

between her own choir and of meditative vibraphone, subtly rough what she calls "broken" to generate glowing drones. A semi-rhythmic figure is perhaps a guitar. Then the vibraphone is prepared piano parked next to something like an electrically prepared piano parked next to a fall. Clouds of Judee Sill-style vocals hover in the distance. We're in a cave – people are rocks and whirling whistling and so it goes on. Finally Harris, for all her epic reverberation, here she stretches out, reworking in different versions. "Walking Inwards The House" is wall to wall. But "After Its Own Death" is a suite of nine segued pieces 10 minutes. A trip and a treat.

Oliver & Yan Jun

Of Divinity

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Oliver & Tim Orange

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beamed in from another world – soupy, messy, comforting. A sparse, blurry drone that might be pure, ethereal atmosphere serves as the backdrop for irregular blurts of car engine choking, metallic clatter, tonal howling and intermittent sci-fi echo. Industrious yet never overwhelming, *Lowering* emerges as an almost meditative experience: a loose net of wilful miniature accidents to drape over whatever confrontational silences abound in the world beyond a pair of headphones.

The comparatively animated *Brother Of Divinity* trades heavily in sinewaves scrambled gently or aggressively, with samples snuck into the general surface melée: a *Where's Waldo?* approach, with Waldo replaced by a crying kitten or squashed snatch of pop or re-re-regurgitated Morse code guitar. In their questing, Olive and Yan Jun – the former on magnetic pickups, both on electronics – seem determined to draw down on or sharpen some ineffable sensation, like amateur radio enthusiasts straining to lock onto a pirate radio signal halfway around the world. Rubbery, stippling pulses, piercing squeaks and sheets of shivering static are their (and our) rewards for sonic labours that are anything but plain, anything but anonymous.

Raymond Cummings

Ossia

Devil's Dance

Blackest Ever Black DL/LP

The output of Young Echo's loosely networked 11 members spans Vessel's baroque tactility, Zhou's brooding techno haze and *Q\$VMV\$M*'s murky dub, among others. They each have their own distinct approaches to building on sound system culture but somehow manage to evoke a peculiar sense of downcast stoicism that seems quite specific to their port city surroundings.

Daniel Davies aka Ossia's *Devil's Dance* is no different, its visceral alienation earning him a spot alongside the gloomy future R&B of fellow Young Echo project Jabu on the Blackest Ever Black roster. But where the latter trio weave harmonies around crackling tones of kitsch sentimentality, Ossia's growling sound design is a deep sea drop into the darkest corners of the primal subconscious or a nauseous amble into subterranean horror.

Titles like "Radiation", "Inertia" and "Slow Dance" set the languid pace of eight tracks that bristle with abstract menace. "Dub Hell" leads its crumbling beats and abrasive, broken synths on a fierce march. A heavily distorted bass wobble on "Hell Version" crashes over signals, reverb and tape hiss before relaxing into a muted bass line that bursts into a muffled calm about half way through.

Rough to the touch, the album artwork features a grayscale photocopy of the title in block letters. Brushes of toner particles obstruct the image's white

background, much like the weathered Shepard tone on the groggy 24 minute closer of "Vertigo" swallows its accompanying instrumentation. This dub-soaked ambient noise epic soars in a dreamy trip through Ossia's grime, techno and jazz influences. Ollie Moore's noir-ish saxophone leads out of a swell of atmospheric into eroded bird song recordings, sirens, an organ line, before a vocal and a violin that are virtually indistinguishable from each other are pummelled by a throbbing industrial beat.

It's in these moments of damp Bristolian introspection that Ossia's sound leans in on its Young Echo milieu most elegantly.

Steph Kretowicz

Jessica Pavone

In The Action

Relative Pitch CD/DL

In the years after she first moved to New York in 2000, Jessica Pavone pursued versatility like her life depended on it. She composed rigorously idiomatic chamber music for string quartets and sang like an amateur in her duo with Mary Halvorson. She doubled on violin and viola, taught music, and played gigs with John Zorn, William Parker and Anthony Braxton. But then she sustained a back injury that kept her away from the viola for two years. When she returned to it she was determined to play only what she wanted to play, and that was tones that made the thing ring.

In The Action is Pavone's third solo recording since she and the viola got reacquainted, and like its predecessors it is short at just over 27 minutes, but intensely physical. Pavone doesn't just bow her instrument's strings, she rakes them like she wants to rattle some windows. On the other hand she's also patient when it suits her.

