

*Who Flew To The Moon* may convince some who wrote him off after his massive "Day 'N' Nite" hit to take another listen. With two tracks per solo album, he offers a case that even critically mauled projects like WZRD are important steps in his journey. Still, his star turns on West's "Welcome To Heartbreak" and "Father Stretch My Hands, Pt 1" are conspicuously absent – for obvious reasons.

**The Koreatown Oddity**  
**ISTHISFORREAL?**

Stones Throw DL/LP

At the beginning of this 30 minute record, The Koreatown Oddity reveals himself to be a British man in disguise. "Actually, I'm not an American Negro", goes a vocal sample as the audience gasps in response. The joke wears off quickly, but it gives this Los Angeles rapper best known for 2020's acclaimed *Little Dominiques Nosebleed* a chance to play with identity. He raps in a stereotypically 'white' voice shorn of regional inflections, and the contrast between his deadpan vocals and the beats ranges from startlingly imaginative (the hammering blapper "Fundrazors") to anodyne ("Indifferent"). A highlight is "History Tension", on which rollicking percussion pushes him forward as he asks, "I'm Black but how Black do I have to be?".

**DJ Premier**  
**Hip-Hop 50: Vol 1 EP**

Mass Appeal DL

DJ Premier's *Hip-Hop 50 EP* is the first in a ten part project helmed by Mass Appeal to celebrate 50 years since Kool Herc's 1973 dance party in a Bronx rec room, a year widely considered the birth of the genre. (Other producers set for instalments include Swizz Beats and Mustard.) These five tracks are essentially freestyles. Premier chops up a *Wild Style*-like funk track for "Remy Rap", but Rapsody arguably outflows Remy. Nas and Premo's "Beat Breaks" may not surpass their seminal "NY State Of Mind", but the reunion is nice to witness. El-P references climate change and Jamal Khashoggi on "Terrible 2's". "The Root Of It All" may be the most satisfying, if only to hear Slick Rick and Lil Wayne match wits.

**Killah Priest**  
**Horrah Scope**

Proverbs CD/DL

Killah Priest was a minor player at the tail end of the golden era, landing key verses on GZA's *Liquid Swords* and even charting a US top 40 album with his former group Sunz Of Man. Now a prolific indie artist, he's close in spirit to the critically acclaimed rapper KA: both use drum-less beats to craft personal and idiosyncratic music. On *Horrah Scope*, Priest's songs resemble a metaphorical dream state as he issues koans like "At our birth, we are fire/At our death, we are waterfalls". It's a deeply weird and appealing album – sometimes he raps on beat, sometimes

he doesn't as he describes encounters with witches and demons from antiquity and vampires from the present day. Throughout, he adopts a philosophical air. "We all came from space made from stardust", he says on "Back To Nebula".

**RZA**  
**Bobby Digital & The Pit Of Snakes**

36 Chambers LLC/MNRK CD/DL

Wu-Tang Clan figurehead RZA's solo meanderings have resulted in a few peaks – many fans adore 1998's visionary *Bobby Digital In Stereo* – and innumerable odd detours. His latest, *Bobby Digital & The Pit Of Snakes*, is a soundtrack to a graphic novel collaboration with Vasilis Lolos and Ryan O'Sullivan. Highlights include a pairing with funk band Stone Mecca on "Celebrate Life", a spoken outro that instructs us to "Live Your Own Rhythm", and the molten alt rock of "We Push". Then there's this stray line from "Cowards": "They try to instill those signals/ Programme the umbilical/Modify the biological/And dispose of the spiritual". Is it a transphobic statement, or a diatribe against microchips in the body? Best not to think too deeply about it.

**Westside Gunn**  
**Peace "Fly" God**

Griselda DL

One of the better releases from Buffalo, New York rapper Westside Gunn's Griselda empire, *Peace "Fly" God* is a collaboration with two understudies, Stove God Cooks and Estee Nack. The former has an excitable voice that lends itself to zany punchlines, like "I got PTSD from the Fed cameras". Estee Nack's angst, halting delivery is less convincing. Everything else here will ring familiar to Griselda listeners: the hypnotic, drone-like loops of obscure, crackly soul recordings; the fantastically absurd drug dealer boasts; a cheerily amoral perspective. "Is it fire or is fentanyl?!/He said it don't matter long as we get it off/And when they overdose it make them get it more", shouts Cooks. Yes, it's toxic stuff, but it's easy to remember that it's not real.

