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2-STEP REMIX OF 'NEVER GONNA
LET YOU GO' BY TINA MOORE /
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Going Further

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Album of the Month

Pic: DASOMHAN



Yaeji

With A Hammer

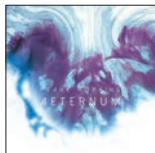
XL Recordings

Rebuilding a sound

IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS since the world was introduced to Korean-American artist Yaeji via her self-titled debut EP back in 2017. A dreamy debut of soft electronics and her own silky vocals on some tracks, while exploring Lustwerk-esque house sentiments and gritty percussion on others, the release not only dripped in promise, but also served as one of the most original debuts from a new producer in the last decade. The same year, Yaeji dropped a flurry of releases, like fizzy pop single 'Therapy', her second EP which featured club favourite 'Raingurl', and a cover of Drake's 'Passionfruit'. While the early releases mostly followed a blueprint of dancefloor sentiments – catchy hooks and Dear Diary vocals – Yaeji still found a way to build in snapshot moments of cinematic sound design and periods of abstract introspection. As a listener, it almost felt like the artist was holding back, not quite ready to push the limits of her own sound. While those snapshot moments still appeared in her subsequent drops, the release of 2020's 'What We Drew = 우리가 그려왔던' – which stripped back the glossy club beats even

further and offered more insular, exploratory soundscapes – really set the stage for her 2023 debut LP 'With A Hammer'. Combining the influences of Korean indie rock, and pop from the '90s and early '00s, with her own sound that hovers on the outskirts of house music, Yaeji told fans: "I wanted to begin this album with intent. I want to take all that I've suppressed and let it breathe and live through their process of creation. I want my music to be free." It's the story of her "hammer", she added, "created from my anger". It's a statement that rings true from the album's bold opening, with Yaeji inviting the listener into her world of artistic alchemy, pairing wind instruments and sugary synths with suspense-filled seconds on vocal cut 'Submerge FM'. It's a perfectly balanced introduction that's both enthralling and enticing and begins to construct the foundations for Yaeji's world within 'With A Hammer' – built from bricks of freedom and her sound evolution, cemented with the elements that make her music click with fans. The last sentiment is even more apparent

on 'For Granted'. The album's first official single, it's one of the more atypical Yaeji productions on offer, but the earworm melody, catchy lyrics and freefall into chaotic breaks re-contextualises sounds that have become synonymous with her production. On some of the album's tracks, like the off-kilter, glitchy 'Fever' and 'Away x5', and the beautiful, soaring 'I'll Remember For Me, I'll Remember For You', there's the sense of contrast that's been nurtured in recent years by artists like Arca, Björk and the late SOPHIE; abrasive stuttered electronics offering a backdrop for softer elements. It's especially prevalent on the hazy 'Passed Me By': a trip-hop beat simmering beneath Yaeji's Korean and English lyrics that make breathy, cryptic comparisons. There's also a number of collaborations on 'With A Hammer', with Yaeji sharing tracks alongside NYC-based producer and SLINK resident K Wata, and Baltimore's Nourished By Time. '1 Thing To Smash', the album's penultimate track featuring London-based Hyperdub affiliate Loraine James, further explores abstract fusion, with the pair's vocals crooning softly about destruction. On 'With A Hammer', Yaeji breaks apart her sound to rebuild it, resulting in something that remains not only authentically Yaeji, but also serves as an introduction into the new world she's creating. **AMY FIELDING**



Frank Hopkins

Aeternum
Rise/Float
Sonic Delights

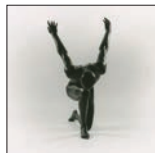
Frank Hopkins is an emerging name in the leftfield electronic scene, already gaining strong favour from the likes of Jaguar and Mary Anne Hobbs who've already aired his works on their shows. His new album firms up their early support. With a nod to his namesake Jon Hopkins, plus expert knob-twiddlers Aphex Twin and Four Tet, the artist explores the delicate structures of electronica, layering and building into a crescendo of sonic harmony whilst adding his own dimension to it. Lush pads and ethereal moments create air and atmosphere, whilst the tricked-out beats dance deftly with synthesised tones bringing it back to the ground. The album's title track treats the listener to a slice of the Hopkins sound wrapped around the other eight pieces of music — a richly textured evolving soundscape that is simply a treat for the ears. **MICK WILSON**



