

what we've been listening to this month...

with such an insane & somewhat overwhelming amount of music available to us all, we thought you might like to know what's really been working for us lately. so, here's a run down of what's been keeping our ears & souls happy this month.....

derry

the pink mountaintops : outside love supposedly 'just' a side project of steve mcbean's 'other' band, black mountain, pink mountaintops have now released more albums than black mountain, so maybe it's the other way round. whatever the case, pink mountaintops deserve to be treated on their own merits & are at least the equal of their more feted relations. the influences remain the same but the mountaintops, probably the best live band I've seen all year, take a slightly gentler, more folk/country approach to the psych, stoner, velvets black mountain template. stand out track 'vampire' sounds like band-era dylan fronting the beggars/exile period stones, whilst the title track reminds me of a country version of low's 'that's how we sing amazing grace'. definitely the psychamericana album of the year. [jagjaguwar](#)

james blackshaw : the glass bead game (released 25th may) the latest release from the incredibly prolific & talented 12 string genius, james blackshaw, sees him take his unique approach to modal guitar playing to the almost inevitable next level. this time blackshaw effortlessly moves on to a more modern classical style of composition with tracks based around piano & female voice, with additional string & wind instrument contributions. at this rate, he'll be producing full blown symphonies by the time he's 30. another triumph from michael gira's consistently brilliant young god label. one of the most beautiful albums you'll hear all year & highly recommended if you're into steve reich, philip glass or terry riley. [young god](#)

natasha

the hospitals : hairdryer peace this dense, menacing beauty originally came out as a vinyl only release last year & it totally bypassed me but once i'd read the wire's trusty end of year poll (where it made the number 3 spot), i had to know what it was all about but there were none to be found anywhere. however, luckily the good people at meds saw the sense in putting it out on cd (& a repress of the vinyl has quickly followed), so i finally got to hear it.....& what an utter treat it is!! far too heavy for shop play (unless we're wanting to clear the shop in a hurry), so you won't be exposed to it on the resident stereo but you should definitely pop it on the headset. prepare yourself though - it's dusty, it's nasty, it's scuzzy, it's demented - it's the sort of thing that would send most people running in fear but this kind of racket makes my ears so damn happy these days. not one for the dinner party. [meds](#)

the horrors : primary colours like many others i suspect, i had completely written these guys off as a bunch of no-hoper art-school dropout, musical wannabees & never warmed to their past musical efforts. that's the joy of this job - i probably wouldn't even have bothered putting this on the stereo unless matt had told me i had to check out the epic 'sea within a sea' on myspace & found myself, somewhat reluctantly admittig an appreciation of where their "new" sound was going. i say "new" as there is nothing original whatsoever about what they are doing (the blatant calling on the likes of spiritualized, jesus & mary chain, my bloody valentine, joy division & the cure clearly sets out their influences) but they've taken those 80's sounds that they (& indeed i) love so much & have turned them into something dark, brooding & fuzzy all of their own. i love it when an album pisses all over your expectations, reminds me not to be snobby & makes me reassess everything i think about a band. [acel xl](#)

matt

mokira : persona new album by andreas filliander in his mokira guise on the consistently amazing type label. a seamless album of long kosmiche ambient soundscapes, conjuring up the lost vibes of kraut masters such as cluster & populuh but also the hiss & dub atmosphere of gas & basic channel. a real special one that's heading straight into the end of year list. [type](#)

woods : songs of shame great record of psychedelic folk pop nuggets - this is more extroverted, accessible & straight up than their previous recordings but they still manage to maintain that classic neil young turned super lo-fi freaky charm. fans of mv & ee will lap this up. expect to hear this a lot coming from the shop speakers this summer! [woodsist](#)

sam

dirty projectors : bitte orca (released 8th june) it's fair to say my expectations for this record were sky high. 'knotty pine' - one of the highlights of the 'dark was the night' comp has been on heavy rotation round my place ever since i got it earlier this year. this album isn't as straight ahead pop as 'knotty pine' suggested it might be but is by some distance their most pop record yet. new york art rock meets nico-esque chamber pop meets aaliyah/timbaland r&b meets... well you get the picture. it's not immediate but given a few listens reveals a multitude of hooks & there are passages that are quite breathtaking. [domino](#)

v/a : the sound of wonder the guys at finders keepers have really come up trumps this time. i didn't think i needed to hear any lollywood (bollywood's poorer pakistani cousin) music but i have been proved wrong. mixing traditional rhythms & instruments with psych, surf, funk & primitive synthesizers may have seemed like mad professor craziness but this frankenstein's monster music works fantastically. it's wonky coming-apart-at-the-sleeves style is gloriously addictive & will have you slack jawed at the invention & imagination squeezed into every tune - the title of this comp could not be more appropriate. highly recommended! [finders keepers](#)