The melody of opening track "Oscillatory Salt Transport" materialises gradually out of a series of long-held tones, hanging in the air before she starts to rush the tempo, stroking faster and faster before resolving the resulting cloud of overtones with a second them as low and lonesome as country relative's admonishment to go no further. But that's exactly what she does here, enacting the same pattern several times before the piece ends.

Swinging a corrosive signal chain like she wants to wrap it around someone's neck, she presses the attack still further on the next two tracks. Each plucked note of "And Maybe In The End" triggers a fat, distorted rejoinder, and "Look Out – Look Out – Look Out" sounds like it was played on helicopter blades instead of viola strings. The final track is a standoff between a keening lament, its acid-dipped ghost, and a sequence of loops and stutters. Nowadays Pavone stakes her claim on single-minded intensity, not stylistic versatility.

Bill Meyer

Penance Stare

Solanaceae

Crow Versus Crow DL/MC

With her second album *Penance Stare* aka Esmé Louise Newman has manufactured a stormy, distorted megalith from forces both industrial and ethereal. Ploughing a particularly gothic British furrow (Newman is from Gateshead) *Solanaceae*, Latin for the nightshade plant, constructs a warped folk horror atmosphere that is translated through a blast furnace and spread out over several decades and genres. *Sleeping Beauty* will wake up eventually, it promises, though it is not a kiss but a roar that awaits her.

All of the ten tracks come in at under four minutes, though they seem much more epic in the listening and tap into various gloomy and mysterious currents. The shoegaze influence is undeniable, with buried, anguished vocals hiding in the back room, pummelling, refracted guitars blocking the entrance way, generating the strange impression that all of this has happened before.

This is music for graves, for howling girls and primal feelings, but it is also a reminder of the awesome power of nature channelled through industry, of the power of the machine to make nature shudder and for nature in turn to make the machine weep. Drum machines, which threaten to disrupt the chthonic with their obvious artifice are here nevertheless not in opposition to the deep, cavernous emanations that ens swirl them.

Guitars follow arpeggios follow distant voices, particularly audible on the title track, driving up a plaintive, wide open plainsong that summons moors and the bashing of rocks together as much as they conjure up female pain and, ultimately, a certain kind of pagan acceptance.

Nina Power

Iggy Luigi Pignatiello & Kevin G Davy

The Six Seasons

Bandcamp DL

This collaboration between British-Italian acoustic guitarist Iggy Luigi Pignatiello and London based trumpeter Kevin G Davy is deceptive. As little as a climate chart reflects the weather on an individual day, or a forecast can predict the dance of cloud and breeze from moment to moment, for all their easy surface charm, these 12 mutable improvisations are dappled with nuance and absorbing details.

Presented as a double EP, each part of *The Six Seasons* – *Austral* and *Boreal* – has tracks titled according to traditional names for seasons in India. It's unclear whether these were used as inspirations for Pignatiello and Davy's instant compositions or were applied retrospectively. Overall, an atmosphere of springtime optimism dominates, largely due to Davy's trumpet. With a varied CV that includes leading his own quintet, recording with Lamb and a youth spent in the plangent company of Nottingham's brass bands, his playing is never strident

or brash. A fine, breathy grain hazes and humanises the clearness of his tone, a gentle vibrato curving the edges as each sustained note unfurls.

Though the improvisations have a tonal anchor and rhythmic regularity clearly rooted in the pair's classical and jazz backgrounds, nothing here feels overly constrained by the harmonic rulebook. Using both nylon and steel-stringed guitars, Pignatiello's playing often draws upon bluesy chord sequences and arpeggiated picking patterns but without dragging Davy into genre confines. When Davy picks up the cue for a louche, breathy summertime blues in "Grishma" it's done with the lightness of a tongue-in-cheek quotation; on "Sharad", his response to Pignatiello becomes distracted from itself, riffing through shifting timbres and mutating tremolo.

That many of the pieces here could pass for notated compositions attests to the pair's unspoken communication. On "Vasanta", Pignatiello's picking zigzags restlessly, providing a springboard for Davy to leap from softly guttural raspberries to darting staccato passages and exuberant whinnying. Likewise, Pignatiello darts around the fretboard as the pair good-naturedly tussle to take the lead in *Boreal's* "Vasanta 2".