**Wrecking Crew**  
**Sedale Threat**

Wrecking Crew/Three Dollar Pistol CD/DL/MC

PremRock, Zilla Rocca and Curly Castro are veterans of East Coast underground rap, and their Wrecking Crew projects feel more like rec league scrimmages than conceptual treatises. The trio spin lyrical references to B-boy arcana like Wu-Tang Clan and Def Jux, journeyman basketball players like Steve Colter and John Paxson, and cult novelists like Chinua Achebe. It's all very low stakes, and several guests show up – Casual from Hieroglyphics seems to inspire the trio on "Behemoth". Near the end of *Sedale Threat*, there are a handful of songs with compelling themes: "No Threat" is a meditation on violence and "Empty Out The Register" is a critique of American exceptionalism. □



**Jazz & Improv by**  
**Andy Hamilton**

**Battle Trance**  
**Green Of Winter**

New Amsterdam/NNA Tapes CD/DL/LP

Tenor saxophone quartet Battle Trance are led by Travis Laplante, with Patrick Breiner, Matt Nelson and Jeremy Viner. They're unlike traditional saxophone quartets both in the all-tenor line-up, and through their use of vocal and other extended techniques. The quartet are perfectionists – it's six years since their previous album *Blade Of Love*, and they've further honed their techniques. They sing while exhaling through the saxophone, using the keys to inflect vocal timbre; Laplante uses circular breathing and layered multiphonics. There are hypnotic contrasts between noise, vocalising, minimalist fragments, drones and pure melody. Forget about how you thought a saxophone quartet should sound – perfectionism pays off and new listening possibilities are created.

**Hugo Carvalhais**  
**Ascetica**

Clean Feed CD/DL

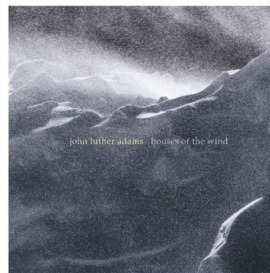
*Ascetica* is the fourth album by Portuguese bassist Hugo Carvalhais. He works with the same core group – reeds players Emile Parisien, Fábio Almeida and Liudas Mockunas, with Gabriel Pinto (keyboards) and Mário Costa (drums). Mockunas comes across as a disciple of Tony Coe, whose pinched out clarinet runs from the upper registers were a hallmark of Neil Ardley's *Kaleidoscope Of Rainbows*. *Ascetica* has a much looser jazz rock ethos than Ardley's classic, its electronics and organ drones suggesting retro-futurism. This is clever, subtle work. For instance, "Organum" sounds groove based but on closer inspection no groove is stated. Other tracks are in unambiguous free tempo with a chattering, tumbling pulse, or a free-floating feel.

**Caleb Wheeler Curtis/Orrin Evans/Eric Revis/Gerald Cleaver**  
**Heatmap**

Imani CD/DL

State of the art free/post-bop by Brooklyn based saxophonist Caleb Wheeler Curtis, with Orrin Evans (piano), Eric Revis (bass) and Gerald Cleaver (drums). On the ten originals, saxophone is dominant – alto on nine tracks, soprano on one – while Cleaver drives the music relentlessly. The results are dark and intense, often raw and blistering. The perfunctory theme

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**John Luther Adams**  
**Houses of the Wind**

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"His music has repeatedly conjured up visions of limitless expanse."—Julian Cowley, *The Wire*

"His music becomes more than a metaphor for natural forces: it is an elemental experience in its own right."—Tom Service, *The Guardian*

"It misses the point to say he is inspired by nature—Adams is changed by nature and his music is a catalogue of the places that changed him."—New York Classical Review

*Houses of the Wind* is shimmering, mesmerizing electro-acoustic music composed from a field recording of an aeolian harp strummed by the Arctic winds.

**and recently released**



**John Luther Adams**  
**Arctic Dreams**

"This a wholly distinctive kind of minimalism that John Luther Adams has made his own."—Financial Times



**John Luther Adams**  
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