



Anna Von Hausswolff

★★★★★

Live At Montreux Jazz Festival

SOUTHERN LORD/POMPERIPOSSA. CD/DL/LP

Banshee-voiced Swedish pipe organist in full flight.

Five years after her late friend Albin Oskarsson first petitioned Montreux Jazz Festival, Anna Von Hausswolff got the call in 2018 to support Nick Cave. Centred on the unbound gothic splendour of that year's *Dead Magic*, her six distended readings stretch her bleak folkloric lyrics and dark instrumentation to the hilt. With a similar mechanical pulse to latter-day Swans, the malevolent heft of The Mysterious Vanishing Of Electra and epic dirge Ugly And Vengeful build to almost unbearable climaxes as the gloomy Gothenburg soprano's unearthly howls and unnerving ululations echo Yma Sumac and Diamanda Galás. It's not all sturm und drang though. The beatless despair of Källans återupståndelse shows the harmonic subtleties at play within Von Hausswolff's bewitching repertoire of dissonance and drama.

Andy Cowan

John Dwyer

★★★★★

Gong Splat

CASTLE FACE. CD/DL/LP

More jazz-fusion improv experiments from Oh Sees frontman and friends.



Oh Sees major domo John Dwyer confessed an ongoing obsession with mid-'70s fusion to MOJO in 2018, warning "we're starting to get more into that zone". Latterly, he's fully embraced

his hankering for fusion with a series of collaborative, jazz-themed releases, of which *Gong Splat* is the best yet. With Los Angeleno musos Ryan Sawyer, Greg Coates, Wilder Zoby and Andres Renteria, Dwyer cribs liberally from Miles's *On The Corner*, Ege Bamyasi-era Can and Larry Young's *Lawrence Of Newark* for nine beatific, frenetic jams. As with all such improvised projects, *Gong Splat* is as much about the journey as the destination, but there's precious little meandering to Dwyer's questing. The motorik title track, the stop-start robot funk of Oneironaut and the freeform psychedelic explorations of Yugoth Travel Agency all demonstrate Dwyer's far-out explorations to be fruitful more often than not.

Stevie Chick

Paul Weller

★★★★★

An Orchestrated Songbook

POLYDOR. CD/DL/LP

All Mod Conservatoire? Jam, Style Council and solo songs crash the concert hall.



Weller is no stranger to the string section: recent albums have featured judicious

orchestrations by the excellent Hannah Peel, and Peel conducted a sizeable classical group behind Weller and band at the Royal Festival Hall in October 2018, a concert released as *Other Aspects* in 2019. But here he's all in, a full-fat BBC Symphony Orchestra backing this livecast May '21 Barbican show, with arrangements by Jules Buckley. Results are mostly great – the Jam's English Rose is beautifully Vaughan Williamsy; *Confessions Of A Pop Group* gem It's A Very Deep Sea is reimagined and reinvigorated – but there are moments where the charts could bear being much edgier, and the guest spots are variable: Celeste understated on an epically pastoral Wild Wood; James Morrison quite the opposite on *Stanley Road's* Broken Stones. In the midst of it, Weller himself sails regally on, in fine-grained voice, and the songs are, happily, bomb(ast)-proof.

Danny Eccleston

Pinegrove

★★★★★

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ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

Crisis time on New Jersey guitar-rockers' sixth studio album.



Frontman Evan Stephens Hall has described Pinegrove as "the midpoint between math rock and Americana". Aside from a periodic leaning toward Wilco/Jayhawks (and '90s cult legends Souled American) models of country, arguably a better comparison is Teenage Fanclub, given Pinegrove's alignment with Big Star's plangent sound; imagine the *Radio City* line-up covering *Sister Lovers/Third* songs. The LP's title references numerical simplicity and stability during a time of what seems like personal angst piled on top of global anxiety and chaos. Hall explores his anger and depression through mostly downbeat but frequently beautiful ballads, such as the waltz-styled Orange, inspired by Oregon's skies during 2020's firestorms, and the delicate Respireate: "No one's gonna rescue us/No one'll care if we spend our lives up," Hall wails. "But I care now/I'm not gonna let you down."

