



Skeletons
Money
Tomlab



The death of the majors has had a liberating effect on Indie music. Records that might have lingered in bargain bins) are lauded by newly influential online music hubs. The upside of this is creative freedom. Artists signed to independent labels such as Arts and Crafts have never faced pressure to conform to audience expectations; but nowadays being signed to such labels brings publicity in and of itself. The downside is also creative freedom. With little pressure to conform, and all the pressure in the world to innovate, self-indulgence can take hold. 'Money', the first album from Ohio outfit Skeletons (and the Girl-Faced Boys) to grace ultrahip German experimental label Tomlab, is incoherent and confused in the extreme; providing frustrating dashes of loveliness ('Stepper Aka Work', 'The Masks') amid the thematic wanderlust. Offering obtuse improvisational detours into funk, middle eastern sounds 'Ripper Aka The Pillows', Polar Bear-esque post-jazz 'Dripper', contemporary classical, and even Hula, Money is a challenging listen. 'Outsider', in the same ironically self conscious way as Xiu Xiu, but less successfully, Skeletons come across as accomplished musicians with little to say. There's a track on this album called 'Unrelentlessness', it should have been titular. **Gareth Stack**