

commitment to immediacy. Much of the time, Ewen's guitar and Smith's double bass interact in a tectonic fashion, each forcing massive groans and shuddering scrapes against the other. This yields a great opportunity to attend to the dynamism and situation-defining qualities of Walter's drumming. While he is quite capable of using cymbal barrages to push around some continental plates of his, he also uses single, perfectly placed snare strikes and hyper-articulated forays around the periphery of his kit to turn the trio's heaving masses into three-dimensional bursts of sound.

Luc Ex

Music Of Inevitable Sounds

Trost CD/DL

The word sabotage is rooted in the practice of throwing wooden shoes into machines to disrupt production. *Music Of Inevitable Sounds* is what happens when you apply the theatrical spirit and wooden shoe timing of a certain strain of Dutch jazz to the inescapable soundtrack of modern living. The racket of machine shops, church bells, cement makers, cellphone yackers and so on has been expanded into music that is by turns unabashedly melodramatic and rudely cacophonous. Mournful cello melodies and slowly galumphing grooves articulate the grief that accompanies sonic bombardment, but the raining tones of multiple pianos and vigorously hacked electric guitar suggests that there's fun to be had in joining what you can't beat.

Travis Laplante & Yarn/Wire

Inner Garden

New Amsterdam CD/DL

A core paradox of Travis Laplante's music is that while it taps into principles of the healing practices of qigong and acupuncture, it often pushes the tenor saxophonist and those who play with him to the brink. Like his work with the duo Subtle Degrees and saxophone quartet Battle Trance, *Inner Garden* is a carefully plotted longform work. But the switch from working with massed saxophones or a drum kit to a quartet of pianists and percussionists brings access to a world of softer sounds expressing a welcome gentleness that registers as powerfully as the moments of ecstatic release.

Eddie Prévost/John Butcher/

Guillaume Viltard

Ikleetik Live One

Matchless CD

The Epiphanies piece that Eddie Prévost wrote for *The Wire* 441 concludes, "Creativity thrives in loneliness." The drummer finds himself in positively enabling company on this splendidly recorded concert from 2016, which is the trio's second release. The way Viltard ballasts the action reminds me of William Parker; he constantly reaffirms the value of letting the bass be a bass, which frees Prévost to vary the energy

level and move in and out of time at will. Butcher's repertoire of streaking high pitches, low barks and exactly sculpted punctuations contribute consistently non-obvious complementarity.

Steph Richards

Supersense

Northern Spy CD/DL

Steph Richards sought to evoke the polysensate quality of musical experience by first developing a set of scent boxes with Sean Raspet, which her quartet opened while recording the album, and then devising a scent card for listeners to sniff while playing the CD. But even if you prefer downloads or suffer from lingering Covid nose, there's plenty to appreciate about the American trumpet and flugelhorn player's third recording. Each pithy track comes at you from a different angle, exploring frantic changes of direction, pointillistic abstraction, or a poetic transition from extended technique to overtly expressive balladry.

Jason Stein & Adam Shead

Synaptic Atlas

ears&eyes DL

Bass clarinetist Jason Stein sounds equally at home inducing trances in Joshua Abrams's Natural Information Society, lurching nimbly through the electric grooves of his and keyboards player Paul Giallorenzo's Hearts & Minds, and grappling like a pro wrestler with the legacy of modern jazz in his own quartet. You can count on him to attain fluency within any system that he operates, and he sounds just as conversant with the language of free improvisation on *Synaptic Atlas*. Drummer Adam Shead is a relative newcomer to Chicago's scene; he first approached Stein in 2015 for career advice, but schooling turned to playing. They combine quick, darting lines with shrewdly calibrated bursts of percussive energy to improvise dialogues unbalanced by neither interpersonal hierarchy nor an over-reliance upon received jazz vernacular.

