

Is Toxicity So Yummy", a cello's anxious tremolo and overblown bassoon rumble in subdued chaos until they explode in full, untamed energy. In these moments, Guidry illustrates the feeling of searching for acceptance, and the barriers to finding it, without needing a word. The rhythm of their instruments says enough.

On the closing track "Grace", there's a surprising moment of rest. The piece is made of amorphous electronics that hover and eventually float away. This is the first time on the album that there's some semblance of certainty and a moment of resolution. The weight of the world is still present, but it isn't all-consuming. Here is a pause for acceptance, an allowance to keep moving, to carry on being.

Vanessa Ague

## Robert Haigh

### *Human Remains*

Unseen Worlds CD/DL/LP

Robert Haigh has been quietly releasing albums on solo piano haven Unseen Worlds for six years. The hype is minimal, the cover art (by Haigh himself) seems designed to be almost unnoticeable, and in his 2018 *Wire* feature, he appears with a cloak over his head. The music, a series of minimal piano pieces, matches well.

*Human Remains* was intended to be Haigh's last album before a retirement in painting, but that was apparently also the intention of the previous album *Black Sarabande*. The pieces are exceptionally calm and atmospheric, sometimes a little dry, but at their best, deeply emotionally resonant. A handful of pieces utilise subtle effects which go a long way: "Waltz On Treated Wire" works with prepared piano; "Still Life With Moving Parts" and "Signs Of Life" have a long reverb effect that deepens the sense of a fogbound landscape. The best track in the collection is "Lost Albion", a composition with a light driving rhythm that is almost piercing in its insightfulness. The backdrop of thin but organic synths and what sounds like a quiet trumpet is strongly reminiscent of Gigi Masin.

Haigh was previously the sole member of Omni Trio, a drum 'n' bass act that had songs placed in *Grand Theft Auto* games. He also contributed to works by Nurse With Wound. We hear hints of this storied background on the last two tracks, which employ insistent string stabs. These songs are less effective, sounding like a *Hollow Knight* boss battle soundtrack, and they end the album on an alienating note. That aside, *Human Remains* makes a fine third entry in Haigh's trilogy of albums for US label Unseen Worlds.

Catherine Sinou

## Headboggle

### *Dual Piano*

Bimodal Press DL/MP

When electronic musicians turn to the piano, it can often hint at evolution, as when Robert Haigh moved away from the heightened consciousness of Omni

Trio's drum 'n' bass towards reflective melancholy, or maybe at refinement, such as Powell stripping back the chaos of his club tunes to highlight the moving parts of experimental composition.

For San Francisco's Derek Gedalecia, who started playing piano at the age of five, it's more a matter of plucking another colour from his Technicolor palette. The Linktree site for his Headboggle alias is an effervescent flipchart of his many projects – from DJ sets and psychedelic videos to generative sound inventions and live performances with his banjo playing father – and *Dual Piano* is just the latest of his wide-eyed experiments.

Even so, these romantic piano fantasias come as a surprise after the dense synthesizer workouts that have packed his Bandcamp page throughout the last decade. The playing boasts not just fluency but real flourish, skipping across the keys to create cascading waves of notes on "Sideways" and pooling into pretty eddies before swirling and gathering speed again. There are rags and tangos and two-steps, all with a feeling of spontaneous creation. At times, one piano performance appears to be playing simultaneously with another, but the result is not a dense nest of sound so much as the transparent motifs of Satie's furniture music pieces, or even a player serenading commuters in one of those public pianos at the train station.

*Dual Piano* makes connections with the rest of Gedalecia's work, some obvious and others more enigmatic. Many of Gedalecia's albums foreground the process with which they were created, in album titles such as *In Dual Mono* and *Digital Digital Analogue*, the latter perhaps his most mesmerizing creation. In *Dual Piano*, there's a familiar sense of tight juxtaposition, with short tracks switching up styles or formats like a series of tasting miniatures for the listener's delectation.

The upshot of these quickfire sketches is the same kind of spontaneous joy that you sometimes get sitting down at a piano keyboard. It also points to one of the under recognised strengths of US underground music in the post-noise era, which is that the tools used to create music are often less important than the spirit and curiosity that the artist brings to them. Whatever instrument he's using, Gedalecia's effervescence shines through, and this quizzical and ever-changing music is destined to be a sleeper smash for between-band DJs in the next year or two.

Derek Walmsley

## HEALTH

### *DISCO4 PT II*

Concord 2×CD/DL/LP/2×LP/MP

HEALTH have collaboration stamped into their DNA. The Los Angeles group broke out in 2007 through a remix of their song "Crimewave" by fellow up-and-comers Crystal Castles that laced the original track's neurotic no wave

with chiptune trills and pings. Perhaps sensing they were onto a good thing, they commissioned a string of remix albums starting with 2008's *Health//Disco*. On 2020's *DISCO4 PT I* this curatorial approach had evolved into full-on co-writing exercises, their synthetic metal pulled out of shape though link-ups with everyone from grindcore malcontents Full Of Hell to hyperpop duo 100 Gecs.

