lengthy improvisations, with da Boff playing electric organs and little instruments, they settle into a constantly regenerating micro-environment of small, muted gestures. Dörner is a master of tightly controlled techniques, which he gleefully unpacks here while Turner busies himself with metallic scrapes and rattles, and da Boff adds a throbbing background hum. But after a while it's not so easy to tell who's doing what. Who's that tinkering with a piano's innards? Is that mooning growl coming from an organ or a trumpet? Or is it a disconsolate Wookiee trying to take the stage?

Erik Friedlander
Oscalypso
Skipstone CD
In the late 1940s and early 50s, bebop bassist Oscar Pettiford pioneered the use of the cello as a solo voice in jazz; here, cellist Friedlander reinterprets nine of Pettiford's best known compositions, revealing just what a versatile instrument it can be. Friedlander strums chords, unfurls rich arco lines and plucks agile, guitar-like solos with a hint of gypsy jazz twang. There's also plenty of playful and light-footed interplay with Michael Blake's saxophone: horn and fiddle trade quick, call and response licks, declaim rich unison lines and even swap traditional roles, with Friedlander soloing while Blake daubs chordal smears, playing two saxes at once à la Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Bassist Trevor Dunn and drummer Michael Sarin provide a limber bounce, rounding out a relaxed small group configuration that allows the natural melodic logic of tunes like "Bohemia After Dark" to shine through.

Anders Lønne Grønseth
Mini Macro Ensemble 2nd Edt Vol 1
Pling CD
As concepts go, the fusion of western chamber music, Indian folk and jazz improvisation seems like something of a hitherto untapped doozy. It works pretty well in practise, too, particularly on this album's opening track "Aureolin", which stirs together fluttering tabla and swooning Himalayan flute, primly prancing charts for cello, bassoon and clarinets and a nasty, ring-modulated Fender Rhodes solo. The track ends up with a thick and spicy dhal that from Miles Davis's *On The Corner* and *Bitches Brew*. Composer Grønseth throws in a few gently swooping sax statements of his own but seems more concerned with the development of sustained moods than any conventional linear narrative.

George Lewis
The George Lewis Solo Trombone Record
Delmark CD
1976 was a big year for the trombone. Albert Mangelsdorff released his solo set *Tromboneliness*, more or less at the same time that the 24 year old George Lewis was preparing this single-minded statement. The three shorter live performances that originally made up the LP's B side show what an accomplished instrumentalist he already was by then, putting his mellow tone and fleet articulation in the service of unending, speed of thought melodic invention. But it's the 20 minute "Toneburst (Piece For 3 Trombones Simultaneously)" that really wows, an astonishing showcase of extended techniques. Lewis romps through kisses, quacks, watery burbles, muted mutters and cartoonish vocalisations – all shaped into a coherent parabola. Having pretty much said all there was to say, Lewis never returned to the solo format again.

Roscoe Mitchell
Sustain And Run
Selo Sesc CD
Lester Bowie wore the white lab coat in The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, but we can all agree by now that it probably should have belonged to Roscoe Mitchell, the master technician of the saxophone. He's developed an approach to circular breathing every bit as innovative and demanding as Evan Parker's. At the age of 75, he's still extending himself, as evinced by these pieces for soprano and sopranino recorded live in 2013. On the title track, a high, thin tone sounds a constant bagpipe drone while cramped coils strain upwards as if to meet it; and "Thanks For The Call" sounds like three distinct improvisations running concurrently, with Mitchell flicking from one to another at will. In every case, there's the sense that Mitchell is taking an idea as far as possible with a harsh yet patient determination.

Veryan Weston/Jon Rose/Hannah Marshall
Tuning Out: Pieces For Tracker Action Organs And Strings
Emanem 2×CD
Here's an idea that shouldn't have worked: a tour of English churches undertaken in 2014, with violinist Rose and cellist Marshall playing strings retuned to micro-intervals and Weston taking advantage of the various chapels' tracker-action organs. These lumbering mechanical behemoths rely on the organist manipulating stops to produce different sounds, a technique Weston uses to coax wheezing nautical pipes and a whirling Wurlitzer effect. Moreover, by partially pulling the stops on multiple keyboards, he establishes microtonal relationships between them. The result is a conversation of subtlety and subterfuge, suggesting strange moods, unspoken agendas and lurking discord. ☐


George Lewis

Julian Cowley on elemental theatre for the ear, abject sound poetry, and serpentine melodies

