

KATE BUSH ALBUM BY ALBUM | DAVE DAVIES THE MYSTIC KINK

UNCUT

2011

THE ULTIMATE REVIEW

30-PAGE
SPECIAL

THE TOP 50
ALBUMS

THE BEST REISSUES
FILMS, DVDs & BOOKS

AND

THE CLASH
THE WAR ON DRUGS
DISCO INFERO
STEVE HARLEY



ARTIST OF THE YEAR

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HARVEY**

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INTERVIEW

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WINEHOUSE!
BLACK KEYS!**

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Weller – and
David Cameron!

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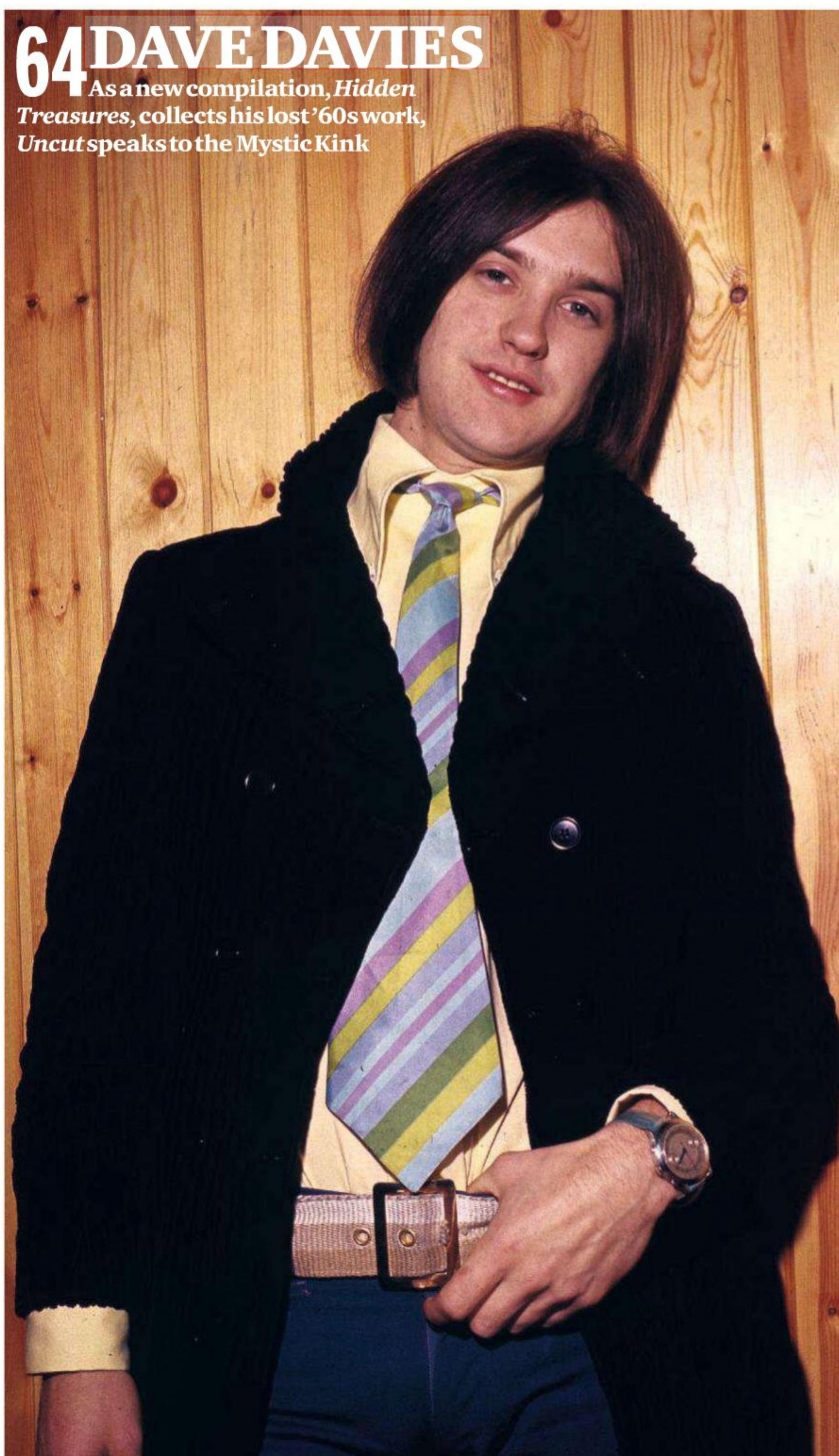
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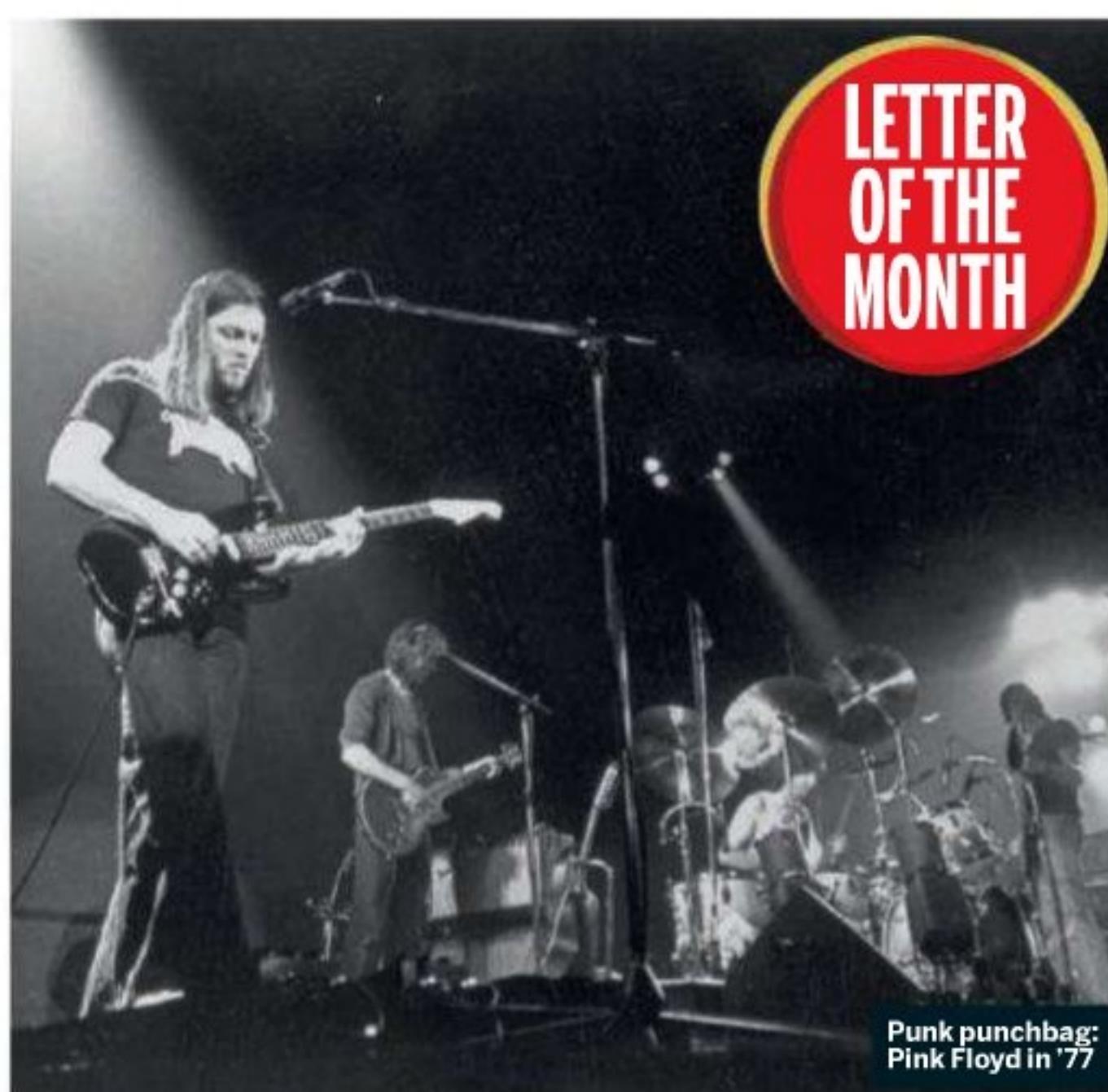
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GIVE FLOYD A CHANCE

I was interested to read the review by John Lewis of Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* in your December issue. John mentions Nick Kent's unfavourable review of a gig from late 1974, in which Kent criticised the Floyd for their "limited musicianship, infantile lyrics [and] rambling delivery".

John says that this "set the tone for punk's scapegoating of the Floyd". There were several reasons why the punk movement had its knives out for the likes of Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Yes, ELP and certain others, but there was no axe to grind with the old guard's musical abilities. Pink Floyd lyrics were actually never more infantile (or effective) as when they flowed from the pen of Syd Barrett many years earlier – and he was a darling of the punk aristocracy. Nick Kent's criticism does not echo my memory of seeing the Floyd live at either Knebworth '75 or on the Animals tour in 1977. Despite the excitement and the validity of the punk period, it was not one defined by musical virtuosity. We haven't



seen the emergence of a new Gilmour or Page, or indeed a new Bonham or Moon.

Had the key players of the punk movement actually taken note of the Floyd '74 gig review (is there any evidence?), the roughshod, couldn't-care-less band, as described by

Nick Kent, should have been embraced and not vilified. If the lyric sheet from the *Animals* album had been studied more closely when it emerged in January 1977, then perhaps they would have been.

Leon Vander-Molen, London

What was perhaps most notable about Nick's 1974 review of the Floyd was its timely reflection of what more than a few people were thinking then about them and some of the other bands you mention. I sat through a performance of "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast" at Bristol's Colston Hall in, I think, 1969, not really that long after being amazed by the Floyd, post-Barrett, at a series of outstanding shows. A stretch of their Bristol concert consisted of them banging nails into logs and frying eggs, the hammering and sizzle

transported around the venue via the much-trumpeted Azimuth Co-ordinator, a 360-degree soundsystem that might have been put to better use than the broadcasting of such infuriating whimsy. It already felt like time for a change – Allan

WORTH THE WAITS

While I was thrilled to read in last month's The Collector column that my vinyl copy of Tom Waits' *Bounced Checks* is an out-of-print rarity that changes hands for \$100, I feel honour-bound to point out that the elusive track in question, "Mr Henry", also appears on the vinyl release of 1984's *Asylum Years*, although possibly not the CD edition.

That said, *Bounced Checks* also features a live version of "The Piano Has Been Drinking" that's almost spoken-word in its darkly comic delivery (think "9th & Hennepin" from *Rain Dogs*) and a real gem. If the compilation is the sole place to find this masterpiece, then that would also justify the hefty price tag in my book.

Brian Carney, Belgium

NO MOORE?

I may be wrong – I am getting on a bit and it was a long time ago – but I'm quite sure it was Gary Moore who pulled out of Reading in 1980, and not Ozzy Osbourne [*The Crazee Gang*, December issue]. I can vividly remember Slade being booed as they were announced. This stopped about five seconds into the first song. They were awesome and went down a storm (bearing in mind they were seen as a "pop" group at the time and this was almost exclusively a "heavy rock" audience). Good times.

Keith Griffiths, Caerphilly

FOOL'S GOLD

I couldn't quite understand the point David Quantick was making at the end of his article on Queen [*Stop Me, December issue*], where he seems to suggest that a fake gold statue of Freddie Mercury which he describes as "a cheap, drab piece of crap" doesn't represent the real thing. I would have thought that the anecdote which he tells a few sentences earlier about the Hungarian girl portrays someone just like that statue – except possibly for the word "drab".

I suppose when you reach a position where you're constantly surrounded by bodyguards and lickspittles who respectively protect you and hang on your every word that you run a grave risk of forgetting how decent people behave. Quantick's story could only be justified if that Hungarian girl had supplied a punchline by knocking those rather prominent teeth down their owner's throat.

John Morrison, via email

Now, there's a thought – Allan

BOOTLEG BABYLON

The 50 Greatest Bootlegs was a great idea for an issue. I was lucky to get into collecting bootlegs right before YouTube rendered the habit all but obsolete. Among my favourites, collected in the early Naughties at the venerable Bleeker Street Records in NY's West Village, are: Jim Morrison's *The Lost Paris Tapes*, which include his private March '69 poetry session and the final Paris

recording session in June '71 with a couple of street musicians; the Stones' *Anthology*, styled after The Beatles' *Anthology*, which does a nice job of mopping up rare studio and live tracks from the Decca years; Yellow Dog's *Twickenham Sessions* and Orange's 10-volume *Rockin' Movie Stars*, which give you more coverage of The Beatles' month-long *Get Back* sessions than you could ever possibly want; *Get Back, Glynis*, which offers the Glyn Johns sessions mix later rejected in favour of the Phil Spector production; and finally, in keeping with your issue's Beach Boys spotlight, the compilation *Endless Bummer: The Very Worst Of The Beach Boys*, which collects such gems as Murry Wilson laying into the boys during an early recording session, and a very drunk Dennis attempting an in-concert "You Are So Beautiful".

Stephen Conn, Las Cruces, New Mexico

SIX OF THE BEST

I absolutely loved *Uncut's* issue on The 50 Greatest Bootlegs. It made me very curious, and I'm definitely going to track some of them down! A couple of my personal favourites were not listed, and I'd like to share them with you and the readers of *Uncut*!

1. Ryan Adams. He wasn't listed at all, to my surprise, although he's got maybe a dozen unreleased studio albums up his sleeve. The two "lost" Ryan Adams albums I like the best are *Destroyer* (recorded during the *Heartbreaker* period, featuring Gillian Welch and David

Rawlings) and *48 Hours* (recorded right after *Gold*). Some of the tracks wound up on his album *Demolition*, but most of them remain unreleased, sadly.

2. Tom Waits. A lot of unreleased songs found their home on *Orphans*, but check out the 5CD set *Tales From The Underground* (PMS Records) and you'll discover there are a lot of gems still in the orphanage. Also recommended: *Frank's Wild Demos* (Zipperman Demo Series Vol 5).

3. Johnny Cash – *The American Out-takes*, recorded in Rick Rubin's living room, May 17-20, 1993. Some of this ended up on the *Unearthed* boxset. Most of it's still officially unavailable. Numerous highlights, such as John and Billy Gibbons together on "I Witnessed A Crime".

4. Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac – *Unreleased BBC Sessions 1967-1971* contains 18 songs that were not on the official 2CD set, *Live At The BBC*. Highlight: Peter's solo rendition of Robert Johnson's "Dead Shrimp Blues".

5. James Taylor and Joni Mitchell – *Live At The Royal Albert Hall*. This is of course a live bootleg, but I've included it anyway because it's such a marvellous and unique recording. Highlights: their duets on "You Can Close Your Eyes" and "The Circle Game".

6. Jeff Buckley. Obviously there was more in the can than what was released on *Grace: Legacy Edition*. The bootleg *Born Again From The Rhythm* (Godfather Records) contains further *Grace* out-takes, such as a few Bob Dylan covers ("Mama, You've Been On My Mind", "Just Like A Woman", "If You See Her, Say Hello"). All of these songs are also on the official *Live At Sin-é* record, but these studio versions are very nice as well.

Louis van Empel, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

SMILES ALL ROUND

I want to thank you for all the space you were prepared to allow The Beach Boys and *The Smile Sessions* in the November issue. Certainly, of the major articles published this year, *Uncut's* was the most impressive.

I have been involved with the Beach Boys fan movement since the late 1970s, via a magazine called *Beach Boys Stomp*. My main contribution has been as the prime organiser of 31 of the 32 fan conventions held here since 1979. For our recent convention, we flew over from San Francisco Mr Frank Holmes, who did the artwork for the *Smile* booklet, as our special guest. Although he wasn't the original choice from earlier in the year, he could not have been with us at a better time. In 1988 our event was attended by Brian Wilson and when the curtain was drawn, it was to an unsuspecting audience.

The only thought I might like to offer – and this was not touched upon by any of your writers – was that back in 1967, would the typical Beach Boys fan of the time have been able to accept such an advance from what had gone before? At least *Pet Sounds* was coherent, but *Smile* was in another world, musically. Artistically it was awesome but how well would it have sold? What I feel we can agree on is that, yes, it would have achieved better sales figures here than in America – as indeed was the case with *Pet Sounds*.

Many thanks for your wonderful coverage.
Roy Gudge, Beach Boys Stomp magazine

THE EDITOR...



LATER IN THIS ISSUE, we announce the winner of the 2011 *Uncut* Music Award, now in its fourth year. Previously, it hasn't been the case that one album has looked a certain winner going into the final judging sessions; these have, in every instance so far in the award's brief history, been hotbeds of argument and counter-argument, long rounds of debate and consideration. Last year's session turned into quite an epic affair, the field narrowing down slowly, before Paul Weller's *Wake Up The Nation* won by a reasonably handsome majority. This year, however, one album looked like it would run away

with the prize, showing a clean pair of heels, as they say, to the competition. If you'd have asked me in advance of the final session, I'd have predicted the shortest get-together of the judges yet, everyone packing up to go almost as soon as they'd got their coats off.

In the event, there was a late flurry of support for two other albums on the shortlist.

Both were widely admired, one of them being suddenly talked about in especially glowing terms. The foregone conclusion that had seemed to be looming was thrown into doubt. Could we be in for a bit of a shock, a surprise upsetting of the odds? In the end, this wasn't how things played out. Whatever the many and various merits of its competition, the judges were in emphatic agreement on the album they thought most deserved this year's award, and a decision was reached without undue argument or rancour.

There's a full report and pictures of the 2011 *Uncut* Music Award starting on page 46, and there'll be a chance to read the judges' deliberations at uncut.co.uk. For their time, enthusiasm and articulate advocacy of the albums they liked – and thoughtful consideration of the ones they were, let's say, less keen on – big thanks to this year's panel, which included Phil Manzanera, Mark Cooper, Stewart Lee, Linda Thompson, Tony Wadsworth and Nick Stewart.

This being the issue in which we bid farewell to 2011, we also present our annual review of the past 12 months, which as usual includes our Top 50 Albums Of The Year, as well as the best reissues, films, DVDs and books, as voted by the *Uncut* staff and contributors.

For the record, as it were, my own Top 10 albums were The Strange Boys' *Live Music*, The War On Drugs' *Slave Ambient*, Josh T Pearson's *The Last Country Gentleman*, Gillian Welch's *The Harrow & The Harvest*, Fleet Foxes' *Helplessness Blues*, Paul Simon's *So Beautiful Or So What*, Jonathan Wilson's *Gentle Spirit*, Tom Waits' *Bad As Me*, The Decemberists' *The King Is Dead* and Kurt Vile's *Smoke Ring For My Halo*. Honourable mentions should go, also, to albums by Okkervil River, Dave Alvin, AA Bondy, PJ Harvey, Bon Iver, Richmond Fontaine, EMA, The Felice Brothers, Dawes, White Denim, Drive-By Truckers, Low, Ryan Adams, Anna Calvi and Ry Cooder.

Our Review Of The Year starts on page 30, and as ever let me know at the usual address what you make of our Top 50 and what your own favourite albums of the year were.

Finally, you may want to take advantage of a handsome seasonal offer and take out a subscription to *Uncut*, either for yourself or someone else you'd like to make suitably jolly this Yuletide. To save up to 43% on a subscription to *Uncut* this Christmas, pay just £7.99

by quarterly Direct Debit and never miss an issue. To take up this excellent seasonal offer, please visit www.magazinesdirect.com/i2gl or phone 0844 848 0848 and quote code BGL1.

THE UNCUT COLLECTION

Uncut has teamed up with Sonic Editions, who specialise in high-quality, limited-edition music photography, to curate a series of classic archive images of rock icons, including Bob Dylan, The Beatles, the Stones, Hendrix and The Who. These beautiful, framed prints are available from £59. Visit www.soniceditions.com/uncut for details



The Strange Boys hit the Top 10

FIRST CUTS

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO **UNCUT**





‘Once in a while something happens...’

**At home with The Clash!
Rarities unearthed for
Uncut’s latest *Ultimate
Music Guide***

IT WAS JUST over 35 years ago when The Clash were first mentioned in the British music press. In the *NME* dated July 17, 1976, a correspondent detailed his experience at a Sex Pistols and Clash show in Sheffield. Reg Cliff (possibly a pseudonymous associate of Malcolm McLaren, stirring things up) dismissed The Clash as “a cacophonous barrage of noise... They tried to play early '60s R'n'B and failed dismally.”

It was Mick Jones himself who tipped off *Uncut* about the existence of this letter. “We were thrilled,” he writes in his introduction to *Uncut’s Ultimate Music Guide: The Clash*. “We were in the paper! We’d arrived!”

Over the next few years, The Clash would enjoy a vigorous relationship with the music press, with features ranging in tone

from evangelical to downright hostile. When they somehow provoked a riot in Belfast, or were arrested in Glasgow, or played Shea Stadium alongside The Who, reporters from *NME* and *Melody Maker* were right by their side.

Those long-unseen stories are reprinted in full in *Ultimate Music Guide: The Clash*, showing how, as Jones says now, “People left thinking differently. And not just about music.”

There are also exhaustive new reviews of every Clash album, thorough investigations of Jones’ and Strummer’s careers after The Clash, and numerous rare photographs of this most iconographic of rock’n’roll bands.

“So many of the memories are distant for me, so I end up talking about the group in the same way as a fan,” remembers Jones.

“What I do know is that it was one of those brilliant moments... of intuition coming together with knowledge. Once in a while something like that happens. We just got lucky, I guess.”



***The Uncut Ultimate
Music Guide: The Clash
is on sale now***

**In true Clash fashion,
the location for this 1979
shot of The Clash, taken
by Pennie Smith, was
a flat overlooking the
Westway – a flat which
just happened to belong
to Jones’ grandmother.**

PENNIE SMITH



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

The War On Drugs

The “beautiful and rocking and drugged-out” records that changed Adam Granduciel’s life

MY INTRODUCTION TO LED ZEPPELIN

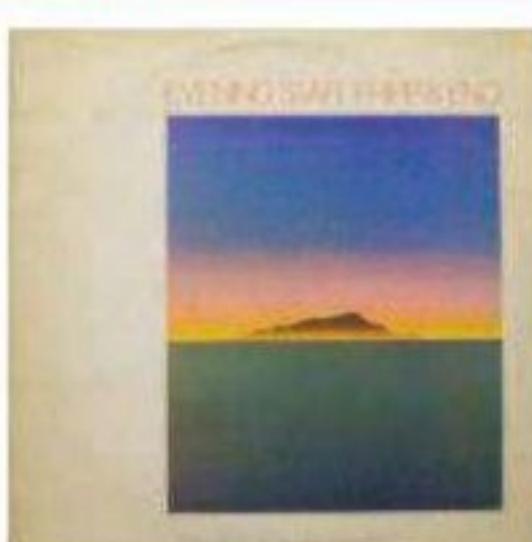


IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR 1979

Led Zeppelin

My brother had this on cassette and it was the first Zeppelin record I ever heard. It's a weird way to be introduced to them, but I've actually come back to it in the last couple of years. It's John Paul Jones' crowning achievement. He's a force and the album is huge – super-heavy, but with beautiful synth and string arrangements. It's definitely one of my faves.

THE ALBUM THAT TAKES ME ON A JOURNEY

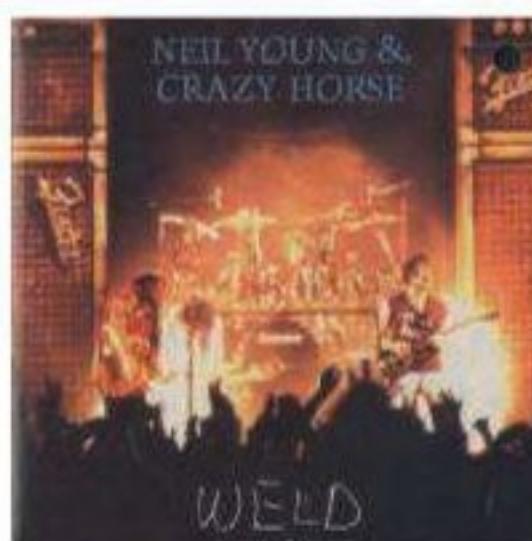


EVENING STAR 1975

Fripp & Eno

It's in the same vein as *No Pussyfooting*, Robert Fripp playing guitar and Eno looping it. I put it on and it takes me on a journey; it's ambient, but not in the classic, piano-drone way. Fripp's been a huge influence on me with stuff like "Heroes", but what I got out of this is the way everything on the first side transitions into everything else. It's just really beautiful music.

THE ALBUM THAT HELPED ME GO ELECTRIC



WELD 1991

Neil Young

I started playing guitar when I was around 13, and I had a small Marshall amp that got pretty loud in my bedroom, so this album was a big influence. I was introduced to it by my brother, and I heard Neil Young *Unplugged* around the same time, although obviously his whole catalogue has become important to me. The whole thing is just super-intense.

THE ALBUM THAT OPENED UP SONIC POSSIBILITIES



OK COMPUTER 1997

Radiohead

When this came along I was about 17 and it blew my mind. I was learning a lot about The Beatles' recording practices then, so for an album to show me the possibilities in the modern age... it was amazing. I'd think, what is that sound Jonny Greenwood's making? So I'd go on the Radiohead page forum in the early days of the internet. Yeah, I was a guitar geek.

THE RECORD THAT TAUGHT ME LYRICAL SIMPLICITY



JOHN WESLEY HARDING 1967

Bob Dylan

It's a turning point for everything he would do in the '70s and the songs are much more personal than before. The writing on it is so simple – "Dear Landlord" is about [manager] Albert Grossman, a beautiful song about friends drifting apart. Sometimes, there's one line in a song that hits you hard. My lyrics aren't super-poetic, I try to have one line that I'm proud of.

MY FAVOURITE HENDRIX RECORD

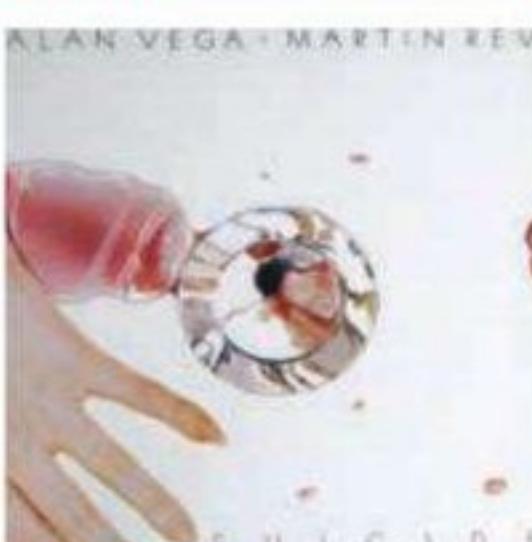


ARE YOU EXPERIENCED 1967

Jimi Hendrix

When I first heard "Third Stone From The Sun" it sounded super-tripped-out to me – beautiful and weird. The playing is ferocious. He was probably one of the first guitarists I listened to who just had this... force. He played from the heart. He couldn't really read music and didn't have much self-confidence, but there are times here when he was completely in the moment.

THE ALBUM THAT SIGNIFIES 'OUTSIDER'

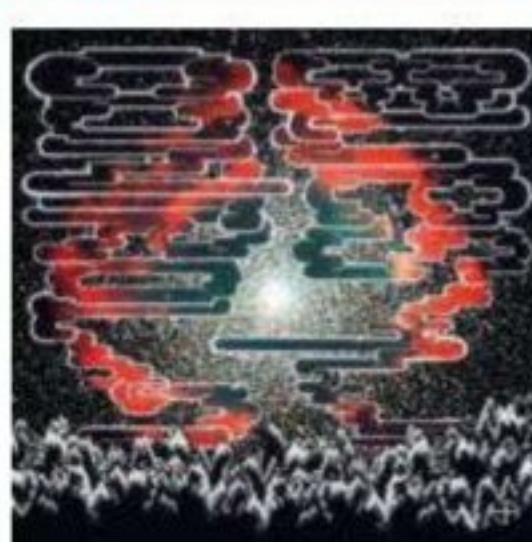


SUICIDE 1980

Suicide

I wasn't too familiar with Suicide, but when I started hanging out with Kurt Vile, we were taking a long drive and he put their second record on. That was the first time I really took their music in. It blew me away. It's dark and humorous and sounds fucked up, and you can tell they're just doing what they wanted to do. So many bands have been influenced by them over the past 25 years.

THE RECORD I CAN'T STOP PLAYING



BLUES CONTROL 2007

Blues Control

They're an instrumental duo – Russ and Lea – from New York and they've put out four records, but *Blues Control* is the first one I had. Russ plays super-fuzzed-out electric guitar, with a mixing board and a bunch of cassette players with loops and drum beats on them; Lea plays keyboards. It's pretty intense and noisy, but never abrasive or jarring. I put it on late at night.

THE GREATEST STONES ALBUM



STICKY FINGERS 1971

The Rolling Stones

The Stones were the first rock band I really cared about, as a kid of around eight or nine. This is obviously post-Brian Jones, but it's got it all. "Moonlight Mile" is probably one of the most beautiful songs ever. All the way through the songs are diverse and the intensity is awesome. The band were kings of their own world – beautiful and rocking and drugged-out.



BEN MARSHALL MEETS...

The Horrors

A frictional encounter with Faris Badwan, Horrors frontman: “That’s a question a moron asks...”

Skying is No 6 in *Uncut*'s end-of-year chart. If you had to describe the album in one pithy sentence, what would you say?
I dunno, man. You spend the whole year writing something, not thinking about what words you're going to use to describe it once it's written. The most boring thing about being in a band is discussing every single aspect of being in a band. The process for me is incredibly exciting; talking about it is incredibly tedious. As a great man once said, if we could sum it up in one pithy sentence we probably wouldn't have bothered writing it at all.

For the first time in a while there are a whole lot of artsy British bands topping the *Uncut* albums list. Why do you think that is?

I'm not sure. I don't spend enough time taking notice of what other people do. Every year people are going on about how things are changing, and maybe the truth is that people say this stuff to convince themselves that the time they are living in is the most exciting time. It takes at least 10 years before you can start judging a particular time in music to have been really significant.

What's the longest time you've been without sleep?

Four days. That was a sort of experiment. It was fine; also it was without the aid of anything. It became a little stressful, but ultimately it was fine.

What's the biggest luxury you've bought since becoming famous?

Luxury?

Yes. A car, maybe? A house? Rolex Submariner?

Hah! You gotta be kidding!

A new guitar?

Guitars aren't luxuries. I'm not that interested in stuff. I haven't bought anything that could remotely be described as a luxury for so, so long. I'm looking round my flat and there is nothing. Nothing you could even describe as new, much less a luxury.



“I've been four days without sleep. It was a sort of experiment. A little stressful, but ultimately fine”

Are there any deep philosophical questions that keep you awake at night?

What, you mean like is there life after death and stuff? No. Are there any questions that keep you awake at night?

Yes. I wonder why the holes in cat's fur are always in the right place for their eyes and asshole. Do you ever think about that?

You, er... You what? No I don't. You actually think about that? That's not a deep philosophical question, that's a question a moron asks himself, the sort of question someone who had no sense whatsoever would ask.

Sorry. You're very tall. Do you think it's possible to be talked down to by an extremely short person when you're as tall as you are?

Of course it's possible. And it happens to me all the time.

Really? When was the last time you were talked down to by an extremely short person?

They were on a stepladder, and I don't want to repeat what they said.

What would I find in your fridge right now?

I'm not sure I am happy to divulge that information. But let's see. OK, there's an avocado-shaped percussion instrument. And a yoghurt and a few sausages.

Last month, Pete Townshend called Apple and iTunes digital vampires. Do you agree?

No, I don't agree. People might be the enemies of music, but it's certainly not to do with any big corporation.

So people are the enemy of music. By which you mean illegal downloaders?

I'm not getting into this. It's so boring. You live in the time you

live in. Illegal downloading has happened already. No matter how hard anyone tries, you're not going to be able to get that particular genie back in the bottle. If people have a chance to take things for free they're gonna take it. You can't blame them for that, you can't moan about it. I'm not gonna stop making music just because people download it. People paying for music is a relatively recent phenomenon. Before the record it was mostly all free. But I still buy records.

What was the last album you bought that you really loved?

The Byrds, *Younger Than Yesterday*.

If I gave you a suitcase full of stolen cash what would you do with it?

Would I know it was stolen? I would. OK, are the bills marked? They're not. I'd spend it, then.

OK, I'm going to give you a suitcase containing 20 million quid. All you have to do is walk away with it and accept that in doing so a Chinese guy will fall off his bicycle and die. Do you take the case?

Under those circumstances I would imagine a common answer is that people do pick up the suitcase but use a substantial part of the money to do good and charitable work in China, saving lots of lives. And therefore your conscience is clear.

Actually most people just don't pick up the suitcase. Notable exceptions were Nikki Sixx, who said he would definitely pick up the suitcase if the cyclist were French; and Jools Holland, who told me the Chinese guy already had a terminal disease and was on his way to Dignitas in Switzerland.

Good on Jools. He's way ahead of the rest of us. I'm going with Jools. He has an answer for everything and it's normally the right answer.

If you died tomorrow, what would you want inscribed on your gravestone?

Why did no-one tell me I was ill?



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i-deck 100 - What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision October 2011



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CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Mark E Smith

The Fall's premier curmudgeon takes an unusually revealing trawl through the picture archives. "I can clear a room in 10 minutes..."



1 WHITEFIELD, MANCHESTER, 1978

That's after the first single, "Bingo Master's Breakout"! Nobody would take a photo of us, so I had to bully this poor lad. He worked at the mental hospital, I think. He was a bit timid, he usually took photos of landscapes and that, so we got him a bit drunk. I think that's why Karl [Burns] was pulling faces. The group was very, very primitive music with very intelligent lyrics. We were supposed to write more poetry, really. When we teamed up with Karl, he could give us more of a backing. That didn't last long.



2 MANCHESTER, 1978

That's another short period. That lineup with Martin [Bramah, guitar] and Yvonne [Pawlett, keyboards], we're talking two or three months, after *Live At The Witch Trials*. If there's anything wrong with music nowadays, bands have all got the same mentality. We didn't agree on anything: Mike was a Teddy boy; Marc Riley wanted to be in The Jam; Martin wanted to be Television. I never bump into any ex-members. I go to Manchester once a fortnight, and I never see Marc. I'm quite good like that. I can clear a room in 10 minutes.



3 LONDON, 1985

I knew Nick [Cave] from years before because I was a Birthday Party fan. To see a bunch of fucking Aussies whack rockabilly crap out, they were just fucking brilliant. Nick would stay at mine and I'd stay at his. Two years ago I went to an awards thing and he was at the next table, and he was a bit sulky. I'd done summat he doesn't like. And there's Shane [MacGowan]. Ecstasy's just come in, you can see by his face. Because I was brought up with Irish people, I just used to wind him up. He's a posh Irishman, isn't he? Shane was alright...



4 SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE, LONDON, 1988

I Am Curious, Orange. It looks quite smart, doesn't it? I couldn't stand anyone in that picture, except Mike [choreographer Michael Clark, whose ballet the band are playing in]. The group had to be in time when you've got dancers – proper dancers, not *X-Factor* dickheads. Also we had Leigh Bowery, which was fantastic. Am I interested in striking out into ballet again? No, I'm not that bothered. What I'm trying to say is too hard for a lot of people to grasp. People say, "Oh, you're 50-odd, what are you doing?" Because no other fucker's doing it.



5 MANCHESTER, 1988

Me, Marcia Schofield [part of the Fall lineup at the time of their first Top 20 album, *The Frenz Experiment*], and Brix [Smith, Mark's then-wife]. I don't miss those days at all, to be honest. It's quite a frightening picture, really. They are both great players. I think it's more "Ghost In My House" time [R. Dean Taylor cover and biggest Fall hit] – that was the Top 30 single. I just remember that, for all their faults, the two American girls, they went along with it, because it kept us on labels. Sometimes, for record companies, you have to do those things.

**6 COLUMBIA HOTEL, LONDON, 1993**

Link Wray. I've already pinned that one up on my wall. It's beautiful, thank you very much. I thought he was fucking great. He was a Red Indian, you know, and I've always got on very well with Red Indians. I remember the *NME* journalist was looking for him, and he'd disappeared. Which is what Red Indians can do. You'd go, "Hiya, Link", and you'd look round and he'd be fucking gone. He stabbed his speakers like it was normal. He did what Pete Townshend tried to do but couldn't. When the journalist wasn't there, he said to me, "They always ask me about that feedback. You know what it was? I made that guitar in my back yard, out of a tree. And they'll never know that, will they?"

7 MANCHESTER, 1997

The lineup that made *Levitate*. It's one of those things you block out of your brain. I don't really want to see any of them again [all bar Julia Nagle quit after an onstage fight in 1998]. It's a bit of a blot on my memory, that. It took me a year or so to get over. I haven't blotted it out, it's just that... as you can see from the picture, I don't look very happy. I was on the piss a lot, to be quite frank. And taking your ex-wife back in the group was not a good idea. Things weren't getting too good. And I've never wanted to go solo, you see. But I don't regret it. Because a lot of people really like that period of music. I couldn't name you a bloody track off it.

**8 MANCHESTER, 2004**

Me on *Newsnight*, after John Peel died. I was upset because, it's so fucking typical of Manchester BBC, they stuck me in a room and close the door on me, and I can't see anything. And I had this fucking Undertone yapping down in one earhole, and Gavin Esler in the other. I thought Gavin Esler was the Undertone, so I said to him, "Can't you just stick to playing the bass, or do you want to be the new fucking John Peel?" And me mother, who never says anything usually, said, "I've never laughed so hard in me bloody life." "You fucking bunch of twats" – honestly, that's what I thought. It's like, "Oh yes, he was one of his favourite singers," and here's this fucking dickbrain from the Undertones going on about himself. What can you say?

**9 KOKO, LONDON, 2009**

I'd broken my hip. I didn't want it spread around. Because I broke it so hard. I broke my other hip the year before. It's like when a 70-year-old woman breaks it, that's how bad it was. Apparently, I could've died. I was supposed to be dead by Christmas. At the time, I didn't want to say. But I'm not bothered about it. I'm alright now. It was me own stupid fault! And I incorporated it into the act. I don't write sitting down. I've always liked, a bit like a loony, to pace around and scribble. So being in a wheelchair was a bit of a fucking lesson. Your vocal tone changes too. We were recording for Domino then. They loved that. Being Robert Wyatt fans and all...

**10 MANCHESTER, 2011**

The band now are all different ages. The rhythm section's 28, and the wife's 38 or whatever. What they come out with, musically and verbally, it's a different world to me, they're Martians. But there's nothing wrong with that. Motörhead is the starting point of some of them. Elena's [Poulou, keyboardist and Smith's wife] is German techno. Let's just say they've got a healthy contempt for *The X-Factor* and U2. "The Stone Roses are reforming," the roadie says. And they go, "Mark, who are the Stone Roses?" I go, "Look, lads. I love you." [cackles] "Who's The Smiths?" You couldn't wish for more, really.

UNSUNG HEROES

Disco Inferno

Burn, Britpop, burn! The adventurous '90s outsiders finally get their dues

DISCO INFERNO'S message always felt like it might take a few years to sink in. In 1994, the Essex post-rockers unveiled their bold, troubling vision of pop music's future, just as the British record-buying public decided what they actually wanted was a chirpy pastiche of its past. Britpop buried Disco Inferno, but their music has refused to die.

"When I was making the records, there was a part of me that was thinking, 'Even if people don't get it now, they will get it later on,'" says the band's singer, guitarist and chief schemer Ian Crause, down the line from his current home in Bolivia. "It was a completely unwarranted fantasy, but bizarrely it seems to be coming true."

Indeed, Animal Collective and MGMT have both recently acknowledged Disco Inferno as an influence—the latter's *Late Night Tales* comp kicks off with DI's "Can't See Through It"—while a freshly packaged compilation of the group's non-album tracks, *The 5 EPs*, has just been named one of *Uncut*'s compilations of the year. Its queasy hymns to an uncertain future feel oddly resonant today.

In 1989, Crause was still at school in Gants Hill, Essex, when he formed Disco Inferno with the slightly older Paul Wilmott (bass), Rob Whatley (drums) and Daniel Gish (keyboards). Gish left to join Bark Psychosis and the band, now a trio, recorded their 1991 debut *Open Doors, Closed Windows*, a respectable homage to the Factory Records sound. Crause is less kind: "I hated the album when we did it and I still think it's shit. But we had to do it, otherwise we'd never move onto other things."

Inspired by The Young Gods' *L'Eau Rouge*, Crause invested in a Roland S-750 sampler and began venturing into uncharted territory.

The stunning 1992 single "Summer's Last Sound", a haunting meditation on the politics of fear, featured Crause triggering samples from his guitar to recreate the sound of a hedgerow full of songbirds. "It was an exciting process," recalls Wilmott. "We knew what we were doing was fairly limitless."

Disco Inferno's approach to emerging musical technology—using guitars and drum pads to trigger samples in real time—reached its apogee on 1994's *DIGo Pop* album. Everyday sounds such as breaking glass and gushing water were employed, not just as incidental FX, but as integral building blocks of the music. Combined with Wilmott's probing basslines and Crause's softly indignant vocals, the effect was initially disorientating but ultimately intoxicating. *DIGo Pop* sounded like nothing else, which was precisely the intention. Yet despite a few enthusiastic write-ups, especially from *Melody Maker*'s cadre of post-rock cheerleaders, the album sank without trace. Crause was devastated.

"I felt that I'd done something quite brilliant, so when it failed, I thought, 'What the fuck do I do now?' It sent me off into a spiral of depression for quite a long time."

Though Disco Inferno toured diligently, their live shows were often awkward, blighted by malfunctioning equipment and audience hostility. Not that the band went out of their way to endear themselves to anyone:



"I felt that we'd done something brilliant": (l-r) Paul Wilmott, Rob Whatley, Ian Crause

WHY I LOVE...

Disco Inferno



"They were smart, knowing and just a touch deranged. That's a nice cocktail in my eyes." **Steven Severin**

Crause remembers hiring one of Depeche Mode's stadium lights for a gig at the Highbury Garage; when they switched

the light on, it almost blinded most of the audience, who left in droves.

Rough Trade kept faith with the band, and Disco Inferno staggered on to make a third album. Released to utter indifference in 1996, *Technicolour*'s outlook was encapsulated by "It's A Kid World", which attacked the prevailing mood for nostalgia by lashing the drumbeat from "Lust For Life" to snippets from a kids' TV themes. "I took refuge in cynicism," explains Crause. "I started to sample cartoon music and write blacker and more ironic lyrics, basically to say, 'This is all a fucking joke'."

By that point, Crause had stopped talking to his bandmates, frustrated by what he viewed as their lack of creative input. "There

was a lot of pent-up aggression and resentment," acknowledges Wilmott. When Geoff Travis lost control of Rough Trade and Disco Inferno were dropped, there was no reason to carry on.

Both Crause and Wilmott explored solo projects, while Whatley "disappeared into the ether". By the late '90s, Crause was back working menial jobs and cultivating an obsession with Dante and early Byzantine history. Only recently, having moved to South America to be with his family, has he felt like making music again. "I'd resigned myself to living with my whole music career as failure," he says. "Now that it's being re-evaluated, it's a very strange feeling."

For Wilmott, this posthumous flurry of interest in Disco Inferno is equally bittersweet—especially as he and Crause still aren't talking. "To have a legacy is a nice thing. I'm happy that the music's being heard with new ears, but it also fills me with frustration that we can't capitalise on it." *Sam Richards*

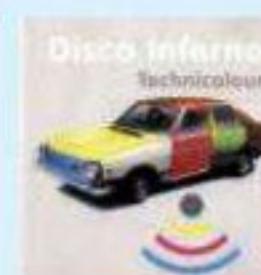
► HOW TO BUY... Disco Inferno



D.I. GO POP

(ROUGH TRADE, 1994) ★★★★

The big artistic statement: 33 minutes of febrile experimental pop, using unorthodox sampling techniques to wring magic from the mundane. Occasionally uncomfortable, often bewitching.



TECHNICOLOUR

(ROUGH TRADE, 1996) ★★★

Disco Inferno's attempt to prove they could write more conventional indie-pop songs, though much of it is still pleasingly off-kilter, and subverted by Ian Crause's bitterly sarcastic lyrics and uncompromising worldview.



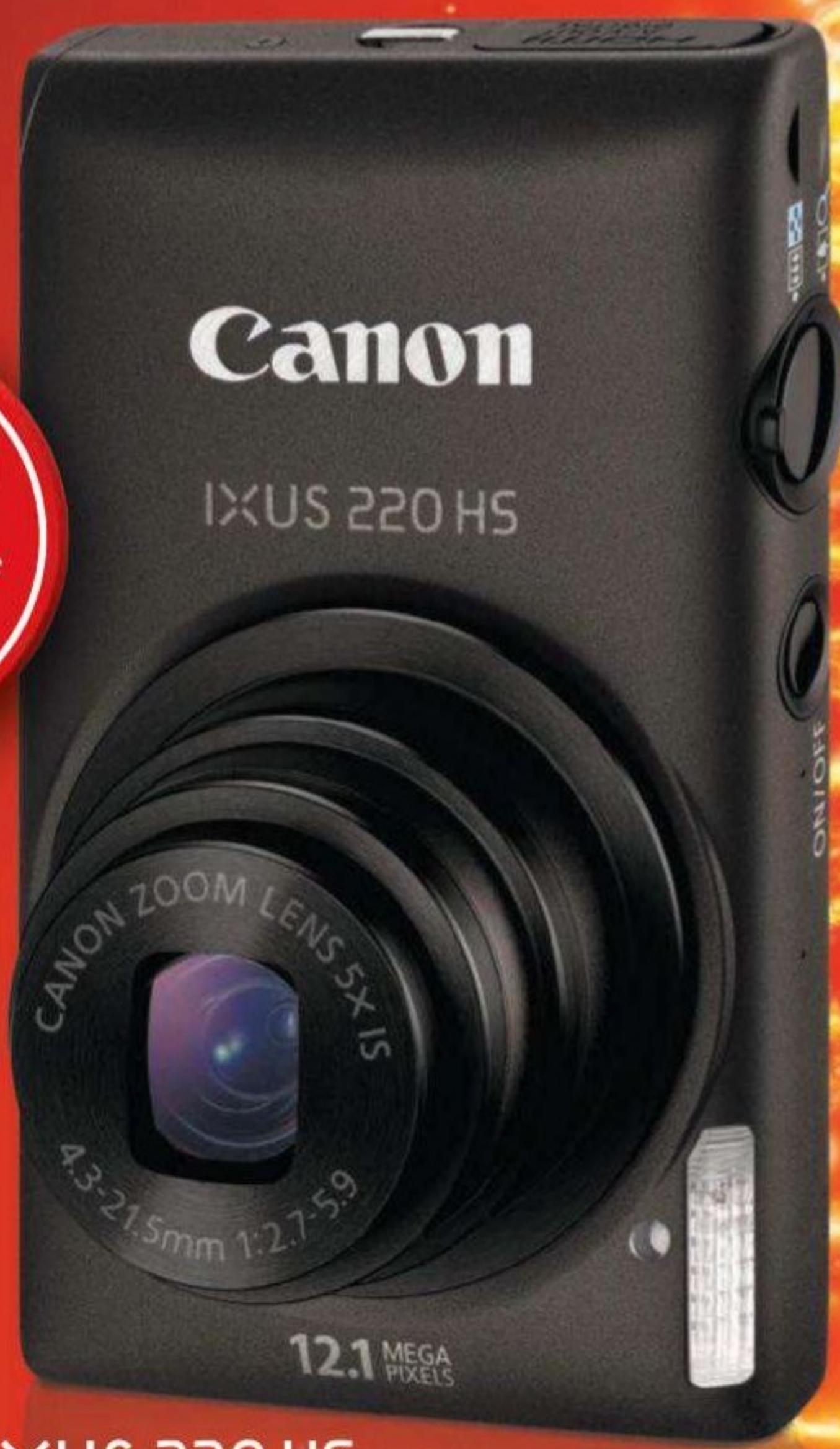
THE 5 EPs

(ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2011) ★★★★

An abundance of riches culled from DI's most productive period, 1992-5. Includes the painfully beautiful "Second Language" and the spry, New Order-ish single "The Last Dance".

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Uncut's monthly trip to music's outer limits.

This month: Blues Control and Laraaji



Laraaji (far right) and his musical collaborator Arij Cakouras (far left), with Blues Control's Russ Waterhouse and Lea Cho

IN CERTAIN CIRCLES, it remains sacreligious to criticise Brian Eno. No matter how many awful records he's involved with, his reputation seems undiminished; never mind the music, we're advised, feel the ideas.

The problem is, of course, that unless you're a musician of exalted stature, to some degree bored with the process of making records, it's hard to be privy to those ideas. Oblique strategies might be stimulating for Coldplay or U2 in the studio, but when the end product is so meticulously tailored to the mainstream, the quirks of its genesis are more or less undetectable. Even on Eno's recent solo albums, it all seems blandly elitist; rather disdainful of the idea of finished music, and of the listeners who are meant to be impressed by it.

A few things this month, though, reminded me of Eno's original genius. First, there were **Adam Granduciel's** selections for *My Life In Music* (see page 8), in which

The War On Drugs' canonical rock influences sat alongside Fripp & Eno's *Evening Star* and a 2007 self-titled album by **Blues Control**, the low-key New York duo of Russ Waterhouse and Lea Cho. "I'd put *Blues Control* on late at night, maybe after *Evening Star*," said Granduciel, an admirer and, perhaps, friend of Blues Control, since his sparring partner Kurt Vile contributed a few diffident bursts of trumpet to their *Local Flavor* album (2009).

Both of these Blues Control albums are great, as it happens, but *Local Flavor* has, I think, the edge, with its pianos and squinting drum machines floating through fairly lo-fi synthscapes, and some disruptive guitar buried deep in the mix. One track, "Rest On Water", is like "a needling reimagining of, maybe, an old Budd/Eno jam", I wrote on my blog at the time. The blues, incidentally, are conspicuous by their absence.

Eno no longer appears to have much active interest in this sort of music, allowing the likes of

Blues Control to follow through trajectories that he has seemingly neglected for three decades. With no little serendipity, a new Blues Control album turned up this month, a collaborative jam with a spiritual maverick that Eno discovered busking, on his zither, in New York's Washington Square.

FRKWYS Vol. 8: Blues Control & Laraaji is the product of a day-long session at the end of 2010, and acts as a neat sequel to both *Local Flavor* and *Ambient 3: Day Of Radiance*, **Laraaji's** 1980 set with Eno. The latter record focused on the playing, at once contemplative and joyous, of Laraaji (born Edward Larry Gordon in 1943), who

had dabbled in acting and stand-up comedy before various spiritual revelations led him to the sparkling consolations of the zither, and providing soundtracks for a generation of yogis and meditators.

