BLUE CARTOON

Are You Getting On AARDVARK

A bit of blue for the dads...

elightfully obscure, Blue Cartoon originate from Austin, Texas where they built a reputation for sprightly power pop. Seemingly believing that direction was becoming a bit stale and predictable, they've refined their approach to embrace wide-

ranging influences, and Are You Getting On is the uplifting end result. The cliché in the accompanying press release refers to their sound as being what you get if you put '10CC, Roxy Music, T. Rex. Todd Rundgren and Yes into a blender'. Add The Beatles in there and it's a pretty accurate portrayal of Blue Cartoon's amalgam and tactical



repositioning. It's often a winning mix, firmly rooted in the 70s. The title track and Dreaming Beautiful Songs have the polish of The Idle Jets at their finest. Only Cowboy In Timbuktu is a playful song that captures the band's blatant humour, with the experimental,

reggae-infused Gray Horizon also proving unexpectedly successful. That said, there are moments where the music lacks clout. The pedestrian plod of Everyday's A Saturday has the unfortunate air of a Wings b-side, and The Primrose Path is a morose way to end an album that contains moments of unbridled flair. RW

DEAN ALLEN FOYD

Road To Atlas CRUSHER

Swedish guartet's mental psych-rock concoction.

Despite the name and cover art, this isn't a reissue from some longlost 60s acid rock fossils. Having raised slightly startled smiles with debut LP The Sounds Can Be So Cruel last year, these Stockholm psych-rockers continue to surprise and

delight in a way that's incredibly detached from modernity, but not exactly stuck in the past either. There's a gritty pulse to their blend of spaciness and demented, colourful urgency that stops you dismissing them as hackneyed throwbacks. Sadness Of Mankind starts all twinkly with Syd Barrett stylings, before skewing into



angular chords and organ. Insects gets freakier still with its free-jazz vibe and rumbling bass backdrop, synth twiddles and rugged guitar spiralling into anarchy. Bluesy grooves are never too far away, keeping things weird but not floating totally into

magic mushroom land. The infectious Hendrix-esque hook of HWY Lost (Revisited) twists and turns amid early Dr Who-rivalling whirls, and the atmospheric closing title track is oddly beautiful in an imaginative, post-rave way. Dean Allen Foyd bid a hearty 'balls' to the 21st century as we know it. You'd be crazy not to get involved. PG

DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

One Of US IS The Killer PARTY SMASHER

The New Jersey mathcore rockers ratchet up the pace, again.

Dillinger's previous album, Option Paralysis, was arguably their most eclectic work. and also featured some of the most mind-flavingly intense sections of experimental rock ever recorded. On One Of Us Is The Killer, the band have

retained a degree of that eclecticism. On the stellar title track they approach, by their standards, radio friendliness, while other songs like Hero Of The Soviet Union trump even the most radical excesses of their last album. Needless to say, this is a good thing. From opener Prancer onward, it's hard sometimes even to process what's going



on. Passages and ideas whizz past, only locking into place as your mind plays over them later. This is key, for at its heart this record is - in relative terms at least - accessible enough that you can remember riffs, melodies and even whole tracks, returning

later for another fix. Understanding Decay, Paranoia Shields and Nothing's Funny all borrow from mainstream atmospheric alt-rock circa the Smashing Pumpkins' Machina, but still can't resist sliding back into brilliant, sublime madness. Dillinger will always be a somewhat niche band, but this record captures them at their best. AL



JAZZ PROG Sid Smith rounds up the best releases from prog's jazzier reaches.

hancing upon a baroque organ in a Bavarian abbey, Keith Jarrett was entranced by the

 otherworldly sounds its ancient stops and pedals produced. Hymns, Spheres (ECM) dates from 1976 but now appears on CD, in unexpurgated double-disc form, for the first time. It's a remarkable harmonic exploration, as Jarrett revels in the natural reverberation of his surroundings and the spectral emanations coaxed from the pipes.



Astonishing and often eerily proto-ambient, it ranges from belligerent grandiosity to delicate intimacy with Jarrett's customary improvisational fearlessness. A unique outing in his extensive catalogue.

Vali (MKDK) is the third album by Phlox, and while listening to it there are times when you'd swear it's come straight from Canterbury rather than Estonia. This pristinely



recorded in-concert appearance bristles with tinkling Fender Rhodes, searing sustaindriven guitar and bubbling sax. Crisp and smartly propelled time-signatures underscore several succinct and accessible melodies whose very tunefulness is yet another echo of the Canterbury ethos. While informed by jazz, there's a decent amount of straight on rock in Phlox's make-

up that means fans of National Health and Dean-era Soft Machine would be wise to investigate without delay.

The spacey ripples of Soft Machine are almost detectable in parts of Synesthesia (Cuneiform) by the Paris-based Kandinsky Effect, though the overall language is overtly jazz-based. Revolving around American saxophonist Warren Walker, electric bass and drums lock around his fluent lines with an unshakable tightness. Taut, economic improvising around strong melodies ensures this is incisive stuff.



Norwegian-based The Geordie Approach take a different tack entirely, sprawling out into abstract, vibrant



soundscapes that shake with fevered invention. Featuring trioVD guitarist Chris Sharkey, Inatween (Bruce's Fingers) is a dense and febrile collage as bass, drums and shrieking electronics collide and tussle with Sharkey's outstandingly splenetic surges.

Pat Metheny's Tap: John Zorn's Book Of Angels, Volume 20 (Nonesuch) pays homage to the sax player's famously acerbic compositions. True, Metheny's filtering has the effect of

PAT

/ TAP

METHENY

smoothing off some of Zorn's jagged edges, but the guitarist's trademark élan and often breathtaking lyricism bring a yearning, transformative quality to the pieces which ensures this is a two-way meeting.

There's a bittersweet quality about the ravishing tunes on Resume (ECM) by Eberhard Weber. Having lost the ability to

play following a stroke in 2007, Weber has painstakingly edited together a series of in-concert bass solos, adding keyboard textures and occasional drum and brass overdubs from Michael DiPasqua and Jan Garbarek.



The broad, sonorous tones of his five-string bass sing from the heart, making the loss of this towering giant of European jazz all the more poignant. Though it's his Colours quartet that he's rightly celebrated for, this is an elegant swansong.