

## Album reviews

### Simian Mobile Disco

#### Unpatterns

★★★★★

It was Justice who, in 2006, booted Simian Mobile Disco into the electrohouse stratosphere via 'We Are Your Friends', a heavily bass-weighted, synth-soaked remix of 'Never Be Alone' by Simian – the offbeat, indie-pop genesis of SMD. A year later, the DJ/remix pair dropped 'It's the Beat', the first single from their debut album. Five years on and... it's still the beat. Frankly, what else is there? Lesser talents might now be twitching with third-album anxiety, but James Ford and Jas Shaw are grooving, shimmying, raving... doing anything but nervously twitching.

*Unpatterns* pulls off the difficult trick of reviving recent(-ish) dance history without indulging in craven retroism. It's rather a blissed-out, brilliantly buoyant reimagining of the UK's summer of love, an astute take on rave and house (hard, deep-vocal, piano). It tracks a path from 808 State via Orbital and µ-Ziq to Julio

Bashmore and Lone, embracing Larry Levan, David Mancuso et al as it goes. It's not only a throbbing testament to SMD's knowledge of this music, but also to their deep love.

'Put Your Hands Together' is the multi-tracked centrepiece, a feverish and soaring call to arms set to ignite dancefloors from Vladivostok to Venus. Also of note are gorgeous, gospel-house tune 'Seraphim' and the insistently percolating 'Interference'. There are patterns in this history, of course, but dogged path-following is not SMD's way. The destination, though, is shared – house, sweet house. *Sharon O'Connell*



### Squarepusher

#### Ufabulum

★★★★★

Having indulged almost every instrumental whim over the past ten years, Squarepusher drops his first exclusively electronic set since '01's *Go Plastic*. While the latter's focus was on a blitzkrieg of brutalised breakbeats, the power here lies in growling dubstep-ish bass frequencies, melancholic synths and a world of dystopian dance textures. Although the visceral race car feedback – as on 'Dark Steering' and its bass-heavy counterpart '303 Scopem Hard' – may divide his diehard fans, this is a hurricane of fresh air from one of music's most imaginative extremists. *Mike Flynn*



### Cornershop

#### Urban Turban

★★★★★

Cornershop crank the virtual sun to 11 and the smiles to infinity with their latest – an imaginative and irresistible, eggs-over-easy splicing of Bootsy, Bolan, Miss Kittin, Kraftwerk, Shuggie, Stardust, the Velvets and countless others over old-school, hip-hop beats, threaded through with strands of Punjabi folk. 'Milkin' It' – which suggests The Fall with Kool Keith as produced by Radioclit – is a standout, but there's effortless joy in every groove here. Roll back the rug and cut loose. *Sharon O'Connell*



## This week's new bar review

### Embassy Dubai's Club 43

The former members-only supper club lifts the rope to mere mortals, yet the result is far from special



Embassy Dubai started off deliberately trying to sidestep categorisation. It wasn't a lounge bar, we were told, nor was it a nightclub. It was in a genre of its own, a self-declared 'exclusive members-only supper club', unlike anything else in town.

We're not too sure the pitch worked; now eight months down the line, the team has changed key and gone after the clubbing crowd. Instead of the London-exported Embassy name, they're pushing 'Club 43' – essentially one floor of the three-storey club – as the new dancefloor destination, flying in international talent and plugging out bright Ibiza-style listings.

The first test of any emerging nightspot is the door policy. Well aware of exclusive Embassy's old reservations-only ethos, we made sure to call in advance for a spot on the list. When we were told there was no need

Embassy's built-in pretensions and try to water them down. All the worst clichés of Dubai's nightlife are on display, with none of the flair and creativity that make the city's best high-end clubs unique.

The upstairs bubbly bar and generically glitzy furnishings scream of everything cynical people say about the emirate who have never visited: opulent but uninventive, lacking in subtlety or substance. This surface-level depth was reflected in the crowd that Embassy had attracted on our visit. On display was a cross-section of what appeared to be the worst aspects of Dubai's nightlife contingent: posturing playboys, overweight men in their fifties pulling on cigars, more mature women still dressing as if a decade younger.

The tiny dancefloor itself – the bit they're dubbing Club 43 – was almost uninhabitable. With a floor lit up with neon squares straight from Pulp's 'Disco 2000' (the disco of the future, as imagined in 1995?), it lacked anything resembling an atmosphere, partly due to a policy forbidding simultaneous drinking and dancing. The DJ veered between hard house and commercial pop, a talented mixer seemingly balancing the demands of the crowd against his own artistic sensibilities. This isn't the dancefloor of a club, but a neon-lit corner for guests to stumble onto for a few minutes before returning to their cordoned-off table.

As an exclusive hangout for members (ie those preoccupied with 'status') Embassy probably got it right the first time. But marketing itself to the mainstream with Club 43 – with events such as an appearance by Criminal Vibes on Thursday July 5 – feels far too much like a misjudged afterthought to appeal to typical clubbers. *Open Mon-Wed 11pm-2am; Thu-Fri 11pm-3am. Embassy Dubai, Grosvenor House, Dubai Marina (04 317 6000).*

### Club 43 is what happens when you take Embassy's pretensions and water them down

our heart even leapt a little; maybe Embassy had ditched the typical draconia to create a free-and-easy club that everyone can enjoy. Sadly the message didn't make it to door; whatever we were told on the phone, on arrival our mixed group was refused entry and told a reservation was essential. Not a good start.

After a humiliating delay, a sympathetic bouncer eventually took pity and raised the cordon. We'd love to say it was worth the wait, but we'd be lying. 'Club 43' is what happens when you take