Day Of Radiance established a template for the emerging New Age scene, but Blues Control have instinctively grasped that Laraaji's music is much more vibrant and exploratory than stereotypes of New Age might suggest. Over the 35 weightless minutes of "Somebody Screams", with (I presume) Laraaji incanting in a voice pitched somewhere between Pandit Pran Nath and Richie Havens, the psychedelic grace and euphoria of the Blues Control/Laraaji album really hits home: a late personal favourite of 2011.

And, just plausibly, one that could still resonate with Eno. Today, I remembered the last time I'd heard a sound like Laraaji's zither, albeit polished to nefarious ends. It was dancing serenely over tablas, in the intro to Coldplay's "Life In Technicolor II".

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

1 Mark Lanegan Band

Blues Funeral 4AD
Rock's Voice Of Doom buckles down, after all the guest spots, for his first solo effort in eight years. Key track: "Ode To Sad Disco".

2 Craig Finn

Clear Heart Full Eyes
FULL TIME HOBBY
Yet more great songs about beer and Jesus from the Hold Steady motormouth, backed this time by some of Austin's finest alt.country hands.

3 Karen Dalton

1966 Delmore
Further delectable Dalton archaeology, as demos from a Colorado log-cabin session belatedly surface.

4 Portishead

Chase The Tear XL
Two years after it appeared as a download, the pulsating coda to *Third* is released as a 12-inch.

5 Black Bananas

Rad Times Xpress IV
DRAG CITY
Jennifer Herrema's post-Royal Trux project, RTX, changes its name and amps up the stadium electro-scuzz even further. Faint Britney influence, too.

6 Elephant Micah

Louder Than Thou
PRODUCT OF PALMYRA
Fans of Hiss Golden Messenger should check out this fellow traveller from Louisville: rather like Will Oldham essaying British folk-rock.



7 High Wolf

Atlas Nation
HOLY MOUNTAIN
A nice companion piece to the Blues Control/Laraaji record: beatific synth epiphanies from globetrotting Frenchman.

8 Calexico

Selections From Road
Atlas: 1998-2011 CITY SLANG
A gourmet serving of lost delights from their limited-edition tour CDs. No filler and no messing about, either.

9 Ty Segall

Singles 2007-2010 GONER
The chronically over-productive garage maven tidies up at least part of his back catalogue.

10 Earth

Angels Of Darkness, Demons Of Light II
SOUTHERN LORD
Dylan Carlson's slow-moving titans return, sounding not unlike an ambient supplement to Calexico's desert twang.

 For regular updates, drop in on the Wild Mercury Sound blog at www.uncut.co.uk

AND IT'S GOODNIGHT FROM...



Jimmy Savile: playing the fool with Mick and Marianne

JIMMY SAVILE

DJ and presenter (1926–2011)

IT WAS NOT always easy to separate fact from fiction in the career of Jimmy Savile. He claimed to be Britain's first-ever DJ, having begun in 1941 by hiring out a room above a café and spinning Glenn Miller records via a wind-up gramophone fed through a valve radio. He may well have been right, though his assertion that he was the first to use two turntables and a microphone in 1947 was somewhat undermined by the fact that twin turntables had already been around for 20 years.

Savile did, however, manage a series of ballrooms and dance halls in the '50s before landing a job

on Radio Luxembourg in 1958. It was his work as presenter of *Teen And Twenty Disc Club* that led BBC producer Johnnie Stewart to poach him as host of new TV music show, *Top Of The Pops*. The first broadcast, on New Year's Day 1964, saw Savile and Alan Freeman introduce The Beatles and the Stones. Savile's on-screen clownery and distinctive presentation (it's worth noting, too, that he once claimed credit for the show's title) made him its most recognisable face over the next two decades.

He served on Radio 1 between 1968 and 1987, during which time he hosted *Savile's Travels* and the Sunday lunchtime retro show, *Jimmy Savile's Old Record Club*. Such was his popularity among the musical fraternity that *NME* voted him the nation's top DJ for 11 consecutive years.

BOB BRUNNING

Fleetwood Mac's first bassist (1943–2011)

Bob Brunning's tenure in the original Fleetwood Mac was a short-lived one. He'd already cut three singles with Five's Company before Peter Green enlisted him as bassist in 1967, though he was soon replaced by Green's old buddy from the Bluesbreakers, John McVie. Brunning, who can be heard on the Mac's debut LP, on "Long Grey Mare", then joined Savoy Brown before devoting himself to a career in teaching. He later recorded again with Green as The Brunning Sunflower Blues Band, and recorded albums with Mick Fleetwood and Danny Kirwan.

BARRY FEINSTEIN

Photographer (1931–2011)

It's estimated that the photographs of Barry Feinstein appeared on over 500 record sleeves during his career, though he's perhaps best remembered as the man

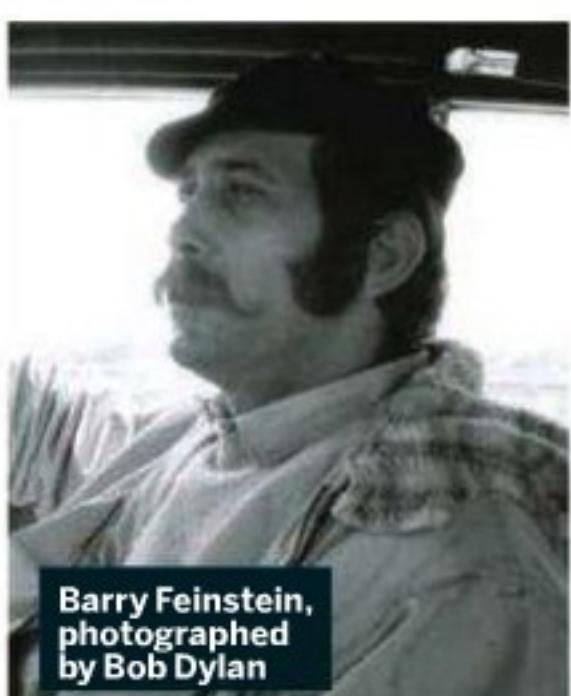
whose stark black-and-white images detailed Bob Dylan's 1966 tour of the UK. His break arrived via Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman, who asked him to shoot Peter, Paul And Mary in 1958. Alongside Dylan's *The Times They Are A-Changin'* and *After The Flood*, his sleeves include Janis Joplin's *Pearl* and George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*.

EDMUNDO ROS

Latin American bandleader (1910–2011)

Composer Michael Nyman, who once produced a TV documentary about this Trinidadian performer, declared that Edmundo Ros "single-handedly introduced Latin American music to English audiences". Ros and his dance orchestra played to heads of state and royalty during his '40s and '50s

heyday, when he wowed London society at the Coconut Grove and the Bagatelle. In 1948, "The Wedding Samba" became his first major transatlantic hit, carrying all the hallmarks of Ros' sound: a hot rhythm, bright melody and sophisticated arrangement. He was also a regular on *Saturday Night At The London Palladium*.



Barry Feinstein, photographed by Bob Dylan

DAVID REA

Folk guitarist (1946–2011)

David Rea might be best remembered as co-writer of Mountain's 1970 rock opus "Mississippi Queen", but his

true metier was folk and blues. He began on the Canadian roots scene of the early '60s, after which he appeared on Gordon Lightfoot's 1965 debut album. Alongstanding friendship with folk duo Ian & Sylvia saw him play on *So Much For*

Dreaming and *Lovin' Sound* (both 1967), the latter featuring Rea's own "Pilgrimage To Paradise". He also issued two solo albums, *Maverick Child* and *By The Grace Of God*, at the turn of the '70s.

PAUL LEKA

Songwriter, orchestrator and producer (1943–2011)

Paul Leka wrote and arranged for Gloria Gaynor, Harry Chapin and REO Speedwagon during his three-decade career, though his most popular contribution was the chant-a-long chorus of "Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye", a US No 1 for Steam in 1969. His first major success came two years earlier, when his "Green Tambourine" became a hit for garage-psych outfit The Lemon Pipers. Leka also produced and arranged The Left Banke's second album and oversaw Harry Chapin's 1974 chart-topper, "Cat's In The Cradle".

HEAVY D

New York rapper/producer (1967–2011)

Jamaica-born Dwight Myers rose to prominence in the late '80s as leader of Heavy D & The Boyz. As MC and producer, Heavy D presided over mega-selling hits like "Now That We Found Love", which fused hip-hop to R&B, and guested as rapper on Michael Jackson's "Jam" and Janet Jackson's "Alright". He also nurtured the early career of P Diddy, aka Sean Combs, who paid tribute by saying that "Heavy D is the person who gave me my first chance in the music industry. He believed when no-one else did." ROB HUGHES

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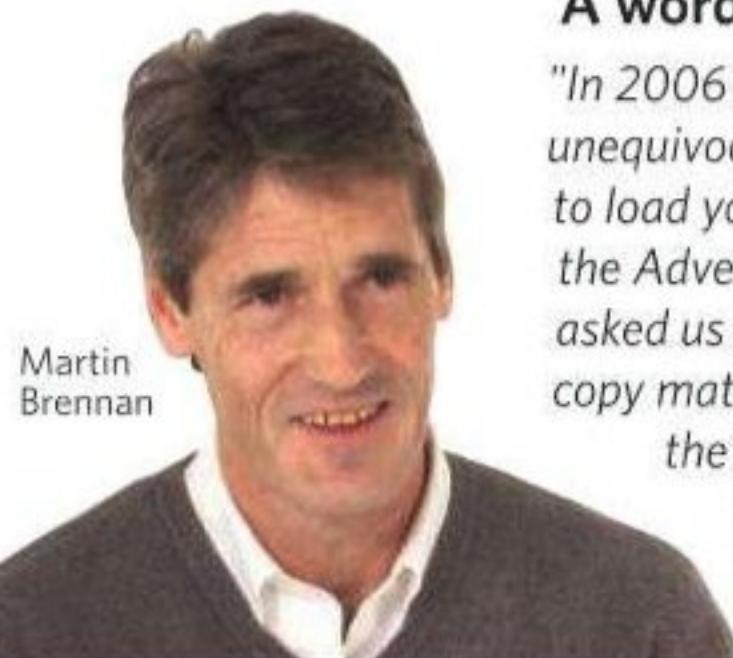
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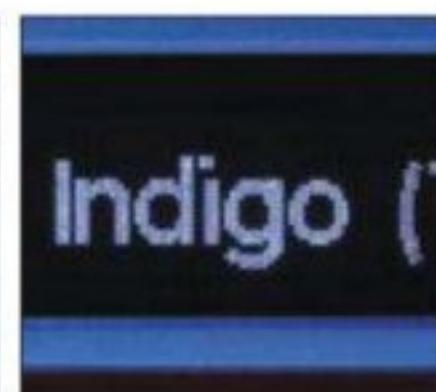


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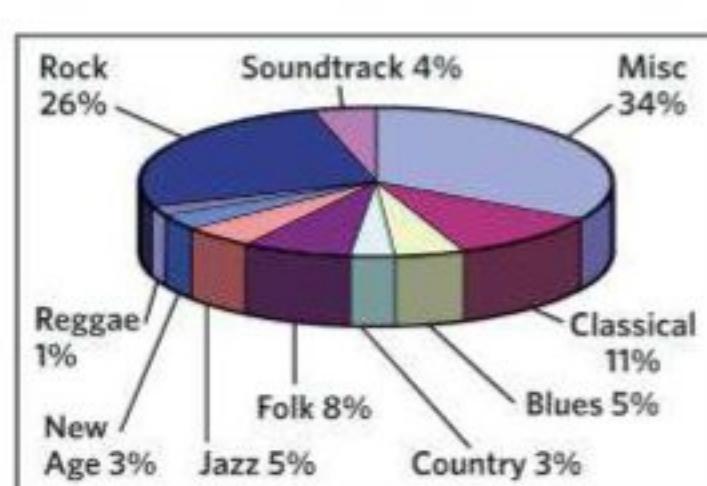
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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

JOHNNY MARR

On veganism, rock-star wheels, working with Girls Aloud and the beehive hairdo... The guitar-slinging former Smith reveals all...

JOHN MARR SEEMS to spend so much of his time fending off requests to reunite The Smiths that it's easy to forget the work he's done since. His CV of collaborations and guest appearances—Modest Mouse, The The, Bert Jansch, the Pet Shop Boys, Girls Aloud, Beck, Talking Heads, Crowded House and dozens more—serves as a pretty good guide to the music of the past quarter-century. Recently, as well as overseeing remasters of the entire Smiths back catalogue, Marr has toured the States with The Healers, fronted an orchestra in Belgium (playing his guitar parts on Hans Zimmer's soundtrack to the Oscar-winning *Inception*), written a soundtrack for Antonio Banderas' movie *The Big Bang* and landed a recurring guest role in the American indie sitcom, *Portlandia*.

He's even become a news story, with his name mentioned in Hansard and his legacy claimed by both sides of parliament. "It all started when one of my friends on Twitter was bitching about David Cameron," he remembers. "I joined in, then went for a snooze and woke up three hours later with 18,000 new followers, and



★ STAR QUESTION ★

**Did you enjoy that Van Halen gig?
Roddy Frame**

Ha ha! I bumped into Roddy in Dingwalls in 1985. He'd just come back from America, and he grabbed me by the shoulders and said, with some enthusiasm, "Oh man, ye gotta see Van Halen live if ye get the chance, they're great!" A couple of years later, The Smiths were touring America and I found myself with a couple of days off in Washington DC and the record company invited us down. So I dragged the whole group over on Roddy's recommendation. And you know what? Roddy wasn't wrong. It was amazing, exactly as he described. Eddie Van Halen bounces onstage and lets rip for two hours, and never stops grinning! I see Roddy around a bit. We were roughly at the same age – 17, 18 – when we started out in the early '80s. We seemed to be the only other guitarists around at that time who were younger than the punks. He's a great guitar player, obviously.

invitations to appear on dozens of news programmes. Of course it's annoying when senior Tories say they're Smiths fans. It makes my shoulders knot up just saying it! What bit of our political stance did they not get?"

Now he answers your questions...

Is there any truth in the rumour that yourself, Andy Rourke and Mike Joyce were due to record with Paul Weller at Solid Bond in the '80s?

Richard Watson, London



★ STAR QUESTION ★
**How do you see the difference between us as two generations of guitarists? Do you share any of the roots I have – Big Bill Broonzy, or Lead Belly? And do you think we should write a song together?
Roy Harper**

Oh, man. It would be an honour to write a song with Roy. For me, Roy's the link between John Lennon and Syd Barrett. He could only have come out of this country, at the time when he did. I appreciate some of the blues guitarists that guys like Roy and Bert Jansch were influenced by. Howling Wolf's guitarist Hubert Sumlin and John Lee Hooker's "This Is Hip" were both formative influences. But my connection with '50s music is more at the pop end of things. It's about Chet Atkins' guitar on the Everly Brothers records, or Little Richard 45s. Things like "Slippin' And Slidin'" are like two-and-a-half minute explosions. Fifties punk rock! For me it's a harmonic thing—chords and arrangements, rather than melodies.

The Smiths recorded "Sheila Take A Bow" in Solid Bond, although Paul wasn't around at the time. However, we were meant to collaborate on a record that Paul was putting together with Ray Davies. Something happened and it didn't materialise. Me and Paul finally played together at Coachella last year, playing "A Town Called Malice", which was great. We've wanted to work together for years but something always goes wrong. He's one of the few figures I always respected as a teenager. The two of us have always fancied the idea of doing something together. I think that would be good.

**What do you think is the ultimate rock-star car?
Jan van der Laan, Netherlands**

A Mercedes SL300 convertible in dark gun-metal grey, with grey leather custom interior and a long bonnet. I say that because I've got one. I bought it off Bernard Sumner. It was a great car for after The Haçienda. There's no seats in the back so you don't get ravers jumping in for a drive around town in search of a party that never happens. I still own this car, but rarely drive it. I drive an Audi now, which is less flash. Bernard and I

are still very close. In the Electronic days we worked together every day for nine years. And even then we went on holiday together! Our sons were born within weeks of each other, as was my daughter and his second child. Those two children are lucky that they ended up with the correct parents! He's the coolest person I ever worked with.

How would you fancy an evening of Smiths covers on The X Factor?

Matthew Leach, Kent

With the lyrics being so idiosyncratic, and the melodies and chords so unpredictable, I can't imagine the Robbie Williams or Chers of this world would have the bottle to cover 'em! But there have been a ton of Smiths covers, under the radar, which is what I like. They tend to be by artists I admire—Boo Radleys, Placebo, Billy Bragg, Neil Finn and so on. I loved Radiohead's version of "The Headmaster Ritual". It's not an easy song to do. **CONTINUES OVER»**

★ STAR QUESTION ★



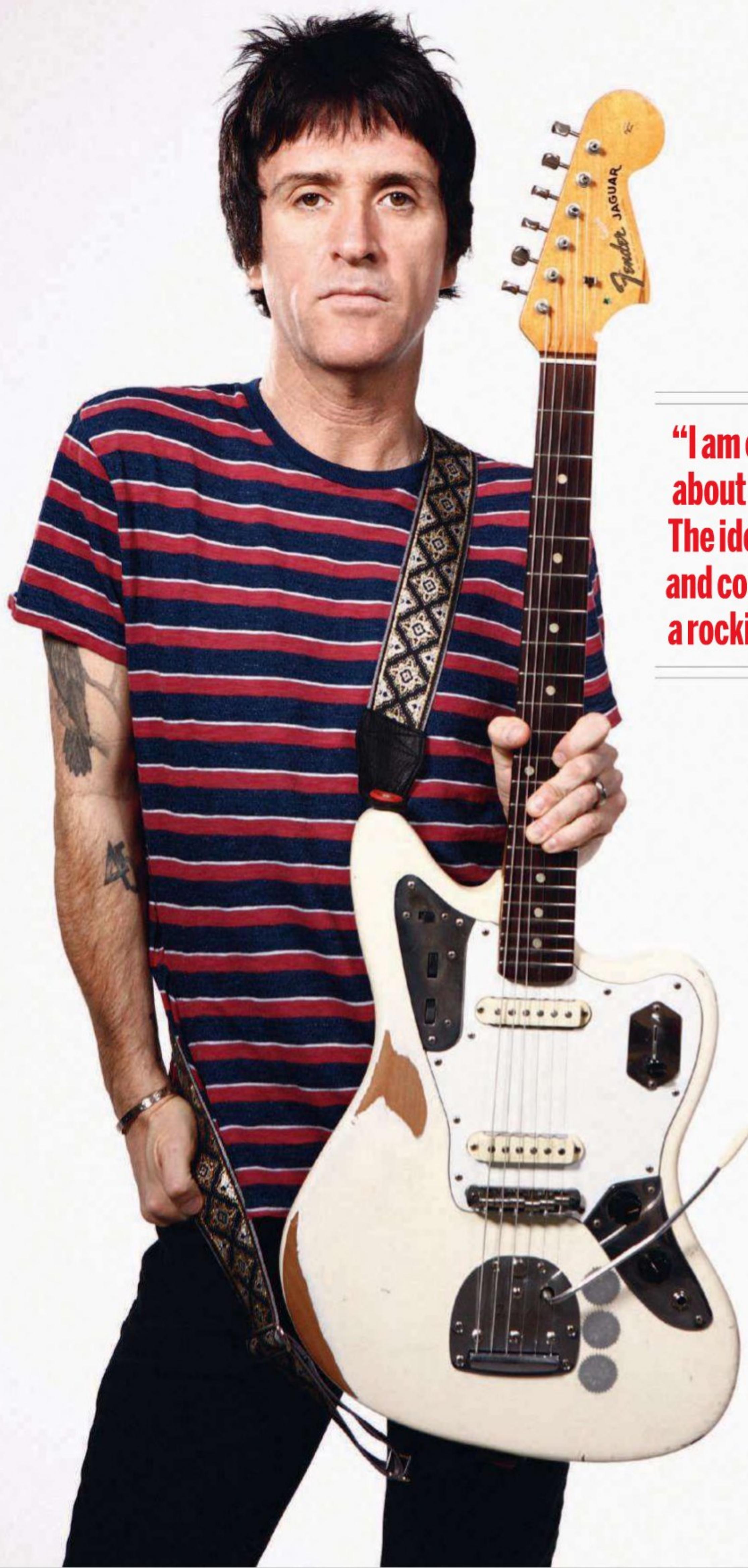
**Ever wanted to form a girl group?
Jane Birkin**

Well, The Smiths made a good go of it between

May and September of 1984! You've just got to look at the photographs—and my beehive—if you need any evidence!

When I was getting the group together, The Shangri-Las and The Ronettes were my passion, really. It wasn't enough for me to be a fan of Ronnie Spector, I had to be a fan of Estelle Bennett. And the beehive haircut that I had in '84—you can see it on the "William..."

Top Of The Pops—was actually me trying to morph into her...



“I am evangelical about pop music. The idea it’s crass and commercial is a rockist conceit”

I often used to use odd guitar tunings – “Headmaster Ritual” has these weird Joni Mitchell-style chords played on an open E tuning, and then loads of other chords piled up using other guitars. That’s my thing. It’s about the wonder of two electric guitars together.

Whatever happened to your “scallywear” clothing label, Elk?

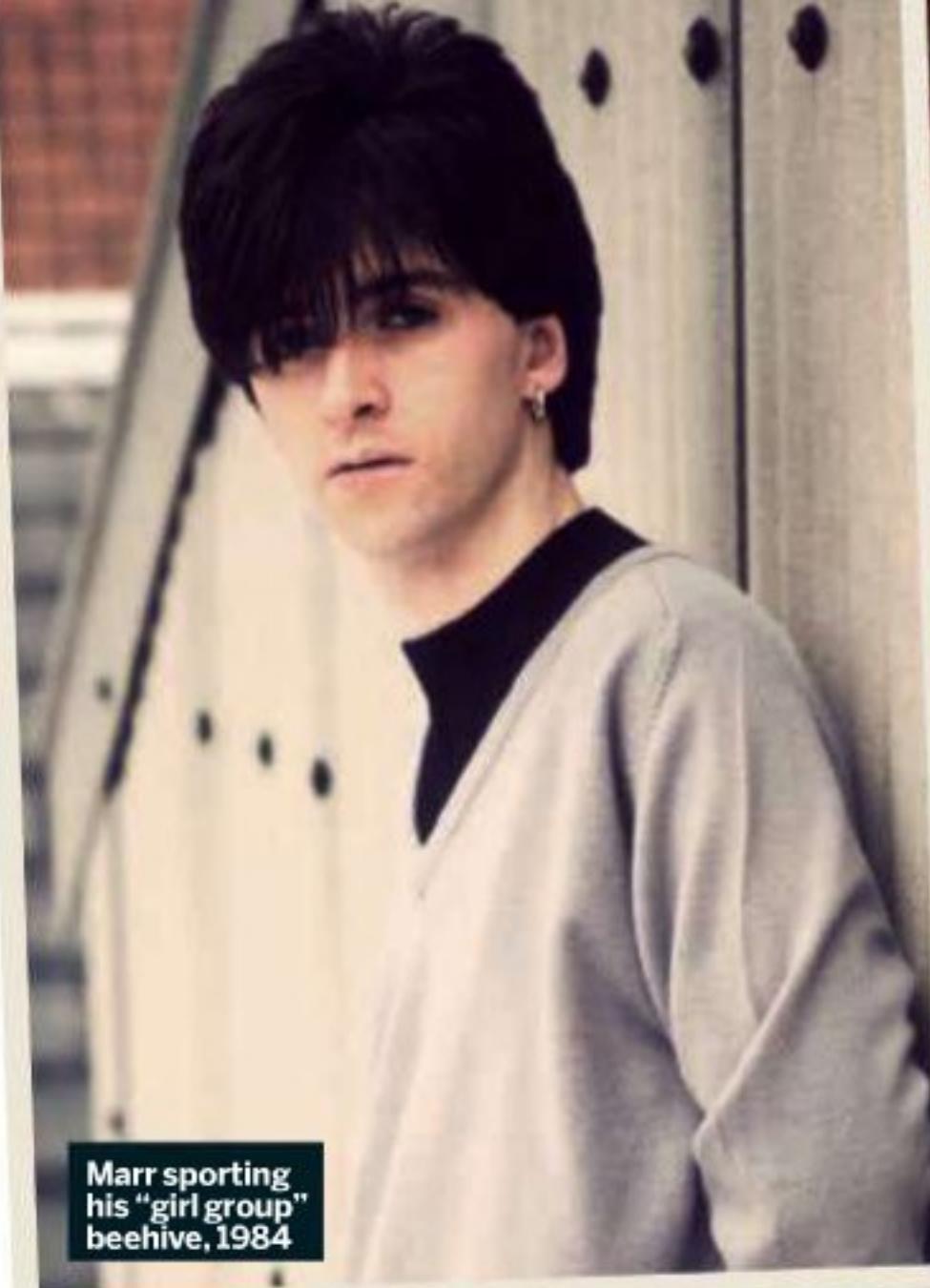
**Charissa Ramirez,
New York**

Clothes have always been important to me, and Elk did very well, very quickly. It suffered from me having to go on tour with The Healers in 2003. I want to get back into it when I’m not so busy. I’m also slightly put off by the fact that other musicians have started doing it – like Liam Gallagher’s Pretty Green label – but I did it first, so there! I like the creative side, and I still have plenty of ideas, I just don’t enjoy all the responsibility of employees and motivating people and making sure that people get in the office on time. Elk was another exercise in ideology, and it did pretty well. But there are just too many potheads involved in the fashion world.

What are your memories of getting involved in the Labour Party’s Red Wedge campaign in 1986?

Tom Wiffen, Cheltenham

Well, I played nearly all the gigs, and the people involved were great. But ultimately we were all being used. We were naïve young people being hoodwinked by savvy old fame-hounds, which all politicians are, on all sides. Every politician I’ve ever met has been more than comfortable with sucking all the attention out of a room. Do I feel any kinship with anyone in the Labour Party? I don’t think we’ll



Marr sporting his “girl group” beehive, 1984

really see the likes of Tony Benn again. But I would hope to see someone more inspirational than Ed Miliband! Do me a favour.

Mario Balotelli. Discuss.

Jay, Bury

First of all, I’m glad that he’s being talked about. Footballers should be interesting and maverick, and Manchester City have got a few of them. People get Balotelli wrong. He’s not some broody, sulky, negative presence. He’s a nice young fella under a lot of scrutiny in a country that isn’t his home. If he gets into any altercation he’ll be the first to put his arm around the opposition player. Watch him warm up, sticking in practice shots from 40 yards out. As a City fan, I was never that bothered about not winning trophies, but what I couldn’t abide was watching a bunch of unfit, hungover blobs who didn’t give a shit, stuck in the ’70s pint-and-pies culture. I love seeing a team who enjoy playing entertaining football.

What is the story behind the demos you recorded with Ian McCulloch in the early 1990s?

Andy Pidgeon, Enfield, Middlesex



Power behind the throne: Marr with Modest Mouse, November 2006

★ STAR QUESTION ★



What’s your health regime at the moment? Who knows, your advice might help keep some talented nutter out of the 27 club...

Andrew Loog Oldham

Andrew and I are good friends. I’ve just done a version of “When Tears Go By” with him, actually. My health regime used to be drinking coffee and eating cigarettes. I stopped drinking about 12 years ago and stopped smoking not long after. In around 2004 or 2005 I was hanging out with [hip-hop band] Naughty By Nature, who had this philosophy of strength through health. It was very un-rock’n’roll, which appealed to me. So, in the last six or seven years, as I started heavy touring around America with Modest Mouse, I got into running, doing 10 or 15 miles most days. It’s the best way to keep fit. And I’ve seen more of the world in the last few years than I ever did in the 20 years before that. I can’t talk about what others should do, but for me it’s a progressive way to live, more creative and less clichéd.

I always enjoyed Ian’s voice, and Ian and I recorded an album’s worth of songs in 1992 or ’93, a few of which – “Lowdown” and another I can’t remember [“Too Far Gone”] – saw the light of day under the name Electrafixion. And I demoed what became “Nothing Lasts Forever”. The first 10 days of us writing together was very creative, and then it lost track in a sort of Mancunian/Scouse haze. It’s a long story which ends with the hijacking of the van that the master tapes were in, on its way from my house in Manchester to Ian’s place in Liverpool. Apparently the robbers were after a shipment of liquid oxygen! And the tapes never came back. It’s actually a great way for that project to have ended. We had some pretty good days. It’s the lyrics that were the problem...

Motown singles with him, or playing him Roy Harper or Bert Jansch. What do I think of his recent interview remarks? Can’t say I’ve read any, to be honest. Does he still do interviews? I thought he didn’t bother these days...

What possessed you to work on Girls Aloud’s last album?

Louis Bebb, Stafford

I was working with Brian Higgins on a Pet Shop Boys record, and I let it slip that I liked the guitars on a couple of Girls Aloud’s early singles. So he got me in a headlock, took me from behind and, before I knew it, I had a harmonica in my mouth. No, I loved doing it. I am evangelical about pop music. The idea that pop is crass and commercial is an old-fashioned rockist conceit linked to the whole “Disco Sucks” campaign. I always saw The Smiths as a pop group. Sparks, Roxy Music, Bowie, Sweet all made great pop 45s. I’ve always held on to the nobility and aspirations of pop, and what it can be. ☺

INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS



Question for Dr Marr: Vegetarian to vegan – how difficult, or indeed easy, a transition?

Mike Joyce

Hey, I haven’t seen Mike for donkey’s years! I’d grown up on a housing estate, and my only relationship with animals was thinking, “I hope that dog doesn’t bite me”. When I stopped eating animals – in solidarity with my girlfriend, who’s now my wife – I immediately started having a more empathetic and caring relationship with them. I became vegan in 2005. It was made easier because I lived in Portland, Oregon, the city of left-wing, granola-eating vegans. Portland’s mayor spends all his time on a Pilates ball and plays in a Peter Tosh tribute band! I took veganism to the nth degree and, in all seriousness, I’ve never felt better. I used to live off cheese sandwiches but after a few weeks of not bothering with all that, you realise that all you’re after is the taste of salt. I feel a lot better. When I play live I’m bouncing three feet off the ground!

Is there anything you miss about Morrissey?

Jonas, Norway

Not professionally. We’re both into the stuff we’re doing now, and that’s way more fascinating than knocking out the old stuff. But sure, I miss him as a friend. There were unique aspects to our relationship and our humour we could only get from each other. I have fond memories of listening to old

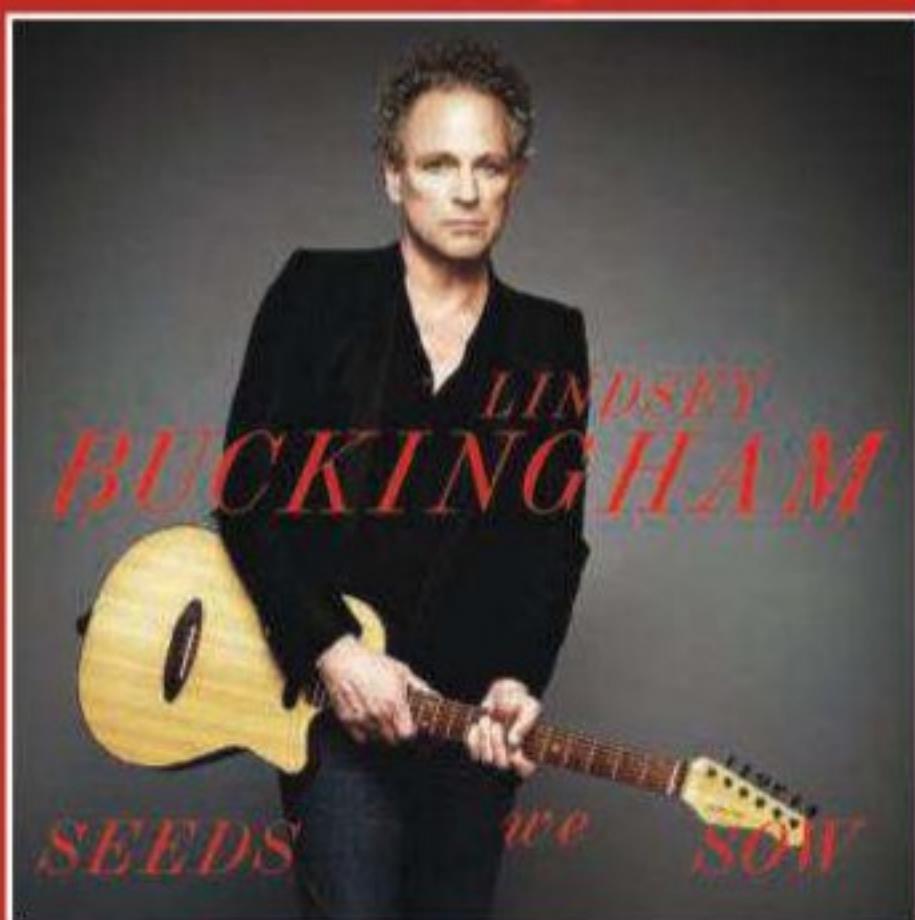
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MAKE ME SMILE (COME UP AND SEE ME)

by Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel

Harvey's 1975 jukebox perennial, polished to a sheen by Alan Parsons, hides a vitriolic jab at former bandmates

THE KEY PLAYERS



STEVE HARLEY
Singer, songwriter,
co-producer



ALAN PARSONS
Co-producer



JIM CREGAN
Guitar



DUNCAN MACKAY
Keyboards



MILTON REAME-JAMES
Original keyboard player

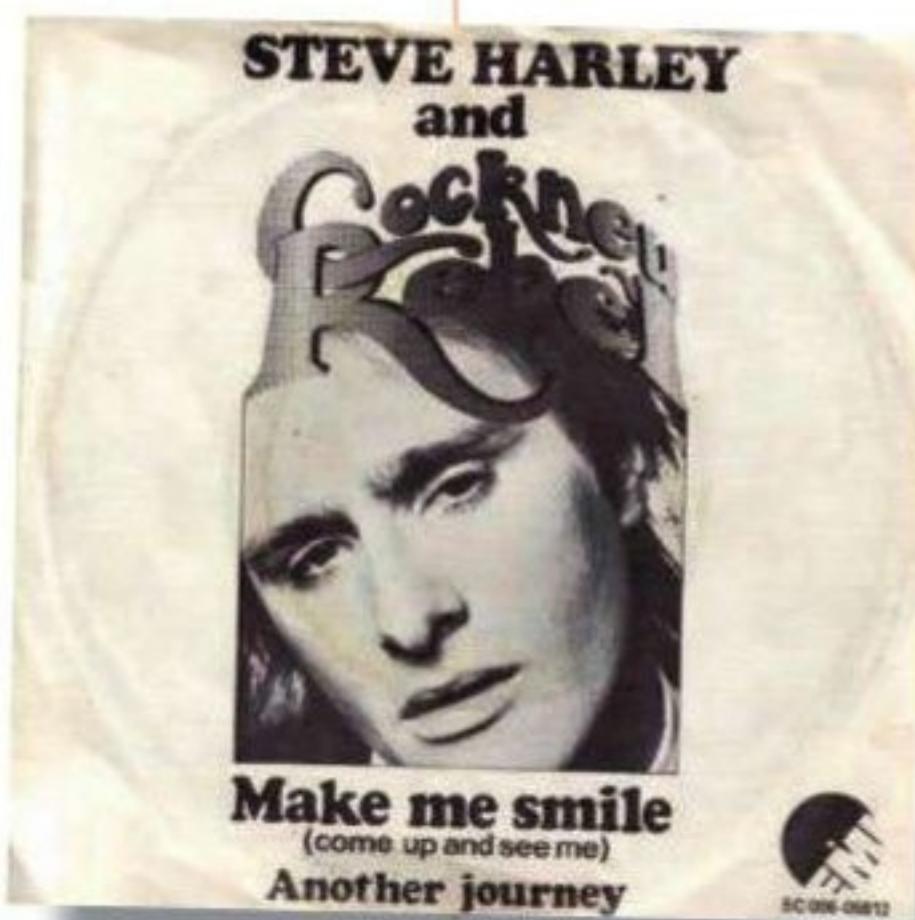
THERE AREN'T MANY songs that are as familiar – and misleading – as "Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)". Taken at face value, you'd assume Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel's No 1 from 1975 to be a love song – but in fact Harley wrote it in a funk after three of his bandmates walked out on him. Slighted, Harley noted their betrayal – "Blue eyes, blue eyes, how come you tell so many lies?" – and then recruited a new band to help him and surviving drummer Stuart Elliott record it.

With Pink Floyd engineer Alan Parsons at the controls, the finished song became an epic production of classic pop – although you can still hear the Dylan-esque sneer in Harley's vocals if you listen carefully. Many of the most memorable parts – the clavinet intro, the "ooooh lala" backing vocals, the acoustic guitar solo, the false endings – were created in the studio by Harley and Parsons. The song continues to mislead almost as much as it delights – DJs are always caught out by the stops in the outro and hardly anybody gets the title right – but that hasn't stopped it featuring on the soundtracks of *The Full Monty* and *Velvet Goldmine*, or being covered more than 100 times. Harley's favourite is The Wedding Present's version from 1990. "They were the first ones to get it right," he says. "They spat it out so violently and I admire them immensely for that. I was thrilled to see somebody do with it what I hadn't." **PETER WATTS**

STEVE HARLEY: I started writing it within days of the original Cockney Rebel splitting up. It's about the end of the old band. The first verse ["You've done it all, you've broken every code/And pulled the rebel to the floor"] was probably written at four in the morning after a bottle of brandy, feeling sorry for myself.

STUART ELLIOTT (DRUMS): We were young and a lot of egos were flying around. Three of them said they were leaving, but I said I'd stick around. We'd had a bit of success and I wanted it to continue.

MILTON REAME-JAMES: We wanted a new deal. We were on *Top Of The Pops*, but were on the dole and earning £5 a night. All the money we earned, Steve spent on self-promotion. Halfway through a tour we confronted Steve and made him an offer but he said no. So we split up, but agreed to play the rest of the dates on session wages. We didn't tell the press, there were no arguments and then we finished the tour and went our own way.



CREGAN: It was very exciting to be in the studio where The Beatles had recorded. There was a cupboard under the stairs with all these strange machines and you'd play one and recognise it from *Sgt Pepper*.

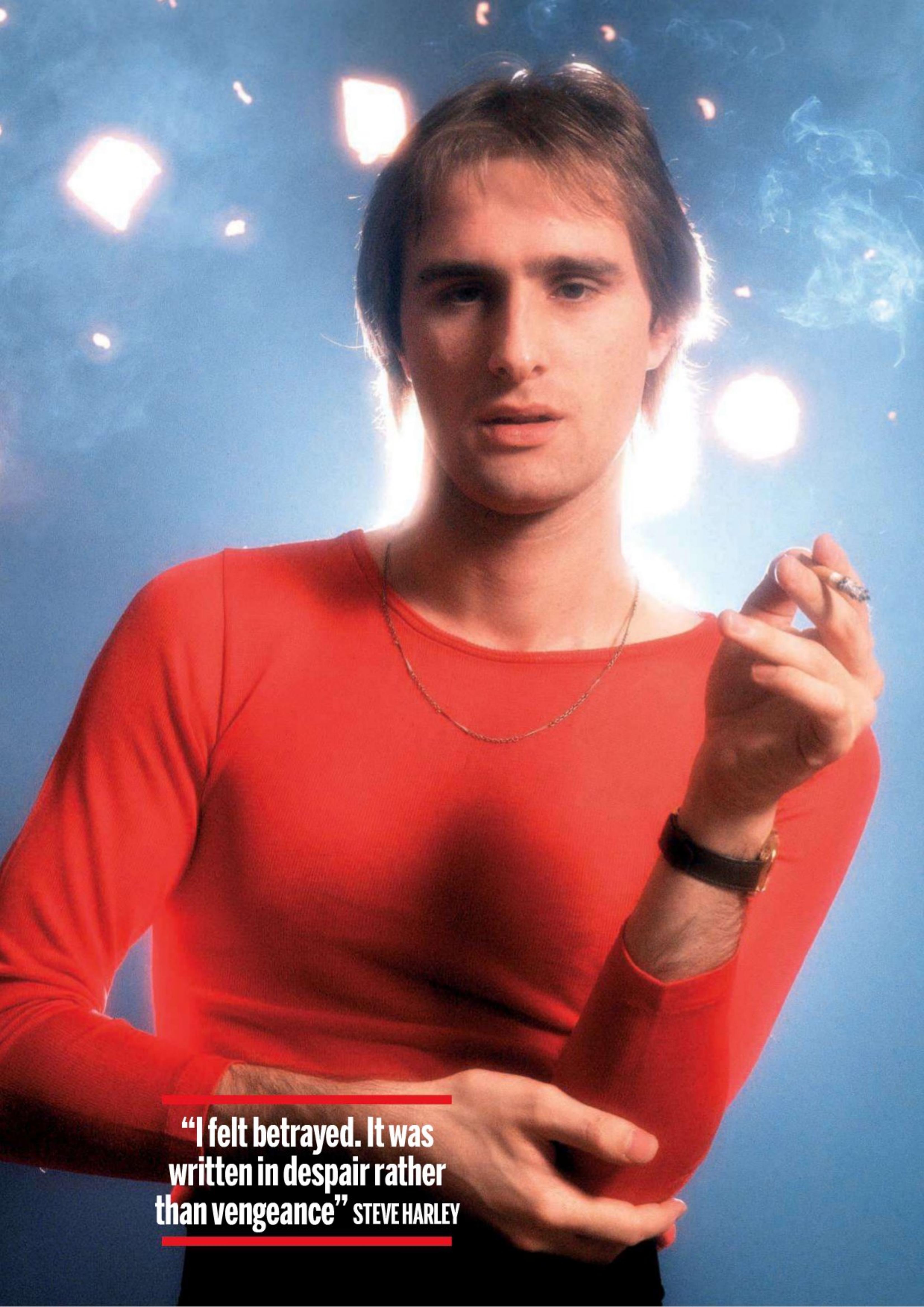
ELLIOTT: I remember Steve playing the song on acoustic guitar in our manager's office and thinking it was really cool, the way the verse and chorus sort of went round in a circle. It was obvious it would be a standout song. Steve says it was written in half-beat. I don't remember that.

HARLEY: At first it sounded completely different. It was a slow blues, and I still sometimes play it like that, but in the studio I think it was Alan [Parsons] who said, "Why not try it quicker?" So it turned into this mid-tempo backbeat, which belies the underlying sentiment.

ALAN PARSONS: It was a little dirgy, slower and a little pedestrian, very on the beat. I changed it to a way I thought worked much better with the girls.

HARLEY: I wanted it to be really hooky, a big

CONTINUES OVER*



“I felt betrayed. It was written in despair rather than vengeance” STEVE HARLEY

THE MAKING OF...



The new Cockney Rebel, 1975: (l-r) George Ford, Jim Cregan, Steve Harley, Lindsay Elliott, Duncan Mackay, Stuart Elliott

production in the chorus, so I wanted a choir. We brought in Liza Strike and Barry St John, and we also got Linda Lewis and Tina Charles and a couple of guys. One was Clarke Peters [later Lester Freamon in *The Wire*].

PARSONS: The girls were recorded in AIR [Studios] on Oxford Street. Barry St John and Liza Strike sang on the chorus and then I think Linda Lewis and Tina Charles came in to do the "ooh la las", along with the late George Ford. He was a great player. They were all very good.

MACKAY: Steve would have a good idea and then we'd finalise it in the studio. None of the songs were completely written before we recorded them. It was a very creative process, and very fast.

ELLIOTT: Steve wrote the melodies and the lyrics, and then we put our heads together in the studio for the arrangements. Steve and Alan did mixing and overdubs.

PARSONS: Steve was the father figure, the boss, which made me feel good because he gave me a lot of freedom. So we both worked together but he was in charge of the band.

MACKAY: I had this riff on clavinet and Steve said, "Stick that on the intro." I'm from a classical background and it's just a variation on a scale, in thirds.

ELLIOTT: The last six beats of the intro were down to me. Just the phrasing of the beat, not the notes. I copied them from Yes' "And You And I"; it's the same recurring rhythm.

HARLEY: It was a habit of mine to write a middle eight with no lyrics, and chords that have nothing to do with the rest of the song. Alan asked me when I was going to write the lyrics for that bit and I told him I fancied an alto sax solo. I knew where it would start and finish. I wasn't going to write it but I'd guide the player.

MACKAY: We were faffing about for hours trying different solos – electric guitar, keyboard, stuff like that – and we're all getting a bit tired when Jim picks up his acoustic guitar and plays that solo. It was tremendous.

HARLEY: Jim is a great player, very subtle and sympathetic, and he came up with this perfect solo. Alan and I switched with faders between three different solos to get it right.

ELLIOTT: One of the phrases in it is a jump from the bottom of the guitar to the top that is almost impossible to do.

CREGAN: We did it about 1 am, which was quite late to be doing important stuff. I thought it was nice, but later it became this bloody iconic piece of nonsense which had a major impact on my career.

PARSONS: There's a lot of compression on that solo, which I don't normally do. Steve was famous until this record for having no guitars, so it always amused me that not only did this song feature guitar, it also had a guitar solo.

HARLEY: The dead stops were my idea. The interesting ones are at the end. We recorded it with a long repeat fade but in the mixing I said to Alan that these tacets – the musical silences – they work, they're commercial and they give an air of suspense, so let's do them at the end as well.

PARSONS: So I made those stops artificially by splicing the backing track onto the end and putting leader tape in between. It would have taken a couple of hours. It was essentially a remix of the "oooh la la" section.

CREGAN: The band was fun but I really loved working with Alan Parsons. It was a joy to watch somebody with his ability shape the music without appearing to do anything. He had such a light hand but he was always doing things very subtly. One of the reasons the song was a success is that it has a timeless quality, it doesn't date, and that's because Alan was in charge of the sound.

MACKAY: He was the most laidback guy in the world. The music would be blaring out and he'd say, "Mmmmm, that doesn't bother me." That usually meant you were on a winner.

HARLEY: Bob Mercer, the MD at EMI, came to see us. We played him a rough mix and he smiled and said, "Number one. Nothing will stop that." EMI could move mountains if they chose to. I knew they'd be pushing it.

PARSONS: It took over No 1 from Pilot's "January", which I'd also produced. I drank a great deal of champagne when I got the news.

HARLEY: We were touring America when it went to No 1. It was there for two weeks and then bloody Kojak knocked it off. If it was Bowie I'd have been all right, but it was a TV cop with a lollipop singing a gimmicky version of "If".

MACKAY: When you're making a song it's just another song, but

when it starts to climb the charts you know you've got it right. It was a monumental leg-up in the industry.

HARLEY: That record has a life of its own. I am always getting requests to use it. We veto a lot, but people hear it all the time and might think I am a mercenary. I asked Bryan Adams what he thought about putting it on ads – is it prostitution – and he said, "No, the song is doing its work."

ELLIOTT: It's still great fun to play and that's often the test of a great song. I still love playing it.

HARLEY: You hear it in strange places, like in a cab in Belgrade, or at hotels where there's a wedding. It comes on and everybody heads for the dancefloor.

CREGAN: A few years ago I was in America, and Steve called and suggested we do some gigs. He picked me up from the airport and we drove back to his house in Suffolk. We went through this village with this beautiful pub and decided to pop in for a Guinness. As we walked through the front door there it was [hums the intro to "Make Me Smile"]. I said, "How the fuck did you organise that?"

Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel tour the UK in December. For dates see www.steveharley.com



FACTFILE

Written by Steve Harley
Performers Steve

Harley (vocals), Jim Cregan (guitar), Stuart Elliott (drums), George Ford (bass), Duncan Mackay (keyboards)

Produced by Alan Parsons and Steve Harley
Recorded at Abbey Road, London

Released February 1975
Chart position 1 (UK)

TIMELINE

Summer 1974

First Cockney Rebel lineup disbands. Harley starts writing "Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)".

Autumn 1974

Harley recruits George Ford, Jim Cregan and Duncan Mackay. The band is renamed Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel.

November 1974

Band enters Abbey Road to record *The Best Years Of Our Lives* with producer Alan Parsons. "Make Me Smile" is chosen as a single.

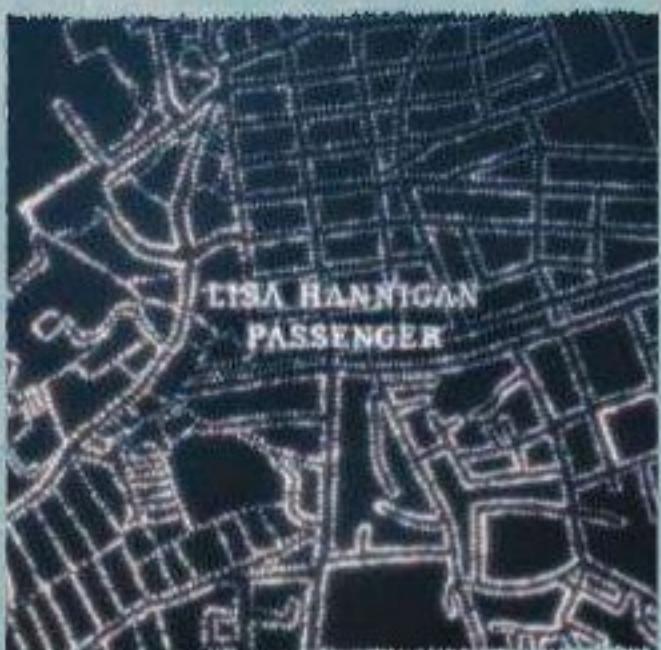
Feb 1975

"Make Me Smile" hits No 1 on February 22, 1975, where it stays for two weeks.

1992

The song is reissued for the first of three times.

BEST OF 2011



LISA HANNIGAN 'Passenger'

"Everyone's a little bit in love with Lisa"

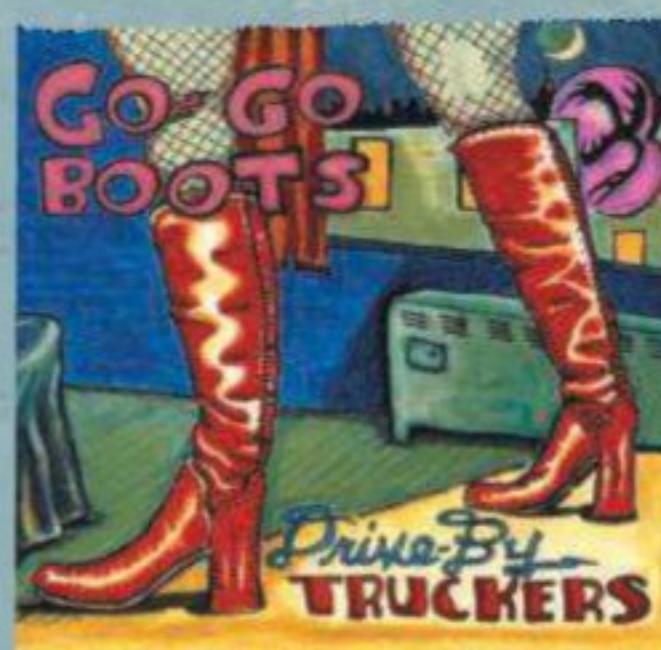
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LIZ GREEN 'O, Devotion!'

