

the *Slavestate* EP and the remixed singles from 1994's *Selfless*. The album's first half is simultaneously some of Godflesh's most aggro material and as gleaming and chromed as a Terminator that's been burned down to its metal skeleton.

*Purge* isn't a completely boom-bap orientated album, though. "Lazarus Leper" is both one of the album's longest tracks and one of its most old school. The primitive drum machine beat sounds like something that could have come off the group's very first EP, and Broadrick's guitar rings out in an endless loop as he recites negative mantras in a gloomy, reverbed-out monotone. "The Father" is another near ballad; Broadrick's singing voice is clean, almost angelic, but swathed in reverb and echo, and the guitars seem to shimmer like sunlight breaking through clouds. It's rare that a Godflesh song sounds like Jesus, but this comes close.

The album ends with two pummelling dirges in a row. "Mythology Of Self", a *Streetcleaner*-heavy trudge through ankle-deep sonic muck, is as slow and pounding as Swans circa 1984 with the lyrics emerging from deep in Broadrick's throat one rage-flecked word at a time. Finally, "You Are The Judge, The Jury, And The Executioner", the longest track on the record at almost eight minutes, has the beauty and dreamlike atmosphere of "Don't Bring Me Flowers" from *Pure*.

Phil Freeman

### Heleen Van Haegenborgh

#### *Squaring The Circle*

El Negocito CD/DL

"How I want a drink, alcoholic of course, after the heavy lectures involving quantum mechanics." The line is a mnemonic to recall the value of the infinite number pi, devised a century ago by British physicist James Jeans. Pi continues to fascinate, offering a portal into mathematical mysteries. Heleen Van Haegenborgh is a pianist, improviser and composer in Ghent, Belgium, and her new release *Squaring The Circle* for percussion quartet and electronics is a stirring musical journey into the heart of pi-manipulated chaos.

The work is also a response to a visual piece in Van Haegenborgh's home town: *Pi, Fugue Pour Les Survivants* by Johan De Wilde, an ongoing graphic grid of brightly coloured strips which De Wilde adds to each year. The image is reproduced in the CD booklet, and it has a handmade quality, somewhere between a tapestry and a scientific graph recording an experiment. However Van Haegenborgh's music stands proud and independent, unreliant on pictures or maths. It's simply a very strong performance and surely some form of collaboration between the composer and her young percussionists: Aya Suzuki, Anita Cappuccinelli, Lucas Messler and Diego Sáenz Mateo, together known as GAME.

Employing a houseful of instruments – from the roar of gongs and timpani to the tuned crotales and tubular bells, via the joy of a "spiral thrash" – the group generate a single 45 minute piece that ebbs and flows. There's plenty of variety without rhetoric or hysteria, and enough space to make listening simple and pleasurable. As Van Haegenborgh puts it,

a sense of freedom, naturalness and directness is what she always struggles for.

Electronic sound is used modestly at first, but around halfway through the electronics kicks in and provides extra excitement. Everything is excellently recorded by Peter Desmedt in his Ghent studio. Ten years ago Van Haegenborgh was performing her *Signaux* for piano and 23 foghorns to a large audience outdoors in the Ghent docks. *Squaring The Circle* denotes a composer whose capacity for intrigue persists.

Clive Bell

### IzangoMa

#### *Ngo Ma*

Brownwood DL/2xLP

Pretoria, South Africa's IzangoMa are billed as an experimental 15-member collective. John Cage said he did his experiments at home, and had things worked out for public performance – but here the description refers to the plethora of contemporary techniques and effects that IzangoMa deploy. Headed by Sibusile Xaba (vox/keyboards) and Ashley Kgabo (synths/snare/drum machine), their debut album appears on Gilles Peterson's Brownwood label.

*Ngo Ma* brings together township styles pantsula and bubblegum – new to me – in a broad synthesis with Sun Ra's intergalactic stylings. Spiritual chants and electro-analogue sonics in a big band idiom create a dense scoring that reminds me of a Bill Laswell gumbo. The collective began when Xaba and Kgabo met in 2016 and incorporates Mozambiquan and South African musicians. *Ngo Ma* blends traditional instrumentation with a panoply of electronics – drum machine, Roland TR-8, Moog Minitaur analogue bass and ARP Odyssey duophonic synthesizer.