Cikada
Live At Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
LAWO CD
Oslo based conductor Christian Eggen and the nine piece chamber ensemble Cikada bring their usual insight and flair to two pieces by the exciting Australian composer Liza Lim. Inspired by an old Nordic tale of seafarers, sorcery and the wind, her *Winding Bodies: 3 Knots* is appropriately elemental theatre for the ear. Lim's taut yet fluent musical language is well equipped to render such strain, surge and reversal, and the plangent tones of a hardanger fiddle add strong local flavour to the drama. Other accents tinge Lim's second piece *The Heart's Ear*, drawn out in variations from a fragment of Sufi melody. It's a meditation that accommodates turbulence, a woozy ensemble gyration around a calm and steady centre. Cikada also spark life into the imposing topographic bulk of fellow Norwegian Jon Øyvind Ness's *Gimilen*.

Étant Donnés
Aurore
Palimpsest Press LP
The group name Étant Donnés alludes to a provocative and enigmatic peepshow that Marcel Duchamp left behind at his death. Behind it lurk brothers Eric and Marc Hurtado who recorded *Aurore* in 1990, when it was issued as a Touch CD. With hindsight, Étant Donnés appear acutely prescient in their idiosyncratic approach to sampling and studio assemblage, which transcends restrictive boundaries and generic markers. Resurfacing on vinyl, *Aurore's* blend of field recordings, breathy, compressed vocals and immersive atmospheres sounds perfectly contemporary now. At the same time it suggests respectful affinities with Luc Ferrari's electroacoustic collages and documentary recordings, while the clenched and abject Hurtado voice touches on Henri Chopin's sound poetry, with a trace of Artaud's extreme anguish and a hint of Alan Vega's no wave chutzpah. Their found sounds – church bells and thunderstorms, chirping sparrows and shrill swifts, fire crackle and water flow – may have become stock material, but *Aurore* still retains an aura of the visionary.

Miguel Frasconi
Standing Breakage (For Stan Brakhage)
Clang DL
In the process of creating *Standing Breakage*, Miguel Frasconi, a founding member of Toronto's Glass Orchestra, attempted to shatter an already fractured yet still intact quartz crystal bowl. The bowl survived, but when rubbed and struck it yielded an astonishing range of horn-like, bell-like, hollow and ringing sounds, which Frasconi then processed and shaped into a 20 minute homage to the memory of underground film auteur Stan Brakhage. Brakhage would sometimes use glass objects as a source for imagery. More generally he was a film maker who saw music as a sonic index of "the mind moving". Music's history, Brakhage believed, can reveal more about changing thought processes within a culture than any other means. The thinking refracted through Frasconi's sounding glass is vivid and exotic. A spellbinding and phantasmagoric projection through crystal.

Landscapes Of Fear
Various
Gruen 2×CD
This thought-provoking sound art project is an offshoot of the "Unsite Temporalities" seminar series at Cologne's Academy Of Media Arts. It takes its conceptual lead and title from a book by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. Political and social exploitation of fear is explored and reflected upon through sonic materials that range from recited text to digitised topography, natural world samples, mocked up conflict, interference and intimations of environmental catastrophe. Some make their point with shocking directness: Ali Chakav's audio mapping of bullet fragments in the skull of a victim of political assassination; or Tim Gorinski's "Amuse 2", which seems to fuse the terror of an actual warzone with an adrenalin rush at a games console. Others are ominous rather than overt: Sebastian Thewes's use of recordings of waterfalls above the arctic circle; Linda Franke's vocal spooling of letters of the alphabet into a state of alarm; or Stephanie Glauber and Miriam Gossing's drive along mysterious tone roads between two Cologne hotels, steered by sat nav voices. Fresh discursive means to address persistent plights and problems.

Tristan Perich
Active Field
Physical Editions CD
Active Field is the fourth release in New York artist Tristan Perich's "Compositions" series. It's produced, edited and mixed by Michael Riesman, whose creative association with Philip Glass spans four decades. Perich's own music loops back unashamedly to that earlier generation's fixation with additive process, patterned repetition and neatly shingled canons. He sounds comfortable in this familiar zone, but his musical means supply an intriguing twist. The ten violinists of Ensemble Signal are augmented by 10-channel 1-bit electronics: simple circuits housed within CD cases – primitive lifeforms in the digital soundworld.

Mark Mahaney