uh

HUMANUS
Moshi Moshi Music
Bubblegum

'Humanus', the debut album from London-based brother-sister duo uh, feels like a rave in a ball-pit hurtling through space. There's an uncanniness hinted at by the album's title — human, but not quite — first delivered by meditative spoken word segments that float over new age ambience in tracks 'prelude' and 'attention'. The latter evolves into a jaunty synth-pop number, with plenty of reverb-heavy vocals that lend a Celtic flair to the electronic noodling of its latter half. 'Hit' breaks things down again, with a choppy kick pattern that turns almost dubby toward its conclusion alongside vocals echoed to oblivion. With six tracks over five minutes long, uh's not afraid to sit within a sonic progression, and often to hypnotic effect; '500 ascended' propels itself with a breakbeat and a dream; 'sister' closes the album with cosmic twiddling in the vastness of outer space. **JAMES GUI**



Petite Noir

Mother.Father
Warp/ROYA
Darkness meets light

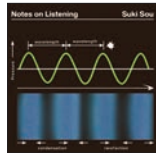
Yannick Ilunga, aka Petite Noir, returns with his second album proper, 'Mother.Father', in which chinks of light emerge from darkness. The South African soloist continues to jumble post-punk sentiments with Afropop beats and electronics as he did on his 2015 debut. But where 2018's mini-album 'La Maison Noir/The Black House' bolstered his sound and lyrical polemics with militarist beats, 'Mother.Father' is generally a more muted affair with flashes of vigour that reveal Ilunga's inner turbulence. While 'Blurry' feat. Sampa The Great is a stunning, sluggish trip-hop rumination on heartbreak, 'Finding Paradise' jacks the tempo with huge, earthy rhythms. Joyous marimba melodies celebrate Ilunga's faith in life. The dubby, brass-backed 'Simple Things' feat. Theo Croker explores racial divides while the kinetic breakbeat of 'Play' rounds off the record. **CHARLOTTE KROL**



Nabihah Iqbal

Dreamer
Ninja Tune
Dancefloor dream-pop

Nabihah Iqbal was forced to make this album afresh after her studio was burgled in early 2020. That upheaval was followed by another. The London artist became locked down in Pakistan after visiting family in the wake of her grandfather's brain haemorrhage. 'Dreamer' was initially sketched there with just an acoustic guitar and a harmonium. The opening tracks' looping structures, whirring round in a lo-fi haze of dream-pop, reflect Iqbal's stream of consciousness as she wrote anew. Unlike her 2017 album debut, 'Dreamer' more freely transposes elements of her sometimes frustratingly directionless tracks ('Sweet Emotion', 'In Light') onto the dancefloor. Highlight 'Gentle Heart' hears her lift simmering synths and washed-out vocals with acid house sonics and '80s cowbell taps. Heady atmospheric feeding the euphoric escapism of club music. **CHARLOTTE KROL**



Suki Sou

Notes On Listening
Curious Music
Pastoral palettes

Music is a temporal art form, a medium bound to a linear experience. Yet some musicians can achieve a sense of infinitude in their sound by mimicking nature's eternal qualities. Making Mother Earth her muse, Suki Sou's endless arpeggios undulate like waves folding into themselves, whilst far above, dense gossamer drones ripple and expand endlessly like our universe. Best devoured in one fell swoop, 'Notes On Listening' leans into the Macau-born sound designer's lifelong synaesthesia and purveyance of the early electronic modes of kosmische and proto-techno, to create a seven-part aural tapestry of our ever-changing cosmos. A highlight is where quivering pads and soft syncopated loops punctuate the formlessness of 'Kelvin-Helmholtz Clouds' (a phenomenon wherein rising air creates wave-like formations). Ambient at its best. **OLIVIA STOCK**



