

Pierce With Arrow

Shatter

Dais DL/LP

Bringing together minimal techno artist Troy Pierce with AV artist Natalia Escobar's Poison Arrow moniker, the compound name continues the mythological theme begun on their recent *For Electra* release. That single – the product of a “sound and scent” collaboration series with perfumer Mark Buxton, and also dropped through Dais – was its own gothic score inspired by the titular Greek heroine and applied to an olfactory experience. *Shatter* does the same again with a different sense, placing the visuals before the music as it reimagines the intrigue of Narcissus's gaze at his own reflection. Also featuring dBridge and Konrad Black, the record is a deep dive into spacious minimal techno and industrial dub, haunted by whispered vocals.

Ratsnake

Just A Genesis

Place No Blame 2×LP

Another alias from Gesloten Kinkel – supposedly from Russia. The latter Dutch language moniker (translating to Closed Circle in English) is taken from *When I Sold My Soul To The Machine*, the Murder Capital documentary about The Hague music scene responsible for I-F, Legowelt and the Viewlexx label. The handful of previous Gesloten Kinkel releases have mostly dropped through Netherlands based labels, while Ratsnake's album debut on London's Place No Blame is a crunchy, lopsided single-take track listing of abstract electro, house and techno. *Just A Genesis* is a formally crisp and straightforward excursion into a slightly more primitive take on the northwestern European styles it's referencing.

Rivet

On Feather And Wire

Editions Mego DL/2×LP

Eight years after ending his Grovskopa project in favour of less limiting approaches to production, Sweden's Mika Hallbäck Vuorenää has refined his delicate, ambient-inflected techno by drawing from an even more encompassing stylistic palate. The album is Vuorenää's first after the series of shortform releases under the Rivet moniker slowed somewhere in the mid-2000s. *On Feather And Wire*'s eclecticism reflects that past, with his initially anonymous reinvention in 2011 allowing for broader influences, while a backlog of ideas since reveal themselves in this ultimately infectious collection of post-punk, industrial and even synth pop-inspired tracks. Echoing elements of The Knife, Chris & Cozey and Gazelle Twin on one end, CoH and even Einstürzende Neubauten on the other, heavily filtered vocals, deeply distorted beats and often melodic EDM hooks make the record experimental enough for a label like Editions Mego, without slipping too far into obscurity.

Saele Valesse

IVIC

NOTON CD/DL/2×LP

The Italian artist consolidates his entangled musical identity with a release outside of his own ambient, drone and techno label JSMÉ Records, responsible for releasing Saele Valesse's music under several aliases – including Saele and Ivic – as well as a handful of other pitch-black post-industrial outfits like Ossia. Released under his full name on NOTON, this album includes previously released tracks from titular 12's *In Your Rosary* and *You Cannot See Me From Where I Look At Myself*. Given those take up more than half of the playlist, it might seem like *IVIC* is more of a compilation of past material than a record in its own right, but its murky dub and hazy minimal techno is just nebulous enough for it not to make a difference.

SOPHIE

BIPP (Autechre Mx)/UNISIL

Numbers DL/12"

In dropping a long desired remix by Autechre, this release by one of the IDM pioneers' most promising fans brings her trajectory full circle. A live performance recording leak from a Numbers show in 2005 inspired the then budding producer SOPHIE to source Autechre's equipment, which she then used to record her groundbreaking single “BIPP” – released on the Numbers label out of Glasgow in 2013. It's eight years later, and Sean Booth and Rob Brown's pitched down and subdued reworking of SOPHIE's hyper-driven garage, electro and dance pop composite is the centrepiece for a two-track EP. It also features the previously unreleased “UNISIL” from the same era, replete with SOPHIE's haptic hallmarks of uncanny squeaks and sparkles mired in an eerie bass foundation.

Yara

Eyeless/Loss

Hypermedium DL

For Hypermedium founder Timos Alexandropoulos's “mystery project”, these two tracks released as Yara come in place of his previous xyn cabal moniker. The Athens based sound artist more notably dropped an EP under the latter name on Manchester's The Death Of Rave last year, drawing on a liquified footwork, grime and trance amalgam comparable to the alien post-club sounds of the likes of Sinjin Hawke, Zora Jones and a slew of other early Fade To Mind releases. Yara's “Eyeless/Loss” doesn't deviate so much from that aesthetic, if not for its less interior and more grainy approach to texture. There's a theatrical element to its swelling orchestral loops and slowed, two-step rhythms on “Eyeless”, resembling triphop at its most ostentatious, while the distorted low end and a boundless Shepard tone on “Loss” make it feel made for a movie. □

Global by Francis Gooding

Alostmen

Kologo

Strut CD/DL/LP

Northern Ghanaian kologo tends toward austerity: it's sufferer's music, typically built on the power of the voice and the rattling report of the eponymous two-string instrument, and it needs little else. But it can be somewhat hard going, and in search of wider audiences popular kologo artists have sometimes padded the sound out with full studio production. Stevo Atambire's Alostmen tread a middle path, with producer and rising Romanian-Ghanaian star Wanlov The Kubolor keeping the sound stripped back enough to retain the rawness of the classic style, while expanded percussion and electric bass add warmth and weight. Out front, Atambire drops proverbial jewels.

