

Circ: 375k

Polar Bear

Held on the Tips
of Fingers (Babel)

★★★★☆ £12.99

Like its highly acclaimed predecessor, *Dim Lit*, this set by the young British group Polar Bear showcases material by drummer Seb Rochford. It explores a mix of trance-like, long-note music over eerie, hypnotic grooves, full-on electronics and free-improv, melancholic songs, punky thrashes and some of the best two-sax conversation to be heard on the current scene.

Typically for Polar Bear, the set opens with a dreamlike slow walk, underpinned by Rochford's rich and evocative drumming. But, unlike most ambient albums, strange things soon start happening. Castanet-like handclaps trigger long, guttural sax lines; electronics fly across the

speakers and give way to free-blasting; and odd, pogo-dancing themes over bumpy drumming sound like punk interpretations of Parisian cafe music.

Little wonder, then, that the title track features an affronted-sounding tenor-sax line over bleary harmonising, while *Argumentative* sounds exactly like its title suggests and the slow *King of Aberdeen* is a folksy lament with hypnotic harmonies.

All in all, a highly creative successor to the equally distinctive *Dim Lit*.