Dele Sosimi & The Estuary 21

The Confluence
Wah Wah 45s
Afrobeat all-star

Dele Sosimi brings lush jazz and global pop inflections to his trademark Afrobeat fusions here. For 'The Confluence', the keyboardist and composer enlists the help of producer Sam Duckworth (aka Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly), and a team of specially assembled musicians — The Estuary 21. Across six tracks, they dig into the nuts and bolts of Afrobeat, highlighting the spontaneity, collaboration and celebration that underpin the genre. 'E Si'me Do' takes its lead from percussionist Afla Sackey (Afrík Bawantu/Ibibio Sound Machine), breaking into a dialogue of brass, keys and Lizzy Dosunmu's unflinching vocal line, while 'Mo Se Bo La Tan' offers a meditative beat embellished with dynamic jazz snatches and mellow harmonies. Finally, 'Ori Mi' builds from a moody rhythm section to a clamorous brassy ensemble. **OLIVIA CHEVES**



Isola

LP1
Smartdumb
Lovestruck microhouse

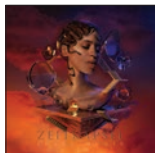
Based in the farmlands of West Virginia, Isola is the latest pseudonym of Vegas-born artist Ivana Carrescia. The composer and synthesist has already amassed a shape-shifting career, from her days as indie singer Eddi Front, and the electro-pop of her Gioia project — the latter being her first collaboration with co-producer and Smartdumb/Godmode head, Nick Sylvester. Her latest incarnation transforms found sounds and honeyed vocals into pastel-hued house on this warm sonic offering. 'LP1' is a soft-hearted thing — a cocoon of gently pulsating basslines and fizzing electronics — designed to mimic the giddiness of falling in love. 'Too Soon' bubbles with the excitement of early infatuation; 'Heaven' apes the thump of a heart that beats just a little bit harder; 'Sundowner', with its tightening tempo and swelling cadences, is the dizzying euphoria of the fall. Smitten. **OLIVIA CHEVES**



Desire Marea

On The Romance Of Being
Mute
Spirit medicine

Amandawe singer and experimentalist Desire Marea broke into underground consciousness as part of the Johannesburg duo FAKA, emerging in 2020 with his debut album 'Desire', a heady din of abstract expressionism built on computer programs and mystical vibes. "My ancestors gave me an instruction to record this with a live band," says Marea by way of an introduction here. There are more players on this album — denizens of the South African jazz and experimental scenes — but the effect is similar, every bit as big, cacophonous and overwhelming as its predecessor. The ultra-critical may argue there's nothing boasting the unabashed melodic beauty of 'Tavern Kween', but on the soaring 'Makhukhu' and 10-minute freakout 'Banzi', Marea and his band create a dizzy, frighteningly affecting spectacle worthy of an opera house. **SAM DAVIES**



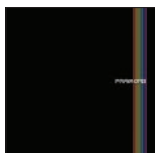
Joyce Muniz

Zeitkapsel

Joycemunizmusic

Electro-infused eclecticism

Brazil-born, Berlin-based producer and DJ Joyce Muniz has enjoyed an enviably varied musical career, collaborating with everyone from Maya Jane Coles to DJ Hell, releasing on a tonne of great labels and even remixing Paul Simon. Her musical output is suitably diverse, but usually driven by any number of club moods, a theme that continues on wide-ranging second album 'Zeitkapsel'. There's all sorts going on here, but thankfully, everything is executed with care and musical craft. Opener 'These Days' is a chunky electro number; 'The Rhythm Is Love' (feat. ex-Azari & Ill's Fritz Helder) is fleeting, disco-indebted house; 'In Der Nacht' (feat. DJ and Queer activist Karl Michael) recalls the heady days of electroclash; 'Never Brushing The Sound' (with British MC Le3 bLACK) floats through sludgy trip-hop. Enough hefty beats and breaks to keep the dancefloors happy. **TRISTAN PARKER**



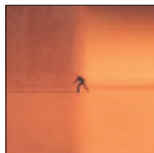
The Orb

Prism

Cooking Vinyl

More Ultraworld adventures

The Orb sacrificed chances of mainstream glory decades ago. Over the past 35 years, they've refused to even flirt with anything like commercialism, and in doing so secured a permanent spot in the pantheon of psychedelic rave via deep musical explorations informed by techno, dub, kosmische, and the ambient house they first pioneered. 'Prism' is a case in point, playing out like hazy aural memories from a weekend of free parties and sound system culture. A nine-track artwork painted with varied strokes, it spans the loose looped house-funk of 'why you can be in two places at once, when you can't be anywhere at all... where's gary mix', to the respective reggae and rocksteady hues of 'dragon of the ocean' and 'a ghetto love story', and timeless four-four acid on 'the beginning of the end' and 'H.O.M.E. high orbs mini earths'. **MARTIN GUTTRIDGE-HEWITT**