Martin Aston

Trees Speak

★★★★★

Vertigo Of Flaws

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Tucson, Arizona's experimentalists drop double-album mindblower!



The core Trees Speak duo Daniel Martin Diaz and Damian Diaz have rustled up four

long-players now in little more than a year. This latest is by far their most ambitious, spanning 90 minutes of profoundly exploratory instrumental speculation. Where its pocket-sized predecessors have flagged up an interest in motorik, rippling synths and Axelrod-style widescreen arrangement, *Vertigo Of Flaws* runs a wider gamut, touching on BBC Radiophonic Workshop scoring (Computer Garden), Air's future-retro synth-pop (Imaginary Forces), spaced R&B groove abstraction à la Joe Meek's *I Hear A New World* (Interference) and early Kraftwerk-esque soundwave experimentation (Integration). On the LP's second disc, things get properly whacked out: Threnody's beatless, treated trumpets recall 23 Skidoo's *Seven Songs*, while Transfiguration's blast of free chorale borders on Sun Ra. Among wild wanderings, Trees Speak frequently snap back to a crisp, jazzy bassline groove, making their whole far-out adventure hard to resist.

Andrew Perry



Duane Pitre

★★★★★

Omniscient Voices

IMPREC. DL/LP

The New Orleans sound artist returns with a stunning work for piano and electronics.

Fans of such contemporary minimalist composers as Kali Malone or Caterina Barbieri will likely have encountered Duane Pitre. His 2009 compilation, *The Harmonic Series*, reintroduced the ancient tuning pattern of just intonation – previously associated with '60s/'70s 'minimalists' like La Monte Young and Terry Riley – to this new generation of young musicians. Since 2012's *Feel Free* album, Pitre has combined traditional acoustic with modern electronic 'improvisation' and this new work, influenced by New York composer Morton Feldman's use of tonal clusters, is the latest result. Although composed of five pieces of varying lengths, offering more harmonic variety, this remains a complete, immersive work, a blissful pulsing conversation between the organic and the electronic that is simultaneously amorphous yet distinct. It's hard to know where you are in the record other than to know that you feel warm and safe and that when it's over you need to play it again.

DP/OV

ALSO RELEASED

William Tyler

★★★★★

Frozen Shelter

LONGFORM EDITIONS/BANDCAMP. DL



Since launching in June 2018, Andrew Khedoori's ongoing series of online-only, deep-listening releases continues to delight and beguile. Of the latest batch, this new work by the Nashville-born guitarist William Tyler is perhaps the least expected and most surprising: a series of short discordant sound experiments leading into 35 minutes of ghostly dancehall atmospherics that waltz and shimmer with an almost tangible presence.

Padang Food Tigers

★★★★★

God's Plenty

SHHPUMA. CD/DL



Recent collaborators with Andrew Tuttle, the London duo of Stephen Lewis and Spencer Grady now release their fifth and arguably finest album. Lewis plays dobro and lap steel, Grady plays banjo: ancient folk sounds that they combine with organ drones, radio chatter and field recordings to create something surreal, otherworldly, and utterly beguiling.

Hiroshi Minami/Eiko Ishibashi

★★★★★

Gasping_Sighing_Sobbing

BANDCAMP. DL



Japanese pianist Minami collaborates with singer/songwriter/improviser Ishibashi on a series of ambient jazz dreams, the wistful melancholy of Minami's abstract keyboard melodies blending with the radio-wave futurism of Ishibashi's electronics and Daisuke Ijichi's warm acoustic bass. A jazz kissa soundtrack for the Japanese space programme that never happened.

Richard Skelton

★★★★★

A Guidonian Hand

CORBEL STONE PRESS/BANDCAMP. CD/DL



In medieval music, the Guidonian hand was a palmistry-like mnemonic device used to teach sight-singing. Here, hyperborean sound artist Skelton imagines this hexachord appendage as a valley landscape, using the scrape, wail and moan of cello, woodwind and bowed cymbal to chart its stunted pathways and conjure up its unearthly climate. AM



Anna Von Hausswolff: not holding back on the drama.