

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

rain machine : rain machine

released 21/09 when tv on the radio released 'dear science' it was definitely good & all but i couldn't help feel that it was just a bit too slick, a bit too produced, maybe a bit too, well, sitek. of course, i grew too love it in the end but it will never have the place in my heart that 'desperate youths...' or 'return to cookie mountain' do. where 'bad science' was all control & craft, the 1st 2 albums were about the juxtaposition of sounds that shouldn't really work together & the feeling that it could all fall apart at any second....which brings us to 'rain machine', kip malone's solo album. now, this is the album i was waiting for. in truth, for the most part it could easily be a tv on the radio album but it's got the rawness i was missing & the sense of daring to push the songs past breaking point, especially on the william elliot whitmore goes insane closer, 'winter song'. it's an album that will reveal more with every play & one of those rare side projects that's as good as the maker's day job.

anti

the beatles

yes, all of them. i know they are absolutely everywhere to the point where you probably can't even remember the old days when all anyone cared about was michael jackson & no, i haven't actually had time to listen to all of the albums yet but from the ones i've heard so far, i know i've got a real treat instore. remastering can often be seen as just another cynical marketing exercise to get you to rebuy something you've already bought before but in this case you only have to listen to a song like 'come together' or 'tomorrow never knows' to hear how great these new versions actually sound. i won't go on about what the songs sound like as i imagine you know that already. if you haven't bought these albums before, now's definitely the time to do it. if you already have, i'm afraid you really do need to get them again. of course, the bad songs, the ringo songs, like 'yellow submarine' now sound even worse but you can't have everything. emi

natasha

soap & skin : lovetune for vacuum

this album was a winner from the outset but having seen her perform live at the great escape & in a dark corner of the stage, providing the perfect support act to patti smith at onnette coleman's meltdown, the intensity of this album just grows & grows for me. her nyman-esque piano compositions married to the pj harvey/nico-esque vocals, quirky, gnarliness of fonal's paavoharju, curious electronic outings of the kind that mum used to offer & dark, eerie atmospherics, make for a very cinematic experience. in fact, for me, the 19-year-old austrian artist anja plaschg conjures up scenes from the nyman-scored cinematic masterpiece 'the piano' (in her high collared, lacy, gothic dress on the album sleeve she even looks remarkably similar to holly hunter's character). anja creates the perfect balance of sparse, delicate & haunting songs against her frenzied ivory hammerings for a record that i find myself returning to again & again. pias

necro deathmort : this beat is necrotronic

as this duo go under a name that make you think they are a scandi-death metal outfit, i suspect many people are going to miss out on this awesome record that should have garnered a lot more attention than it has. matthew rozeik & aj cookson have made an incredibly powerful debut that moves between the industrial 'machine-gun'-esque electronics of portishead, the doom-laden, bass-heavy drones of earth (pre-irritating keyboards), the filthy beats of aphex twin & the turntablist dance-hip hop-noise fusion of dj shadow.....skittering electronics, earth-style drones & creamy hiss, pedal effect antics, crushing guitars & full-on post-apocalyptic doom. it's brutal, ballsy & devastating but at the same time it's also delicate, considered & atmospheric – one hell of a listen, right through the last pounding note. if aphex twin & earth made an album together (& now that i think about it, they damn well ought to!), you could only hope it resulted in something as impressive & terrifying as this. distraction records

m a t t

eno moebius roedelius : after the heat

recorded in 1978 this was the second genius collaboration to come from krautrock legends cluster & king of all music brian eno. an immense meeting of minds – eno's trademark ambient soundscapes meld perfectly with cluster's signature take on instrumental soundscaping. features possibly my favourite brian eno song ever made – 'the belldog'. they even managed to rope in old holger czukay from can to play bass on a couple of tracks... ambient music seriously doesn't get much better than this. 'after the heat' remains a lost classic.

[sky/bureau b](#)

the feelies : crazy rhythms

the good dudes at domino records have finally seen fit to reissue the works of the massively underappreciated us post-punk group the feelies. 'crazy rhythms', their first album, was released in 1980 on stiff records to underground nerdy acclaim & featured nervous raw punk energy that unfortunately they would never quite recapture again. the songs are all catchy as hell but are underpinned with choppy, angular surf-punk riffs & at times fairly experimental percussive passages. 'crazy rhythms' is an absolute indie landmark album that i'll be listening to forever. [stiff/domino](#)

s a m

mos def : the ecstatic

I don't know the whys & wherefores but it seems that mos def decided to show up for his latest album. I'd all but given up hope that he would deliver an album as great as his 1st – one that, way back in late 1999, announced a major new talent. he seems to have devoted his energies to his acting career ever since & clearly there was no choice to make between rapping a little more & the 'italian job' remake, certainly the 2 crushing disappointments that were his 2nd & 3rd albums suggest as much, so 'the ecstatic' is all the sweeter. I really haven't let it slip too far from my cd player/ipod. madlib, late j dilla & oh no production, the obligatory slick rick guest spot (which almost manages, as always, to steal the show), a mini black star reunion, banda black rio & best of all, the effortless, tumbling flow of the man himself. I'm so glad he's back & I really didn't think I'd find myself saying it. [v2](#)