The somersaulting "Hemanta 2" is the nearest the duo come to really kicking loose, Davy spiralling upwards with an uncharacteristically pinched, unstable trumpet line while Pignatiello's bass strings buzz with the impact of his strum. **Abi Bliss**

Annabelle Playe

Geyser

DAC DL/LP

Annabelle Playe's third LP explores the compositional techniques employed by the GRM school of electroacoustic music as well as the foreboding depths made familiar by industrial and dark ambient. Cavernous drones anchor pulses of static noise and sound beams across a bleak canvas, with "Geyser A" reminiscent of a distress signal from beneath the frozen lake. The churning synthesis gathers

force as the composition centres towards a convulsing distortion, overtaken by a punishing phaser before its abrupt end.

"Geyser B" begins like a cut scene, reverberating snares and sharp bow scrapes punctuate deeply tuned singing bowls before a piercing tone ushers in an unfolding arc of bruised machines. The still moments towards the end of *Geyser* offer little respite; Playe often leaves an ominous spectre, be it a granular residue of sound, a dull bleep in the background or sudden shocks of noise. Taken as a whole *Geyser* portrays a dystopia reminiscent of the game *Frostpunk*, with lumbering mechanisms puncturing a cruel landscape.

Central to Playe's work on *Geyser* is the intriguing use of distortion. In contradiction to ambient and immersive techniques noise is often brickwalled, in the sense that it feels like being witness to destruction behind a glass wall. In part it creates a separation between the sound and the listener, with all texture save for the swelling drones lost. However this distance creates a dramatic paralysis in which the lack of tactility of the sounds subordinates the experiential position. Face pressed against the surface, the listener is unable to change the unfolding chaos that lies ahead.

Jon Davies

Maja Ratkje

Sult

Rune Grammofon CD/DL/LP

Sult is a suite of improvisations based on music created for the Norwegian National Ballet; a continuation of composer Maja Ratkje's decade-long work composing for live performance. The compositions began as accompaniment for an adaptation of *Hunger* by Knut Hamsun, an early example of modern psychological fiction which follows an unnamed writer in 19th century Oslo, hindered by self-destructive impulses. The recording cultivates the book's distinct sense of place, while mirroring its depictions of unstable mental states.

The compositions are played on a modified pump organ, which Ratkje learned to play in situ as the performances

happened: free improvisation stretched to its emancipative end. Ratkje allows herself time and space to feel the limits of her new, unique instrument, and to capitalise on the opportunity for sonic invention through unfamiliarity.

"Introduksjon – Denne Forunderlige By" ("This Marvellous City" – the song titles are quotations from the novel) is an expansive beginning, based around a mournful organ drone, looping and layering. As the record develops, the modified sections of her set-up reveal themselves: guitar strings, percussive objects, tubes and a wind machine built into or onto the instrument by Ratkje in collaboration with technicians at the Oslo Opera House. On "Den Sprættende Bevægelse Min Fot Gjør Hver Gang Pulsen Slår", an urgent organ refrain and Foley-esque percussive sounds emulate the overwhelming urban setting of the novel. The song features a gentler version of the percussive vocal experiments developed by Ratkje in her solo work, and with her improv group Spunk.

"En Træflis Å Tygge På" is an abstract street scene, approximating the surprising harmony of a street musician, a whistling passerby, and the rattling of chains and crunching of papers underfoot. These abstract, atonal interludes interact with mournful chamber songs such as "Øine Som Råsilke, Armer Av Rav" – a mirror of the erratic and nonlinear depiction of varying states of madness described in the novel.

Reflecting on the initial performances of *Sult*, Ratkje stated her intention for "the music to be ugly and tender and rough and fragile at the same time". Her audacious, adaptable voice and Frankenstein's monster of an instrument are well-suited to this contradictory reflection of the complex, damaged human psyche. **Claire Biddles**

Julia Reidy

brace, brace

Slip DL/LP

The textures and tones of a 12-string guitar are broken apart, twanged and

stretched across this h from the Sydney born. E improviser Julia Reidy. I walls of drone and built electronic smokescreer between soothing repe discordant crunching. I the same long track. Th between 11 and 15 min briefer "Lament", a dre and buckled psych-folk minutes.

