

line-up is a wonderfully uncluttered and direct means of communication and here, employed by three of the UK's top improvisors, it seems to mainline a certain core spirit that never strays far from the orbit of free jazz. Which isn't to say there's no room for abstraction. Ideas arise in waves, probing and unhurried, but underpinning it all is a baseline urge to burn. All three musicians display impeccable chops and lithe imaginations.

Ted Daniel with Energy

Live At Ali's Alley

Ujamma 2xLP

Taped at the end of an eight month weekly residency at Rashied Ali's Manhattan loft in May 1978, these somewhat sketchy lo-fi recordings crackle with fierce power, providing an essential document of trumpeter Ted Daniel's woefully under-recorded avant big band Energy. Mostly featuring tunes composed by Daniel and pianist Eddie Banks, there's an echo of Horace Tapscott's insistence on form and discipline in the large group setting, while still finding room for wild soloing from the likes of saxophonist Joe Rigby. Daniel's arrangement of Pharoah Sanders's "Upper & Lower Egypt" is almost unbearably joyous and John Coltrane's "Naima" wafts in ragged beauty.

Derek Plays Eric

A Suite Of Soaps And Other Assorted Sceneries

Jazzwerkstatt CD

This is the second album on which the Berlin based trio of electric guitarist Andreas Willers, electric bassist Jan Roder and drummer Christian Marien evoke a world where the boundaries between the avant garde and the popular no longer exist, where Derek Bailey might play Eric Clapton, if you will. In reality, it sounds like Herbie Hancock's *The New Standard* for Eugene Chadbourne fans. The Beatles' "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" is retooled as growling blues noise; Gentle Giant's "Cogs In Cogs" is a mellifluous jazz ping; Joe Cocker's "Space Captain" is an orgy of gnarled quarter tones. Why not?

Drašler Røysum Trio

BorderlessSoutheastofTheNorth

Non-Aligned DL/LP

The inaugural release on the Slovenian Non-Aligned label features Drašler brothers, double bass player Jošt and drummer Vid, who together with label head Mitja Hlupič kickstarted their own free improv scene in their native village of Bistrica ob Sotli near the Croatian border. Norwegian clarinetist Andreas Røysum was an early visitor and has collaborated with the brothers for the last decade. Together, they make adventurous improvised music that hums, buzzes, twangs and shudders. It's a restless sound, constantly fresh, seldom predictable, seeming to draw on all manner of non-Western musical and theatrical traditions. A little slice of utopia.

Camille Émaille/dieb13/Hans Koch

ÂBE

Confront CD/LP

Are turntables the most haunted of musical sound sources? In dieb13's hands they

seem to suggest a ghostly presence – like a thick layer of dust – whether through the accretion of vinyl crackle or sudden blasts of unidentifiable, achingly nostalgic radio blare. Saxophonist/clarinetist Hans Koch adds phlegmy gurgles and piercing sine waves, while percussionist Camille Émaille interposes scrapes and rumbles, occasionally rising to a free yet restrained barrage of kick drum and cymbals. A sense of tentative unease pervades these improvised sketches, menace lurking in the wide interstices, like walking into a room and instantly knowing you shouldn't be there.

Kate Gentile

Find Letter X

Pi 3xCD/DL

A monumental release from Brooklyn based drummer/percussionist/composer Kate Gentile, leading her longstanding quartet. Not only does the three disc set clock in at over three hours, but every second feels dangerously crammed with dense, volatile information. There's an explosive energy at the core of Gentile's compositions, as if she's trying to see how much it would take to blow them apart. She's ably aided by saxophonist Jeremy Viner, bassist Kim Cass, and Matt Mitchell providing relentlessly ferocious rhythmic variations at the piano and bulbous modular synthscapes. Even the album's more meditative moments feel like the breath-held prelude to a storm.

Johnny Hunter Quartet

A Consequence In Three Parts

Efpi CD/DL

Manchester based drummer Johnny Hunter might still be best known for his work with Sloth Racket but in his own right he's also a composer of considerable depth, as evidenced on this third outing by his quartet. The five-part suite is based on 12-tone techniques but remains appealingly accessible throughout, whether trundling with a muscular hard bop heft or sliding into more fractured splinters. Tenor saxophonist Mark Hanslip brings a mysterious authority and trumpeter Graham South blows up some strident squalls, while bassist Seth Bennett heartily tucks into heavy modal vamps. Hunter, as ever, rides the kit with commanding *joie de vivre*.

Sonny Rollins

Go West!: The Contemporary Records Albums

Craft 3xCD/DL/3xLP

Collected here are the two late 1950s dates Rollins cut for Los Angeles based Contemporary Records. *Way Out West* (1957) was the first time he recorded in a piano-less trio (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne), a format that allowed his harmonic ideas to flow like a crystal stream, which he would revisit many times. *Sonny Rollins And The Contemporary Leaders* (1958), recorded with a quintet including guitarist Barney Kessel and pianist Hampton Hawes, sits closer to West Coast cool jazz. A third disc of alternate takes from both sessions rounds out this snapshot of pre-*The Bridge* Rollins in fine form.