arctic monkeys : humbug

I have had more than a few sideward glances around here when I have said how much I like this record & while it's true that I've never been much taken with these boys before, it is true I tell you! I really do love this album & no, i'm not on the wind up. josh homme has his hand in the transformation of my affections but it's the boys themselves that have put in the hard work. they have slowed things down quite a bit & there is a nice widescreen feel & they're ever so slightly heavier but I can't say I can quite pin down why I'm so taken with 'humbug', all I know is I love it – & to all those that doubt my sincerity I say "bah!". [domino](#)

j a m e s

fuck buttons : surf solar 7"

fuck buttons return with a fuzz-fuelled euphoric bomb that's urgent, driving & addictive as heck. certainly this sounds a lot more dancefloor-primed than their previous work, perhaps thanks to the looming influence of legendary dj/producer andrew weatherall who's taken on production duties, with the result being a truly epic, noisy track that just builds & builds. on the flip 'new crossbow' sounds like spacemen 3 trading in their guitars for samplers, all shimmering chords repeating over an entrancing hypnotic groove. can't wait for the album! [atp](#)

v/a : echo expansion

seems there's some very healthy beat experimentation taking place in california right now, with producers taking the raw elements of the hip hop music they grew up with & melding them with a new-found love of early psychedelic music & odd electronics. whilst the hottest names on the scene are flying lotus & his right hand man, the gaslamp killer, both of whom are featured here, this excellent compilation highlights a host of other names who are all righteously ploughing a new field. lazily termed 'wonky hip hop', this is forward thinking beat science well worthy of closer scrutiny. [dublax](#)



daniel

vivian girls : everything goes wrong

the girls are back with their 2nd album almost a year after the reissue of their debut. the influences remain the same - ramones, '60s girl groups, surf & indie pop - but this album is a whole different beast. it becomes quickly apparent that this they've made a great leap forward as the songs themselves are far subtler, lacking the same immediacy of those on their debut & whilst the infectious pop hooks are still there, they are not as instant or obvious at first. working that little bit harder to discover them makes you appreciate them all the more & the way they have been crafted into the song is often astounding. songs such as 'can't get over you' & 'the end' are prime examples, as just when you think the song has weaved all its tuneful magic, a sudden unexpected melody or harmony appears, lifting it to a level you simply weren't expecting. the band are clearly taking this pop band business a whole lot more seriously, as is not only apparent through the general mood of the album but in the clear amount of thought that has gone into each song. an incredible album. [in the red](#)

the fresh & onlys : grey-eyed girls

woodsist strikes again with another winner. I seem to be recommending something they put out almost every month. fresh & onlys released their debut lp, imaginatively entitled 'debut' only a few months ago on john dwyer of thee oh sees castle face label & have yet another lp due on in the red this winter. their prolific nature does not however mean the talents of songwriters tim cohen & shayde sartain are spread thinly. every song off this & indeed, off 'debut', is gold. their sound is an amalgamation of many, the major players perhaps being 80s punk & post-punk, psych & classic rock but with many others lurking just below the surface. it is definitely however a sound of their own & a timeless one at that. [woodsist](#)

john

lightning bolt : earthly delights

released 12/10/09 shit yeah! the greatest, most awe-inspiring & generally utterly brilliant band in the world finally release their follow up to 2005's 'hypermagic mountain' & once again it's an absolute blinder. it's business as usual with 9 (oh why only 9?) mammoth slabs of heavy-as-hell juggernaut noise rock, once again inducing the listener to wonder how the hell two guys can create such a massive sound. the usual ingredients are all here, brian chippendale's machine-gun drumming & drowned-in-feedback vocal squealing combine with brian gibson's bass trickery that manages to create the sonic equivalent of a jet-plane taking off. needless to say, fans of the band are unlikely to be disappointed. if you are unfamiliar with them, check out some live footage & let the obsession commence. i only hope we don't have to wait so long for the next album! [load](#)

luke vibert : we hear you

a definite return to form for the artist formally known as plug/wagon christ, after a couple of (personally) slightly disappointing, standard-fare acid-house styled albums. 'we hear you' is an eclectic affair, drawing in elements of dubstep, hip-hop, wobbly techno & electronica to make an album of good times summer-vibes listening. mashing together dark basslines, cheeky cut-up samples, squelchy acid lines & slick, irresistible beats, this is one that should please fans of anyone from apex to a tribe called quest. great stuff! [planet mu](#)

simon

v/a : horse meat disco

this now not so underground club attracts a discerning mix of old time disco heads, club kids, bears, naturists & everything inbetween to worship at the altar of all things disco. their first compilation features personal faves of mine such as the sexy, midtempo funk of karen young's 'deetour', gino soccio's futuristic electronic stomper 'it's alright' & the hi-nrg diva vocals of sheryl lee ralph's 'in the evening', getting me all nostalgic for heaven's steamy dancefloor way back in '84! all in all a fabulous, glittering party collection moving the hips & the head. poppers not included! [strut](#)

nite jewel : good evening

after last year's single 'what did he say' on italians do it better comes her essential album for languid late night listening. real name ramona gonzales, her dedication to 8 track recording technology & its limitations make the ten songs on this album an intensely intimate affair such as 'artificial intelligence' which effortlessly meld delicate beats & swirling synths with her ethereal voice, while tracks like 'weak for me' seem to remind me a little of arthur russell with the starry-eyed vocals & the way she makes something moving out of very simple elements. a very understated yet sophisticated collection seemingly originating in a different time, nevertheless still sounding very now. [no pain in pop](#)