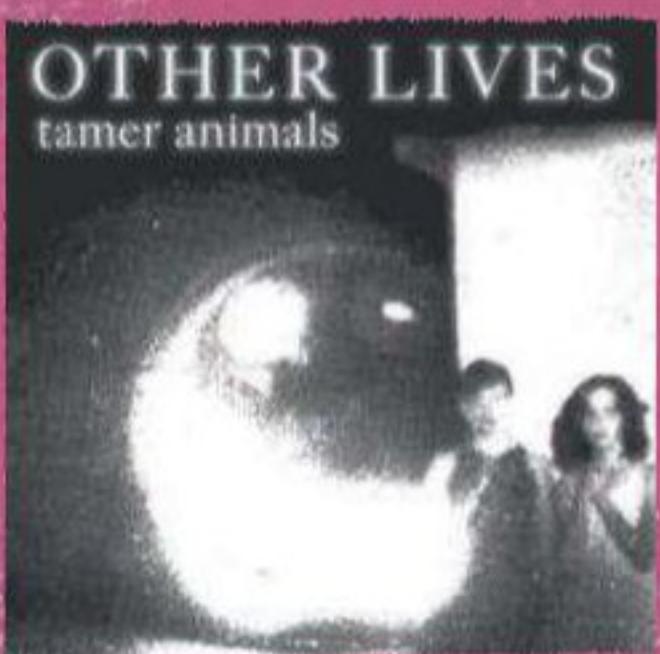
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INDEPENDENT



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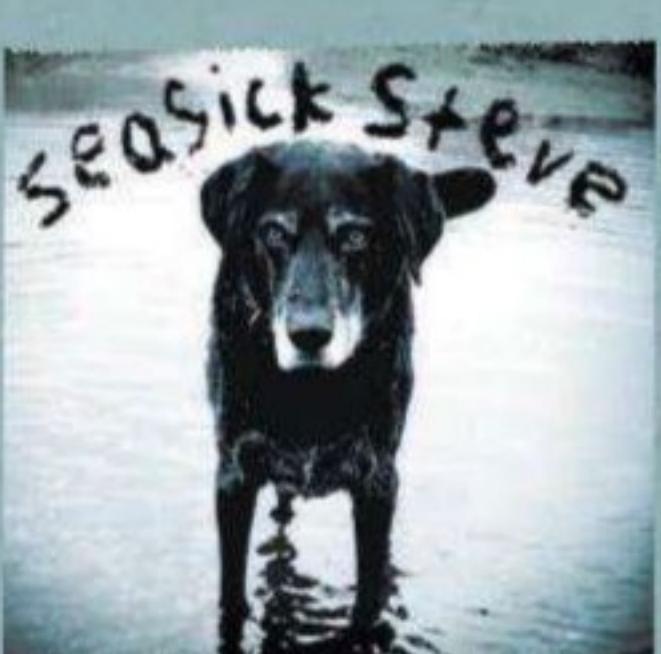
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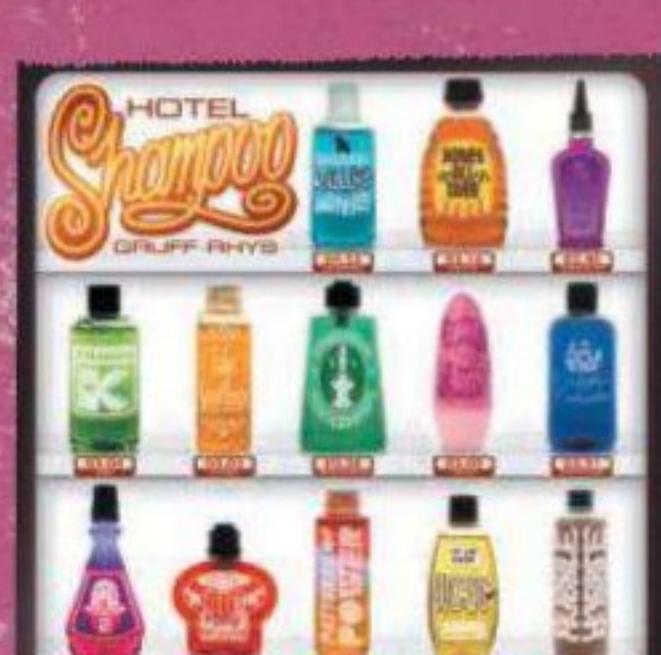
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GIRLS 'Father, Son, Holy Ghost'

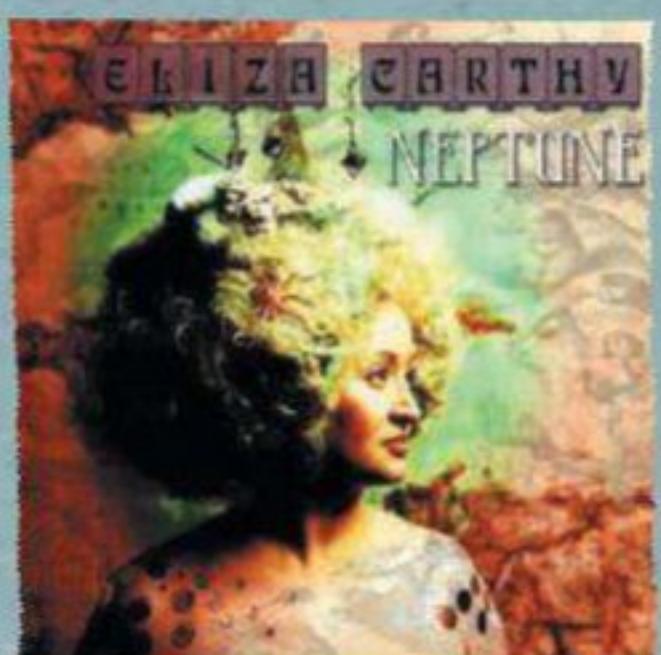
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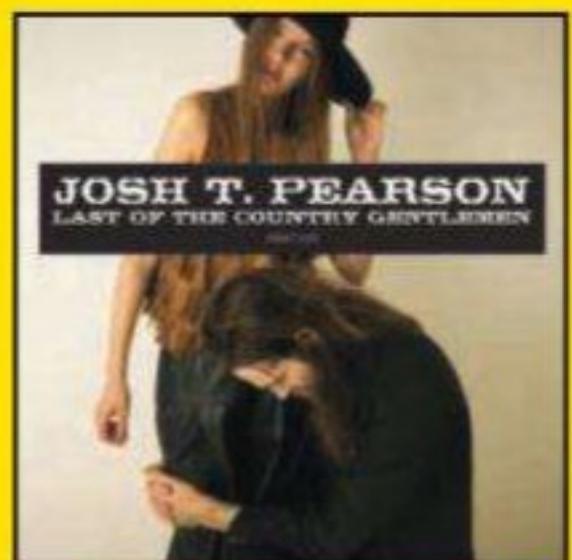
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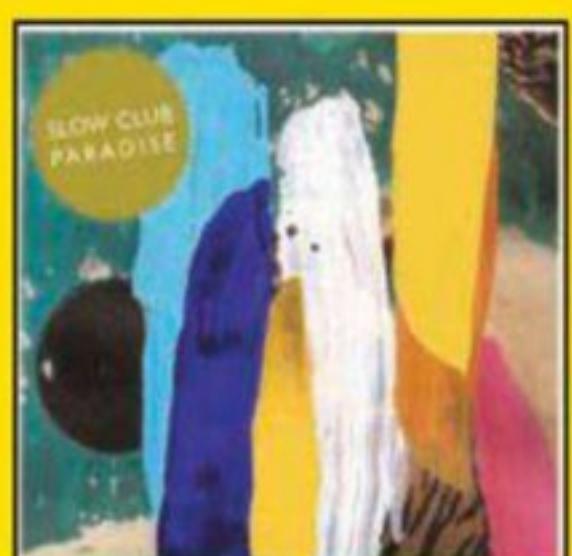
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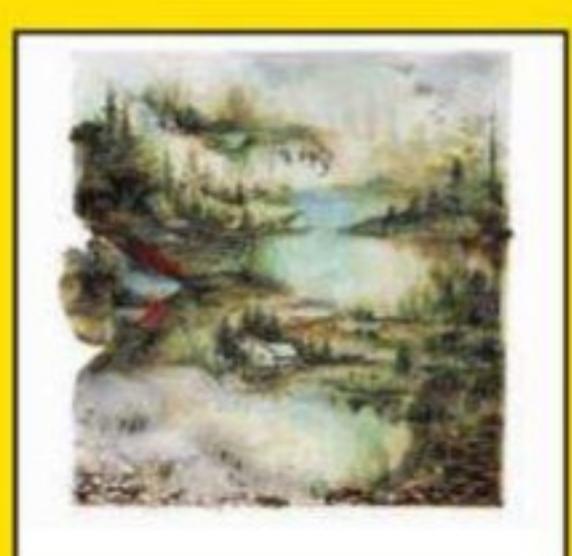
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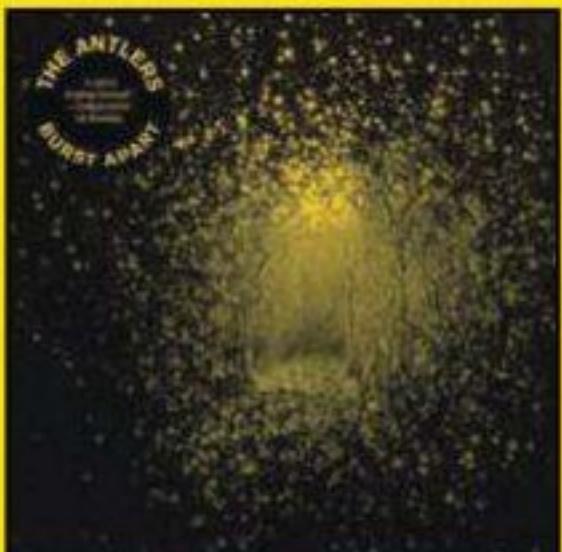
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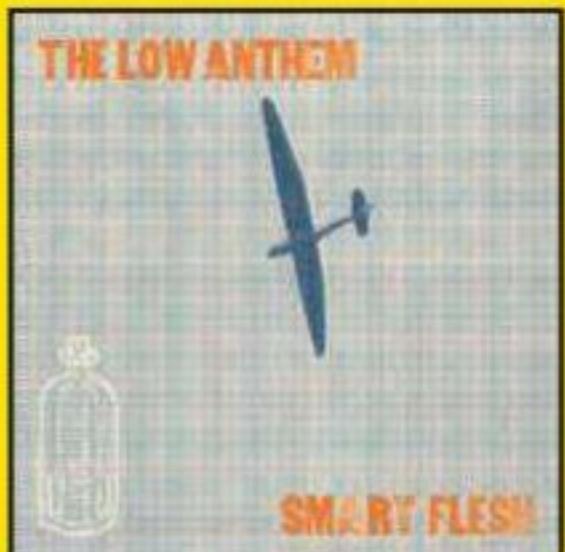
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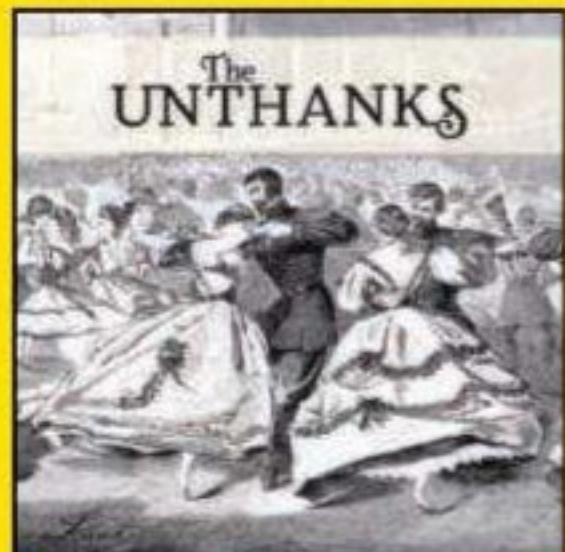
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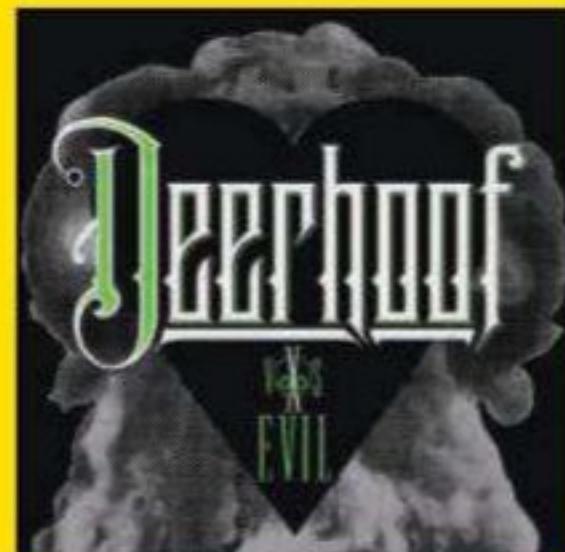
the antlers
burst apart



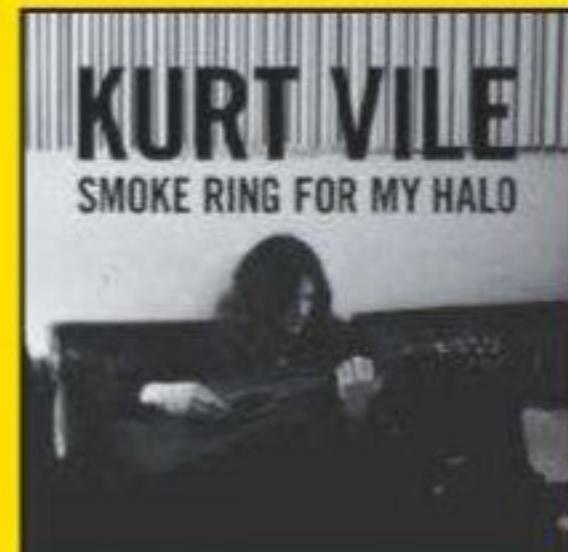
the low anthem
smart flesh



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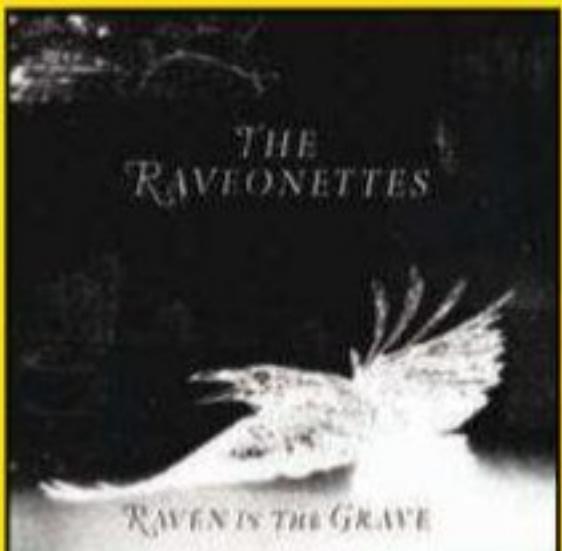


deerhoof
vs evil



kurt vile
smoke ring for my
halo

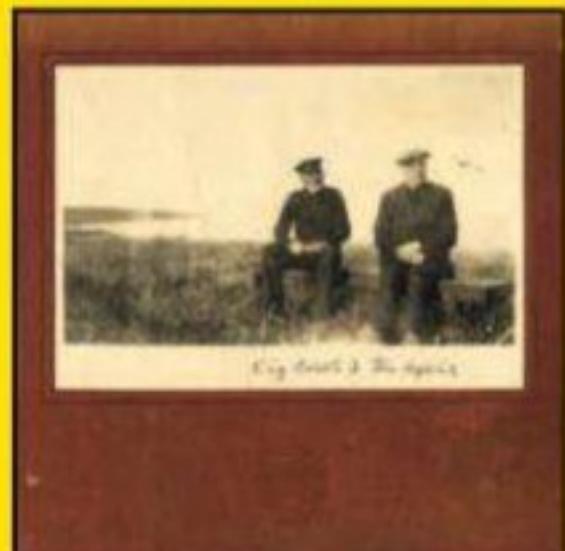
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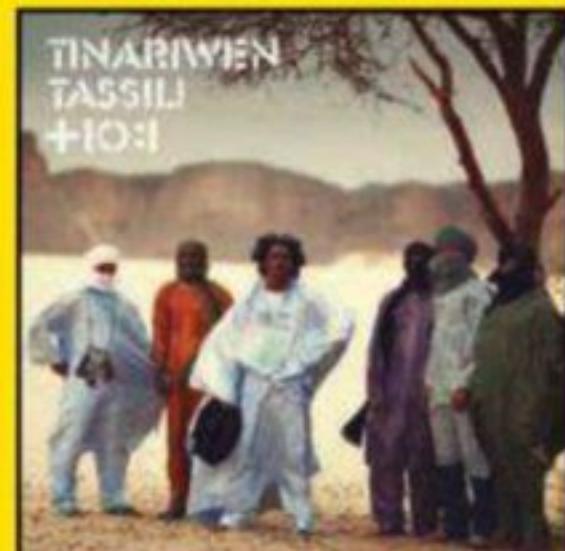
the raveonettes
raven in the grave



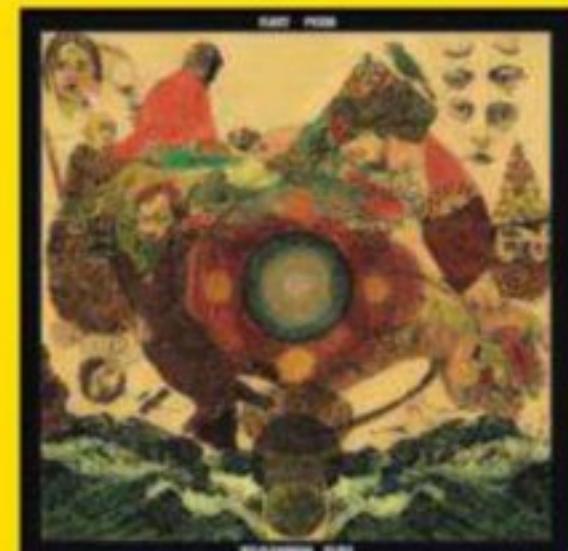
laura marling
a creature i don't
know



king creosote &
jon hopkins
diamond mine

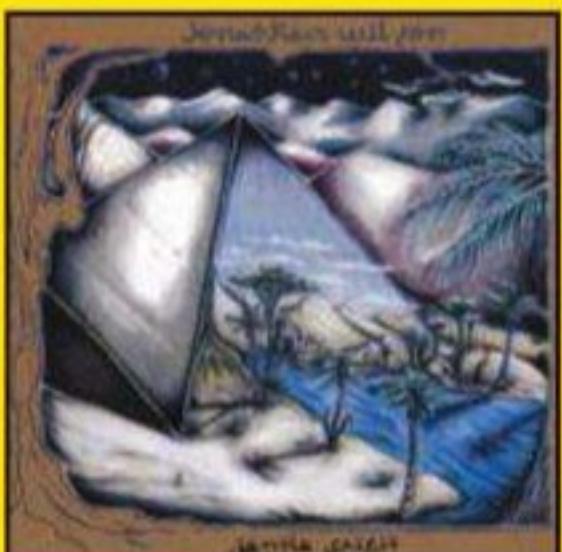


tinariwen
tassili

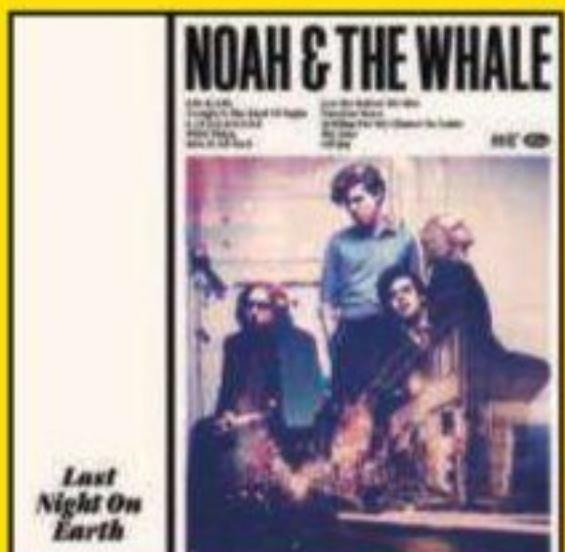


fleet foxes
helplessness
blues

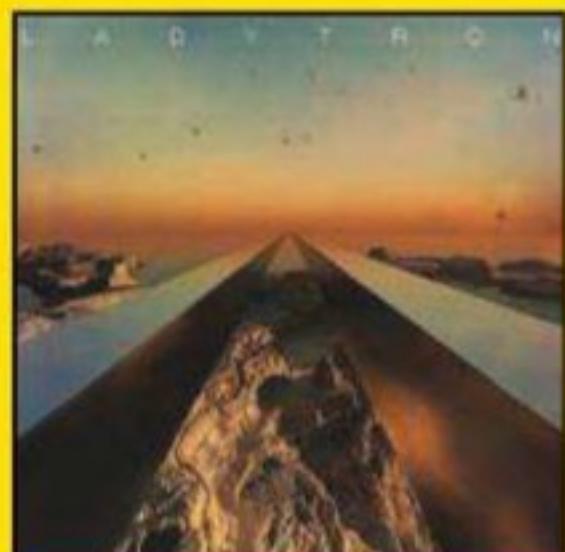
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jonathan wilson
gentle spirit



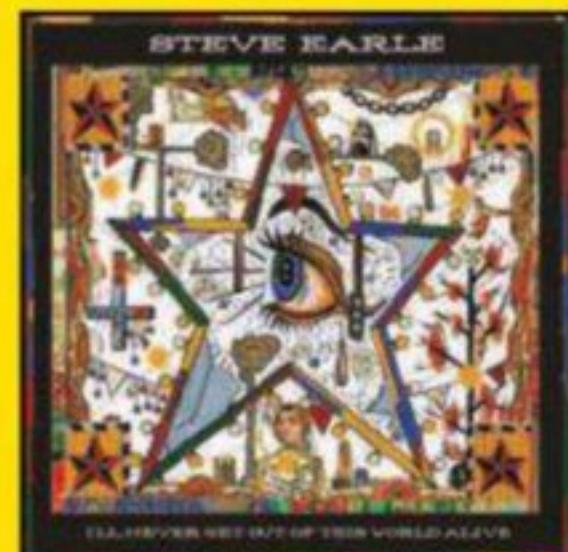
noah & the whale
last night on earth



ladytron
gravity the seducer



m83
hurry up, we're
dreaming



steve earle
i'll never get out of
this world alive

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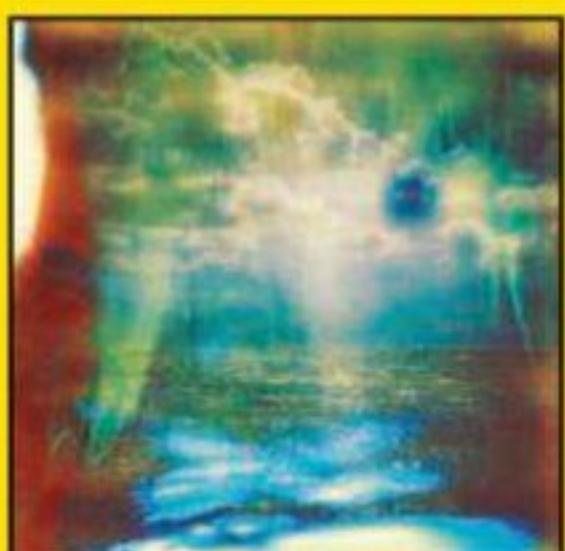
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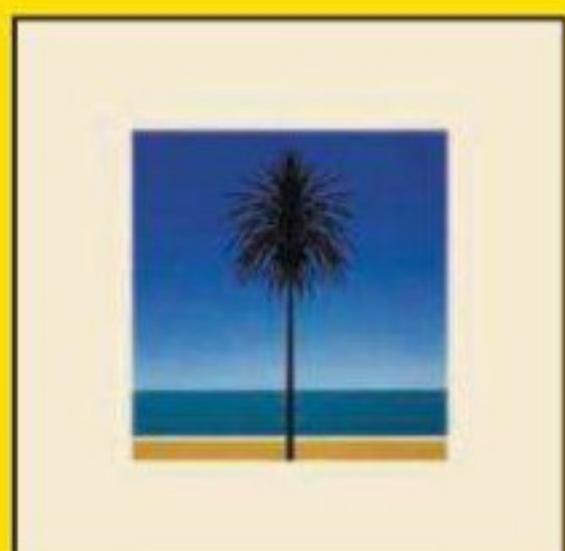
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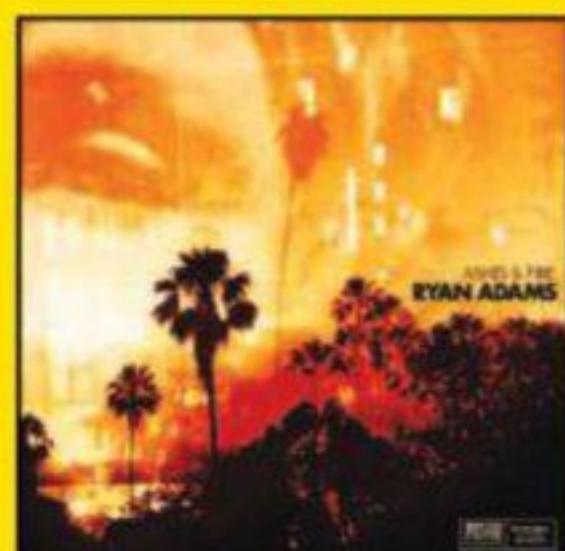
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UNCUT PRESENTS

THE REVIEW OF

2011

THE ESSENTIAL ALBUMS,
FILMS, DVDS & BOOKS
OF THE YEAR

Exquisite and rapacious comebacks... Meditations on agonising lost love, and the British seaside... New singer-songwriters who could have been cryogenically frozen in 1974, and others who audaciously dismantled tradition... The belated arrival of rock's most elusive classic... And, for the first time, one winner of both Uncut Album Of The Year (voted for by

our writers) and the Uncut Music Award (chosen by a seasoned and auspicious panel of judges). Over the next 30 pages, Uncut puts 2011 under the microscope, as we reveal our favourite new albums, reissues, films, DVDs and books, and interview two of the key players in an eventful year. Your thoughts on 2011 are, as ever, welcome: allan_jones@ipcmedia.com

FEATURING

PJ HARVEY PAGE 36

JONATHAN WILSON PAGE 50

THE DEFINITIVE TOP 50 ALBUMS OF THE YEAR PAGE 31

THE BEST REISSUES & COMPILATIONS PAGE 48

AND OUR SELECTION OF 2011'S FINEST FILMS PAGE 56

THE 50 BEST ALBUMS

50 UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA

Unknown Mortal Orchestra

TRUE PANTHER SOUNDS



Ruban Nielson is a New Zealander who used to record for Flying Nun; though he has since relocated to Portland, you could still detect that label's trademark skinny indie sound on UMO's debut. There was more, though: an ambulatory and charming take on psychedelia, and even a surprising funkiness.

49 ARBOURETUM

The Gathering

THRILL JOCKEY



The Baltimore band's fourth album—inspired by Carl Jung, it seems—found Dave Heumann and his ever-changing accomplices essaying a kind of stoner folk-rock, with elaborate Richard Thompson-esque tunes given an awe-inspiring psychedelic heft. A cover of Jimmy Webb's suitably Jungian "Highwayman" provided artful respite, too.

48 CORNERSHOP FEATURING BUBBLEY KAUR

Cornershop And The Double-O Groove Of

AMPLE PLAY



Tjinder Singh and Ben Ayres' latest capricious scheme involved the divine Bubbley Kaur, reputedly discovered in a laundrette. Kaur provided joyous Punjabi vocals, while Cornershop deployed their full arsenal of unsteady loops and breaks. Marvellously, "The Biro Pen" evoked an Indian folk recasting of "Grooving With Mr Bloe".

BUBBLING UNDER

DAVE ALVIN

Eleven Eleven

YEPROC

LUKE HAINES

Nine And A Half

Psychedelic

Meditations On

British Wrestling

Of The 1970s And

Early '80s

FANTASTIC PLASTIC

IRON AND WINE

Kiss Each Other

Clean

4AD

NICK LOWE

The Old Magic

PROPER

CONNAN MOCKASIN

Forever Dolphin

Love

PHANTASY/BECAUSE

NORTHSEA RADIO ORCHESTRA

I A Moon

THEHOUSEHOLDMARK

SHABAZZ PALACES

Black Up

SUBPOP

TV ON THE RADIO

Nine Types Of Light

POLYDOR

THUNDERCAT

The Golden Age Of

Apocalypse

BRAINFEEDER

WRETCH 32

Black And White

MOS/LEVELS

43 ST VINCENT

Strange Mercy

4AD



While mention of Annie Clark's spell in Sufjan Stevens' band remained a reflex action, it was also a good way of placing her characterful music. On her third album, she continued her

own ascent to the high table of contemporary American indie; a playful, baroque and subtly provocative talent.

42 JENNY HVAL

Viscera

RUNE GRAMMOFON



A folkish, theatrical Norwegian singer who previously recorded as Rockettothesky, Hval tapped into her local avant garde, with electronic help from Deathprod—but her own music was as raw and human as it was sonically uncompromising.

41 RAPHAEL SAADIQ

Stone Rollin'

COLUMBIA



The Tony! Toni! Toné! vet began the year playing alongside Mick Jagger in the Grammys' Solomon Burke tribute. And while *Stone Rollin'* expanded his range a little to include some choppy, White Stripes-ish rock, his metier remained consummate, inspiring soul revivalism.

40 KATE BUSH

50 Words For Snow

FISH PEOPLE/EMI

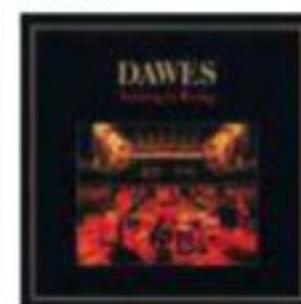


Six years on from *Aerial*, Bush—now huskier of voice—came in from the cold with two albums: the Director's Cut reworkings, and this extraordinary suite of winter songs. Also featuring, we should note, Elton John, Stephen Fry, and some rather eroticised snowmen and yetis.

39 DAWES

Nothing Is Wrong

LOOSE

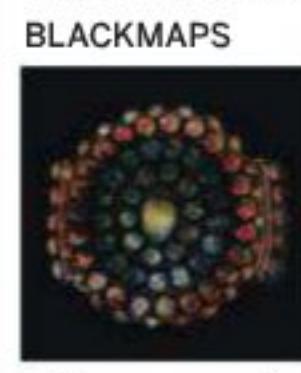


Alongside their producer Jonathan Wilson, the LA quartet were at the vanguard of the new Laurel Canyon scene, linking up with Jackson Browne (a clear influence) and Robbie Robertson (who employed them as a backing band). Rich harmonies, unabashed classicism and a persuasive second album.

38 HISS GOLDEN MESSANGER

From Country
Hai East Cotton

BLACKMAPS



MCTaylor followed up his rootsy, stripped-back *Bad Debt* with a first UK release for this crafted, imaginative take on cosmic American music. The songs themselves

CONTINUES



Snow queen:
Kate Bush

47 THE CARETAKER

An Empty Bliss Beyond This World

HISTORY ALWAYS FAVOURS THE WINNERS



An uncanny curio, this, as James Leyland Kirby—feted for his work in the eerie sampling field of hauntology—sought to reflect the fractured memories of Alzheimer's patients by creating a kind of ambient collage from battered 78s.

46 ICEAGE

New Brigade

ABEANO



The youthful Danish hipsters courted controversy, wielding knives and toying with dubious pagan imagery.

Their music, though, transcended such stunts, being a thrilling blend of

gothic-tinged post-punk and hardcore, like a cross between Joy Division and Black Flag.

45 MIKAL CRONIN

Mikal Cronin

TROUBLE IN MIND



A good year for garage rock, thanks to The People's Temple, Thee Oh Sees and this solo debut from Cronin.

The fuzzy exuberance sat alongside some fine songwriting, referencing Brian Wilson and The Everlys as much as underground ramalams.

44 TUNE-YARDS

WHOKILL

4AD



Merrill Garbus' penchant for writing her project name as tUnE-yArDs betrayed a certain quirkiness. But the gusto with which she mixed and matched global musics, often relying on her own eclectic voice, made a virtue of that eccentricity—and the questing imperative that drove it on.

43 ST VINCENT

Strange Mercy

4AD



While mention of Annie Clark's spell in Sufjan Stevens' band remained a reflex action, it was also a good way of placing her characterful music. On her third album, she continued her

remained folk-like gems, but the treatments were expansive, incorporating dub, a Steely Dan-ish veneer and a particularly horizontal type of funk.

37 LITTLE DRAGON Ritual Union

PEACEFROG



The Swedish band have become the obscure collaborators of choice for discerning musical

A-listers (Gorillaz, David Sitek, Big Boi, Raphael Saadiq), and their third album proved why. *Ritual Union* showcased their elegant brand of electropop, pleasingly understated and immune to fashionable whim.

36 JONNY Jonny

ALSATIAN



Euros Childs, once of Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, and Teenage Fanclub's Norman Blake pooled their considerable songwriting resources for their best work in an age. Some of *Jonny's* songs sounded like lost children's TV themes; others had the easygoing poignancy that both artists have long been masters of.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1997 BOB DYLAN
Time Out Of Mind COLUMBIA

1998 MERCURY REV
Deserter's Songs V2

1999 THE FLAMINGLIPS
The Soft Bulletin WARNER BROS

2000 LAMBCHOP
Nixon CITY SLANG

2001 RYAN ADAMS
Gold LOST HIGHWAY

2002 THE FLAMINGLIPS
Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots WARNER BROS

2003 WARREN ZEVON
The Wind ARTEMIS/RYKO

2004 BRIAN WILSON
Smile NONESUCH

2005 ARCADE FIRE
Funeral ROUGH TRADE

2006 BOB DYLAN
Modern Times COLUMBIA

2007 LCD SOUNDSYSTEM
Sound Of Silver DFA/EMI

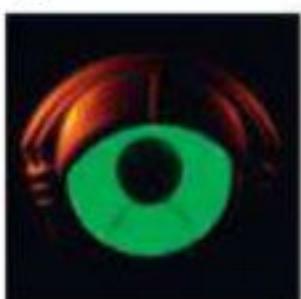
2008 PORTISHEAD
Third ISLAND

2009 ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
Merriweather Post Pavilion DOMINO

2010 JOANNA NEWSOM
Have One On Me DRAG CITY

35 MY MORNING JACKET Circuital

V2



A partial rapprochement from Jim James and his bandmates, after the R&B-tinged experiments of *Evil*

Urge. *Circuital* found MMJ back at home in Louisville, playing to some of their old live strengths as an expansive rock band, at once rootsy and adventurous.

34 FATOUMATA DIAWARA Fatou

WORLD CIRCUIT



Damon Albarn's recent Congolese project suggests the axis of power in African music may be shifting.

Nevertheless, the run of Malian stars continued with Diawara, a former actress with a strong, bluesy voice and a sound that was sweet, poppy but far from compromised.

33 LOW C'Mon

SUB POP



A mightily effective summary of the Duluth trio's two-decade career, *C'Mon* placed the stark and slow confessional with which Low made their name alongside fuller, more conventionally pretty folk-rock, Neil Young-ish freakouts and the odd, unlikely quote from gynaecological rapper Kool Keith.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 15

32 GIL SCOTT HERON & JAMIE XX

We're New Here

XL



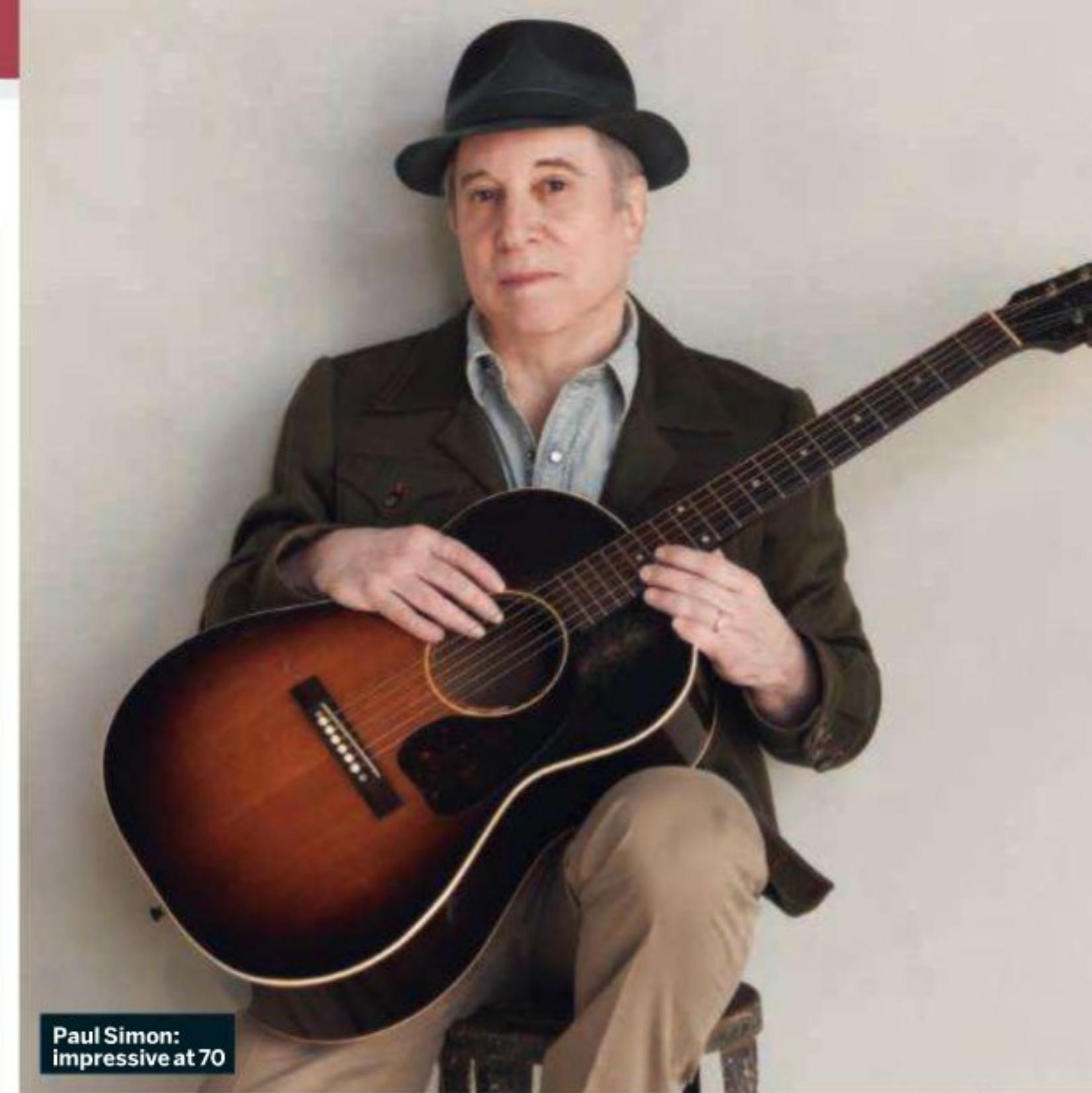
Heron's 2010 comeback, *I'm New Here*, was comprehensively reworked by The XX's nifty young producer, replacing the original smoked trip-hop with a mélange of contemporary electronic styles. An unlikely and vibrant epitaph for the ever-unpredictable Heron, who died soon after its release.

31 DESTROYER Kaputt

DEAD OCEANS



Dan Bejar has long been a Canadian indie rock institution, with the New Pornographers and with his own Destroyer. Still, *Kaputt* represented an audacious departure, with its highly manicured homages to the brainier end of '80s New Pop: Scritti, TalkTalk, Prefab Sprout et al.



Paul Simon:
impressive at 70

30 TIM HECKER Ravedeath, 1972

KRANKY



Hecker has straddled the worlds of ambience, post-classical music and the avant garde for a few years now, but his seventh solo album provided a breakthrough of sorts. *Ravedeath, 1972* was engrossing, gaseous music, with its sacred air compounded by Hecker's main instrument of choice, the pipe organ of the Icelandic church in which the album was recorded.

29 PAUL SIMON So Beautiful Or So What

DECCA



Just as his old records were being awarded suitably forensic reissues, Simon approached the momentous occasion of his 70th birthday seemingly creatively refreshed. His 12th solo album was one of his best, an impeccably crafted, erudite and rueful collection of songs that tackled spirituality with both sureness and lightness of touch.

28 KING CREOSOTE & JON HOPKINS

Diamond Mine

DOMINO



A concept album about life in a Scottish village, made with a composer more often associated with Eno and Coldplay (Hopkins), proved to be an unlikely breakthrough for doughty Scottish folksinger Kenny Anderson. A low-key record, but one blessed with uncommon empathy, both lyrical and musical.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 11

27 BJÖRK Biophilia

ONE LITTLE INDIAN



The hype around Björk's eighth solo album focused mostly on *Biophilia*'s groundbreaking apps and the newly invented instruments that formed a striking part of her live performances throughout the year. It could not quite obscure, however, the fundamental brilliance of the actual music, which proved to be a ravishing negotiation between cutting-edge technology and emotional viscera.

26 THE DECEMBERISTS The King Is Dead

ROUGH TRADE



REM's *Collapse Into Now* arrived in March, but many discerning listeners would argue that 2011's quintessential REM LP was actually made by another band, Portland's ever-studious Decemberists. Peter Buck (joined by Gillian Welch) made the link explicit when he guested on a clutch of warm, literate country-rock songs.

25 BILL CALLAHAN Apocalypse

DRAG CITY



The former Smog man sold his 14th album as a conceptual piece, possibly involving a cattle-drover facing personal apocalypse. As ever, the meaning was inscrutable, but Callahan's wit, timing and slow genius with a tune was gripping, not least when he intoned the album's catalogue number at its death.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 7

Tinariwen with Kyp Malone (centre) and Tunde Adebimpe (second right) of TV On The Radio



24 REAL ESTATE

Days DOMINO



The '80s revival seems to have been running for 20 years now, but few bands have recreated the spidery, suburban jangle of that decade as sensitively as Real Estate. New Jersey forebears The Feelies were an obvious touchstone, along with Felt, on this second beguiling album.

23 THURSTON MOORE

Demolished Thoughts

MATADOR



At the time of writing, Sonic Youth's future is uncertain, following the separation of Moore and Kim Gordon. Myriad leftfield jams will doubtless proliferate, but *Demolished Thoughts*, produced by Beck Hansen, posited another way forward for

Moore, recasting his signature sound in appealing folksinger garb.

22 GANG GANG DANCE

Eye Contact



While the flood of adventurous Brooklyn bands ebbed a little in 2011, the scene's originators went from strength to strength. GGD's fourth album brilliantly fused rave-pop and dance music with psychedelia, and provided a Technicolor companion piece to Björk's *Biophilia*.

21 JAMES BLAKE

James Blake



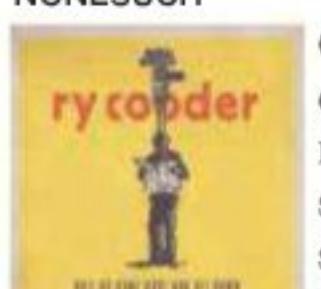
A feted dubstep producer, Blake's debut album revealed him to be an innovative singer-songwriter too, deconstructing his songs so that they

became spare, beat-strewn and strikingly plaintive. A kindred spirit to The XX, but also to Bon Iver, with whom he eventually collaborated.

20 RY COODER

Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down

NONESUCH



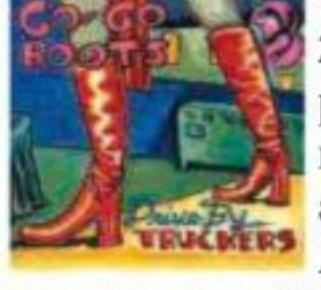
Cooder's hot streak continued with this rowdy, indignant set of American folk songs for a new Depression, inspired by his loathing of the bankers and Republicans he believed were destroying his country. The sort of album one imagines Woody Guthrie would have made in 2011.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 12

19 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

Go-Go Boots

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

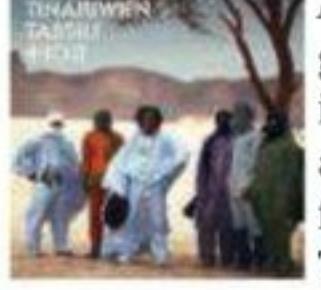


The sessions for 2010's *The Big To-Do* provided enough material for two albums, but *Go-Go Boots* felt like anything but offcuts. Instead, it found the Truckers privileging their country-soul chops on a bunch of songs appealingly described by singer and guitarist Patterson Hood as "R'n'B murder ballads".

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 8

18 TINARIWEN

Tassili v2



As their influence grew, both internationally and locally (with flourishing young Touareg bands like Tamikrest and Terakaft), **CONTINUES**



Real Estate: staking their claim

THE 20 BEST AMERICANA ALBUMS



1 GILLIAN WELCH
The Harrow & The Harvest
ACONY

2 WILCO
The Whole Love DBPM/ANTI

3 JONATHAN WILSON
Gentle Spirit BELLA UNION

4 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
Go-Go Boots PIAS

5 RY COODER
Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down NONESUCH

6 BILL CALLAHAN
Apocalypse DRAG CITY

7 THE DECEMBERISTS
The King Is Dead ROUGH TRADE

8 HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER
From Country Hail East Cotton
BLACK MAPS

9 DAWES
Nothing Is Wrong LOOSE

10 DAVE ALVIN
Eleven Eleven YEP ROC

11 IRON AND WINE
Kiss Each Other Clean 4AD

12 GREGG ALLMAN
Low Country Blues DECCA

13 FRANK FAIRFIELD
Out On The Open West
TOMPKINS SQUARE

14 THE JAYHAWKS
Mockingbird Time DECCA

15 THE LOW ANTHEM
Smart Flesh BELLA UNION

16 RYAN ADAMS
Ashes And Fire COLUMBIA

17 LUCINDA WILLIAMS
Blessed LOST HORIZON

18 THE FELICE BROTHERS
Celebration, Florida LOOSE

19 RICHMOND FONTAINE
The High Country ELCORTEZ

20 GLEN CAMPBELL
Ghost On The Canvas SURFDOG

THE 50 BEST ALBUMS CONT...

Tinariwen cannily returned to the Sahara, making their rootsiest, most stripped-back album yet, while simultaneously allowing members of TV On The Radio and Wilco into their circle.

17 FEIST

Metals POLYDOR



Adele might have been the dominant pop-soul presence in 2011, but Leslie Feist made a vastly superior, if far less ubiquitous album this year. Four years on from her "1234" hit, Feist's third solo album was an intimate, plushly melodic wonder, pitched halfway between Laura Nyro and Fiona Apple.

16 JONATHAN WILSON

Gentle Spirit

BELLA UNION



The new king of Laurel Canyon emerged as the best-connected musician you've never previously heard of, and his debut album properly showed why: a baked, beatific, old-fashioned record strong enough for songwriter and producer Wilson to be judged not as a copyist of his many influences, but as a peer.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 14

15 WILCO

The Whole Love

DBPM/ANTI



A high-spec DIY vibe prevailed over Wilco's eighth album, recorded in their loft and released on their own label. Musically, it was all over the map, embracing power-pop, their riskiest jams in years, and a hushed folk strain that culminated in a new classic, the 12-minute closer "One Sunday Morning".

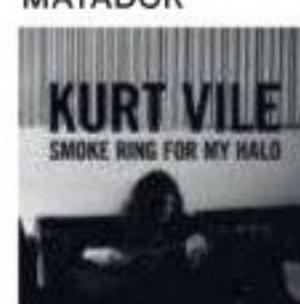
ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 5

JESSE DYLAN: DEIDRE O'CALLAGHAN: GUY EPPEL

14 KURT VILE

Smoke Ring For My Halo

MATADOR



Philadelphian Kurt Vile (his real name) enhanced his next-generation slacker cred by guesting on this year's J Mascis acoustic joint, *Seven Shades Of Why*. He bettered that, though, with his own latest opus and its memorable songs that simultaneously sounded both crafted and spontaneous.

13 TOM WAITS

Bad As Me

ANTI



Exuberant, tender, truly idiosyncratic, Waits' first album of new songs in seven years was a stunner. On an album that

felt like an all-new greatest hits, Waits revisited most of the voices deployed in his career, and added a couple of new ones: a demented rockabilly yowl and a feminine falsetto.

12 FLEET FOXES

Helplessness Blues

BELLA UNION



Robin Pecknold had a tough job to follow the gilded Foxes debut, but he acquitted himself well, with a discreet expansion of the band's sound, and an increased focus—beneath those gorgeous and dense harmonies—on his awkwardly maturing psyche.

11 LAURA MARLING

A Creature I Don't Know

VIRGIN



Another rapidly maturing artist, Marling's third album (aged 21) emphasised the artistic chasm between her nuanced folk-pop—now with a Joni-ish jazz tinge—and the



Tom Waits: an exuberant return

cruder roistering of English peers like Mumford & Sons and Noah & The Whale.

10 THE WAR ON DRUGS

Slave Ambient

SECRETLY CANADIAN



Kurt Vile's old bandmates remained close to him (frontman Adam Granduciel continued to serve in Vile's band) while blowing up a similar musical vision to epic proportions. Granduciel's songs had a guyish, Springsteen-like intimacy, but came judiciously wrapped in gauzy, stadium-sized spacerock.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 2

9 BON IVER

Bon Iver

4AD



Justin Vernon's adventures with Kanye West and Gayngs signposted that the follow-up to *For Emma...* would

be less folkish and solipsistic, and so it proved. *Bon Iver* was ambitious, fanatically detailed, but still warm and poignant, even when Vernon was referencing AOR warhorses like Bruce Hornsby.

8 WILD BEASTS

Smother

DOMINO



The Lake District quartet's reputation as young standard-bearers of English art-rock was cemented further by their third album. This time, the yodelling eccentricities were toned down in favour of a sensuous, enveloping ambience that owed much to cerebral '80s antecedents, most notably Talk Talk.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 9

7 RADIOHEAD

The King Of Limbs



As with 2007's *In Rainbows*, comment on Radiohead's eighth album was initially dominated by the guerrilla-like nature of its release. Again, though, its musical brilliance soon emerged: a suite of eight limber, nagging songs whose organic and electronic origins became more blurred than ever.

