



Music reviews

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Body

INDIE ROCK UNDER THE LIGHT SAN CISCO Island City Records **** Watching San Cisco's career is akin to observing a teen transition to adulthood. The youthful zeal of the Fremantle band's early output has become somewhat more refined as the trio matures, both as people and as musicians. As with all young adults, there (hopefully) comes a stage where one accepts who they are, warts and all, and steps out into the world a little more confidently. That's what fifth album Under The Light sounds like. Songs such as High, One Percent and Summer Days - the latter featuring a whimsical cameo from Nick Allbrook of Pond and former Tame Impala fame - are packed with all the standard San Cisco goodies: gentle melodies, playful synths, and Scarlett Stevens' excellent work behind the kit, all wrapped up and delivered with the assurance of a band that knows how to please its fans. Consequence and the closing number Into My Heart are the album's high points; the former is a dance-rock jam that wouldn't be out of place on Arcade Fire's Reflektor, and the latter is a folky pop proverb that proves the value of doing more with less. Once again, San Cisco's combination of danceability and genuine songcraft proves a winner.

Alasdair Belling

WORLD/POP PLASTIC MAN TOUKI Captain Pouch **** On their second album, Touki's principal musicians - British-Senegalese Amadou Diagne and French-American Cory Seznec - combine songs addressing weighty global matters as climate change and the refugee crisis with personal stories, West African fables and a trio of tunes. Utilising predominantly perky rhythms and mellifluous melodies, the pair draws on an array of instrumentation including one-stringed Ethiopian bowed lute (masenqo) and 21-string West African harp (kora), Appalachian banjo and muted acoustic guitar, violin and cello and percolating percussion. The contrasting singing styles of the alternating bandleaders - Diagne's soulful, soaring Senegalese, and Seznec's softer, lower register in English - work beautifully as a duet in the haunting Don't Look Away. A couple of catchy instrumentals bear the influence of dancing western Kenyan omutibo guitar music, while the mbalax-styled title track melds Senegalese and Cuban influence, and the West-African/American country fusion of Fula Cowboy brings an engaging set to its conclusion.

Tony Hillier

CLASSICAL PORGY AND BESS FANTASY: MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS DAVID BOLLARD AND DAVID STANHOPE Tall Poppies ****1/2 Forty years ago, two Sydney-based pianists embarked on an occasional series of

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piano programs. Both David Stanhope and David Bollard were associated with the Australia Ensemble and recorded extensively for Tall Poppies. Now their early concerts have been assembled on a double-album set and with some technical wizardry, the performances sound as fresh as though recorded yesterday. Each of the nine works was recorded before live audiences in different venues, the oldest performance dating from 1980 in the Sydney Town Hall. Remarkably, the recording quality sounds fairly uniform throughout. Half the program comprises familiar repertoire: Mozart, Saint-Saens, Rachmaninov, Debussy and an exhilarating version of the Grainger/Gershwin Porgy Fantasy. The latter is hardly surprising given that composer and conductor Stanhope is the pre-eminent Grainger-ranger in the country - hence the authoritative versions of so much Grainger, notably a breakneck version of Green Bushes, with Leslie Howard providing an extra pair of hands. Fun stuff, all 147 minutes of it!

Vincent Plush

ROCK LIAM GALLAGER & JOHN SQUIRE LIAM GALLAGER & JOHN SQUIRE Warner Music Australia ***1/2 It has always been easy to view Liam Gallagher as a yobbo dolt. Brother Noel was the more talented one: the sharper wit, the great Oasis songwriter. But Liam G remains one of the most gifted vocalists in rock 'n' roll, pitched between Rotten and Lennon with Bolan's way of bending a single word beautifully out of shape. He gave Oasis its vocal glow of romance. It's arguable John Squire's shimmer-and-chime momentum as a guitarist was meshed into a similarly grand tension with Ian Brown's threatening charisma out front of fellow British act The Stone Roses. All of a sudden, Gallagher (51) and Squire (61) are mimicking their own musical history and, unsurprisingly, the duo's self-titled debut sounds like Oasis meets The Stone Roses, with a splash of The Beatles' pop psychedelia (an influence from which both drew originally). As such, nothing here truly surprises, other than the fresh energy and a production of bright and forceful density. This is an album made for the British spring: for parties, for outdoor music festivals in need of epic rock 'n' roll to fill the sky. Squire has written all 10 songs here, and Gallagher sings his magnificent heart out. Mark Mordue

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