

The Wire 175 [September 1998]

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"100 Records That Set The World On Fire [When No One Was Listening]"

Pierre Akendengue - Nandipo

(Saravah 1973)

Composer, guitarist, dramatist, poet and singer, Pierre Akendengue's influence in his home, Gabon, is huge; in the francophone world, he's made a dent; everywhere else he's barely a footnote. Graduated from universities in France (in literature, psychology and more), Akendengue went blind sometime in his twenties -- which may have turned his remaining senses toward the sound of language, the way musical parts fit together, and the contrasts in songs from different countries. Nandipo, his first album, becomes a play -- each song a dramatic act made of miniature scenes. Complementary voices (tight harmonic choruses, Akendengue's own thrilling tenor and emphatic reading voice) arc above a collection of individual instruments, each running their own rhythmic line. The album is accented by soft acoustic guitar, shakers in stereo effect, slicing flexitone, berimbau and cuica, deep cello. With the assistance of Brazil's Nana Vasconcelos, Akendengue seamlessly incorporated the French popular melodic vocal style, brisk Amazonian percussion, and solid, soulful African themes, words and energy: a 'Fourth World' styling several years early. RE

Kevin Ayers & The Whole World - Shooting At The Moon

(Harvest 1970)

The real Canterbury sound, for all its supposed sophistication, is often stodgy and constipated. These are descriptives that could never be applied to Kevin Ayers's second post-Soft Machine LP. The group Ayers assembled for this project was outstanding. Composer David Bedford played keys, avant garde street agitator Lol Coxhill played sax, a virginal Mike Oldfield played strings, there was a drummer named Mick, and Ayers's fucked-up romanticism overlaid the whole thing. Everyone sounds stoned and the results are a beautifully syncretic mess that reminds me of nothing other than recent Sonic Youth. Unlike all other like-minded projects of the Progressive era, Shooting At The Moon actually achieves a balance between the extremist proclivities of each of its session's participants. It drew up the blueprint for a merger of free jazz/pop/rock/avant grade whomp that should have been used as a roadmap for the revolution. Alas, it was not. BC

Albert Ayler - In Greenwich Village

(Impulse! 1967)

Recorded in two sessions, one late 1966, the other early 67, Ayler had by this time assembled the ultimate collection of ecstatically inspired

freedom-chasers: brother Donald on trumpet, Beaver Harris on drums, Grimes/Folwell both on bass and the phenomenal post-Ornette sawtooth violinist Michael Sampson. Word is that Sampson, previously a mainstay of classical orchestras, had such a moment of revelation during a chance encounter with Ayler's music that he packed in his previously cushy career to join him in the back of a van on its way round Europe. The 1966 European tour has since taken on mythic proportions and In Greenwich Village catches them on their triumphal return. Side two's "Truth is Marching In" still stands as the perfect synthesis of Ayler's concerns: joyous whooping, marching band refrains, mass ensemble levitation, pig-throttling solo blurt -- the OM that reverberated quietly round the base of Coltrane's skull until he saw Ayler fully articulate it. Ayler would go on to perform "Truth is Marching In" at Coltrane's graveside the next year. Albert wasn't long for this planet either; his body was fished out of the East River in New York in November 1970. As he himself explained: "I can't be confined to an earthly plane even though I was, like, born here and everything." Amen. DK

Bad Brains - Bad Brains

(Roir 1982)

You think you're all worked up? Let this album be your yardstick. You saw The Beatles on Ed Sullivan? We saw Bad Brains at A7 and up became down. This ineptly recorded, completely relentless music justifies every cliché thrown at it -- runaway train, water shot from a hose, Coltrane as a rock, whatever. The group's unexpected changes and catchy riffs may be the product of their fusion background, but in 1982 who knew where the hell four black (belt) punks came from, much less what they listened to? Singer HR channeled the putdowns of Johnny Rotten through pro-Rasta positivity and local concerns and, just to make his point, danced for the hearing-impaired like James Brown, Original Punker. The dub numbers (hardly a fashionable move back then) give you chance to catch your breath before the next hayride to righteousness. There may be faster, harder or louder punk music somewhere but it doesn't levitate like this utopian shitfit. SFJ

Derek Bailey - Aida

(Incus 1982, Reissued Dexter's Cigar 1996)

Variously provoking delight, amazement, embarrassment or rage, this, the finest of Bailey's solo recordings, serves as a test of one's entrenchment in tradition. The guitarist plays his instrument like a found object, treating it as though it lacked any previous history and had simply descended from the sky. With all the intensity of a child playing or an expert tinkering, these three pieces reveal a relentless exploration of the instrument's possibilities. To the listener straining for points of reference, slices of Japanese koto, punk rock, Country blues, flamenco, and folk guitar might seem to surface momentarily only to dissolve again, as Bailey draws his lines of escape from all habit, cliché, and resolution. CC

Louis & Bebe Barron - Forbidden Planet OST

(Small Planet 1956)

By the time MGM got around to asking Louis and Bebe Barron to compose an electronic soundtrack for their prestige sci-fi presentation, *Forbidden Planet*, the husband and wife team had already worked with John Cage, Anais Nin, Aldous Huxley and Maya Deren. Mimicking Norbert Weiner's experiments involving negative and positive feedback in stressed animals, the Barrons had learned to make electrical circuits literally 'shriek', reprocessing the results through careful tape manipulation into extremely rich and varied electroacoustic soundscapes. Having supplied not only the film's music but its alien sound effects as well, the Barrons had to abide by the studio's decision to list their contribution as 'electronic tonalities' in the credits out of fear that the Musicians' Union might sue. This unfortunate trivializing of their pioneering work might explain why the *Forbidden Planet* album became such a relatively rare and neglected item. Harsh, metallic, and cavernous, the future never sounded this good again. KH

Captain Beefheart and The Magic Band - Bat Chain Puller

(Unreleased; recorded 1976)

Few rock artists as washed up -- and seemingly past it -- as Captain Beefheart was in 1974 have come back with new music as dazzling as that on *Bat Chain Puller*. Having flirted disastrously with commercialism, the nadir of which was *Bluejeans and Moonbeams*, he took a lengthy sabbatical, returning two years later, aged 35, with an album legendary for the wrong reason -- it has never been officially released. Occasionally it harks back to the complexities of *Trout Mask Replica* but is more measured, with a vivid, plangent, colourful sound. The remit is as wide as anything Beefheart had attempted before: pop songs, poetic narratives and recitals, chamber-style instrumentals and songs in fantastic new shapes. Some material was later reworked as *Shiny Beast*, but the original album is the more vital example of this late(ish) flowering of Beefheart's creativity. MB

Joey Beltram - Places

(Tresor 1995)

Former graffiti artist Beltram's place in Techno history is assured through the sheer bombast and snotty energy of his teenage releases for Belgian label R&S, but on this less-lauded LP he traded in his tough keyboard stabs for intricate lattices of percussion, which build and shimmer like a cyborg samba school. The cover shows Beltram with the Brooklyn Bridge in the background, the striking and unusual elongated bone structure of his face complementing the arching pylons. Sonically the architecture emulates the wired rhythms of urban life, with funky syncopated drum lines broken up by the odd heavily reverbed splash of sound, or a percussive synth riff. *Places* is a classic example of Techno's ability to keep itself indecipherable and let the listener give it meaning. Beltram is

resolutely determinist about his work and refuses to see it in any narrative or evocative form outside of the dancefloor. Tracks like "Floaters" and "Set Ups", which initially hint at dark underworld references, are in fact graffiti slang - Beltram had begun to pine for his spray cans when making the LP. MSh

Steven Jesse Bernstein - Prison

(Sub Pop 1992)

"Didn't do well in school, but handled pharmacy and the tools of street crime instinctively." So runs a self-penned epitaph on the sleeve of Steven Jesse Bernstein's only recording, the posthumously released *Prison*. It's an over-concise summary of his concerns which typically sacrifices literal truth in favour of high-octane impact; Bernstein's poetry was turbulent, bruised, confrontational and complex, building on the legacies of influences like Ginsberg and Bukowski. He agreed to have a selection of that poetry recorded and augmented by Sub Pop midfield general and Pigeonhed mainstay Steve Fisk during the last two years of his life, and *Prison* was the result. Fisk matched Bernstein's exhilarating, rasping and aching self-aware delivery with smeared HipHop, smudged atonal samples, and snatches of Latino loungecore; creating an uncannily coherent union of words and music which deserves to ensure that Bernstein's 1991 suicide will not consign his work to oblivion. CS

Blue Cheer - Vincebus Eruptum

(Philips 1968)

Named after a particularly potent brand of street acid, Blue Cheer were the 60s progenitors of Heavy Metal. A group who played so hard and loud that, so rumour persists, they inadvertently caused the early demise of a dog which strayed on stage while they were improvising. *Vincebus Eruptum*, their seminal debut, snarled rabidly in the face of hippy innocence and soon became a Hell's Angels party stomper. 30 years later, the record would inspire a horde of suitably impressed Japanese noise trios to pay mutated homage to the group. *Vincebus Eruptum* may have failed to impress the Woodstock generation with its full on sonic rock attack and textured silver sleeve, but without its raw power both High Rise and Musica Transonic would have remained mere twinkles in Nanjo Asahito's eye. EP

The Blue Men - I Hear A New World

(RGM White Label 1960, Reissued RPM 1991)

A profound influence on artists as diverse as Steven Stapleton and Saint Etienne, Joe Meek's magnum opus was destined to languish in obscurity for several decades. Aside from a couple of highly collectable EPs of the material, and a few white label copies, it didn't get an official release in Meek's lifetime. Having developed an obsession with transmundane sounds when working as a radar operator during his National Service, Meek had his passion further inflamed by the Russian and American

satellite programmes Consequently, he resolved to create a record which would explore life on the Moon. Aware that this was going to be "a strange record", Meek brought his entire gamut of unorthodox recording techniques to the fore. Speeded-up tapes, rattling washers, combs dragged across ashtrays, etc, were thrown into the mix, along with the clavoline and all manner of home-built effects. The results are at times an adumbration of techniques used in later electronic music; at other times the record is undeniably quirky with its risible speeded-up voices. But undoubtedly, it was a significant work, suffused with exquisitely simple melodies and genuinely strange intros that still sound way ahead of their time. JE

William S Burroughs - Call Me Burroughs

(ESP-Disk 1965)

One man, one voice, one microphone. It sure don't come much better than this: Uncle Bill alone in the studio, reading extracts from *The Naked Lunch* and *Nova Express* with the libidinous detachment of a research scientist in a toxicology lab. The sound of a man who loves his work. Routines include "The, Complete All-American De-Anxietized Man", "The Buyer" and the crazed ramblings of the Death Dwarf going on the nod in Nova Police custody ("*My power's coming! My power's coming!*"). Not since the Raven first croaked "Nevermore" have things sounded this grim. What makes these recordings unique, however, is the way Burroughs tackles some of the more abstract of his cut-up sequences, his sepulchral drawl imbuing their fractured syntax with a distant, mournful poetry that has never been equaled. *Call Me Burroughs* demonstrates just how powerful a listening experience text can be. One of the hundred records you should hear before you die. Just before you die, in fact. KH

