



Some Finn funky: *Butterflies* by flautist Finn Peters is a sonically adventurous yet funky album

Flute-ylicious

If all you know of flute music is James Galway, then it's time you got a little Finn Peters into your life. Jazz, soul, hip hop, esoteric gamelan-based experiments: you name it, the versatile Peters has done it. He also blows a mean saxophone. His Finntet – terrible name, great ensemble – secured the Best Band prize at last year's BBC Jazz Awards after releasing *Su-Ling*, an absurdly sophisticated blend of funk, free jazz and many more exotic ingredients besides.

Taking its inspiration from nature, Peters's follow-up, *Butterflies* (Accidental), finds its creator in more reflective, if no less sonically adventurous mood – not for nothing has he been described as a 'sound scientist'. The Nightingale incorporates Messiaen-like birdsong before firing up into a Latin groove, while instruments such as the jégogan and gangsa give Atlas a distinctively Eastern flavour.

Speaking of which, Nicolas Meier's *Silence Talks* (Naim) is deeply imbued with the dance rhythms and folk melodies of Turkey, the native land of the Swiss-born guitarist's wife. Meier is an unusual figure – how many musicians can you name who play both jazz and full-on heavy metal? His new quartet album falls

MUSIC EXTRA: JAZZ



unambiguously at the world music end of the jazz spectrum, blending Oriental sounds with virtuosic flamenco flourishes on the likes of *Turquoise*. Great Metheny-esque fusion playing from Meier (on an 11-string fretless glissitar among other things) and inspired contributions from his regular collaborators make this an unalloyed pleasure.

In jazz circles, the Hammond B-3 organ is pretty much synonymous with the late, great Jimmy Smith, creator of *Back At The Chicken Shack* and *Midnight Special*. Where Smith's style was rich and soulful, young New York-based B-3 player Sam Yahel adopts a distinctly minimal approach to his instrument on new project *Jazz Side Of The Moon*

(Chessky), a carefully understated revisiting of Pink Floyd's gazillion-selling masterpiece.

Yahel sculpts nuanced textures while tenorist Seamus Blake finds inventive new phrasings for the über-familiar themes such as *Money* and *Brain Damage*. As Yahel points out in the liner notes, what Gershwin and the other creators of the Great American Songbook were to a previous generation of jazz musicians, the Floyd and other rock behemoths are to the current crop.

Tom Richards may have shared a stage with indie swaggers Hard-Fi but his work as a composer and bandleader owes little obvious debt to Cash Machine or Living For The Weekend. *Smoke And Mirrors* (Candid), the debut release from the Tom Richards Orchestra, features seven characterful compositions that demonstrate the possibilities of the thoroughly modern big band.

It moves seamlessly from the swing-orientated to the electronica-inflected and from the luxuriously lush to the positively hard-driven and propulsive. High-quality soloing from the likes of Gwilym Simcock on piano makes this a real delight. Fans of Jamie Cullum note: the little marvel co-wrote and sings the title track. *Robert Shore*

JAZZ

Finn Peters

Butterflies
Accidental, £9.99

BBC Jazz award winner, flautist and saxophonist Finn Peters throws together Chinese philosophy, Indonesian gamelan and "world jazz" on his second album. Judiciously mixing composition and improvisation, this gem of a disc features slow to medium-tempo pieces that build to near-theatrical climaxes.

Though he echoes the experimentation of figures such as trumpeter Don Cherry, Devon-born Peters is on to something distinctive, dicing up Oriental and African-derived musical motifs with a sure-footed touch. Butterfly-like, Peters's alto saxophone playfully flits and darts against a core rhythmic background.
John Stevenson

Critics' choice Hot albums



Finn Peters

'Butterflies', Accidental
Peters' daring, flute-led foray into acoustic jazz, rootsy grooves and beats-based ambience steers well clear of Muzak territory.

Daedelus

'Love To Make Music To', Ninja Tune
LA producer delivers his best electronic effort to date, an impressionistic take on rave/jungle/hardcore, drum 'n' bass and minimal techno.

Modey Lemon

'Season Of Sweets', Birdman
Pittsburgh's finest shrug off their garage/noise-rock shackles for good, adding groovy krautrock, no-wave noise and wonky pop to their über-cool mix.

Wild Beasts

'Limbo, Panto', Domino
Heroically odd gang from Leeds (via Kendal) debut with a ludicrously melodramatic but mighty mix of post-modern music hall and modern rock.

Flutter control

New release the reflective, *Butterflies*, by flautist and saxophonist Finn Peters', a follow-up to *Su-Ling*, has a distinctly fresh focus to it. Feel the calm, says Daniel Spicer

"It is a bit more still and peaceful," Finn Peters says. "I've been wanting to do a record like that for ages, something with that kind of stillness. I've always really liked Messiaen's 'Quartet at the End of Time,' and that feeling of timelessness." The album's title is inspired by the Chinese thinker, Chuang Tzu, whose famous dream of a butterfly caused him to question reality, and it seems Peters has been doing some thinking of his own lately. "I'm interested in Taoist philosophy and eastern religion," he says, "so that's something that is part of the music. Whatever you think or believe or feel definitely affects how you play and compose. That's what music is, a reflection of who you are and what you believe."