Two years later, here's the sequel, which finds HEALTH joining forces with a new raft of guests. The big commercial draw is a collaboration with Nine Inch Nails titled "Isn't Everyone", a serviceable exercise in muscular stadium goth that sounds more or less exactly like Nine Inch Nails. In general, *DISCO4 PT II* is more interesting when HEALTH forge alliances with younger and hungrier names. A couple of rap/rock fusions deliver the goods. "Murder Death Kill" ying-yangs screamo vocalist Ada Rook and Florida rapper PLAYTHATBOIZAY while "Pagan-Icozn" drape verses from Backwash and Ho99o9 over tranquilised drones. Links with two metal groups, The Body and Lamb Of God, are similarly effective, contrasting drifting shoegaze segments with blasted feedback and heads-down thrash.

The rest of the album is just so-so; a fact that seems to indicate that HEALTH are generally only as good as what their guests bring to the table. A track like "Dead Flowers" succeeds thanks to the dark charisma of Poppy, who turns it into a doomed romantic torch song with a sliver of pop hidden among all the gothic genuflection. But where actual songs are lacking, though, it shows up HEALTH's core sound as somewhat hollow. From that perspective, their curatorial approach feels like a savvy tactic, a case of good taste and connections compensating for a shortage of ideas.

Louis Pattison

## Keiko Higuchi

### *Vertical Language*

Black Editions CD/DL/LP

There is a 1998 episode of *The Simpsons* with a scene in which Lisa is watching an avant garde violinist in a jazz club. The punter next to her scoffs and says, "It sounds like she's hitting a baby with a cat." Lisa replies, "You have to listen to the notes she's not playing," to which he retorts, "I can do that at home."

In this gag, the writers identify a thoroughgoing concern of avant garde music – the notion that silence is just as aesthetically significant as sound; that ostensible absence can be found or positively charged. The affinity of this concern with the Japanese concept of *ma* or negative space informs this new record by vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Keiko Higuchi, whose A side consists solely of her singing and piano playing while on the B side she is joined by Louis Inage on electric bass.

This theme is perhaps surprising, because silence seems anathema to

Higuchi's most recent releases. *Hoichi The Earless*, her 2020 collaboration with Jacob Kirkegaard, Tobias Kirstein and Niels Lyhne Løkkegaard, sustains high-pitched drones for its 25 minute runtime. Last year's *Summing Ancient Spirits* was a duet with Manuel Knapp overwhelmed by the latter's Pain Jerk-esque digital tornados of sound. And on *Vertical Language* she certainly does not have the restraint of, for instance, John Tilbury in her piano playing.

There is more silence here than on the aforementioned releases, but most tracks are grounded in recurrent melodic piano figures, which often build from delicately picked notes or sprightly couplets into resonant allegro passages, and only occasionally stray into atonality. This is accompanied by her accomplished free jazz vocalisations, and Inage's impressionistic bass playing (whose precedence in the final track "Esashi Oiwake" seems to give Higuchi license for slightly more counterintuitive piano improvisations).

All of this ostensibly does not give much time over to negative space. Nevertheless, the album feels starkly spacious. While it distinctly lacks the shuffling ambience of a live record, it bears an immediacy which makes the listener feel as if they are in the room with Higuchi. It is perhaps in this sensation of positively charged shared space between the listener and performer that the album best manifests the notion of *ma*.

Daniel Neofetou

## Jameszoo

### *Blind*

Brainfeeder DL/LP

Jameszoo aka Mitchel van Dinter creates music as if it had never been heard before. It's like finding the Lascaux cave paintings and discovering they've been laser-printed; ineffably ancient and primitive yet up to date in every gesture. His adventure began (aside from a few EPs) on 2016's *Fool*, on which he collaborated with legendary Brazilian composer Arthur Verocai, and introduced cameo roles for pianist Steve Kuhn and bassist Thundercat.

The roster on *Blind* is equally eclectic, with saxophonist Evan Parker and trumpeter Peter Evans representing one quadrant of improvisation, pianist Matthew Bourne and Kit Downes two more. Also in the mix are figures from closer to home – violinist Diamanda La Berge Dramm, saxophonist John Dikeman, drummer Christian Lillinger and Oliver Johnson aka Dorian Concept. All of which sounds like a special guests set-up, except van Dinter aims at the concept of the nonexistent soloist, an approach to improvisation and electronica that (rightly) adjudges virtuosity to be the province of machines. Working at Willem Twee studios in Den Bosch (as 's-Hertogenbosch is now more usually called), he's put together another extraordinary programme of what he likes to call "naive computer jazz", calling on kit like the Disklavier, not for