Medasin

Always In A Hurry

Maison Arts

Step, don't run

Texas-based producer Medasin may owe his popularity to the worldwide lo-fi hip-hop craze in the 2010s, but his latest album 'Always In A Hurry' is an expansive attempt to break out of that mould.

The title track opens with a percussive flourish before bursting into a drum & bass breakdown. 'star song' picks up from the ashes, bringing the energy back up to a lively clip with warm drums that orbit around a 2-step rhythm, propelled by misty synths. Then there's the sax solo that dissolves into an impressionistic piano outro leading directly into 'stretch'.

The album is characterised by this fluidity, the chillout haze of his previous work distilled into its affective essence. But rather than mere elevator music — as one track is jokingly titled — new percussive sensibilities drawn from UK dance music inject a crucial dynamism to Medasin's sound. **JAMES GUI**



Joshua Idehen

Learn To Swim

Self-release

Uncle rap

Lots of rappers embrace gospel music these days, with mixed results. On 'Don't You Give Up On Me' and 'This World's A Madness', the opening one-two of Joshua Idehen's new mixtape, the London born, Stockholm-based MC employs a choir to belt out his words of affirmation, and the results are spectacular. Now, many years into a patchwork career (check out his excellent 2011 album 'Routes' with LV on Keysound), Idehen's trademark motivational ramblings are in full force, never more so than on the stirring 'Stay Cool, Learn To Swim'; amid a barrage of non-sequiturs Idehen drops pure wisdom: "Recognise the difference between alone and lonely; More often than not you will not resolve all loose ends; Your life isn't that kind of movie; It's more of a rambling soap opera that will eventually run out of budget". Here's hoping he lasts a few more seasons. **SAM DAVIES**



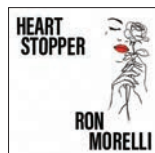
Paul St. Hilaire

Tikiman Vol.1

Kynant Records

Riddims & voice

When the voice of dub techno speaks, you listen. Giving us his first solo album in over a decade, the Dominican-born, Berlin-dwelling vocalist and producer Paul St. Hilaire, aka Tikiman, returns with nine slabs of rumbling, grumbling beats and poetry to make your head nod and the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. You'll recognise his voice from such underground classics as Rhythm & Sound's 'Never Tell You', Moderat's 'Slow Match' and Larry Heard's 'Stratusfly', but perhaps underrated is Tikiman's wizardry on the buttons. From his home studio in Kreuzberg, only a true reggae technician could conjure the deep-dish bass crust on the traveller's lament 'Bed Room In My Bag'. Everything here is worthy of his own esteemed canon, but best of all is 'Keep Safe', a digital swamp of noise and vocals culminating in a bloody guitar solo. Roll on Vol. 2. **SAM DAVIES**

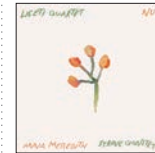


Ron Morrelli

Heart Stopper

L.I.E.S.

It's not an overstatement to say that Ron Morrelli was one of the most influential figures of clubland in the 2010s. Through his labels L.I.E.S., he ushered in a new era of kick-drums recorded in the red, EBM melodies, and a punk sensibility that rearranged dancefloors worldwide. He's typically, however, kept his own releases for other labels like fellow provocateurs Hospital Record. But on 'Heart Stopper', Morrelli brings it home, turning out two discs of vintage analog funk. The record feels like a whirlwind tour of everything that makes Morelli and L.I.E.S. great. We have blown-out drum tracks ('Subway Shootout'), eerie wave ('Ron's Torture'), apocalyptic techno ('Rule Is To Survive'), and, of course, a hearty dose of straight-up jackin' house ('House Music Revenge'). 'Heart Stopper' is a master of his craft taking a well-deserved victory lap. **HENRY IVRY**



