

Sakamoto, The Associates, Simple Minds and Cowley, the compilation highlights that many of those attempting European flavoured music in the late 1970s did not originate from Europe at all. Like Bowie, these musicians constructed and embodied their own Europe from synths, glamour and irony – an expanded version of the ideal that Bowie presented on *Low*.

Like so many ideals, this picture of 70s Europe was a disguise and a utopia, born far from the unstable realities of the place itself. *Fantastic Voyage* is a compelling science fiction postcard from this optimistic alternate reality.

Claire Biddles

Bill Fay Group

Tomorrow Tomorrow And Tomorrow

Dead Oceans CD/DL/2xLP

As Bill Fay Group guitarist Gary Smith told Julian Cowley in *The Wire* 275, “You listen to a Bill Fay song, and you get the everyday event or mundane object coupled with some element that transcends everything. At once prosaic and touching.” These qualities seem true, too, of the songwriter’s career: his early work in the 1960s and early 70s went unnoticed; he fell into obscurity, then, decades after releasing any music, was rediscovered to great acclaim, long after he had resigned himself to a life of gardening and groundskeeping.

Tomorrow Tomorrow And Tomorrow was recorded in the late 1970s, shortly after Fay’s first two albums had flopped commercially and he had lost his record deal with Deram. Joined by Bill Stratton, Gary Smith and Rauf Galip, *Tomorrow* pushes Fay’s already unusual brand of folk rock in more experimental directions through unlikely arrangements and mercurial song structures. The group couldn’t find a home for it, though, and it was shelved for over two decades. Eventually, the album was released in 2005 on the back of a late wave of appreciation that would eventually draw Fay back to making records.

Its 2024 reissue on Dead Oceans is a double vinyl package – the album in its entirety plus a side of previously unreleased material. The tracks range from hymn-like ballads (“We Are Raised”) that give voice to Fay’s Christianity, to beguiling mini-suites (“Planet Earth Daytime”) that are of a more ambiguous disposition in their musings on the mundane. Alternate versions and demos reveal the songs’ versatility, whether rendered with synthesizers or in a more classic folk rock line-up. Bonus track “Coming Down” sounds like it could’ve been a classic – perhaps, if the trajectory of Fay’s career is anything to go by, it still will be.

Lucy Thraves

Dredd Foole & The Din

We Will Fall

Corbett Vs Dempsey CD/DL

“Someone once said you can never keep honesty, integrity and intelligence down”, Dan Ireton informs an audience gathered at storied Boston, Massachusetts rock club The Rat to witness Dredd Foole, his musical alter ego. “To which a wise man replied: we both know those are the EASIEST things to keep down”. This arch crack concludes a frothing run-

through of The Rolling Stones’ “Play With Fire”, one of five covers on *We Will Fall*, an archive set from 1983. Dredd Foole was a popular live draw in Massachusetts but, with touring kept to a minimum, made little impact elsewhere. Seems integrity might have kept him down.

Some 20 years after the material on *We Will Fall* was recorded, Ireton found a different peer group in the mushrooming New Weird America movement. Here, though, he and The Din – comprising members of Boston post-punks Mission Of Burma, who had broken up a few months before this show – muck in for clods of clattering garage rock. Wailing mid-1960s style organ illuminates “So Tough” and “Not A Beast” (a second, home-recorded version of which appears at the end of this album); a cover of The Doors’ “The End” starts with a cod-militaristic blast of cornet by Roger Miller, which he brings back for the slow, gothic “Touch”.

It’s generally rather more loose than the locked-in playing one might associate with Mission Of Burma, but if one has committed oneself to cranking out Stooges, Velvets and Stones standards, then ramshackle is no doubt the optimum approach. Still, the band are at their most musically interesting on “Behind You” which is ten and a half minutes long, opens with some Neil Young/Tom Verlaine-adjacent guitar and was revived a decade later for Dredd Foole’s proto-free folk album *In Quest Of Tense*.

