

Our Christmas gift to you; the best music from the last 12 months as chosen by Somethin' Else staff. Think of them as the musical equivalent of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Spotify playlist [here](#)



Michael Baggs: Album: Justice - Audio Video Disco (Ed Banger/Because) An exceptional second album from two of the most serious men in dance. Out went the nerve-shattering electro of their debut, in came seventies guitars riffs and a clash of classic rock and space-age French house music. An incredible album from start to finish, and one of the strongest and most cohesive dance albums in recent memory. Viva la France.

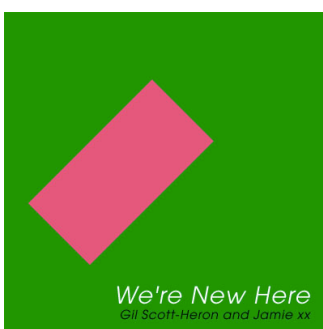
Runners up: Yuksek 'Living On The Edge of Time', The Sound of Arrows 'Voyage'

Tune: Pnau - The Truth (MoS) Onto my 'now stuff' playlist in January 2011, still there in December. 12 months of utter joy from one MP3 and yet another example of why Australia is a million miles ahead any other music making region when it comes to making people dance.

Runners up: Yuksek 'On A Train', Emeli Sande 'Daddy'

Steve Ackerman: Album: Aloe Blacc - Good Things (Stones Throw) Great summery soul that has optimism running through it from a modern sounding version of Al Green. The perfect antidote to the economic gloom. He's also a really stunning live performer!

Jono Lamb: Album - Wild Beasts - Smother (Domino) There's been some pretty good contenders for the title this year, including Metronomy's stunning 'The English Riviera', Danger Mouse and Daniele Luppi's masterstroke 'Rome' and frankly Jay-Z's best album ever (and all it took was the biggest producer and best singer in pop music). Unfortunately, what all of these suffer from is a chronic bout of what's known in the medical profession as filler-itis, where a couple of tracks really let the side down. Wild Beasts third studio album has no such problems, resulting in a mesmerising, beautiful and lovingly crafted album that really has no weaknesses in my mind. (PS, Jay-Z album debate not up for discussion)



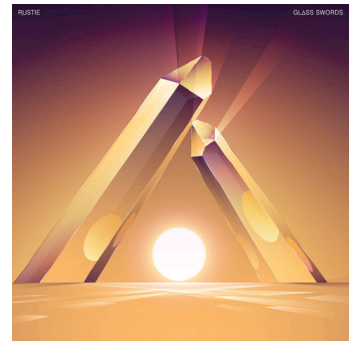
Tune: Jay Z & Kanye West ft Beyonce 'Lift Off' (RocNation) This isn't just one of Jay's best tracks, it's one of Beyonce's. And Ye's for that matter. I'd write more but it's the day after the party. I'm tired.

Will G: Album: Gil Scott Heron & Jamie xx - We're New Here (XL)

Amazingly warming and when you listen to it you know everything will be okay.

Tune: Rogerseventytwo - You Take Me Higher (Fools Gold) Disco, funky, spunky brilliance which takes us to places so far away from a Brixton flat on a Monday evening in November.

Dan Moss: Album: Rustie - Glass Swords (Warp) When Liam Gallagher opened his much-maligned mouth to suggest that creating electronic music is "too much a walk in the park" these days, he definitely wasn't listening to the audio fireworks display that is 'Glass Swords'. Sporting extra-terrestrial phallic artwork and octave-surfing winners in 'Cry Flames' and 'Ultra Thizz', the Glaswegian skillfully references and fuses early SNES/Atari nostalgia with trappings of modern RnB, trance and dubstep to paint shamelessly indulgent soundscapes of the future across the most ambitious album of 2011.



Tune: Pengilly's - 'Toby's Hill' (Self-Released) If this song was an episode of Friends it would be called: 'The One Where Ross Jumps Purposefully Through The Windows Of Central Perk Into Oncoming Traffic'. This totally underrated track wanders melancholically and introspectively through Gregorian chanting, restrained sub-bass and orchestral flutes to plunge into levels of exquisite despair so deep even Chandler won't be able to invert your frown. I miss Friends on TV.