6 THE HORRORS

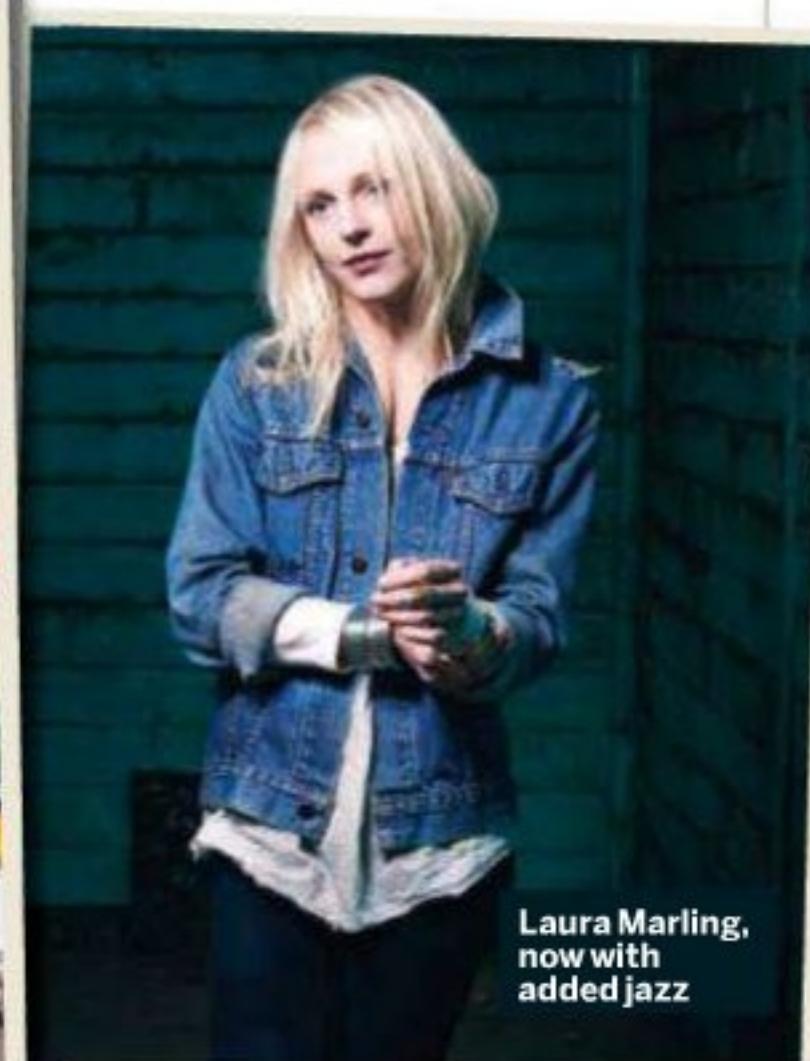
Skying



Formerly pigeonholed as semi-competent goths, The Horrors' continuing evolution was startling, as their



White Denim: redefining garage rock

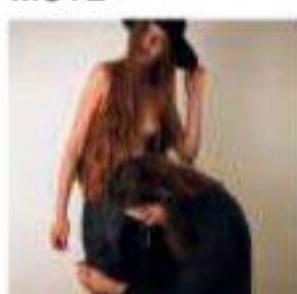


Laura Marling, now with added jazz

third album built on the My Bloody Valentine skree of *Primary Colours* and added an anthemic new punch, resulting in songs reminiscent, in many places, of Simple Minds in their aesthetic pomp.

5 JOSH T PEARSON Last Of The Country Gentlemen

MUTE



Ten years on from his sole album with Lift To Experience, frontman Josh T Pearson – biblical of beard and wild of eye – looked like he'd been alone in the wilderness for the last decade. His solo debut, though, told a labyrinthine story of lost love, through slowly unravelling songs and a fearless, unnerving intensity.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 1

4 WHITE DENIM

D

DOWNTOWN



Initially presumed to be Texan garage rockers, White Denim's rampant virtuosity went into overdrive on the Austin quartet's fourth album, with a set of 10 songs that often forged common ground between squalling Southern rock and the spiralling intricacies of prog and post-rock. Ceaselessly inventive, and quite exhilarating.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 6

3 METRONOMY The English Riviera

BECAUSE



Metronomy's first two albums made scant impact at *Uncut*, but their third became happily omnipresent: a dazzling blend of West Coast vibes, '80s synthpop and more recent French indie (cf Phoenix) that provided a soundtrack for Joseph Mount's reflections on a sunny Devon childhood.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 13

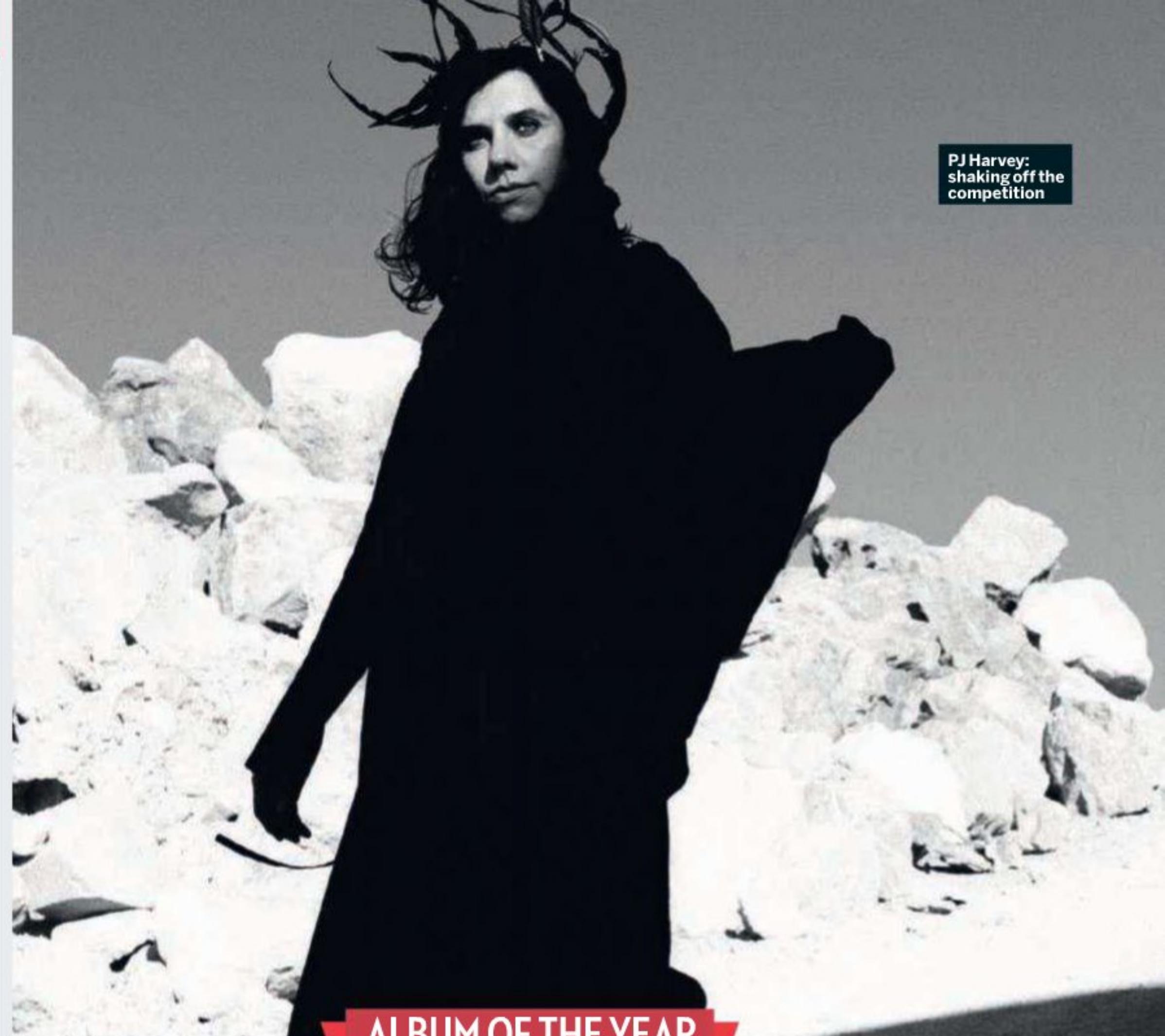
2 GILLIAN WELCH The Harrow & The Harvest

ACONY



Another album whose lengthy gestation (eight years since *Soul Journey*) felt entirely justified. Welch and David Rawlings' pathological attention to detail meant that these bare and finely wrought new country-folk songs, rendered with guitar, banjo, two voices and the odd foot-stamp, had the gravity and resonance of old standards.

ON YOUR FREE CD TRACK 3



PJ Harvey:
shaking off the
competition

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1 PJ HARVEY Let England Shake

ISLAND



"I feel like, at this moment in time, this album came together in all the right conditions," PJ Harvey tells

Uncut this month, and *Let England Shake*'s arrival in February certainly felt serendipitous. With a sort of

febrile allusiveness, Harvey talked of war and the impact of war, and about the anxieties of nationality, using a simple but sophisticated musical language that was immediately seized upon by so many listeners disenchanted with contemporary British music.

As it turned out, *Let England Shake* ushered in a strong year for British artists (see *The English Uprising*, below), and a year of profound

conflict, on myriad levels. The album's strongest qualities, though, were timeless: words and music that complemented one another beautifully; intelligence, emotional commitment, craftsmanship and creativity stitched together in auspicious fashion. And a subtly articulate discourse on the history of human folly that, while perfect for 2011, would have been tragically salient in any other year, too.

THE ENGLISH UPRISE

Why 2011 has been a good year for homegrown artists...

SINCE OUR FIRST issue, *Uncut* has tended towards the belief that the most vital new music was born in the USA. From *Deserter's Song* to *Modern Times*, Flaming Lips to Animal Collective, James Murphy to Joanna Newsom, we've celebrated American artists who've lit out for the new territory. While honouring enduring homegrown talents like Robert Wyatt, Paul Weller and Robert Plant, or bright sparks like the Arctic Monkeys, it was easy to believe that too much homegrown music was, as the inescapable term had it, so much landfill indie.

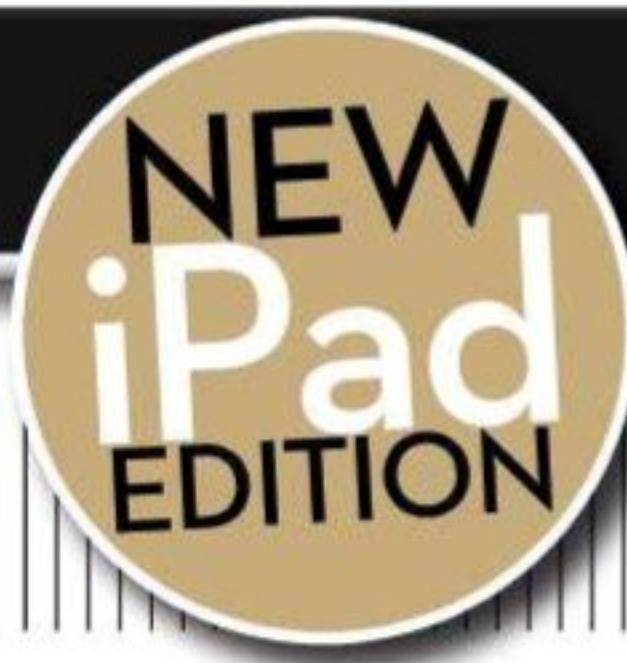
2011 may have been the year, however, when old roots and strange new blooms sprouted up through the debris. For the first time, English artists made up half of our end-of-year Top 10. Radiohead and PJ Harvey, both in the third decade of their careers, made two of their strongest records yet. Younger acts – Metronomy and Wild

Beasts, Laura Marling, even The Horrors – outgrew the customary hype, quietly maturing into their distinctive mid-careers. The defining reissues of 2011 were those of Roy Harper's back catalogue. The most eagerly anticipated comebacks of the coming year may well be from The XX and These New Puritans. Even Kate Bush – the queen, if you like, of Old Weird Albion – chose to make her return in 2011.

Is this new vitality simply a coincidence? The seesaw of fashion? Or is it a collective musical response to cultural atmospheric disturbance? The last time the country seemed so precarious was the mid-'70s, when a sense of national crisis, the end of the postwar settlement, produced both Thatcherism and punk. Could the current national mood, the ongoing earthquake, result in something similarly profound? If England continues to shake, we may be in for interesting times.

TURN TO PAGE 36
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PJ HARVEY INTERVIEW

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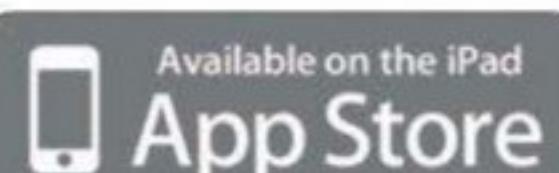
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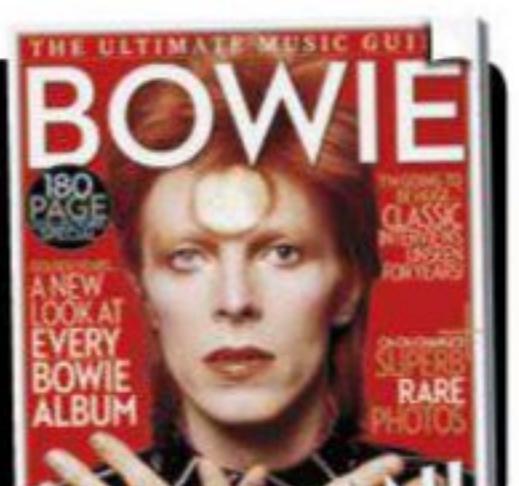
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ARTIST OF THE YEAR

The Queen Of England

In tempestuous times, *Let England Shake* confirmed PJ HARVEY as one of the most important musicians of the last two decades. To celebrate that album's crowning as Album Of The Year, *Uncut* heads west to encounter Polly Jean Harvey on her Dorset home turf, and to reveal the vision behind *Let England Shake* and its illustrious predecessors. "It is," she says, "such a dangerous tightrope to walk."

WORDS BY STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAMUS MURPHY



IT'S THE LAST MORNING of the blazing Indian summer and London feels like a movie set. Across town a raggle-taggle platoon marches to St Paul's with plans to occupy the Stock Exchange. Here at Waterloo, the station is thronged with ladies in implausible hats and booted, suited wideboys studying the *Racing Post*, all waiting for the early train to Ascot. We're here for a different pilgrimage, a journey to the deep green heart of the country to meet the artist who has charted, more acutely than anyone, the latest uncanny episode in England's dreaming.

Back to the engine, gazing out through the window, with PJ Harvey's *Let England Shake* soundtracking the speeding trainscape, it's as if you're being dragged backwards into the past by ghosts of the nation's unquiet dead. Through the dozing, dappled home counties, across the Downs, out past multiplexes and retail parks to the docks, container sheds and glittering ocean, and into the album's vale of myth and mortality—of "the grey, damp filthiness of ages and battered books/And fog rolling down behind the mountains/On the graveyards and dead sea captains", as she sings on "The Last Living Rose". Intoxicated by this potent cocktail of song and landscape, you step off the train half expecting to find Polly Harvey holding court in some ancient smuggler's dell, stalking a bombed-out church or addressing the English Channel from the Cobb of a storm-wrecked bay. (Patti Smith, for one, seems similarly enchanted. "I like her," she tells *Uncut*. "I like her range. She is fiercely modern and has the heart of a shepherd girl.")

In fact, we meet in a bright, British-modern hotel in a Dorset market town, where wine glasses tinkle to the sound of Adele and the mushy peas fancy themselves as purée. Polly appears dressed head-to-toe in black, but more in the style of a discreetly hip curator than the East End funeral-horse look she has adopted for recent performances. As we talk, though she maintains the poise that characterises every aspect of her art these days, there's one unsettling reminder of the strife that has fed it. On the street outside the hotel window, there's a market stall. But where you might expect a display of surfwear and stoner T-shirts, instead it seems to be doing brisk trade selling paramilitary surveillance kit and camouflage combat gear for children.

Congratulations, Polly, on an incredible year. Short of a No 1 record, it's hard to imagine how it could have gone better...

"It's been a wonderful year. Really amazing. Obviously whenever you make a new piece of work, you don't think how it might be received at that point, you just follow the direction the work is taking you. And I had no idea how people would receive the record, even when we had finished it. I knew I was very pleased with it. And I knew that I had achieved what I set out to do, which isn't always the case. Often when I start recording I think I'm heading in one direction, but find myself veering off somewhere else and don't quite get where I want to. But I knew with this record it had absolutely gone where I had hoped it would."

Your Mercury Prize felt almost more like a coronation than a simple album of the year award. Yet you received similar acclaim for *Stories From The City...*, which you've subsequently said isn't your favourite album. How do you measure the success of your work?

{ "It was surreal to sit down next to David Cameron, have a conversation and then perform a song like 'The Last Living Rose'" }

"For me the most important thing is to hopefully create and achieve what I desire at the onset of the project. And I'm quite a good judge myself of whether I've managed to do that or not. And it's not often that I will make a record like *Let England Shake*, where I know after I've finished writing it that that's a very strong piece of work and I couldn't have done any better. That doesn't happen very often."

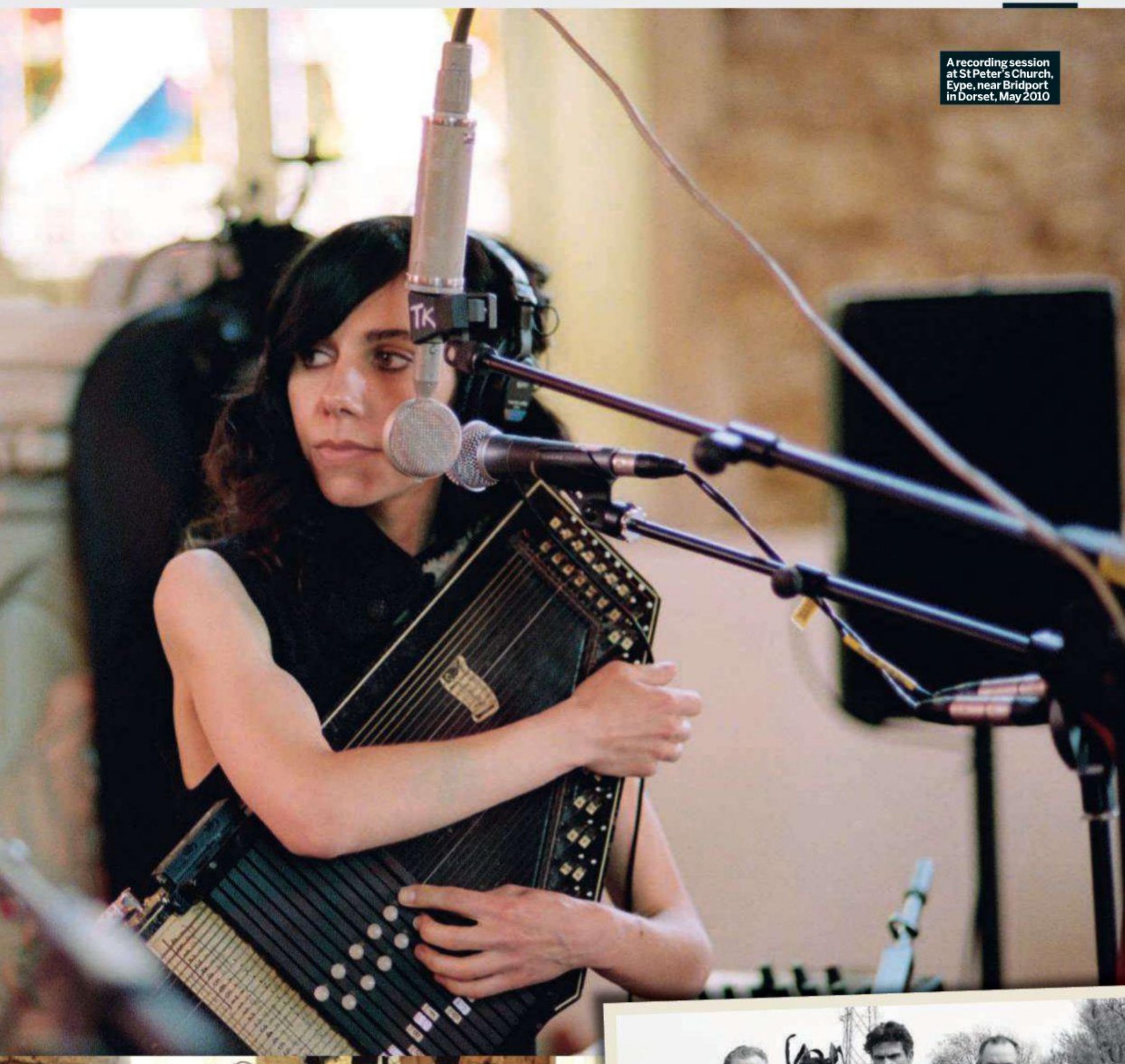


Having said that, I knew that for me, *White Chalk* was an album like that, too. I had a very clear idea of what I was setting out to do with that piece and I felt that I did it, and I think it's a really strong album. For me it's a very successful album! But in terms of how many it sells it doesn't make sense at all."

BY FEARFUL SYMMETRY the campaign for *Let England Shake* was bookended by two television appearances on Andrew Marr's Sunday morning politics show. In the first—in April 2010, a couple of weeks before the General Election—she appeared strumming an autoharp and singing the album's title siren song before Gordon Brown, visibly crumpled in the

CONTINUES OVER*

A recording session
at St Peter's Church,
Eype, near Bridport
in Dorset, May 2010



(l-r) Mick Harvey,
Poly Harvey,
Jean-Marc Butty,
John Parish

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

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Queen of darkness:
live at Manchester
Apollo, September
8, 2011



desperate final days of his premiership. And then in September 2011, she challenged the oleaginous David Cameron on his part in steering us towards a world where "economic gain is the only goal of worth", before singing a death-defying "The Last Living Rose".

Did you get any sense of whether Brown or Cameron engaged with your songs?

"In those situations you have no opportunity, really, to talk to them. It's all so fleeting. Understandably, because there's so many other people around and they are doing 30 different things at any one time. I had a brief word with David Cameron, but in no way was I able to have a conversation."

It must have felt like a remarkable opportunity, to sing directly to people in power?

"Of course. It was an amazing opportunity. It almost felt surreal, to be in that situation, very early in the morning in a brightly lit television studio, having that moment, when I could sit down next to David Cameron and then perform a song like 'The Last Living Rose'. I was so glad to have been asked to do that."

In the brief time you were in the studio together, Cameron said his wife, Samantha, had bought the album following the Mercury Prize and was enjoying it. Johnny Marr famously forbade Cameron from liking The Smiths. Do you

think that's silly? Do you worry about the wrong people liking your work? In some ways it's quite easy to imagine very conservative people enjoying *Let England Shake*. And they might not be wrong?

"I think it's open to many interpretations, an album like this. I wanted very much to write a piece that was open to many different interpretations and was quite ambiguous. But I've always had a strong belief that when a record is finished and when it goes into the public domain I let go of it and have no power over it. It belongs to the people."



The singer and the statesman: with David Cameron on *The Andrew Marr Show*, October 2, 2011

It's fair to say that Polly Harvey herself sometimes talks with the guardedness of a well-drilled politician. The hint of any spin on a question, any murmur of interpretation or the suggestion of intention, is met with the straightest of bats, an almost Boycottian, steadfast deliberation. Ask, for example, whether there isn't something slightly dangerous, a Morrissey-esque frisson of provocation, in singing about "goddamn

“When I embarked on *Let England Shake*, I was quite prepared to fail. I didn’t know if I’d be able to do it at all, let alone do it well”

Europeans", of stagnant English blood and foreign soil, and the response is polite but diffusive.

"Yes it's provocative in that way," she admits. "And I've always wanted to be an artist that provokes a response in a listener, always. I want people to think about things. At the same time, I don't hang on to something when it's gone out to the public, because it would drive me mad! You can't survive like that as an artist – I'm just speaking for myself, maybe other people can! But I have to let go of it. I can't look after that work and tell people how to take it. In some

ways, it doesn't matter who the artist was who created the piece, ultimately it has to exist on its own. After I'm dead and gone, hopefully people will still want to listen to that record. That leaves the work much more open to travel."

She learned very soon not to give too much of herself, except in her art. "Everything happened very fast when I was very young," she says, remembering her early days in London 1991/92, the media storm that greeted "Sheela-Na-Gig", her first *NME* cover, the intensity of the response she inspired. "I had to learn very quickly how to cope with interviews, things like becoming more public, being on stage more, being recognised. It's very difficult at a young age to deal with, especially coming from a very sheltered upbringing."

I*FLETENGLAND SHAKE* is the album of 2011 it's because of the richness of its conception and writing, the ghostly dramatic polyphony that suggests that the English Civil War never really ended. But it's

also because of the maturity and majesty of its delivery – the marching, fighting, drinking and mourning songs, tunes that feel like they've already lived a century or two, coupled with a voice in its forties still discovering new characters to play, and, on "Battleship Hill", giving the performance of a lifetime. And finally, because of the way it has chimed so

uncannily and powerfully with the times.

What happened between those two Andrew Marr performances? A seismic year and a half of regime change, fiscal brutality, occupations, demonstrations, crumbling media dynasties, financial panic, riot and ultimately English cities in flames. If they were ever to bring back *The Rock & Roll Years*, the old BBC TV show that rubbed news footage up against the hit parade of the day and watched the sparks fly, for the episode on 2011 they could do worse than simply set the rolling news cycles to the sound of *Let England Shake*.

CONTINUES OVER*

History in the making

The rise and rise of PJ Harvey, at a glance

October 9, 1969:

Born in Bridport, Dorset

July 1988: Joins

John Parish's band Automatic Dlamini on sax and guitar

January 1991:

Forms eponymous trio with Rob Ellis and Ian Olliver. Debut show at a skittle alley in Sherborne. Olliver replaced by Stephen Vaughan

June 1991: Relocates to London. Defers a place at St Martins when signed by Too Pure



October 1991: "Dress" is deemed Single Of The Week by John Peel in *Melody Maker*

March 1992: Debut album *Dry* is released

June 1992: Signs to Island

April 1993: Appears topless on *NME* cover

May 1993: *Rid Of Me*

August 1993: PJ Harvey trio split

February 1994: Performs the Stones' "Satisfaction" with Björk at the Brit Awards

February 1995: *To Bring You My Love*

February 1996: Duets with Nick Cave on "Henry Lee". The couple fall in love on the video shoot

September 1996: *Dance Hall At Louse Point* with John Parish

May 1998: Guests on Tricky single "Broken Homes"

September 1998:

Is This Desire?

October 1998:

Appears in Hal Hartley's film *Book Of Life*

October 2000:

Stories From The City, Stories From The Sea

August 2001: Guests on *It's A Wonderful Life* by Sparklehorse

September 2001: *City...* wins her first Mercury Prize

2003: Guests on Josh Homme's *Desert Sessions Vols 9 and 10*

May 2004: *Uh Huh Her*

August 2004: Appears on Mark Lanegan's *Bubblegum*

January 2005: Guests on *After The Poison* by Marianne Faithfull

September 2007:

White Chalk

January 2009: Scores stage production of *Hedda Gabler*

March 2009: *A Woman A Man Walked By* with John Parish

February 2011:

Let England Shake

April 2011: Performs before Cameron on *Andrew Marr Show*

September 2011: Wins second Mercury Prize

December 2011: *Uncut Artist Of The Year*

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

"I was just responding to what I felt compelled to do at the time," Polly says now, a little mystified at the suggestion that the artist might be, in Ezra Pound's words, "the antenna of the race". "It was just responding to the world we live in," she admits. "It's just coincided with this continuing seismic action, to use your words, with what's happening now. I could never have foreseen it would fit in today, or even the time it came out, because I began writing it two and a half, three years ago. So it's just the way things have evolved suit the record really well."

Ask what was the first mystical inkling she had of the mood and direction of the album and she is quick to steer the conversation back on-message.

"I had wanted for many, many years to begin to explore my feelings towards the wider world in song, to what goes on that we read about and hear about through the news. I've always been very affected by what's happening in the world. Profoundly so. I feel so moved by things every day. And such a feeling of impotence, like we all do. What can you possibly do to change anything? I'd long wanted to be able to start to bring these feelings into songs and I didn't know how. And I also knew that I would have to do it very well or not do it all. It's such a dangerous tightrope to walk. I really didn't want to write bad songs on such important matters. And often your heart can be in the right place, but that doesn't mean you're going to do good work. So I was very wary of that.

"Part of the reason this album happened was that, as a writer, I was finally at the stage where I was more confident that I could carry it off. I had more craft of language at my disposal than I had before. And it was that coupled with the greater sense of urgency and frustration, and that feeling of impotence. It was those two things that made me think, 'OK, if I'm feeling this profoundly moved, upset, frustrated by what's happening, can I use that in song?'"

Throughout *Let England Shake* there are echoes and allusions to earlier artists wrestling with national disgrace, from the seedy

homesickness of "The Last Living Rose", recalling both "The Queen Is Dead" and

William Blake, through to the chords of "The Dark Places" echoing "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out", and "The Colour Of The Earth" picking up something of The Clash's "Straight To Hell". Polly herself has suggested that two major inputs were the dreamy

devastation of The Doors and the bilious poetry of the first two Pogues albums.

Founding Pogue Spider Stacy is touchingly gobsmacked at the suggestion of influence. "I am beyond flattered that she should have been listening to us while making a record of such beauty as *Let England Shake*. There is no one else like her. She's peerless, one of the very few contemporary artists in any discipline whose clarity and profundity of vision have sharpened and deepened over the years to a point where she now seems to be working



in a field defined only by herself. Her empathy, her erudition, the sense of the connection between blood and clay and the bones and roots of the world echo something that could so nearly be lost, but is always somewhere to be found, hovering in the air or lying in the soil below us: the dark red life of these rainy islands."

"I'm not a great poet, I'm not a great novelist. I write songs, that is my strength. It's frustrating – I'd love to be a better poet"

Polly, were you conscious of contributing to this canon of state-of-the-nation albums?

"No, I wasn't conscious of joining a wider body of what had gone before. Although some of those artists are my favourites: The Clash – fantastic! The Smiths – amazing! But I knew that whatever I ended up with would be my own language, my own way of doing it. When I embarked on *Let England Shake* I was quite prepared to fail. There'd been a number of times I'd worked towards writing an album like this and abandoning it because it wasn't very

good. I was quite prepared for that to happen again. I wasn't imagining joining some band of brothers who'd gone before and done it well. I didn't know whether I'd be able to do it all, let alone do it well."

IT'S A TRADITION in writing about PJ Harvey that each album is presented as a reaction to the one before: so after the bleeding raw *Rid Of Me*, the darkly cinematic *To Bring You My Love*; after the glittering pinnacles of *Stories From The City...*, the wilfully sketchy *Uh Huh Her*. In this narrative, *Let England Shake* has been covered as an escape from the harrowing autobiographical grief of *White*

Chalk into the wider world of issues – war, politics and history. It's a simplified reading, ignoring the deeper currents and continuities of her career. *Let England Shake* in particular has suffered from a certain literal-mindedness, read as though it were a straightforward history project, complete with footnotes and references to Wilfred Owen and Harold Pinter, Goya and Gallipoli. As though it were documentary rather than poetry.

Warfare and conflict has long been part of Harvey's metaphorical arsenal, **CONTINUES OVER»**



Clockwise from left: performing at The Academy, New York City, June 7, 1995; after her split with Nick Cave, 1998; with John Parish for *A Woman A Man Walked By*, 2009

The immaculate auteur...

Your guide to PJ Harvey's albums



DRY TOO PURE, 1992

★★★★

The astonishingly assured debut, transforming delta blues damnation through the sensibility of a Yeovil teenager, proved that "Sheela-Na-Gig" was no fluke.



RID OF ME ISLAND, 1993

★★★★

The major label debut is, thanks to the production of Steve Albini, rawer than *Dry* and, on "50ft Queenie", more fabulously extreme.



4-TRACK DEMOS

ISLAND, 1993

★★★

Released following the break-up of the original trio – so effectively the debut of PJ Harvey, solo artist – these demos and unreleased tracks revealed the immaculate auteur occasionally obscured by Albini's production.



TO BRING YOU MY LOVE ISLAND, 1995

★★★★

With Flood, Bad Seed Mick Harvey and mentor John Parish on board, Harvey's widescreen Biblical torchsongs effectively broke America.

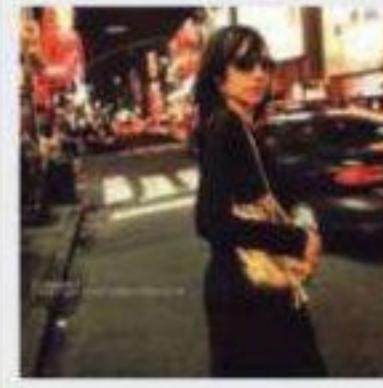


IS THIS DESIRE?

ISLAND, 1998

★★★

Written in the course of her break-up with Nick Cave, *Is This Desire?* marked a songwriting departure into the third person, with Flood's production darkening into a trip-hop fug.



STORIES FROM THE CITY, STORIES FROM THE SEA ISLAND, 2000

★★★★

Her most polished pop album to date saw a commercial revival and universal critical acclaim, including the first of her Mercury prizes.



UH HUH HER ISLAND, 2004

★★★

A return to lo-fi self-produced experimentation after the glittering peaks of ...*City*, *Uh Huh Her* proved a necessarily sketchy exercise in rediscovering her artistic *raison d'être*.



WHITE CHALK ISLAND, 2007

★★★★

Personal grief, fascination with Russian literature, and a renewed sense of writerly ambition made *White Chalk* a harrowing but triumphant return to form.



LET ENGLAND SHAKE ISLAND, 2011

★★★★★

Twenty years into her career, her finest album to date: a polyphonic spree charting England in conflict, referencing wars past and present.

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

On home turf:
Polly Harvey in
Dorset, 1993



her way of writing about the battlefields of love and life. Way back on "Plants And Rags", from 1992's *Dry*, she sang of easing herself into a bodybag. On her 2009 collaboration with John Parish, *A Woman A Man Walked By*, on "The Soldier", an eerie song that lays the ground for *Let England Shake*, she sang "*I imagine a dream in which I'm a soldier/And I'm walking on the faces of dead women/And everyone I left behind me...*"

"There are many others," Polly agrees. "On *White Chalk* there was 'The Mountain'. Even as far back as *Dance Hall At Louse Point* there was 'Civil War Correspondent'."

So the opposition between *White Chalk* and *Let England Shake*, between supposed autobiography and historical research, is really not so clear-cut?

"I totally agree with you. The last two records are a progression in my capabilities as a writer. I think I'm a better songwriter now, just through having a bit more experience. So the songs on both those records are much more cohesive or strong, they hang together better. They just seem more accomplished."

If the run of albums from *To Bring You My Love* through *Is This Desire?* to *Stories From The City...* and *Uh Huh Her* might be subtitled, after one her songs, "The Desperate Kingdom Of Love", *White Chalk* and *Let England Shake*, could be the sequel: "The Treacherous Kingdom Of Death". The albums feel like parallel explorations of the same theme in

different keys, like the fugue Virginia Woolf managed in *Mrs Dalloway*, between the domestic dissatisfactions of Clarissa and the war trauma of Septimus.

"I think my work has always been a desire to move forward and away from what I've done before. But for years I've tried to explain that my work's not autobiographical. And *White Chalk* wasn't any more than this one, but it was a time when I was very interested in exploring the inner psyche, the inner mind, the edge of things. I was reading a lot of novels that did that – a lot of Russian novels, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky,

Because the album hadn't found its direction when I put it out. In hindsight I should have waited. The albums I've done since then, for me, I think are two of my strongest pieces of work, because I was prepared to wait and really find the direction the record was going in."

Would you describe yourself primarily as a writer these days?

"Oh! These days... I still would put singer-songwriter. I feel that is what I'm best at. Though the largest per cent of my time is spent writing. I write separately from music these days because I find I can strengthen my words.

I'm not a great writer, I'm not a great poet, I'm not a great novelist. But I can sing songs. I write songs, that is my strength – as frustrating as that is to me! Because I would love to be a better poet. But I realise that absolutely is not where my strengths are."

Reading about your research, I was reminded of the section in Dylan's *Chronicles*, where he

describes reading old newspapers from the American Civil War. "I wasn't so much interested in the issues as intrigued by the language and rhetoric of the times," he writes. "It wasn't like it was another world, but the same one only with more urgency."

"Exactly, that's exactly it! Although I did read a lot about history, the more I read, the more it was just talking about the language of today. And that's also why it was useful to draw upon those reference points in the songs, because it is the same language. It doesn't really matter

**{ "There is no one like her.
She's reached a point where
she now seems to be working in
a field defined only by herself" }**
Spider Stacy

where characters were really inhabiting their inner mind, right on the edge of losing things. That's what I was interested in and that's where that album came from.

"And before that, I can see that an album like *Uh Huh Her* was really reaching to find something that it didn't quite find. I think there were some good songs on it and there were some dreadful songs on it! I wasn't sure where I was going. I think I learned a lot from that record, of knowing to bide my time in the future and just wait until something's finished.

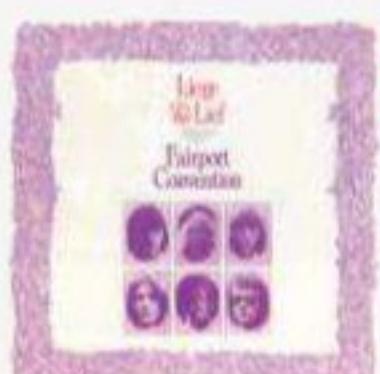
England is mine

Ten state-of-the-nation LPs



THE KINKS ...Are The Village Green Preservation Society PYE, 1968

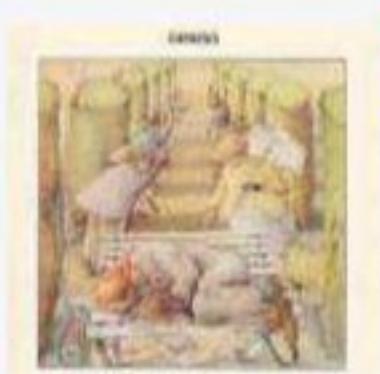
Ray Davies' pie-eyed pastoral nostalgia finds its ultimate expression on The Kinks' masterpiece, which comprises 15 songs defining, remembering and fantasising a vanishing England.



FAIRPORT CONVENTION Lieu & Lief

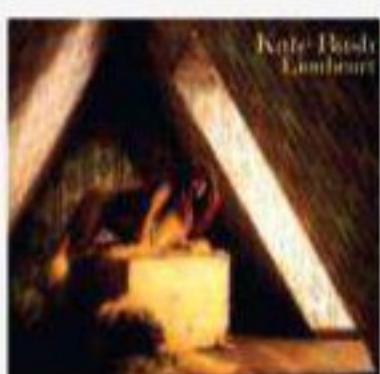
ISLAND, 1969

Though hardly social commentary, *Lieu & Lief* amounted to a declaration of independence, accessing and transforming the tap-root of ancient English folk.



GENESIS Selling England By The Pound CHARISMA, 1973

"Can you tell me where my country lies?" warbles Peter Gabriel on the opening track of Genesis' fifth album, pursuing the question, via TS Eliot and a litany of early '70s supermarkets, across an hour of symphonic prog.



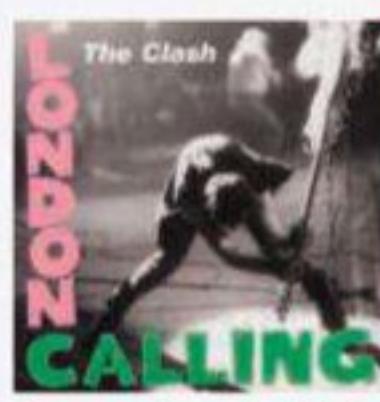
KATE BUSH

Lionheart EMI, 1978
On her second album Kate Bush conjected a lushly romantic, absurdly influential English neverland from such



Voice of the Midlands: the Specials, Coventry, 1980

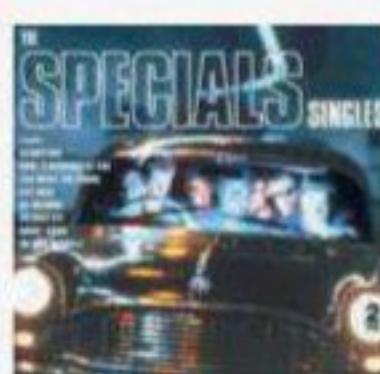
diverse sources as Powell and Pressburger, Hammer horror, JM Barrie and *The Sweeney*.



THE CLASH

London Calling CBS, 1979

You could compile a superb compilation of The Clash's state-of-the-nation addresses, from "Career Opportunities" through to "This Is England", but as a single album, *London Calling* remains matchless.



SPECIALS

The Singles Collection

2 TONE/CHRYSTALIS, 1991

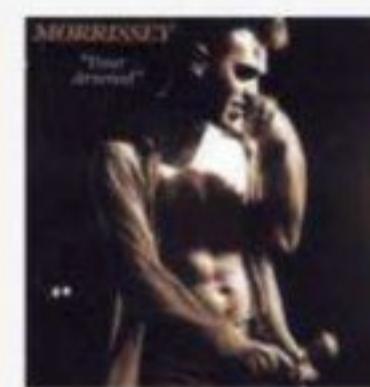
More than any one of their studio albums, the Specials' collected singles add up to the most bleakly hilarious document of post-punk English life.



PET SHOP BOYS

Actually PARLOPHONE, 1987

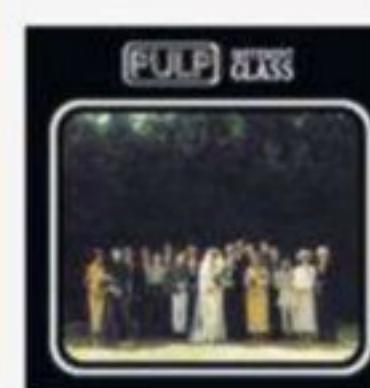
Across songs like "Rent", "Shopping", "Kings Cross" and "It Couldn't Happen Here", Tennant and Lowe acutely anatomised the hollow hearts of the Thatcherite boom.



MORRISSEY

Your Arsenal HMV, 1992

Morrissey's definitive English album, here his muse is startlingly re-energised by a dismal Majorite landscape of bedraggled football hooligans and National Front Discos.

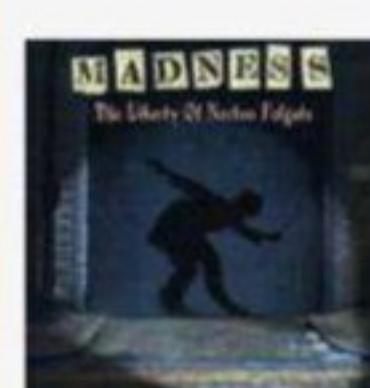


PULP

Different Class

ISLAND, 1995

More than any of the other Britpop candidates, Jarvis Cocker retained a searing, dramatic sense of England's divides – of sex, class and region – at the time of the Blairite jubilee.



MADNESS

The Liberty Of Norton Folgate LUCKY 7, 2009

The Nutty Boys left it late to deliver their definitive album, but ...*Norton Folgate* was worth the wait, the group finding, in an obscure nook of London history, an ideal of an England of immigrants where "we're all dancing on borrowed ground".

what the actual date was, it's still happening now. And it always will. That was the thing that I learned most of all through all of my reading: the language hasn't changed, it's remained the same since any record of war has ever been made. It's the same language used to describe the end results of it. And I found that that really shocked me to begin with. Nothing has changed in hundreds and thousands of years."

Are those ancient paths of Dorset your equivalent of Dylan's Highway 61, where the Old Testament, the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement seem to be happening simultaneously?

"It's not just Dorset; I spend a lot of time in other places. But I'm very aware of that always, and more so as I get older. That's the nature of any artist. If you want to make something out of the world we live in, you've got to be open to really seeing things, really hearing things. That does mean you have to be open to absorb it. So you don't just see the moment you're in, you see the years beforehand and the years to come."

SPEND AN HOUR with Polly Harvey and your overwhelming impression is of steadfast dedication to the life of the artist; a sense of vocation that is almost old-fashioned. It's this commitment that's seen her outlast the Too Pure kids and the riot grrrls, the grunge mavens and the Britpop boys, and remain vital into the 21st century.

"I remember having long talks with Polly about creativity and not having confidence in what you're doing," says Adrian Utley, guitarist and multi-instrumentalist with artistic fellow-travellers Portishead. "The thing with Polly is she always seems to know exactly where she's going. Even when she says she doesn't! She's always seemed to me very strong and very focused. It's really heartening for all of us – the fact that 20 years into her career she's creating her strongest work. Her dedication is absolute, really. She's completely driven by her creativity. I think it's that superb, that really strong confidence when she's made up her mind about what's she's doing. Including the way she

looks and what she wears on stage. You might get the impression that she's can't be like that in reality... But in fact she is!"

Where did your commitment come from, Polly?

"Maybe it was my mother. Maybe it was growing up around lots of creative people – musicians, artists, photographers. I was always ambitious: I knew that I wanted to go into art of some kind. I didn't know of what kind, whether it was going to be art or sculpture or painting or performance or acting – it could have been any of those things. But whatever field I went into I wanted to be the best. That was what I would aim for. Whether I got there or not was a different matter. I wanted to do the best work. And something new. That was very important."

Has that conviction ever wavered?

"There's been a couple of times, which I think is quite normal in anyone's life. You find yourself going down a certain road, and you stop and think, and rightly so, 'Is this the best I could be doing?'"

CONTINUES OVER*

Is being an artist quite a selfish way to live? "It is and it isn't. In some ways it's very selfless. You have to make many sacrifices in order to do it. But you find yourself looking at other people and thinking, 'I wouldn't mind living a more simple life'. But I think it's very normal to any human being that you reach these certain markers in your life and you think, 'Is this still feeling right or is there something else I could be doing with my life that would be more beneficial to me and to others?' I've been through a couple of times like that."

After the success of the year you've just had, do you think the 14-year-old Polly would think "mission accomplished"?

"Yeah. But I think I felt that from the moment I was able to continue to make records... And that was a long time ago. I got to the point after the first two records where I realised I was in a position where I was going to be able to continue to write and put out songs and people would be interested. It was back then that I had got to the point I had dreamed and hoped of getting to. That was what I wanted to do: do the thing that I feel so compelled to do, and take very seriously. I want to give something back of worth, I want to make something worthwhile and meaningful."

Are you aware of having become an influence on younger artists, becoming as inspirational as Captain Beefheart was to you? On Laura Marling or Anna Calvi?

"I don't know if that's the case. You'd have to ask them. From what I gather those two artists were influenced by many, many different things, many different people. I don't know if I feature largely in that. So no, and I'm not the kind of person who is aware of that, were it the case anyway."

Having had this year of success, was there ever a danger of becoming too embraced, almost respectable—the worthy darling of the broadsheets? Are you tempted to now make a sensationally scandalous record that would make Andrew Marr choke on his Danish pastry?

"Ha! I'm not sure where I'll go next. It takes quite some time for me to work out what feels right. All I do know is I won't be doing the same thing again. I've also enjoyed discovering this new way of writing and I would like to continue that more."

You must feel emboldened, having made, 20 years into your career, a record like *Let England Shake*. Do you feel at the peak of your powers? Firing on all cylinders?

"No I don't feel like that. I feel like at this moment in time this album came together in all the right conditions. That's really rare. I'm quite prepared that all of those things might not happen again for another 10 years.

"The only thing I need to hold onto is honouring the place I feel I need to go with my work, and just try to make that as good as I can. It's all I can do. But it's not going to happen every time." 

Polly Harvey:
predictably
restrained



"A brave and dramatic record"

Let England Shake: Uncut Music Award Winner, 2011

TO COMPLETE A remarkable year, PJ Harvey has been chosen as the fourth winner of the Uncut Music Award, for *Let England Shake*.

While *Uncut's* Album Of The Year is voted for by the magazine's writers, the Uncut Music Award covers a slightly different timespan (from September 2010 to August 2011, in this case), and is picked by a panel of judges from the upper echelons of the music world.

The judges met last month to select a winner from the shortlist of eight records, with *Let England Shake* emerging as the clear victor. It was, said Allan Jones, *Uncut* editor and chair of the panel, "a brave and dramatic record", while Mark Cooper, BBC Creative Head Of Music Entertainment, described Harvey as "the best British artist of the last 20 years; a brilliantly inventive and self-demanding artist."

Linda Thompson also "loved it... I was impressed that a woman could go through a whole album and not mention some stupid bloke, except a stupid dead bloke. I love anything without hooks and choruses, that's bliss for me, and these songs are beautifully played—beautifully underplayed."

Polly Harvey, for her part, was predictably restrained when told the news. "I'm very pleased to get the Uncut Music Award, and it strengthens my desire to carry on pursuing the avenues of work I have been for the last 20 years," she said. "It strengthens my conviction

to always trust my instincts and to continue to do work of meaning and importance, in some way. I'm quite far into working on what will become my next body of work, and again my desire of wanting to learn continues to unfold. I began working on my next piece the moment I finished





The judges: (l-r)
Stewart Lee, Allan Jones,
Nick Stewart, Linda
Thompson, Phil Manzanera,
Tony Wadsworth and
Mark Cooper



recording *Let England Shake* over a year ago. I'm well into that next project already."

Harvey joins Fleet Foxes (2008), Tinariwen (2009) and Paul Weller (2010), the previous winners of the Uncut Music Award. In second place this year, behind *Let England Shake*, was Paul Simon's *So Beautiful Or So What*. "An extraordinary piece of work," adjudged Tony Wadsworth, chair of the British Recorded Music Industry. "The craftsmanship, the playing, the experimentation where he's sampling the old gospel stuff, it's all amazing. If this was a fresh young artist who'd come from nowhere there would be no question about giving him the award."

"I regard Paul Simon as being up there not just with Bob Dylan, but the likes of Rodgers & Hart," said Nick Stewart, the music-biz legend who signed U2 to Island. "Parts of this record are just absolutely glorious. Full marks for it

"The best British artist of the last 20 years... inventive and self-demanding"
Mark Cooper

was listening to his latest album [*Le Noise*]. I always feel that his music is feeding a part of my soul that really needs feeding, and it only seems to be his music that's doing it."

MONITOR AUDIO
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2011 UNCUT MUSIC AWARD
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
MONITORAUDIO

'I WISH MORE RECORDS WERE MADE LIKE THIS...'

The judges' verdicts on the Uncut Music Award 2011 shortlist



BON IVER: Bon Iver

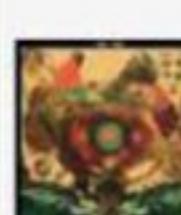
"I really liked it, partly because he's done what Fleet Foxes have failed to do, in that he's actually moved on."