Ligeti Quartet & Anna Meredith

Nuc

Mercury KX

String before synths

With a history dating back to 2010, Ligeti Quartet sit at the bleeding edge of contemporary strings. So, turning their attention to the work of award-winning composer Anna Meredith was always inevitable. Here the Ligeti players interpret Meredith's compositions, and make them their own. Opener 'Tuggemo' shows what's possible when orchestral notes take the lead over synthesised sound, rather than being forced to fit in and around them. Anyone here for the kind of dance-classical hybrids that have become ten-a-penny over the last decade will find themselves coming up short. Instead, 'Nuc' is an exercise in innovative instrumentals with plugged-in aspects, spanning crescendo-filled curios ('Solstice In'), reflective mournful moods ('Haze', 'Solstice Out'), arpeggiated frenzies ('Shill') and dramatic builders ('Nautilus'). **MARTIN GUTTRIDGE-HEWITT**



Avalon Emerson & The Charm

Avalon Emerson & The Charm

Another Dove

Crystalline Pop

Ever since the heartbreaking synths of Avalon Emerson's 'The Frontier', her songs have unfolded with the dramatic pacing of the best pop records. She goes all in on her debut LP, 'Avalon Emerson & The Charm', an album filled with weirdo love songs. Executive produced by fellow club-turned-pop auteur, Bullion, the instrumentation is dainty and faint, somewhere between Cocteau Twins and Destroyer as staccato synth lines duet with the occasional string or guitar. Emerson previously covered The Magnetic Fields and her lyrics have the same force of Stephen Merritt's, as the conversational and mundane is transformed into wondrous metaphor ("What did you wear on Halloween?" or "And I was warm like bath water", for instance). There are occasional gestures towards her day job, but these are songs for long car drives, not Panorama Bar. **HENRY IVRY**

Compilation of the Month

Pic: BAILEY SLATER



V/A

Interplanetary Criminal: All Thru The Night

Locked On Records

Essential overview

THE RETURN OF GARAGE is no longer a revival, it's a revolution. Foundations were being laid deep in the underground as far back as 2010, but Conducta producing AJ Tracey's breakout garage anthem 'Ladbroke Grove' in 2019 was the moment it all kicked off proper. The infectious tune was that summer's biggest hit. It climbed to number three in the charts and garage has barely been out of the Top 10 ever since.

Last summer, in fact, was dominated by the sweet vocals and bouncy bass of 'B.O.T.A. (Baddest of Them All)'. It bled from car stereos, out of supermarket tannoy and all across festival main stages throughout the hottest months. Eliza Rose was the vocalist and Interplanetary Criminal the beat-maker, which makes him the perfect candidate to put together this fresh new garage collection for Locked On. The legendary label was formed in 1996 by Tarik Nashnush in the backroom of a record shop he ran on Holloway Road. It remains garage's most influential label, having put out classic material by The Streets, countless crucial 12"s and

three self-titled compilations, the last of which came in 1998. Its return in 2023 is welcome: rather than some cynical cash-in that rehashes old hits, this is an on-point collection carefully curated by a new school of talent.

Manchester-based Zachary Bruce was born in 1993, so came up around vocal classics like 'Sweet Like Chocolate' and 'Babycakes'. His youth was spent mostly around the north of England, which is where sub-genres like bassline, speed garage and even donk all have their roots. They are some of the influences that colour his already well-formed sounds which are unpretentious, primed for a party and full of bounce — all while taking in plenty of stylistic twists and turns. For evidence look no further than the 15 tracks here. The Criminal takes care of the opening trio of cuts — there's the smooth grooves and silky vocals of 'Don't Hurt Me' with Porij, the clipped funk and vulnerable vocals of 'Reckless' with Todd Edwards, which is a nice nod to the pioneer's lasting legacy, and the darker 2-step energy of solo cut 'Why'.

Chavinski x Eli Murphy's 'O.B.F.C.' is the next standout: a deeper cut with proper songwriting that harks back to the glory days of female-fronted garage acts. It's a tune that hits an emotional sweet spot, while a tune like Ollie Rant's 'A Love Like' is much more physical. The vocals are cut and chopped to amp up the energy, the drums are kinetic and bassline infectious. Elsewhere, Main Phase's 'Shake' has a shuffle that nods to the early '90s US garage sound which so heavily influenced the eventual birth of UKG.