Barry Lee: Album: Josh T Pearson - Last of the Country Gentlemen (Mute) 'Heavy' doesn't quite do this one justice. It's not an easy listen. An hour long with only 7 songs, and 4 of those clock in at over ten minutes. In the doleful country tradition Josh T lays bare his torment, torn between the woman he's married and the woman he loves, his religious duty and carnal desires, the man he wants to be and the man he is. Indulgent, hugely; but haunting and brilliant.

Single: Lana Del Ray - Videogames (Interscope) The internet trolls have really laid into Lana. She may be guilty of surgically enhanced features and a slightly derivative sound, but she isn't exactly the first. She looks like Angelina and sounds like Dusty, Nancy or Nico. Brooding, murderous, cinematic, smoky cabaret. This track was played to death on radio and drove my finance and colleagues mad, but I love it.

Rowan: Tune: Low - Try To Sleep (Sub Pop) Low have been toiling at alt-rock's coal face for the best part of two decades, but 'Try To Sleep' finally saw them distill their unique sound into four minutes. Set to a nagging xylophone loop, this ode to insomnia marries gorgeous boy girl harmonies to an aching melody, played at a stately, funeral march-like pace. Beautiful.



Album: SBTRKT - SBTRKT (Young Turks) - At the start of 2011, If anyone had told me that my album of the year would come from a musician with roots in dubstep (urgh) and even worse, a failed career in jazz-funk (URGGHHH!!) i would've given you short shrift. But Aaron Jerome's deft debut has soundtracked my year, from

radio playlists to parties via numerous nightbus journeys. There's loads to love here - the snaking vocal of Little Dragon's Yukimi Nagano on 'Wildfire' and the late night vibes of Sampha's 'Hold On' to name but two tracks - but most of all this is that rarest of things; a dance album with fantastic pop tunes at its heart. Ace.

Nan: Single: Nicki Minaj - Super Bass (Ca\$h Money) It's very rare for a cover version to be better than the original (especially if the person covering is 8 years old) but if you haven't done so yet, put 'Sophia Grace Super Bass' in the googles and you will see what I mean. Little Sophia's performance catapulted her into stardom and it's likely that one day soon Nicki Manaj will be covering one of her songs and uploading it on You Tube. Either way, Super Bass is ace.



Album: Wild Beasts - Smother (Domino) Wild Beasts live in Stoke Newington and it excites me to say I have seen them eating a roast dinner in The Three Crowns on TWO separate occasions. Each time I couldn't help but notice their fondness for two of my favourite things; braised red cabbage and horseradish. It struck me that if we had the same taste in food, we might also enjoy similar music so I went home and had a listen to 'Smother'. From the moment it opened with 'Lion's Share' I knew I was right. The album is 'smothered' with the perfect amount of operatic vocals, ivory tinkling and animal references to put it up there as my album of the year.

Simon Poole: Album: Motor City Drum Ensemble - DJ Kicks (!K7) I keep returning to the sumptuous eclecticism of Motor City Drum Ensemble's DJ Kicks mix. For me, it's approaching the quality of Coldcut's deathless '70 Minutes of Madness' from 1995, the *sine qua non* of modern dance music. The album as a whole still rightly retains a house sensibility, with the spine-tingling 'The Juice' from Mr. Fingers, Peven Everett's sparse and soulful *Stuck*, and the touching 'Can Your Love Find It's Way' (*sic*) by Poppa Howard but also elegantly envelopes Tony Allen, Philippe Sarde, the Aphex Twin and even a charming little techno soupçon from Underground Resistance's Robert Hood. What's more, it kicks off with Sun Ra's 'Door to the Cosmos', giving the jazz part of your brain a quick preparatory rub down.



Claire White: Album: Kid Congo & The Pink Monkey Birds - Gorilla Rose (In The Red) Pure genius. Kid manages to take you into his bizarre and wonderful world! What else could you possibly want from an album! Close your eyes and get stuck in.

Tune: The Love Me Nots - Do What You Do (Atomic Go Go)
The drums ...say no more!