Red Hot & Ra: SOLAR – Sun Ra In Brasil

Various

Red Hot DL/LP

Following last year's album of "Nuclear War" remixes, anti-AIDS organisation Red Hot's second engagement with the oeuvre of Mr Mystery calls on Brazilian artists to try their hands at interpreting Sun Ra tunes. In a few cases that simply means slapping a sample of a classic Ra declamation over unremarkable nu fusion. But there are some highlights: Metá Metá & Edgar's crack at "Rocket Number Nine" is a weird collage of synth squiggles, sax bleats and angry sermonising; Max de Castro & Bnegão & Orchestra Klaxon transform "Brainville" into Ronny Jordan-style urban jazz that it would be churlish to dislike.

Daniel Villarreal

Lados B

International Anthem CD/DL/LP

If you dug drummer Daniel Villarreal's 2022 joint *Panamá 77*, this'll float your boat too. The same afternoon backyard sessions with guitarist Jeff Parker and bassist Anna Butters have supplied the music for both albums. It sounds exactly like the informal jam it surely was – in the best possible way. In the pocket grooves manifest, hang around for a few minutes and end before anyone's had a chance to get bored. Props to Jeff Parker who has a seemingly effortless ability to transform any vamp – from a reggae-ish stroll to *Dark Magus*-style power funk – into something distinctly jazzy yet cliché free.

Modern Composition by Julian Cowley

Luke Bedford

In The Voices Of The Living

NMC CD/DL

Instability, performed with suitable urgency by the BBC Philharmonic, with input from the organ at London's Albert Hall, provides a dramatic introduction to this selection of works from one of the more substantial compositional voices to have emerged from the UK in recent years. Taking risks yet maintaining a firm grip, UK composer Bedford brings imaginative volatility to orchestral writing that he holds together with impressive technical resourcefulness. The five movements of *In The Voices Of The Living*, sung by tenor Mark Padmore and setting words from literary figures including Petrarch, Shakespeare and Joyce, enact through chamber music that is both tenacious and delicately precarious the present's continual slippage into the past. This absorbing set is rounded out by the mysterious gauzy billows of *Outblaze The Sky*, conducted by the late Oliver Knussen, and a concerto where saxophone quartet nestles with tantalising ambivalence within an orchestral context.

Joseph Bohigan

The Water Has Found Its Crack

Other Minds CD/DL

In 2021 Charles Amirkhanian, executive producer at Other Minds, celebrated his own Armenian heritage with *Miatsoom*.

Further evocations of that living legacy, with its multiple narratives of involuntary displacement, resilience and rerooting, flow volubly through *The Water Has Found Its Crack*. Bohigan, who grew up in California, has created forms that bring the individuality of speaking and singing voices into intimate and intricate relationship with instrumental textures that carry an aura of shared and perpetuated cultural identity. Their words are transcribed and translated in the accompanying booklet, while on the recordings of these pieces, they are entwined with strings or embedded within electroacoustic montage to perform vital acts of anamnesis. The dynamics of storytelling, filtered through the fragmentary structures of memory, exercise a powerful fascination.

Erik Enocksson

Räkna evighet som intet

Irrlicht/iDEAL CD/DL/LP

“Reckon eternity as nothing,” says the title. Text derived from the work of Lotta Lotass, one of Sweden’s more intrepid contemporary writers, serves as a touchstone for this electroacoustic composition in two movements. The first opens with male and female voice reading the same words, slightly out of sync, while we hear at a distance, barely audible, the voices of children playing. A drone develops, string-driven and fine-grained. Initially frail, stretched almost to transparency, it steadily bulks out with an air of potential menace, before resolving into lapping waves of choral serenity. The opening of the second movement resurrects and for a while intensifies the menace. Alarm bells ring. Then the choir returns. Supported by slow cello tones and swelled with feedback, a pair of sweet voices float into the foreground. After their departure, a trail of gentle interference crackles in their wake.

The Gurdjieff Ensemble/Levon Eskenian

Zartir

ECM CD/DL

Keith Jarrett’s enthusiasm for the teachings and the music of GI Gurdjieff introduced that Armenian-Greek mystic’s name to the ECM catalogue back in 1980. On *Zartir*, an ensemble playing regional instruments such as the lute-like oud, woodwind duduk and tombak drum perform compositions by Gurdjieff in elegant and atmospheric arrangements by their artistic director Levon Eskenian. Music, in the composer’s view, should mirror the workings and vibrational being of the cosmos, and so provide, through its constituent elements, its modes, rhythms and harmonic relationships, a path to enlightenment. Heard on a less elevated plane, Eskenian’s reconception of the music offers plentiful beauty and stimulating subtlety to energise mind and body. Arrangements of songs by earlier composers Sayat-Nova and Ashugh Jivani slot seamlessly into the programme.

