

The opening features text spoken by the composer – Isaac Newton on the laws of motion – played as a sample, along with piano processing. The music continues its electrifying, heroic progress, as unearthly, spatially-modulated piano sounds are infiltrated by weirdly distorted reminiscences of Liszt's *Transcendental Etude No 4 (Mazeppa)* – appropriately, Soojin Anjou's repertoire includes this transcendently challenging series of studies.

Later compositions include a tribute from one Morton to another (Feldman). *The Other Piano* (2007) for piano and electronics is in four movements, commencing with *Within (Remembering Morty)*. On this movement especially, sounds career around virtual space with vertiginous abandon. The release concludes with *Preludes* for piano, early mature pieces from the late 1950s onwards. *Prelude No 4* (1966) was Subotnick's first venture with the Buchla, and concluded his exploration of a post-Webern aesthetic. It confirms the album's musical riches.

Andy Hamilton

Tanya Tagaq

Toothsayer

Six Shooter DL

"It's so easy to succumb to death in the north purely by the elements, including the socio and political elements," Tanya Tagaq has said of her home, the far north of Nunavut, Canada. For centuries, the Inuit people have survived frigid temperatures and colonialism; more recently they have seen their livelihood devastated by climate change.

The perils of the far north are the subject of "Polar Worlds", a new exhibit at the National Maritime Museum in London which opened in September 2018. The five songs on *Toothsayer* were created as an auditory contribution to the exhibit, but Tagaq's distinctive throat-singing stands in fierce, cathartic contrast to the image of museum vitrines loaded with antique navigational instruments and fur-lined mittens. On "Icebreaker", she fills her face with a creaking snarl, rhythmically grinding her breath over the syncopated flutter of Jean Martin's drums, subdivided through a digital delay. "Snowblind" is fluid and orchestral, with synths and strings that recall some of the arrangements of Tagaq's erstwhile collaborator Björk.

The instrumental tracks gently rise and fall like a rotating platform for Tagaq's exquisite glossolalia – she chatters, squeaks and throws her voice into shapes that don't so much imitate the voices of the animal kingdom as affirm the human being's place among them. The title track adds the meandering presence of an electric guitar, white hot like a solar flare. Next is "Submerged", an electroacoustic hybrid in which the ominous pops of melting ice are blended with bouncy tom hits, gritty guitar riffs and rhythmic

panting. Finally, on "Hypothermia", Tagaq offers a tangle of gorgeous harmonies and close-miked, ASMR-inducing whispers.

Whatever narrative structure is implicit in *Toothsayer* is concealed in its textured, glowing forms. Given the arc of history, it is understandable to hear distress in Tagaq's plaintive cries. But her voice also conveys a transformative ray of hope. The album's title is an allusion to her novel *Split Tooth*, and for Tagaq, toothiness represents hunting, fighting, and survival. Explosively powerful, yet resoundingly fragile, her extended vocal technique illuminates an astoundingly rich range of embodied possibility.

Emily Pothast

Art Terry

Sex Madness

Alt Soul CD/DL

The obvious – and wrong – comparison would be with Prince. There's the same confident multi-instrumentalism, preacherish wails, daringly blended black and white song traditions (Prince being as much Joni Mitchell as he was James Brown) and, above all, the same sex obsession.

But while there was something slightly remote and shiny about Prince's use of innuendo, Los Angeles born Art Terry simply tells it like he sees it, a folksy counsellor who comes on with style, part-August Darnell, part-Cab Calloway, and lays down some righteous detail about the sticky stuff. "Can't Get No Pussy", the album's single, is addressed at the dangers of going down South where archaic laws dictate that the dark and lonely work of cunnilingus can lead you straight to a dark and lonely Georgian cell.

Working with collaborators Stew (of Stew & The Negro Problem, with whom Terry has played keyboards) and bassist/keyboardist Raphael Mann, who co-wrote "Casual Sex" and "Sex Madness/Theme" respectively, Terry is the Alex Comfort of street encounters, replacing the beardy bloke from *The Joy Of Sex* with his own lissom frame. *Sex Madness* is as much a theatrical presentation as an album, a tent show of modern love and its woes. Terry and Stew previously worked together on a musical called *Passing Strange* which documented their sexual adventures in Europe; the title is derived from *Othello*, which gives a fair sense of its confidently referential air. Spike Lee made it into a film. Someone ought to do something similar with *Sex Madness*.

And yet it is still at bottom a collection of great songs with attendant videos. "Pimp" is unbelievably direct, a polite interrogation of the guy who runs the girls: what's his motivation? If it's just money, why does he need so much of it? "Madame Baby" is falsetto whimsy, its conversational tone weirdly reminiscent of early Pink Floyd. It's set in London's Camden Town, and features wheezy clarinet and flute. Likewise "Ask Her",

which manages to make a whole line out of "com-for-t-a-ble" and is, let's not shrink from it, a love song to cunt. It's also a meditation on the gender of God. Prince was always too busy with the faders to get this far into his supposedly obsessive theme.