John Cale - Paris 1919

(Reprise 1972)

After a musical training programme that included playing alongside La Monte Young, Tony Conrad, Terry Riley and The Velvet Underground, John Cale's solo career finally found its feet with this, his still glorious third album. On *Paris 1919* Cale's confident piano playing and vibrant Welsh vocal provide the perfect vehicle to carry this selection of spectral songs which, once heard, refuse to be exorcised from the memory. Cale wisely chose members of LA boogie unit Little Feat to complete his chamber ensemble. It seemed an eccentric choice at the time, but it works beautifully, especially on "Macbeth", where the hooves of post-Velvets improvisation thunder through Cale's haunted castle of a song. Several fine albums for Island Records would follow before punk rot briefly set in, but *Paris 1919* remains John Cale's most satisfying avant rock statement to date. EP

El Camaron De La Isla, Con La Collaboracion Especial De Paco De Lucia - Al Verte Las Floras Lloran

(Philips 1969)

No one whose funeral was televised with thousands of people fainting over his coffin can really be described as neglected, but Camaron, the tormented duende of contemporary flamenco, is too little known outside Spain - and flamenco itself too little understood. Camaron helped restore the form's rawness and authenticity after decades of operismo and Franco-inspired dumbing down, while his tousled, rebellious image appealed to the young. On the first of several collaborations with Paco De Lucia, the master technician and seminal innovator of modern flamenco, he tackles classic forms, from the belting buleria to the wasted intensity of the siguiriya. Camaron's famously rasping voice, not yet ravaged by drugs or alcohol, still sounds pure, liquid, almost feminine, while De Lucia's guitar has a mercurial lightness. And however tender and lyrical, there's an ever present tension and attack. A truly exalted recording that opens up another world. MH

Chrome - Half Machine Lip Moves

(Siren/Beggars Banquet 1979)

The core duo of Chrome, Damon Edge and Helios Creed - aided by various musicians who fleetingly joined the project - created music that deserved something more than the cult audience it inevitably engendered. *Half Machine Lip Moves* was a curious and powerful hybrid, which fused a stooges-style aggression with a sci-fi and LSD-inspired otherworldliness, reflected in titles that evidenced their interest in aliens and contemporary technology. This album was arguably their finest moment (*Alien Soundtracks* was their other meisterwerk): Creed's searing, heavily FX-laden guitar (Electro-Harmonix Bassballs?) and Edge's eerie Moog and vocals, underpinned by metallic drums, came together to create what could have become a radical new departure point for a nascent form of post-rock. Their influence may be discernible in the sound of Big Black and a few others; but the extent of their neglect can be measured in the month that Damon Edge's corpse remained undiscovered after his death in 1995. JE

Cluster - Cluster 71

(Philips 1997, Reissued Sky 1996)

Cluster 77, the album Dieter Moebius and Hans-Joachim Roedelius recorded in 1971 for Philips before moving to the Brain label, has been unduly neglected. Even the recent Krautrock revival overlooked it. Dismissed as too heavy and Teutonic, it prefigures Illbient by about 20 years, parts of it sounding uncannily like DJ Spooky. Engineered by Conny Plank, the three untitled tracks form dark tunneling echoes around icy repeated synth bleats, soaring electronic drones in winding and diving pitches, and sporadic alert signals fusing the new possibilities for electronic noise production with the repetitions and resonances of dub. Space music with a severe hangover, its blaring synth sounds coil and

flange into the depths through a blurry rotary motion of sound, while patches of regular thudding pulse conjure up a malformed Techno. MF

Ornette Coleman - Dancing In Your Head

(A&M; 1977)

A fan recently proposed Muhammad Ali's youthful boxing style as the stylistic equivalent of Coleman's 60s free jazz. Both were, he said, "intricately related to (and a profound expression of) a militant flowering of black American identity." Always look to the second act. In 1974, the 'Rumble In The Jungle', bankrolled by Zaire's murderous, CIA catspaw Mobutu, saw poor George Foreman, Ali's opponent and thus by implication 'un-black' and 'un-militant', vilified and humiliated before all the world. In 1977, *Dancing In your Head* with Bern Nix, Charlie Ellerbe, Rudy McDaniel and Sharron Jackson, was a music recasting the urban Babel as a visionary free-pulse funk, less 'on the one' (as James Brown would insist) than 'on the many'. Coleman also went to Africa - in "Midnight Sunrise" he and Robert Palmer played with Morocco's Joujouka musicians - but this dense, shifting 3D of jittery atoms, this hermetic yet pushy dreamscape juju couldn't be *less* Ali-like, whichever way you look at it. MSi

Alice Coltrane - Universal Consciousness

(Impulse! 1972)

In 1972, jazz mysticism was vigorous and holding, not yet bleached out into the whiter-wash purity of Keith Jarrettism. Having explored the small group exoticisms pioneered by her late husband, Alice Coltrane went for broke with *Universal Consciousness*. This album clearly connects to other dyspeptic jazz traditions - the organ trio, the soloists with strings - yet volleys them into outer space, ancient Egypt, the Ganges, the great beyond. The production is astounding, the quality of improvisation is riveting, the string arrangements are apocalyptic rather than saccharine, the balance of turbulence and calm a genuine dialectic that later mystic/exotic post-jazz copped out of pursuing. Her lack of constraint was dimly regarded by adherents of 70s jazz and its masculine orthodoxies, yet Alice deserved better credit for virtuosity, originality, and the sheer will power needed to realized her vision. DT

Comus - First Utterance

(BGO 1970)

Named after the god of revelry in classical mythology, Comus emerged around 1969 during the polystylistic ferment of British Progressive rock, and fell apart in 1974 after a disappointing second album. Two songs on their extraordinary debut *First Utterance* draw on mythology and Milton's poem *Comus*, about threatened female chastity; others describe brutal murder, Christian martyrdom and mental illness. Roger Wooten's contorted vocals (echoes of Family's Roger Chapman) forcefully convey the terror and hysteria in the lyrics, supported by atmospheric

arrangements which veer from poignant partoral to turbulent workouts for acoustic guitars, violins, hand drums, and electric bass. Folk rock at its most delirious, devilish, and dynamic. CBL

Tony Conrad - Four Violins

(Table of the Elements 1997)

Utterly neglected by all available histories of Minimalist music, Conrad's contribution to that aesthetic has only recently gained widespread acknowledgment. Much of the responsibility for this historical void lies with La Monte Young, who has actively suppressed tapes of the Dream Music he recorded with Conrad and others in the early 60s. Conrad's music has also been overshadowed by the more agreeable, rhythmic Minimalism of Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and Terry Reilly. In contrast, Conrad's dense, abrasive drones, and his commitment to unscored, long-duration playing remained at odds with the New Music establishment. The 23 years separating its recording in 1964 and its release last year have done little to diminish the force of *Four Violins*, the only recording of Conrad's early solo music. On and between the layers of his overdubbed violins, Conrad invents a new musical language of buzzes, rasps, and flutters, amassing a whole that is, by turns, unbearably intense and gloriously ecstatic. CC

Lol Coxhill - Digswell Duets

(Random Radar 1979)

The tireless British saxophonist and maverick explorer in a brace of live duos with fellow one-time members of Digswell Art Trust, a pioneering multi-arts hothouse before its transformation to a residential care home for the elderly. Coxhill's meeting with pianist Vervan Weston could easily pass for a tragicomic soundtrack of the 1950s, and is itself worth the steep secondhand asking price; but it's the meeting with electronic music exponent Simon Emmerson that guarantees it a place in this list. Making on-the-fly sound processing a credible partner in a free improvising context has become integral to much of Pauline Oliveros's and, recently, Evan Parker's work; but here are the first flowerings of that experiment. Knife-edge reactions from both players test the technology to its limits - other than during the opening seconds where Coxhill's reeds set the pace, this is seamless music making that is as gripping as it is innovative. DI

Betty Davis - They Say I'm Different

(Vinyl Experience 1974)

Miles Davis met Betty in 1969, when she was Betty Mabry, still in her very early twenties and hanging with Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix. Betty Davis's photograph appeared on the cover of his *Filles De Kilimanjaro* album, but their marriage lasted not much longer than a year, finishing when Davis discovered she was sleeping with Hendrix. By the trumpeter's own admission, however, she turned him on to the funk rock that

revolutionized his sound forever. Her own music was a pressure cooker of sex and adrenalin, equaled in guts by only a handful of her husband's records. *They Say I'm Different* contains the much sampled "Shoo-B-Doop And Cop Him", the tough fetish-funk "He Was A Big Freak" ("*Pain was his middle name... he used to laugh when I made him cry*"), and a title track that remains one of the decade's overlooked funk masterpieces. In Davis's own words "If Betty were singing today she'd be something like Madonna; something like Prince... She was the beginning of all that when she was singing as Betty Davis. She was ahead of her time." LC

Miles Davis - On The Corner

(Columbia 1972)

Miles Davis once said that *On The Corner* was the product of a period of listening to Sly Stone, Bach, James Brown and Stockhausen, and was part of his bid to reach black youth. Jazz musicians hated it, critics bemoaned Miles's fall from grace, and since Columbia failed to market it as a pop record, it died in the racks. Even now, when Davis's jazz rock recordings are being reissued to great acclaim, *On The Corner* remains lost in time. Still, this record might well be the most radical break with the past of all of Davis's many breaks. Dense with rhythm and conceptually enriched with noises, his trumpet's role mixed down to that of a journeyman, the melody reduced to recycled Minimalist patterns, Davis broke every rule enforced by the jazz police. Yet heard today - especially in the Bill Laswell remixes on *Panthalassa* - we hear that Davis was laying the foundations for drum 'n' bass, TripHop, Jungle, and all the other musics of repetition to come. JFS

Dead C - Trapdoor Fucking Exit

(Xpressway 1990, Reissued Siltbreeze 1993)

Trapdoor Fucking Exit is the sound of three newly freed New Zealanders wrestling with the implications of punk-primitive aesthetics in the wake of US/Euro free jazz ground leveling. Two broken guitars and a rapid-firing drummer, playing lead, singlehandedly redefined the concept of garage punk without any considerations of melody, rhythm or fidelity. Originally released as an ultra-limited cassette recorded on a damaged Walkman, the fact that there isn't a Dead C tribute group in every small suburban town the world over is still utterly perplexing. Guitarist Bruce Russell has since become the Southern Hemisphere's premier disseminator of outward-bound sound, courtesy of his Xpressway and Corpus Hermeticum imprints. DK

Bill Dixon Orchestra - Intents And Purposes

(RCA 1967)

One of the architects of the 1964 October Revolution and the short-lived Jazz Composers' Guild, Dixon was an outspoken critic of the conservative factions in jazz - musicians and industry figures alike. He

has good cause. Though his early 60s groups were among the most original of the time, his few recordings for Savoy were shamefully neglected, and this lovely, prophetic 1967 session for RCA has been out of print for three decades. Dixon's eccentric trumpet style, with its grainy microtonal bite and often melancholy edginess, remains intact on 80s and 90s releases. But what's been ignored is his individual approach to scoring for larger ensembles - the 11 piece 'orchestra' is heard on the dark, moody "Metamorphosis 1962-66". Dixon's combination of composed lyricism and propulsive energy, wrapped within his shifting tonal colours and textures, still sounds contemporary and cutting edge.

