

AUDIO SOUL PROJECT

Community (NRK)



Whether you know it or not, if you've been on a house dance floor, you've danced to a Mazi Namvar aka Audio Soul Project track. Over the last 5 years Chicago DJ/producer Mazi has been responsible for over 80 records, offering some of the finest tracks that house music has to offer. Whether he's diving the deep house sound or getting tougher with techno, it's a given that you can expect quality. *Community* features quality techno with nods to both Chicago's early sound and the deeper, soulful side of house. With an ear tuned from A&Ring both of his imprints: Gourmet and Simple Soul Recordings, Namvar offers up enough soul to appease the most discerning crowd. Under the Audio Soul Project moniker, you'll find Mazi teaming up with a wide variety of artists—on *Community* there's no less than eight. Ron Carroll lends his vocal talents on the album's title track: a spoken word winner that to talks on the finer points of house music. Jessica Simone sings on *New Plateau*, one of the albums brighter, jazzier moments. *Europea*, another stand-out is tech house at its finest. This is an excellent representation of electronics most eclectic category in all of its sub and sub sub generated glory. (Rob Simas)

ASTRALASIA

Something Somewhere (Transient Records)



Here's a band of U.K. mates that have been at it together, creating and performing music, for about a decade. Astralasia consists of four members, but for *Something Somewhere*, they brought in guest talents from David Riley of Dreamhouse, Paul Chousmer of Another Green World and Lou Palmer of Honeytunnel. Not a bad line up at all for the long-awaited ninth album. Although the band released their first eight albums on Magic Eye Records, they decided to sign with Transient, a progressive and psychedelic trance label, which better suits their new sound compared to earlier works. Astralasia developed a loyal following in the beginning with many memorable live gigs spreading the ambient sound as heard on *Politics of Ecstasy* and *Whatever Happened to Utopia?* On *Something Somewhere* the group puts on an uplifting and beautiful psy-trance face

whilst retaining their ambient core on a few tracks. Also, the wonderful vocals of Melanie Taylor acts as a magnet, pulling you deep into the songs. The group parallels America's Electric Skychurch style only that ES decided to go full ambient with their recent release. I wonder if these two groups are dialoging before going into the studio? Hmm. (Tru Pham)

JOHN GRAHAM

Transport 5 (Kinetic)



If *Tranceport/Transport's* history is an indicator of what's to come for its deliverer, then John Graham or Quivver, better have his bags packed, bid farewells to family and friends, stock up on Red Bull and pray that he doesn't burn out before N'Sync. Just look what happened to others that preceded him, Oakenfold, Dave Ralph, Sandra Collins and Max Graham. Yes, their lives have changed for better or for worse, but their careers are undeniably more successful since Kinetic got a hold of them. The UK-based Graham has been knee deep in collaboration: He united with With Parks and Wilson to form Tilt and partnered with unite with Neil Barry for Quivver. After shifting and shuffling, he aims to please the darker, techier progressive newbies with an astounding composition of brilliant tracks by DJ Remy, Quivver himself, SSHH, Red Moon, John Creamer & Stephane K and Paranoid Jack. It doesn't get any harder and more body jarring than this. (Tru Pham)

GEB.EL

From A Distant Point of View (Mole Listening Pearls)



Purveyors of European downtempo and mellow house, Mole Listening Pearls present an upgrade of Frankfurt-based producer Geb.el's debut album. *From A Distant Point of View* presents an array of moods, from the soulful, bossa-inflected house of *Love From The Sun* to the downtempo breaks of *The Killer* and *The Chicken*. The tracks are carefully mapped out, combining smooth vocals and eccentric vocal samples with organic instrumentation and melodic layers, but relying on neither one to carry a track. There's no real formula to the production, maintaining a fresh sound throughout. Geb.el proves to be competent at any style he tries out—*Blue* breathes to a prominent bassline while *The Killer*

And *The Chicken* throws out a hip hop-esque break with a husky flute meandering in and out. Everything 'flows with ease until track seven, a stupefying remix of 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*. With the other tracks smacking of European style and class, this needless remix is a spanner in the works of an otherwise smooth flow. The beat is adequate but the vocals are uncertain and the track simply begs the question: Why? Other than this, the album is an impressive piece of production, successful in matching moods to beats and effortlessly transitioning between them. Rounding it out is the closing track *Moon Over Nightwaves* that perfectly captures the twilight peace the title suggests. (Lucy Beer)

TOM THUMP

Panatone (Cosmic Flux)



