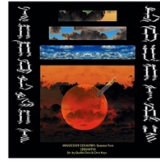


18 Rhodri Davies
Telyn Rawn (Amgen)

The telyn rawn was a medieval Welsh harp, strung with horsehair – an instrument lost to modern audiences, at least until Davies commissioned a new one in 2016, and consulting Welsh folklore and bardic poetry, taught himself to play. Bill Meyer said: “The organic matter of the titular instrument’s strings produces a lower and quickly decaying sound reminiscent of a kora... It’s hard to know what history buffs and harp nerds will make of this record, but the clarity of its execution makes it classic Rhodri Davies music.” (September/439)



19 Quelle Chris & Chris Keys
Innocent Country 2 (Mello Music Group)

Detroit rapper/producer Quelle Chris and producer Chris Keys returned to the scene of their 2015 collab *Innocent Country*, seizing on its chilled stoner repose as an antidote to the anxiety of the present moment. Madeleine Byrne said: “Quelle has stated that the theme of the album is peace... rather than presenting a platform *Innocent Country 2* asks a series of questions about what this peace might mean in this period of extreme psychic – and physical – stress.” (June/436)



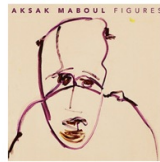
20 Special Interest
The Passion Of (Night School/Thrilling Living)

New Orleans’ Special Interest rewired contemporary punk rock to their own specifications, patching it to the political currents of Blackness and queerness, the mechanical thud of techno and confrontational no wave. Here they tackled desire, gentrification and poverty. But their main target was complacency. Laina Dawes said: “*The Passion Of* benefits from an atmosphere dictated by a collective of stridently queer creatives hell-bent on starting the party while simultaneously expanding the listener’s horizons.” (September/439)



21 Irreversible Entanglements
Who Sent You? (International Anthem)

Formed to play a Musicians Against Police Brutality event in Chicago in 2015, Irreversible Entanglements tapped into free jazz’s spirit of confrontation as a route to liberation. On *Who Sent You?*, Camae Ayewa aka Moor Mother channelled a fury that was all the more powerful for its articulacy and containment, while the band whipped up a kinetic backdrop of darting bass, rolling drums and firestorms of brass. Brian Morton said: “These are angry nocturnes, with no nightingales in them, just a raven-dark premonition of coming conflict.” (April/434)



22 Aksak Maboul
Figures (Crammed Discs)

In 2014, Marc Hollander, founder of Belgium’s Crammed Discs, revived his seminal Rock In Opposition group Aksak Maboul, working with a new collaborator, the vocalist Véronique Vincent. On the double album *Figures*, they explored an enigmatic, collaged art rock with contributions from Fred Frith and Tuxedomoon’s Steven Brown. Julian Cowley said: “*Figures* has the surreptitious coherence of montage, thriving on ingenious juxtapositions and sudden rerouting along another trajectory or onto a different plane.” (August/438)



23 Liv.e
Couldn't Wait To Tell You (In Real Life)

Singer-songwriter/rapper Liv.e created her debut album in a month while staying at her mother’s in St Louis, Missouri. That explained why the 20 tracks of *Couldn't Wait To Tell You* often felt diaristic, daily dispatches with an emotional expression that felt raw and unmediated. It marked out Liv.e as a raw talent, breathing in neo-soul, jazz and hip-hop and breathing out something both intimate and singular. Richard Stacey said: “Music from when it seemed like there might be a future worth dreaming about.” (October/440)



24 Ellen Fullman & Theresa Wong
Harbors (Room40)

Drawing inspiration from the stories and atmospheres that surround bodies of water, *Harbors* also found these two veteran composers finding resonance between their respective instruments – Fullman’s 70 foot long string instrument and Wong’s cello. Louise Gray said: “Fullman and Wong together conjure up rolling fogs and seascapes; they pepper with sonic sleights of hand: are they freight train whistles, even a snatch of tune from some revenant sailor’s pipe? It’s not important to know – the strength of this work lies in the unfettered imagination behind it and in its execution.” (August/438)



25 ONO
Red Summer (American Dreams)

Some 40 years from their inception, Chicago industrial noise group ONO returned with a surreal and confrontational mix of avant garde gospel, outsider jazz and percussion. The music was often playful, but the subjects – racial violence, sexual abuse in the US Navy – didn’t flinch from political realities. Stephanie Phillips said: “Mystical and curious, much of the album plays like an uncovered soundtrack to science fiction writer Octavia E Butler’s dystopian Afrofuturist stories. The difference being, the stories ONO reflect on are real, some within living memory.” (June/436)



26 The Soft Pink Truth
Shall We Go On Sinning So The Grace May Increase? (Thrill Jockey)

A sense of mischievous subversion has always sat at the heart of Matmos founder Drew Daniel’s art, and so it was with his Soft Pink Truth project’s new album. A reaction to political polarisation, instead of lashing out Daniel called on collaborators Colin Self, Angel Deradoorian and Jana Hunter to create a contemplative work with a spirit of communality at the centre. Dan Barrow said: “[The album] is most persuasive on the second side, which plays beautiful variations on the same piano melody performed by Matmos partner MC Schmidt.” (May/435)

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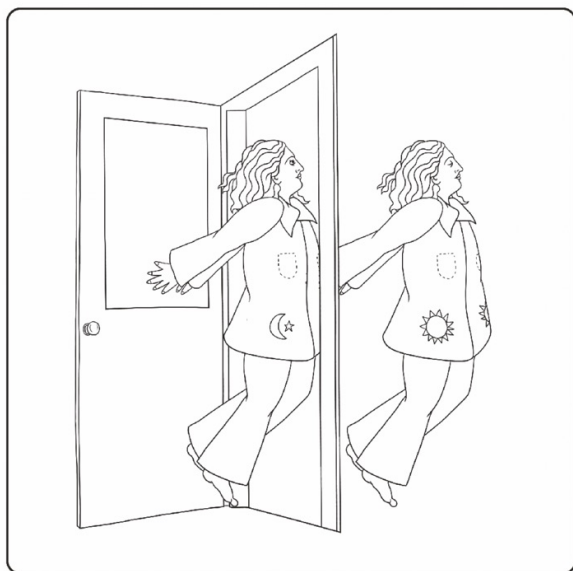


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