AL

Paul Dolden - L'ivresse De La Vitesse

(Empreintes Digitales 1994)

Canadian electroacoustic composer Dolden champions a 'theory of excess', a belief that the intoxication and seduction of information overload is a desirable condition, one that frees us to perceive the world afresh. *L'ivresse De La Vitesse* compiles nine devastating sonic manifestos to make his point. Several hundred painstakingly scored and multitracked solo acoustic instruments collide to produce a super-dense musical black hole that even Iannis Xenakis would have shied away from. Trying to actually follow the impossible complexity drags you across the event horizon into a world where consciousness survives but meaning has been obliterated. Futile relief comes on a few tracks where virtuoso soloists battle in vain against the taped chaos. Nirvana or nihilism? No matter, you can listen to it a thousand times without wanting it to make sense. BD

Dr John The Night Tripper - Gris-Gris

(ATCO 1968)

Now acclaimed by everybody and their dog, *Gris-Gris* has been neglected for 30 years in the psychedelic waiting room, overshadowed by lesser obscurities. Part of the problem was the fact that this was a warped R&B record of ungraspable originality. The instrumental combinations were inspired. Combined with electronic treatments that owed much to post-Spector LA studio trickery, they constantly unbalanced the ear's efforts to place the music within a continuation of music history. Plus Johnson's playing in particular sounds more like steam powered organ played at a lizard funeral rather than conventional reeds. Partly fuelled by drugs but consummately skilled, the album created its own self-contained mythology out of the recording studio. A good proportion was flummery and vaudeville, but enacted with sufficient conviction to come across as real magick. DT

The Electric Eels - Cyclotron/Agitated 7"

(Rough Trade 1977)

An unbelievable slab of primitive art damage from the deep Cleveland

underground. Recorded in 1975, the incredibly itchy-scratchy quality of the vocals, instruments and recording give the songs a crumbling edge that is the mark of only the best sub-underground murk. When this single appeared (on Rough Trade of all places) it challenged every outsider notion of the American pre-punk scene. If Pere Ubu was avant garage, what on earth was this? Could it really have been recorded in 1975? The primitive instrumental raunch dynamics combine with Dave E's aggressive sissy-boy vocals in a way that should have made every dada-loving teen start a group immediately. If not sooner. And it seems to me that the versions of these songs on subsequent archival issues of Eels material are not as raw and disturbed as the ones on this single. Jesus, what a sound. BC

Esquivel And His Orchestra - Other Worlds Other Sounds

(RCA Victor 1958)

In January 1958, Juan Garcia Esquivel drove from Mexico City to Hollywood, California, at RCA Victor's invitation, to record an album that would feature American musicians playing some of his startling 'Sonorama' arrangements in stereo for the first time. The result, the company decided, was to be a gentle little affair entitled *Beguine For Beginners*. Esquivel thought otherwise. Claiming that all his sheet music had been stolen, he suggested they tackle "Granada" instead. The producer had a fit. The ensuing session, however, included reworkings of Cole Porter, Sammy Kahn and Kurt Weill of such stark exuberance and scintillating orchestral muscle that, 40 years on, they still have the power to amaze Esquivel's passion for drawing new sounds from conventional instruments shines through in the taut dynamics of *Other Worlds Other Sounds*, a tribute to the arranger as an unacknowledged force in 20th century music. KH

Chaha Fadella & Cheb Sahraoui - N' Sel Fik

(Factory/Mango 1985)

While *N' Set Fik* is probably the closest that raj, or any other form from the Islamic world, will get to approaching the verities of Western pop music, such a dizzying, swooning record could never have emerged from the Anglo-American tradition. Chaba Fadella's comeback record after a sabbatical raising her children, *N' Set Fik* expresses commitment with a drive that has only ever signified wandering lust since Charley Patton and Jimmie Rodgers first claimed that they were pistol-packin' daddies 60 years ago. Needless to say, the closest you will come to hearing such a complete surrender to ecstasy in Western pop music is a Massive Attack or Bally Sagoo remix of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. PS

Faust - The Faust Tapes

(Virgin 1973)

"We made tons and kilometres of tapes and *The Faust Tapes* is only the best," is how the group's Jean-Herve Peron assessed this epochal album.

When the group produced the raw musical material, they were holed up in a converted schoolhouse near Wumme in Germany, growing their own dope and tomatoes and living naked. Assembled by their producer Uwe Nettlebeck, this 26 part opus showcases the art of sonic collage at its best. The editing forms a brilliant narrative structure, wrenching the listener through psychedelia, motorik, quirky pop and musique concrete. At a time when the label 'Krautrock' is often erroneously applied to any spliff-riffing that goes on for longer than it should, *The Faust Tapes* reminds how in their hands it meant the whole world in sound, encompassing all music from the daftest to the fiercest. MB

Fingers Inc - Another Side

(Trax 1988)

The first, and still the best, House album ever released. Up to that point, House music had centred on the body, drawing its influences from disco, Electro and soul, all musics centred around the dancefloor. The music of Larry Heard, together with vocalist Robert Owens, seemed to exist outside of any earthly reference point whatsoever. It was as if they had fallen out of the sky. Slow, spacious dreamscapes drifted by, while Owens's voice recounted tales of dark sexual intrigue, whose emotional brutality were at odds with both the music below and the purity of his delivery. The whole thing was underpinned by Heard's sense of musicianship and his belief in House as a musical form capable of sustaining a prolonged, varied vision over the course of an album. That he achieved this with a set comprised largely of previously released singles is further testament to the quality of the originals. PM

Fire Engines - Get Up And Use Me

(Pop Aural 1980)

This mini-album offers the freshest of the various inspired rethinks of the electric guitar that came out of post-punk Scotland. Guitarists Davey Henderson and Murray Slade spooled off writhing, dissonant lines of energy that spoke of obsession and entanglement. The music claimed the riff back from bad rock - all the pieces work on nagging, repeated bass and guitar lines. But there was no truck with regular rock rhythms - the group rode on the tightly wound, oddly paced bounce of Russell Burns's snare hits. Henderson's vocals are frequently shrieks (*"Get up!"*): the 'songs' are essentially guitar instrumentals. The group's interest in the warping neuroses of consumerism was reflected in the packaging (the record came in a plastic carrier bag) and titles such as "Plastic Gift" and "New Thing In Cartons." Listening back to the lo-fi, 'live in the studio' approach, it's striking what an unusual sound the group achieved - the harsh, electrifying prickles of the guitars (Rickenbackers, as I recall) and the trashy fatness of the drums. Speedy, delirious and unrepeatable. WM

Family Fodder - Monkey Banana Kitchen

(Fresh 1980)

A loose collection of friends and, more often than not, wanderers, Family Fodder reached their apex (or at least one of them) with *Monkey Banana Kitchen*. The music took the ferocity of contemporaneous British punk and scaled it way back. They also eschewed the giant pop hook, replacing it with the hoop jumping of songs in three languages, instruments played for only four seconds, harmonic call-and-response motifs and opaque but symbolic political lyrics. Multiple reprises of phrases and fragments result in a much more subtle and effective memory-tickle. I can't count how many instruments finally made it onto the album, though piano (providing much of the rhythm), melodica, sax, synth and cowbell dominate. Their integrated eclecticism is actually layer after thin layer of dub, jazz and New Wave - peering down into this multiply music, you detect traces of structural complexity, and the pop that's there blurs. Lesson No 537 from Fodder members: participate only when absolutely necessary - knowing when to pare down makes it easier to transcend. RE

4 Hero - Parallel Universe

(Reinforced 1994)

Before Goldie took drum 'n' bass into the realms of 'conventional' (ie album-oriented) music with *Timeless*, there was *Parallel Universe*. These days, drum 'n' bass albums are almost the norm, but back then, the idea of not only moving beyond the darkcore dancefloor style prevalent at the time, but sustaining that vision over the course of an album, was groundbreaking. Dissolving Jungle's tunnel-visioned rhythmic matrices and reassembling them into sonic collages of beats and loops, threaded through with saxophones, guitars and female vocals, the greatest strength of *Parallel Universe* lay in its ability to touch on all the disparate bases of the breakbeat scene and make it appear totally natural that they should all be sitting there together. No single track stood out; it was the wholeness of the album that was so staggering. To achieve this required a quantum leap of ambition, light years beyond the grasp of those simply content to trace over the 12" template of Jungle. That would only come later. PM

Robert Fripp - Exposure

(EG/Polydor 1979)

Most of Fripp's recorded output showcases his talent as a guitarist, but only *Exposure* offers any serious insight into the man himself. Returning to music after a four year break studying with Gurdjieff disciple JG Bennett, Fripp's psyche had veered from frustrated hostility to enigmatic good humour, and his first solo album captures every aspect of a many-sided personality. Angelic electric guitar drone in the form of Frippertronics serves to frame a sparse, moving reworking of Peter Gabriel's "Here Comes The Flood". Tape recordings of Fripp's argumentative New York neighbours jostle for space with cryptic spoken comments from Brian Eno. Terre Roche and Daryl Hall sing gorgeous,

gentle ballads over mildly unreliable rhythms, but the highlights of *Exposure* see guest vocalist Peter Hammill chewing glass, barking with grisly charisma over cracking rock riffs. There's no stylistic consistency, and no need Fripp is resplendent in divergence. It's the *Sergeant Pepper* of avant punk. BD

Lewis Furey - Lewis Furey

(A&M; 1975)

Previously known to the world only by a session violin credit on Leonard Cohen's *New Skin For The Old Ceremony*, Lewis Furey established himself as nothing less than Montreal's answer to Lou Reed on this, his first (and best) solo album. Cohen's producer John Lissauer created the sound of francophone cabaret trapped in a bell jar, the perfect showcase for Furey's piano - and banjo-driven tales of obsessive love and betrayal. Those who currently thrill to Rufus Wainwright's debut need only hear a few seconds of Lewis's torchy, nasal vocals to know that there is nothing new under the sun. These tales of Quebec's demi-monde are laced with imagery drawn equally from Blake and Burroughs, brutal metaphors and sly, devilish arrangements. And speak of the devil, *The Rocky Horror Show's* Tim Curry turns up as backing vocalist - along with Cat Stevens. RH

Fushitsusha - DBL Live

(PSF 1991)