No contemporary garage collection would be complete without a tune from the prolific Holloway who brings his signature warped bass, late-night urban energy and glitchy textures to 'On 'Em'. There are further gems from DJ Perception — another driving force behind the garage resurgence whose 'Jump Up' is all splashy claps, seductive sax lines and lush chords — and a contribution from Frazer Ray, aka Soundbwoy Killah, that is a brilliant distillation of many different strains of UK bass music.

'All Thru The Night' unfolds like a DJ mix as it ebbs and flows through different moods and grooves. Along the way, garage's past, present and future are all well represented. It's a collection which suggests the genre is in safe hands.

KRISTAN J CARYL



Les Abranis

Amazigh Freedom Rock 1973-1983
Bongo Joe Records
Kabyle folk funk

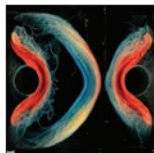
Shamy El Baz and Karim Abdenour met in Paris in the mid-'60s. Part of the Kabyle Amazigh diaspora, they had both fled Algeria after the war of independence ushered in a repressive conservative government. United by a passion for rock, disco and funk, they began experimenting, mixing elements of these genres with traditional Kabyle folk and chaabi, finally establishing themselves as Les Abranis in 1967. Bongo Joe has boiled the band's back catalogue into an impressively cohesive chronology, running through all four of their albums, from the early sounds of the '70s through to their 1983 hiatus. Tracks such as 'Athedjaladde' lean heavily on blues, surf and garage rock, held up by Samir Chebane's deft percussion, while a move towards psych and prog characterise their later outputs, heard here in the plinky synths of 'Therrza Rathwenza' and the complex pseudo-prog of 'Mmliyi Kan'. **OLIVIA CHEVES**



V/A

By Hook or By Crook Vol. 1
N-Face
Next gen bass

It has been a hot-minute since Dublin's Sputnik One launched his N-Face label with two-tracker 'Supa Natural/Grafters'. A collaborative effort involving Belfast-based grime artist EMBY, the release added to growing evidence that the two Irish capitals have blossomed in bass and MC cultural terms. Eight months on, or thereabouts, and 'By Hook or Crook Vol.1' is an in-depth introduction to the imprint's overall ambitions. Save for a few slower offerings, like the chugging drums of 'False Cognate' or the skeletal beats of 'Treats', the tracks largely fall into the dark, spatial end of the 140 spectrum, essentially taking the sounds of intimate basements and packaging them for posterity. Infectious percussion, heads-down atmospherics, rooted in dubstep, touching on broken techno and mutant garage, all showcasing a slew of enviably skilled rising talent. **MARTIN GUTTRIDGE-HEWITT**



V/A

Utopia Or Oblivion
Constructive
Conceptual explorations

'Utopia Or Oblivion' is a compilation that wastes zero time digging into the conceptual implications of its title. An ambitious project from London's Constructive imprint, it selects 10 producers to craft a sonic realisation of the ideas of R Buckminster Fuller, a celebrated philosopher and futurist whose 1963 essay of the same name examines the precarious space that humanity inhabits, between heaven and extinction. The goals of 'Utopia Or Oblivion' are lofty, and, reflecting this, its success in reaching them is somewhat mixed. This is largely due to each producer bringing their own respective take on the concept, meaning it lacks a throughline to properly draw all this music together. That aside, each composition is genuinely compelling. Robert Lippok's opener is seductively melodic, though from hereon in, it is fearlessly cerebral and experimental. **ANGUS THOMAS PATERSON**



V/A

Two [Is Greater Than] One
Pressure Dome
Ambient + breaks

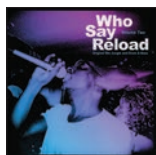
Bristol imprint Pressure Dome unveils its sixth compilation, a cut above your typical unmixed showcase. Featuring eight collaborations from a mixture of label guests and regulars, there's equally a focus on evocative ambient soundscapes as there is sub-bass-heavy grooves. The drum programming is strikingly sophisticated, sporting a versatile range of broken beats — jungle, d&b, dancehall, breaks. What sets the Pressure Dome sound apart though is its enthusiasm for digging deeper, crafting soundscapes that are dense in texture and rich in detail. Label boss Yushh is more interested in exploring musical ideas than she is in rolling out functional dancefloor fodder that goes through the motions. There's real movement and momentum, and the heavy use of percussion delivers a solid sense of progression as the narratives of these tracks unroll. **ANGUS THOMAS PATERSON**