Evan Johnson & Carl Rosman

Indolentiae Ars

Huddersfield Contemporary CD

“I can’t go on”, sang Ethel Waters at Harlem’s Cotton Club in 1933. “Everything I had is gone”. That was the first performance of Ted Koehler

and Harold Arlen’s sentimental ballad “Stormy Weather”. Amsterdam based American composer Evan Johnson’s composition *Ground* makes allusion to that now famous torch song in radically deconstructed form. Mangled fragments surface fleetingly out of the muttering and growling introspection of Australian musician Carl Rosman’s contrabass clarinet solo. *Indolentiae Ars* brings together pieces for solitary clarinet and voice written by Johnson over a span of 17 years. Together they testify with almost implausible eloquence to Johnson’s Beckettian persistence, hemmed in by a sense that there is nothing original to express and nothing authentic with which to express. Rosman’s playing and vocalisation throughout is improbably articulate and oddly compelling.

Guy Klucevsek

Hope Dies Last

Starkland CD/DL

Klucsevsek’s *Flying Vegetables Of The Apocalypse*, issued by Phill Niblock’s Experimental Intermedia in 1991, revealed that Pauline Oliveros was not the only accordionist using that instrument to cross musical boundaries and break new ground. Klucsevsek’s approach, however, was fundamentally different, not least because of his unshakeable attachment to traditional song and dance forms closely associated with the accordion. This New York based musician’s capacity to work artful variations on such material and to embark on unanticipated trajectories has remained a source of surprise and delight for listeners who care for the instrument’s sound. His irrepressible sense of humour is a bonus. On *Hope Dies Last* you’ll find a tango, waltzes and a hornpipe, plus the title track from that 1991 release, revisited and refurbished. As Klucsevsek declares on the sleeve, “the exploration and adventure continue”.

Mary Lattimore

Goodbye, Hotel Arkada

Ghostly International CD/DL/LP

Staying at a hotel in Croatia, Californian harpist and composer Mary Lattimore fell for its faded charm. Now renovated, the old building has lost that unique resonance, accumulated through long years of ramshackle hospitality. On her fifth studio album she seeks to recapture that resonance, to evoke Arkada’s former appeal, while lamenting its current absence. With unobtrusive, yet telling contributions from friends including Meg Baird, The Cure’s Lol Tolhurst and Slowdive’s Rachel Goswell, she conjures up a bittersweet sense of location and changing times through six pieces that are subtly complementary, in their character and impact, meriting comparison to the finely nuanced ambient soundtracks of Angelo Badalamenti.

Laura Ortman

SMOKE RINGS SHIMMERS ENDLESS BLUR

Bandcamp DL

White Mountain Apache composer Laura Ortman, who grew up near St Louis, has lived in Brooklyn for more than 20 years now, experiencing constantly its vortex of sounds,

its everyday rhythms, chance encounters, random eruptions of urban noise and plurality of musical idioms. The inspired title *SMOKE RINGS SHIMMERS ENDLESS BLUR* captures perfectly the simultaneously allusive and elusive nature of her approach to composition, playing acoustic and amplified violin, singing and embracing whatever other instrumental resources are required to express her intense vision. With engineering assistance from Martin Bisi, Ortman here once again channels her memories, sensations and perceptions into forms that are immediately inviting and consistently intriguing.

60 Seconds Each

Various

Corvo DL/LP

An obvious precedent for this kaleidoscopic collection is Morgan Fisher’s *Miniatures* (1980), itself inspired in part by Herbert Distel’s *Museum Of Drawers*, a cabinet housing commissioned artworks. In accompanying notes Holger Lund opts instead to cite strict time limitation imposed by The Residents on their *Commercial Album* (also 1980), and Wolf Vostell’s coordination, in 1966, of 100 one minute events. As conceived by Kristoff Georgen, following a data leak that disclosed 31 fellow applicants who failed to secure a post at a German academy, *60 Seconds Each* features a compact soundwork from each, as wildly differing in character as the artists who concocted them. Snippets can be frustrating but also appetising, and there’s plenty of conceptual fodder to chew over here, as well as a vinyl art object to enjoy. Claudia Molitor, Erwin Stache, Charlotte Simon and Mattin are among the contributors.

Noise, Industrial & Beyond by Emily Pothast

All About HER (A Benefit Compilation For Hollow Earth Radio)

Various

Bandcamp DL

This 42 track benefit compilation provides a cross-section of the sub-underground sounds that emanate from Seattle based freeform station Hollow Earth Radio’s low power FM signal. While the station historically boasts an anything goes sonic ethos, most of these tracks tend toward the instrumental and electronic, from the expansive drone of Veins full Of Static to the Mort Garson-ish synthwork of The Twelve Hour Foundation; the atmospheric noise of Fields We Found to the bouncy beats of Sermons By The Devil. Dreamy keyboard melodies float aloft on dubby rhythms, while detuned downtempo segues into textured ambience. Surreal radio-inspired collages nod toward Hollow Earth’s more eccentric offerings. Like the station it benefits, *All About HER* is an enthusiastically curated labour of love.

Richie Culver

Scream If You Don’t Exist

Participant DL/LP

Quasi-comedic aphorisms scrawled in chunky block letters give British conceptual