



MINAMO DURÉE

12K1038

two by Mainframe are more conspicuously modernist and electronic, but remain raw and uneven, matching this mood perfectly. But weaving through all this is another vital presence: the enigmatic ranting preacher Gonjasufi, whose cracked voice at first sounds like a drunk wildly extemporising over the top of the instrumental melodies, but is quickly revealed to be absolutely incorporated into the fabric of the sound. Somewhere between Devendra Banhart without the tweeness and rockstarisms, Mark E Smith at his most demonically megaphonic, and Ghostface Killah wailing over “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” on an infamous bootleg, Gonjasufi’s chants and ditties riddle the listener, alternately seducing and berating, impelling you to enter into his idiosyncratic hermetic logic, and twirling you into dizziness when you do. It’s a puzzling album, presenting different facets with each listen, but the way it erupts at you like a huge mystical guffaw makes it big, big fun and another convincing proof that Warp are about more than the simply hip and/or cerebral. Joe Mugs

Robin Hayward
States Of Rushing

Choose CD/DL
This new release on Konrad Sprenger’s Choose label is a solo tuba recording. Conventionally, the largest and lowest of the horns has been saddled with a vaguely comic image. To illustrate the tuba’s versatility, cartoonist Gerard Hoffnung drew a musician filling a pint mug from a tap fitted to its side. And when comedian Martin Mull parodied the slick licks of “Dueling Banjos”, he cast cumbersome tubas in the sparring role. But a few sonic explorers have viewed the tuba in fresh light and have discovered enormous potential within its bulbous form. Melvyn Poore has led the way; Robin Hayward is on the case too.

Hayward, based in Berlin since the late 1990s, is a rigorous interpreter. Christian Wolff and Alvin Lucier have written pieces for him, and he also collaborates with radical improvisors such as trumpeter Axel Dörner and guitarist Annette Krebs. On *States Of Rushing* he is heard alone and, as on his earlier solo release *Valve Divisions* (Fringes CD), there’s no overdubbing or electronic processing, although your ear may suggest otherwise.

Hayward’s plunge into the fertile realm of noise and microtonal articulation suggests laboratory work, industrial processes, a trip to the zoo, a lost world of steam engines chugging and hissing. That’s not to say that his playing is imitative or merely a matter of sound effects. His expansion of the tuba’s musical language is dramatic, with a sure sense of shape and movement that is musically rewarding as well as acoustically intriguing. Julian Cowley

Hellvete
De Gek

Kraak LP
Hellvete is one wing of Belgium’s self-styled Flemish Funeral Folk collective, whose other

incarnations include Sylvester Anfang II, Per & Øystein, Edgar Wappenhalter and Chainsaw Gutsfuck. Their prodigious catalogue has graced many labels beyond their own, but finds a simpatico home on the Belgian label Kraak, which has become a de facto hub for all that drones and freaks in the Benelux region, both through album releases like this and an annual festival and series of live events that has seen visits from Jack Rose, Kurt Vile, Volcano The Bear and Embryo, among others.

Although Hellvete is embedded in the darker end of the free drone scene, *De Gek* is a controlled and disciplined suite of recordings. The tracks are taut compositions that evolve and progress with coiled energy. Opener “d’Helle” is a golden velvet dawn of drones and vocal incantations with an Eastern-tinged acoustic guitar lead part cutting stiletto-sharp slashes across its sumptuous surface. Title track “De Gek” translates as “The Fool”, and evokes the eternal figure of accidental wisdom with cycling, plucked guitar and banjo riffs, each cracking like a splintered spoke on fortune’s wheel. “Den Duits” (“The German”) follows in similar fashion, but adds a background shimmer of intoning vocals.

The second side aspires to greater grandeur. A choir usher in “K Riep Tot De Oorsprong Der Dingen” (which roughly translates as “K Shouted At The Origin Of Things”) as the album takes a cosmic turn, becoming expansive and chaotic before the plaintive balladry of “Fur Helena” offers up the album’s only true song. The invention and precision of its compositions mean this album manages to grow beyond the acoustic timbre of its free-folk roots to achieve a poise, scope and energy akin to Alexander Tucker in his fiercest moments, or even heavy instrumental rockers like Grails or Tarentel. In doing so, it succeeds in setting itself above and apart from the increasingly routine and predictable moves of the prolific free-folk drone scene.

