

**DAVID CHENU QUINTET****Two**

(self-released)

David Chenu might be best known around town for his work with gypsy jazz stylists, Paris 49. But Chenu the composer and bandleader steers dramatically clear from the Django sphere. Rather than filling every nanosecond with notes, Chenu evokes instrumental passages that are far more expressive in nature. On his aptly titled second disc, *Two*, the melodies take their time developing and linger in the air like wisps of smoke, dissipating but never disappearing.

If Chenu is so fortunate to have future jazz collectors dissecting his career, they will identify "Chorale Number One" as a masterpiece of this, his early phase. The minute-plus prelude is itself a three-act play (methinks it's a tragedy) resolving into the smoothest of bass lines before Chenu introduces the thematic melody, a less bawdy Hank Crawford insight to the misgivings of a nighthawk.

In all, *Two* consists of twelve original compositions. Most are more readily identified by a mood or aura than a hummable refrain. The entire disc was recorded live to analog reel over two winter days, ending (literally) when the tape ran out. If there's a metaphor here, it is that Chenu's album titles will reach well into the double digits.

— danté dominick

**THE BLACK AND WHITE YEARS****The Electronic Years**

Anything but black and white, these five songs range in hue from "Run Run Run," a slow samba-tinged, Caribbean jam to "Power to Change," which traces its lineage back to Blondie and the Talking Heads. Gently rubbing shoulders with an assortment of styles, random pianos, congas and synth strings are intuitively weaved in and out of every track, creating a lush, pop sound that's close to perfection.

— carson barker

**MICE AND RIFLES****All Kites Up**

Dark pasts and forlorn memories are riddled throughout the country-esque debut of Mice and Rifles. With preacher-like vocals, richly somber guitar lines and smoothly textured backgrounds, singer/guitarist Kevin Brinkkoeter paints a monochrome picture using a small selection of colors to tell a deep, twisted saga seemingly stolen from the era of Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, and Patsy Cline. Laced in every track are subtle signs of internal rebellion and political incongruence.

— carson barker

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