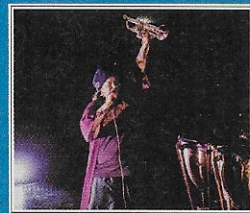


The 75 Best Albums Of 2023

JAZZ
Compiled by ANDY COWAN



10



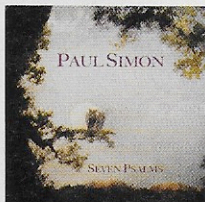
JULIE BYRNE
The Greater Wings
(GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL)
As with this year's LPs by Sufjan Stevens and Depeche Mode, the third by Buffalo singer-songwriter Byrne was underscored by grief, following the death of her longtime collaborator Eric Littman. But while *The Greater Wings* was an undeniably sad record – its fragile folk constructs given ethereal heft by co-producer Alex Somers – it was also one that worked movingly through valediction towards transcendence. "Just doing it shows [it's] about resilience and living," Somers told us.
Standout track: The Greater Wings

9



EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL
Fuse
(BUZZIN' FLY)
Musical hiatuses can rarely have been as amicable as the 24-year gap between the 10th and 11th EBTG albums. Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt's return to making records together began as a tentative private endeavour and flourished in this artful maturing of the EBTG sound; grown-up, suitably reflective songs with cutting-edge beats and nightlife settings. "There's definitely a vibe of that celebratory club experience," Thorn told MOJO, "but the lyrics also go very deep internally."
Standout track: Run A Red Light

8



PAUL SIMON
Seven Psalms
(OWL/SOONY)
A 33-minute continuous piece of music, with a title that came to him in a dream and a prevailing spirituality that remained questing rather than resolved, Simon's 15th solo album also looped back to his first, 1965's London-set *The Paul Simon Songbook*. The resonances ran through *Seven Psalms'* dominant sound – Simon's solitary, adroit fingerpicking, the influence of Davey Graham still reverberating. "This is me 58 years older," Simon told MOJO. "I'm still that person."
Standout track: The Lord

7



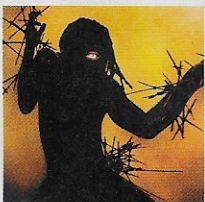
JAIMIE BRANCH
Fly Or Die Fly Or Die Or Die Fly Or Die
(INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)
Calling the late trumpeter Jaimie Branch a jazz musician was an unfortunately reductive way of describing a colossal talent – one showcased in all its exuberant complexity on this final LP, recorded four months before her death in 2022. Branch's third *Fly Or Die* LP straddled carnival hardcore, a Meat Puppets cover, protest ballads and her free and joyous rethink of jazz orthodoxy. A landmark album, tragically pulsating with life.
Standout track: Baba Louie

6



LANA DEL REY
Did You Know That There's A Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd
(INTERSCOPE)
A plea for brother Charlie to quit smoking. A song titled Grandfather Please Stand On The Shoulders Of My Father While He's Deep-Sea Fishing. Another called The Grants. The artist born Lizzy Grant's volatile mix of mythography and confession got trickier on her ninth, the blasted Hollywood ballads self-referentially turning in on themselves as Taco Truck sampled 2019's Venice Bitch. Release by release, the discography only gets more rewarding, the story more complex.
Standout track: A&W

5



YOUNG FATHERS
Heavy Heavy
(NINJA TUNE)
The fourth Young Fathers album hardly made the job of categorising them any easier, but it did emphasise how the Edinburgh trio had stealthily become one of the most important bands in the UK. *Heavy Heavy* was a densely-layered grid of influence, as soul, rock, chants, handclaps, frictional electronic soundscapes and even a touch of glam (*I Saw*) fed into something constantly shifting, constantly dynamic. A career high, that promised much more to come.
Standout track: Drum

4



ROBERT FORSTER
The Candle And The Flame
(TAPETE)
Forster's most famous partnership was with Grant McLennan in the Go-Betweens, but it would be another long-term relationship that informed his eighth solo LP – his marriage to Karin Bäumler, who was fighting cancer as she played on the album alongside Forster and their two children. *TCATF*, then, was family bonding ritual as universal solace: songs of love, memory and resilience that were just as moving even without knowing the backstory.
Standout track: Tender Years



P.J. Harvey: at her earthiest and most spiritual.

3



LANKUM
False Lankum
(ROUGH TRADE)
From squat punk outliers to the most acclaimed folk band in years, the journey of this Dublin collective was miraculously navigated without compromise – hence the imposing landmark of their fourth LP. *False Lankum*, with its gothic shanties and glowering noise, located a space where avant-doom met traditional song and somehow made both more accessible. Modern folk's *OK Computer* or *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, pronounced MOJO's reviewer.
Standout track: Clear Away In The Morning

2



P.J. HARVEY
I Inside The Old Year Dying
(PARTISAN)
P.J. Harvey's recent activity seemed to be moving away from music, with 2022's epic poem *Orlam* in arcane Dorset dialect. In fact, it was all part of a bigger project manifested in this tenth LP, that redeployed sections of *Orlam* for skeletal, seasonal, magically-inclined songs of her home county's countryside. *I Inside The Old Year Dying* was Harvey at her earthiest and most spiritual, creating a powerful new mythology out of simple elements.
Standout track: A Child's Question, August

- 1 JAIMIE BRANCH**
(ABOVE)
Fly Or Die Fly Or Die Fly Or Die ((World War)) (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)
- 2 KASSA OVERALL**
Animals (WARP)
- 3 LONDON BREW**
London Brew (CONCORD JAZZ)
- 4 JAMES BRANDON LEWIS/RED LILY QUINTET**
For Mahalia, With Love (TAO FORMS)
- 5 DEVON RUSSELL GRAY, NATHAN HANSON, DAVU SERU**
We Sick (INNOVA)
- 6 THANDI NTULI WITH CARLOS NIÑO**
Rainbow Revisited (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)
- 7 DWIGHT TRIBLE**
Ancient Future (GEARBOX)
- 8 KENDRICK SCOTT**
Corridors (BLUE NOTE)
- 9 KOFI FLEXXX**
Flowers In The Dark (NATIVE REBEL)
- 10 MULTITRACTION ORCHESTRA**
Reactor One (SUPERPANG)

AMERICANA
Compiled by SYLVIE SIMMONS



- 1 JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT**
(ABOVE)
Weathers/Vanes (SOUTHEASTERN)
- 2 JOE HENRY**
All The Eye Can See (EARMUSIC)
- 3 TANYA TUCKER**
Sweet Western Sound (FANTASY)
- 4 MALCOLM HOLCOMBE**
Bits & Pieces (PROPER/NEED TO KNOW)
- 5 JOBI RICCIO**
Whiplash (YEP ROX)
- 6 HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER**
Jump For Joy (MERGE)
- 7 BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY**
Keeping Secrets Will Destroy You (DRAG CITY)
- 8 JANA HORN**
The Window Is The Dream (NO QUARTER)
- 9 THE WOOD BROTHERS**
Heart Is The Hero (HONEY JAR)
- 10 THE HANDSOME FAMILY**
Hollow (LOOSE)