

Album of the Issue

Samara Lubelski

Future Slip
Ecstatic Peace!



An otherworldly record, Lubelski recalls Goldfrapp but without the heavy synthesizers. Shame. But really there is only space for one Goldfrapp, so this album is inviting. Lovingly produced by Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label, Lubelski was recruited in 2007 for his *Trees Outside the Academy* album, and now two years later *Future Slip* introduces us to a new sound from Lubelski.

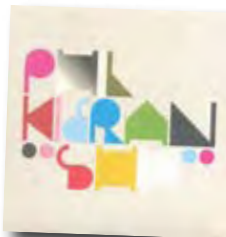
Lubelski has a voice of calm, serene with textbook energy, simplicity at heart, and with depth in each track; *Future Slip* is bound to become a staple. This record serves up a collection of bittersweet melodies; it's a fairytale, a joy ride in the country.

Lubelski's hazy vocals coupled with menacing baselines and pop chop drumming, creates a record rich in imagination and perspective. Opening with *Culture King '68* there's a clear indication that we're in for something special here, as the album progresses onto the fifth track *Headships Down*, a sort of avant-garde soundscape emerges. Eventually finishing up with *Field the Mine*, it's clear why Thurston Moore wanted to produce this album. Go. Get it now. myspace.com/samaralubelski.

Shirley Stevenson

Phil Kieran

Shh
Cocoon Recordings



Phil Kieran's debut album is an ethereal mix of techno bliss and futuristic digital sounds.

Kieran's background as DJ, producer and film-score creator for Steven Soderbergh's *The Girlfriend Experience*, means that *Shh* doesn't sound like a debut album. A confident and self-assured piece of work, it makes no apologies for the eclectic mix of influences melded together. Kieran aims to create an album that "captures everything [he's] ever loved about music" is fulfilled in *Shh*.

Cut Copy Waste is the first indication that this album can be the soundtrack to a chilled-out drive or lazy weekend whilst tearing up a massive club audience. *Raining for Old Friends* arrives in the middle of the album and smashes any preconceptions you'd already built about *Shh* through the first six tracks. With the rain-shower sampled in the background, it mesmerises the mind into a relaxed state that makes *Don't Look Far Away* an exhilarating euphoric and contrasting follow-on.

Phil Kieran has created an album impossible to pigeonhole into one solid genre with new sounds, samples and guest vocals. *Shh* is an album that keeps on giving. www.myspace.com/philkieran.

Sophie Gordon

Efterklang &

The Danish National Chamber Orchestra
Performing Parades
The Leaf Label



Born from 2007's *Parades*, *Performing Parades* does exactly what it says on the tin. In 2008, Efterklang teamed up with The Danish National Chamber Orchestra to perform their original work to a capacity audience at Koncerthuset in Copenhagen. Also included is a DVD of the original surreal, beautiful and intricate performance, complete with face-painted classical musicians.

Although their 8th release, the music is an explorative, all-consuming mix of haunting vocals, electro-beats and tumultuous orchestral tangibility. In an industry where "real" music is often considered a thing of the past, *Performing Parades* has excelled even its predecessor and namesake.

This gloriously uplifting album "closes a chapter" according to the band's Casper Clausen. The live performance is both immaculate and exploratory; filling you with a rich cacophony of sounds which certainly feels like a pinnacle; a colossal vision. Following their summer stint at UK festivals, Efterklang is touring this autumn including a performance of *Performing Parades* at London's Barbican Hall. www.efterklang.net.

Sophie Gordon

Portico Quartet

Isla
Real World Records



Clarinets, drums, flutes, glockenspiels, and keyboards combine on this challenging instrumental album. Having been nominated as one of the Mercury Prize albums of 2008 (with debut album *Knee Deep in the North Sea*), Portico Quartet is experiencing an identity crisis, fluctuating between folk, jazz and trippy 1960s beats on their latest release.

At times this is avant-garde jazz at its befuddling best, as in opening track *Paper Scissors Stone*, where the twang of guitars is interspersed with oboes, violins, drums and the calls of gulls in an everlasting miss-mash of jazz like marmite, dividing opinion. In contrast, the easy listening strains of steel drums and saxophone on *Clipper* create a combination apt for any hotel bar, highlighting the eclecticism of the band. Title track *Isla* is safer ground for producer John Leckie and the stand out of the album, winding down a chaotic juxtaposition with delicate violins and a nonchalance, which is somewhat mislaid through the rest of the album's hyperactivity. www.myspace.com/porticoquartet.

Ruby Beesley

A.A. Bondy

When The Devil's Loose
Fat Possum



Creating a real buzz around his music, A.A. Bondy has legions of fans like Bon Iver, Felice Brothers and Low Anthem. On the same label as Andrew Bird, Bondy is in good company.

Not only does his music captivate listeners, but Bondy is an interesting man. Born in New Road, Louisiana he eventually found himself in the Catskills region of New York State writing this album in the deep snow. *When The Devil's Loose* is a vast arrangement of sounds with Bondy's vocals paradoxically sparse and full. In this nebulous state, what's created is an album rich in emotion and harmonies that demand your attention.

Bondy is creative, and through this he explores a soundscape heavily routed in Americana. Opening track *When The Devil's Loose* introduces Bondy's style – it sounds like something you may know, but is simultaneously unique. *I Can See The Pines Are Dancing*, *False River* and *On The Moon* are organic with reference to Bondy's world.

Bondy will be touring the UK this October. www.myspace.com/aabondy.

Cherie Federico

My Robot Friend

Soft Core
Double Feature Records



Now you're talking. Energetic, fun, edgy, catchy and alive, *Soft Core*, is a delightful record. Two year's in the making, it's the third album from the band based in New York City.

Having started recording back in 2001, My Robot Friend has attracted a loyal fan club including the likes of Antony from Antony & the Johnsons, and even had their songs covered by the Pet Shop Boys and Robbie Williams. Eclectic to say the least.

A vigorous live performance, Howard Robot performs in an elaborate, personally designed light-up suit, while interacting with illuminated objects, wireless video camera, pyrotechnics and various other homemade props. Opening track, *Robot High School* is synth heavy with monotonous vocals, backed with supped-up electrics. Final track, *23 Minutes in Brussels*, the hidden bonus track (they don't do that anymore) is hip and rather cool.

Not only is My Robot Friend diverse and entertaining, the cover artwork is something else, with a conglomeration of fruit and cauliflower. Modern art perhaps? You decide. www.myrobotfriend.com.

Shirley Stevenson