

## Low Leaf

### Red Moon

Leaving DL/LP/MC

## Arushi Jain

### Delight

Leaving DL/LP/MC

## QOA

### Sauco

Leaving DL/LP/MC

## Sam Gendel & Sam Wilkes

### The Doober

Leaving DL/LP/MC

## Sam Wilkes/Craig Weinrib/Dylan Day

### Sam Wilkes, Craig Weinrib & Dylan Day

Leaving DL/LP/MC

A new batch from Leaving Records, the Los Angeles label now in its 15th year. First up is *Delight* from Delhi born, New York based musician and composer Arushi Jain. Inspired by *Raga Bageshri* – a Carnatic raga intended to convey the longing felt when waiting to be reunited with a lover – Jain finds an inviting languidity via the shimmering vocals and fluttering flute of “Infinite Delight” and “You Are Irresistible”, which rise together in warm and expectant plateaus.

Sams Gendel and Wilkes deploy something similarly sultry with a slightly odder character. Initially, the smoky saxophone of “Ben Hur” and the laidback percussion of “Milton Suite” feel straightforwardly nocturnal, like dimly lit excursions taken through some louche nightscape. However on further listens the odd mixture of languorous instrumentation and slightly off-kilter melodic snippets begins to leak a particularly characterful and idiosyncratic feel, like the theme to a British television detective series if it was performed by Kenny Graham & His Satellites.

Wilkes also appears in trio formation alongside Dylan Day and Craig Weinrib, and without the grasping exploratory tendrils of Gendel’s saxophone, this self-titled collection of seven pieces generally finds a tighter, straighter groove. Opens “Standing In The Door” and “Too Young To Go Steady” both set up slow-moving riffs, the melodic gaps probed and explored. However, the space and warmth in the mixture ensures that things remain on the meditative side of jazzy.

The pair of releases from QOA and Low Leaf – aka Argentinian musician Nina Corti and Los Angeles multi-instrumentalist Angelica-Marie Lopez respectively – initially seem similar. The former’s *Sauco* opens with its title track, a soothing palette of birdsong and synthetic verdant greens slowly shifting across the soundscape, while *Red Moon* begins with a shimmering and beatific version of Alice Coltrane’s “Blue Nile”, both delivering a type of new age soothe. However, as *Red Moon* moves on to the remaining two pieces, it’s clear that something weirder is at play.

As “Innersound Oddity” begins, a voice wryly advises, “Strap in, kids”, before a cycle of spaced-out electronics ploughs through the middle of the mix. Above this, the combination of Mekala Session’s frenetic drumming and probing bursts of Bryan Baker’s saxophone pushes the sound even further out. Slightly less frenetic, but equally cosmic is “How To Open A Portal”, a hazy mirage of melting electronics and reclining jazzy textures that’s not dissimilar

to *Sauco*. QOA achieves a similar sound via more grounded ecological themes, naming tracks such as “Muitu” and “Lippia Alba” after organisms native to Argentina. The result is a set of nature-infused ambient washes which are highly evocative of the landscape and which exude an intoxicating serenity.

Spenser Tomson

## Raymond MacDonald

### Desire Lines

multi.modal CD

Glasgow’s Raymond MacDonald takes the collaborative spirit of improvisation and supercharges it with theories, psychological research and innovative working practices, all in the spirit of bringing people together. He’s a key part of regular free music gathering The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, and during the pandemic, facilitated a series of virtual performances which launched a groundbreaking study into the psychological value of collaborating online. This disc is a rare solo outing for the saxophonist, but it carries his usual fraternal spirit, with neighbour Richard Youngs on production duties.

*Desire Lines* slots into the concept of the multi.modal CD series by incorporating MacDonald’s painting into the album artwork. His colourful, bold abstracts – inspired in part by working with AI – set the tone for an album of three expressive freeform solos, each played from the heart and following an idea to see where it goes, just like the dirt tracks formed by wandering feet of the title. After starting on alto, *Desire Lines* hits its stride when MacDonald moves to soprano. On the smaller instrument, the flow of air through the tubes and chambers is faster and more fluid, with an almost flute-like purity to the modulation of sound. MacDonald flexes his circular breathing on these lengthy improvisations, and considered next to Evan Parker’s trailblazing work in the medium, the Glaswegian shows a distinctive, punchy lyricism.

This solo recording is just one facet of MacDonald’s varied zones of activity. *Here Is A Big Place*, another project with Youngs, is an unfolding site-specific performance visiting sites of biographical or aesthetic significance, from each other’s houses to Glencoe in the Highlands. The book *Conversations With Chimère* chronicles a dialogue between MacDonald and an AI whose prompts give potential scores for new improvisations. MacDonald’s practice is complex, but the goal is simple and always same: to use music to make the world a better place.

Derek Walmsley

## Rob Mazurek & Exploding Star Orchestra/

### Small Unit

### Spectral Fiction

Corbett Vs Dempsey CD/DL

## Rob Mazurek

### Milan

Clean Feed CD/DL

## Star Splitter

### Medea

We Insist! DL/LP

Over more than three decades veteran trumpeter Rob Mazurek has never stopped adding tools and methods to

his improvisational practice, relentlessly stretching an early investment in post-bop fundamentals. Over the years he’s added electronics, keyboards and even voice to his arsenal, and along the way he’s forged a kind of modular approach within an ever-expanding array of ensembles so that new concepts and compositions can bleed into or swap out of any given group, rigorously transformed by the personnel within those outfits.

*Spectral Fiction* was created by a scaled-down sextet version of his long running Exploding Star Orchestra, recorded live in Chicago the day after the full band had performed a special concert in support of last year’s *Lightning Dreamers*. Over the course of two lengthy new pieces Mazurek directed the killer group – cellist Tomeka Reid, bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, drummer Chad Taylor, pianist Angelica Sanchez and vocalist Damon Locks – within organically flowing, improvisation driven sequences loosely related to themes carved out by the larger unit. Channeling the groove orientated sound worlds of early 1970s Miles Davis, the sextet surges and recedes around the futuristic freedom-seeking texts of Locks, clinging to and cleaving form in the most organic fashion. The daytime performance seems charged by the energy of the preceding night’s set, with a palpable internal rapport marked by sublime intuition, as phrases and colors merge and divide like cellular matter.

*Milan* is the latest transmission of solo work focusing on Mazurek’s long-time obsession with sound projection, creating richly saturated sonic canvases. Performed as a live radio broadcast in the titular city, the musician used piano as a resonating device, feeding all of the sounds through the keyboard. With the sustain pedal fully depressed throughout the concert, Mazurek shepherds a dense sonic weave, whether contemplative or ecstatic, blowing tart, inherently melodic trumpet lines over thundering lower register piano chords, unleashing primal vocal howls while triggering various bells and shakers, or melding electronic beats with noh ensemble samples. The music flows continually, casting a ritualistic spell.

Star Splitter is Mazurek’s duo with Italian trumpeter Gabriele Mitelli – something of a stylistic disciple – and on their second album, the pair function like hall of mirror refractions of one another across a single work. The duo juggle trumpets, electronics, and raw vocalizing in a shapeshifting sound quilt that veers from spacious deliberation to densely raucous rapture. Despite the shared instrumentation, the musicians blend disparate aesthetic tendencies, sometimes coalescing but more often generating a visceral friction through differences that push and pull.

Peter Margasak

## The Messthetics & James Brandon Lewis

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Impulse! CD/DL/LP

## Janel & Anthony

### New Moon In The Evil Age

Cuneiform 2xCD/DL/2xLP

Although fusion’s gaudier variants have received delightful contemporary