

PLAYLIST

Indie Sounds Abound: Some Playful, Some Pop



Kristine Jakobsen

The Norwegian band Razika, whose most recent album is "Program 91."

By BEN RATLIFF
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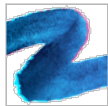
Blood Orange

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Edén Frangipane

Daniel James, who has released his first album as Canon Blue.

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Music pours out of Dev Hynes, Texas born, England raised, and now living in New York. He was a member of the British band Test Icicles until 2007, until he went solo and called himself Lightspeed Champion for a few broadly melodic indie-rock records; now he's [Blood Orange](#). The impressive and elegant first Blood Orange record, "Coastal Grooves" (Domino), sounds stylistically all out of order. Mr. Hynes, a natural obsessive about pop mannerism and song structure, sings in a voice that easily rises into falsetto range, plays stuttered, echoing guitar that sometimes breaks into rehearsed shred-solos, and sings from the points of view of girls as well as boys. It sounds roughly like Prince, if Chris Isaak were his brother, and the Strokes were his children. If you've heard any of Mr. Hynes other music, you know this is not the final summation of who he is. It's probably where his head was six months ago, yet it seems genuine enough.

Michael Pisaro

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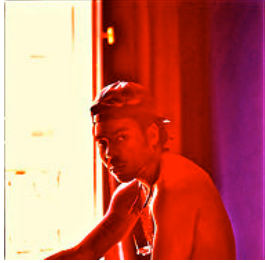
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Jonathan Rutherford

From left, Thommy Saraceno, Anna Saraceno and Michael Hutcherson of the band Owlfood.

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Adam Bainbridge

Dev Hynes, a musician who records under the name Blood Orange.

The American composer [Michael Pisaro](#) likes his music to develop as a slow-motion force, with adjustments of tone and pitch and instrumentation so long-brewing that you lose your awareness of the player's hand and the composer's will. He's into field recordings, sine waves and percussion, unusually played. Per Mr. Pisaro's instructions the percussionist Greg Stuart attacks metal by pinging, dropping, bowing — generally anything but playing with sticks or mallets. Two new works by Mr. Pisaro, on two different discs, have just come out on Gravity Wave, the imprint dedicated to his work by the electro-acoustic label Erstwhile: "Hearing Metal 2" and "Hearing Metal 3," both homages to Brancusi, the sculptor. Mr. Pisaro seems to get some — or even a lot — of his ideas from the natural world: the shifting and overlapping sounds of moving water, or wind on trees, or birds. All those elements get their own little arias in the first track of Volume 2. But it's "Hearing Metal 3" that absorbed me most: one 45-minute piece for percussion and electronics, shifting from the complicated ringing of bows rubbed on the edge of metal surfaces, to tiny flurries on top, leading to a 10-minute finale: various kinds of grains falling, in unpredictable waves, on light, sensitive cymbals. Then you reach the sudden end, which

has given me a shudder each time I've heard it. It's carefully plotted but feels wide open; it's hard to tell whether this piece is about control or the opposite. He (and Mr. Stuart) will be performing at [the Stone](#), in Manhattan, Sept. 14 to 15, during [Erstwhile's two-week booking of the club](#); you can track down the records at [michaelpisaro.blogspot.com](#).

Owlfood

I hadn't heard anything about Owlfood, ([owlfood.com](#)) from Boston till I read the metal blog [cvltnation.com](#) and was directed to [Paradigm Recordings](#), in England, which understands metal as a late-night disposition, not a style. Owlfood is a trio of musicians who are otherwise visual artists and filmmakers, and it has been quietly putting out music in split cassettes, CDRs, compilation records; it's one of those bands that seems as if it's meant to remain semi-private. Its first full-length, from Paradigm, collects most of that in one place. It makes quiet and repetitive music with guitars and harmoniums and voices, occasionally a sample, and the barest drums; it operates at the crossroads of drone-folk and doom. This is music that creeps up on you with minimal intentions. It's not going anywhere fast.

Razika

The members of Razika, a Norwegian all-female quartet, were born in 1991, but their attitudes sound born yesterday. Razika plays naively sweet and imperfectly rhythmic ska-pop. "Program 91," the band's first album on Smalltown Supersound, is light as air, with lyrics about young love and frustration, and guitar tones so transparent they sound almost African. Enjoy it while you can; one gets the sense that some aspect of this group's mood or musical ability will fall and harden, like a soufflé, and never be the same again.

Canon Blue

The world of Daniel James, from Nashville, intersects with the worlds of a few meticulous and learned pop bands of the moment. He's recorded with Chris Taylor of Grizzly Bear and toured with the Danish band Efterklang. And on his own first album as [Canon Blue](#), called "Rumspringa" (Temporary Residence), he collaborates with Efterklang, as well as with Amiina, the string quartet that works with Sigur Ros. These are orchestral indie-pop love songs with glockenspiel twinkles and repeating minimalist arpeggios, music for old-thinking young people, and conceived as a psycho-geographical travelogue, with American city names in subtitles. It's playful with sound and echo, pop and American-



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classical traditions, and relationships between foreground and background. But what I like most is that this rich, ambitious and very contemporary music has a flashy and aggressive drummer, Bjorn Heeboll, the kind of musician who, on songs like “Fading Colors (Bloomington)” and “Velveteenager (Minneapolis B),” tends toward extravagant high-hat fills and overcomplicated patterns. The record is almost too clean and tasteful: the drummer rights the picture.

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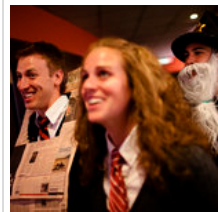


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