

Bandcampin': Good stuff for your ears

BY BEN SALMON • The Bulletin

Bandcamp is an online music platform used largely by independent artists and record labels to stream songs and sell merchandise. It's also a vibrant virtual community teeming with interesting sounds just waiting to be discovered. Each week, I'll highlight three releases available on the site that are well worth your time and attention. If you find something you dig, please consider supporting the artist with a purchase.

Jeff Parker

"The New Breed"

For the past couple of decades, Jeff Parker has been one of the most dynamic — and, thus, busiest — guitarists in the American underground, playing with a wide range of jazz and experimental artists like Joshua Redman, Rob Mazurek, Smog, Jason Moran, Brian Blade and, most consistently, Chicago post-rock giants Tortoise. And like many busy sidemen, Parker put his own music on the back burner for years, at least in part to focus on others' work (and to keep the gigs flowing, presumably). Recently, though, he has returned to his interest in mingling beats, samples, live instruments and improvised jazz, and the results have been intoxicating. His most recent album,

"Suite for Max Brown," was one of 2020's best, but start with 2016's "The New Breed," a collection of electro-jazz-rock-hop that's every bit as rich and warm as it is meticulous and ambitious.

Arlo Parks

"Collapsed in Sunbeams"

Arlo Parks is a young British singer-songwriter and poet who is destined for big things and has been at least since she released her phenomenal debut single "Cola" back in 2018 — and maybe since the beginning of time. That sounds like hyperbole, but the ease with which Parks brings together reliably head-nodding beats, melifluous melodies, perfect "music to chill to" vibes and show-don't-tell storytelling

details is pretty uncommon, and suggests preternatural talent. Parks is not only destined for big things, she's also perfect for this moment, when the shuffle button has antiquated the idea of genre boundaries and endless Spotify playlists have turned music into background noise for many people. Her debut, "Collapsed in Sunbeams," is exactly that kind of well-crafted neo-soul-pop that'll crawl into your head without snapping you out of your insensibility.

Bartees Strange

"Live Forever"

"Live Forever," the debut album from Oklahoma-raised, Washington D.C.-based singer-songwriter Bartees Strange, feels like it exists on the other side of the coin from

Arlo Parks' "Collapsed in Sunbeams" (see blurb above). Each one effortlessly fuses a handful of different styles, but where Parks does so seemingly without revealing a seam or breaking a sweat, Strange's songs crackle with an energy that highlights the places where punk rubs up against hip-hop and where floaty noise-pop abuts an arena-ready rock anthem. Both are fine approaches, but "Live Forever" is positively thrilling as it bounces from sound to sound. Who else out there can approximate Kings of Leon one minute and industrial techno the next? The answer may or may not be "no one," but Bartees Strange certainly can, and he can make you feel something while he's doing it, too.

■ Ben Salmon is a Bend-based music journalist and host of *Left Of The Dial*, which airs 8-10 p.m. Thursdays on KPOV, 88.9 FM and streams at kpo.org. You can find him on Bandcamp and Twitter at [@bcsalmon](https://twitter.com/bcsalmon).



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Continued from previous page
videos and updates at Jackson's Instagram: [@mariatheprestigiousbeast](https://www.instagram.com/mariatheprestigiousbeast).

Q: What are your thoughts on Black History Month, especially with everything that happened last year with Black Lives Matter?

A: I didn't really learn a lot about Black history in depth until I was well into my 20s — like 24, 25 I started actually looking into these things ... outside of that strict guideline of, oh, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King and these are the only people you really know. It's a lot. I had to at some point stop because you learn so much and you recognize so many things. It just brought to the forefront a lot of the things I went through growing up. In Baltimore, it's not looked at as the best place. I think things have calmed down a little bit, hopefully, but they were wild when I grew up there. It was a lot of violence, a lot of drug usage, a lot of drug dealers — that was normal for me, being in that environment. And I just didn't recognize how systemic racism played a part in that because that's all I knew, and I just assumed that that's how life was for everybody. So I'm really hoping this year with how everything happened last year, people really take the time to educate themselves and really take the time to dig into Black people's lives and their history and how all of us have gotten to the point that we are at right now.

Q: Do you think that Black Lives Matter coming to the forefront last year has changed anything?

A: I do just feel like a lot of the times Black lives are not really considered important at all unless it's a political move. A lot of the times it's completely looked over and pushed under the rug. Most of the people I talk to in Oregon realistically are white people, and a lot of them were just like, "Oh, well, you're just bringing up politics," and I just look at them like, "How are you telling me (that) me talking about my life and how things happen to people who look like me are me trying to bring up politics, when it's literally my life?" But that's really the only way a lot of people who aren't of color will equate Black lives. It needs to be attached to something, it needs to be attached to organization, it needs to be attached to politics. I think a lot of people, white people or non-POC, don't look at just the individual and the fact that Black people have hopes and dreams and things that they want to do and fears like everybody else. When they're expressing that in settings that may happen to be whiter than others, it's not because they're trying to make anybody feel guilty or uncomfortable. They are literally just telling you, "This is what my life is like." And if that makes you uncomfortable, good, because hopefully you can be a catalyst to somebody else and help dismantle the fact that me bringing up how I live and how people have responded to me just being in a space physically, how that's deemed uncomfortable.

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