

**Jazz & Improv**  
by **Stewart Smith**

**Paul Dunmall/Percy Pursglove/Olie Brice/Jeff Williams**

**Palindromes**

Westhill CD/DL

*Palindromes* emerged from bassist Olie Brice and trumpeter Percy Pursglove's desire to bring saxophonist Paul Dunmall and drummer Jeff Williams together for the first time. The group don't go so far as to structure its music palindromic-like, but there's a clear architecture to their improvisations. The two half-hour sets have a rare quality of being simultaneously lively and spacious, with Brice's inventive bass complemented by Williams's colouristic drumming. Dunmall and Pursglove are a superb pairing, moving from chattering free bop and spare lyricism to free improv sputters and smears. The second set climaxes with rousing sax and trumpet reminiscent of the Ayler brothers, winding down into a warm conversation between old friends.

**Nortonk**

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Biophilia DL

Nortonk take their inspiration from no-chord quartets across the decades. "Chutes And Ladders" has the scurrying energy of The Ornette Coleman Quartet, but these young New Yorkers are plugged into contemporary currents, replacing the blues feeling with an angular tonality. Rising out of Thomas Killackey's and Gideon Forbes's contemplative trumpet and saxophone harmonies, "Spiders" lingers beautifully, anchored by Stephen Pale's bass and Steven Crammer's teasing drums. "Duuzh" swings like crazy, as the horns zigzag over the brisk rhythm section, while "GLaDOS" follows a frenetic first half with an exploratory processional. Beginning like "Lonely Woman" played backwards, "Herzog" blossoms into a richly melodic rumination, the soft-grained horns taking on a gritty intensity in the chorus.

**Zeena Parkins/Mette Rasmussen/Ryan Sawyer**

**Glass Triangle**

Relative Pitch CD/DL

*Glass Triangle* delivers on the promise of Zeena Parkins's and Mette Rasmussen's electrifying performance at the 2016 edition of Glasgow's Counterflows festival, adding Ryan Sawyer's percussion to the spiky tangle of amplified harp and alto saxophone. Fitted with a whammy

bar and run through pedals, Parkins's harp channels avant rock pyrotechnics on barn burners like "Merlin And The Gloom", meeting Rasmussen's laser-guided squall with divebomb bends and gonzo Lightning Bolt-ish riffs. It's a blast to hear the pair running head first into Sawyer's trap kit fusillades, but more thrilling still are the weirder, quieter pieces like "Flod Of Trees" where Parkins and Rasmussen conjure an alien chorus of warbling synth tones and tart alto phrases over the percussionist's insect patter and chimes.

**RED Trio & Celebration Band**

**Suite 10 Years Anniversary**

No Business 2xCD/DL

In February 2018, Lisbon's RED Trio gathered friends from Portugal and beyond to record a tenth anniversary suite. Across the three parts, RED are joined by combinations of saxophone, trumpet, trombone, vibraphone, cello and electronics. Pianist Rodrigo Pinheiro's "Corrente" has a beautiful feature for vibist Mattias Ståhl, and an animated conversation between the horns in which Luis Vicente's spit valve trumpet takes a star turn. Featuring Miguel Abreu's haunted vocals, drummer Gabriel Ferrandini's "Mais Vale" is a slow crawl of piano clusters and abstracted blues, like Jandek via Morton Feldman. Bassist Hernâni Faustino's "Ditirambo" has a similar preoccupation with space, as Pinheiro's questioning chords give way to Ferrandini's skittering drums. John Butcher's saxophone heralds the introduction of the other players, but even in the more dramatic ensemble passages, there's an eerie sense of drift.

**Pat Thomas & The Locals**

**Play The Music Of Anthony Braxton**

Discus CD/DL

Oxford brings the funk to Anthony Braxton on this wildly entertaining set from the 2006 Konfrontation Festival in Ulrichsberg, Austria. Pianist Pat Thomas's arrangements lay in the pocket funk and reggae grooves under the oblique themes, exploding any notions of Braxton's music as forbiddingly cerebral. The sly curls of wah guitar on "Composition 40b" recall electric Miles, topped with avant Dixie clarinet from Alex Ward and dissonant piano splashes from the leader. "Composition 6c" opens with a bass and guitar scramble reminiscent of Saccharine Trust's punk improv, until the groove kicks in and Ward lets rip with vaulting glissandi. "Composition 6i" sets a loping rhythm against a wonky clarinet motif and Thomas's rhythmic clusters. It's such a joy you almost forget how audacious it is.