It was the emergence of Keiji Haino in the early 90s that really opened up the contemporary Tokyo scene to the West, a scene primarily concerned with glorious guitar reinvention; pushing individual and group expression to the extreme; and making huge leaps of rock imagination. Their geographical position alone gave them, like the Krautrockers, much more of an outsider's view of the 'classic' Western rock canon. Here, the likes of Blue Cheer or Arthur Doyle - not exactly household names - figure as the most influential artists for new Japanese music. *DBL Live* still stands as the scene's crowning document - a sprawling double CD set that sounds so otherworldly and unprecedented, the rest of the world is still trying to catch up. From static and forlorn proto-Gregorian howl, minimal feedback hiss and spectral six string tremblings through ridiculously overdriven guitar destruction in the space of 50 minutes, Haino's power trio redefined the leftfield forever. DK

Michael Gibbs - Michael Gibbs

(Deram 1970)

For the debut album by composer (and reluctant bandleader) Mike Gibbs, youthful passion and intensity burst every seam. Listening to it is a heady experience - it's packed solid with music whose structural, melodic and harmonic language was way ahead of its time. There's also an unstoppable personal timbre, something Gibbs's 'straight' contemporaries talked about, but rarely achieved to this degree. It should

have changed orchestral jazz forever (it's hard to believe anyone could churn out conventional charts after hearing this record), yet anonymous big band music has trundled on much as before. What makes *Michael Gibbs* an essential jazz record is the relationship between great composition and improvisation. There has rarely been a finer setting for Kenny Wheeler's glittering solos, Tony Oxley's fractured swing and John Surman's explosive baritone. Phil Lee, Jack Bruce and Chris Spedding are superb. And the brass chorale that kicks off "Family Joy, Oh Boy", crowned by John Wilbraham's piccolo trumpet, is one of the great opening moments in recording history. JLW

Glenn Gould - The Solitude Trilogy

(Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1967, 1969, 1977)

Glenn Gould's decision to abandon live concert performances for good was three years behind him when he accepted an invitation to make an audio documentary for Canadian national radio. Gould accepted with alacrity and subsequently devoted hundreds of hours of research, travel, editing and mixing to the project, which he called *The Idea Of North*. Like its two successors (*The Latecomers* and *The Quiet In The Land*), *The Idea Of North* edits a collection of monologues into a complex, shifting meditation on solitude and isolation. Voices advance and recede, questioning, theorizing, wondering, describing; the whole could be described as an oral tone poem, with Gould counterpointing the rhythms of words and emotions with the rattle of a northbound train, the seas off the coast of Newfoundland, and carefully selected snatches of music. The various thoughts, textures and visions fuse into a moving whole - and the climax of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony which closes *The Idea Of North* is breathtaking. These documentaries mirrored Gould's increasing withdrawal from the world and were clearly born out of his own intense preoccupations. As one of the voices in *The Latecomers* says, "*People are ecstatic about getting into the mainstream. I think it's a little bit stupid since the mainstream is pretty muddy...*" CS

Bob Graettinger - City Of Glass/This Modern World

(Capitol 1953)

Graettinger's entire body of work consists of about a dozen original compositions and song arrangements commissioned by Stan Kenton from 1947-53, but it was enough to briefly shake the foundations of big band jazz before sliding into obscurity. Such aggressive dissonance, jagged polytonality and clashing rhythms, in scores like "Incident In Jazz", "House Of Strings", and his four movement "City Of Glass", were previously unheard in the jazz world, and quickly confused and alienated critics and even the musicians themselves. Graettinger's unorthodox compositional methods were drawn in part from Bartok, Stravinsky and especially Varese in his collision of dramatic blocks of sound, but his own unusual psychological/acoustic theories - plus the undiluted

intensity of their presentation - turned them into a musical Rorschach test for listeners. They're just as shocking and breathtaking today. AL

Al Green - The Belle Album

(Motown 1977)

A pivotal record for Green, launched from somewhere between Memphis and Valhalla, it was pop sensibility infused with Pentecostal fire, and the last gasp of soul passion before the adolescent cool of the post-Jimmy Carter years suffocated the US. These were songs not intended so much to rattle the pop cage as to find Green himself a new and sanctified place in the music. But the shift was too much for anyone in 1977 and left even the cognoscenti confused. And no wonder "Belle" proposed a menage a trois with God; "Country Boy" was an apologia of Southern life, skillfully hidden in part by the hieroglyphics of Southern dialect; there was the spirited eschatology of "Chariots Of Fire"; the ethereal spun gold of "Dreaming". Even by 1977's production and technical standards, it sounded like a field recording, especially with Green playing his own lead guitar. But it had real down home power. As Green himself once said, this was music as strong as death. JFS

Bernhard Gunter - Un Feu De Neige Salie

(Selektion 1993, Reissued Table Of The Elements 1997)

Gunter's debut album is a masterpiece of radical restraint. It's a compact disc with every last trace of the music seemingly surgically excised, and all that remains are the minute glitches of the recording, mixing and mastering processes. Microscopic pops and buzzes flicker across the surface of nearly imperceptible high frequency tones - unless you listen to it in a quiet space or on headphones, it may seem at first to be completely silent, and the CD pressing plant at first returned the master tape to Gunter as 'faulty'. Its humility is beguiling - once attuned to their subatomic universe, the sounds become strangely compelling. The disc heightens awareness of your immediate surroundings and the rarely tapped full potential of the human eardrum. BD

Herbie Hancock - Sextant

(Columbia 1973)

One of the charges against electronic music is that it's cold, alien, deadly serious. As pioneered by academic serialists at Cologne Radio, it certainly invites those adjectives. However, when The Herbie Hancock Sextet recorded *Sextant* they'd been using clavinetts and mellotrons and ARP synthesizers on the road for three years. This gave their burbling sonics a hands on, funky spin that still causes smiles today. Buster Williams's groovesome basslines and Hancock's boogie figures float over polymetric layerings that recall Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch* and Miles Davis's *ESP*. Trombonist Julian Priester supplied the umbilical link to The Sun Ra Arkestra. Uncushioned by the harmonic conventions that padded

out later, more saleable fusions, the players' lines glisten over deep black space and tangle into multicoloured collective improvisations. BWa

Kip Hanrahan - Desire Develops An Edge

(American Clave 1983)

Hanrahan, a former film student turned audio auteur, was pushing the envelope even by New York standards. Different musical camps were already checking each other out, but the dolly mixture he picked for 1983's *Desire...* looked flamboyant to the point of foolhardiness. This was where Bronx met East Village; Latinos and Haitians doing the bump and skronk with No Wave art punks, free improvisors and jazz's contemporary cool. Rhythmically luscious, it oozed sensitivity; Jack Bruce sang a blinder (his relationship with Hanrahan still bears fruit), while the likes of Elysee Pyronneau, Arto Lindsay, Steve Swallow, the three Johns - Stubblefield, Scofield and Zorn - Milton Cardona and Davis's producer (and Hanrahan's idol) Teo Macero gave themselves completely to the mood. Next to this, Bill Laswell's pick 'n' mix ventures were crude patchworks. DI

Joe Harriott - Abstract

(Columbia UK/Capitol US 1961)

When conjuring up the name of the UK's greatest jazz musician, all of whose records are out of print, the temptation is to list every one of them. And truth be told, almost anyone of them would qualify for this list: the two with double quartet of Indian and jazz musicians (*Indo Jazz Suite* and *Indo Jazz Fusions*, both 1966), and the 1954 records with Buddy Pipp's Highlifers, would put him on the WorldMusic list; then there are the poetry and jazz record with Michael Garrick; the Afro-Cuban recordings with Kenny Graham; his Dixieland work with Chris Barber; blues recordings with Sonny Boy Williamson and Jimmy Page... But his heritage will probably rest with *Free Form, Movement and Abstract*, all three of which have been compared to the best of Charles Mingus and Ornette Coleman. In fact, with *Abstract*, the effect is that of Coleman playing with a group with the cohesion and compositional unity of Mingus. Except that - dare I say it? - Harriott was a more passionate alto saxophonist than Coleman, and the compositional feel of the Harriott quartet evades the clichés which Mingus often relished. If Harriott's records are ever reissued, or better yet boxed together, the UK's stock in the history of jazz will go through the roof! JFS

Jonathan Harvey - Bhakti

(NMC 1984)

Harvey fits the profile of the 'academic composer' in a New Music ghetto. Yet the British composer has written some of the most stunning electronic music since Stockhausen, with dazzling combinations of synthesized sounds and real-time orchestral forces. Born in 1939, he underwent a "Stockhausen conversion" in 1966: "Here was a man who

was quite explicitly seeing in music the language of some greater consciousness." Harvey's best known piece, *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco*, was created at Ircam in 1980. A second Ircam commission, the electroacoustic *Bhakti*, is probably his masterwork, inspired by hymns from the Rig Veda, "keys to transcendent consciousness". Harvey's precise but sensuous aural imagination particularly favours bell-like sonorities, and transitions from tape to orchestra in *Bhakti* are remarkably seamless. Its first recording inaugurated the NMC label, a vital showcase for contemporary composition in Britain. Still an underrated figure, Harvey is one of the most exciting composers writing today. JLW

Henry Cow - Concerts

(RER Recommended 1976)

20 years after their demise, British avant rockers Henry Cow continue to inspire those who seek the outer limits of rock. Signing to the enterprising Virgin label in the early 70's enabled their uncompromising LPs to reach the provincial high streets of Britain, as well as more far-flung places. *Concerts*, recorded live at various European venues during 1974-75, showcased the remarkable span of their eclectic experimentation; from Weill/Eisler influenced songs, hauntingly sung by Dagmar Krause, and complex instrumentals that absorbed free jazz and avant garde chamber styles, to ambitious non-idiomatic free improvisations like "Oslo", which, for the young teenager I then was, became the gateway to the wonderful and rather frightening world of Improv. Legendary stuff. CBI

Ram John Bolder - Black London Blues

(Beacon 1969)

In this Windrush anniversary year, it is salutary to revisit this 1969 release. Holder, now known as an actor in films (Lester's *Cuba*) and TV comedy (as 'Porkpie'), is the son of a music loving Guyanese preacher. In 1963 he came to London, where Rachmanism flourished. The blues, big in white suburbs like Richmond and Ealing, were rarely used to express black experience in Britain. Holder's ten trenchant short stories, including "Notting Hill Eviction", reflected life as he had lived it in the years when, after decades of economic depression, world war and austerity, thousands of people, black and white, were trapped in slum conditions while prosperity grew around them: *"Regent Street is out of bounds/Unless you have a hundred pounds"*. Though musically mainstream - electric Chicago with James Brown seasoning - Holder's songs fixed the picture of a crucial part of British social history as evocatively and potently as Roger Mayne's North Kensington photographs. BWi

The Homosexuals - The Homosexuals' Record

(Recommended 1984)

The greatest lost first generation punk group never made a legit album. This 16 song compilation, released six years after the fact, collects singles and work tapes, and omits as much as it includes. It's still dazzling. The Homosexuals were very smart, very weird and very intent on striking out on their own path; they hid behind multiple pseudonyms and embraced obscurity. Their songs have a million hairpin turns, and they'd stick a big roaring chorus out front - *"MY NIGHT OUT GREAT FUN GREAT FUN!"* - while they snuck around to kneecap you from behind and leaned over to kiss the inside of your skull. Take *Chairs Missing Wire*, square the artiness, dub the mix until it's flipped inside out, and you're on the right track. Sublimely difficult. DW