S.J. Cass: Album: Crystal Fighters - Star Of Love (Zirculo)
After seeing them live at Latitude i totally feel in love and this album makes me run at the gym.

Tune: Adele: Rolling in the Deep (XL) Great karaoke song.



Joe Gardner: Tune: Krts - Hold On (Boiler Room) An awesomely epic slab of future dubstep that sums up 2011 for me. This was the year dubstep and garage imploded into the mainstream yet simultaneously re-invented itself by going epic. There's so many

pioneers of the new sound from the UK but it was Brooklyn based uber-trendy producer Krts who really solidified the new sound for me. Please note he was called Kurtis but decided vowels we're too cheesy for him, a bit like the heavily oscillated basses that have fallen by the way-side.



Album: Nero - Nero (MTA) An amazing album that brought dubstep into the mainstream and produced a series of classy but commercially viable singles. Yes, this does involve heavily oscillated bass but also has a vision of involving melody, meaning, bass music and a sense of depth. Nero are fast-becoming Daft Punk for the dubstep generation and their

Vangelis influenced debut made me feel like our dystopian future will at least have a utopian sound track!

Nicky B: Album: Trentemøller Reworked / Remixed (In My Room) Being in headphone land for the last six months on floor three has allowed me to indulge in a secret trippy dark house obsession. Trentemøller is a legendary Danish producer who has put out a collection of his old remixes alongside reworked versions of his own songs by others. I just love this album, it's slow and sulky and tender and beautifully groovy. There are versions of Trentemøller tracks by Andrew Weatherall and Modeselektor, with remixes of Franz Ferdinand and Depeche Mode songs, but don't be put off if these names turn you off. This record is sublime and leaves you feeling like you are floating.

Single: Adele - Rolling in The Deep (XL) - Well a squizillion album sales can't be wrong. The moment I heard this song in January, I knew me and this tune were destined for a karaoke love match. If Adele hasn't sorted out her nodules then I will happily step up at the Brits 2012 and murder her best song ever.



Jez: Album: Gregory Porter - Water (Motema Music) This isn't actually my favourite CD of the year but it is bloody good and one I think you all should hear. New jazz vocalists of real quality rarely come along but Porter is very much the real deal. People who liked Donny Hathaway, Stevie Wonder, Andy Bey, Kurt Elling or just good music also liked this.



Tune: Kate Bush - 50 Words For Snow (Fish People/EMI) Stephen Fry reading out made up words and phrases for snow with Kate Bush geeing him on with phrases like " come on Joe you've got 42 to go" should not work. But this is Kate Bush, the woman who wrote a masterpiece about the number Pi, so it does.

Phil Smith: Fleet Foxes - Helplessness Blues [Bella Union] "So now I am older / Than my mother and father / When they had their daughter / Now what does that say about me?" From the opening line of 'Montezuma', this album kind of nails the feeling I sometimes get as I run about enjoying London fun, one year left on my Young Person's Railcard, unable to imagine what it would be like to "wash my hands of just looking out for me." Ok, so my parents were actually thirty something when they cracked out Sister Smith; still, I think by my age they had some serious existential ducks in a row. "What's my name, what's my station? / Oh, just tell me what I should do" the title track later asks. There's probably too much mid-twenties who-am-I-and-why-ing on this record, but the music - melancholic, melodic, folky, full of rich vocal harmonies and orchestral textures and delicate guitars and wistful, whistle-able tunes - seems an answer in itself, especially if finding an orchard in which to "work 'till I'm sore" (the band's suggestion) doesn't quite cut it.



Tune: Roman Flügel - Brasil [Dial] Sumer summer, wearing a ridiculous hat, waiting outside places for people to arrive but not minding because it's clement as hell and there's this tune. It started a podcast mix (from Dummy Mag) and I always struggled to get beyond this track and its bubbling four-to-the-floor, out-of-key synth warbling and extensive percussion palette.



Paul Bennun: Album: WU LYF - Go Tell Fire to the Mountain (LYF) When not lobbing scaff through the windows of Argos in Manchester, these teenage hoodrats made an album that makes Arctic Monkeys look like Oasis. Perfect.

