

evolution of atmospheric glitch music that blurs the lines between what is acoustic, organic, spatial and virtual.

“Zauberwort” is taut, playful and warm, with brass and vocal tones swirling around extended minor sonorities, framed by edgy plucks of harp and guitar. The running piano figure of “Rytmy” emerges and disappears into a blur of sustain pedal, while open fourths and fifths envelope the figure in curvaceous streaks. “Cresta” assembles a ground loop of hyper-defined articulations on strings, skins and chimes around which synth filters gurgle, chirp and bounce.

The loop based musical structures serve mostly to frame Popp’s superabundant textures, which are undoubtedly the star of the show. Relief from repetition is achieved through variation and surprise textural drama, like when the airy portamento strings in “Wildwasser” enter, ushering in an amorphous, globular chamber music texture. “Elektrin”, with its jangly celeste, wobbly bass flute and fresh glitchy guitar, is a thing of fidgety beauty.

Another highlight is the copious yet poised “Touha” where dulcimers jangle heavy and delicate, extending restlessly in florid bursts and curled flourishes. *Romantiq* is hypnotic, curious and, at its best, genuinely fresh and beautiful.

Leah Kardos

Ozmotic | Fennesz

Senzatempo

Touch, DL/LP

This is the third collaborative release from Austrian guitarist/producer Christian Fennesz and Turin based multidisciplinary art duo Ozmotic (Stanislao Lesnoj and SmZ) following 2015’s *AirEffect*. From the start, *Senzatempo* (*Timeless*) was conceived as an exploration of the slippery nature of time and our sometimes altered perceptions of it. The chosen theme brought sharp nuance during the temporal strangeness of the pandemic, when the collaborators developed the material remotely in isolation. The resulting album consists of only four tracks, each one immersive, atmospherically resplendent, sprawling yet structurally intricate.

Senzatempo opens with the wide gaseous textures of the title track. Sharp bursts of hissing percussion keep the atmosphere pressurised without suggesting anything resembling a pulse, just a sense of intensifying stillness as Fennesz’s shimmering guitar gathers trails of tremulous detritus. “Floating Time” emerges lively and spitting with hiss, clicks and crackle into murky clouds of shuddering distorted guitar, huge and dreamy. The music is refreshingly harmonically driven, not built on inflexible drones but on a tonal firmament that shifts and winds, lending the hulking, unbound textures a sense of structure, direction and movement. “Motionless Image Of Eternity” is a mysterious, ascending, humongous flow. Fizzing and snarling, ever widening, full of awe.

As the title suggests, final track “Movements: I-II” is in two parts, the first amorphous and heavenly, but also sharp edged and taut with ghostly echoes, crackling surface noises, whooshing waves. The sound

escalates towards a bursting point, followed by the first and only rhythmic sequence of the record, a dark ambient groove scattered with glitched guitar and shards of field recordings. *Senzatempo* is like meditating on the edge of the abyss. An overwhelming stillness, majestic and dangerous.

Leah Kardos

The Purge Of Tomorrow

The Other Side Of Devastation

Modern Obscure DL/LP

Scotch Rolex & Shackleton

Death By Tickling

Silver Triplet DL/LP

A new pair of releases from UK producer Sam Shackleton, the first of which arrives under the new identity The Purge Of Tomorrow. *The Other Side Of Devastation* comprises two longform soundscapes, designed to “create an immersive encounter where listeners are called on to actively unburden their mind of unnecessary thoughts”.

Rather than achieve this meditative effect via the cosmic inertia of similarly ambient pieces, Shackleton creates something more energetic and unpredictable, drawing listeners in with weirdness rather than zoning them out with monotony. “Time Moving” begins with what sounds like the narrator of a TV science programme being swallowed into a black hole, the words squeezed and stretched alongside trippy chimes and a slowly unravelling electronic fuzz. This low key psychedelic effect is bolstered by violinist Kathy Alberici, whose strings warp and stretch across the frame until the vocals return, rising from beyond the event horizon one final time, still garbled and gloopy. “Waves” intensifies the aesthetic, so when the same samples rise from the mix, they are in the form of an almost unrecognisable granular glitch, as though denatured by colossal heat and pressure. While both pieces recall a less bassy version of Shackleton’s 2011 release *Fireworks*, the overt doominess of that record is replaced here with lysergic expansiveness.