Hugh Hopper - 1984

(CBS 1972, Reissued Cuniform 1998)

Recorded in 1972, 1984 may have been intended as a safety valve for Hopper's more experimental ideas while Soft Machine slid towards the anonymous fusion it espoused after *Seven*. Whatever, he left a few weeks later. Before Soft Machine, Hopper, Robert Wyatt and Kevin Ayers often visited Gong's David Allen in Paris experiment with tape loops and musique concrete. Some tracks on *1984* use techniques learned from Allen, though derived from Terry Riley. The compositions, named after the Ministries of Oceania, range from 15 minute abstract pieces like the hallucinatory "Miniplenty" to brief bluesy emsembles involving Gary Windo, Lol Coxhill and associates from the short-lived 'big band' edition of Soft Machine. If *1984* seems less startling and alien now than in 1973 it is because, over the last 15 years, a thousand musicians rediscovered the same territory. BWi

Son House - The Original Delta Blues

(Columbia/Legacy 1964)

Son House tells us he *"woke up this mornin"*, but in every other way this is a blues session out of the ordinary. He receives a "Death Letter" and goes to see his sweetheart's body laid out. Bravura unaccompanied vocals warn of those who *"grin in your face"*, and foretell the end of the world in "John the Revelator". "Preachin' Blues" mixes sacred and profane, while "Pearline" showcases House's extraordinary bottleneck guitar-playing. Many tracks rework his classic 30s recordings, which influenced Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and through them the history of post-war popular music. Like many bluesmen, he was rediscovered in 1965 after decades of obscurity, but unusually, got a session for a major label, through Columbia's David Hammond. Then in his 60s, House summoned up his old power and an even greater intensity for some of the most haunting and anguished blues on record. The session has been reissued under various titles, including *Death Letter*. AH

The Human League - Being Boiled

(Fast Product 1978)

By 1978, the original Kraftwerk gimmick - machines that emote, folks that don't - had expanded into a potential aesthetic universe, at this stage somewhat underpopulated. The opening was there for others to flesh out what was not just a primary metaphor (new music as the humanisation of emergent technology), but a neat career opportunity too. At a time when grand passion, political or sexual, was pop's expressive orthodoxy (responsible for most of the 80s' worst music, including some by the later versions of themselves), The League chose to program their drum machines with the driest Sheffield wit - just as 'human' a response, after all, and far harder to fake - and then demonstrated considerable heroism sticking to the plan in the face of intransigent pubrock bigotry on the circuit. MSi

Ken Ishii - Garden On The Palm

(R&S; 1993)

The tidal wave of dark rave and proto-Hardcore (Joey Beltram, CJ Bolland, Mundo Muzique), which had made R&S; one of the most respected labels in dance music, was subsiding when *Garden On The Palm* made its diffident appearance. However, this double vinyl foray by a previously unknown Japanese producer remains a landmark in Electronica - elliptical, minimal, and relentlessly intriguing. Oblique electroacoustic shimmers, playful squelches, quixotic beats and alien magnetic chimes combine to produce music which follows its own dreamlike logic throughout, maintaining a wordless emotional charge without abandoning either taut economy or its unique sonic palette. CS

Charles Ives - Symphony No 4

(1910-16, Recorded Deutsche Grammophone 1988)

Charles Ives (1874-1954) is now regarded as the father of American music, though during his lifetime his work was rarely played and usually misunderstood. His magnificent Fourth Symphony (1910-16) involves polytonality, polyrhythms, quarter-tones, aleatoric music, and the simultaneous playing of different idioms, achieving a stunning complexity in a work that is by turns nightmarish, phantasmagoric, nostalgic and triumphant. Popular tunes, hymns, ragtime rhythms, marching band themes, atonality and skewed romanticism jostle and collide or are delicately superimposed. And Ives hadn't even heard any Stravinsky or Schoenberg. His principal influences were an imaginative or eccentric father, and the sights and sounds of his New England childhood. Seiji Ozawa's DG recording with The Boston Symphony Orchestra effectively handles the myriad changes. Berio and The Beatles, Zappa and Zorn, plus countless tape collagists and samplists, have all followed in the pioneering footsteps of this great composer. CBI

Blind Willie Johnson - Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground

(Columbia 1929, Reissued 1989)

These days it could be filed under Ambient: a piece of Country gospel improvisation, slide guitar with vocal hums and moans, but no lyrics. The great Blind Willie recorded nothing else like this and, therefore, it has no equal in recorded music, even though Ry Cooder has made a good living scoring movies following its lead. I first heard this in the late 60s, surrounded by nuns and schoolgirls, while perched on a hard seat at a Newcastle-Under-Lyme convent during a screening of Pier Paolo Pasolini's Jesus biopic *The Gospel According To St Matthew*. The effect was stunning and I have remained in awe of this tune ever since. SB

Gottfried Michael Koenig - Terminus II/Funktion Grun

(Deutsche Grammophon 1967)

In the rediscovery of Cologne's first wave of Electronica, Gottfried Michael Koenig has still to resurface. Working with Stockhausen on the latter's *Kontakte*, he moved on to Utrecht in the Netherlands, where *Terminus II* and *Funktion Grun* were realized. The pieces are systems music of sorts: all the sounds derive from an original tone and follow in the order in which they were mathematically processed. But besides the conceptual pursuits, Koenig was evidently drawn into exploring noise colour in great sculptural swathes, pustling ring modulation and its ability to swell tones into the realms of cyberdelia: strata of brittle, industrial sounds on rising and falling vectors and hollow blistering drizzle, like some turbulent data systems architecture. *Funktion Grun* evolves a spidery modem noise -but this was 1967. MF

Cathy Lane - Nesting Stones

(Unknown Public 8/Sensuality Essence And Nonsense 1998)

Stockhausen's *Gesang Der Junglinge* features the voice of a near-infant boy. *Nesting Stones* doesn't seem so different: a mix of musique concrete and electronic treatment, featuring the cry of Lane's own child Mia. What's so striking is how insipid and even cowardly Stockhausen's pioneering work suddenly seems, how carefully the young Darmstadt modernist (who had just become a father) distances himself from any of his own feelings about child-as-sound (above all, imposing some irrelevant biblical material on the work). Mia's yowling, by contrast, is looped and treated until its primal empathic pull (she's calling "Mama") folds into maddening repetition, strain and ugliness. Even as the sound mutates into gurgles and chuckles - everything we're programmed to respond positively to - the baby manifests as parasite, as cancerous scrawl, as chaotic insistent *thing*. A simple idea, on the face of it far from new, and yet - in this age of child abuse panic and false memory syndrome - far more powerful, daring and revelatory than almost any Electronica or concrete I can think of. MSI

The Last Poets - The Last Poets

(Douglas Music 1971)

"We were rappin' when they were nappin'," Jalaluddin Mansur Nuriddin told an interviewer in 1984, calling attention to his group's unacknowledged role as the progenitors of rap. That same year, with HipHop fully established, producer Bill Laswell revitalized the group's career with a new Last Poets record and a reissue of their self-titled debut from 1970. Backed by a spare conga beat, the trio delivers a ruthless critique of racial ideology - white ("On The Subway") *and* black ("Niggers Are Scared Of Revolution") - with a poignancy and fury unmatched even by their recent collaborators, Public Enemy. CC

Alvin Lucier - I Am Sitting In A Room

(Lovely Music 1970, Reissued 1990)

Lucier is the undoubted genius of process music; and this is his masterpiece. He intones a brief text describing the process of creating the album, recording this and then playing it back into the room, before re-recording it again. And again. And again. With each repetition, the frequencies of Lucier's voice that most closely match the room's resonant frequencies are enhanced, and soon he becomes incomprehensible, only the dim memory of his text animating glistening spools of sound. The music is its own score, but it's not the formal simplicity of technique that impresses the most. Towards the end, once Lucier has gone and only the inarticulate room remains, it's a gorgeous and quite extraordinary experience. BD

Christian Marclay - Record Without A Cover

(Recycled 1985)

A visual artist first, Marclay found his musical voice on platters of steel. *Record Without A Cover* (which it was, literally) was part Fluxus, part Imaginary Landscape and part pure devilry. Not only was it Plunderphonia par excellence, it was an objet d'art which took a poke at vinyl fetishists. In essence, a record about records. Never mind if you were unlucky enough not to find your copy sufficiently mauled in the record shop browser; Marclay would still have you enjoy the sound of a stylus plying its way through muck-encrusted grooves, the clicks and bangs giving way to drums and the onward procession of Duke Ellington's "Caravan", and climaxing with a carnival-style pile-up of orchestral manoeuvres, lounge lizards, organ fugues, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all. Utterly unique DL

The Master Musicians Of Jajouka - Brian Jones Presents The Pipes Of Pan At Jajouka

(Rolling Stones Records 1971, Reissued Point Music 1995)

He only wanted to share: Brian Jones was justifiably evangelical about the shrill, gripping music that he heard in a village nestled in Morocco's Atlas Mountains. Simply recording the Pipes of Pan wasn't enough in

1969. In an effort to communicate his own kif-enhanced experience, The Rolling Stones guitarist took his four-track tapes home to England, where he deployed the full arsenal of psychedelic signal processing. The resulting album documents a millennia-old music, the sound of panic itself, as well as the fragmented mind of Jones in the months before his death. Drums throb in the foreground as the pipers are sucked figuratively into the slipstream of a jet engine via extreme phase shifting. A women's chorus, shrieking like seagulls, loops in the distance. Jones's apology for a muffled female solo is sufficient to raise gooseflesh: "It was not for our ears". Well before dub reggae and its spawn - the cult of remixing - Jajouka showcased techno-primitive terror, up where the air was very thin. RH

The Modern Lovers - The Original Modern Lovers

(Mohawk 1981)

This album, as well as their first LP on Berserkley and a few subsequent bootlegs, makes a potent case for The Modern Lovers as having been potentially the most influential group of the 1970s. Based in Boston, led by the adenoidal Jonathan Richman, The Modern Lovers existed during rock's darkest period (1971 -74). At a time when no one else even considered doing it, they combined The Velvet Underground's instrumental textures with garage rock drive and genuine suburban angst. The combination is still riveting. If it had been heard at the time it was recorded, there's no way that this music wouldn't have caused a revolution. Its surface is so simple and its guts are so complex that these tunes would almost surely have supplanted those of The Eagles as the most easily xeroxed emo-core of the era. BC

Monoton - Monotonprodukt 07

(MonotonProdukt 1981)

Monoton is, or was, Viennese media, light and sound artist Konrad Becker. His second album *Monotonprodukt 07*, a double, is so alive with the pulses that triggered many Electronicas to come, from Techno through Trance to Mego's creeping static, you could make a case for Becker's guruhood. Yet, for all its prescient washed out tones, threadbare textures and Minimalist rigour, it has the edge on much that followed. Adopting an imperious art stance towards mainstreams and margins alike, Becker cast a cold analytic eye over Electronica's urfathers, picking up on Suicide's jittertronic urgency, if not their melodrama, and DAF's throbbing sequencers, but with the sex threat removed, which he patched into his own crackling circuits, hissing vistas and tumbling beatstreams. His dryness cannot entirely suppress a likeable goofiness: "*Fish lives in water - thirsty*". BK