Reidy's technical sk endless experimental brace, brace sound like Robbie Basho playing t a disorientating, sweat nimbly prodding away t confusion crawls into t presences also seem t her metallic meanderin as if a cavernous, cold hosting a gig where all been drugged but are t sleep, maniacally loopy over and over as their

Blissful, bending sh an insistent burst of fi "Draw" but the Auto-T adds in elsewhere on t from the staggering se and batters from her g enhancing it. Besides i it's a fierce unleashing the album around bet sun-stroked and scan **Claire Sawers**

SB The Moor

SPIRIT REALM.FINAL

Deathbom And DL MC

Sharkula & Mukqs

Prune City

Haus & Mountain DL MC

SB The Moor (formerly The Moor) might just t because I find that at *REALM.FINAL* makes n uncomfortable as Don once did – and he end my favourite TV show and a fantastic funk a *My Love* in the same

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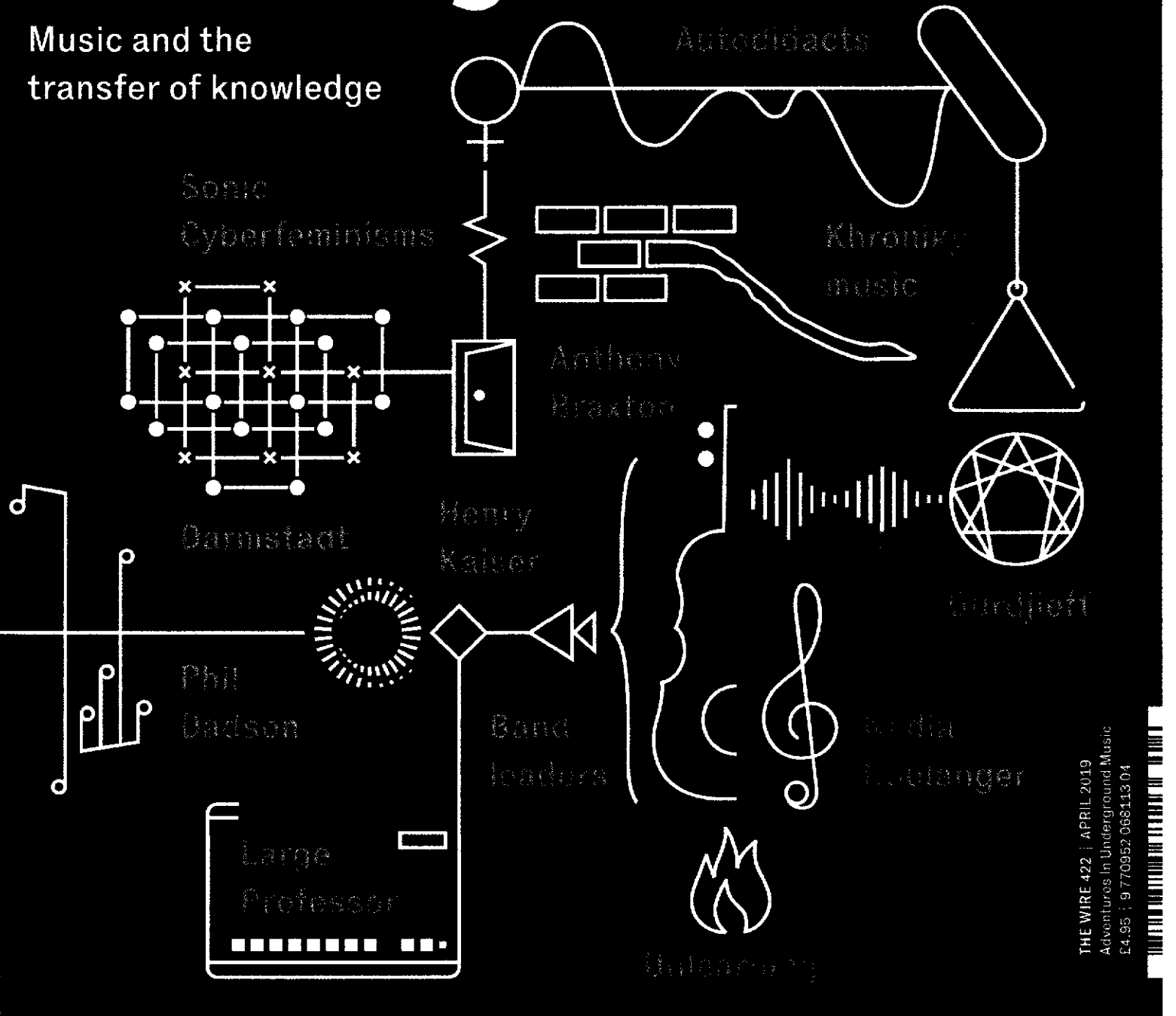
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