Noel Gardner

Bob Marley & The Wailers

Catch A Fire: 50th Anniversary Edition

Tuff Gong 4xCD/DL/4LP

Originally credited simply to The Wailers on its original 1973 release, it wasn’t until two years later when original members Peter Tosh and Neville ‘Bunny’ Livingston had left the band – and it was clear that Marley was heading for international stardom – that *Catch A Fire* was reissued with the frontman sharing the headline. Now recognised as the album responsible for breaking reggae into the mainstream, *Catch A Fire* came just two years after The Wailers had cut outstanding sets with Lee Perry as producer. Both *Soul Rebels* and *Soul Revolution* were released via Scratch’s Upsetter imprint and regarded by cognoscenti as the height of their songwriting output, forming a template for the forthcoming genre of roots reggae.

Island boss Chris Blackwell originally identified Jimmy Cliff as the artist to break reggae, but when Cliff signed to a major label his attention turned to The Wailers. They came to a deal over a spliff on the roof at Island HQ and were given £4000 to cut an album back in Jamaica. The group went into Harry J’s studio, the best in Kingston, also using Dynamic Sound and Randys. Recording the sessions on eight-track tape was engineer Sylvan Morris, a name usually left off credits in favour of the London crew responsible for overdubs only. Recruited for the sessions were former Hippy Boys/Upsetters drum and bass team, brothers Carlton and Aston ‘Family Man’ Barrett eventually becoming the rhythmic core of The Wailers. It was this line-up, along with Earl ‘Wire’ Lindo on organ, that appeared

on BBC2’s *The Old Grey Whistle Test* playing spellbinding performances of “Stir It Up” and “Concrete Jungle”. This appearance introduced the band to a new audience and over the years has achieved a rightfully legendary status.

This beautifully produced set includes the original Jamaican album along with the internationally released version (featuring Wayne Perkins’s wah-wah solo on “Concrete Jungle” and Rabbit Bundrick’s organ effects throughout) plus *Live From The Paris Theatre London*, eight unreleased alternate and extended versions and a sumptuous booklet with sleeve notes by Chris Salewicz.

Steve Barker

Microstoria

Init Ding + _SND

Thrill Jockey DL/2xLP

Microstoria was a collaboration between Markus Popp (Oval) and Jan St Werner (Mouse On Mars). These reissues comprise the two LPs they made in 1995–96 and they are fundamentally lo-fi electronica before any of those words were even put together.

Smart enough to know that electronic soundtrack composition had a history as long as pop, walking the line between the semi-improvisational studio space and the edit suite, Microstoria occupy a genuinely curious place on reacquaintance. How can electronic music sound so organic, so botanic even? What does this music consist of – melodic ideas coming from a place of authorship and control or accidentally recovered shards of a process in which Popp and Werner were precisely trying to evade any sense of control?

There’s a very Main/Stars Of The Lid feel to the grainy reticence and stealth of tracks like “File Care” and “Zuhause”, like the last flames of feedback from a My Bloody Valentine or Jessamine record, time-stretched into an almost monastic quietness, a fungal suggestion of structural immensities beneath the surface. Gratifyingly there’s no ‘challenge’ or ‘confrontation’ in this music, only the manipulation of very simple sound sources – drones, twinkles, rumblings – into tracks that in a very real sense leave you suspended within the sound, an absolute refusal of impetus, penetration and propulsion. As the last track of *Init Ding* (“Dokumint”) is followed by the first track of *_SND* (“Sleepy People/Network Down”) there’s a wonderful sense of continuity, as if the duo are simply flicking the Microstoria switch back on and letting it all breathe again.

More mysterious and compelling than much of the more lauded avant electronica of its time (Pole/Panasonic for instance) it’s great that Microstoria have been recovered from the vaults. This is some of the most engrossingly odd music of the 90s.

Neil Kulkarni

Sam Morrison

Whatever: Anthology 1

Blue Buddha DL

Sam Morrison is a soprano and tenor saxophone player (who occasionally picks up the alto and bass flutes as well) who played alongside Miles Davis at the 1975 Newport Jazz Festival (as documented on *At Newport 1955–1975: The Bootleg Series Vol 4*). He’s often