V/A

DJ TOYS #01
TOYS Berlin
Post-modern romp

Swathes of queer Berliners have already shed their shoes, clothes, and inhibitions at a TOYS collective party — soaked in the hot, heady grooves of electronic architects including Avalon Emerson, Benjamin Damage, Elkka, and Medlar. Now prepare to bring the wobbles and wonton home with the collective's first DJ TOYS compilation, mastered by German breaks veteran Moomin and featuring a tableau of future-focused house, bass, techno, and breakbeat. Label founders ASA 808 and Dark Sky experiment with quaking low-end on the dubby, shuddering rhythms of 'YOWSE', in advance of Small Car NRG's dimly-lit techno romp, 'TOAST'. But a track that's already been dropped by Emerson and Barker at Berghain, 'SOMA', is the divine climax that seals the deal: externalising the collective's core belief in the body as a site of empowerment and self-expression. **OLIVIA STOCK**



V/A

Who Say Reload: Original 90s
Jungle & Drum & Bass
Velocity Press
Champion sounds

An accompaniment to the 2021 book 'Who Say Reload: The Stories Behind the Classic Drum & Bass Records of the 90s', author Paul Terzulli compiles 16 tracks to continue the story. It's a whistle-stop tour of an unparalleled decade: so the proto jungle of Nookie's 'Shining In Da Darkness' and Foul Play's classic remix of Omni Trio's 'Renegade Snares' move into the rude jump-up of Amazon II's 'King Of The Beats', then the jazzy ambience of Wax Doctor's 'Heat' and the tech-funk of Optical's 'Bounce'. DJ Nut Nut's 'Special Dedication', meanwhile, reps ragga jungle. It's a personalised snapshot, covering an era when so much evolution happened. But by mixing hard to find gems, like Trace's remix of DJ Tamsin & The Monk's 'A Better Place', with classics, it casts its net and appeal far and wide. **JOE ROBERTS**



V/A

Stay True Sounds Vol. 5
Stay True Sounds
Deeper than deep

Kid Fonque's Stay True Sounds compilations have become the standard bearer for the best in South African house. And from the moment you hit play on MusiQuality's lead track 'Untitled', it's clear we are in for more of the same. Lethargic and lazy pads wrap themselves over meditative, swung drums. A piano eventually winds its way in as the track slowly boils like the kettle on a Sunday morning. This is the energy level of the compilation as a whole. Even when there is a slightly tougher groove on a track like 'Melanated' or 'Nothing (Ed-Ward Remix)', the tracks don't so much drop or build but bubble with bursts of melody and emotion. The comp includes a mix of Stay True Sounds fixtures (SONIDO, Thabo Tonick) and newcomers like Khulile, all highlighting Fonque's quest to find the deepest house out there. **HENRY IVRY**



V/A

Blacklips Bar: Androgyns and Deviants — Industrial Romance for Bruised and Battered Angels, 1992-1995
Anthology Recordings
Inside the Pyramid

Born during New York's AIDS crisis, ANOHNI's Blacklips Performance Cult was an avant-garde drag performance group appearing weekly at the Pyramid Club. This comp, partnering a book authored by ANOHNI and Marti Wilkerson, reveals a world stretching from the camp and chaotic to the plaintive and political, collecting recordings of Blacklips members alongside popular DJ tracks. James F. Murphy's theatrically OTT 'Satan's Li'l Lamb' and ANOHNI's soul-melting 'Rapture' sit next to John Waters regulars Divine and Edith Massey, Marilyn and the Movie Stars's hip-jutting new wave, and the gothic, operatic EBM of Diamanda Galás' bonkers 'Double-Barrel Prayer'. It's a massive distillation of hope, despair, pride and desire. **JOE ROBERTS**