The first album was intimate and charming, but this actually opens things up a bit. No, it opens things up a lot." **Tony Wadsworth**



BILL CALLAHAN: Apocalypse

"Being a guitarist, the first thing that struck me was how great the playing was; it's quite eccentric, similar to the sort of thing I would play. In places it reminded me of Kevin Ayers, or even Leonard Cohen." **Phil Manzanera**



FLEET FOXES: Helplessness Blues

"Their first record won the first Uncut Music Award, but I thought this was even better; much more personal, much more emotionally engaging than the debut, without surrendering any of the glorious melodic virtues, the harmonies." **Allan Jones**



PJ HARVEY: Let England Shake

"The words here do the job they're supposed to do, and if they do seem a little bit clichéd in places, it's because they have a deliberate relationship with existing poetry or folk song or hymns. The subject matter is written about really well without being preachy or dogmatic. I've always been impressed by her, but this is the first of her records that has really stopped me in my tracks." **Stewart Lee**



JOSHT PEARSON: Last Of The Country Gentlemen

"You get drawn into this extraordinary experience. The songs are long; some of them are close to complete indulgence. But there is something quite fascinating about it. If you think about Tim Buckley and those artists signed to Elektra all those years ago, he fits into that field. I wish more records were made like this." **Nick Stewart**



RADIOHEAD: The King Of Limbs

"There are some bands, I think, that are best listened to like jazz. The best jazz, when you're in the moment with it and immersed in it, is the best music on the planet. With Radiohead, there are times when somebody puts them on and I just thank God they exist." **Mark Cooper**



PAUL SIMON: So Beautiful Or So What

"There isn't a crotchet or a quaver of Paul Simon's music I don't know. He's an extremely underrated guitar player. This is a great record. It's hard to be relevant when you're old, and he's done so well to remain so. He's finally showing some emotion. And for a man who's 70, he's singing so well." **Linda Thompson**



GILLIAN WELCH: The Harrow & The Harvest

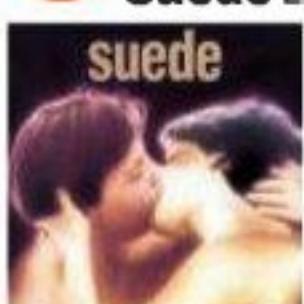
"I think she's one of the best artists on the planet. She's brought this sort of post-modern artform to bluegrass, or mountain music. She reminds me of Morrissey, bizarrely, because there's this weird kind of personal doom in her writing and her sense of hard times." **Mark Cooper**

THE 30 BEST REISSUES

COMPILATIONS & BOXSETS

30 SUEDE

Suede EDSL

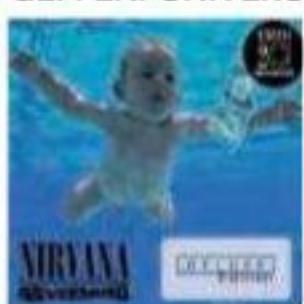


Suede's live reactivation received almost as much praise as Pulp's. But the pick of their reissues was the 1993 debut: romantic, heroically pretentious, and, crucially, featuring Bernard Butler, who amicably kept away from the band's reunion.

29 NIRVANA

Nevermind

GEFFEN/UNIVERSAL

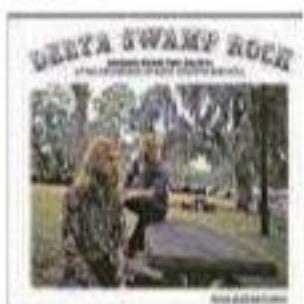


In 2011, deluxe reissues seemed to grow bigger by the month. The 20th anniversary take on *Nevermind* filled five discs, and included Butch Vig's original mix, satisfyingly grittier than the final Andy Wallace polish.

28 VARIOUS ARTISTS

Delta Swamp Rock

SOUL JAZZ

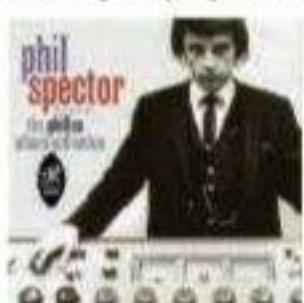


Less Southern Rock, more—as the subtitle promised—“The Crossroads Of Rock, Country And Soul”. Lynyrd Skynyrd and Area Code 415 sat alongside Bobbie Gentry and rarities like Billy Vera's “I'm Leaving Here Tomorrow, Mama”.

27 PHIL SPECTOR

The Philles Album Collection

PHIL SPECTOR/LEGACY



A study in how the hit-singles genius grappled with LPs, including three Crystals albums, one by Bob B Soxx & The Blue Jeans, and one bona fide classic—*Presenting The Fabulous Ronettes*.

26 MERCURY REV

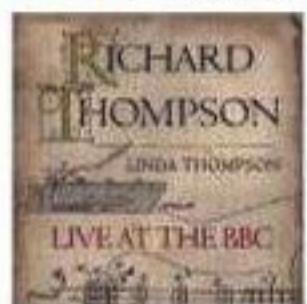
Deserter's Songs v2



Jonathan Donahue and Grasshopper's widescreen update of Cosmic American Music inspired a generation of indie bands. Thirteen years on, this deluxe reissue proved *Deserter's Songs* was a career high for the Catskills band.

25 RICHARD THOMPSON

Live At The BBC



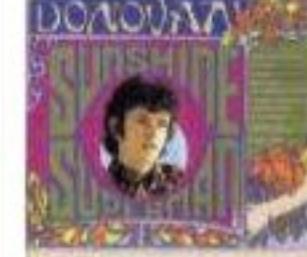
The unreleased Thompson material kept coming, with three CDs and one DVD of sessions. *Live At The BBC* moved from 1973 (plenty of Richard

& Linda) to 2009 (a session of trad tunes), emphasising Thompson's consistency and clarity of vision.

24 DONOVAN

Sunshine Superman

EMI



Forty-five years on, Donovan's whimsical reverie received a rich new stereo mix; and a re-evaluation that placed it as a key antecedent of The Incredible String Band's *Wee Tam*.

23 CARAVAN

In The Land Of Grey And Pink

DECCA



A British psychedelic landmark from the Canterbury stalwarts who'd hitherto been rather neglected, at least compared to their contemporary, Robert Wyatt. On their third album—spread over three CDs here—Caravan found a perfect balance between folksy pop and bracing prog-jazz improvisation.

22 THE FALL

This Nation's Saving Grace

BEGGAR'S BANQUET



The Fall's reissue programme has been as erratic as Mark E Smith himself. Their highly regarded ninth album, however, was rewarded with a lavish boxset. Visionary texts and propulsive accompaniments from the 20th and best Fall lineup.

21 THE LOUVIN BROTHERS

Satan Is Real/Handpicked Songs

1955-1962 LIGHT IN THE ATTIC



The often-released 1959 country classic, with its infamous cover shot, turned up again in the year of Charlie Louvin's death. The meticulous Seattle label Light In The Attic twinned it with an enticing best-of, showcasing the Louvins' pioneer harmonies and authentic Christian dread.

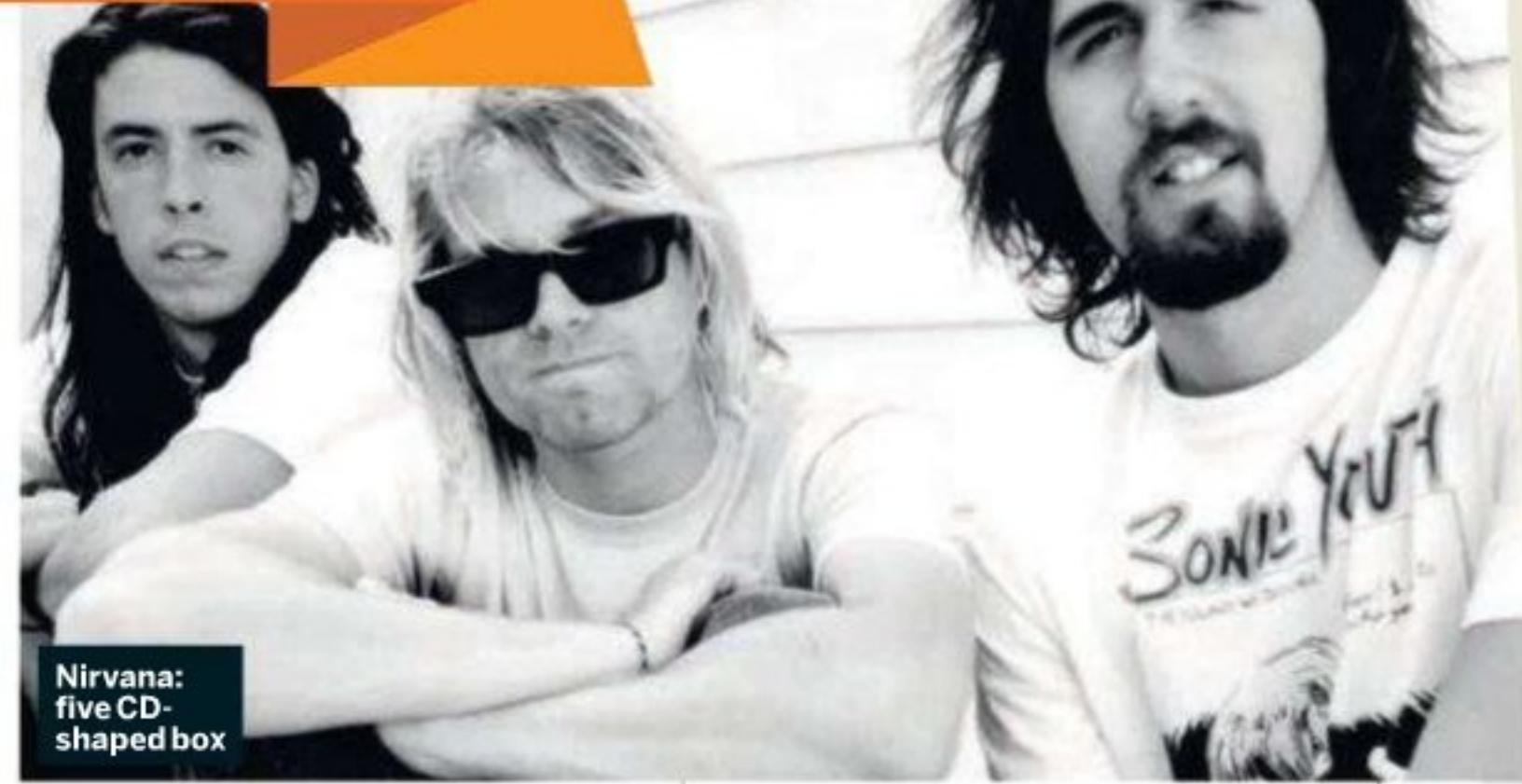
20 U2

Achtung Baby

MERCURY



A 20th anniversary heritage edition of U2's Berlin adventure seemed at odds with its strenuously “ironic” premise. Now, though, *Achtung Baby* was accorded the serious treatment that befit their most significant album.



Nirvana:
five CD-shaped box

19 MANIC STREET PREACHERS

National Treasures: The Complete Singles

COLUMBIA



As the trio contemplated their future, an encyclopaedic singles set replaced more capricious comps. “Motown Junk” to “This Is The Day” in chronological order: an object lesson in turning provocation into a long and auspicious career.

18 KATE AND ANNA MCGARRIGLE

Tell My Sister

NONESUCH



Eccentric, moving Canadian folk songsthat became unlikely hits: the McGarrigles' first two albums remastered, plus unheard material, given added poignancy by Kate's death in 2010. The foundations of one of music's most enduring dynasties.

17 THE KINKS

The Kink Kontroversy

SANCTUARY

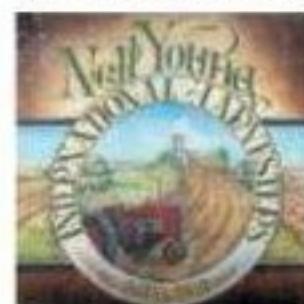


A year of notable Kinks activity pivoted around Ray Davies' curation of London's Meltdown festival and the start of a new reissue programme. The pick was this, their third album from '65, capturing the band as they evolved from R&B firebrands into more nuanced English documentarians.

16 NEIL YOUNG AND INTERNATIONAL HARVESTERS

A Treasure

REPRISE



Neil Young's retrospective labours in 2011 involved a Buffalo Springfield tour, plus work on *Archives*

Volume Two and an autobiography. His sole release was unexpected: a live collection from '84/'85 from an ornery trek round the States with a downhome, but classy, country band.

15 VARIOUS ARTISTS

Our Lives Are Shaped By What We Love: Motown's Mowest Story 1971-1973

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC



A curious detour in the Motown story—an LA subsidiary label—provided the source for this fascinating and uplifting comp, where the odd familiar anthem (Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons' “The Night”) nestled alongside deeper cuts, like Odyssey's ravishing title track.

14 KATE BUSH

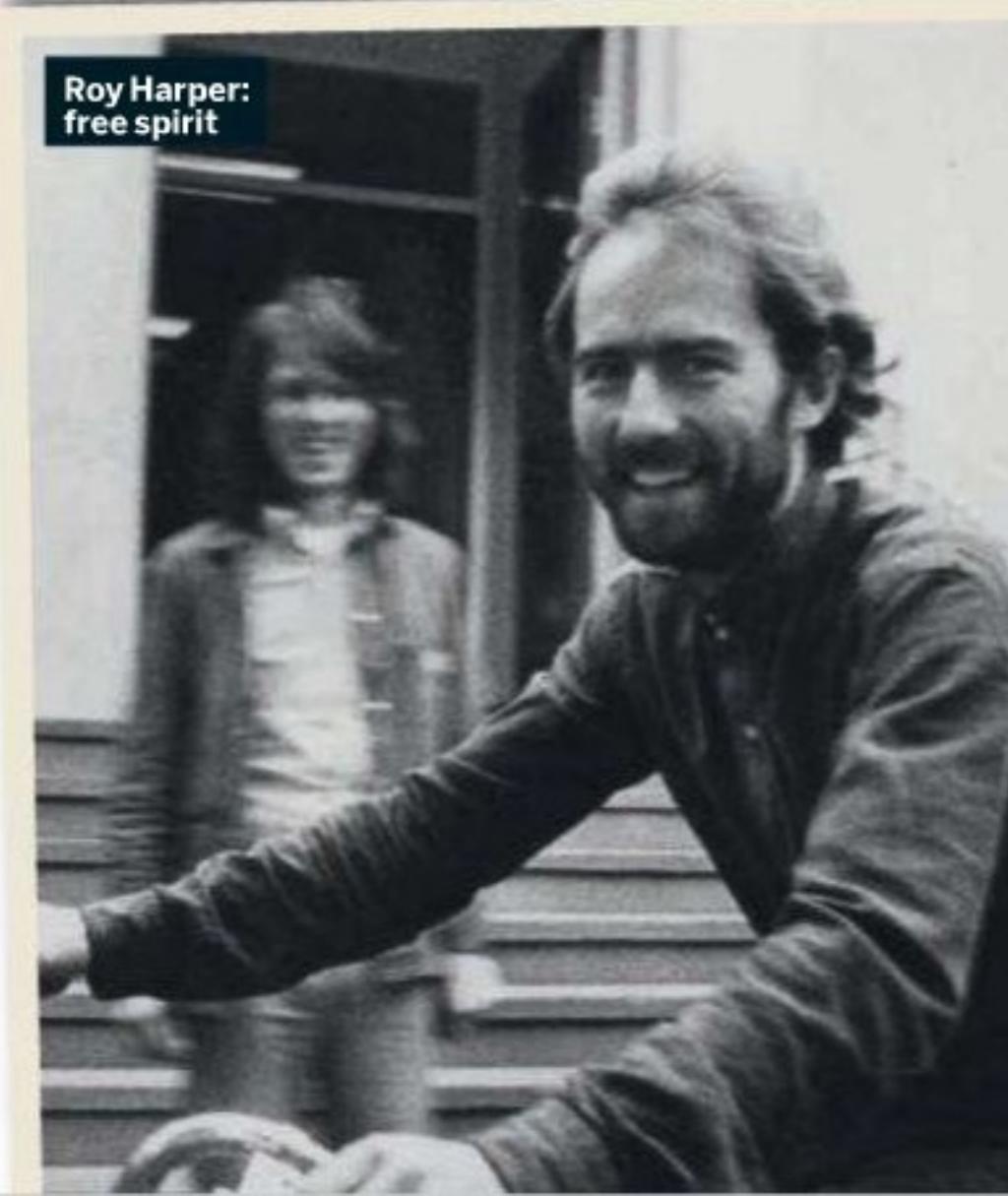
The Director's Cut

FISH PEOPLE/EMI



Warming up for the frosted epiphanies of *50 Words For Snow*, Bush returned to *The Sensual World* (1989) and *The Red Shoes* (1993), stripping out the excesses, adding contemporary touches (Autotune on “Deeper Understanding”) and debuting her mature, somewhat huskier voice.

Roy Harper:
free spirit





Marvin Gaye:
the funk soul
brother

13 MARK MCGUIRE A Young Person's Guide

EDITIONS MEGO



As one-third of Emeralds, Ohio guitarist Mark McGuire was instrumental in revitalising interest in *kosmische* music. Bewilderingly prolific, the mission continued on his innumerable solo releases, the highlights of which were collected on this handy compilation: measured, ornate, and compelling.

12 MICHAEL CHAPMAN Fully Qualified Survivor

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC



The underrated folkguitarist and singer-songwriter celebrated his 70th birthday with a reissue for his 1970 magnum opus: an electrifying suite much admired at the time by John Peel and David Bowie.

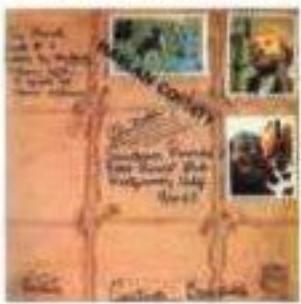
11 ROY HARPER Stormcock BELIEVE



Alongside Chapman and one Bob Dylan, Harper was another wilful free spirit to turn 70 in 2011. Commemorations included digital reissues of key early albums, including the majestic *Stormcock*. A memorial, too, for the album's gifted orchestrator, David Bedford, who died in October.

10 JIM FORD Harlan County

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC



In a similar spirit to *Delta Swamp Rock*, Ford's only solo album from '69 made connections between Cajun country and Southern funk, with Dr John and James Burton along for the ride. Sly Stone called Ford "the baddest white man on the planet".

celebration of *Screamadelica*, with countless live shows and multiple new editions of the album. The boxset, with its CDs, vinyl, DVDs and remixes, captured the project's apparently infinite glory perfectly.

7 REM Life's Rich Pageant EMI

One last purported return to form (*Collapse Into Now*) made only marginal impact in REM's final year. But their reissue programme arrived at this fourth classic – the point where REM became more direct and anthemic, while retaining a cultish mystique.

6 DISCO INFERNO The 5 EPs ONE LITTLE INDIAN



As a surprise high-flyer in this chart, Disco Inferno were dysfunctional post-rockers from Essex, whose engaging '90s EPs became a key influence on the likes of Animal Collective. For the full story, turn to page 14.

5 THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN Darklands EDSSEL



Received wisdom suggested that *Psychocandy* would be the highlight of a complete JAMC catalogue reissue. *Uncut* consensus, however, fell on the '87 follow-up *Darklands*, which proved there was more to the band than obliterating walls of feedback.

4 MARVIN GAYE What's Going On

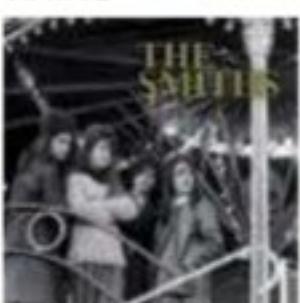
UNIVERSAL



Gaye's impassioned state-of-the-world address had lost none of its majesty 40 years on. But the Super Deluxe edition of the 2011 reissue contained a broader picture of the singer's early-'70s activities, including a selection of funk jams closer in spirit to Sly Stone.

3 THE SMITHS Complete

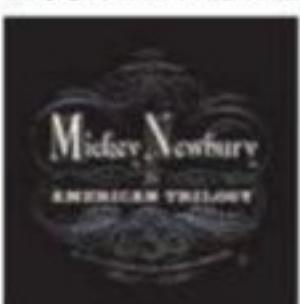
RHINO



While Morrissey worked on his autobiography, Johnny Marr remastered all eight albums (five studio, one live, three comps). The result was *Complete*, with The Smiths' splendid legacy given a softer, richer treatment than on previous CDs. You've got everything now, surely?

2 MICKEY NEWBURY An American Trilogy

SAINT CECELIA KNOWS/
MOUNTAIN RETREAT



Newbury was a songwriter more referenced than actually heard, until *An American Trilogy* placed his three albums from the cusp of the '70s in a box, with a fourth CD of out-takes. Poetic, atmospheric, and with a subtle grandeur.

REISSUE OF THE YEAR

1 THE BEACH BOYS The Smile Sessions EMI



The business of The Beach Boys, and especially of *Smile*, has never been easy. How, for example, should *The Smile Sessions* be categorised, since this legendary trove of music had never been released before – at least officially? *The Smile Sessions* qualified as *Uncut*'s old record of the year because, if not exactly a reissue, it was certainly nothing like a new album. Here, finally, were the complex, strange and energetically bootlegged recordings from 1966 which, allegedly, drove Brian Wilson mad: for many, the ultimate archive release.

Mark Linett and Alan Boyd's forensic sorting of the *Smile* fragments followed the template of Wilson's 2004 reconstruction, and made sense of Wilson and Van Dyke Parks' visionary, silly take on American history and music. For those who wanted to dig deeper, *The Smile Sessions* was released in no less than five different versions, including a 5CD boxset (also including two vinyl albums and two seven-inch singles), uncovering the evolution of the songs over multiple intense takes. Seventy-nine minutes of "Good Vibrations"? Thirty-six versions of "Heroes And Villains"? That was the mind-boggling depth of *The Smile Sessions*; a conclusion to one of rock's messiest and most intriguing stories that was both thorough, and thoroughly satisfying.



NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR

He jams with *David Crosby* and *Jackson Browne* and has *Charlie Sheen*'s Chevy in his garage. He's a sought-after producer who builds *beautiful guitars*. His debut album perfectly recreates the *ambience* of early '70s LA...

Meet Jonathan Wilson, the new King of Laurel Canyon

LATE THURSDAY EVENING, Jonathan Wilson and I are stood outside the Canyon Country Store, a longtime Laurel Canyon landmark, perusing a cartoon map of the locality drawn on its wall.

These labyrinthine valley-side streets, with names like Wonderland Avenue and Lookout Mountain Road, were once the haunt of rock'n'roll aristocracy: Jim Morrison used to live right behind the store itself, in a small house set back from the road, and Wilson, a keen student of the regional rock mythography, points out on the map where other notables once resided. Here was Micky Dolenz's place; Joni Mitchell lived over here, and this corner was the location of the famous wooden house in which Frank Zappa once presided over a retinue of freaks and weirdos. More recently, Wilson himself had a place not far from here,

ATE THURSDAY EVENING, Jonathan Wilson and I are stood outside the Canyon Country Store, a longtime Laurel Canyon landmark, perusing a cartoon map of the locality drawn on its wall.

WORDS BY ANDY GILL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY AARON FARLEY

across the street from Rick Rubin's lavish home, with its illuminated waterfall.

Laurel Canyon was the heart of counter-cultural Los Angeles, the place where singers, songwriters and musicians gravitated to escape the smog and sleaze, jamming long into the night at each other's pads; a lush semi-wilderness in which the fantasies of "getting back to the land" might be lived out just a few miles from the tourist flytraps of the Sunset Strip and Hollywood Boulevard.

Jackson Browne was a key player in that scene, and he remembers the sense of community among the Canyon musicians.

"What was happening in LA then was happening there because that's where the record companies were," he explains. "You

had to go to where the studios were, and LA was one of those places. People didn't have studios in their homes back then, but they'd play guitars and sing songs, and listen to each others' records. I'd be staying at a house and David Crosby would come by with an acetate of something they'd just cut, and he'd be taking it around to see what it sounded like Paul Rothchild's stereo."

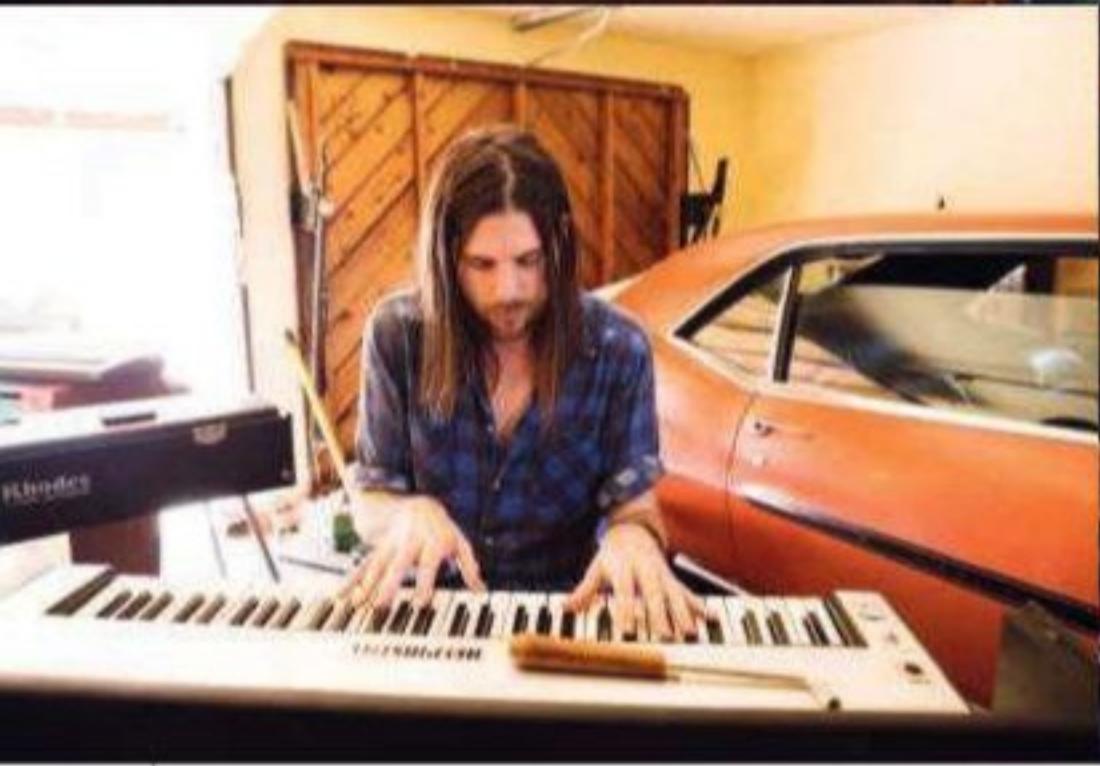
THESE DAYS, OF course, the Canyon has been tamed and gentrified, to the point where fledgling musicians can't afford to rent, let alone buy, one of the area's characteristic houses on stilts cantilevered out from the side of the valley. Rather than old Chevys and battered pick-ups, streets are stuffed with Beemers and Benzes and Priuses, while high-end trainers and handmade loafers long since replaced *huarache* sandals and cowboy boots as the footwear of **CONTINUES OVER***



Made for these times:
Jonathan Wilson at his
home in Silver Lake, LA

NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Jonathan Wilson in his Five Star studio in Echo Park. Clockwise from right: that "intriguing" Mellotron; a handmade guitar in progress; writing at the piano; writing at the piano; with a new bandmate (possibly); in the studio; that's Charlie Sheen's Chevy Camaro in the background...



choice. Nobody jams long into the night: how would they get up at five to meet their personal trainer for a jog before making that important meeting at seven? Probably the last person to jam in the Canyon was Jonathan Wilson, at whose place members of Wilco, Vetiver, The Black Crowes, Dawes and The Jayhawks would congregate. But now Wilson's moved out to Echo Park, about half an hour's drive away, which is where we meet up the next day in his airy wooden studio, Five Star.

"I've been here for two years," Wilson explains. "The other place was more of a jam spot, and this is the album spot." The control room is littered with gear: an Omnichord atop a pile of boxes, a Gibson lap-steel leaning beside the leather settee, and a two-inch tape machine as large as a wardrobe, given to Wilson by Jackson Browne. The mixing console, he reveals, came from Shelter Records—the very desk used for albums by two of Wilson's heroes,

“That Chevy Camaro was given to me by Charlie Sheen. I protested... but he insisted. He’s a cool guy” Wilson

Leon Russell and JJ Cale. Wilson himself has been quietly building a reputation as a producer, drawing glowing reviews for Dawes' splendid *Nothing Is Wrong* album, and his own equally gorgeous solo effort *Gentle Spirit*, released within a few weeks of each other in August 2011. Both, significantly, are available as vinyl double albums, an indication of the analogue spirit in which they were made.

Wilson takes me on a tour of the premises, pointing out instruments of note that crowd the walkways. He's intrigued by an electronic Mellotron he's just acquired, then leads me out to a double-fronted garage to see a proper, full-

size Mellotron, complete with cosmic illustrations on its panels. On the other side of the garage sits a beautiful Chevy Camaro.

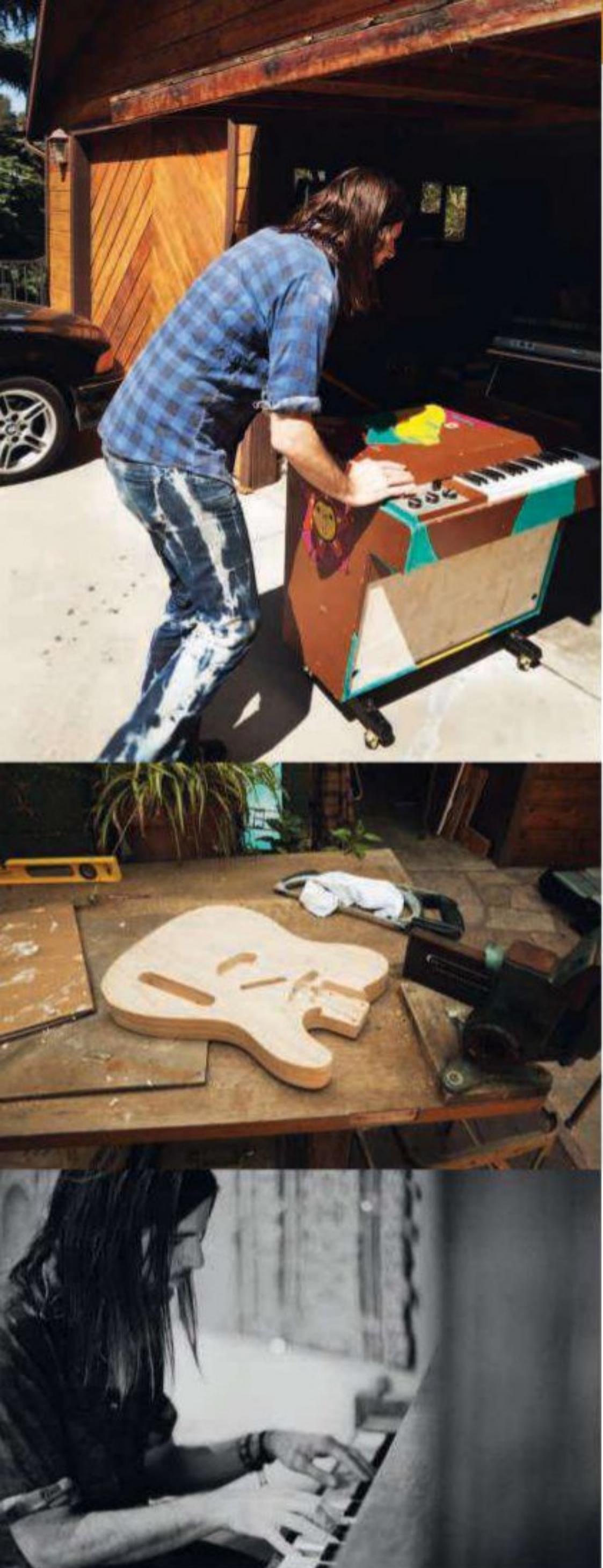
"That was given to me by Charlie Sheen," says Wilson.

Charlie Sheen gave you a Camaro?

"Yes, he's a fan, and a friend, really. He said, 'Jonathan, you must have this'. I protested I couldn't just take it, but he insisted. He's a cool guy."

The Chevy, one surmises, runs on tiger blood. Originally from North Carolina, Wilson first came out to Los Angeles when he was 19, to play with a band from his hometown that were hoping to make it big in California.

"One of the guys was the son of this wealthy cat that owned the Charlotte Hornets NBA team, so he provided a place, and we weren't gonna starve or anything. So we went straight from NC to Beverly Hills. I spent a while there trying to get this band off the ground. It never happened, but one of the guys, Benji Hughes,



and I started my first band, called Muscadine. I moved out to Malibu, to live with this guy and produce his album. That's when I got hooked on the ocean, the rocks and the cliffs, the desert-y vibe out there."

Listening to Wilson's *Gentle Spirit* album, it's clear how not just the West Coast sound of the Laurel Canyon and Malibu scenes have seeped into his sensibility, but also the affinity for the natural world and the laidback vibe that was once the area's cultural calling card.

"The first song, 'Gentle Spirit', just blew my mind," says Jackson Browne. "I found myself listening to it every chance I got. I'd first heard him playing with Benji Hughes. Later I was given his CD and it was mentioned that it was by the guitarist who played with Benji—I thought, 'Oh, I definitely want to hear this.'"

Wilson's musical baby-steps were almost literally that: he wrote his first tune on guitar aged three—his parents, who schooled him in the British Invasion bands, and in the LA sound of the '70s, still have the cassette somewhere.

"There was lots of Jackson, Zevon, The Eagles," he says. "They get a bad press these

days, but the production on those albums is sublime. That pristine thing was a big influence on me."

Wilson's natural facility for music, however, goes far deeper, into his family heritage of Baptists and bluegrass. One uncle even played bass with the great Bill Monroe.

"Both sides of my family are from North Carolina, going way back to the 1800s," he says. "It's a deep thing—that state is pretty special. Earl Scruggs is from down the street, and there's an unspoken prowess on instruments, much like you'd find in Ireland. There's ancient things happening, ties to an earlier time."

The young Wilson soon found himself drawn to the drums, and to the intricacies of jazz.

He was less drawn to the musical theory side of his jazz schooling, however: "When I was being schooled at the piano, I would turn off to it, not listen, as if I was being told by some higher power not to absorb that information. That was a blessing, 'cos since I've worked with people, and they attach a sort of diagram to sound: 'If it's the minor third, it can't work with the sharp ninth.' I don't believe in that sort of strict ruling. So I was lucky to escape jazz school unscathed. Now, sometimes I'll be working with a band and they'll stop a take, saying, 'It's not gonna work with this chord', and I try and persuade them to try it and see."

Taylor Goldsmith of Dawes attests to Wilson's empathetic production sensibilities. "When we were going to make our first record, we didn't know who we were going to make it with, what our priorities were," explains Goldsmith. "Then, when we met Jonathan, we couldn't think of anyone that could possibly be better. He's the kind of producer who realises what an artist wants to be, and helps them realise that."

"Even if I'm not bringing my own sonic imprint to their work, I do bring a certain attitude to exploration," believes Wilson. "Just the willingness to experiment and give it a shot. Sometimes, when people get in the studio, that's when they're at their most conservative. I try and promote the idea

that the albums that you love, the music that you love, didn't happen by being that conservative."

But while he has steadily accrued producer and musician credits working with artists as varied as Elvis Costello, Jenny Lewis and Erykah Badu, making his own music has been a longer and more involved process for Wilson—one exacerbated by his refusal to sign the kind of "360" deals now common in the industry, whereby the label owns the masters, publishing and merchandising, leaving the artist with nothing to pass down to their family.

"I'm not going to do that," he says. "It was holding onto certain standards which made things so difficult. We turned down four or five offers. I refuse to deal daily with people that I couldn't share a beer with. So what I did was

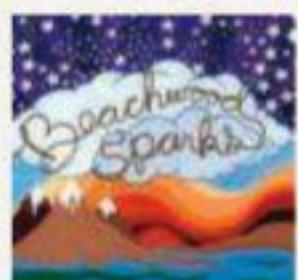
start to build guitars, compressors, effects pedals, and play on other people's records, and make albums for other people, play the upright bass for somebody for a year, just do anything I could not to have to live some sort of pitiful existence concerning my own music. It took a long time to assemble the right team, and during that time I was gathering skills and relationships, to enable me to do it right."

"It's such a surprising thing to find somebody that plays that well, who writes that well, and who builds instruments," comments Browne. "Jonathan has built a lot of guitars for other players—I saw a great young guitarist, Blake Mills, playing with the Watkins Family the other day, and he was playing what looked like an old Telecaster. I said, 'Is that a real one?', and he said, 'No, it's a Jonathan!'"

With the team he assembled for *Gentle Spirit*—among them, jamming friends from Laurel Canyon, such as Vetiver's Andy Cobic and Otto Hauser, The Jayhawks' Gary Louris and The Black Crowes' Adam MacDougall, along with veteran keyboardist Barry Goldberg and former Steve Miller sidemen Gerald Johnson and Gary Mallaber—Wilson finally hit a rich vein of musical paydirt. The songs evoke Wilson's instinctive **CONTINUES OVER***

Lost Canyon CLASSICS

Forget Joni, CSN and the rest: Jonathan Wilson selects four lesser-known Canyon albums you should own



BEACHWOOD SPARKS

Beachwood Sparks (2000)

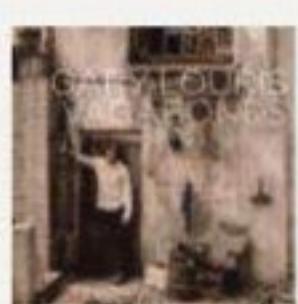
This is a record I listened to so many times, the CD wore out. I was living in a closet hovel in Topanga Canyon, and in the early '00s this was the only game in town to me. I have since befriended these guys. They have a new record out soon, I cannot wait...



BENJI HUGHES

A Love Extreme (2008)

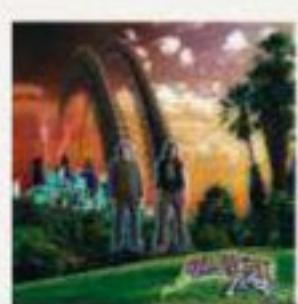
Another classic, from a songwriter unmatched and unparalleled. Benji sees a storyline unfold in a song before his pen hits the page. He's been my best friend since we were 16. The secret is out, Benji's the king...



GARY LOURIS

Vagabonds (2007)

This was a record born out of the Laurel Canyon jams, with Gary from The Jayhawks penning a set of stellar tunes, Chris Robinson producing, I play guitar and bass, Adam MacDougall, Josh Grange, and Otto Hauser of Vetiver. One of the special LA records of recent years.



ALL NIGHT RADIO

Spirit Stereo Frequency (2004)

"Farmer" Dave Scher from Beachwood Sparks and Jimi Hey form a duo and make the most perfect psychedelic opus since Love's *Forever Changes*. Everyone in the LA music community knows this is the record. It gets talked about with much joy and reverence.



connection to nature and the peacenik sensibilities of an earlier era. Play *Gentle Spirit* in your car, and your speed will drop by 10mph, involuntarily. The album also includes, in songs like "Can We Really Party Today?", a first step into more political concerns.

"This album is the first time I had bitten off those type of things," he says. "It was coming off of the feeling of being in the post-Bush United States. I'm trying to convey the positives, not just get on a soapbox about how fucked everything is. 'Can We Party...' is a question I still don't know the answer to. I was in Spain recently, and that seemed to be a culture taking care of itself, without the extremes we have here, people being cast aside on Skid Row and so on."

AARON FARLEY; ARAYA DIAZ/WIREIMAGE

“I feel that if Elliott Smith had still been around, he’d have been a buddy. And Zevon, too...” Wilson

A GLUT OF POSITIVE reviews for the album, and for a one-off *Borderline* show featuring Wilson with Jackson Browne and Dawes, have made him the latest beneficiary of the UK's role as curators of underappreciated American talent—although this time it's a two-way process, Wilson having assumed the position of unappointed cheerleader for veteran Brit folkie Roy Harper, persuading various fans and aforementioned jamming acquaintances to contribute cover

versions to a planned album he's collating.

Back home, the LA scene isn't quite as active as it was when Wilson was hosting jams in Laurel Canyon. "It's a little more dormant right now, because everybody's off on tour," he says. "But there was a time

when there was a bigger group of us all connected, playing at my house. A lot of that has sort of disbanded at the moment. Back then, I thought the scene was more congruent—The Black Crowes were off the road, The Jayhawks were not yet back on the road, Vetiver would come through, Dawes was definitely not as busy as they

are now, and there was more time to hang out."

"There's a great hang at Benmont Tench's house," says Jackson Browne. "It's sort of like bluegrass without the banjos. You might find Gillian Welch and Jenny Lewis and Harper Simon trading songs. That's the kind of scene I gravitate towards. I think Jonathan is one of the guys responsible for resurrecting that scene."

"There's a few things here, though not maybe as burgeoning as it was," confirms Wilson. "But the scene now, for me, has shifted to Jackson, and Graham [Nash], and David Crosby—these are the guys I like to do stuff with now."

Do you ever think you may have been born out of time?

"For sure," he admits. "But at the same time, I think that things are all in the right time and place for me. Certainly, it would have been fun to go to some of Bill Graham's shows, listen to Jerry and things; and one thing that bugs me out is that right here in this house, we're just steps away from Elliott Smith's old house, and I just feel like if he had still been around, he'd have been a buddy. And Zevon, I'm sure we'd have been friends, too." ☀

Gentle Spirit is available on Bella Union

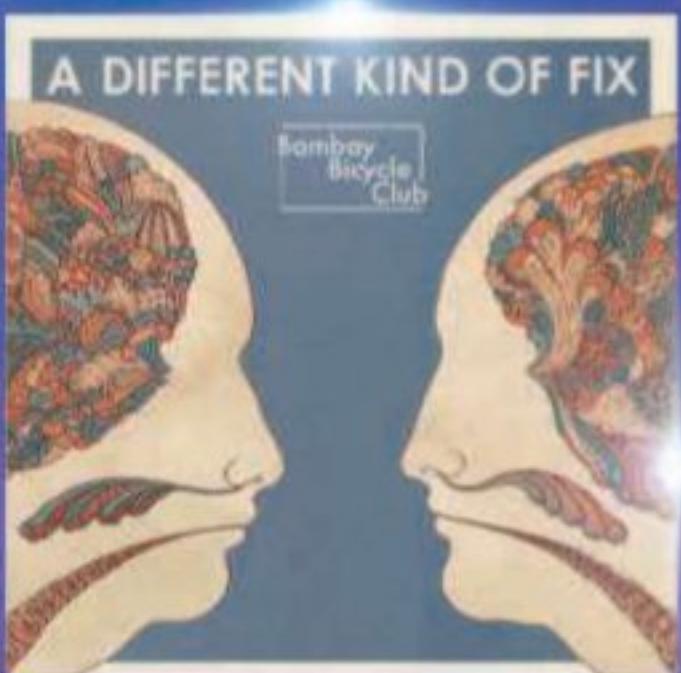


With Jackson Browne and Graham Nash at Shoreline Amphitheatre on August 7, 2011



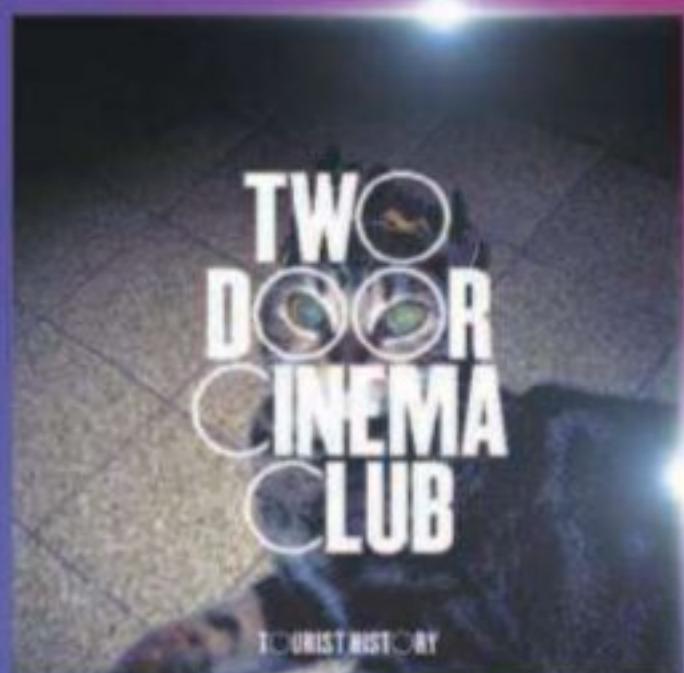
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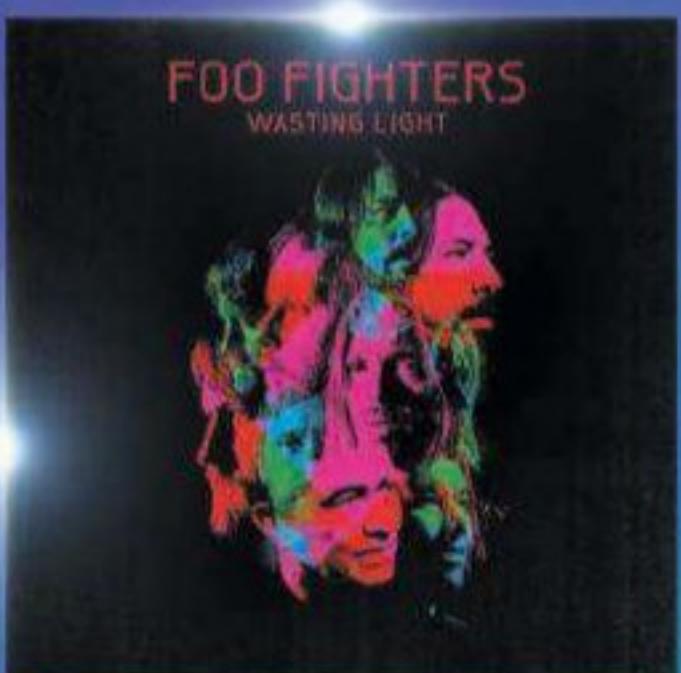
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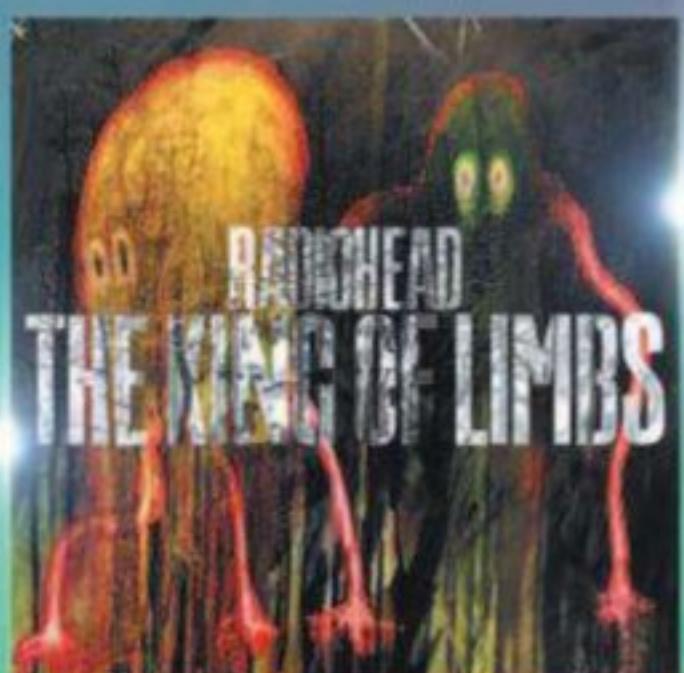
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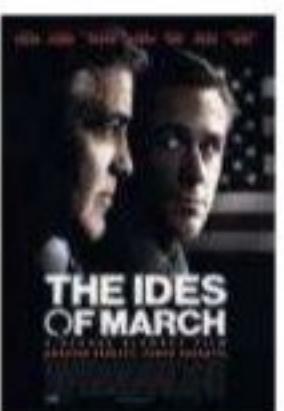
love Christmas

THE 20 BEST FILMS



20 THE IDES OF MARCH

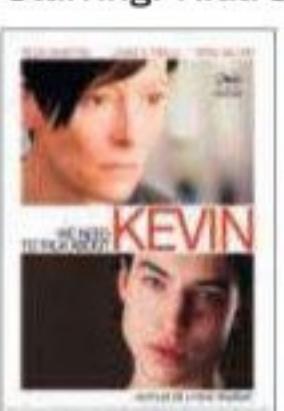
Directed by: George Clooney
Starring: Ryan Gosling



A fruitful year for Ryan Gosling: there was a starring role in muscular action thriller *Drive* and a rom-com, too—*Crazy, Stupid, Love*. But here, as an idealistic political advisor on the presidential campaign trail, Gosling proved he could confidently hold his own against heavyweights Philip Seymour Hoffman, Paul Giamatti and Clooney himself, with the director channelling the vibe of '70s political thrillers like *The Candidate*.

19 WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

Directed by: Lynne Ramsay
Starring: Tilda Swinton

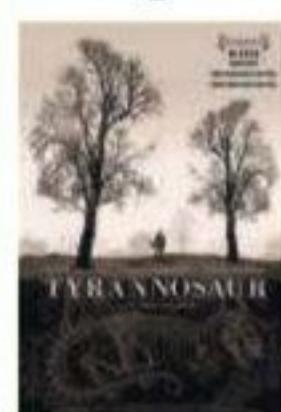


A full nine years on from her last film, Ramsay's triumphant return to active film-making found the *Morvern Callar* director tackling Lionel Shriver's

acclaimed 2003 novel about the emotional struggle between a mother and her troubled son, who grows up to commit a Columbine-style atrocity. The hyper-fragmented, elliptical narrative was typical Ramsay—while Swinton, playing the role of an alpha-female mother battling her own guilt, gave a mesmerising performance.

18 TYRANNOSAUR

Directed by: Paddy Considine
Starring: Olivia Colman



What exactly is it with actors? Gary Oldman, Tim Roth and Samantha Morton all chose tough domestic dramas as the subject matter for their directorial debuts. Here, Paddy Considine weighed in with this powerful study of abuse, allowing Olivia Colman—hitherto best-known as Sophie from *Peep Show*—to display rather more dramatic chops as the timid but kindly Hannah, locked in a grim domestic situation with her husband James, played by Eddie Marsan.

What happens behind closed doors: Olivia Colman and Peter Mullan in *Tyrannosaurus*



preparations and the concomitant strain on all involved. Friendship won out, of course, but not before some fine jokes were successfully cracked.

16 MONEYBALL

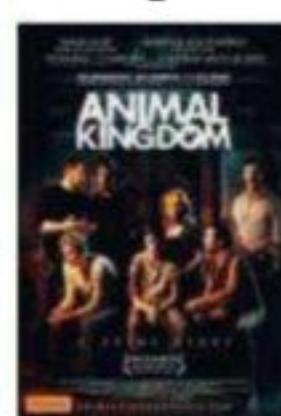
Directed by: Bennett Miller
Starring: Brad Pitt



A sports movie co-written by Aaron Sorkin—comparisons with *The Social Network* were inevitable. They were both leisurely stories about underdogs in the Information Age—here with Pitt as the general manager of the low-budget Oakland Athletics baseball team, whose unorthodox statistical research engineered a winning streak.

