

Cornelius

Refractions

Eat Your Own Ears DL/LP

Keigo Oyamada has come a long way from the days of Shibuya-kei, the Japanese kitsch indie pop scene he helped ignite in the late 1980s. After quitting Shibuya-kei duo Flipper's Guitar in 1991, Oyamada wriggled out of the genre's modishness and set forth as Cornelius. The funky, rock-strewn, sample-friendly solo career that followed has generated comparisons with Beck, Prince and Brian Wilson – or all three, depending on where the additions to the Cornelius catalogue landed.

True, Oyamada is happy to dip in and out of the funk, alt and surf rock genre pools. However, his additional sidebar explorations – into lounge music and wistful chillout, for example – mark him as a singular artist, restless in his search for new ideas from further across the musical spectrum. Thus, 32 years on from Cornelius's debut album *The First Question Award*, *Refractions* floats by on a fluffy cloud. "You Make Me Cyborg", sung by The Monochrome Set's Ganesh 'Bid' Seshadri, is a swooning, jangly indie pop masterpiece that recalls the halcyon days of Sarah Records.

With vocals from longtime Cornelius pal and collaborator Sean Ono Lennon, the gentle, kosmische propulsion behind "Aeons" makes it the perfect summer's day driving song. Featuring Arto Lindsay, "Bad Advice" ups the funk-lite factor, sounding like something Nick Heyward might have come up with while the rest of Haircut 100 were at lunch.

The album's longest track "Yumenemi" is a swaying, bossa nova-esque croon that clocks in at just under seven minutes, while the closer "Dissolving Line" mixes Oyamada's previous explorations of lounge music with more breezy, feelgood indie vibes. Overall *Refractions* finds the latest iteration of Cornelius very much at peace with the world.

Simon Coates