Conlon Nancarrow - Studies For Player Piano

(Wergo 1988)

Until the 80s, Nancarrow's extraordinary music was almost completely

unknown. These digital recordings made in his studio in 1988 - replacing a less complete LP set - helped gain a wider audience. Nancarrow was an avant gardist who almost exclusively used the 19th century technology of the player piano: in the 1940s there was no available electronic alternative for achieving a complex "harmony of rhythms" unplayable by human musicians. The early studies have a blues, boogie woogie or jazz influence, and the very first, from 1947, sets the pattern - like a demented five finger exercise with voices converging from impossible directions and dropping away at the close, the lines in dizzying rhythmic counterpoint. Nancarrow developed serial techniques independently of Boulez and Babbitt, but the chaotic energy of many studies recalls free improvisation. In his painstaking way Nancarrow achieved the rhythmic effects of electronic music in a completely self-contained medium. This is also some of the most hilarious 'pure' music you're likely to hear. AH

Youssou N'Dour - Djamil

(Senegalese Cassette 1983)

There's no shortage of material on the market by Youssou N'Dour, but little of it really does him justice. This cassette captures Super Etoile De Dakar in creative overdrive, before they discovered Parisian studios and rock 'n' roll stadiums. Here they're pushing the concept of the Senegalised Cuban orchestra to its limits, drawing on the cross-rhythms of the sabar drum orchestra to create exhilarating new structures. Taking on the roles of the different drums, blaring brass, slinkily sinuous guitars, percussion and voices pursue simultaneous conversations, with sudden changes in rhythm and tempo. The interplay of Youssou's gilded shriek, Ouzin Ndiaye's braying Islamic baritone and Alia Seck's exultant rapping adds both drama and a zaniness as disorientating as the complexity of the music. MH

Le Nimba De N' Zerekore - Gon Bia Bia

(Syliphone 1980)

"Ce disque est une page d'ethnologie," say the breathless sleeve notes. And this is how I like my ethnology kamikaze kit drumming, delirious wailing saxes and something called 'chant telephone' - a growling singing used to embody the spirits of the initiation forest. In post-independence Guinea, regional orchestras were set up to sing the praises of the ruling party while providing culturally 'authentic' dance music - one of the pleasanter side effects of Sekou Toure's thoroughly nasty dictatorship. While the dominant strain was Mande music (well known from Salif Keita, Bembeya Jazz and the like), Le Nimba from N'Zerekore, a rusting market town in Guinea's forested south east highlands, mixed Mande and Cuban sounds with the songs and rhythms of the Kpelle, Kono and Toma peoples. Supposedly retracing the stages of male initiation, this could be seen as an African concept album. But what gets you going is the wild

rhythms booting along spiky guitar melodies, call and response vocals and some blasting saxes. A truly mad record. MH

Nurse With Wound - Chance Meeting On A Dissecting Table Of A Sewing Machine And An Umbrella

(United Dairies 1979)

The key document in the development of the British underground, and the cornerstone for all subsequent outsider forays into 'electric experimental music'. Originally issued in a numbered edition of 500, it received a fitting '?????' rating in place of five stars from Sounds magazine. A monstrous trawl through twilight sounds, where bellowing, scraping avant garde composition met Krautrock's expansive pummel. 19 years after Steve Stapleton's youthful trio hit the fade on "Blank Capsules Of Embroidered Cellophane" and went home for tea, it still stands as a monument to their vision and peerless invention. DK

Phil Ochs - Rehearsals For Retirement

(A&M; 1969)

The single most eloquent collection of protest songs in the English language. Released in the wake of the notorious 1968 Chicago Convention and trials, *Rehearsals* represents a quantum leap for the Yippie Vice-Presidential candidate (running mate to the porcine Pigasus) and spokesman for 'the movement'. A song cycle in which the political gives way to the existential, its mixture of angry disillusion and impassioned optimism is entirely disarming. Scathingly satirical social comment and scarily lucid self-analysis combine to provide a sublime drivetime sound track to the collapse of Western civilization. Ochs appears on the cover image of a gunslinger's tombstone, voicing the death of America. Eight years later, pursued by government agents, drink problems and the ghosts of the counterculture's ideals, he was dead himself: a suicide A genuine fucking tragedy. EB

Oval - 94 Diskont

(Mille Plateau 1995)

A record of two halves. The opening "Do While" achieves, in little over 20 minutes, a culmination and distillation of all anterior minimalistic endeavour in music. Whether consciously or not, Oval synthesize the influence and best practice of the purest Minimalism of Steve Reich or Terry Riley with the digital essence of new 'instrumental' technology. From nothing but digital detritus, Oval construct a resonant holism of pure crystalline beauty. The balance of this disc is given over to brief excursions into textural exposition, pushing back the boundaries of sound as music. TO

Ron 'Pate's Debonairs featuring Rev Fred Lane - Raudeluna's 'Pataphysical Revue

(Say Day Bew Records 1977)

A document of a single evening in the university town of Tuscaloosa,

Alabama, March 1975, at the Second Raudelunas Exposition. Dominating proceedings is Fred Lane, towering alter ego of flautist and whirlygig sculptor Tim Reed, who compares with a series of hilarious lateral jokes and weird monologues. His cover versions of "Volare" and "My Kind Of Town" backed by Ron 'Pate's Debonairs - a hot, swinging, meandering big band - set new standards as melody gives way to controlled, impassioned and deeply humorous improvisation. This monumental work also features Anne LeBaron's superb "Concerto For Active Frogs"; Mitchell Cashion's charming settings of Julius Caesar's "The Chief Divisions Of The People Of Gaul"; Industrial noise from The Captains Of Industry; and wild Improv combo The Blue Denim Deals Without The Arms. No other record has ever come as close to realizing Alfred Jarry's desire "to make the soul monstrous" - or even had the vision or invention to try. It's all over the place. The sleeve notes describe it as "the best thing ever" - time has not damaged this audacious claim.

Annette Peacock - I'm the One

(RCA 1972)

"Pain and Pleasure are equal but different", Peacock's liner note said. I'll choose pleasure, if it's all the same to you. While this LP lacked simple joy (even "Mister Joy"), it contained many pleasures. Peacock's earlier involvement with psychedelia and free jazz, and experiments she and Paul Bley carried out with a prototype Moog, fed into her rock albums. She applied techniques developed with Bley to her raw-nerved, frank songs about sex, love, emotions and relationships, intensifying them with electronic alteration of her voice or by voice generated effects. 1968's *Revenge* was not released until 1971, when she cut *I'm the One*, and these albums prompted David Bowie to ask her to play on *Aladdin Sane*. She signed on at Juilliard instead, but her influence on Bowie and Eno, not to mention Laurie Anderson, is not hard to trace. The spine-tingling "Love Me Tender" is probably the best Elvis cover ever, piping even John Cale's "Heartbreak Hotel".

Pearls Before Swine - Balaklava

(ESP-Disk 1968)

The soundworld might be Tim Buckley's *Goodbye and Hello*, the 'lizzardd sound' (*sic*) of West Coasters Kaleidoscope (and even the Brit psych-medievalists of the same name), but Tom Rapp's Florida based outfit nailed together a more intoxicating, Carpenter's Gothic version of folk psychedelia, in which the whispers of ancient voices created powerful crosscurrents. Like the archivist warlock Harry Smith, the Swine herd were clearly hypnotized by phonography's ability to re-animate history's dead voices: encrusted with popping shellac, we hear Trumpeter Landfrey, bugler at the original Charge of the Light Brigade (hence the title), and even the indistinct voice of an aging Florence Nightingale. Concrete features including canned birdsong and seaspray - before Ambient made them naff - and a taperewind of the entire LP, fold Rapp's

lyrical ballads into shuffling temporal layers. Despite being cloaked in sweet arrangements with strings, oboe and distantly swatting percussion, Rapp's shadowed invocations of Herodotus, Santayana, the Orpheus myth and Blakean angels in response to Vietnam atrocities - America's Crimea - proved too dark for flowered-up Aquarians. RY

Pere Ubu - 30 Seconds Over Tokyo

(Hearthan 1975)

Of all human emotions, fear is the hardest to capture musically, but this early single from Pere Ubu simply melts with fearful dread. Angular, uncompromised and shocking, its exterior reference point is the American bombing of Japan, but its real movement is inward, trying both to fathom the minds of those who would commit such an act and to acknowledge the terror, felt by subsequent millions, that it could easily happen again. Not a party record, then, but a landmark one - it created a whole new soundworld of shadowed, industrial grief, taking some musical cues from Beefheart but substituting a gaunt foreboding for his crazy organic optimism. Listening hard in Manchester were those who became Joy Division; their sensibility stems from this record, but never remotely matched its evocation of apocalypse. AM

Lee Perry - Revolution Dub

(Cactus 1975)

Lee Perry's "Yehol Evol" - B-side of a tune called "Honey Love" which ran the vocal track backwards over the backing track - had served notice as far back as 1967 that the producer was prepared to take his music beyond the bounds of the merely sensible. Besides some wildly eccentric vocals, *Revolution Dub*, from 1975, contains material completely foreign to popular music - snatches of television dialogue. *I am Doctor on the Go*, proclaims Perry to a chorus of canned laughter, and so on. The collision of the British sitcom with the rhythm from Junior Byles's aching "Long Way" took reggae into retaliatory culture-shock experimentation. Also, this album had some of the most potent dubs ever recorded by Perry. There's the ultra-heavy version of Bunny Clarke's "Move Out Of My Way," the rock-hard reworking of Jimmy Riley's take of Bobby Womack's "Woman's Gotta Have It"; and a juddering dub of "Bushweed Corntrash". Fierce and funny. WM

Iggy Pop & James Williamson - Kill City

(Bomp 1977)

Recorded in 1975, with Iggy on weekend release from the Neuropsychiatric Institute in Los Angeles, *Kill City* is an overlooked masterpiece sandwiched between the implosion of the Stooges and Iggy's collaboration with David Bowie. After the explicit savagery of 1973's *Raw Power*, this sounds initially muted and less vivid. But Iggy's arrangements - or should that read Williamson's? - perfectly highlight a kind of benumbed amorality and sense of toxic dislocation. The title

track is a cold slap in the face to the decadent pretensions of The Doors' "LA Woman"; "I Got Nothin'" is a cold blast of pop nihilism; "Lucky Monkeys" is the kind of post-narcotic comedown groove that Royal Trux have made their name with. Released against Iggy's wishes, *Kill City* is a fascinating document of darkness and hard vitality. TR

Public Enemy - Apocalypse 91... The Enemy Strikes Black

(Def Jam 1991)