Nick Southgate

High Wolf
Incapulco

Winged Sun CD-R
libiis Rooge
Pink Hybrid
Winged Sun CD-R
The no-fi aesthetic that rules in the global DIY underground might be both pragmatic and political, part of an ongoing dialectic, but it has the unintended effect of erecting a gauzy barrier between the music and the listener. A counterculture’s response to the economic and cultural hegemony of digital recording technology it might be, but no-fi murk actually has the same effect, obfuscating the material reality of musicians’ labour in myth and sentiment.

High Wolf is the solo project of a shy soul called Max (Winged Sun is his label too), while libiis Rooge is his duo with Neil Campbell of Astral Social Club. As with ASC, the tracks on both these CD-Rs are dense laminates built up from short loops thick with sonic detail (multiple electronic textures, Fourth World percussion) and strafed by wildstyle electronics and the kind of

sun-kissed infinite guitar lines pioneered by Michael Rother.

All the tracks are brief and they teem with intense, focused activity. But their impact is diminished by the fidelity, which makes it feel as if you are hearing them through ears packed with cotton wool.

Next time out (High Wolf and libiis Rooge LPs are due on Not Not Fun and Dekorder respectively) a little more clarity at the recording stage wouldn’t go amiss. This is powerful stuff and I want to hear it roar out of the speakers in HD. Tony Herrington

Ilk

Panegyric Territories: Volume 1
Sonic Oyster CD-R

Richard Youngs & Andrew Paine
Earth Rod

Sonic Oyster CD-R
Tokyo Garden Suite
Sonic Oyster CD-R

Richard Youngs is best known for his solo work and, more recently, as bassist in Jandek’s live trio, but for more than a decade he’s been forging a quietly productive collaboration with fellow Glaswegian Andrew Paine. Their most visible project is Ilk, a duo through which they give full rein to their shared love of Prog rock, indulging in portentous passages of spoken word, multi-part song suites with fantastical/folkloric subject matter, pastoral acoustic interludes and gross-out solos – all presented with serious affection and not a hint of irony. But Ilk’s latest release, *Panegyric Territories: Volume 1* – the fourth since their 1998 debut, *Zenith* – illustrates better than ever that, though inspired by it, Ilk never actually are Prog. If Progressive rock was a very British mix of rock volume, classical pomp and jazz virtuosity, with an added touch of folk, then Ilk are an updated version that combines psych-folk, drone and noise. The album begins with an acid-drenched guitar solo that subsides into a bucolic penny whistle and acoustic guitar, which gives way to dense, chaotic noise. There’s no flashy precision or preoccupation with skill. Rather, there’s an impulse towards trance and transcendence that aligns it with contemporary psychedelic practioners.

Earth Rod, recorded under Paine’s and Youngs’s own names, seems like an attempt to rein in some of Ilk’s excesses – an album of two and three minute tunes that vaguely lean towards song structure using guitar, clunking rhythms and oddly non-committal, often wordless vocals.

There’s a disorientating looseness to these songs that, in effect, does for British folk and rock what Matt Valentine has done for US psych-blues, unhitching it from metric form and structural certainty and sending it into outer space with a massive lysergic dose. It concludes with a piece featuring spoken poetry called “Tokyo Garden (Intro)”, a theme that’s explored at greater length on *Tokyo Garden Suite* – one 30 minute piece of wilfully obscure poetry recited over melancholy piano, caustic noise and overblown shakuhachi. As the intoned epithets repeat like fleeting, recurring

thoughts, the piece builds into a strangely moving and slightly unsettling glimpse into a stranger’s private mental landscape.