**Cat Toren/Yuma Uesaka/Colin Hinton**

**Ocelot**

577 CD/DL

An arresting debut from a young New York Brooklyn trio who combine an interest in space and tone with tricky rhythms and

jazz lyricism. They set out their stall on "Daimon II", with Yuma Uesaka's soft-toned saxophone gliding over the slant ridges of Cat Toren's piano while drummer Colin Hinton maintains a steady pace. On "Factum", bell-like piano tones and bowed cymbals glimmer through a misty expanse, before Uesaka's saxophone takes the trio into a rousing chorus. It's a tricky balance to pull off, but they negotiate the transitions with real sensitivity. "Post" rides a staccato motif without sounding like secondhand Glass, while "Sequestration" is their deepest dive into post-Cage atmospheric. They deftly pull it all together on the closing "Crocus", as green shoots of melody break through the tundra.

**The Underflow**

**Instant Opaque Evening**

Drag City DL/2xLP

An entrancing document of Mats Gustafsson, Rob Mazurek and David Grubbs's 2020 European tour as The Underflow. Gustafsson's playing gets quieter and stranger as the years go by. On "Planks", his shakuhachi-like wisps of flute build to Rahsaan Roland Kirk style vocalisations, as he smacks his lips and gasps into the mouthpiece. Grubbs introduces lambent swelling guitar chords, while Mazurek weaves a bluesy thread of piccolo trumpet. "Self-Portrait As Interference Pattern" opens with Gustafsson drawing sizzling oscillator tones from his noise boxes while Grubbs spits acidic gobs of fuzz. Mazurek's trumpet alternates between manic runs and long trails of echo, anticipating the ambient leanings of the second half. A surprise coda of snuffling and belching baritone sax is the cherry on the cake. Grubbs successfully integrates song into the group sound, his pensive art rock a sturdy vehicle for improvisation.

**Colin Webster**

**Vs Amp**

Raw Tonk DL/LP

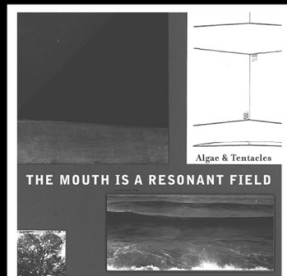
Manipulating amplifier feedback through his baritone saxophone, Colin Webster explores rhythm and tone, foregrounding the mechanics of the instrument and the presence of the breath. For "In Rama", Webster holds down a two-note motif on the righthand keys, embellishing it with percussive taps on the left. Named after an infamous crocodile, "Bujang Senang" sounds like distorted gamelan, with Webster firing spittle across syncopated rhythms. "Knife-Grinders Of Grimethorpe" recalls Vibracathedral Orchestra's psychedelic drone, while the bloopy synthesizer tones of "Flora" could accompany a Norman McLaren animation. On "The Flemish Weaver", a pulse tone gathers speed behind a mid-range drone – that loom is getting a serious workout. "Lapis Lazuli" puts it all together, as hornpipe-like tones bubble under a raspy drone and woody taps build into a gnaw-like trance. □



**DEREK MONYPENY**

*The Hand As Dealt*

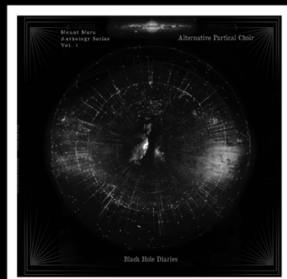
Fifth solo record by member of Alto! and Freak of Araby Ensemble  
Gatefold 2LP + 7 inch



**ALGAE & TENTACLES**

*The Mouth Is A Resonant Field*

Second full length by singer/improviser John Mellillo  
140g LP with Chapbook



**ALTERNATIVE PARTICLE CHOIR**

*Black Hole Diaries*

Trio of Alan Bishop, David Oliphant, and Joel Robinson  
Gatefold 2LP



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