which goes by the names Tantourinen Session or Marijuana Summit. Legend suggests they were too stoned to get it together, so it was never released. It’s unknown whether Caldwell and Yeck-Stauffer were also baked when they made these relaxed jams but they’re in similar territory. Caldwell lays down throbbling synth textures, organ curlicues, rippling electric piano and unhurried bass lines, while Yeck-Stauffer’s multitracked and muted pocket trumpet buzzes like a pair of lazy flies around a box of doughnuts.

Don Cherry
Cherry Jam
GloWax CD/LP/12"
Recorded for radio in Copenhagen in 1965, this is the cherry finds Cherry between key moments — touring in Albert Ayler’s band in spring 1964, and with Sun Ra and Ada in autumn 64, among others. He is perhaps the leader, Complete Communion, at the end of 65 — but the music here is considerably less progressive than those engagements. Stacked by lesser known Danish musicians, he tackles the standard “You Took Advantage Of Me” as a sleepy ballad, saving his energy for three previously unheard hard bop originals. Never a virtuoso soloist, his blowing is a little ragged when playing cool, and more gripping when he tips over into rapid-fire explosions. Still, it’s his as hell.

Rodrigo Faina & Change Ensemble
Different Roots
RvL Books
Argentinian composer Faina here leads a 23-piece Dutch ensemble through an ambitious suite that straddles jazz and contemporary classical moods and methods. Underpinned by loose and softly played drums and bass, Faina’s grand themes float by like huge, towering banks of cumulus, while spoken passages from bookends are supported by chorales and Judy’s Cortazar, narrated in a voice reminiscent of Laurie Anderson, lend a curiously dreamlike feel. The colossus is broken by a thunderous beat with stadium-sized drums and a stinging fusion guitar solo played by Guillermo Celano, eventually drowned out by ominously gathering orchestral shapes. It’s like the end of the world scored by George Russell.

Futari
Beyond
Unis CD/LP
This debut by the duo of pianist Satoko Fujii and vibraphonist Taiko Saito captures them just off the back of their first short tour together in 2019 — and zings with spontaneous energy and the joy of exploration across nine succinct pieces. The manic energy of episodes highlighting just how compatible the two instruments are when played straight, as Fujii and Saito play scampering cat and mouse or bathe in pools of moonlight reflection. But it’s when they explore the further reaches that things become really interesting: vibes emanating a ghostly harmonic feedback while prepared piano clangs like dull temple bells; or a distant rumble of thunder rattling black branches.

Timo Lassy & Teppo Mäkynen
Live Recordings 2019–2020
Wes Jazz CD/LP/12"+LP
Recorded, from two leading lights of the Finnish scene, that the tenor sax and drums duo remains one of the most enduring and endlessly renewing compositions in Jazz. One might rightly expect some penumbra towards past masters, and “Liberty” channels John Coltrane and Elvin Jones in full flight — the moments in live versions “Impressions” where the piano and bass drop out come to mind — with Mäkynen inhabiting a muscular power swing and Lassy seavesseling between gutural growls and delicate piano whispers; while the click-brom rhythm of “Kobi” could almost be some kind of minimal techno.

Craig Scott’s Lobotomy
I Am Revalting
Lobotomy Laboratory DL/170/DSB
As part of Levels based unit Shatner’s Bassoon, guitarist Craig Scott has already clearly signalled a love for a particularly British brand of absurdity. On this, his second solo album, he takes this to another level. Using snippets of found sound and samples of acoustic instruments, he’s constructed a suite of creaking, fragmented, insanely detailed tunes that suggest a crazed alter-reality. Tiny dabs of piano, subliminal orchestral bursts and flash-frame snippets suggest the barest hint of rhythm. A glorious burst of strings suggests the deck band of a hallucinatory South Seas cruise under radioactive purple skies. Rhythmic slurring seizes into a raspberry brass band on the hoof. There’s something in the tea, I think.

Miguel Zenón & Luis Perdomo
El Arte Del Bulerio
Music DL
Puerto Rican alto saxophonist Zenón and Venezuelan born pianist Perdomo sound supremely comfortable playing songs from the bolero tradition — or the Great Latin American Songbook, if you like. Zenón’s tone is unforced and mellow yet unfraid to make intricately ornamented diversions. Perdomo offers warm accompaniment, sending out dollop ripples like scrunched velvet. As Zenón explains in the sleeve notes, the tunes chosen — written by the likes of Arsenio Rodriguez and Bobby Capó — are childhood favourites, deeply ingrained in the musicians’ imaginations. It’s no coincidence that the album was created in the midst of pandemic as a live-streamed gig. “In my opinion, we all need a little soothing."