Taken together, these three releases seem to feed into one over-arching work, connected by ghostly filaments of suggestion, and sketching out an alternative secret history of British popular music. Daniel Spicer

Jaga Jazzist
One-Armed Bandit

Ninja Tune CD/DL/2xLP
Norway has produced a lot of wonderful music recently, so it’s reassuring in a way that, when they put their minds to it, Norwegians can still engender Grade A rubbish. What is it that makes the nine-piece outfit Jaga Jazzist so annoying?

Let’s first admit that Jaga Jazzist sell records by the sled-load and draw big crowds at home. Their breakthrough album, 2001’s *A Livingroom Hush*, was voted Jazz Record of the Year by BBC radio listeners. Their latest is a self-styled ‘Wagner meets Fela Kuti’ extravaganza, though to me it’s more a case of Frank Zappa meets that irritating kid in the sixth form who plays piano really fast. The title track is a cantering tune for trombone and harpsichord, with rambunctious counter-melody on fuzz bass, plus flute lines, everything interlocking like a Swiss clock. And about as involving. We switch beats for a while, then a cunning rhythmic bridge pops us back into the original tune. It’s got ‘cocky jazz composer’ written all over it. At least Zappa had a real harpsichord, whereas this (and the fuzz bass) are just keyboards.

All these dense, closely written pieces (mixed in Chicago by John McEntire of Tortoise) are dominated by Lars Horntveth’s keyboards – cue an outbreak of anti-keyboard rash in memory of John Peel. There’s even less earthy instrumental playing here than on previous Jaga Jazzist albums, but those too were slick exercises in control freak music, hygienic and soulless. On “Book Of Glass”, Jaga Jazzist inhabit a parallel universe to Stereolab, one in which the harmonic sensibility is shared but the oxygen and physicality has been removed. “Toccata” is a Reich ‘n’ Glass minimalist muckabout, big on counter-melodies again, while “Touch Of Evil” is a mini-symphony bookended by helicopters. Music for clever clogs to stroke bumfluff to. Clive Bell

C Joynes
Revenants, Prodigies, And The Restless Dead

Bo’Weavil CD/DL
Technique can be valuable, but only if you have something to say with it. Cambridge guitarist C Joynes isn’t simply playing the John Fahey, Sandy Bull and Joseph Spence songbooks note for note. He wants to take a slice of our collective instrumental past and drag it rudely into the future to see what it will do there. *Revenants, Prodigies, And The Restless Dead* is archaeology in the best sense, bringing old stuff out of the ground to see how these things glint as that light

strikes them. This is how the album’s title should be understood: bringing the dead back to the light, so they might live again.

You know this when Joynes ties large bunches of cutlery to his wrists and picks his way clankingly through a detuned ode to a West African sawmill. I was sold from that point onwards. Later he brings out the theremin for a duet. Joynes knows his tradition and he’s still prepared to screw with it because his fundamental interest is in working with sound. As much Conlon Nancarrow and Ali Farka Toure as Blind Lemon Jefferson, the compositional mind at work here can take apparently disparate threads of modernism and ethnic tradition and treat them as though they were all archaic blues styles learnt from dusty 78s.

Joynes isn’t engaging with tradition first hand, he’s engaging with it as filtered through previous generations of engagement and interpretation. This is ‘race music’ in the best sense, inherently half-bred and possessing no purity other than that of the spirit. Bruce Russell

Kommissar Hjuler & Mama Baer
Amerikanische Poesie Und Alkoholismus

Feeding Tube LP
Kommissar Hjuler & Mama Baer’s sound poetry inflates the ridiculous, childish aspect of wordplay and disarticulation inherent to that particular discipline, while eroticising it and using it as a tool to reformulate the banal, recasting arguments, suburban melodrama, shrieking fits and idiotic cover versions as potentially liberating moments of confusion. The artist Hans Bellmer saw eroticism as having to do with the disarticulation of the body, his art based around the repositioning of limbs and postures, and it’s here that sound poetry connects with sexuality, in the way that it obsesses over rephrasings and playing with words, with the initial sensual pleasure giving way to a form of Gnosis that goes beyond meaning.