15 ANIMAL KINGDOM

Directed by: David Michôd
Starring: Jacki Weaver



Debuting writer/director Michôd's study of a Melbourne crime family was a welcome addition to the recent spate of Australian crime drama, such as *The Hard Word* and *Snowtown*. Focused on a dysfunctional family of career criminals headed by Jacki Weaver's matriarch, Smurf Cody, Michôd explores notions of loyalty and betrayal, creating a gripping thriller as much in debt to the psychosexual melodramas of Tennessee Williams as Scorsese's mob movies.

14 LE QUATTRO VOLTE

Directed by: Michelangelo Frammartino
Starring: Giuseppe Fuda



Frammartino's meditative debut set out to commemorate the disappearing rural lifestyle in his native Calabria, Italy. Shot in a remote village, Frammartino finds much to admire in the landscape and the daily rituals and superstitions of the villagers. But it addresses loftier, metaphysical concerns, too, and there are some excellent goats.

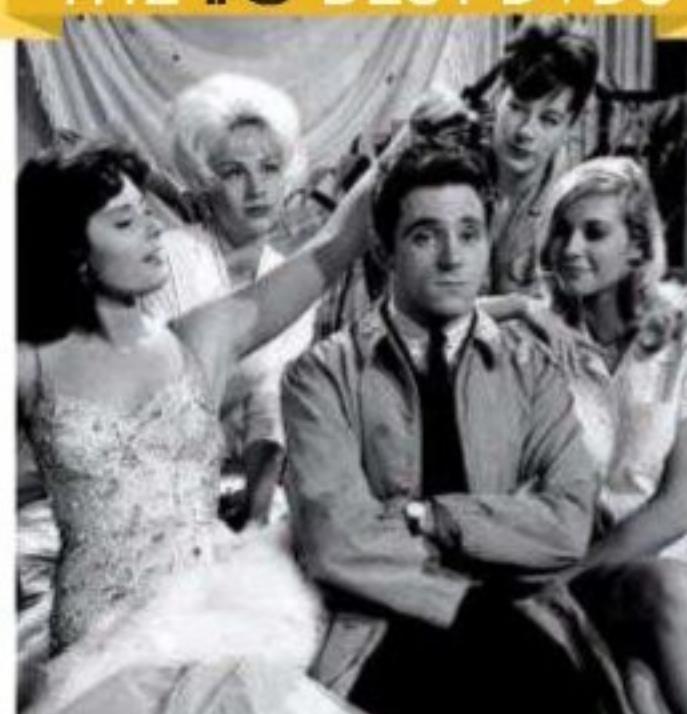
13 SUBMARINE

Directed by: Richard Ayoade
Starring: Craig Roberts



Best known as Moss in *The IT Crowd*, Ayoade established himself here as a gifted filmmaker, sympathetic to the anxieties of adolescence. Set in Swansea in the '80s, newcomer Craig Roberts plays Oliver Tate, who's negotiating the hazards of turning 16. The vibe is quirky indie—think *Rushmore* and *Garden State*—right down to the soundtrack from Arctic Monkey Alex Turner.

THE 10 BEST DVDS



1 THE STRANGE WORLD OF GURNEY SLADE

2 MORGAN: A SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT

3 CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT

4 JACKIE BROWN SPECIAL EDITION

5 TREME - SERIES 1

6 MINNIE AND MOSKOWITZ

7 THE KILLING - SERIES 1

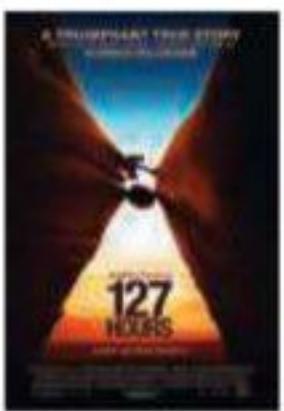
8 HAMMETT

9 ALICE

10 CHILDREN OF THE STONES

12 127 HOURS

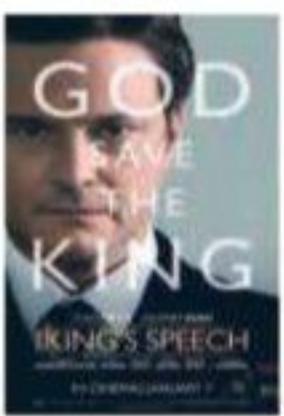
Directed by: Danny Boyle
Starring: James Franco



Danny Boyle is drawn to projects predicated around rites of passage—whether it's escaping addiction in Glasgow or leaving the slums of Bombay. Here, he dramatised the story of Aron Ralston (James Franco, excellent), pinioned in a Utah canyon and forced to amputate his right arm to escape. Laser-targeted towards that scene, Boyle nonetheless delivered an unsentimental account of Ralston's extraordinary survival.

11 THE KING'S SPEECH

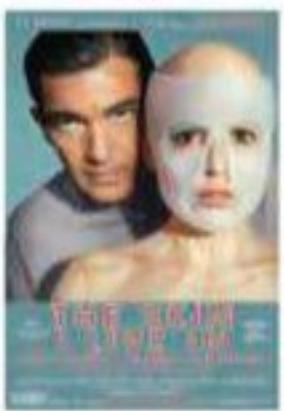
Directed by: Tom Hooper
Starring: Colin Firth



In these recessionary times, it seemed no surprise that audiences found comfort in familiar tropes—stiff upper lips, posh frocks, the Empire and on. So, while *Downton Abbey* has been TV's ratings hit of the last year, *The King's Speech* was 2011's most successful film. Certainly, this story of how George VI overcame his stammer was stirring drama of the best kind.

10 THE SKIN I LIVE IN

Directed by: Pedro Almodóvar
Starring: Antonio Banderas

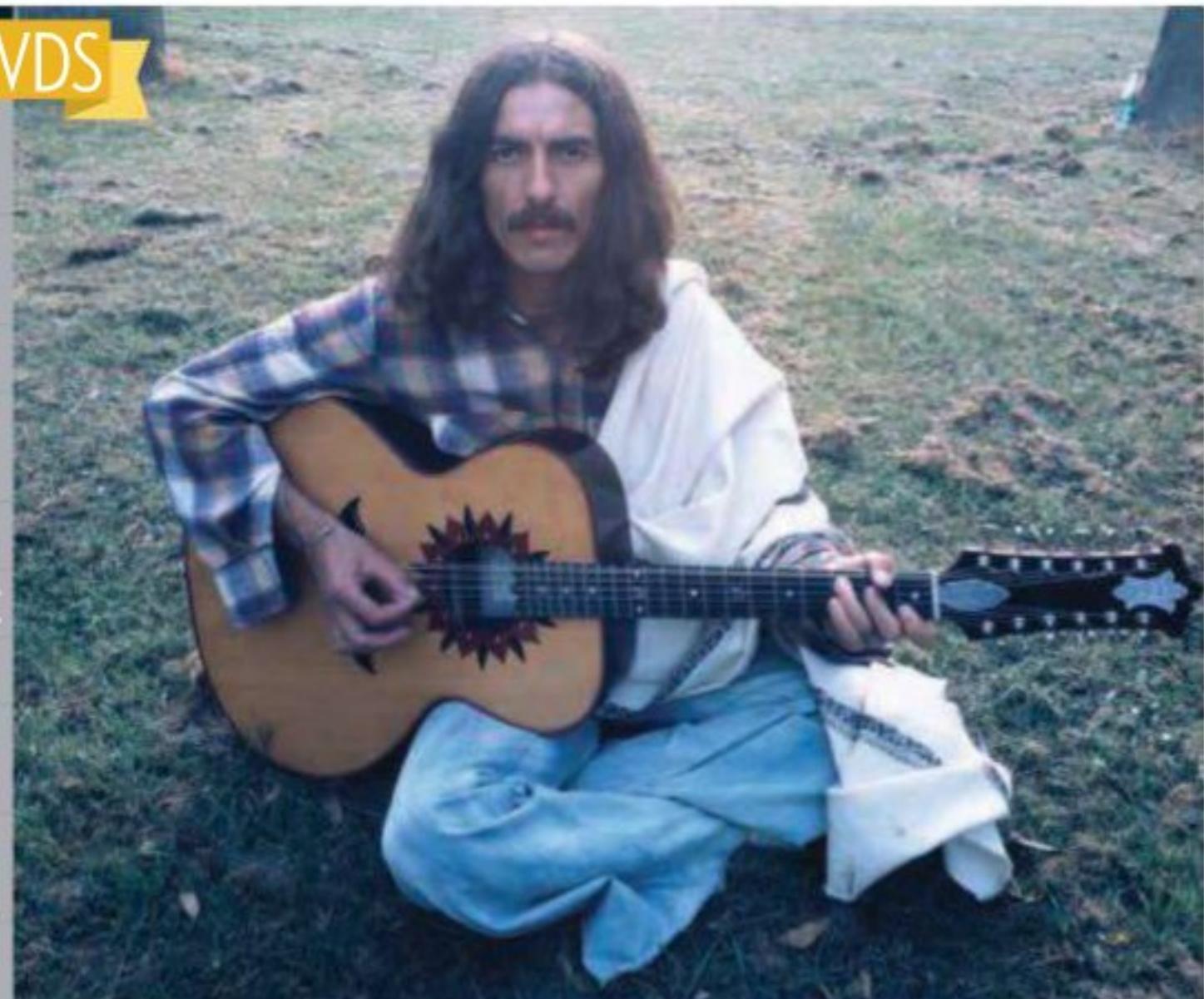


Having turned 62 this year, for his latest film Almodóvar chose to revisit his signature themes—obsession, sexual identity—and reunite with Banderas for the first time in

Medical macabre:
Antonio Banderas
in *The Skin I Live In*

THE 10 BEST MUSIC DVDS

- 1 GEORGE HARRISON - LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD
- 2 HERE'S A HEALTH TO THE BARLEY MOW
- 3 WHEEDLE'S GROOVE
- 4 THE BEAT IS THE LAW: FANFARE FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE
- 5 LEMMY
- 6 ROCKSTEADY: THE ROOTS OF REGGAE
- 7 1991: THE YEAR PUNK BROKE
- 8 LEVON HELM - RAMBLE AT THE RYMAN
- 9 MARK STEWART - ON/OFF: POP GROUP TO MAFFIA
- 10 SHE'S A PUNKROCKER



21 years. The result was predictably bonkers stuff, with a Hitchcock-via-Cronenberg plotting on the macabre antics of Banderas' plastic surgeon—but the finished result was executed with Almodóvar's inimitable elegance and style.

9 THE GUARD

Directed by: John Michael McDonagh. Starring: Brendan Gleeson

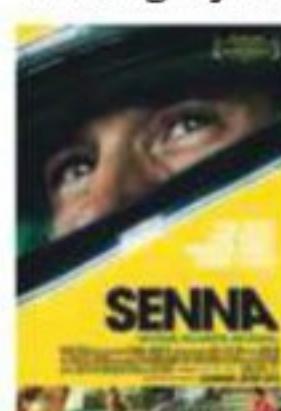


After a rare lead role as a hitman in 2008's *In Bruges* (directed by John McDonagh's brother, Martin), *The Guard* found Brendan Gleeson on the other side of the law for a change—as a corrupt local policeman whose sleepy patch on Ireland's west coast becomes an international crime hotspot. McDonagh's film served Gleeson's strengths well—it's

aribal comedy, greatly elevated by Gleeson's mischievous presence.

8 SENNA

Directed by: Asif Kapadia
Starring: Ayrton Senna



Senna's death, aged 34, while in the lead at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix, did much to seal the Formula One driver's mythic status. Constructed entirely of archive footage, Asif Kapadia's documentary offered up a visceral reminder of Senna's formidable skills on the track, while some narrative meat was provided by the longstanding rivalry between Senna and his former teammate, Alain Prost.

7 THE ARTIST

Directed by: Michel Hazanavicius
Starring: Jean Dujardin



Following on the heels of two enjoyable, if throwaway, spy-movie parodies, French director Michel Hazanavicius revealed himself as a film-maker of greater substance with *The Artist*, a black-and-white silent movie in the tradition of

A Star Is Born and *The Bad And The Beautiful*, set around the time of the arrival of talkies in 1920s Hollywood. The result was richly detailed, stylish and funny—and a little feelgood, too.

6 BLACK SWAN

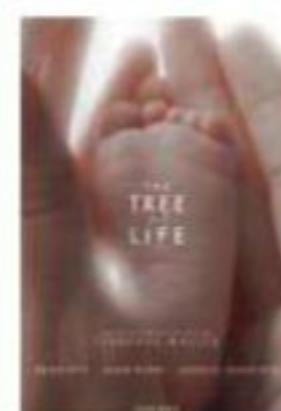
Directed by: Darren Aronofsky
Starring: Natalie Portman



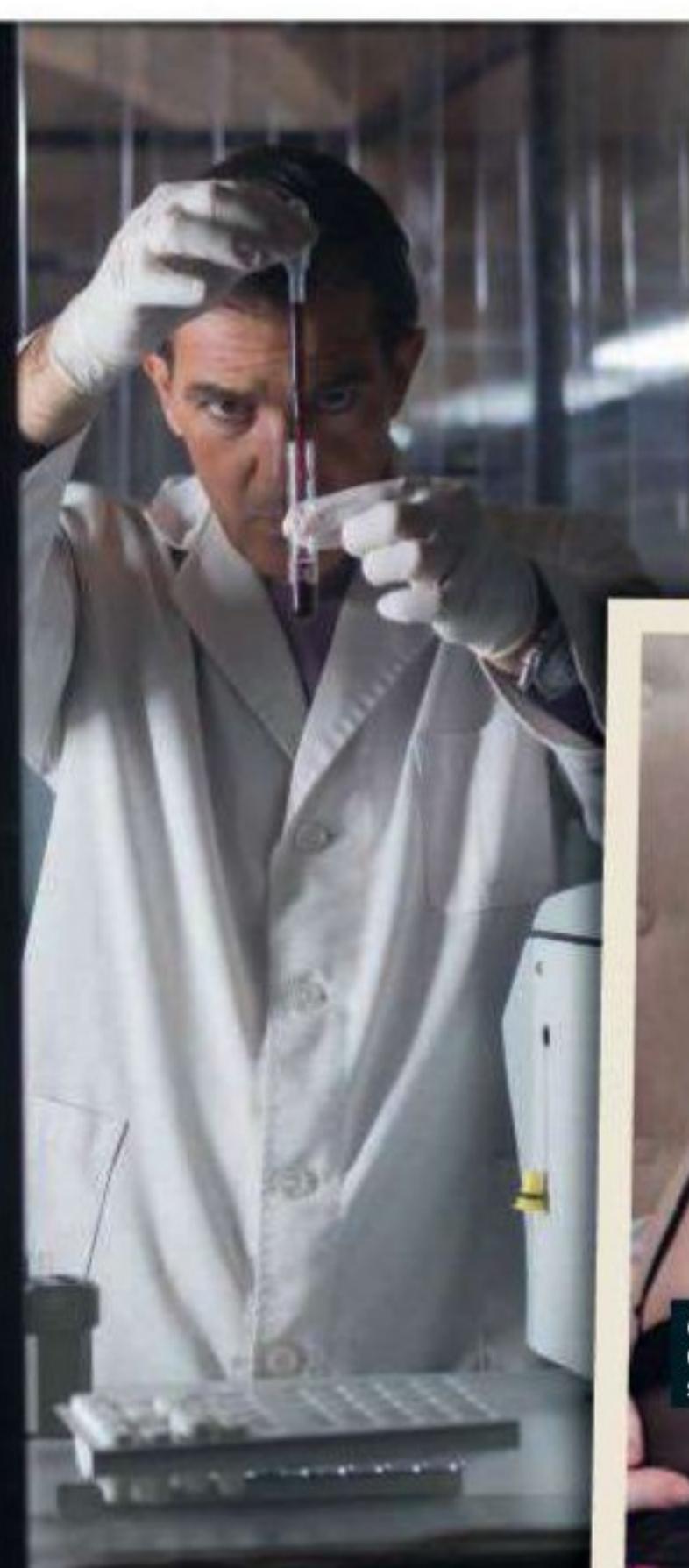
Aronofsky's previous film, *The Wrestler*, explored the lengths that a person will push themselves to for their art. It's a theme revisited here, exchanging pro-wrestling for the more rarefied milieu of ballet dancing. As Portman's prima ballerina unravelled, Aronofsky's melodrama assumed a compellingly tortured pose, somewhere between *Repulsion*-era Polanski and Cronenberg-style body horror.

5 THE TREE OF LIFE

Directed by: Terrence Malick
Starring: Brad Pitt



His fifth film in nearly 40 years, Malick's latest was an ambitious, if deeply polarising, symphony to the ineffable mysteries of creation. The story nominally followed an American **CONTINUES OVER>**



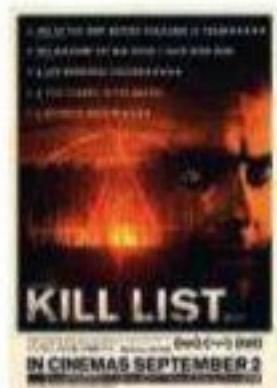
Off-duty: Brendan Gleeson lets off steam in *The Guard*

THE 50 BEST FILMS CONT...

family, dominated by Pitt's stern paterfamilias, from the middle of the 20th century to the present day—but also looped back to the dawn of time itself, to take in exploding volcanoes and dinosaur smackdowns.

4 KILL LIST

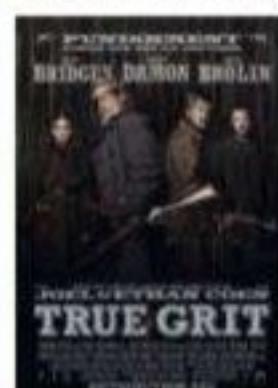
Directed by: Ben Wheatley
Starring: Neil Maskell


A strong stomach was certainly required for British director Ben Wheatley's second film. In much the same way that his debut, the shot-on-a-shoestring *Down Terrace*, put a fresh spin on the gangster

movie, another familiar genre was upended for the follow-up, *Kill List*. But what began as a hitman movie set, perhaps unpromisingly, in dingy Sheffield, ended up closer in spirit to Brit folk-horror classics like *Witchfinder General* and *The Wicker Man*. Along the way, some awful things were done with hammers.

3 TRUE GRIT

Directed by: Joel and Ethan Coen. Starring: Jeff Bridges


The big news here for fans of the Coen Brothers was their reunion with *Big Lebowski* star Jeff Bridges, who brought along some impressive facial hair to his meaty performance as US Marshal Rooster Cogburn. This was an unusually straight-faced genre exercise for the Coens, with its rich period detail and loving attention to vernacular. But *True Grit* felt part of an ongoing exploration of times and places in American history that's often overlooked in the Coens' work, and proves that their artistry is intact, even when they're not playing it for laughs.

2 DRIVE

Directed by: Nicholas Winding Refn. Starring: Ryan Gosling


Danish director Nic Winding Refn has been chronicling the European underworld since his debut, *Pusher*, in 1996. For his first American movie, he tackled a fondly remembered sub-genre of stripped-down, existential action movies familiar from late 1970s and early '80s movies by Walter Hill, John Carpenter and Michael Mann. In Ryan Gosling, he found a leading man who channelled Steve McQueen's minimalist cool—and had a way with a toothpick, too.

Ryan Gosling gets his share of the loot in *Drive*



Cold War intrigue:
John Hurt (foreground)
and Gary Oldman in
Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

THE 10 BEST BOOKS

1 33 REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE: A HISTORY OF PROTEST SONGS DORIAN LYNSKEY

2 YOU REALLY GOT ME: THE STORY OF THE KINKS NICK HASTED

3 BUTTERFLY ON A WHEEL: THE GREAT ROLLING STONES DRUG BUST SIMON WELLS

4 BREAKFAST IN NUDIE SUITS: OUT OF TUNE AND ON THE RUN WITH GRAMP ARONS IAN DUNLOP

5 NO DIRECTION HOME: THE LIFE & MUSIC OF BOB DYLAN ROBERT SHELTON

6 THE RESURRECTION OF JOHNNY CASH: HURT, REDEMPTION AND AMERICAN RECORDINGS GRAEME THOMSON

7 AND ON PIANO... NICKY HOPKINS JULIAN DAWSON

8 THE MAN WHO RECORDED THE WORLD: A BIOGRAPHY OF ALAN LOMAX JOHN SZWED

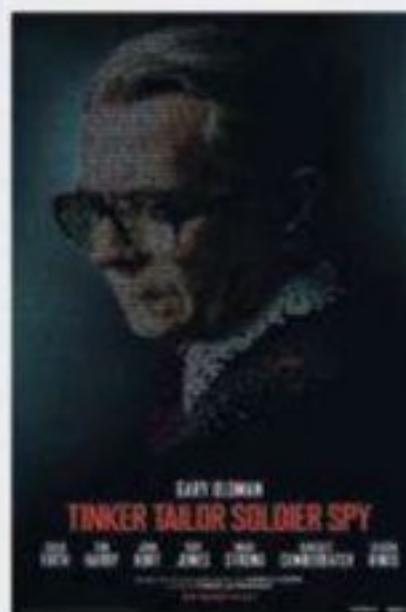
9 THE HELLHOUND SAMPLE CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY

10 EVERYTHING IS AN AFTER-THOUGHT: THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF PAUL NELSON KEVIN AVERY

FILM OF THE YEAR

1 TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY

Directed by: Tomas Alfredson
Starring: Gary Oldman



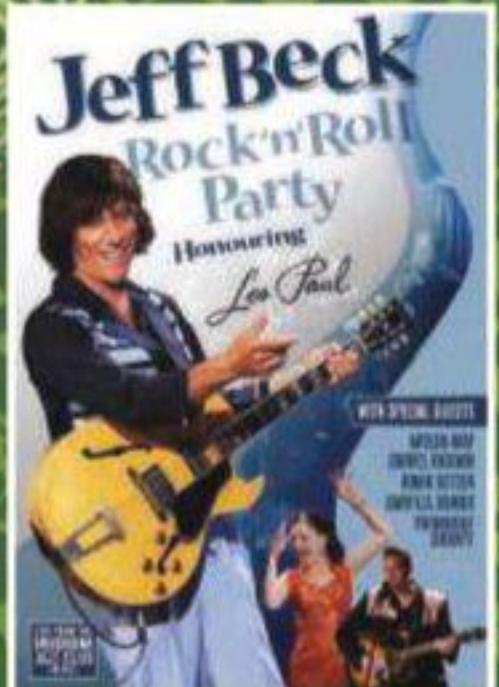
THE LAST WE heard from Swedish film-maker Tomas Alfredson, he was enjoying well-deserved plaudits (including our 2009 Film Of The Year) for *Let The Right One In*, his wintry period piece about vampires. It seemed appropriate, then, that this next film offered yet another atmospheric account of life among the undead—or in this case, the British secret service in the 1970s, a dingy shadow-world populated by pale-faced men in beige suits, lit by a sickly mortuary glow.

This was Alfredson's masterful adaptation of John le Carré's Cold War thriller, conspicuously far removed from the globetrotting derring-do of James Bond, yet as compelling in its own way as any edge-of-your-seat action movie. Set in a paranoid climate of deceit and shoddy compromise, *Tinker, Tailor...* was brilliantly anchored by Gary Oldman as the stoical George Smiley, a former spymaster brought out of retirement to unearth a Soviet mole in the very upper levels of MI6. Oldman—one of cinema's great shouters—gave a melancholic, introspective performance, commendably portraying Smiley as a diligent mandarin whose emotions have long since been ossified by the intricate protocols demanded by his job. Around Oldman, Alfredson assembled a first-rate supporting cast, including Colin Firth, Mark Strong, Kathy Burke, John Hurt, Tom Hardy and Benedict Cumberbatch.

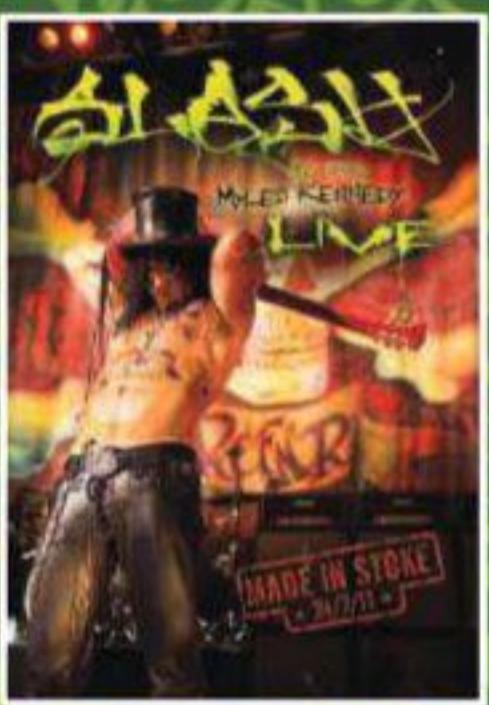
And who was the traitor? In many respects, the end result was less important than the path Alfredson nimbly took through le Carré's labyrinthine story. This was intelligent, well-crafted film-making. Travelling from smoky Hungarian cafés to the muddy playing fields of a minor English public school via the shabby corridors of Whitehall, Alfredson's slow-burning film provided a terrific account of the British secret service as an indulgent, self-serving boys' club, locked in denial about its own rapidly diminishing place on the world stage. Here were anxious men whose professional and personal lives were mired in compromise; where nobody can be trusted. In fact, for a film set during the mid-'70s, *Tinker, Tailor...* often felt uncomfortably close to our own shifting, dishonest times.



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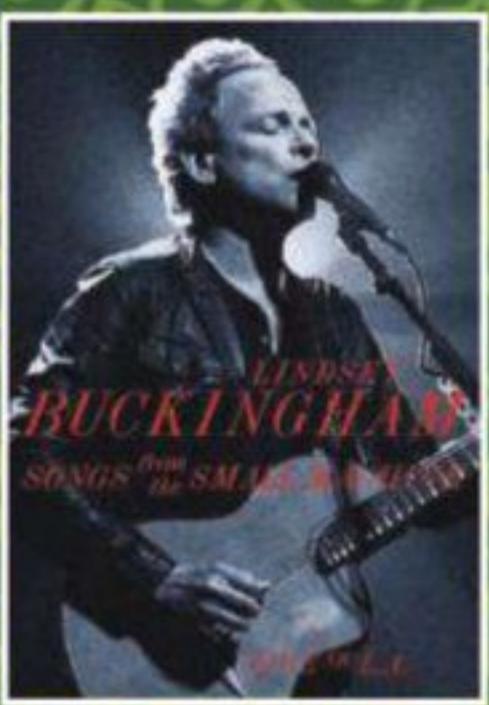
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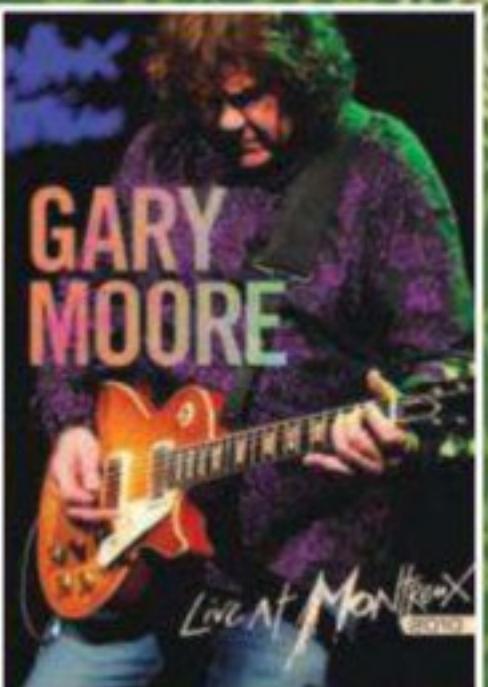
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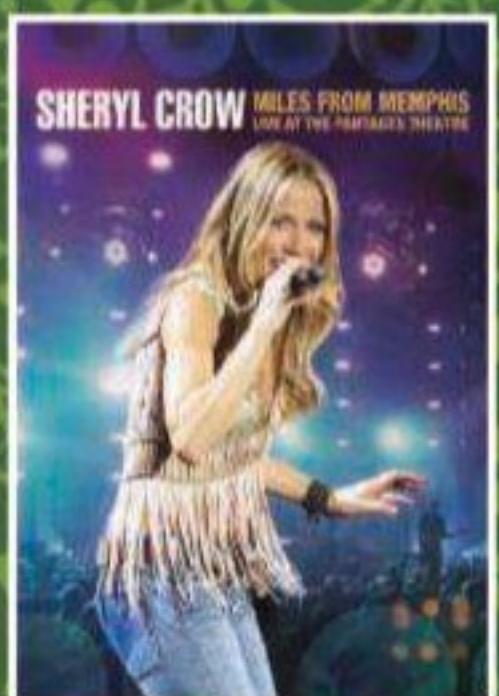
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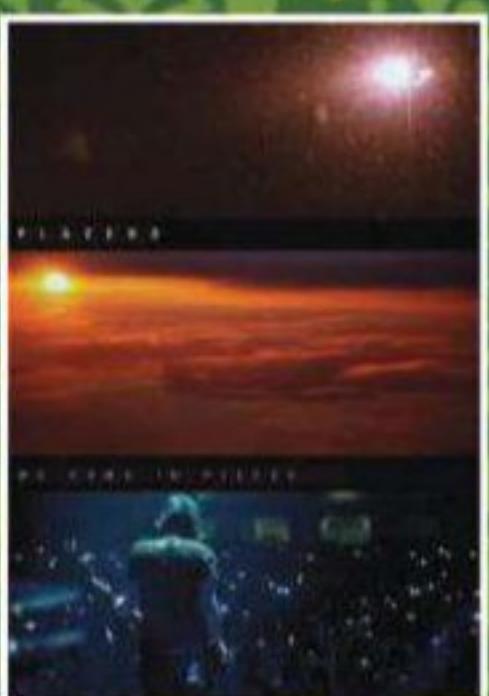
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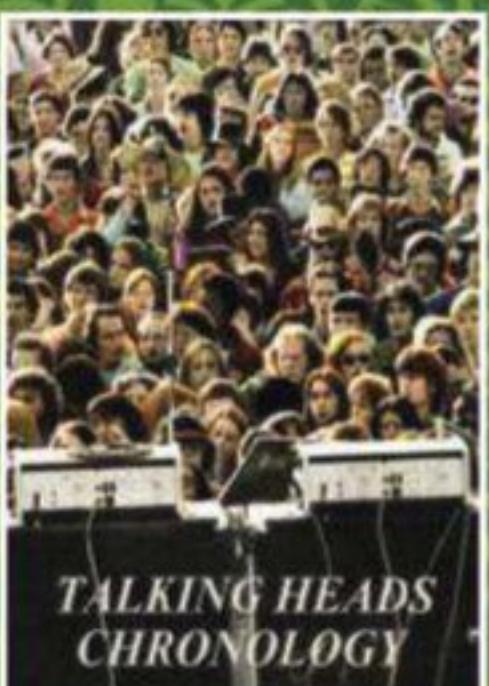
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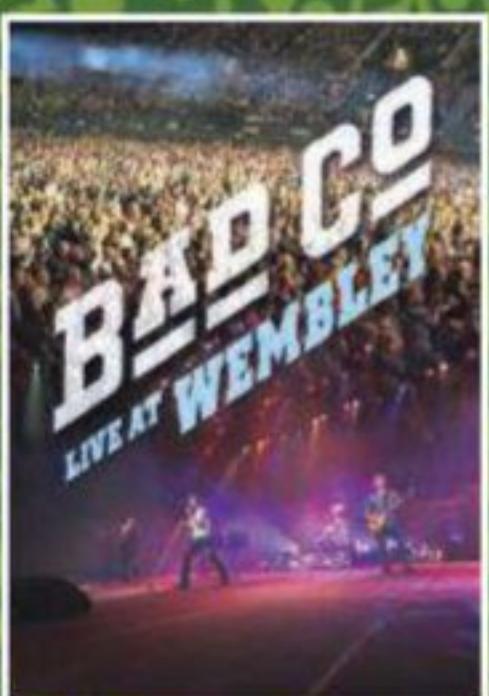
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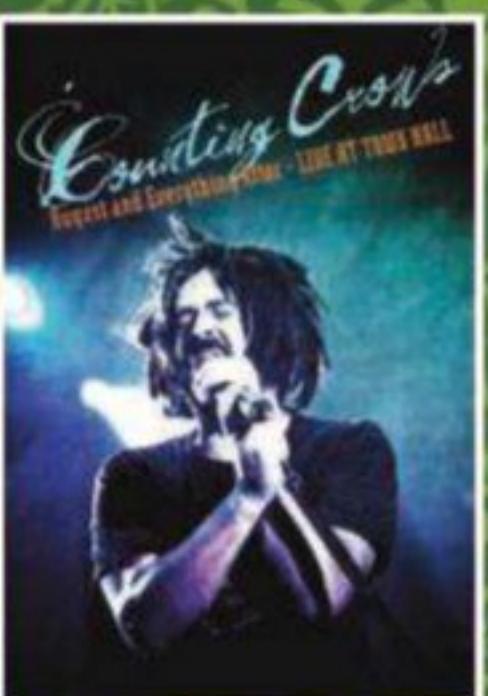
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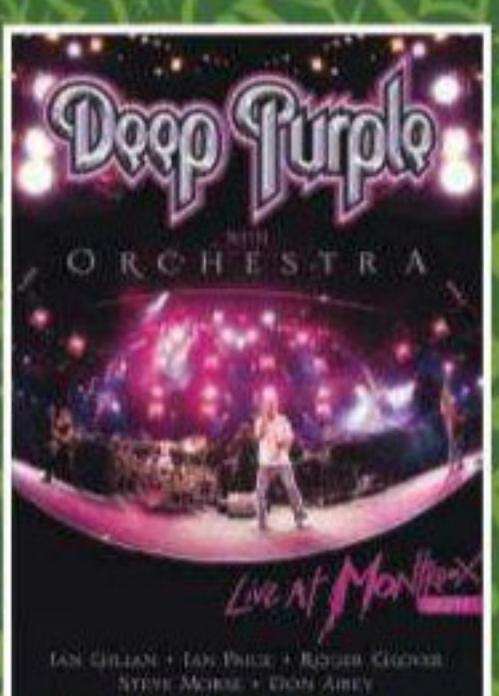
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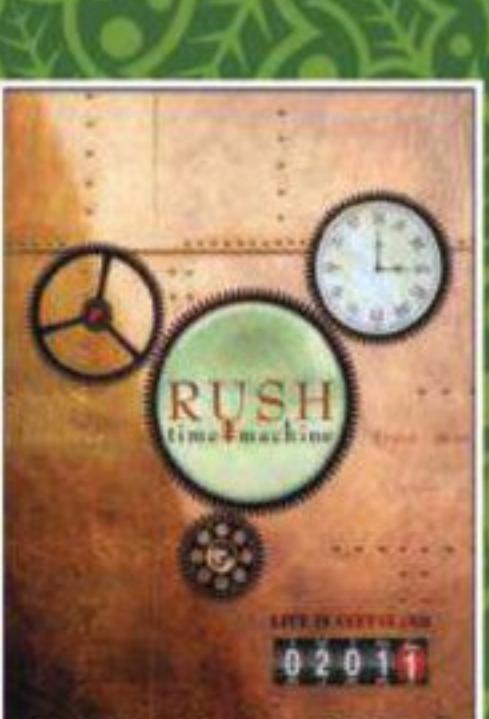
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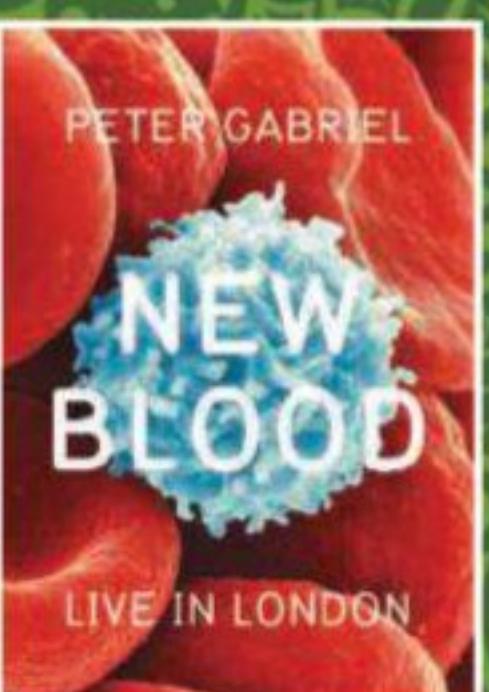
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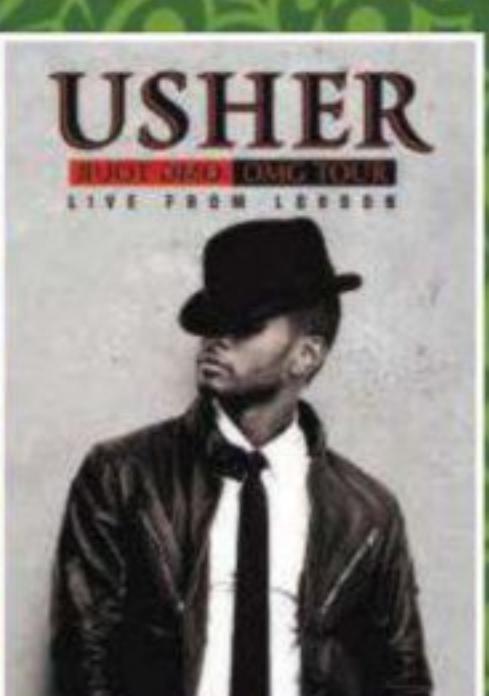
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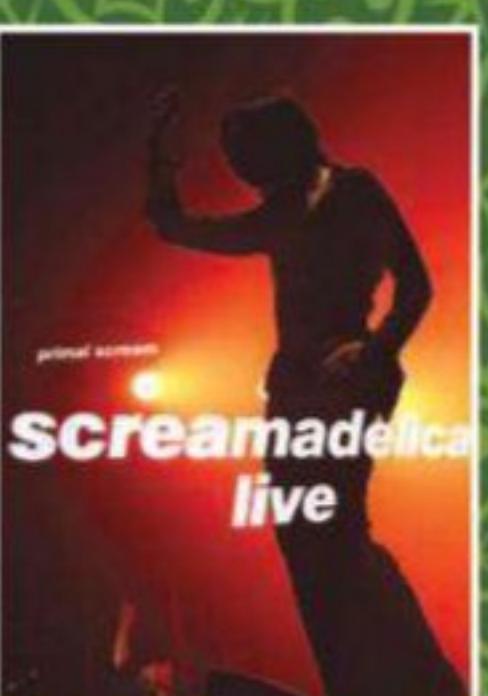
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ALBUM BY ALBUM

KATE BUSH

INTERVIEW BY GRAEME THOMSON

It would be inadvisable to get carried away, but two album releases in 2011 suggests Kate Bush is returning to a more agreeable rate of productivity following almost 20 years of near hibernation.

Whatever lies ahead, we can look back on a past rich with treasure. During her 33-year career, Bush has gone from theatrical teen prodigy to pagan pop goddess to wistful chronicler of the elements, following her impulses with absolute dedication. Her work remains *sui generis*, a wondrous alchemy of folk roots, post-punk, world music, prog rock and some ancient siren call.

Uncut talks to some of those who have helped Bush craft her remarkable oeuvre.

THE MELODRAMATIC DEBUT

THE KICK INSIDE

EMI, 1978. PRODUCED BY ANDREW POWELL



Recorded when Bush is just 18, this astonishingly accomplished, powerfully feminine record features musicians from Pilot and Cockney Rebel.

Feeling her way in the studio, the songs – including the No 1 single “Wuthering Heights” – are already masterful.

ANDREW POWELL (PRODUCER): The selection process was difficult. I've still got about 100 songs on cassettes, some of which I still wish she'd done. “Wow” was on that list, which tells you the quality of what we kept off. “Wuthering Heights” was only written a few days before we went into the studio. Kate came around, sat down at my piano and played it. I said, “Um, yeah, I think we should use that!” It hit me straight away as really extraordinary.

IAN BAIRNSON (GUITAR): She had an endless supply of songs. She'd sit at the piano and say, “Might do this, might not.” There was no formula, they were all truly original. So was she. She'd sing the lead vocal with one voice and do backing vocals as a completely different character. You'd think, “There's a whole cast of people in there.”

POWELL: Everyone realised that this was no ordinary singer-songwriter. It was a fantastically creative atmosphere. We cut three tracks in the first day. We started off with “Moving” and it was done in two hours.

DAVID PATON (BASS): I remember us discussing the album: “It's so different, what will people think?” We thought it was great, but it was a shock when it did so well, so quickly.

SAMPLADELIC EXPLORATIONS

NEVER FOR EVER

EMI, 1980. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



Left unsatisfied by her second album *Lionheart*, Bush breaks from Powell, retains Jon Kelly as co-producer, and dives into the endless sonic possibilities of the Fairlight digital sampler.

JON KELLY: I remember her saying, “Now we have control of what we do.” I went to her flat in Brockley just after Christmas [1979] and she played me “Babooshka”. I thought it was a single straight away. It had the rising chorus and that little piano motif from the very beginning. It had all the ingredients.

JOHN WALTERS (FAIRLIGHT): On “Babooshka” we created a huge mess in Abbey Road's Studio 2 – smashing glasses, sampling them and saving the noises as files in the Fairlight. Kate understood the implications of digital sampling that the Fairlight kicked into play, and grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

BAIRNSON: At one point I think she was confused. It's that thing about having too much choice. Synths, Fairlight, she had all these tools to play with and in some ways it was too much.

MAX MIDDLETON (ORGAN): She wasn't into dissecting music, she wanted it to come together naturally. She'd play the song, we'd watch her, and that was it. She sang “Violin” like she was performing onstage. It was 200 per cent effort every time. I was constantly impressed.

KELLY: There were fabulous sessions in Abbey Road. We played for days under no pressure, just for the joy of it. It was such a creative time.

A METICULOUS MASTERPIECE

THE DREAMING

EMI, 1982. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



After a stuttering start with Hugh Padgham, Bush painstakingly pieces together her fourth album, working alongside a series of engineers.

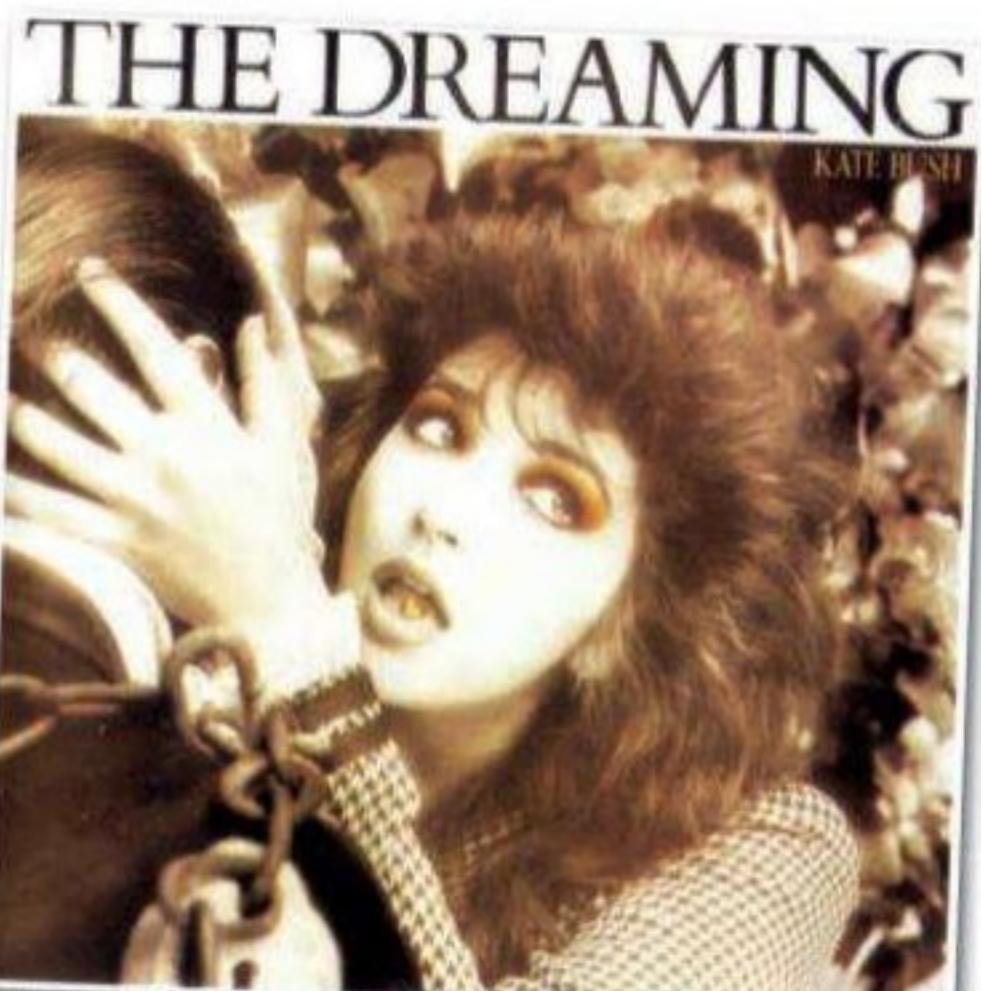
The results may be defiantly odd – donkey impersonations and Rolf Harris' didgeridoo are just two of many eccentricities – but this multi-layered, polyrhythmic and wildly experimental album remains a landmark work.

PAUL HARDIMAN (ENGINEER): She wanted to produce herself, to move on from possibly some rather safe studio sounds and just experiment. She had been building up to this, but EMI were very reluctant for her to have total control after what had been a successful run of albums.

NICK LAUNAY (ENGINEER): I don't remember anybody from EMI coming down. They were kept at arm's length. There was basically her, the musicians she chose, and an engineer. On a technical level, making that record had no rules, we could try everything that came to mind. We were both in the same place: “I wonder what this does?” It was an approach of plugging things in, seeing what it did, and working out how you use that to manipulate the instrument you're playing. The sound on “The Dreaming”, this metallic sound, very dreamy and surreal, is actually a guitar and a piano going into a harmoniser – the note goes up and up and up in octaves until it's so high you can't hear it. We used that on quite a few songs.

HARDIMAN: Working on the album was hours of crippling tedium with bursts of extreme

In her element:
a flame-haired
Kate Bush, 1978



THE DREAMING

THE AVANT-GARDE POP RECORD

HOUNDS OF LOVE

EMI, 1985. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



Recorded at her new studio in the barn of her parents' farm in Welling, Kent, it's a peerless fusion of the commercial and creative. Side one is packed with hits, including "Cloudbusting" and "The Big Sky", while the second hosts the darkly conceptual "Seventh Wave" suite.

PAUL HARDIMAN: When I first heard "Running Up That Hill" it was obvious that Kate had finally found a groove. It wasn't a demo, we carried on working from Kate's original 24-track start. The whole album has an overall harder edge. We all felt it was already on its way to becoming a major album.

YOUTH (BASS): It was fantastic. At 11am her Mum would come in with cakes and tea, then we'd work till late afternoon. Every musician would come down and play their parts separately, which gives it a slightly futuristic atmosphere. On "Big Sky" she let me do what I liked, then she chopped it up and arranged it in the Fairlight. She's after the currency of ideas reflected in the music, rather than academic virtuosity.

CHARLIE MORGAN (DRUMS): The whole "Seventh Wave" concept was outrageous—the second half of "Jig Of Life" is an entire 24-track of me playing different drums: lambeg, bodhran, you name it. I came back thinking, "What have I done today?" There were no rules or barriers, it was just pure creativity. And then her Dad would come in and say, "I'll go and get a take-out. What do you fancy, some Indian or a Chinese?" Amazing.

excitement. At times Kate was just exhausted. It was hard work, but hugely rewarding.

LAUNAY: Very often she'd come to do the take and each time she'd play the song slightly differently. It wouldn't be a case of the musicians getting annoyed, it would be a case of people laughing, rolling on the floor, saying to her, "No, no, when you get to that bit you're doing something different..." I did a lot of editing together of different takes and it got very confusing at times. I don't think she had any realisation of how complex songs like "The Dreaming" were. To her they were very simple.

BRIAN BATH (GUITAR): At one point they got everyone—kids, engineers, about 50 of us—just going "Waaaah!" On "Pull Out The Pin", I got this ridiculous diminished guitar lick which just went all over the place, like a Jimmy Bryant thing. Kate loved it!

HARDIMAN: EMI were probably confused by the results. It sold OK, but more importantly it registered in the US and set up the recording and production of *Hounds Of Love*.

ROMANCE AND WANDERLUST

THE SENSUAL WORLD

EMI, 1989. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



Bush's sixth album is a stately, autumnal slow-burner which largely lives up to its title. Among the many highlights are three tracks Bush recorded with Bulgarian folk singers *Trio Bulgarka*. It peaked at No 2 in the UK album chart.

JOE BOYD: Kate rang me and said she wanted to have Bulgarian harmonies on her new album. I told her that the best way to accomplish that would be to go to Sofia, so we went over and spent two days in a schoolroom with the Trio, her beatbox and a tape of the tracks. The ethnographer would suggest a folk melody that might work with a line of Kate's song, the arranger would come up with a harmony for it, and Kate would say yes or no. After working out the arrangements they all flew to London. Kate is a perfectionist, and those sessions were long and hard.

BORIMINA NEDEVA (MUSICIAN/TRANSLATOR): I don't think Kate completely understood what she was taking on when she started, but she's not afraid to try new things. In the end, most of the experimenting was done in the studio in London. On "Rocket's Tail", Yanka [Rupkina, the Trio's senior vocalist] came up with this solo at the end which was completely wild, out of the blue. She was absolutely improvising, which is very unusual, and Kate thought it was wonderful. Kate and Trio really bonded. They were so emotionally on the same wavelength there wasn't much need for words. Most of the time they would just communicate in sign language. Or hugs.

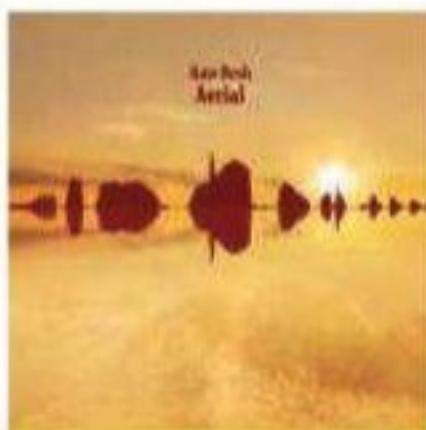
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Venus in furs:
ready for a tumble
in the snow, 2011

AT ONE WITH NATURE

AERIAL

EMI, 2005. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



Following a 12-year hiatus during which she became a mother, Bush returns with this spacious, organic double album. The second disc traces the arc of a summer's day, each song threaded with birdsong.

TONY WADSWORTH (EX-EMI EXECUTIVE): It was pretty clear that her priority was her family. I thought there was a distinct possibility that I might get fired before anything came!

STEVE SANGER (DRUMS): On "Aerial" she explained that when this birdsong begins, that's when I start playing. That was a different day! There was a lot of tea, great food, great fun. It was the most creative thing I've done.