Not the classic LP for many aficionados - the complexity of *Fear Of A Black Planet* will probably get most people's votes - but on this underrated follow-up, PE's sound is pared back down to its raw essentials to go to war against everything from gangsta rap's low inspirations to American States refusing to mark Martin Luther King's birthday. As conventional world views and even the zeitgeist of rap seemed to move against them, PE never sounded *louder*. The LP opens with the proclamation: "*The future holds nothing else but confrontation*", before launching into the sirens and tornado scratching of "Lost At Birth", where the build-up seems to go on forever until Chuck D's Old Testament roar soars out of the mix: "*Clear the way for the prophets of rage*". It isn't all this spine-clenchingly thrilling, but the church choirs and swampy boogie riff of "By The Time I Get To Arizona" and the sparse brutality of "Shut 'Em Down" are among PE's greatest moments. MSh

Lou Reed - Metal Machine Music

(RCA 1975, Reissued Greatest Expectations 1991)

Q Magazine featured *Metal Machine Music* in its 50 Worst Records of All Time, describing it as "sadistic, blackboard-scraping feedback". What higher recommendation could you possibly need? Reed himself reported: "I find it very relaxing - it's not done as a joke." The metal machine involved two electric guitars feeding back through mismatched tremolo units. They're speeded up, slowed down, recorded backwards and layered repeatedly. What results is at once the pre-eminent deranged noise record, an impossibly cacophonous screech of electric torment, and also a classic of Minimalism; some of the most enigmatic, exquisite harmonies ever documented. It's a pity the CD reissues can't handle the original double LP's locked grooves, but even if it doesn't last forever, the music is infinitely convoluted. It still awaits a proper critical appraisal - even the gleefully enthusiastic Lester Bangs didn't fully 'get' *Metal Machine Music*. BD

Steve Reich - Early Works: Come Out/It's Gonna Rain, etc (Elektra Nonesuch 1965)

In 1965 in San Francisco, partly inspired by the phase experiments of Terry Riley's *In C*, Steve Reich was playing around with two identical tape loops he had recorded of a black Pentecostal preacher. Letting the loops go slightly out of phase, he became mesmerized by the complex sub-rhythms set up by the interference, the voice morphing into a pulsing

Minimalist music. *It's Gonna Rain* lifts those three words out of the sermon, turning them into a rhythm -a flickering repeat that shears into depersonalized cyber tones. In a longer sequence, about people beseeching Noah to let them into the ark, the tape subdivides into eight loops of garbled counterpoint. In 1966 he pushed the voice of Daniel Hamm, arrested in the Harlem riots of 1964, even further towards a morass of hypnotic vibrations around the phrase "*Come out to show them*". A Techno prophecy. MF

The Residents - Satisfaction

(Ralph 1976)

If there was one record that told you the 60s were over, then this was it. The Clash may have crowed, "no Rolling Stones in 1977", but their rhetoric was just gasbag posturing compared to this, a blowtorch evisceration of Jagger and Richards's song that reduces their original to a piece of marketable rebellion fluff (Wham!'s "Bad Boys" with a better riff). The Residents start from the premise that there are rather more serious things to be unsatisfied about than romance or advertising things: like total mental breakdown, a condition they proceed to delineate with unbearably off-key guitars and a vocal that sounds like the most haunted, driven, raging man alive. It's excruciating, purifying and hilarious, and if inflicted on friends it usually receives two of the highest possible accolades: "Take that fucking thing off", and "They weren't being serious, were they?" AM

Jean C Roche - A Nocturne Of Nightingales

(Sittele 1993)

As a genre, field recordings of animals have rarely ventured outside the domains of field guides for wildlife spotters and New Age relaxation tapes. Jean C Roche's project to record 'concerts' of nightingale song, pursued since 1958, escapes the tweeness of its own packaging largely through the arresting qualities of the nightingale song itself. Billed as high art performances given in "Woodland Edge In Bourgogne, May" or "In Willows Beside A Lake, Southern Finland, June", the brief and flickering patterns of oscillating sound, diving whines, aggressive pulses and piercing beats in a shifting variety of timbres bear striking affinities with the more futuristic tinkerings of human on analogue synthesizers. Not so much a question of framing nature with music, as framing music with nature. Species fusion music has yet to be investigated.

Royal Trux - Twin Infinitives

(Drag City 1990)

Track titles like "Kool Down Wheels" and "Jet Pet" may evoke mid-70s Aerosmith, but this 1990 double album from Neil Hagerty and Jennifer Herrema, aka Royal Trux, sits on the very brink of chaos. Hagerty described it mischievously as "harmolodic rock 'n' roll". Given the duo's former heroin habit, it would be tempting to write off *Twin Infinitives* as

some drug-crazed splurge. But this churning cauldron of anti-rock and Improv noise has its own logic: atonal vocals, drums, boiling synths and ragged guitar lines collide, often in different metres. The roots of rock and free jazz are ransacked for inspiration, then reassembled in startling new forms. And although the album is totally uncompromising, it is hard to resist its fantastic atmospheres. There had been nothing else like in this decade. MB

Arthur Russell - World Of Echo

(Upside/Rough Trade 1986)

One of the least-honoured links between disco and the avant garde, Russell, a cellist whose experiments were too much for the Manhattan School of Music, was making connections between the formats as soon as he hit New York in the mid-70s. Though not his first release, *World Of Echo* - for solo cello, voice, effects and electronics - encapsulated many of his ideas for loose-limbed music that kept curiosity at its heart. *Echo* remains an extraordinary record: sonar rhythms and melodies drift through various layers of sound and meaning, like a metaphor for the unconsciousness. Russell, who died in 1992 from AIDS, is remembered for his disco singles - "Kiss Me Again", "Is It All Over My Face", "Go Bang", the latter resurrected by Todd Terry's "Bango" - and co-founding Sleeping Bag Records; but this record, categorized as just plain weird when it was released, should be re-examined closely. LG

Bally Sagoo - Wham Bam 2, The Second Massacre

(Oriental Star Agencies 1992)

"Let's massacre, c'mon take my hand!" Indeed, who could say no to the original wideboy remixer from the Indian side of Birmingham, as he alternates dancefloor versions of catchy Bollywood choruses with seething rappers talking up his current release as even more world-mashin' than the last. I love Bally Sagoo because he sample everything in sight and then hurls it all into the mix as if genuinely excited by his new toy, the remix studio. *Wham Bam 2* is a cartoon-paced Technicolor outburst of infectious joy, and was the last of Sagoo's nuff-nutty cassette releases before settling down to a nice sensible deal with Sony as a mature, tasteful producer. Still available in Indian cassette shops. CBe

Buffy Sainte-Marie - Illuminations

(Vanguard 1969)

If Dylan going electric in 1965 turned folk purists into baying hyenas, Buffy Sainte-Marie going electronic would have turned them into kill-hungry wolves, if they weren't already a spent force. Film maker/archivist Harry Smith had established a precedent for folk-avant garde-shamanic pow wows, but Cree-born Sainte-Marie crosswired them, drawing occult aspects out of her folk and Native American sources with electronics. Synthesized from her guitar and voice, already rich in natural reverb, Michael Czajkowski's score hallucinates ghost shadows on "Poppies",

edges the supernatural ballad "The Vampire" with eeriness, and hatches a chorus of chimeras out of her setting of Leonard Cohen's "God Is Alive, Magic Is Afoot". When Coil picked up on "God...", the song linked them into a chain leading to *Sesame Street*, where Sainte-Marie roosted for five years. Occult enough? BK

Nancy Sesay & The Melodaires - C'est Fab 7"

(It's War Boys 1980)

The seven inch that has everything. Three lopsided pop songs from 1980 in which the drama takes place on two planes - that of the performance, executed with the uncanny joie vivre of the newborn; and that of the idiosyncratic mixdown, the minutely detailed work of a genius (L Voag), a flamboyant performance in its own right. On the title track, Sesay sings at so high a pitch as to be incomprehensible. A boozy male chorus chips in now and then. The bassline swings and pulls together numberless elements - concrete, doowop, vaudeville even - which your brain tells you shouldn't fit. The ending has an a cappella reprise of the song swallowed by a deafening, all-encompassing death-ray whine. Incredible. The flipside just deepens the mystery - what is going on? In the apocalyptic "Ballad Of Hong Kong", manic stereo panning of percussion over horror movie loops gives way to an Ivor Cutleresque interlude, which leads swiftly into a distended ska chorus and then fades into very slowed down piano - Sesay all the while singing her heart out. "National Honk" is a two minute dada operetta, delivered as though it meant life or death. Not just groundbreaking, it burrows into caverns not imagined since Richard Shaver entered Lemuria. EB

Sonny Sharrock - Black Woman

(Vortex 1969)

In 1969, Sonny Sharrock, America's first free jazz guitarist (prominent on such Pharoah Sanders albums as *Tauhid*) was well into his 1967-73 stint in jazz-pop flautist Herbie Mann's group, terrorizing Mann fans with uncompromising blasts of atonal electric guitar. Not only did Mann love that clash, he produced this album, Sharrock's first as a leader, for an Atlantic subsidiary. The album, with a cast of New York free jazz all-stars including pianist Dave Burrell, bassist Norris Jones (aka Sirone), trumpeter Ted Daniel, drummer Milford Graves, and more, features Linda Sharrock's Patty Waters/Yoko Ono-influenced vocals, with healthy dollops of soul and gospel. I've heard side two's opening track described as "an adaptation of a lullaby [used by Canteloube in his *Chants D'Auvergne*] culminating in the rape and dismemberment of the singer". Linda's fierce wails and screeches are as aggressive as her husband's guitar playing, yet there's an unavoidable pop element in the music suggesting that, however naively, the participants believed that they could reach amass audience. Alas, this eccentric musical grab bag (which also touched on Country blues with the first appearance of Sonny's "Blind Willie", here played solo on acoustic guitar) was too far out

even for those times. A year later, the couple's music became more extreme on the also-legendary *monkey-pockie-boo*. SH

Silver Apples - Contact

(Kapp Records 1969)

Being an RAF brat who spent many years abroad, USAF radio stations exposed me to what seemed to be impossibly exotic musics. Along with raw blues, hot gospel, gutsy soul and hard R&B; were Beefheart, Hendrix and the enigmatic Silver Apples (named presumably after Morton Subotnick's 1967 synthesizer composition *Silver Apples Of The Moon*). As America swooned on surf, swayed to psychedelia or melted to Jack Jones, The Silver Apples were in their bunker, shaping strangeness from a drum set, a banjo and a homemade hybrid oscillator, 'the Simeon', named after the duo's vocalist. I easily succumbed. *Contact*, their second album, a four-track recording fusing layered oscillators, sustained chords, frantic skitterings of unearthly insects and Dan Taylor's metronomic drumming, is the sound of the American dream dissolving into a nightmare. Simeon's vocals are thin and piercing, incanting spaced-out paranoia or rambling wistful stream-of-consciousness shards pre-dating Underworld's dislocated lists. They provided blueprints for Suicide, Kraftwerk, Can, Neu!, Eno and the New York 'No Wave' artists, and as with many pioneers, they quickly disappeared into obscurity. RM

