

The vocals slip between half-spoken and half-sung cadences as they worm their way into the listener's ear, their tone drawing parallels to the detached air of Montreal's Marie Davison on her 2018 album *Working Class Woman*. Similar to the 2021 Lolina LP *Fast Fashion*, which was recorded on a set of CDs, Astrova wrings as much out of the hardware as she possibly can, locking the output into an absorbingly minimal framework.

Misha Farrant

Mdou Moctar
Funeral For Justice
Matador CD/DL/LP

Since his early days as a wedding performer, concerts and extensive touring have remained a crucial creative outlet for Nigerien guitarist Mdou Moctar and his band. With the poise of a guitar hero and the shredding chops to back it up, he appears a charismatic figure – part entertainer, part preacher.

Appropriately, his performances have a tendency of becoming sweaty, transcendental communal gatherings, spurred by his sparking fretwork and the tight, repetitive grooves that drummer Souleymane Ibrahim, bassist Mikey Colton and rhythm guitarist Ahmoudou Madassane unleash alongside him, turning the heat up even higher.

The group's overwhelming energy was barely contained by 2021's *Afrique Victime*, while their latest record *Funeral For Justice* comes a step closer to channelling an authentic Mdou Moctar live experience. The title track wastes no time to demonstrate the unfettered power on tap, bursting from silence into a series of electrifying riffs and fervent claps, never letting up. While Moctar has rarely shied away from inspired political messages in his music, *Funeral* feels completely driven by them, the deteriorating sociopolitical situation in Niger providing additional fuel for what was already red hot music.

"Sousoume Tamacheq" confronts the oppression faced by the Tuareg people head on, wrapping a desire for change into blazing rock spirals and rambunctious riffs, while the emphatic anthem "Oh France" throws shade at French colonialism, the group seamlessly shifting into higher gear and further increasing the pressure. "Takoba", "Imajighen" and "Tchinta" are mellow, melodic pieces that find Moctar in a lyrical mood, his sorrow embodied in flowing blues harmonies, psychedelic flourishes and lovely call and response choruses. Meanwhile, the hard edged "Modern Slaves" returns to the album's pointed political themes, making sure they stay with the listener even as the final ricocheting chords fade out.

Antonio Poscic

Elaine Mitchener
Solo Throat
Otoroku DL/LP

Elaine Mitchener is a virtuosic experimental vocalist, movement artist, and archivist of the global Black avant garde. *Solo Throat*, her first solo LP, uses texts by African-American and African-Caribbean poets Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Aimé Césaire, Una Marson and NH Pritchard as catalysts for experiments

in translation – from text to voice, from past to present. Mitchener doesn't just recite these poems; rather, she treats them as sites for encounter ridden with both dangers for semantic breakdown and avenues for new meanings.

Mitchener's vocal dexterity can't be overstated. She toggles masterfully between pure and haunting tones on "black mantle" and "black mantle II", clear and forceful diction on "gyre's galax", howls, sputters and stutters on "stretchedwoundspeaks", and scratchy groans and melismatic whines on "tender as fly agaric". "unknown tongue" might be the most impressive piece of all. Multitracking her vocals, she conjures up a drama of communication beyond language: her two characters seem to meet, argue, scheme, get frustrated, hit an impasse, muddle through, and finally begin to play and harmonise with each other.

At least that's what I hear. Ultimately, making sense of all this is only part of the point. Consider "spittle", the middle piece of a triptych inspired by Aimé Césaire's poem *When In The Heat Of The Day Naked Monks Descend The Himalayas*. The poem's surreal language – "Very powerful monster against monster/Yours whose body is a statue of red woody sap/Whose spittle is fofa urine/ Mine whose sweat is a gush of caiman bile" – dissolves in Mitchener's adaptation into a timbral soundscape of breathing, buzzing, growling, teasing.

Is she imitating a mosquito here, a monkey there, a river here, a monster there? Yes and no. I think Mitchener is interested in leaving her source texts opaque, making them resonate without exhausting them.

Daniel Glassman

Paul Newland
things that happen again
Another Timbre CD/DL

Nomi Epstein
shades
Another Timbre CD/DL

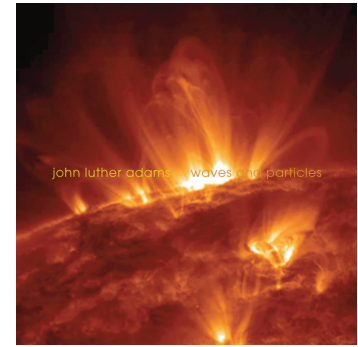
Marco Baldini
Maniera
Another Timbre CD/DL

Paul Paccione
Distant Musics
Another Timbre CD/DL

The profile of the Another Timbre label has developed so consistently over the past decade that there seems to be a well defined concept underpinning its catalogue. Simon Reynell, its curator, may be reluctant to formulate such a statement of intent, or so narrowly to define the label's orientation, but the identity of Another Timbre is projected not only through the elegant uniformity and typographic precision of its folded card sleeves, but also from the music within, which tends to be quiet, subtle and gradual, inclined to glow rather than glare.

Nonetheless, Another Timbre invariably manages to deliver surprises and revelations within those undemonstrative parameters. This latest batch of releases all exhibit those anticipated qualities of unhurried exposition and finely nuanced restraint, yet the musical content is strikingly varied. Performances are

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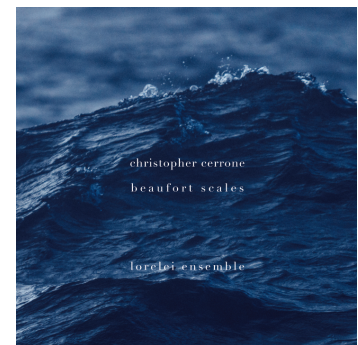
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