Death By Tickling is Shackleton’s collaboration with Scotch Rolex aka DJ Scotch Egg aka Shigeru Ishihara. The Japanese musician has also worked with Alberici, who contributed violin to Ishihara’s 2010 Drum Eyes record *Gira Gira*. These ten pieces appear, at least initially, closer to the archetypal Shackleton sound: “The Blue Sun” buzzes and clicks over low ambient bass, swelling occasionally into twisted knots of solid pulse, while “Asterids (Enter Life)” and “Five Butterflies” take the cosmic drift of his The Purge Of Tomorrow work and charge it with a booming muscularity. However, it’s the addition of Ishihara’s top layer above Shackleton’s exciting low end which takes them elsewhere. “Deliver The Soul” scatters precision machined beats across cavernous reverb, funnelling into the gradually increasing pressure of “Final Spasm”, before the album’s closer “The Eleventh Voyage” compresses it all into a perfect diamond, all shimmering edges and perfect skittering corners spiralling around sinking bass.

At their best, these pieces combine the mutated drone movements of Shackleton’s recent *Departing Like Rivers* with the broken

trap punctuations of Ishihara’s 2021 release *Tewari*, alchemising some new heavy element in the middle ground.

Spenser Tomson

Fatima Al Qadiri

Gumar

Hyperdub DL/10"

Proc Fiskal

Rt Hon EP

Hyperdub DL

Santa Muerte

Eslabón EP

Hyperdub DL

These three EPs from Hyperdub may not encapsulate the label’s scope, but each is imprinted with some of its cardinal points. The one that chimes most with Hyperdub’s signature ambience is also the newest addition. Santa Muerte’s *Eslabón* conjures those twinkling cityscapes that haunted landmark releases like *Burial* or *Memories Of The Future*. Their city was of course London after the last tube home, the incipient form taking shape at the time being dubstep. Neither applies to Santa Muerte, the recording name of Mexico born, Texas based Panch Briones whose productions owe more to Southern hip-hop swing and dembow metre than the proverbial UK hardcore continuum. But the shadows cast are unmistakable.

Edinburgh producer Joe Powers aka Proc Fiskal has eased up slightly on the ambitious thematic of 2021’s *Siren Spine Sysex*, which hinted that his limber, grime-inflected braindance could constitute a reimagined national folk music. Not a bad idea, per se, but a big one – ungainly, even, given that one of Powers’s strengths is understatedness. The four tracks on *Rt Hon*, skittering and hyperkinetic yet oddly unfussy, demonstrate that they’re also low key, diaristic and non-voyeuristically intimate. They speak the digital love language that Powers once expressed a desire to seize from corporate clutches: “Social media notification sounds are designed to release serotonin,” he explained, “which is what I’d like my music to do... I’d like to think I’m taking back the power of the manipulation.”

Although Fatima Al Qadiri’s *Gumar* also employs comparable restraint and economy, it’s solemn by contrast, largely beatless, spacious and yearning. Al Qadiri’s collaborator is a Kuwaiti vocalist also named Gumar (Arabic for moon) whose heartbroken refrains are repeated throughout. The press blurb suggests that this EP builds on the producer’s last album, 2021’s *Medieval Femme*, but my thoughts are drawn less to Al Qadiri’s output as an auteur than to her portfolio as a film score composer. The tracks are structured less like songs than vignettes, motifs or themes, rich with implied cinematic narrative, stirring a desire to know the story of this enigmatic Gumar and how they came to be offering up these disconsolate vows to the night sky.

James Gormley

Lana Del Rabies

Strega Beata

Gilgongo CD/DL/LP

Strega Beata – Latin for *Blessed Witch* – is the third album from Arizona based musician

Sam An's electronic project Lana Del Rabies. This moody, simmering record is in turns reminiscent of 4AD goth, the ethereal righteousness of Zola Jesus and Lingua Ignota, and even the incongruous melodic sweetness of Nine Inch Nails – channelling its touchpoints and influences into a tightly focused and narratively compelling gothic saga.

An plays a game of concealment and revelation throughout the album, bringing musical elements into focus only to obscure others. On opener "Prayers Of Consequence" she sounds as though she is performing from under a thick sheet of frosted glass. On "Hallowed Is The Earth", a simple piano melody rings out from underneath a pin-sharp drumbeat, before becoming subsumed into a wall of white noise, controlled by An's half-spoken command.

This makes the elements that break surface all the more breathtaking, as with the crunchy electronics and gothic guitars of "Master". The central sequence of this and "Mother" seem related, like twins or reflections, both compelling journeys of a voice through unpredictable soundscapes. "Mother" is the album's central statement, a vocal line rippling through morphing industrial noise, reverbing piano, doomy near silence and repeated wailing. Perhaps because of the titles (there's also "Grace The Teacher") it's interesting to think of these nonlinear tracks as character studies, with An taking on the voices of archetypes.