Hjuler and Baer’s sexually graphic artwork foregrounds this approach, while connecting it to wild man rock stylings by combining improvisation with an energetic, emotionally raw presentation. The bulk of their back catalogue comes in microscopically limited art editions with handmade packaging, but *Amerikanische Poesie Und Alkoholismus* is a comparatively overground release in a run of 500 numbered copies.

The A side presents a duo dissection of an English language text on sound poetry by the French poet and critic Jean-François Bory. The pair take turns reading excerpts, now deadpan, now hysterical, accompanied by shortwave interference, tape work and the high Wasp tones of early Whitehouse. It works as both a deflation and a satire of sound poetry’s academic leanings while bolstering its most basic tenets by pushing it to its most senseless extremes. The B side is a three-part solo work from Mama Baer for field recordings and voice entitled “Alcoholisme-brut” that moves from tapes that sound like excerpts from a soap opera accompanied by a melancholy recorder to a sweetly disturbing alcoholic lament.

Hjuler and Baer present the most radical furtherance of sound poetry since the publication of Henry Chopin’s *Revue OU* collection, while finding common ground with the unofficial experiments of contemporary UK underground groups like Blood Stereo, Towering Breaker and Usurper. *Amerikanische Poesie...* is the duo at their most hilariously alienating and crudely sophisticated. David Keenan

Alan Licht & Loren Connors

Into The Night Sky
Family Vineyard CD/DL
After a flurry of releases in the late 1990s – four in just three years – Alan Licht and Loren Connors have slowed down somewhat. *Into The Night Sky* is only their second album since then, following 2003’s *In France*. But they still perform together enough – most notably with Jandek and for Aki Onda’s slide projection piece *Cinemage* – to maintain what Connors calls a telepathic connection. The two 24 minute tracks here show how precise their radar is. Though recorded a decade apart, the pieces have a clear, consistent tone that hides any traces of time’s passage.

That tone is primarily one of patience. Notes and chords are doled out gradually; reverb often rings out fully before a new sound is attempted; and deliberate pauses or full-stop silences mark the pair’s progress like signposts. It would be easy to attribute this to Connors, since slow, thoughtful playing is his trademark. But in his many solo and collaborative projects, Licht is just as adept at playing sparsely with no loss of vitality. Working with Connors simply brings that side of him into sharper focus, and the duo’s tight mesh seems to possess a single pulse.

Which is not to say that the sum effect of *Into The Night Sky* is merely additive. Some of the album’s best moments come when Connors and Licht put some sonic distance between themselves. On “Map Of Dusk”, recorded in 1996 at Mercury Lounge in New York City, they start with ten minutes of careful interlocking, but then slide into a battle between high-pitched noise and languid, repetitive strums. Similar opposition comes during the title track, recorded in 2006 at NYC’s Yoga Sutra. But here the tussle produces an eerie din, followed by a patient dénouement mirroring the first track’s opening. That tonal circle, forged across a decade, is summed up by the album’s cover image – a loop just about to close, yet ripe with the possibilities in the space between beginning and end. Marc Masters

Lula Côrtes
Rosa De Sangue

Time-Lag CD/LP
Rosa De Sangue is perhaps the holy grail of Brazilian psych record collectors: a privately pressed farewell to the close-knit Pernambuco scene of the 1970s by its figurehead, whose already limited run was cut short when Côrtes signed to a major label shortly after its release. Don’t let the 1980 on the cover fool you: this is

YOU'RE
GONNA
LOVE
THIS:
EVER WONDER
HOW SOME PEOPLE
HAVE ALL THE LUCK?
EVER ASK YOURSELF:
WHY NOT ME?
WELL, NOW YOU
CAN BE RICH,
FAMOUS,
AND BEAUTIFUL,
EAT ALL YOU
WANT WITHOUT
GETTING FAT,
HAVE GREAT SEX
WITH OTHER
BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE,
BE WITTY
AND CHARMING,
NEVER GET BALD,
BE A MENSCH,
AND SAVE
THE WORLD --
WITHOUT
TRYING.