Altın Gün

Yo!

Glitterbeat CD/DL/LP

Altın Gün's unwavering commitment to Turkish psychedelic rock receives a glossy refurbishment here. Where their last, *Gece*, was a fuzz and drum break homage to early 1970s Anadolu psychedelics, *Yo!* shifts the time frame forward to draw inspiration from European disco and synth pop. That seems to be the principle anyway, but in practice the propulsive, polished neo-funk of cuts like “Kara Toprak” and “Kesik Çayır”, or the crystalline vocals and floating synth pads on “Arda Boyları”, find them arriving in lesser explored regions. For the purists, classic Anadolu rock moves are executed with polished perfection on “Sevda Olmasıydı” and “Yekte”.

Azumah

Long Time Ago

Nyami Nyami DL/LP

Azumah was the Soweto band of eSwatini visionary Smiles Mandla Makama, and *Long Time Ago*, a 1989 set for David Marks's storied 3rd Ear imprint, is confirmation that he was a genuine one-off. With songs led by the low buzz of marimbas or the rhythms of the berimbau-like makhoyane, Azumah sound like Amampondo, screwed, with Nana Vasconcelos guesting. Makama was also an instrument inventor, and on “Woza Moya” and “Zamadlozi” he plays the smilerphone or bush-synthesizer: a reverberant rack of tuned makhoyane bows, played rapidly, which plunge

everything into a fog of metallic overtones. Hard, unique and visionary music.

Color De Trápico

Various

El Palmas DL/LP

A compendium of Venezuelan styles ranging from the mid-1960s through to the late 70s, taking in salsa, cumbia, Venezuela's own joropo style, pop oddities and dancefloor jazz fusions. Opener “Despartar” by Los Darts sets things up perfectly, the widescreen jazz intro setting up shimmering modernist pop with its eyes firmly on Brazil; La Retreta Mayor's lush “Zambo” is high grade dancefloor jazz with Mighty Ryeders vibrations; Grupo Almendra step lively with expansive, synth-led funk fusion on “Tu Y Yo”. It's a collection with the flavour of a thoughtful mixtape, but even at only eight tracks, the inclusion of “Bimbón” – a novelty cumbia recut of gruelling Europop mega-hit “El Bimbo” – seems like a waste of space.

Drissi El-Abbassi

Rai Sidi Bel Abbes

Nashazphone DL/LP

A handful of aching, exquisitely restrained 1980s *rai* cuts here, lifted hiss-intact from cassette, to represent the early solo career of vocalist El-Abbassi. Hailing from Oran, the cradle of modern *rai*, El-Abbassi started out as a stage animator – hype man, in essence, though also provider of lyrics to the lead singer – for popular groups in the city; when the outfit he was with broke up in 1979, he tried his hand at singing, releasing cassettes under the moniker Cheb Drissi. To judge by *Rai Sidi Bel Abbes* the results were spellbinding: downtempo beat machine rhythms, embroidered with microtonal wah-wah and synth textures, El-Abbassi's plangent voice echoing in the middle distance.

Farhot

Kabul Fire 2

Kabul Fire DL

The Hamburg based beat maker and label owner Farhot left Afghanistan with his parents in the 1980s and was brought up in Germany; his productions since the early 2000s have ranged far and wide, but the two beat tape-ish albums under his own name, *Kabul Fire* and now *Kabul Fire 2*, have both circled uneasily around his Afghan heritage. This new volume takes up the theme much more explicitly than the first, using evocative Afghan loops, dialogue samples (including a snippet of speech from the assassinated Northern Alliance commander Ahmad Shah Massoud) and snatches of song to weave Afghanistan into the music as a constant presence. Farhot's beats have a smartly upgraded boom-bap sensibility (Karriem Riggins comes to mind) and he has an ear for a richly emotional loop – the strings on the meticulously built “Yak Sher” give it exactly that adrenalinised melancholy of which true underground classics are made.