An follows a grand tradition of industrial goth, but feels most contemporary on "Apocalypse Fatigue" – even the title is blankly reflective of life in 2023. It's an appropriately

slow, chugging dirge with every element dragging its heels in automatic forward motion, no beats quite lining up. An's screams and a violent beat are like jumpscare towards the end. Although the album closes on the more reflective, hopeful "Forgive", the lingering emotional residue of *Strega Beata* is a sludgy dread.

Claire Biddles

Saint Abdullah & Jason Nazary *Evicted In The Morning*

Disciples DL/LP

Saint Abdullah's *Mechanical Flirtations* was one of my albums of 2019, so I was keen to hear this new dialogue between the Tehran born brothers Mohammad and Mehdi Mehrabani-Yeganeh and the live drums of Jason Nazary (Anteloper/Clebs). It doesn't disappoint.

Former New Kingdom frontman Jason 'Nosaj' Furlow unites with producer Steel Tipped Dove for a stubbornly singular rap album

By Mosi Reeves

Nosaj from New Kingdom & Steel Tipped Dove *House Of Disorder*

Fused Arrow DL/LP

It's revealing how critics and fans cite Jason 'Nosaj' Furlow's group, New Kingdom, as an influence on triphop acts like Morcheeba, Tricky and Bomb The Bass in their "Bug Powder Dust" era. Formed in New York with producer-rapper Sebastian Laws, New Kingdom emerged three decades ago, a crucial period during which hip-hop began to cleave into haves and have-nots, each side judged by its mainstream viability. If the beloved likes of De La Soul occupied a tentative middle ground and moral restraint for the genre's capitalist extremes, then clotted, grungy mashers like "Good Times" and shout-y raps reminiscent of Beastie Boys marked New Kingdom as too far left for all but the most progressive heads.

New Kingdom split after two albums, 1993's *Heavy Load* and 1996's *Paradise Don't Come Cheap*, that are well worth seeking out. Nosaj's appearances since have been scattershot, ranging from peak turntablism-era fare like Material's *Intonarumori* and the *Altered Beats* compilation to Armand Hammer's 2020 album *Shrines* and The Bug's 2022 release *Absent Riddim*. In 2021, he joined with Brooklyn producer V8 TFD for the typically idiosyncratic *Acid Is Groovy Kill The Pigz*. Now comes *House Of Disorder*, a higher profile pairing with producer Joseph 'Steel Tipped Dove' Fusaro.

Six years ago, Nosaj released a two-track cassette produced by No Surrender, "Last Man Standing" backed with "Modern Man", that poked at his middle-aged frailties. The latter track kicks off *House Of Disorder*. "And where did this man in my mirror come from?/That's not the face I knew when I was young", Nosaj raps in a slight singsong lilt over acoustic guitar. Its shuffling beat, so key to his earlier New Kingdom work, puts the listener in a familiar place, even as it omits that group's youthful, noisy churn. But the languid "Modern Man" turns out to be just a respite. By next track "Beatles", Nosaj is back on his snarky, rah-rah bullshit. "John! Paul! Ringo! George fuckin' Harrison! N***as only need white boys on heroin! Keith Richards! Holy fuck! How he still alive!", he barks animatedly.

Part of Nosaj's charm is his fearlessness. He's unafraid to hide a song's true meaning amid a volley of apparent nonsense, as with "Beatles" and how it subtly questions why a Black iconoclast gets fewer creative opportunities than



Cluck the world: Jason 'Nosaj' Furlow

substance-addicted white rockers. The New Kingdom albums often sounded better than the sum of their parts, with jagged, uneven performances nevertheless adding to a satisfying and memorable whole. A similar result emerges with *House Of Disorder*. The boilerplate "A Whirlwind Among Breezes" peaks with a great summary of Nosaj's romantic frustration: "When did I become the evil that you despise?"

As Nosaj fulminates, Steel Tipped Dove proves a thoughtful interlocutor. This is the producer's second album this year, but unlike *All The Weight Feathers Don't Have*, he doesn't merely stick to hard boom-bap drums. On some cuts, digital melodies and percussive drops pulse softly underneath Nosaj's voice, careful not to get in the way when the rapper (with help from Eulas Pizarro) screams like Pastor Troy on "Lucille". But then there's a howling loop of gothic voices on "I'm The Magic Band And The Captain" and a hurly-burly electric guitar riff on "Rattlesnake". Why not opt for a singular musical strategy? Alas, Nosaj and Steel Tipped Dove are too contrarian to settle for the path one expects. ○