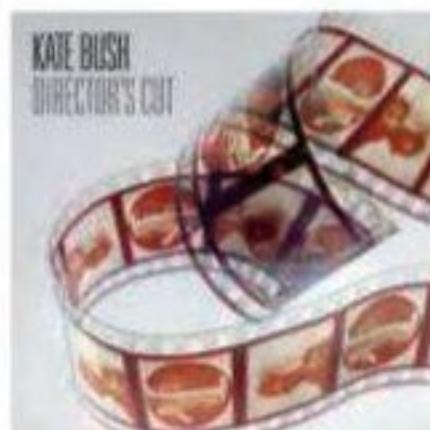
PETER ERSKINE (DRUMS): There was a lovely informality to it. The only direction I remember was her always asking me to get out my "lovely blue snare drum", a steel drum from Yamaha. It records terrifically, but she was also quite taken by the appearance. "OK Kate, I'll get that out."

WADSWORTH: The first listen was amazing. She was nervous. I went to the studio in her garden, she gave me a tracklisting, said "It's a bit long", and played the whole thing. I don't think I'd heard the human voice singing with birds before. I thought, "God, she's still doing things that are incredibly original and yet seem absolutely natural."

THE PAST, REWRITTEN

DIRECTOR'S CUT

FISH PEOPLE, 2011. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



An uncharacteristic backward glance by Bush. Reworking 11 songs from *The Sensual World* and *The Red Shoes*, she adds new vocals and instrumentation while stripping back much of the clutter.

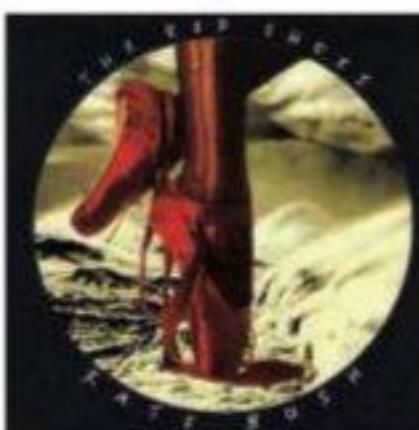
STEVE GADD (DRUMS): She didn't want me to go back and listen to the originals, she wanted me to treat these recordings as new songs. She wanted fresh ears. Very interesting. It was just me, her and the track. "Rubberband Girl" might sound like a bar band in a room, but it's just me playing along to what was there. At times she encouraged me to really stretch out in a way that felt like we were just jamming, to be really free. I felt great that she finally got what she wanted for these songs.

MICA PARIS (VOCALS): I went down to her home in early 2010 and I remember her saying, "Don't tell anyone, Mica. Don't let anyone know I'm making an album." "Don't worry Kate, I won't!" When I heard the song she asked me to sing on, "Lily", I looked at her and said, "My God, that's a killer." Her vocal was so powerful. It was a long day. She knows exactly what she wants. Often it seems very unusual, then you hear the way she puts it all together and you think, "Wow, she was right." She's also very open to suggestion, which is a fantastic trait. A real sharing energy.

FROM TROUBLED TIMES...

THE RED SHOES

EMI, 1993. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



A soundtrack to tough times: the death of her mother and the end of her long-term relationship with engineer Del Palmer results in a patchy, overlong and oddly grounded record.

HAYDN BENDALL (ENGINEER): It was a very difficult time and I was aware of that more than anything. I didn't realise 'till later it had such an impact on the music. It was a weird, fractious time, and nothing really seemed to gel.

COLIN LLOYD-TUCKER (VOCALS): She wasn't feeling that great, but she wouldn't give up. When we arrived to do "The Red Shoes", the night before she'd been up doing "Rubberband Girl". It was very raw, with just a guide vocal, and she was still working out lyrics. She had a verse which she kept repeating, and she said, "I'm going to write the words later." That was unusual – usually the song was complete when she started. Doing backing vocals was tough. We were literally sliding down the walls by the end of the session, every syllable had to be bang in time. She's a perfectionist, but she also likes a happy accident. On "The Red Shoes" me and Paddy [Bush, Kate's brother] both went into the same harmony, which was actually the wrong note, and she said, "That's fantastic! Leave it like that." She picks up on things like that.

THE ONE WITH SNOWMAN SEX

FIFTY WORDS FOR SNOW

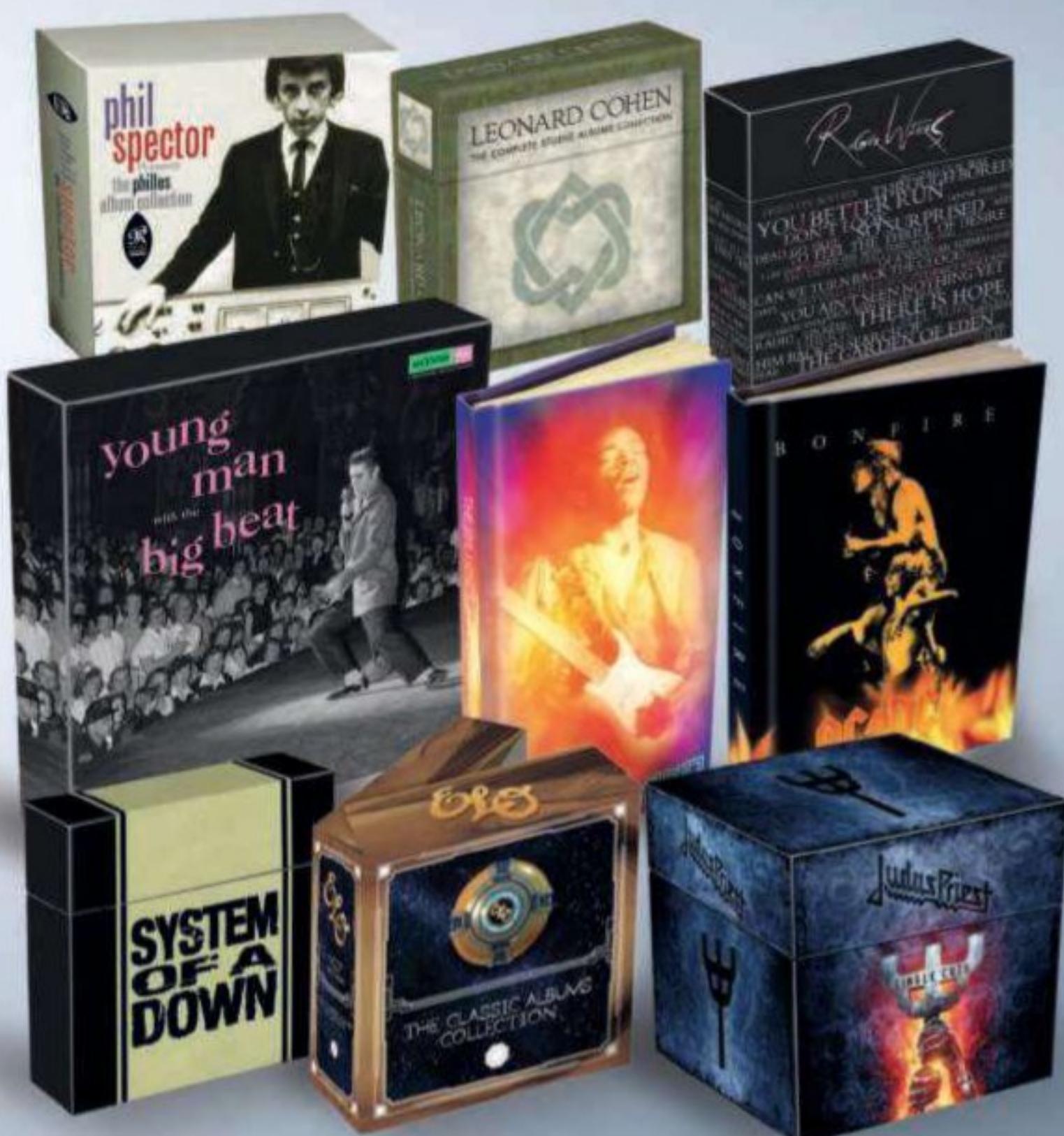
FISH PEOPLE, 2011. PRODUCED BY KATE BUSH



Bush's latest album features seven long, slow, winter-themed songs set against a backdrop of swirling snow. The mood is gentle but the imaginative landscape is as vast as ever: yeti, amorous snowmen, Stephen Fry – they're all here.

STEVE GADD: There was some space between *Director's Cut* and the new album. When I went back, the first project was done and she was beginning the second one, though she might have had some ideas while we were working on the first record. We worked hard and, boy, we got some things done! With *Fifty Words...* sometimes it was just Kate playing piano and her vocal, and then the two of us together trying to construct a rhythm based on what was there now and what might be there thereafter. I've never done another project like it. She's so unafraid. She's all about the art of it. We never really talked about the concept, but I was amazed how she put this album together sonically and visually – not just the songs, but the photographs, images, themes. It's the whole package with her, and amazing to see. And she treated me great! She always wants to make sure you're comfortable, that you're not tired or hungry. She took care of me the way she tried to take care of these songs. ☺

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ROUGH TRADE SHOPS ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2011

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"JAW-DROPPING A TRULY
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MOJO

"PICK OF THE WEEK BY A
STRANGE COUNTRY MILE"

GUARDIAN GUIDE

The Dedicated Follower

DAVE DAVIES swashbuckled his way through the '60s, a teenage musical revolutionary and provocative dandy about town. But in the early '70s, the KINKS guitarist experienced a dramatic rebirth, and embarked on a new-age quest that has sustained him through addiction, near-death experiences and those long-running spats with big brother Ray. *Uncut* taps into the wisdom of the Mystic Kink: "Listen, if it pisses people off," he says, "maybe it's a good thing..."

WORDS BY DAVID CAVANAGH

PHOTOGRAPH BY GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS

THE MAN WHO has just entered the foyer of Taunton's impressively medieval Castle Hotel wears a long black coat and a hat with a fern sticking out of it. Next to the fern is a brooch spelling the word "Om". He's driven up from Devon to meet *Uncut*, but in another sense he's travelled lifetimes. Once British pop's most flamboyant firebrand, Dave Davies, at 64, is the sort of figure you'd imagine standing on a tor with his arms upstretched to greet an eclipse. "I believe in a divine aspect and it's there whether we like it or not," he says, matter-of-factly. ➤





"I liked being noticed..."
Dave draws a crowd,
London, 1968

On the table in front of us is a new CD, *Hidden Treasures*, a lovely compilation that pieces together Davies' long-lost solo album from 1967-69. Sometimes known as *A Hole In The Sock Of...*, the album was commissioned when "Death Of A Clown", his Dylan-esque lament for a ramshackle circus, surprised everyone by crashing into the Top 3. Work on the album was abandoned two years later after disappointing sales for the follow-up singles ("Susannah's Still Alive" and "Lincoln County"), and ever since, the "lost" LP has enjoyed a *Smile*-esque mystique among Kinks fans. Davies, however, has not driven from Exmoor to give *Hidden Treasures* the hard sell. A lead guitarist rather than a natural frontman, he was ambivalent about his solo career ("It was our managers' idea") and he harbours no bitterness about the album's cancellation. He reads out some titles: "This Man He Weeps Tonight", "Crying", "There's No Life Without Love". He puts the booklet down. "It's pretty obvious what kind of mood I was in, isn't it?" he grimaces.

We're here to talk about his adventures in The Kinks and beyond; but, while happy to address the past, he makes it clear that he deplores "the morbid fascination with nostalgia" which sees albums like *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society* scrutinised and dissected 43 years after they were made. Our energy, he believes, would be better spent on seeking solutions to the spiritual problems facing mankind. Turn off your telly, is his message, and cancel your newspaper while you're at it.

"We don't need to read," he insists. "There's a whole book inside us. We are all divine. We're all much more than we think we are."

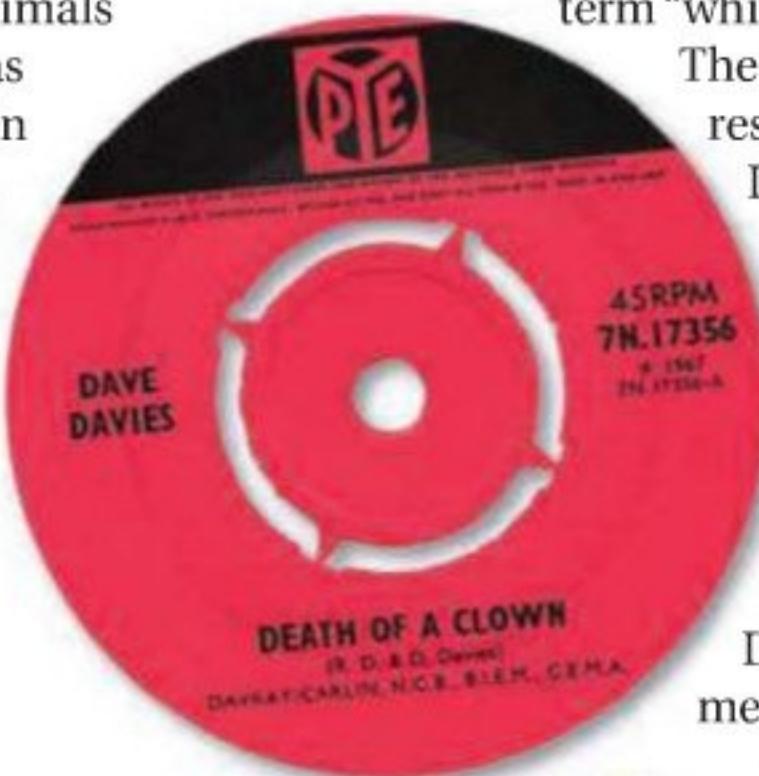
No doubt about it, Dave Davies has come a long way from the village green.

OF ALL THE millions of ideas that have permeated Davies' psyche—both prior to and since the 1972 epiphany in New York that changed his life and turned him into a mystic—surely his most far-reaching brainwave was the decision, one day in 1964, to take a Gillette razorblade to the speaker cone of his Elpico amplifier, slitting it repeatedly from the centre to the edge. Fed through a larger amp—a Vox AC30—the violated Elpico made a ferocious, distorted noise that sent "You Really Got Me", The Kinks' third single, hurtling to the top of the UK charts in September 1964. For inventing that guitar sound, Davies has often been credited as a pioneer of heavy metal. He remembers Jimi Hendrix telling him, around 1967, that "You Really Got Me" had been a landmark record in the development of rock. When it came out, The Kinks instantly joined The Animals and The Pretty Things as the rawest newcomers in Britain. Dave's raucous sound inspired Pete Townshend to write "I Can't Explain" for The Who. At just 17, he was already influential.

Born in February 1947, Dave had been the baby of the Davies

family, the youngest of eight children living in a terraced Muswell Hill house. The next youngest was Ray (born 1944), followed in an ascending line by six elder sisters. Full of music and women, the house reverberated to Perry Como, Al Bowlly, Max Miller and rock'n'roll. The sisters' boyfriends were Teddy boys, and it wasn't long before Dave heard Chuck Berry. "It was like being visited by someone from outer space," he marvels. "He was gutsy, lyrical, rhythmic—poetic long before Dylan." Another influence was Big Bill Broonzy, a black American bluesman who sang about oppression in the South. "Me and Ray could relate to him from a lower working-class point of view, from seeing our uncles working on the railway and having to kiss up to the bosses. Emotionally, we hooked up with the blues. A black bass player I once knew in LA coined the term "white negroes" to describe The Kinks."

The two brothers differed in one crucial respect. Unlike the introspective Ray, Dave was a show-off, a physically confident extrovert. He was expelled from school at 15 (for having sex on Hampstead Heath), and he got his girlfriend Sue pregnant that same year. The relationship was quickly ended by their respective families, to Dave's lifelong regret, and he didn't meet his daughter until 1993, when she was 30 and had kids of her own. Almost every song Dave wrote for The Kinks in the '60s was a plea for contact with Sue. Perhaps the most poignant image comes in "Funny Face" (1967). "I see you peering through frosted windows", he sings, desperate for a glimpse of her face before she vanishes. "I was angry," Dave recalls of his youth.



“Rock'n'roll really suited my personality...
Music didn't resurrect me.
It gave birth to me”

"I carried a lot of rage. I still do. I was rebelling against authority. I wasn't an articulate kid. Rock'n'roll really suited my personality. To play the guitar and get stuck in – it was an amazing opportunity. Music didn't resurrect me. It gave birth to me."

Being a famous young man in the '60s brought out his aggression ("I was really in-your-face"), but it also had unexpected side-effects. Between 1964 and 1968, Dave gallivanted around London like a perfumed libertine: confrontational, flirtatious, bisexual. The Kinks' co-managers, Grenville Collins and Robert Wace, encouraged him to be as dandified as he dared. "Robert came from old money," he explains, "and Grenville was charming and funny. Life was a game and he was above it all – literally, because he was so tall. He wore pinstriped suits and said, 'Jolly good show. So glad you could come.' We'd say, 'Sorry, Grenville, we had a car accident.' He'd say, 'Oh good! Anybody dead?' I loved the flamboyance." It was Collins and Wace who kitted The Kinks out in foxhunting jackets, a risqué look to complement their risqué name. Here's Dave on *Shindig!*, still only 17, in the foxhunting gear, grinning saucily as he hits a wrong chord in "All Day And All Of The Night". Here he is at 20, in 1967, singing "Death Of A Clown" in frilly white lace and chocolate-coloured velvet, looking like a buccaneer. "I loved thigh-length boots," he remembers mistily. "They made me feel like D'Artagnan. Grenville even bought me a sword. I used to go nightclubs in my thigh-length boots with my sword. One night I nearly stabbed Mike D'Abo of Manfred Mann in the throat."

Ray was the stay-at-home songwriter. Mick Avory was the archetypal pie-and-a-pint drummer. But Dave and bassist Pete Quaife

were camp and theatrical, shopping in exclusive boutiques. The two of them used to meet for lunch: "Spaghetti Bolognese, two and six. Then straight to Carnaby Street." Oscar Wilde became a sartorial role model. The classic mid-'60s Dave Davies hairstyle – a nobleman-style triangle, centre-parted – was an attempt to look like a cross between Robin Hood and a girl. "I liked being noticed. I loved wearing silly hats that I'd found in ladies' shops, seeing people stare at me, outraged. Listen, if it pisses people off, maybe it's a good thing. You either take me or leave me."

A familiar face at London haunts like the Scotch Of St James, Dave befriended actors like Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay, and musicians including Jeff Beck, Graham Nash and Brian Jones. The blond Rolling Stone became one of his closest allies. "We were of a similar mould," Davies says, "always trying to outdo each other with girls and clothes. We even used to influence each other's gestures. If you watch old clips, there's Brian going [*extravagant pout*] on telly; I'd mimic him and he'd mimic me. We were conscious of looking gay. Homosexuality didn't become legal in Britain until 1967, but what shocked me when The Kinks came along in '63 to '64 was that there was so many homosexuals in the music business. It was fascinating."

Keen to experiment, Dave had sexual relationships with men as well as women. "It was wonderful. It was like letting a genie out of a bottle." But when Michael Aldred, a presenter on *Ready Steady Go!*, told Dave that he'd fallen in love with him, bisexuality suddenly didn't seem so attractive: "I realised I preferred women at that point." He was also linked with the R'n'B singer Long John Baldry. **CONTINUES OVER»**

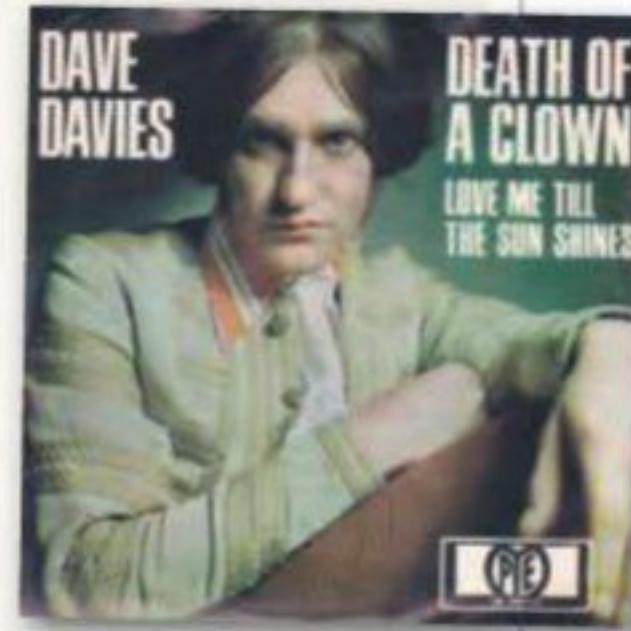


Songs of a Kink

Dave Davies' best Kinks-era tracks, and where to find them

DEATH OF A CLOWN

His first solo hit. Dylan-esque lyrics. Russian-style melody. Great line about an insect trainer. (*Something Else By The Kinks*)

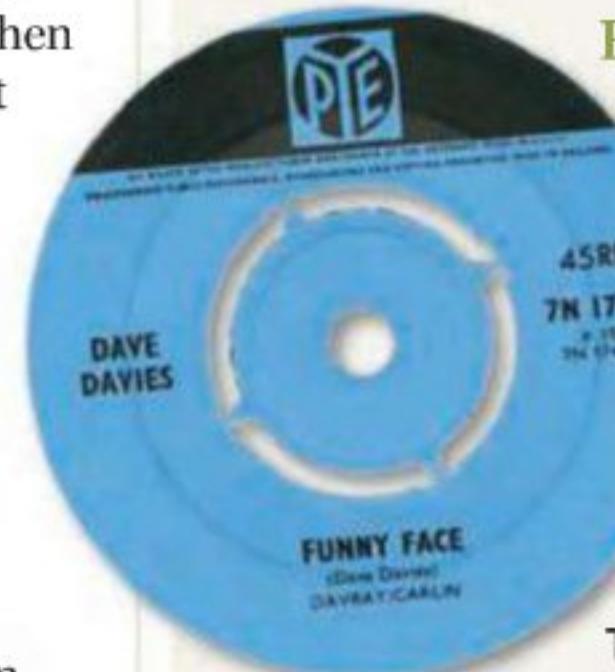


LOVE ME TILL THE SUN SHINES

B-side of "... Clown". More Dylan-esque lyrics (probably based on "All I Really Want To Do") over a heavy, spidery riff. (*Something Else By The Kinks*)

SUSANNAH'S STILL ALIVE

Second solo single (1967), about an old woman consumed by memories of a former lover. One of many songs about real-life girlfriend Sue Sheehan. (*Kinks, The Ultimate Collection*)



FUNNY FACE

B-side. Dave is panicking. Will he ever meet Sue again? "The doctors won't let me see her". (*Something Else By The Kinks*)

LINCOLN COUNTY

Third solo single (1968), a breezy Wild West number about a hellraising outlaw. (*Dave Davies, Hidden Treasures*)

MINDLESS CHILD OF MOTHERHOOD

A track from his lost '60s album. About Sue again ("in dreams I have seen you") and the child that Dave wouldn't meet for 30 years. (*Dave Davies, Hidden Treasures*)

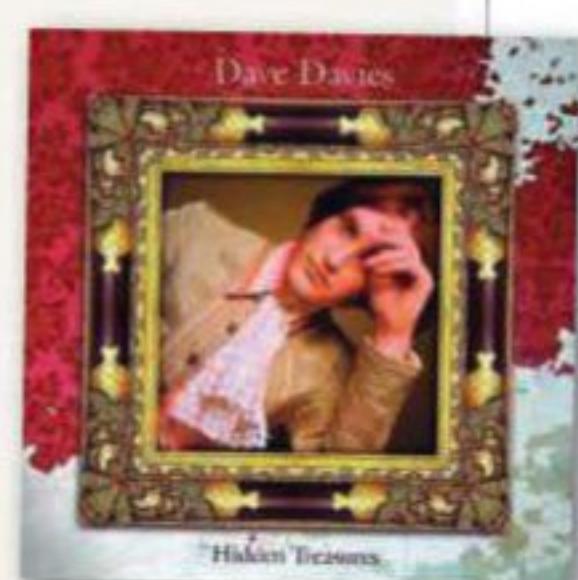
CREEPING JEAN

Dark psych-rock, from the lost '60s LP. Dave is an uncanny ringer for Mott The Hoople's Ian Hunter. (*Dave Davies, Hidden Treasures*)

STRANGERS

Magnificent folk song from the "Lola" era. Dave is tormented by his need for a companion on life's journey.

(*Kinks, Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround, Part One*)



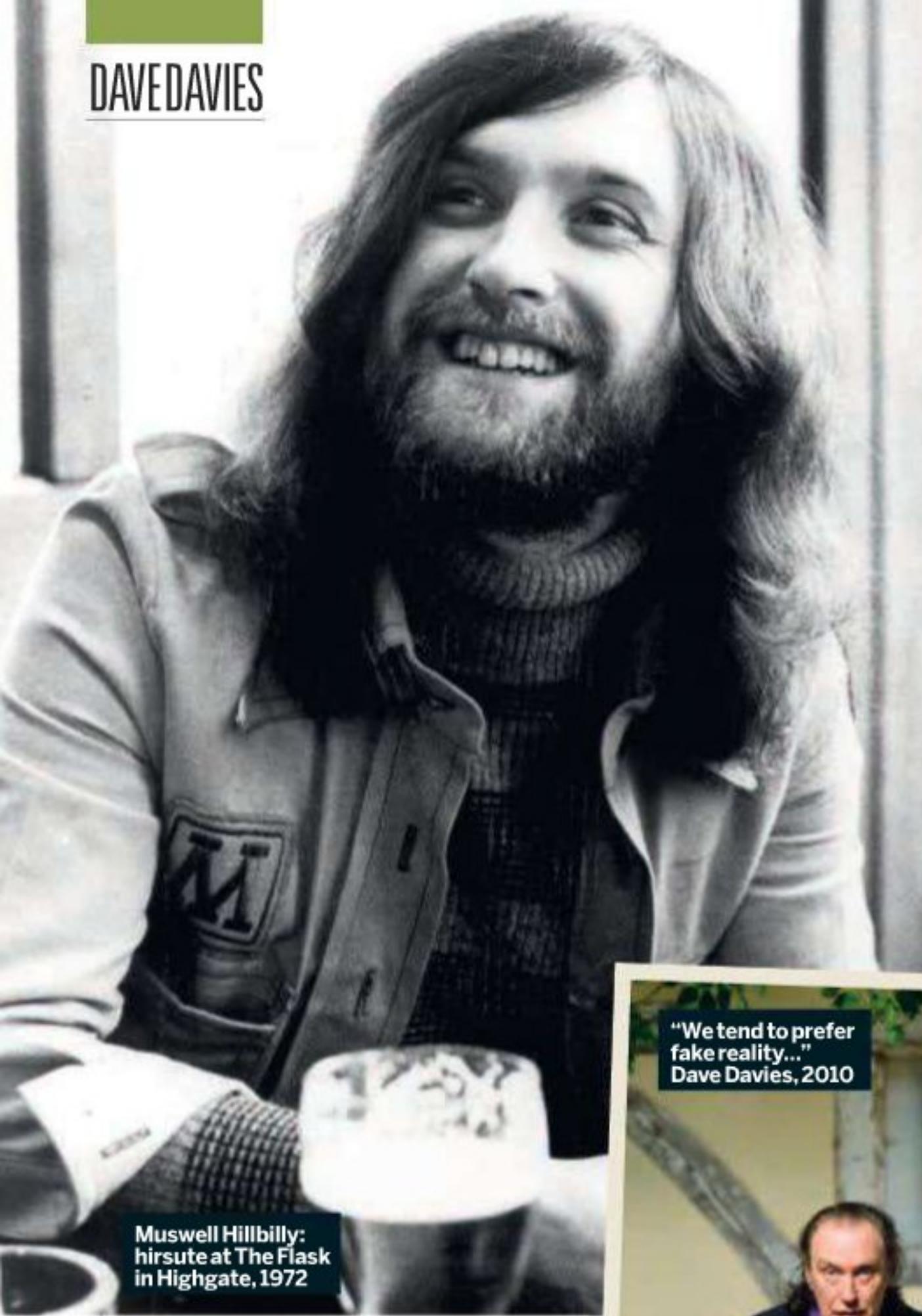
TRUST YOUR HEART

Dave's high, aching voice was perfect for this '70s ballad of forgiveness and heartbreak.

(*Kinks, Misfits*)

LIVING ON A THIN LINE

"Come Dancing" notwithstanding, Dave wrote The Kinks' best song of the '80s, a state-of-the-nation warning with McGuinn-like 12-strings. (*Kinks, The Ultimate Collection*)



Muswell Hillbilly: hirsute at The Flask in Highgate, 1972

although he denies they were ever especially intimate. "He had a glorious voice. I would sit there drinking, just listening to him talk." Then he grows thoughtful. Perhaps it's occurred to him that his younger self is coming across as a promiscuous tease. "It wasn't disrespectful," he stresses. "It wasn't a quick knee-trembler behind the pub. There was a natural, organic, creative, experimental thing going on in the '60s. It was very artistic. Experimenting with sex was just as important as painting pictures on a canvas. There was no barrier between how you behaved and what kind of music you performed. And I had a *fabulous* time."

TWO EVENTS IN two American hotels, a decade apart, changed the way that Davies viewed life forever. The first, in a New York Holiday Inn in 1972, was an uncontrollable impulse to commit suicide. "I was a drug addict and an alcoholic without realising it. The Kinks were touring too much and I went into the abyss." Just as he was preparing to jump from a window, an old girlfriend – a psychiatric nurse – knocked on his door and talked him round. Davies refers to the incident as "a psychic death", but it was also a spiritual birth. He was convinced he'd been rescued for a reason.

"I came out determined to change my lifestyle and reject everything I'd believed before. I constructed a new belief system, beginning with astrology and yoga. I realised I had a lot of work to do on my mind and body. You've got to drag that creaking machine with you."



"We tend to prefer fake reality..."
Dave Davies, 2010

when he talks like this, maintains exactly the same tone of voice as he does when he's reminiscing about Chuck Berry. He hasn't suddenly gone into a trance. But he's unquestionably on a roll; this is his vocation. At one stage he talks uninterrupted for almost 15 minutes, referencing Carl Jung, 19th century Hindu philosopher Swami Vivekananda, Kabbalah, quantum physics, cosmology and

new-age rituals. "The problem that we have to confront is that we tend to prefer fake reality – fake attitudes, fake society – to the truth," he says. "We have this thing in our minds that the truth will hurt us. We always fall on the side of fake, because we're more comfortable with it. We prefer to be lied to."

Does Ray have any comprehension of the things that you believe in?

"I've tried so often to bring Ray and I together. Then I suddenly realised, in the late '80s: who do I think I am, thinking I can heal everything?"

The second incident, in 1982, was even more intense. In a hotel room in Hampton, Virginia, he had a visitation from extraterrestrial bodies, who informed him that they were watchers of the human race. He describes it like this: "It was the opposite of what had happened in '72. Instead of being thrown into a world of evil spirits, I was shown a more cohesive vision. It was what they call in the East a kundalini experience. Kundalini energy is dormant in all of us. Even the planet has kundalini energy. When I had my 'kundalini rising', as they call it, psychic energies fused in my spine

and moved up to my brain. Sitting in between the two spheres of my brain is my third eye. And when we see through our third eye, we see reality as it really is, not as a fake TV image. This kundalini force is something we all need to try and understand more. It's a state of consciousness that's natural to us. It's where we're supposed to be, but we're not."

It's important to state that Davies, when he talks like this, maintains exactly the same tone of voice as he does when he's reminiscing about Chuck Berry. He hasn't suddenly gone into a trance. But he's unquestionably on a roll; this is his vocation. At one stage he talks uninterrupted for almost 15 minutes, referencing Carl Jung, 19th century Hindu philosopher Swami Vivekananda, Kabbalah, quantum physics, cosmology and

I've always been Ray's most ardent admirer and the greatest supporter of his work. Of our work. But I can't fix everything. And the more I think I might be helping, the more I might actually be making it worse."

Has tension been good or bad for The Kinks?

"Good," he says quickly. "But I wouldn't say it was essential. Inspiration can be a kind of tension. It's uncontrollable, yet you have to do it. The tension you mean is more emotional, like me and Ray."

Or you and Mick?

"Or me and Mick. But the tension between me and Mick had nothing to do with creativity. It was more like, 'Get out of my fucking way, you idiot.' The tension between Ray and I – at least 90 per cent of the time – had a creative, positive result to it. It wasn't just two drunk guys hitting each other over the head."

Are you and Ray communicating at the moment?

He looks away. "Yeah, we're doing OK," he mutters. It's his shortest reply of the day.

ON JUNE 30, 2004, Davies stepped into an lift at Broadcasting House, where he'd spent the morning doing interviews to promote his solo album, *Bug*. He immediately lost all feeling on the right side of his body. He couldn't speak. They rushed him to hospital. He'd had a stroke. "It was precipice time," he smiles. In the hospital, he was unable to communicate with the specialists who examined him. His speech, his movement, all had to be regained in long sessions of therapy.

"You're taken right back down to basics. You're naked, you can't move, you're on your back. No one can help you. But I was fortunate because I had this spiritual information to draw on. They made me up a room with a little 'Om' sign, and candles, where I could sit and meditate. And all the karma that I'd learned about – it worked! It was as real as physics or gravity."

Davies hasn't toured since his stroke, but has performed "little shows" here and there, including one at a spiritual retreat on Exmoor, which he hosted with his partner Kate. He also records meditative music with his son Russell, under the name The Aschere Project.

Surprisingly, while he was hanging out at The Scotch Of St James all those years ago, there was one man he never met. "George Harrison was way out there," he enthuses, "in terms of inspiring people. I wrote a song for him, just before he started getting ill, but I didn't know him, I didn't know his people, so... It's sad, I would love to have done something with him."

A mystical Kink: it seems unlikely, in a band renowned for its non-cosmic, reality-rooted songwriting. But Davies has an answer for this, too. The Kinks, he suggests, were built on a "love bond" – a sibling connection – that travelled spiritually to the listener. You don't have to feel the kundalini force to hope that Davies might share that bond with his brother again one day.

Hidden Treasures is available now on Universal

LONDON 15 MAY 1989

The Stone Roses at the ICA, 1989

Strobes, flares and an era-defining night: the view from the front row of the Roses' legendary London gig, by the man who captured it on film...

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOE DILWORTH

MAY 15, 1989, the ICA, London. There was a massive buzz about this show because the debut album had just come out; the Roses hadn't played London much, and there was a huge press contingent asking, 'Can they cut it?' It was an odd place for them to play, not a rock venue at all.

"I was there for *Melody Maker* and as there was no photographers' pit, I had to fight my way down to the front. It was a nightmare

to shoot because it was all lit from behind or with strobes. It was immediately evident this band were doing something different. It was a traditional rock'n'roll setup – and yet it wasn't. The dynamic was unlike any show I'd shot before. At an average gig, I'd use a single roll of film. That night I used five, even though they played for less than an hour. It felt that we were witnessing a sea-change, a total zeitgeist moment. A year later they were playing to 27,000 people at Spike Island. Looking back, you'd have to say the ICA was the night it took off."

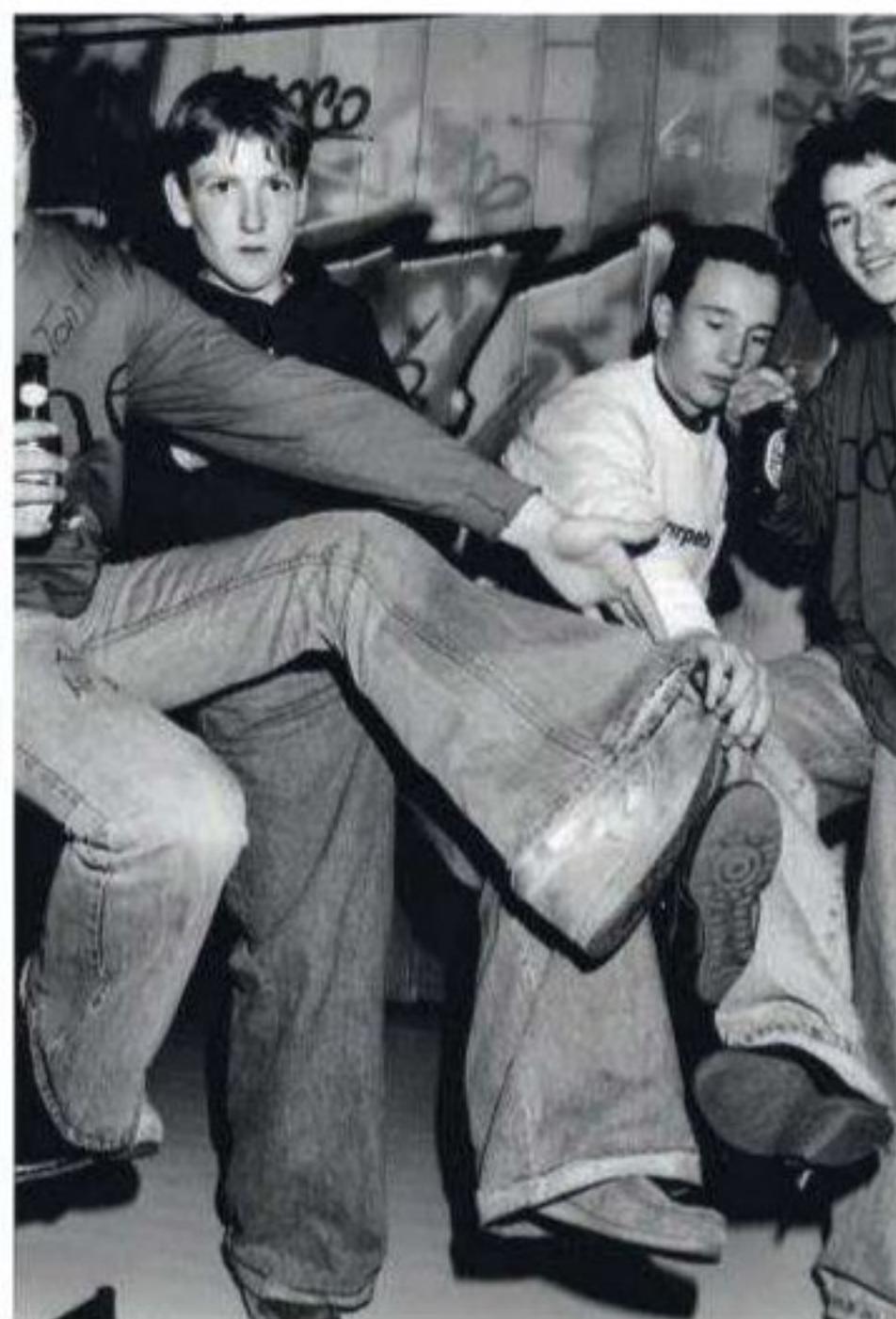
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▲ "Ian Brown obviously took the lead in some ways. But it didn't feel like he was the star and the rest were his backing band. There was a democratic feel in which all four came across as equals, and I positioned myself at the side of the stage so I could get the whole experience."

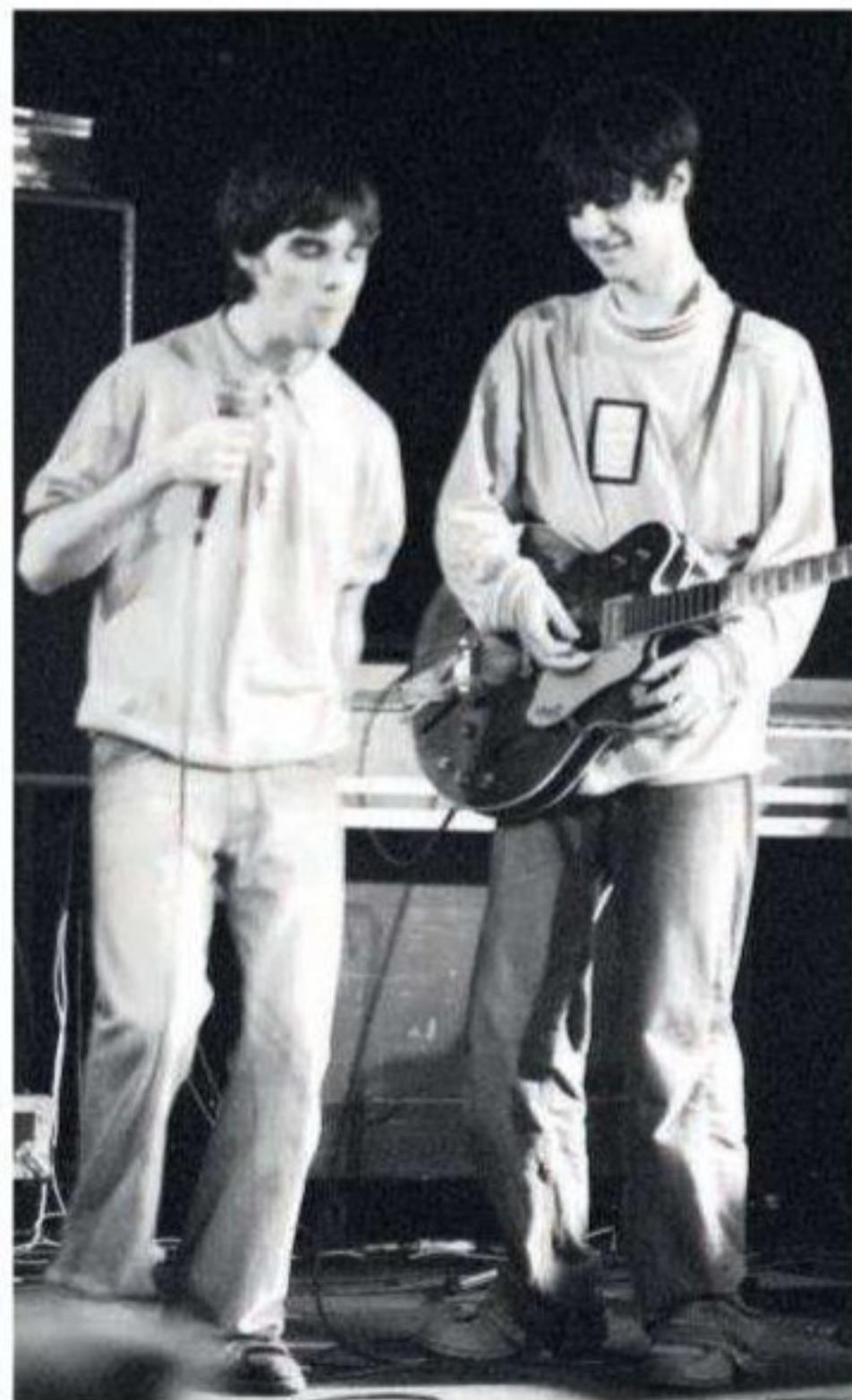


FLASHBACK

Great rock moments revisited



▲ "They already had a travelling fanbase who followed them around the country and they were all down the front. The flared jeans were a great social transgression at the time. The look was part of the generational change that was taking place. It was the start of baggy, I guess."



▲ "There was a chemistry on stage between all four of them and it was obviously very strong between Ian Brown and John Squire. It was the unity between them that was most striking."

► "I stood next to Mani for the whole gig and what impressed me was the communication between the four of them. They all seemed to be watching each other. Reni was an amazing drummer, too. I listened to the bootleg of the show the other day and he's fantastic."



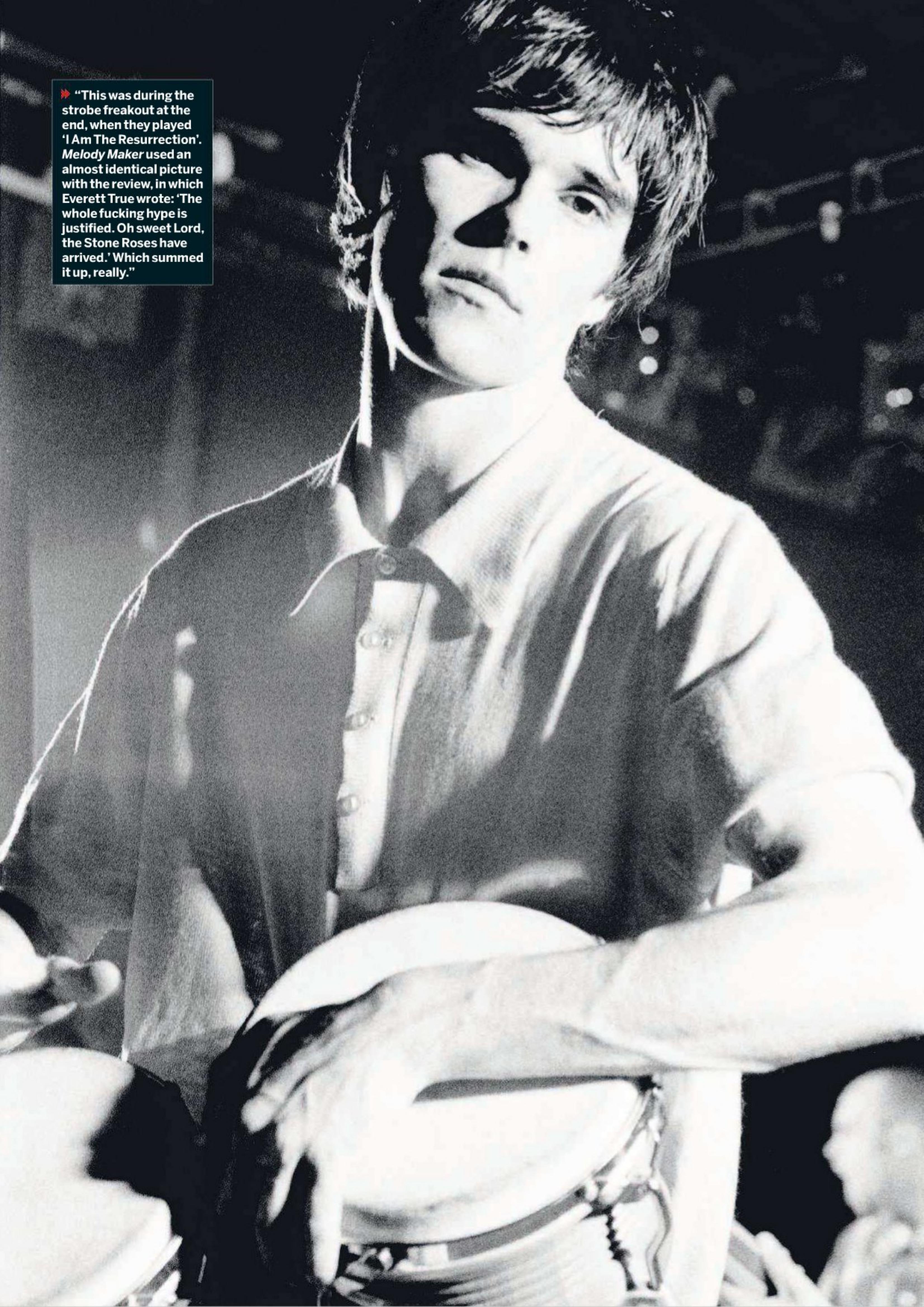
► "Ian Brown had an aura. He embraced the history of the rock'n'roll frontman, but somehow he transcended it, too. He prowled around the stage the entire time and had a very personal rapport with all their followers in the front row."



▼ "Cressa was the Roses' answer to Bez, like the band's unofficial fifth member. His presence on stage, dancing, contributed to the democratic dynamic and was part of the blurring of the distinction between band and audience."



► "This was during the strobe freakout at the end, when they played 'I Am The Resurrection'. *Melody Maker* used an almost identical picture with the review, in which Everett True wrote: 'The whole fucking hype is justified. Oh sweet Lord, the Stone Roses have arrived.' Which summed it up, really."





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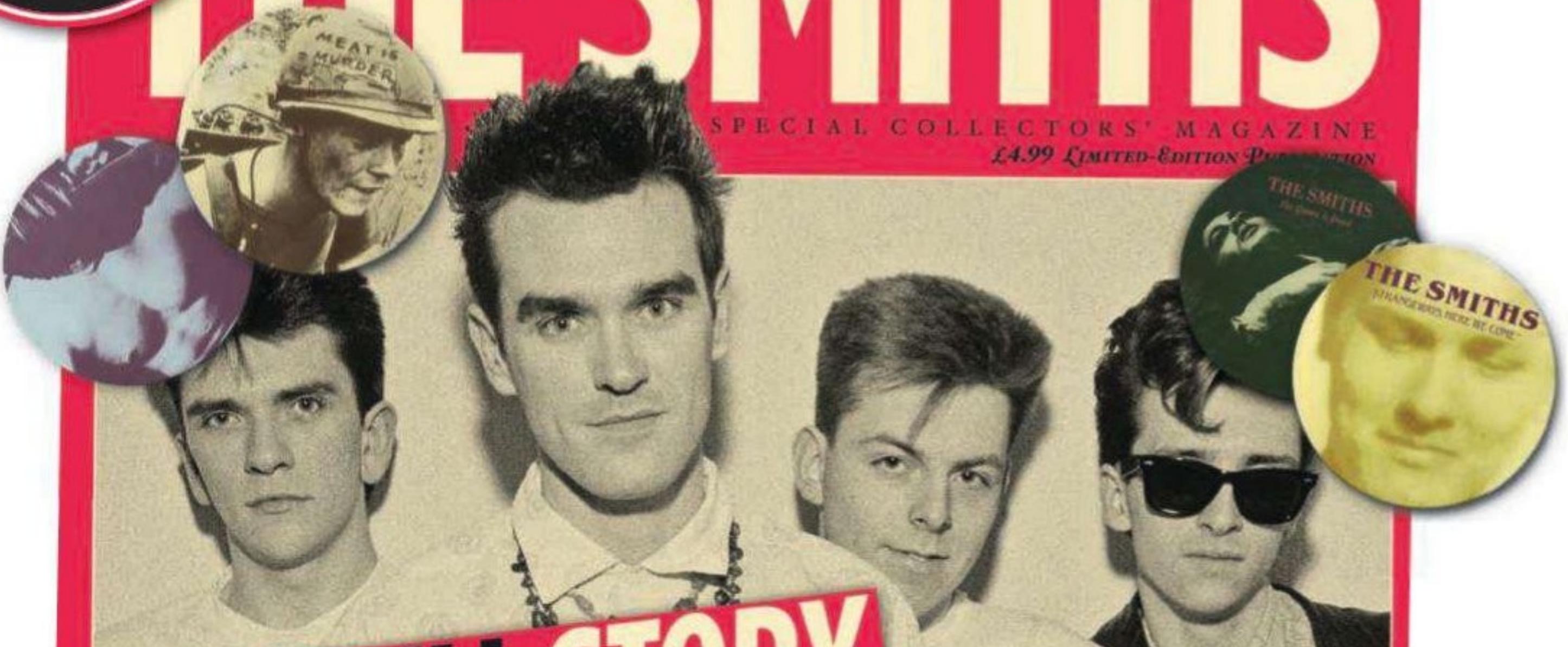
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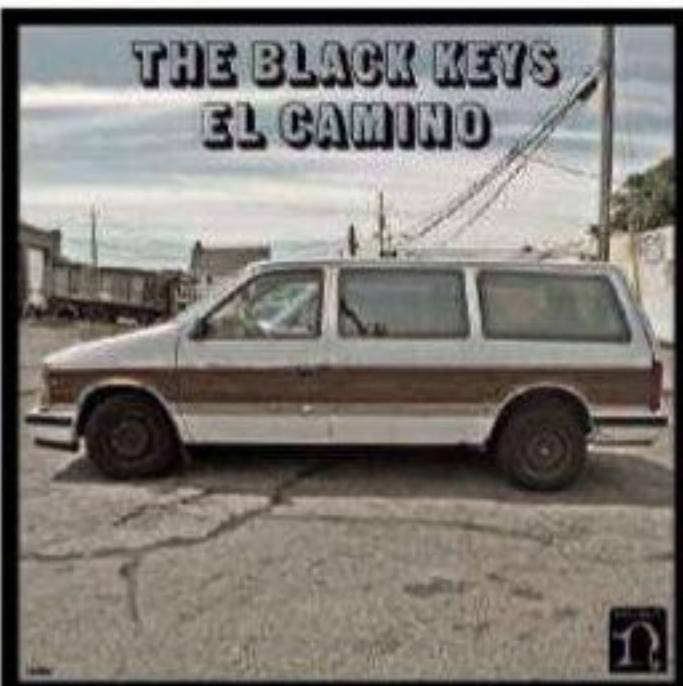
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The best of 2011



THE BLACK KEYS

El Camino

NONESUCH



Ten years into the game, Patrick Carney and Dan Auerbach add funk and soul to their potent blues-rock brew, with triumphant results. *By Graeme Thomson*

ALBUM OF THE MONTH

OF ALL *EL CAMINO*'S many achievements, the most easily overlooked might be the fact that it exists at all. Ten years and seven albums is, after all, an

impressive distance to travel on the back of The Black Keys' consciously primitive manifesto. It's partly a matter of providence. By the time guitarist Dan Auerbach and drummer Patrick Carney rumbled out of Akron, Ohio in 2001, hell-bent on pursuing their particularly brutal brand of unadorned blues-rock thuggery, The White Stripes had already ensured we'd become acclimated to primitive squalls of bad-weather blues.