As America's post rave generation drifts to a more sophisticated sound we are met with a myriad of chillout compilations: *Another Late Night*, *Back To Mine*, *@Home*—the list spirals into infinity. Or somewhere close. It's an exciting time to reline, but the one thing many of these CDs lack is a fresh track listing. San Francisco's legendary Tom Thump has assembled a list of lesser-known artists for *Panatone*, all of which are amazing. The mix is seamless, gliding effortlessly through a selection of downtempo and midtempo tunes that are sure to move you in the right direction. Opening with the *The Birds Song* by Valerie Etienne, Thump instantly captures your attention and never lets go. The sounds are worldly, jazzy, soothing, ethereal—all rolled into one big musical spliff. Another big stand out is LA's own John Tejada breaking from the 4/4 beat to present a wicked track with Divine Styler and his sister Carmen Tejada called *The Matrix of Us*. Cosmic Flux has once again proved that less is more with this brilliant collection of downbeat goodness. Also available on double vinyl for the mixmasters. More please! (David Ireland)

LAURENT GARNIER

Shot in the Dark (Mute)

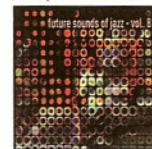


While 1994 seems sooo long ago, when Sheryl Crow, Coolio, and Toni Braxton raided the top hit charts, Laurent Garnier released this gem of an album, which sent a ripple

through the dance industry as well as more mainstream circles. Never before domestically released, Mute has capitalized on this oversight and is bringing it to the states for us to bathe in. Hailing from France, he brings on his style of house and Detroit techno crossover tracks, sounding as fresh today as seven years ago. From the highly sought after acid overtones of *Astral Dreams*, to the subdued *Bouncing Metal* and downtempo escapism realized in *Rising Spirit*, this was ultimately a stepping stone for techno and laid some of the bedrock for the genre now known as tech-house. By listening to the meticulousness assemblage of each track, *Shot in the Dark* is the apt setup to his next release, the critically acclaimed *Unreasonable Behavior*, proving there is another side of the otherwise Daft Punk'ed French scene—more mature and restrained. Also, as an added bonus, Mute has domestically released the single *Astral Dreams*, so expect to hear that flood the floors AGAIN. (Steve-O)

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Future Sounds of Jazz vol. 8 (Compost Records)



Eight volumes deep, the *Future Sounds of Jazz* series continues to bring forth the best that nu-jazz and downtempo has to offer. Volume 8 happens to be one of the strongest installments of the series, presenting a variety of styles, from bossa rhythms to gentle house and spoken word. As the intro of *Soulpatrol's Theme* states: "Our bags are packed with jazz...means freedom, means rhythm, means passion, inspiration, soul." This mission statement is borne out throughout the album. Moonstarr's *Dust* kicks up some of its namesake with a frisky breakbeat and swing-y inflection that paves the way for the lighthearted bossa twang of Shawn Lee's *Happiness*. Attica Blues' foraging hip hop/spoken word track *The Quest* featuring Roger Robinson finds its way onto *Volume 8* by way of the broken beat remix of Beanfield. On an album full of highlights, The Underwolves' *Bird Song* stands out with a male and female vocalist trading soulful lyrics over a sparkling jazz-inflected rhythm. *V8* provides another blueprint for the melding of genres and moods in the name of musical innovation. Addicts of the *FSOJ* will need no urging to pick up this installment. If you don't already know about the *Future Sounds of Jazz*, do yourself a favor and get educated. You won't look back. (Lucy Beer)



THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS

Come With Us (Astralwerks)

The brothers have worked it out. Any fear you might have had that the CB were in a flat spin, and might not handle the new millennium as well as they did the 90's can be put to rest. As with most CB albums, *Come With Us* hurtles out of the gate, a flaming hulk of funk, acid, hammerheading beats, the best in analog synths and well-chosen samples. The title track, boasting sinister, "Come With Us," vocals and nerve-rattlingly big beats is followed by the tribal house of *It Began in Africa* that hinges on the scream of a tiger—a sample so fierce you'll fill your pants if not forewarned. Ahem. Through out the album tracks tend to bleed, elements transform, leads for an upcoming track surface as early as halfway through the preceding song. *CWU* has the usual handful of chilled-out gems—high-grade winners such as *My Plastic Eyes* and *The State We're In*. If there's chink in the otherwise fabulously bejeweled armor of *Come With Us* it's *The Test*. Ironically named, it's a song of solid structure which burns to the ground as Richard Ashcroft whines and screeches "Did I Pass?" over and over (and over). It was whilst listening to this track—thankfully at the end of the album, that I realized my version of Hell is to be trapped in a recording studio with Ashcroft and Morrissey for eternity. That being said, the rest of *Come With Us* is a superb, innovatively produced victory. Although it's unlikely the Brit duo will ever create an album to top their seminal '95 debut *Exist Planet Dust*, it gives moi a rise in my trousers to catch a glimpse of one of electronic music's flagships as it swings back into view, guns ablaze. (M. von Pfeiffer)