

JG Thirlwell

Archer Original Soundtrack Vol 1

FX DL/LP

It's apt that Australian polymath JG Thirlwell is composer of the music for the absurdist animated spy sitcom *Archer*, having come aboard for its seventh season. Thirlwell's career has veered wildly between the industrial shock of Foetus (and its myriad offshoots) and the madcap instrumentalism of Steroid Maximus, with frequent dips into swingin' lounge music and noir atmospherics amid the noise.

This has all fed into Thirlwell's soundtrack work for TV shows. *Archer* follows the exploits of the obnoxiously misogynistic and immature spy Sterling Archer, voice-acted superbly by H Jon Benjamin. It's worth noting that Benjamin hired session musicians to record a 2015 jazz album entitled "*Well I Should Have...*" in spite of it being abundantly clear from the first few notes that Benjamin has absolutely no idea how to play piano. Each track here is composed by Thirlwell with additional instrumentation from Steven Bernstein on trumpet, Marty Ehrlich on flute and sax, Simon Hanes on piano acoustic and electric guitar, and Matt Nelson on sax. The exception is Scott Sims's title theme; opening the soundtrack, it immediately pushes us down a winding staircase past piano, bleating trumpet and pattering percussion. The comically suspicious introduction to "Lucy Goosie" layers staccato trumpet over longer notes but then opens out to a string section as the trumpets recede.

Nelson's saxophone on "Pencil" sets up the image of a seduction scene from the show that potently involves a pencil, while the rich double bass and piano on "Fire Alarm" conspire to form a dense bustle of sound. Thirlwell's genre hopping via Hanes's roadhouse electric guitar is a lot of fun when it leads into tracks like "Tiki Time", then relaxing the mood via the sneaking incognito tone of "Sniper".

Misha Farrant