Tune: Sufjan Stevens - Get Real, Get Right (Asthmatic Kitty) Everybody's favourite not-at-all-gay Christian bares his soul and piles on the weird arrangement at the same time. Also perfect as a secular redemption anthem.

Chloe S: Album: Joker The Vision (4AD) Was going to choose Drake but you know...

Tune: Skream ft Sam Frank - Anticipate (OWSLA) Have to support our New DJs.

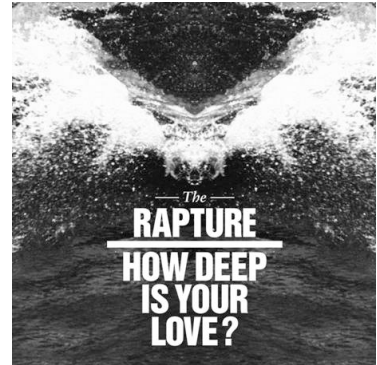
Tom Green: Tune: Jamie XX - Far Nearer (Numbers) Jamie XX is for me the producer of the year, and his biggest achievement must have been successfully using the sound of a steel drum in a way which doesn't make you want to kill someone, as he has in this song.

Album: SBTRKT - SBTRKT (Young Turks) Great production, great songs, great collaborations. GREAT.



James Gates: Album: Glasvegas - Euphoric///Heartbreak \\\ (Columbia) - With themes of abandonment, drug abuse and social care on their imaginatively titled debut album 'Glasvegas' you might expect this follow-up to be quite a morose and sombre affair. You'd be correct. But whilst the album does command a certain degree of pathos from its listener, tracks such as 'Shine Like Stars' and 'Lots, Sometimes' are genuinely uplifting through James Allan's ability to turn pain into joy. Plus, it was number 1 in the Swedish album charts and I'm not going to disagree with the musical opinions of the nation that brought us Abba, Ace Of Bass AND Eagle-Eye Cherry.

Tune: The Rapture – How Deep Is Your Love (DFA) The Rapture are still going! And seemingly getting better and better, this track from their amazing album 'In The Grace Of Your Love' is a prime example of why this band were dubbed 'probably the best post-punk indie dance band ever'... by me, just now. Not only is it amazing, but the chorus is also hauntingly similar to that of Sisco's 'Thong Song', you can literally sing 'Let me see that Thoooo-oooo-ooooong' over the top. Luckily that's where the similarities end.



Phil Harris: Tune - The Rapture - How Deep Is Your Love (DFA) The Rapture return with 'How Deep is Your Love' which is their first release since 2008. How deep is your love has an epic piano riff, a synthy bass to rival all and it even has a sax solo! Its my toe tapping anthem of 2011 and you should check it out.

Album - Coldplay - Mylo Xyloto (Parlophone) Yes i like Coldplay and i'm not even ashamed to admit it. The unpronounceable 'Mylo Xyloto' i think is great improvement on 'Viva La Vida'. For me the stand out tracks are 'Paradise' and us against the world. I'm really looking forward to seeing them live in 2012.

Chris Elcombe: Album: Marius Neset - Golden Xplosion (Edition) Unintentional innuendo of the title aside, this is brilliant - energetic, inventive, virtuosic-but-not-just-for-the-sake-of-it, and above all massively groovy. A new saxophonist and writer on the scene - and everyone loves a good hornblower.

Tune: Trio VD - Barlow (Naim) The best X Factor/Gary Barlow tribute act you'll find...



Ed De Lacy: Album: Jehst - The Dragon of an Ordinary Family (YNR) Jehst's back at his best on this album. I've been an avid fanboy since his first EP in '99 - one of the first bits of vinyl I ever bought, - and it's great to have the beats and vocals back to his original and raw best (with a modern sheen of course).

Tune: SBTRKT - Wildfire (Young Turks) A quirky, little steppa that made me skank out hard every time I heard it out this year. Simple and big.

And with that, so ends another selection of fine music. My my, what a lot of dubstep! Happy holidays one and all.

Rowan C 20/12/11