

## Flying Machines

### *The Vortex, London*

Guitarist Alex Munk graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 2011. He formed Flying Machines in 2014, with keys-player Matt Robinson, bassist Conor Chaplin and drummer Dave Hamblett. It's late 2016 and the band are releasing their self-titled debut – Munk's first album as leader. That's more unusual than it should be. Most young players don't wait half as long before piling into the studio and that can be a mistake. Munk says he needed a few years playing other people's music to decide what he wanted to write and he's been rewarded for his patience with an album that's stirring and steely in its focus. Playing to a full house, the quartet swept into 'Tracks', which laid out the sonic blueprint for the set: lyrical themes, passages of head-in-the-clouds ambience and prog-ish grooves that spooled out of the speakers like data streams down fibre optic cables. 'Bliss Out' and 'Emotional Math Metal' brought more, algorithmic melody lines and ensemble hits offset by millisecond delays. 'Stratosphere' was funky then luminous, while 'Peace Offering' was a blissful false promise, opening with supple guitar and whispered electronics before kicking into overdrive. Balladic new composition 'Moondust' was less episodic and perhaps a hint at where Munk is headed next. All in good time though, of course. **Thomas Rees**