Luke Skywalker - I Wanna Rock 12"

(Luke Records 1992)

The guiltiest of guilty pleasures. Former 2 Live Crew member Luke Skywalker is without a doubt the biggest asshole in music history this side of GG Allin, but this record - which along with the ascendancy of champion scratch DJ Magic Mike moved Miami Bass from its Electro roots to a more streamlined version of breakbeat science (so it actually set about 500 square miles of the world on fire) - sets his unrepentant ribaldry to a beat with so much relentless forward momentum that I'd forgive him for spending the rest of the record talking about his favourite position from the *Kama Sutra* (which, in fact, he does). Perhaps inevitably, the dirty version rocks a lot harder than the clean one. PS

Tim Souster - Swit Drirmz

(Transatlantic 1977)

Had he not died tragically in mid-life in 1996, Souster might now be winning greater recognition for his saboteur assaults on the frontline separating academic electronic composition and art rock. A former Stockhausen pupil, his Intermodulation ensemble with Roger Smalley brought *Beat Music* - a Pan Sonic-like rhythmic layering of pulses and frequencies - to the Proms at the dawn of the 70s; several pieces on *Swit Drirmz* were written for his subsequent group Odb. *Spectral* (1972), scored in graphics and standard notation for electronically processed viola, still sounds superb. The other pieces show Souster exploring the

capabilities of various synthesizers. Sometimes the results are merely pleasant, as on the New Agey "Afghan Amplitudes", but in "Music From Afar", a synthesized voice recites poems - an unsettling vocoder glimpse into a sci-fi future "Surfit", intertwining fragments of a Beach Boys interview with live percussion and keyboard, seemed rather pedestrian even in 1976, but prefigured today's debates on the tension between the classical theoretical approach and the popular impetus toward exploring technology's sound potential for the sheer hell of it. BWi

Alexander 'Skip' Spence - *Oar*

(Columbia 1969)

This brilliant album - a progenitor of both the loner/stoner and lo-fi movements - was conceived while Spence was incarcerated in a notorious New York mental institution. He had landed there following a series of evil drug-instigated shenanigans he visited upon the member of his group Moby Grape. Recorded on three track(!), absolutely solo, *Oar* represents a type of internalized psychedelic exploration that would not find a real audience for decades. It would be incorrect to say that the company dumped the record. *Oar* was reviewed very positively in *Rolling Stone*, and ads for it ran in the US music magazines. But it is such a dark suite of songs and so accepting of its hopelessness that there was never a chance in hell that hippy turds would latch onto it. BC

Spontaneous Music Ensemble - *Karyobin*

(Chronoscope 1968)

SME had already been going for a couple of years when *Karyobin* was recorded in 1968. Drummer John Stevens has pushed the group from the freedom of jazz into the wider challenge of collective free improvisation. The awareness and openness this demanded on the part of the musicians can be heard throughout this pioneering album. Compared to the magnificent raging bark of Peter Brotzmann's *Machine Gun* (recorded a couple of months later), the music on *Karyobin* distances itself from the energy and impassioned self-expression of free jazz. Evan Parker and Kenny Wheeler play with extraordinary closeness, between and beneath them Derek Bailey had already taken the guitar into unheard-of territory. The rhythmic flexibility of John Steven's gentle work provides the space for it all to happen. Like the best of the improvised music that has followed in the ensuing 30 years, it touched on a special kind of intensified awareness, an in-the-moment saying and listening that is enthralling to hear unfold. WM

Mark Stewart & The Maffia - *To Cope With Cowardice*

(On-U Sound 1983)

After the delirious punk-funk excursions of The Pop Group, Stewart teamed up with ex-members of The Sugarhill Gang and engineer/producer Adrian Sherwood, whose radically inventive approach to sound is still not fully appreciated. It was the perfect alchemical

marriage of wayward genius an exercise in inspired miscegenation that drew upon elements of dub, brittle funk, cut-up tapes, and noise. Mark Stewart's abrasive, yet seductive vocals had found their perfect musical complement. Dystopian visions - unsurprising, considering the contemporary political climate - collide with an almost quasi-mystical radicalism, derived equally from Jamaican dub and the likes of Blake and Shelley. The highlight of this astonishing record is Stewart's version of "Jerusalem", the ultimate statement of radical visionary consciousness that would have been the perfect sound track to Jarman's *The Last Of England*. JE

Sun Ra - Strange Strings

(Saturn 1967)

For more than a year Sun Ra had been collecting exotic stringed instruments from curio shops and music stores on his travels, and had gathered together a koto, some ukuleles, a mandolin, and various Chinese instruments. One day at a rehearsal in 1966 he passed them out to the horn and reed players of The Arkestra and explained that their next record would be with strings, since they needed to reach their audience in a different way than traditional jazz could provide. When they complained that they didn't know how to tune the instruments, much less play them, Sun Ra explained how that was precisely the point it was to be an exercise in ignorance, music at the point where knowledge gave way to the pure spirit which could guide their playing. The result was a remarkable piece of textural, atonal music, save for the few moments where singer Art Jenkins growled through a megaphone. In retrospect they seem to have found the nexus at which Stockhausen and Cornelius Cardew's scratch orchestras met; but if anything, *Strange Strings* is a more organic and satisfying work, all the more astonishing as having been the most completely improvised piece of music in the history of jazz. JFS

The United States Of America - The United States Of America

(CBS 1968)

Sometime John Cage associate Joseph Byrd summoned a collection of liberal-minded musicians armed with ring modulators and anti-establishment principles to make an experimental rock record which deserves to be as widely known as contemporaneous efforts by The Velvet Underground and The Silver Apples. Eschewing guitars in favour of violins, organs, calliope, harpsichord and pure electronics, The United States Of America achieved a unique hybrid of psychedelia and electronica which giddily reworked vaudeville and downhome Americana, encircling its sources with vocalist Dorothy Moscovitz's lysergic melodic swoops and wildly oscillating synthesized tonebursts. "Where Is Yesterday?" sampled a solemn "Agnus Dei", and the closing "The American Way Of Love" weaves fragments from the whole record into a wayward tape tapestry. As far as I know, Byrd only made one more record

(*The American Metaphysical Circus*, credited to Joe Byrd & The Field Hippies), but with The United States Of America, he opened up territory which disappointingly few have seen fit to explore further. CS

Galina Ustvol'skaya - Galina Ustvol'skaya No 1

(Hat Art CD 1991)

The description 'the lady with the hammer' makes Ustvol'skaya sound like a Russian Mrs. Thatcher, but her music is as much Horror as Hammer. Born in 1919, and a student of Shostakovich, she forged a totally independent path. She made no compromise with the regime, and her music was not performed. This was, as far as I'm aware, the first recording of her music on a Western label, probably the first ever. Hers is an austere tonal world of extreme, often violent contrasts, expressing a despair that invites an obvious political interpretation. Pianist Reinbert De Leuw and his colleagues perform works from all periods. The *Duet For Violin And Piano*, and the *Piano Sonata*, are in a mature style that shows an unflinching realism. Unlike other composers who could be called 'religious Minimalists', exposure for Ustvol'skaya has come very late. But her heroic music must be considered too forbidding for New Age success. AH

The Walker Brothers - Nite Flights

(GTO Records 1978)

Only the first four tracks, Scott Walker's own, concern me, as the rest of the album is given over to the other 'brothers, with mediocre results. "Shutout" rips open with ominous bass, knife-edge drumming and a heavy sustained chord screaming into a tunnel of absolute despair. One of the best voices in contemporary music enters, stabbing an elliptical litany of terrors chased by Les Davidson's chainsaw guitar eating into metal. The brooding atmosphere is set as Walker breathes wreath-like free falls throughout the surging skin-bursting of "Fat Mama Kick" and "Nite Flights". "The Electrician", a masterpiece (also bizarrely released as the most uncommercial single ever), follows; the ultimate in barbed intensity. Walker pours venom against US involvement in the politics of torture in South America, from within an evil cloud of shimmering menace (echoing the Eno/Bowie/Visconti hinterlands of *Low* and *Lodger*). A middle section flashes from the electric storm as lush orchestration eases into a calming Spanish guitar only to plunge back into the velvet blackness. Brutally honest, somber yet sensual, these tracks shimmer and resonate with as much relevance and power now as they did when they were originally released to near obscurity 20 years ago. RM

Johnny 'Guitar' Watson - Ain't That A Bitch

(DJM 1976)

Introduced to a state of the art studio (Paramount) and engineer (Kerry McNabb) by Frank Zappa, the Gangster of Love, Johnny 'Guitar' Watson,

cut the best-sounding funk album of all time in 1976. Futuristic lyrics ("Superman Lover") complemented Watson's unerring ear for note placement. He alchemized the styles he had dallied with in the last two decades rockin' R&B, sepia Sinatra balladry, slick soulman confessional and a new superfrosted funk. Bassist Steve Neil, sacked because he asked for too much money, was replaced by bass overdubs. Watson also supplied keyboards, guitar and vocals - each one replete with his unique 'attitude'. Drummer Emory Thomas and a horn section that included England's own free jazz hero Paul Dunmall completed a killer sound; as steely and urgently urban as Edgard Varese, as slinky as Nat King Cole, as sharp and sassy as no one else in recorded history. BWa

X-103 - Atlantis

(Axis/Tresor 1993)

Jeff Mill's solo follow-up to Underground Resistance's *Rings of Saturn* project confounded the conventions of the utilitarianism of hard Techno, and the hashish hazy listening of Ambient. I bought the LP on the back of UR 12"s, and found it difficult but relentlessly fascinating. Stylus on vinyl stalks the circular structure of the underwater city through a series of alien rippling ambiances and metallic rhythm workouts. While "Eruption" outstrips any Gabba track for sheer punishing energy, the warbling "Thera" is an understated moment of gothic magnificence. Five years on, Mill's ideas are now almost mainstream - "Hagia Triada" is similar to his Purpose Maker track "Alarms", now a standard DJ mixing tool - and how many are still out there on their own. "Minnia", my favorite Mills piece, sounds like Miklos Rosza with Grace Jones's "Slave To The Rhythm" turning into an early Chicago House track. MSh

Larry Young - Laurence of Newark

(Perception 1973)

Jazz hepsters may have deeply dug Larry Young's numerous vibrant Hammond organ workouts for Prestige and Blue Note, but those who longed to hear him stretch out that massive sound of his more imaginatively on record would have to wait until the early 70s. Young's new found freedom, which took off on John McLaughlin's *Devotion* album and the records he made with Tony Williams Lifetime, soared on *Laurence of Newark*, where his playing entered another creative dimension. The beating heart of the record is "Khalid of Space Part Two" (Part One remains missing to this day) - 12 minutes of Sun Ra inspired cosmo jam that pushes Young and his 'Arkestra' toppling over the edge of free jazz freakout to tear a mindblowing solo from the primal fretboard of James 'Blood' Ulmer. Young's untimely death, and the imprisonment of Perception's founder, ensured that no further experiments of this kind would be carried out. Meanwhile, *Laurence Of Newark* begs to be reissued. EP

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