If that's so, then Peters must be feeling very level-headed right now. *Butterflies* exudes an unhurried calm and meditative contentment, drawing on eastern musical influences including Balinese gamelan. It's a musical tradition that – unlike Indian classical music – has been explored very little by jazz musicians and its inclusion on *Butterflies* is just one element of an expanded sound palette Peters brings to the new album. Alongside his regular band of drummer Tom Skinner, guitarist Dave Okumu, pianist Nick Ramm and bassist Tom Herbert, the album features contributions from violinist Darragh Morgan of Ensemble Moderne, Senegalese kora player, Kadialy Kouyate and electronics from Matthew Yee-King. "The added instruments make it a much bigger sounding record, I think," says Peters.

"The way in which I wanted to use the electronics on the record was as an alternative form of orchestration – a different way of making the music sound like it was using larger forces, without actually hiring the London Sinfonia. It gives it a whole different level of sonic depth."

Clearly, he's intent on using the latest technological advances to aid his art – but we might have to wait some time before we see some of his ambitions realised.

"I've been reading about this project where you put this massive hat on and attach yourself to a computer and it reads your brainwaves and through some weird process it can actually work out what note you're thinking of. This is really at the very early stages of the technology but I'm hoping that in the future, it might develop – because I've always found a block between what you think and what you write. There are various stages of the process of composition. You think of something. Then, I often write at the piano, so it goes down there. Then it goes on

to the manuscript and you change it around. Then the next stage is playing it for the musicians and, especially if they're good improvising musicians, it might change again. It'd be great if you could actually just strap yourself into a computer, sit back, relax and clear your mind, then come up with some music. It sounds far-fetched, but so did going to the moon."

Oddly, given all this futuristic techno-speak, there's a definite feel for the natural world on *Butterflies* – largely thanks to the fact that Peters retreated to his native rural Devon to record it. It finds its most stunning outlet on 'The Nightingale,' on which Peters' flute perfectly mimics complex birdcalls. "I always find birdsong really inspiring," he says. "Messiaen went around the world transcribing birds and he's pretty accurate in his transcription. I'm probably a bit more liberal – there's possibly not so many quarter tones and stuff in there. Also there's some things that they do that are so fast they're impossible to play."

So, with all this talk of mind-reading computers and communing with nature, is Peters turning into some mystical cyberdelic ascetic? Not likely. "The next record I'm working on is going to have a lot more electronics but I think it will probably come back to being a bit more up and funky. I think it goes in cycles. You do one record and then to counteract that you do something else. Art's often like that."



Album reviews

Finn Peters



★★★★★

Butterflies Accidental

For most people, jazz flute represents the Muzak-honking scourge of the shopping centre. Happily, Finn Peters steers a steady course well clear of this taste-free zone. Not since the Rahsaan Roland Kirk's '60s circular breathing, triple sax-and-flute toting whirlwind has the flute been placed so boldly front and centre. Peters's daring choice to lead with flute, adorned with contrasting stabs of sax, showcases the strength of the tunes on this album.

Peters's debut, *Su Ling*, won him

plaudits for its mix of acoustic jazz, electronica and roots grooves. This subtle curveball of a follow-up draws its inspirations from a broader palette. These include birdsong (sampled and used as a compositional device), Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu (who famously dreamt he was a butterfly, and then questioned his own existence) and Messiaen-esque through-composition.

'Butterflies' is a mesmerising and deeply rewarding tone poem, at times symphonic and cinematic. In places the expansive harmonic waves, bubbling beats and ambience would make for a nifty rescoring of those rainy, dystopian scenes from *'Bladerunner'*. 'Pterodactyl' morphs into some darker, crunchier textures supplied by guitarist Dave Okumu, while on 'Moyses', the sonic mood is positively menacing. Mathew Herbert's production and the talented Finntet band create a Zen-like balance, while the undulating layers of live playing and electronics, wrapped in indelible melodies, draw things to an uplifting climax on 'Ottanta'. Ultimately it's the beauty, optimism and cynicism-free qualities of *'Butterflies'* that make it an essential listen. *Mike Flynn*

Finn Peters *Butterflies*

Accidental (Cat No. not given) | ★★★★★

Finn Peters (fl, s), Dave Okumu (g), Nick Ramm (p), Tom Herbert (b), Tom Skinner (d) and Matthew Yee-King (sound processing, SuperCollider, synth). Rec. date not given

Peters' follow-up to 2006's acclaimed *Su-Ling* is an altogether more laid back affair: a sophisticated, assured collection of electro-acoustic tunes that radiate peace and tranquillity. It leaves a sweetly exotic fragrance hanging in the air, with melodies evoking eastern locations – from the slow-burning desert-groove of 'Fax,' shimmering like a mirage on the horizon, to the stately Balinese gamelan of the title track. For the most part, it all adds up to a calm, reflective, even relaxing experience – but there are other moods on offer: 'Atlas' ingeniously incorporates a gamelan gong cycle into an infectiously breezy swinger; 'Moyses' builds up to dramatic, turbulent turmoil akin to *'Supersilent'* at their most menacing before breaking down to dark electronic swirls and spooky water drops; and the joyously sunny 'Ottanta' effortlessly captures the uplifting mind-expansion funk vibe of Rotary Connection's *'Black Gold of the Sun'*. Bursting with ideas, gorgeously produced, and imaginatively realised, *Butterflies* is quite an achievement. *Daniel Spicer*