Dominique Bassal
Axel Remperimos Te
Emperantes DIS/DiValsa Blue-Ray DL
Bassal’s name appears on numerous releases from empreintes DIGITALes. The Montreal based label, which specialises in electroacoustic music, values his expertise in musique concrète. One of his features in their catalogue as composer too. Axel Remperimos Te, designed to evoke a repressive civilisation in ruins, steers listeners through seven mysterious rooms that reverberate with cryptic messages from the past. Bassal’s resonant chambers have the appeal of a well-crafted soundtrack, ranging across stylistic boundaries in order to achieve desired effects. His technical know-how produces a cavernous sense of space, enveloping enigmatic figures and actions. Atmosphere is granted priority over storytelling, overall, so when the resilient voice of a double bass brings rhythm definition and a sense of narrative momentum to the final room, it comes as a welcome surprise.

Øyvind Brandstrøg
Norncarror Biotope
Crónica DL/MC
Conlon Nancarrow’s Studies For Player Mono are so self-contained that it takes a special kind of creative verve to adapt this to a more instrument. Brandstrøg, a professor of music technology based in Trondheim, has done just that, orchestrating a dozen for pipe organ, Disklavier and electronics. Although they respect the rapidity and rhythmic vigour of those painstakingly realised originals, these adaptations pack less punch. Still, enhancement of timbre and colourisation creates a pleasing effect, rather like a hand-tinted version of a familiar monochrome photograph. An advanced degree of digital literacy, as well as a sense of fun, has enabled Brandstrøg to transcend the novelty value of this project. Substituting computer controlled acoustic instruments for Norncarror’s mechanical articulations, he generates music that is energetically entertaining and, in terms of its technological implications, robustly thought-provoking.

Bruce Brubaker & Max Cooper
Glassforms (Versions)
Infinite DL
Pianist Brubaker and producer Cooper return to the scene of their recent redundant attempt to breathe fresh life into the music of Philip Glass. On this occasion their accomplishments are techno DJ Donato Dozzy with percussionist Daniele di Gresigno, ambient musician Laurel Halo and Iranian sound artist Tehg. Once again the results lack the immediacy and vitality of the Glass they are recycling.

Chris Cundy
Mountains
Aural Terrains CD/LP
In 1977, Dutch composer Ton de Leeuw composed Mountains for bass clarinet player Harry Sparrnaay. His score translates recollected traces of folk music and Hindustani song forms into a contemporary idiom that enables the reed instrument to converse volubly with electronic fluttering and warbles, prerecorded on tape. Chris Cundy has resuscitated this engaging piece along with another by Cornelius Cardew, also called Mountains, and also written for Sparrnaay in the same year. Cardew opted to recast Bach in ways that test the soloist, while also reflecting his personal tussles with music’s nature and potential significance. The contrast between John Cage’s Five and Thamos Chrysostomus’ Pyrrhonics highlights radically different spatial relationships and modes of communication that can exist within a quintet of bass clarinets. An early, indeterminate score by Cardew rounds out this absorbing release.

Clara De Asis & Mara Winter
Beyond The Same Dream
Another Timbre CD/LP
Access to a vaulted medieval church in Basel, otherwise closed during quarantine, gave Spanish experimental musician Clara de Asis and American flute player Mara Winter a tranquil space apart, to explore and record. The bulk of compositional credits goes to de Asis, but Winter, whose background is in performance of medieval and Renaissance repertoire, brings attentive sensitivity and distinctive inflections to this music of intimate and intuitive collaboration. Hollow tones, breathy flows and ghostly melodies emanate from her bass transverse flute, while de Asis savours the spectral potential of bowed metal, basic electronics and assorted objects, from which she extracts sounds in a variety of unconvoluted ways. The outcome is delicate, eloquent, tactful and singular. Beguiling music, driven by the inquisitiveness that forms a bond between these finely matched artists.

Francisco López
DSB
Crónica DL/MC
Prolific Spanish sound explorer López offers another engrossing essay in acoustic phenomenology. DSB is a montage of raw material, sometimes identifiable tied to a specific source and carrying associations, at other times anonymous or generic. Juxtaposed without any form of commentary or overarching context, the