James

jon hopkins : insides it's all eyes on the dance section this month with two bountiful servings of bleeps n' beats, the first of which being this superb album from jon hopkins. a nifty pianist & hotshot producer by trade (with past credits including coldplay, david holmes & king creosote amongst others), his solo material is immaculately fashioned electronica, where glitched-up beats that recall autechre or four tet at their finest meet sublime ambience with an almost classical twist. it's at times beautiful, at others sinister, &, as exemplified in the amazing 'light through the veins', is capable of building into something truly epic & moving. big recommendations! [double six](#)

cathode : sparkle plenty hurrah for geordie band cathode, keeping it real & honing a fine strain of electronics that sucks in the best bits of artists such as boards of canada, isan, kettel & ulrich schnauss & spits them out as fully formed nuggets of melodic blipping whirring electronica that is just downright lovely. it's not particularly new but cathode do it so well & with such ease that this album can't help but charm. the great mid-album excursion into krautrock ('structure hunger') is a nice diversion too, proving that these chaps can vary their sonic-scape & pull it off well. & did i mention the watery cover picture? brilliant! [expanding](#)

daniel

kurt vile : constant hitmaker as soon as the opening track 'freeway' begins, this album is clearly destined to be a one way trip into pure lo-fi pop bliss. beautiful yet weirdly familiar vocal melodies occasionally poke their heads over the warm blanket of fuzz enveloping the album, get lodged somewhere in your brain, then retreat back into that lovely murk. soon enough though another will have wormed its way in, & by the end you're left with peculiar hazy memories of pop songs, ones you can't quite put your finger on yet will be humming for days. [woodsist](#)

thee oh sees : help the super prolific oh sees latest on in the red (pretty much a guarantee of awesomeness) is their best yet. it's their most straight up garage punk record to date, full of grinding guitars & simple yet effective vocal hooks. add to this a touch of nuggets worshipping shambolic psych, & the result is exhilarating. [in the red](#)

john

animal collective : merriweather post pavilion there is a strong chance that you already own this album, but if not, why not? just when i was thinking it would be impossible for animal collective to keep up such a consistent string of amazing albums they went & did it again with 'merriweather post pavilion', eleven rays of sunshine that manage to be noisy yet beautiful, melancholy yet massively uplifting. with the sun starting to (occasionally) show its face over our seaside town, this album packed full of perfectly crafted songs & beach boys-esque harmonies is blissful summer listening. [domino](#)

venetian snares : filth with last years 'detrimentalist', aaron funk (aka venetian snares) did a rather fantastic job of taking the jungle blueprint & smashing it into a wonderfully messy splattering of hoovers & amens. the world of acid techno has become the latest victim of the snares treatment, with 'filth' combining his usual spazzed out breakbeats with some lovely 303 synth lines & plenty of alien-sounding bleeps. if they ever hand out prizes for the most obscene samples & track titles, you can be sure of a clean sweep here! if you enjoy the heavier end of the apex spectrum, this could be one for you. [planet mu](#)

simon

camera obscura : my maudlin career their last album, 2006's 'let's get out of the country' featured their breakthrough single 'lloyd i'm ready to be heartbroken'. now three years later & signed to seminal label 4ad, traceyanne campbell & co. are back with a shiny, summery collection of deliciously bittersweet, melodic pop gems. sometimes musically reminding me of 'baby the stars shine bright' era everything but the girl mixed with the jangliness of the sundays, whilst lyrically recalling the humour/mundanity of the smiths & belle & sebastian, this album certainly won't disappoint the old fans, but those new to the band will find much to enjoy. [4ad](#)

peaches : i feel cream having just turned 40 ms. niska shows no signs of mellowing at all, thankfully. still as outrageous as you'd hope, this album is full of music driven by sex & sexual politics from the queen of electroclash. hard & dark throbbing beats coupled with glistening synths take you back to the early days of the new romantic clubbing, whilst also sounding bang up to date production wise. aided & abetted by writing & production cohorts digitalism, simian mobile disco, soulwax, longtime collaborator gonzales & shunda k of yo majesty, expect a hot & sleazy ride. [xl](#)

calum

hot 8 brass band : rock with the hot 8 the hot 8 brass band are a truly unique collective of musicians hailing from new orleans. although officially & professionally forming in 1995, it was not until after hurricane katrina that hot 8 reached an audience outside of louisiana. primarily through spike lee's katrina documentary 'when the levees broke: a requiem in four acts', the band gained their deserved exposure. 'rock with the hot 8' sees the band mix traditional marching music, hip hop, r&b & soul. surprisingly, born out of all the horror & despondency in new orleans post katrina, this is some of the most uplifting, bring a smile to your face music you will ever hear. [tru thoughts](#)

funky nassau: the compass point story 1980-1986 a compilation of music born out of chris blackwell's personal studio in the bahamas. the artists that passed through blackwell's sacred hands include everyone from grace jones to talking heads & sly dunbar. if you were lying on a beach, in the bahamas with your feet up & a cold beverage in your hand, this is what you would be wiggling your burnt toes to... even if that's not your reality, this cd will be sure to send you to a sunny place, as it features some seriously fun & funky tunes. [strut records](#)