Driven by duophonic synth, the eerie, trance-like "Birds (Of A Feather)" dances edgily around a single chord. It's purely instrumental, throwing in Ra-like space effects. "City Lights" is a lively dance, sustained by TR-8 handclaps. "Out Of The World" mixes historic and contemporary South African styles – Sibusile's MC calls are propelled by walking piano reminiscent of marabi, the blues of South Africa. "Tribute To Johnny Dyani", with its retrofuturist effects and chorale vocals, is dedicated to the great Blue Notes bassist.

On the long, discursive "Mgung U Ndlovu" the dominant instrumental voice is lyrical soprano saxophone, laced with delightfully kitsch effects. The album closes with hypnotic, kwaito influenced "Wathint' Imbokodo". *Ngo Ma* is a beautifully engaging concept that demonstrates the enduring popularity of jazz derived styles in South Africa.

Andy Hamilton

### Rickie Lee Jones

#### *Pieces Of Treasure*

BMG Modern CD/DL/LP

Rickie Lee Jones has been, by her usual standards, rather productive over the past decade or so, and the thread of albums she's woven since 2007's *The Sermon On Exposition Boulevard* has her rejuvenated, and at peace, it seems, with her history. It increasingly reads like a mature third act, after a first phase where Jones stretched the arc of her song on

masterpieces like 1983's *The Magazine*, and a curious period near the turn of the century where she experimented with genre and voice – triphop on 1997's *Ghostyhead*, a gentle, resonant covers set on 2000's *It's Like This*.

*Pieces Of Treasure* is Jones's jazz standards collection, an album so obvious to long term fans, the biggest surprise is that the mercurial and unpredictable Jones let it happen. She was encouraged by producer Russ Titelman, who she worked with on both her 1980 debut and its 1981 follow-up *Pirates*. They're a dream team. Titelman is a steady presence, guiding the performances as Jones locates the core of each song. The song selection demands reverence, but nothing pious, which suits Jones's serious playfulness, and when she takes liberties with melody, it's all the better to drape her voice over the musicianship, like lights across landscape.

There are thoughtful touches throughout – Ara Dinkjian's oud on "Nature Boy" reframes the song, unexpectedly; the acoustic guitar and voice duet of "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" where Jones sings tenderly and joyously, and throughout, a sense that Jones is captured and quietly enraptured by each song. The sobs at the end of "It's All In The Game" are about emotion, sure, but they're also, somehow, about Jones's mastery of space and pause, and her ability to transform ageless material.

*Pieces Of Treasure* is a moving album from an artist who knows these songs inside out and is smart enough to know when to set knowledge aside, to access each song's elemental power.

Jon Dale

### Zubin Kanga

#### *Machine Dreams*

Nonclassical CD/DL

Australian born pianist, composer and music technologist Zubin Kanga explores the possibilities of cutting edge technology on new album *Machine Dreams*. The material, commissioned as part of funded research project Cyborg Solosts, in association with a UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship at Royal Holloway University, incorporates motion and touch sensor tech, old school synthesis, AI and an assortment of digital hybrid instruments and sound shaping applications.

It's satisfying to note the diversity of the contemporary composing talent showcased here, some of whom also happen to be disabled, women, non-binary, trans, queer and composers of colour. The album opens with Alex Paxton's relentlessly playful "Car-Pig", a manic frenzy of layered sampler instruments, with micro-sliced animal noise, bagpipes, uncanny voices and tack piano flourishes careening like a demented merry-go-round on fast forward. Tansy Davies's ten minute solo for Prophet synth "Star-Way" (dedicated to the memory of Mira Calix) sets into motion arpeggio sequences that bounce, unfurl and refract with delicate thunder; squelchy tones harden to glinting shards, wrapping tendrils around prismatic harmonic colour. The long lines of "Single Form (Swell)" thicken, crackle and churn with noise and debris, becoming an expanse of oceanic sound. Post-human ideas come to the surface in Nwando Ebizie's "I Will