An amazing album, all the more jaw-dropping for its deceptive simplicity and for the way it refuses to funk out a more obviously raunchy soundtrack. Terry is a precious beam of light in what must be for the young a deeply confusing world. I'm giving this to my boy for his birthday. It'll spare me one of those chats.

Brian Morton

Rian Treanor

Ataxia

Planet Mu CD/DL/2xLP

Rian Treanor's debut album opens with audio of actor Joan Lancaster reciting visual artist Bruce Nauman's words from his 1985 two-channel video work *Good Boy Bad Boy*. It's one of three tracks that features a recognisably human voice, accompanied and integrated into the hiccupping syncopations and shimmering atmospheric of the Rotherham based producer's distinctive catalogue to date. On "Ataxia B2", the voice of Pakistani playback singer Naheed Akhtar is clipped and jammed in the palpable assault of slick and rapid kick drums. Sung fragments of the phrase "people don't understand people" is chopped, looped and reconfigured like a dada literary cut-up on the glacial closer "ATAXIA D3". With this conspicuous bookend and the aforementioned art reference, Treanor makes an explicit claim as a visually oriented music producer.

His more abstract *The Death Of Rave* EP releases – with their scientific titles *Rational Triangle* and *Pattern Damage* – marked a shift towards a more playful, even soulful approach to his garage, techno and IDM-informed computer music. Hence, the offbeat electronic pop register of Aktar's Lollywood croon on M Ashraf's "Good News For You", which first appeared on last year's *RAVEDIT* white label. The *Ataxia* album title too changes course from the formal logic of geometry and mathematics to the symptom of neurological dysfunction affecting the human body. The result is a crystallisation of all that has come before: the irregular glitch and deep house of the early EPs, years curating Leeds Enjoy art space and a formative experience of Treanor's father Mark Fell's engagement with late 1980s Sheffield rave culture.

The usual comparisons to Chicago footwork can still be made here, except *Ataxia* echoes more of the pop and funk consciousness of Jlin's omnivorous outsider palette than the severe aggregation of Rashad or early RP Boo. The music resonates with a clarity Treanor had not yet achieved in the past, where the glassy shards of "ATAXIA A2" meet the staggered modulations and condensed

hi-hats of "ATAXIA D1", and ultimately reveal a unique and unexpected humanity. Steph Kretowicz

Wound

Various

Carbon DL/2xLP

When anyone can publish a playlist, compilers of various artist collections must face this question; what's the point of making the thing at all? The existence of *Wound* derives partly from quality control. None of its 21 tracks sounds like leftovers that were just sitting on a shelf or in a hard drive waiting for someone to ask for a giveaway track; the selections that don't accurately represent a musician's strengths change your mind about what their virtues are. If you like to listen one LP side at a time, this selection of mostly American (the contributors include one Briton, three New Zealanders and one Bhutanese national who lives in North Carolina) guitarists is sequenced to flow easily between sculpted noise and rustic reverie.

But while superior execution may speak to those already persuaded, it's necessary to follow up with another needling query; what's the record's point of view? The best compilations (*Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Folk Music*, *Takoma's Contemporary Guitar*, *Xpressway Pile=Up*) not only contain good material; the way that they organise it delivers some news in a way that you can't ignore.

Wound might not quite reach their level, but it does reveal the fertility of a creative plot bounded by the work of John Fahey, Loren Connors and The Dead C. You can hear the fragile but steely solitude that Connors cultivated 30 years ago in newcomer Alexander's jewel-like opener; Connors's contribution is an eerie, untouchable blur.

The entropic noise of Kryssi Battalene and Eric Hardiman's tracks is close kin to the studies in corrosion supplied by Dead C representatives Michael Morley and Bruce Russell. The paths blazed by Blind Joe Death and his ilk are evident trailheads for Rob Noyes and Bill Mackay, and while nothing else Wendy Eisenberg has done sounds indebted to the Takoma school, here she sounds like she cutting up and shuffling pages from its playbook.

Other musicians present work that sounds natural sitting next to the aforementioned music without linking clearly to any antecedent. The bark on steel wool friction of Mike Shiflet's "Six Bowed Guitars" corrals ghosts as effectively as Loren Connors without sounding anything like him, and Tashi Dorji's dramatically strummed "Bend" is quite irreducible. The collective assembled on *Wound* demonstrate whether you play it unamplified or run its signal through a chain of disruptors, the guitar remains a superb tool to produce expressive and richly textured sound. Bill Meyer