What Happens In A Year

Cérémonie/Musique

FIP CD/DL

That's a long name for a small band, but it's a fair summation of the time it takes to make a record. What bass guitarist Giacomo Meregá, electric guitarist Todd Neufeld and baritone sax/bass clarinet player Josh Sinton have done with their year is hone a very particular group sound that answers the question: "What album of Jimmy Giuffrè-inspired collective improvisations did John Abercrombie record for ECM in the late 1970s, but took it back before they dipped it in the reverb vat?" If you weren't asking that question already, the exquisite attunement of these restrained explorations of implied swing, mutually buoying tonalities and laconic melodies are an admonishment to get more curious. □

Modern Composition By Julian Cowley

Marianne Baudouin Lie

Atlantis, Utopia & Ulvedrammer

Particular CD/DL/LP

An ancient stone church at Selbu in the heart of Norway has in recent years become a favoured venue for recording artists on account of its generous acoustic properties. Cellist Marianne Baudouin Lie headed there to perform pieces by Norwegian contemporaries. Ellen Lindquist's *Many Thousands Gone* suggests vulnerable human figures in a challenging environment, a vocalised folk song pitched against rugged, angular cello tones. Voice and instrument find common ground and harmonise on Eirik Hegdal's flowing *Concertino*. They grow conspiratorial on Stine Sørli's episodic *Atlantis Lamento*, hushed and breathy or terse and brash. Lie's whistling shadows a flickering drone, then a faint repeated cry accompanies sawing ostinato on Maja Ratkje's *To F*. Closing this engrossing programme is *Wolfdreams*, an engagingly skewed solo rock opera with score by Lene Grenager and words from Lie.

Martina Bertoni

Music For Empty Flats

Karlrecords DL/LP/MC

Relocating from Rome to Berlin in 2017, cellist and composer Bertoni has a taste for cavernous ambience. The seven tracks on *Music For Empty Flats* share an epic cinematic quality. Using electronic and digital means to dilate, enhance and project the sound of her instrument, Bertoni conjures up vast and deeply reverberant acoustic spaces where it proves difficult to sustain a focus for the ear, and correspondingly easy to feel engulfed by the music's expansiveness. Despite titles such as *Bright Wood* and *Distant Tropics* differences between individual pieces are less striking than the consistent character of the album overall. Perfect for times when you feel the need to surrender to sound and get washed away for a while, although such oceanic fullness is certainly not a match for all moods.

Lamin Fofana

Blues

No label/Black Studies DL

Listening to the new release from DJ and sound artist Lamin Fofana brings to my mind the experience of looking from the window of a moving train. Sitting still and enclosed, watching the world beyond the glass pass by. Existing simultaneously in

two separated zones, one fixed and one temporary, but which is static and which is in motion? *Blues* offers five atmospheric soundscapes that generate a comparably disorienting sense of relationships existing between concurrent and contrasting realities. Originally from Sierra Leone, Fofana lived in Brooklyn, New York, before settling in Berlin four years ago. Fusing natural and urban environments, cooked music and raw noise, these compositions seem to trace that ongoing journey through the haunted spaces of memory and elusive terrain of dreams.

Ikue Mori/Satoko Fujii/Natsuki Tamara *Prickly Pear Cactus*

Libra CD

Something About Water, the duo session with Paul Bley which confirmed that Satoko Fujii is a musician well worth following, appeared in 1996. Since then her output has been steady and diverse, but since celebrating her 60th birthday two years ago the Japanese pianist has been wildly prolific and she shows no sign of putting on the brakes. Undeterred by the pandemic, from her home in Kobe she has been collaborating remotely with Ikue Mori, stationed at her laptop in New York, exchanging audio files and overdubbing. Mori then mixed and edited their feisty dialogue, and while her effervescent electronics and Fujii's intense and eloquent playing may appear poles apart, in practice the chemistry between them produces a torrent of scintillating music. Natsuki Tamara, Fujii's husband, contributes trumpet to four of the ten tracks and blends in seamlessly.

Brendon Randall-Myers/Dither

Dynamics Of Vanishing Bodies

New Focus CD/DL

The clangorously adventurous spirit of Glenn Branca lives on in the music of New Yorker Randall-Myers. To realise *Dynamics Of Vanishing Bodies*, this core member of The Branca Ensemble has enlisted the services of Gyan Riley and his associates in electric guitar quartet Dither. Over the course of its five sections this challenging and brilliantly executed piece makes extensive use of unconventional tunings, controlled feedback and overlapping loops to dramatise human experience of attachment and loss. Boldly etched sounds leave delicate echoes in their wake; emphatic gestures have a ghostly lingering afterlife. The impact of thrashed chords is imposingly physical, the showers of harmonic sparks are spectacular, yet the disciplined virtuosity of Dither is no less evident in the closing movement where foot pedals and loopers alone remain to evoke the aftermath of an encounter.

Maja SK Ratkje & Trondheim Voices

Ekkokammer 3.0/Echo Chamber 3.0

MNJ DL

"Echochamber is all about what it means to have a voice, metaphorically as well as