Jack and Meg's growing profile created a context for The Black Keys, yet they suffered somewhat by comparison. Where the Stripes were wont to add a pinch of Pop Art mischief, Auerbach and Carney's approach was dourly puritan, and they initially seemed ill-equipped for the long haul. With the release of stodgy fourth album *Magic Potion* in 2006 their dedication to a single idea lost much of its lustre; the listener longed for some light relief and an awareness of other horizons.

If that album now sounds like a salutary lesson in the perils of bowing to self-imposed rules rather than seeking to rewrite them, its follow up, 2008's *Attack & Release*, moved The Black Keys into a whole new dimension. With flute, banjo and organ drifting into the picture, the results were subtle, spooky and expansive, less about the immediate interplay between rhythm and riff and more about creating a clinging, dream-like atmosphere that wove its way through an entire album.

The change had plenty to do with Danger Mouse, the genre-hopping Midas who produced *Attack & Release* and one song (the irrepressible "Tighten Up") on follow-up *Brothers* (2010), and returns to the fold on *El Camino*. This time, however, everything has changed. The Black Keys smashed into mainstream consciousness with *Brothers*, a triple Grammy-winning, million-selling behemoth, making *El Camino* a record with much to live up to. Perhaps its most impressive achievement is that it never once sounds like it.

Where *Brothers* was loose, spacey and more openly soulful, *El Camino* is, by comparison, a quick thrill: with 11 tracks in 38 minutes it is five songs and almost 20 minutes lighter than its predecessor. Returning to the bare-boned foundation of live electric guitar and drums, it goes directly for the jugular, the eclectic sprawl of *Brothers* giving way to a lean, hungry approximation of the best of the '70s. The winking strut of glam merges with the strident urgency of The Clash, and the power of Zep and Sabbath bleeds into idiosyncratic stabs at urban funk, soul and early disco.

The album comes out of the traps snarling. "Lonely Boy" lets loose a great slavering wolfhound of a riff to torment the roller-rink keyboards, while Auerbach pities some poor disenfranchised soul ("Your Mama kept you but your Daddy left you") who has, all the same, somehow snared him. The ascent into a genuinely anthemic chorus turns out to be a recurring theme. These are direct, accessible,

copping an ear to "Police And Thieves," right down to the lurching reggae breakdown. Yet the payoff is immense. On these songs The Black Keys sound like a fully functioning, turbocharged rock'n'roll band. They also sound, for perhaps the first time, as though they're having tremendous fun.

Naturally, there are times when the skies darken. "Little Black Submarines" is the album's sole concession to the epic, and has clearly been given licence to let all hell break loose. It begins as a minor-key acoustic creep, Auerbach singing his sorrows down the line in his best wounded Robert Plant quaver. It taps along, picking up the merest hint of ghostly organ, before collapsing into a fearsomely overloaded landslide of drums and guitar. Towards the end, somewhere way off-mike, Carney emits a primal "Yay!" as the music sweeps over him. Thrilling. The closing "Mind Eraser" packs similar heat, kicking off with a meathook riff before settling into a churning mid-tempo groove. The results sound not a million miles away from their own "Psychotic Girl" retooled by Them Crooked Vultures.

At these moments The Black Keys punch as hard as they ever have, but just as often they're slinking towards the dancefloor. *El Camino* moves away from the rootsy gospel-blues textures of recent records in favour of something sleeker and snappier. The soaring "Nova Baby" boasts a shimmering pop chorus that wouldn't sound out of place wrapped around the tonsils of Danger Mouse's old buddy Cee Lo Green. "Sister" is even better. A kissing cousin to the Stones' "Miss You", it traces the missing link between Ardent Studios and Studio 54, stopping off midway to unzip a strafing, Isley Brothers-inspired fuzz guitar solo. A similar spark runs through "Stop Stop", a driving soul groove about a(nother) bad news woman who is "wound up like a weapon, you got an evil streak".

You search for signs of weakness but struggle to find any – aside, perhaps, from the middling "Money Maker". This is both a supremely confident record and a ridiculously enjoyable one. A decade into their career The Black Keys have not only outlasted their more celebrated peers but outstripped their own past achievements. *El Camino* feels like the dawn of greatness.

The Black Keys punch as hard as ever, but they're just as likely to slink towards the dancefloor now

ruthlessly hook-heavy songs. "Gold On the Ceiling", with its wide-bottomed boogie, campy handclaps and high-pitched Flo & Eddie-style Halloween screams, is like The Sweet gone feral. "Run Right Back", another stomping glam throwback, roughs up the "Spirit In The Sky" riff over deliciously distorted bass. Auerbach enhances the mood by mimicking Bolan, both vocally and lyrically: it requires no great leap to imagine lines like "Finest exterior/She's so superior" gracing a vintage T.Rex song.

El Camino wears its influences firmly on its sleeve. "Dead And Gone" takes an upstanding Motown beat and slashes through it with a sharp, urgent guitar figure liberated from The Clash's "London Calling". "Hell Of A Season", meanwhile, suggests someone has been



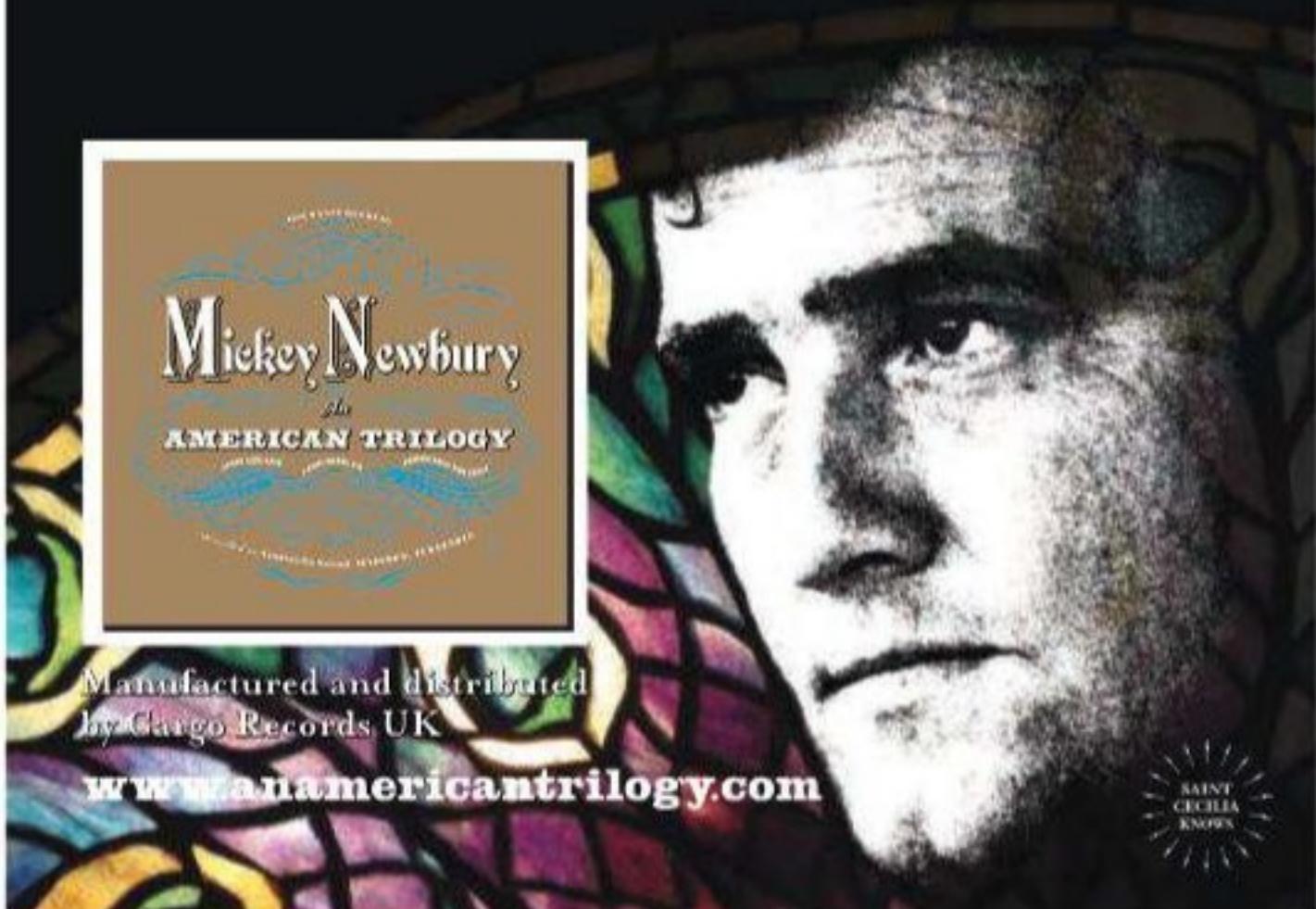
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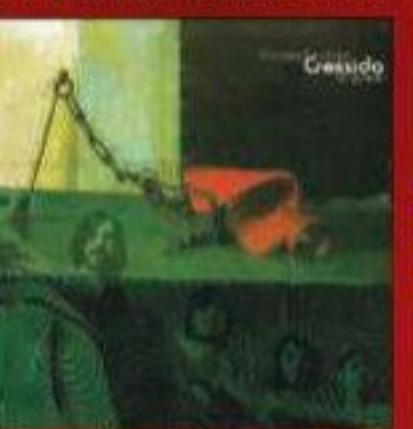
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AGITATION FREE**Shibuya Nights: Live In Toyko**

ESOTERIC

★★★

Ethnographic Krautrockers, reunited and live

Mind-expansion was high on the agenda in the countercultural ferment of '60s Berlin, but where their contemporaries Ash Ra Tempel and Tangerine Dream turned to LSD or Buddhism to redraw their perception, Agitation Free happened on a more practical approach: international travel. Journeys around the Mediterranean shaped the dusty, Eastern-tinged jams of their first two albums, 1972's *Malesch* and the follow-up *2nd*. This recording of a 2007 show feels a little picture-postcard, "First Communication" and "Malesch" lacking much grit under the fingernails, but field recordings are integrated nicely and Michael Hoenig's electronics supply a gentle, pleasant spaciousness. *Louis Pattison*

ALBATROSH**Yonkers**

RUNE GRAMMOPHON

★★★★★

Spry piano/sax duo with an eye on classic US styles

This Norwegian jazz duo are barely out of the conservatoire, and it sometimes shows – you can hear clear traces of both Wayne Shorter's still deliberation and Sonny Rollins' boyish exploration in André Roligheten's saxophone, and perhaps a touch of Jarrett in the sentimental piano. But this is exuberant and occasionally unique playing – merry, vamping melodies get befuddled, hover on the edge of really swinging, and drift in and out of freer territory. Roligheten bashes out some percussive key-tapping and reed abuse to switch up the palette at times, just as fellow Scandos Håkon Kornstad or Mats Gustafsson might do. An emotionally complex, big-hearted set. *Ben Beaumont-Thomas*

THE ALBION CHRISTMAS BAND**A Sound In The Frosty Air**

ROOKSMERE

★★

Ashley Hutchings in a folky winter wonderland A seasonal adaption of the 40-year-old Albion Band,

still led by the Guvnor of British folk-rock, Ashley Hutchings, joined by Simon Nicol, Kellie White and Simon Care. It's mostly hearty传统als in an intimate, drumless acoustic mode – "Christ Was Born In Bethlehem" is a keening *a cappella* duet between Kellie and mother Chris, who amply filled Sandy Denny's shoes in Fairport Convention. In the spirit of his previous anthologies, Hutchings intersperses the music with Yuletide poems. A misplaced cover of Tears For Fears' "Mad World" rounds off a somewhat passionless collection. *Rob Young*

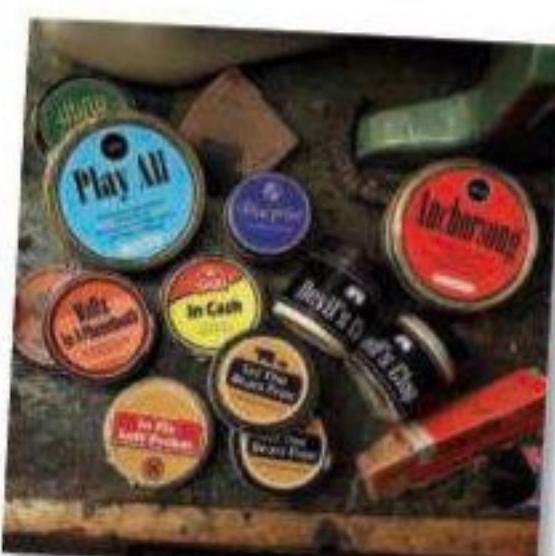
ANCHORSONG**Chapters**

TRUTHUGHTS

★★★

Maddeningly catchy instrumental electronica

Anchorsong is Masaaki Yoshida, a Tokyo-born, London-based knob-twiddler. He specialises in big, catchy riffs played on fat-sounding analogue synths, backed by funky breakbeats and punctuated by exotic instruments (sitar, koto, shamisen, vibes, etc) and Fender Rhodes. His instrumental miniatures hint at dubstep ("Plum Rain"), early Cabaret Voltaire ("Ghost Touch") and '80s Scritti Politti ("The Blacksmith") and, at first, they sound like unfinished sketches that lack vocals. But each has a self-contained logic (he plays them live using a keyboard and an MPC player) that makes them sound like coherent, road-tested songs – or at least achingly hip TV theme tunes. *John Lewis*

**ATLAS SOUND****Parallax**

4AD

★★★

Sometime Deerhunter frontman still intrigues

Bradford Cox is cultivating a reputation as a bit of an awkward customer – see



the bizarre Deerhunter interview in *Uncut*'s April 2011 issue for evidence – but his music continues to become more welcoming with each release. Here, the feverish jangle of previous Atlas Sound releases has been refined into a set of a dreamy, classic-sounding pop nuggets, sung by Cox with a wry, casual authority. Only as you lean closer does the elegant disdain of his lyrics – "Is your love worth the nausea it could bring?" ("Modern Aquatic Nightsongs") – become apparent. *Sam Richards*

THE B-52S
With The Wild Crowd!
Live In Athens, GA

EAGLE ROCK

★★★

Anniversary gig for a hometown crowd

Recorded in their original home base of Athens, Georgia, on Valentine's Day 2011, exactly 34 years since their first gig in the town, age does not appear to have withered The B-52s' quirky cartoon pop and new wave energy. The earlier material fares best, notably Kate Pierson's kookily obsessive pleading on "Give Me Back My Man" and the solid funk groove on "Mesopotamia" (still infused with the art-dance sensibilities of original producer David Byrne). In comparison, 2008's "Funplex" sounds a tad lumpy, but they're back on track for the closing double-whammy of "Planet Claire" and "Rock Lobster". *Terry Staunton*

BARON BANE**LPTO**

DESPOTZ

★★★

Swedish synthpop with a suicidal undertow

Benny from ABBA has spoken of the sense of gloom that pervades Scandinavian latitudes – those long, cold, dark winters that produced Grieg, Garbo and Bergman as well as ABBA's bleakest ballads. Swedish synthpop five-piece Baron Bane certainly have that gloominess in spades. Even when singer Ida Long edges towards Madonna-style disco ecstasy, the band still exude that suicidal, vodka-drenched melancholy. It's most obvious on the album's lead single, "Love.Cure.All" – Morrissey miserabilism retooled for the dancefloor. They repeat the trick again on "Sordid Eyes" and "Transience", all heart-juddering time signatures, heart-wrenching chord changes and lovelorn lyrics. *John Lewis*

AXEL BARTSCH
Experiment Musik

SPORTCLUB

★★★

Kompakt-affiliated Berliner makes minimal techno go all warm and fuzzy

Berlin-based Axel Bartsch's second album displays little of the clever-clever sleight-of-hand trickery typical of Germany's glitchier producers. Instead, *Experiment Musik* strips minimal techno back to a soulful combination of rhythm patterns, deep house grooves and spring-loaded

acid worms. With its touchy-feely synthetic textures and cavernous background spaces, the title track and "The 13th Sign" recall the early '90s electronica of Higher Intelligence Agency, Move D and the Source Records label, while "Assistance From Beyond" bumps along with a fearsomely immovable 4/4 pulse. The Basic Channel-esque "Sparkling Energy" features his wife Lauren Devain's radiant vocals. *Rob Young*

NAOMI BEDFORD**Tales From The Weeping Willow**

DUSTY WILLOW

★★★

Second album from late-starting folkie

After helping organise the anti-poll tax protests, Bedford co-wrote Orbital's Top 20 hit "Funny Break" before putting her musical career on hold while she backpacked around India and raised a family. The follow-up to her 2007 debut is a fine advert for taking your time; there's a ripe, rounded maturity to her folk-hybrid form, as English trad ballads ("Lord Thomas & Fair Ellendor"), Americana staples ("Railroad Bill") and smart covers (Zevon's "Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner") are delivered in a voice that thrills, soothes and haunts in equal measure. Best of all, though, is "My Love Is Deep", a duet with Del Amitri's Justin Currie, which has a Nick Cave-like intensity. *Nigel Williamson*



WHITE DENIM

Last Day Of Summer DOWNTOWN ★★★★

Recorded “on vacation”, the Texans’ freewheeling session is anything but throwaway, says **Sam Richards**



WHITE DENIM, as their frenetic live shows would suggest, are not a band much given to idling. Last summer, while the master tapes of their scintillating third album *D* were withering on the reel, awaiting record company approval of a reworked song that the band never wanted on the album in the first place, the Texan crack-shots decided to use their downtime productively.

They retired for one last time to their Silver Bullet trailer in the woods outside Austin and made a whole new album in four weeks, with a view to giving it away for free on the internet. At the time, the record company impasse was considered serious enough to place the future of the band in jeopardy. Yet, although the recording of *Last Day Of Summer* was initially motivated by impatience and frustration, those emotions rarely seep through onto the record. Instead, it sounds like a band kicking back and enjoying themselves, free from external pressure or mediation. If White Denim genuinely believed that this might be their last hurrah, they were sure as hell going to go down blazing, not whining.

Made available as a free download from White Denim’s website last September, *Last Day Of Summer* achieved its aim of proving to the record company that the band were too good to let slip. Now, that very same record

company is giving the album a physical issue, backed by a full press and marketing campaign, acknowledging that it deserves a wider audience. In fact, *Last Day Of Summer* is as good as anything White Denim have ever done, and for any listeners daunted by *D*’s progger diversions, it might even prove to be a gentler introduction to this terrific band.

The album hares off at a frightening pace with a hilarious seat-of-the-pants romp through “I’d Have It Just The Way We Were”, the breezy 6/8 jam from second album *Fits* (not for the first time, you will convince yourself that drummer Josh Block must have at least three arms). That’s swiftly followed by the infectious breakneck boogie of “Home Together” (Canned Heat on heat?) and probably the catchiest top-down driving rock song White Denim have ever written, in the form of “Tony Fatti”, Petralli assuming the role of a washed-up ’60s stuntman poignantly pleading for one last ride.

Things calm down a little after that, but even an apparently straightforward Southern strut like “If You’re Changing” exists in three

different time signatures, before giving way to the lithe, Soft Machine-style folk-jazz excursions of “Incaviglia” and “Light Light Light”. As always with White Denim, though, the musicianship never overwhelms the songwriting, coming as a welcome bonus rather than an indulgent distraction. The astonishing guitar break at the end of “Our Get” – the work of fleet-fingered new guitarist Austin Jenkins, making an impressive debut here – is much more than mere decoration, lifting the song into an entirely new realm.

Then there’s “Champ”, an enjoyable spot of rough-and-tumble psych that harks back to the band’s antsy garage-rock beginnings, and “Shy Billy”, which brilliantly chances its arm at lovesick ’80s funk. By the time you reach closing track “New Coat”, which nods towards at least three different soul classics, all you’re really conscious of is having been rigorously entertained. Whether they spend six months in a proper studio or four weeks in a caravan, White Denim are incapable of making a boring record. We should be very grateful that they’ve survived to make some more.

Q&A James Petralli

Why did you decide to record a whole new album while you waited for *D* to progress?

We were uncomfortable with having to wait two years to follow up *Fits*, and we also had a ton of strong material that was essentially ready to go. We feared that the songs from *Last Day* would become less interesting to us as time went by, and that if we didn’t push them out they could be lost. We also figured that if the album generated excitement in our fans, then it might do the same with our business partners and

encourage them to set a release date for *D*.

How did the circumstances influence the feel of the record?

It was a typically scorching August in Texas and we were enjoying a summer off the road, even though we were feeling increasingly nervous about our future as a band. We treated the process like a vacation, drinking and smoking in the afternoon, generally just enjoying one another’s company, taking it easy. We knew we were going to be sharing the music immediately, so we wanted it

to feel light and casual, but also to reflect the precarious state of the band at the time. We ended up with a record that is by no means overworked. It is flawed in some really interesting ways that are hopefully also inviting to listeners.

Were you sad to say goodbye to the caravan?

It was bittersweet. The trailer was really good to us, but it was becoming impractical. These days we’re always camped out in a really great space in Austin called Lakeside. INTERVIEW: SAM RICHARDS

THE BEATLES WITH TONY SHERIDAN

First Recordings: 50th Anniversary Edition

TIME LIFE

★★

Beatles' earliest recordings gussied up, mono/stereo, for re-re-re-release

Pre-fame recordings of the superstars will always be good for a gander, and there's plenty of historical value here: the Fabs' ersatz first single ("My Bonnie"), a rare Lennon/Harrison co-write ("Cry For A Shadow"), and tidbits of what The Beatles would eventually evolve into ("Ain't She Sweet") amid Tony Sheridan's not unpleasant pop vocals and Elvis-isms. Still, this territory has been covered (see Bear Family's definitive *Beatles Bop – Hamburg Days*), and is thin on the ground for all but the most devoted pop scholars and Beatlemaniacs. Nice packaging, though, with some eye-opening, rare Astrid Kirchherr photos.

Luke Torn

BEE GEES

Number Ones

WARNERS

★★★

Four decades of zeitgeist-grappling chart-toppers from the brothers Gibb The perennial appeal of the Gibb's upper-register vocals and compositional might is underlined by the third release of this 2004 collection, dedicated to then recently deceased brother Maurice. Masters of emotionally charged '60s pop ("Massachusetts", "I've Gotta Get A Message To You") they also turned rococo weirdness ("I Started A Joke") into commercial gold. Seventies stormers like "Stayin' Alive" and "Night Fever", meanwhile, realigned black music influences as imaginatively and successfully as Bowie in his "plastic soul" period. Even when sailing close to mawkishness on 1998 closer "Immortality" (a No 1 only in Brazil), the siblings' seasoned class and skill wins through. *Gavin Martin*

BIRDY

Birdy

14TH FLOOR

★★★

Fifteen-year-old piano wunderkind debuts with sagely chosen set of covers Demographic calculation undoubtedly helped shape this classy entrée from the

artist formerly known as Jasmine Van den Bogaerde (she's actor Dirk Bogarde's great-niece); nonetheless, the results are impressive. Birdy brings uncommon poise and sophistication to songs by Bon Iver, Cherry Ghost and The National, far from typical territory for teenage female newcomers. Name producers James Ford, Jim Abbiss and Rich Costey sensibly leave her beautifully weighted readings of Cherry Ghost's "People Help The People" and "White Winter Hymnal" uncluttered, ensuring the foregrounding of her uncanny maturity throughout. Clearly a talent to be reckoned with. *Gavin Martin*

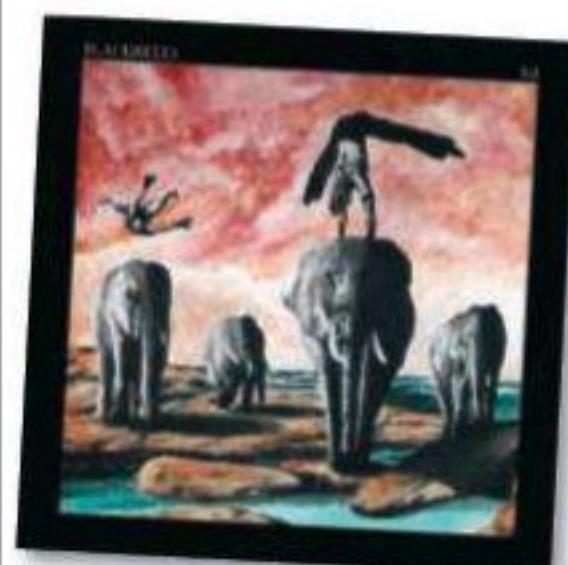
BLACKBELLS

Ixi

SELF-RELEASED

★★★

A thick slab of refreshingly brutal indie rock There's nothing remotely precious about this Brooklyn band, who display a primal affinity for power chords and tonsil-shredding arena-rock choruses and deliver them with the requisite muscle and skillfulness. While Blackbells' self-titled 2010 debut EP delivered candy-coloured hard rock in the manner of early Cheap Trick, the five tracks on the follow-up (capably produced by bandleader Ben Rice) range from the Oasis-like contours of "One By One" to the raging throwback rave-up "Bad Bones", with equally persuasive side trips into the modes of Led Zeppelin at their moodiest ("The Shelf"), muscle-car-era Detroit ("Testify") and Aerosmith circa Rocks ("Shoestring Lolita"). *Bud Scoppa*



THE BLASTERS

Live 1986

FLOATING WORLD RECORDS

★★★

Alvin Brothers approach the end of their '80s alliance Captured on home ground – a rollicking roadhouse in San Juan Capistrano on Valentine's Day, 1986 – roots-



Goin' back to Massachusetts: '60s Bee Gees

rock tyros The Blasters were nearing the end of their initial run when this live show was recorded. The set emphasises Dave Alvin's songwriting chutzpah, seamlessly melding careering originals with classic covers ("Mystery Train"). The band, a slimmed down version of the original outfit (sax player Steve Berlin having left to join Los Lobos), are on consummate form. There are shortcomings: signs of fatigue are evident on "Just Another Sunday" and the variable bootleg quality of the soundboard tape lacks the turbocharged thrust of 2002's return *Trouble Bound*. Still, fans of unalloyed roots rock won't be disappointed. *Gavin Martin*

BRITE FUTURES

Dark Past

TURNTOUT

★★

Competent but unsatisfying effort from renamed Seattle synthpop unit

Released from their deal with Warner Bros, the band formerly known as Natalie Portman's Shaved Head sound utterly delighted to be indie again on their second full-length, coming off like the Pacific Northwest's answer to the Scissor Sisters. A breakneck cavalcade of bleating synths, screaming guitars and exuberant boy-girl vocals, *Dark Past*'s 10 tracks whizz by in a lean 33 minutes. And yet, apart from "Too Young To Kill", powered by a Cars-style groove, the music is accessible but not particularly sticky or distinctive, an assortment of random moves that fail

to cohere or go anywhere – the musical equivalent of empty calories. *Bud Scoppa*

PETER BRODERICK

Music For Confluence

ERASED TAPES

★★

Unimpressive ambient/

"post-classical" OST

This soundtrack – for *Confluence*, a documentary about girls murdered in 1980s Idaho – is sometime Efterklang collaborator Peter Broderick's 13th release since 2007, and it shows.

Music For Confluence lacks imagination and dynamic, with gentle fuzz and weak violin failing to conjure any sort of atmosphere. Given the documentary's subject matter, its soundtrack should feel somehow affecting, yet wears the air of a milquetoast composer who heard Rachel's once and vainly attempted to recreate their fraught, beautiful menace. Whether it works with the film remains to be seen; as a record in a year when Tim Hecker and Broderick's labelmates A Winged Victory For The Sullen have boldly staked their territory on the ambient landscape, it feels distinctly un-vital. *Laura Snapes*

JC BROOKS & THE UPTOWN SOUND

Want More

BLOODSHOT

★★★

Jeff Tweedy-endorsed Chicago soul band puts its own twist on the genre

The debut album from this club-seasoned group features an improbable cover of Wilco's "I Am Trying To Break Your Heart", virtually unrecognisable

from the tortured original version. Brooks' gleeful reimagining serves to free the band to further mess with neo-soul conventions – the songs themselves are less involving than what the band does with them. "Want More" morphs from old-school R&B to an avant-garde rave-up, while "Missing Things" hews closer to Motown. Throughout, the bone-dry sound keeps the tautly efficient performances of the three-piece core group and horn section in razor-sharp focus. *Bud Scoppa*

ANE BRUN

It All Starts With One

BALLOON RANGER

★★★

Norwegian singer with a

"post-Kate Bush" muse

Norwegian chanteuse

Brun is a platinum-seller

in Sweden and has

collaborated with Peter

Gabriel, Valgeir Sigurðsson

and Ron Sexsmith. Her

post-Kate Bush muse blends

folk, electronica and classical

pop, and this sixth studio

album oozes erotic and

elemental imagery and

dream-pop atmosphere.

Brun's voice can be spine-

tinglingly gorgeous and

annoyingly mannered,

often in the same song,

so it's in the most simple

tunes – the Afro-tinged

orchestral pop of Jose

González's duet "Worship"

and the soaring, rumbling

masochistic angst of epic

closing piano ballad

"Undertow" are particular

standouts – that she

transcends a tendency

towards preciousness.

Garry Mulholland



Bohemian rhapsodies:
Laurel Canyon veteran
Judy Collins

BURAKA SOM SISTEMA

Komba

ENCHUFADA/ROUGH TRADE

★★★

Portuguese/Angolan party posse's indefatigable second

Lisbon's Buraka Som Sistema are global ambassadors for the frenetic Angolan street music known as *kuduro*, gleefully adulterated here with generous slugs of dubstep, dancehall, rock, R&B, baile funk and anything else that fits the fervent party mood.

"Eskeleto (feat Afrikan Boy)" is a stealthy, slithering opener, but subsequently the relentless jerking beat never lets up; you certainly wouldn't want to listen to the track "Hangover" while suffering from one. A *komba* is apparently an Angolan funeral rite, which does beg the question: if this is how hard they party at a wake, what happens when someone gets married?

Sam Richards

ROBERTO CACCIAPAGLIA

The Ann Steel

Album 1979

HALF MACHINE

★★★

Bold and bizarre futurist pop, reissued

This enchanting collaboration between Italian composer Roberto Cacciapaglia and American model Ann Steel may have come out 32 years ago, but it's still a shock to hear its rococo synthpop for the first time. Cacciapaglia's chintzy psychedelia provides richly

melodic bedding for Steel, a wide-eyed neophiliac whose shrill delivery, on "Sparkling World", suggests Joyce Grenfell warbling the *Futurist Manifesto*. "Don't you think punk's just out of style?/Don't you feel it's as old as a medieval trunk?" she notes on "Measurable Joys". Well, quite.

Piers Martin

CAMILLE

Ilo Veyou

EMI

★★★★

Underrated Björkish Parisienne revitalised by pregnant pause

Despite major fame in France, where she is routinely compared to Björk, Camille Dalmais remains an underrated cult figure in Britain – possibly because she alienates some critics with her jokey cabaret attitude, bilinguallyrics and grunting, belly-slapping percussion. Recorded while pregnant with her first child, her punningly titled fourth album is arguably her most formally conventional to date, with its elegant orchestral ballads and fragile avant-folk lullabies. The comic touches remain, notably "La France", a Piaf-quoting parody of Parisian music-hall clichés. But impassioned chansons and rueful pastorals such as "She Was", "Le Berger" and "Le Banquet" are magnificent, invoking Polly Harvey more than Björk.

Stephen Dalton

THE CHAP

We Are The Best (The Best Of The Chap)

LO RECORDINGS

★★★★

"Greatest hits" compilation from self-styled Dada indie-pop collective

There is no group quite like The Chap: punctiliously crafting clipped, immaculate pop that draws on a variety of sources. However, inverted commas fly about their every song like bats in a barn. If you cannot take too much irony in your musical diet, then they are not for you. Titles like "(IAm) Oozing Emotion" tell their own story; they are devoid of fluids, utterly deadpan. "We Work In Bars" lays bare the reality of leftfield music making, while "Woop Woop" is a litany of the popster's progress from the charts to hotels, to loneliness and suicide. Zero points for passion, but a perfect score elsewhere.

David Stubbs

CLEAN GEORGE IV

God Save The Clean

TENEMENT RECORDS

★★★

Long-gestated debut from Scottish eccentrics

Post-punks with a fondness for John Cooper Clarke and a vaguely glam strut in their odd, genre-dodging step, CG IV have been silent since releasing their debut single in 2007. At times wilfully eccentric – the lyrics of "XP Avenue" consist entirely of recording credits and thanks – these songs are an acquired

taste, by turns swaggering and bleakly introspective, but always spiked with George's droll humour. Earl Brutus, Bobby Conn and Trans Am are kindred spirits, but with only a small shift in attitude – and perhaps a title change – it's easy to imagine "Impotence is Bliss" appealing to Kasabian's demographic.

Sharon O'Connell

COLLECTIONS OF COLONIES OF BEES

Giving

HOMETAPES

★★★★

Mathematical mini-album from post-rock collective, their first in three years

Fresh from playing backing band for Justin Vernon on the Bon Iver man's Volcano Choir, COCOB return with *Giving*, a brief but perfectly formed study in calculated abandon, which, while hardly breaking into new cosmic terrain, sustains their customary altitude. Comprising four tracks – "Lawn", "Vorm", "Lawns" and "Vorms" – the album is as mathematical as that sequence suggests, each piece a cat's cradle of guitar elaboration, lengthy equations which build in intensity without ever meandering into jazz. If rock is indeed dead, then albums like this are its extended, intelligent coda, its sustained afterburn.

David Stubbs

echo the Sondheim-ultra of David Ackles' 1972 marvel *American Gothic*, with Collins producing a rapturous finale with "Big Sur", her love song to the Pacific coast. "I know that stretch of ocean as far as I can see," she sings, overpowered by the Proustian rush. "Today I often see it through my tears." Jim Wirth

MARC COPLAND/JOHN ABERCROMBIE

Speak To Me

PIROUET/DISCOVERY

★★★

Subdued but engaging piano/guitar duo

Veteran Philadelphia pianist Marc Copland has become something of a specialist in the art of the duet, playing delicate, low-volume collaborations with jazz heavyweights such as Greg Osby, Kenny Wheeler and Ralph Towner. Here he teams up with ECM guitarist John Abercrombie to work through six originals (a mix of comforting riffs and weird chord changes) and three standards ("Witchcraft", "If I Should Lose You" and Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation"). Piano/guitar pairings tend to be low-key affairs, so don't expect any fireworks, but these two manage to create an elaborate tangle of harmonic logic that's soothing and engaging in equal measure.

John Lewis

ADRIAN CORKER

Way Of The Morris OST

TRUNK

★★★★

Morris on! Original music for a filmic exploration of occult English dance

Tim Plester and Rob Curry's *Way Of The Morris* documentary is a dreamy eulogy to English morris dance. Although a few fiddle tunes are included on this OST, Corker samples matter appropriate to the film's content and composes delicate, often elegiac cues. "Springtide" and "Stourton Wake" splice folk rhythms and accordions with gentle electronic intrusions; cues like "Bells+Tape 1" and "Birds+Tape 2" resemble Radiophonic Workshop interludes, crackling with distorted countryside ambience. "Music in the key of Adderbury" is a theme, and Corker captures the film's sense of parochial customs made strange. Rob Young



JUDY COLLINS

Bohemian

WILDFLOWER

★★★★

Grand dame's momentous SoCal history tour

Judy Collins' glass-shattering voice helped establish the reputations of some great songwriters, but while *Bohemian* features terrific interpretations of Joni Mitchell, Jimmy Webb and Woody Guthrie, the 72-year-old's own songs on this elegy for her Laurel Canyon heyday are on a different plane. Pseudo-memoir "Morocco" and "In The Twilight", a portrait of her dying mother,

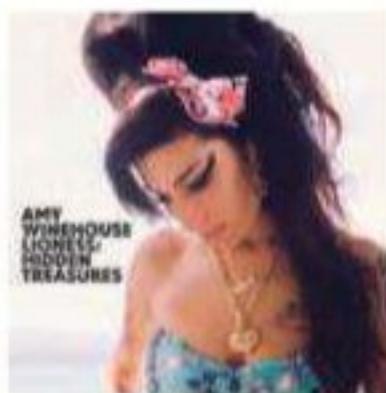
AMY WINEHOUSE

Lioness: Hidden Treasures

UNIVERSAL/ISLAND

★★★★★

The final album, compiling offcuts into heartbreakin shape. By Garry Mulholland



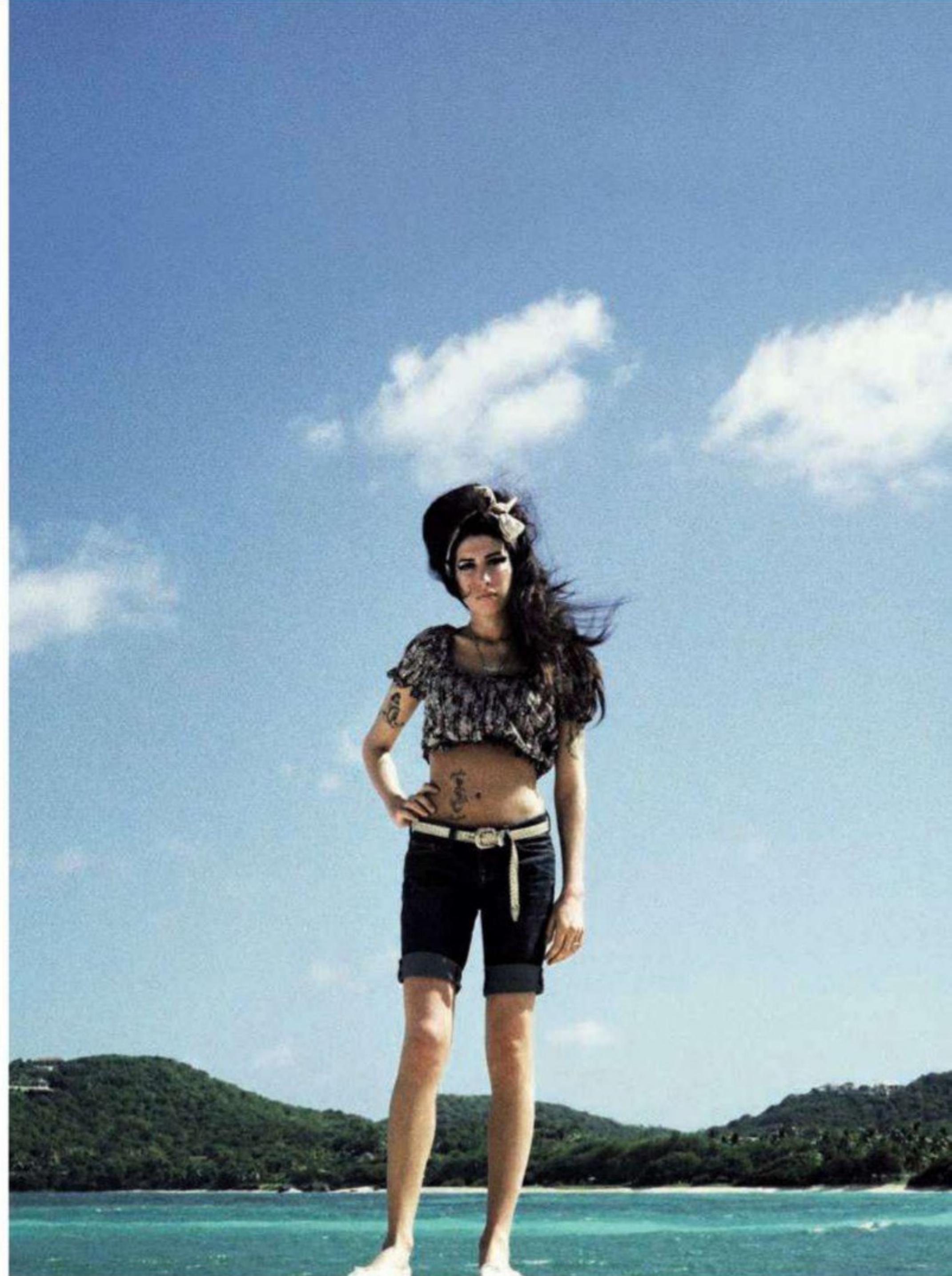
THIS IS, PERHAPS, the most gruelling album review I've ever had to write. It's a record by a dead person who I met, and really liked, and fully expected to meet and like again.

The Amy Winehouse I interviewed in late 2003 was an insanely charismatic and shamelessly frank 20-year-old who looked like a Jewish punk Jessica Rabbit and wore pink ballet shoes so worn her toes poked through. She was ribald and hilarious, old beyond her years, and seemed like the person least likely to join the Forever 27 club of any I had ever met.

This strange and wonderful force of nature is alive and well on *Lioness: Hidden Treasures*, an offcuts album overseen by producers Mark Ronson and Salaam Remi. Almost nine years separate the earliest and latest recordings here, yet Winehouse's deep love of classic black music, her caustic explorations of the cost of love and lust, and, most of all, the offhand savagery and soul of her rich, sensual voice tie these disparate recordings together well enough to make this a focused, satisfying third Amy album. Imagine if Billie Holiday had lived long enough to fall in love with reggae and you get some idea of the loveliness of opener "Our Day Will Come". Produced by Remi in May 2002, this version of the Ruby & The Romantics doo-wop standard contains all the revivified retro elements Winehouse would perfect in her 2006-7 imperial phase: easy, joyous rocksteady rhythm, smoky jazz phrasing, girl-group harmonies, deep soul.

Things get more Spectoresque on "Between The Cheats", a 2008 Remi collaboration and the only tune here intended for a new Winehouse album. The wall of sound builds, Amy sings "I would die before I'd divorce you", and then what sounds like (and Winehouse's horizontal slurs are difficult to decipher throughout) "I'd take a thousand thumps for my love". If Blake Fielder-Civil's ears are burning already then he should keep fire extinguishers and ointment handy.

Winehouse's mastery of the cheating song is explored on "Wake Up Alone", a slow, insistent strut of brushed drums and acoustic jazz guitar. "I drip for him tonight", she purrs, from a familiar and lonely place where existential agony meets uncontrollable physical desire.



These heights are matched by "Tears Dry", the original ballad version of "Tears Dry On Their Own", arranged by Remi in the sweet soul style of The Chi-Lites' "Have You Seen Her?"; the exquisite Leon Russell cover "A Song For You"; and a take on "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" which dares to rank with

It's the pleas to our memory that pull the emotions hither and thither, as great soul music should

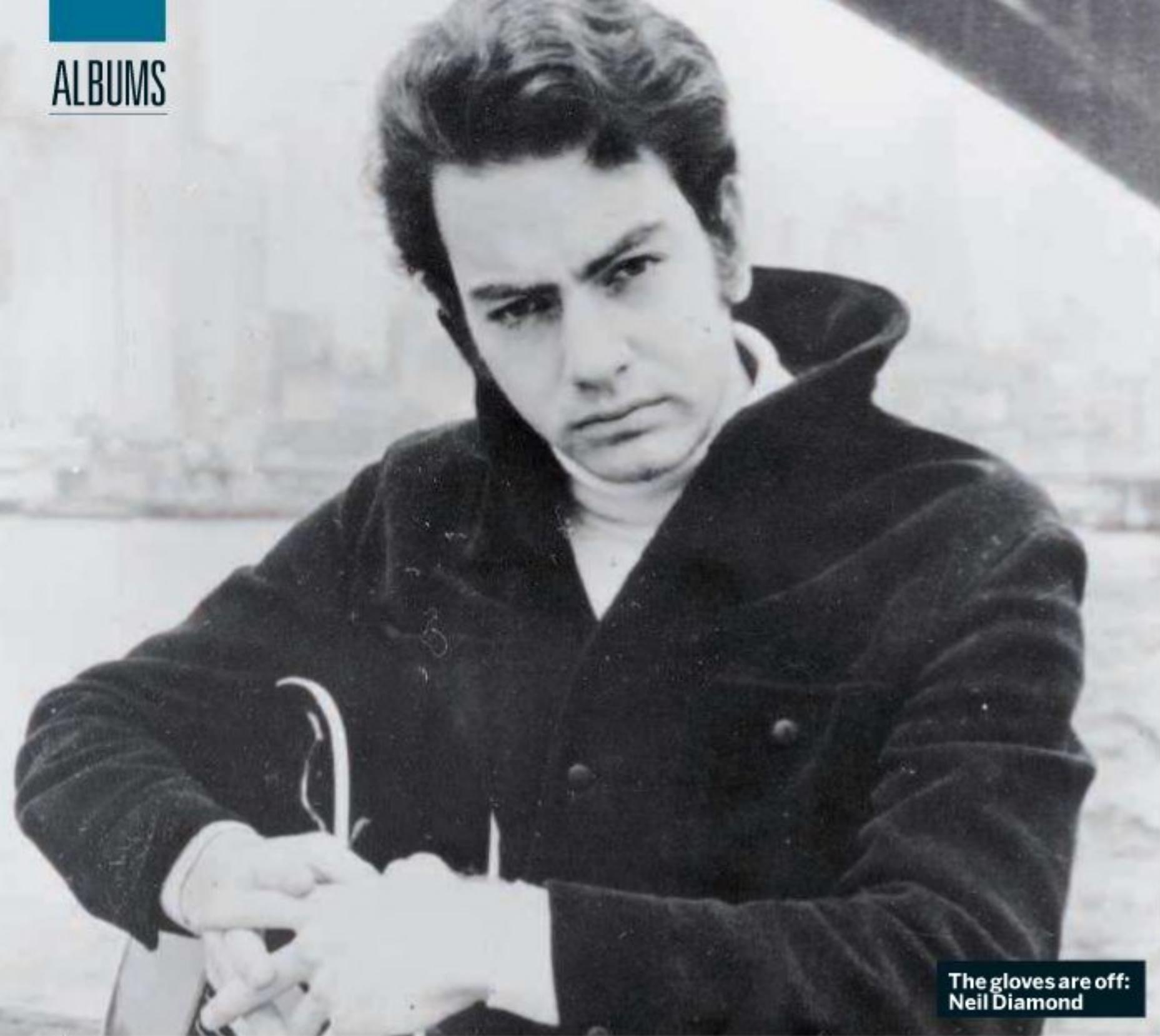
the definitive versions by The Shirelles and Carole King.

Elsewhere, a mid-tempo cut of The Zutons' "Valerie", fun collaborations with rapper Nas ("Like Smoke") and Roots drummer Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson ("Halftime"), a witty

catfight song called "Best Friends", and Amy's final recording, the "Body & Soul" duet with Tony Bennett, all entertain and beguile, the latter disputing claims her voice was prematurely shot. The only bad move is a 2002 version of "The Girl From Ipanema" which exists only to prove that not even Amy Winehouse can make karaoke material and scat-jazz anything other than cringe-inducing.

On the closing "A Song For You", a ballad made famous by suicidal soul hero Donny Hathaway, a 2009-model Amy Winehouse sounds elegantly broken as she sings, "And when my life is over/Remember, remember, remember..." The next words are, "When we were together", but it's the repeated pleas to our memory that pull the emotions hither and thither, as great soul music should. The truly gruelling thing about *Lioness* is that most of it is so beautiful and effortless and easy, and no matter how much you want to look for ghoulish clues, it sounds like a great new record by someone spectacularly alive.

But it isn't. And that's what breaks your heart.



The gloves are off: Neil Diamond

DAKOTA SUITE

The Side Of Her Inexhaustible Heart

GLITTERHOUSE

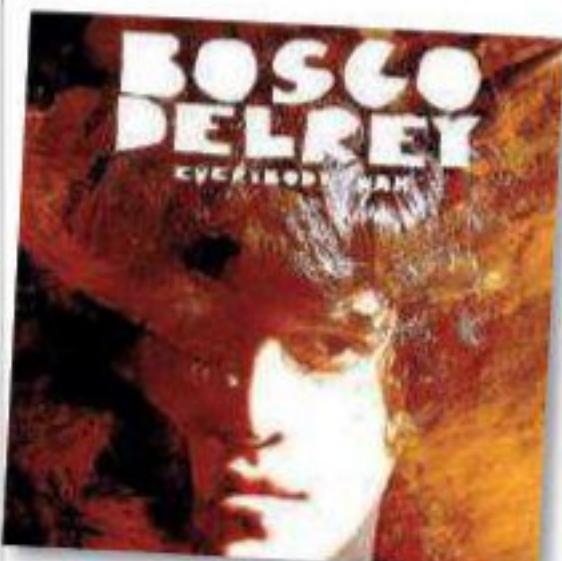
★★★

Drifting melancholia from Leeds singer-songwriter

For over a decade Dakota Suite has been a vehicle for the avant-angst of singer-songwriter Chris Hooson, who teams up here with pianist Quentin Sirjacq and cellist David Darling for (another) double album of decaying chamber-folk.

"Where The Tears Go" recalls long-term influence Mark Eitzel, but the key references these days are late Talk Talk and a touch of Harold Budd. It's undeniably beautiful but somewhat oppressive, and without the pastoral jazz kick of last year's *Hearts Of The Empty*, these drifting pieces come close to flatlining.

Graeme Thomson

BOSCO DELREY
Everybody Wah

MAD DECENT

★★★

Well-connected psychedelic rock'n'roller's debut

Bosco Delrey's credentials are unquestionable: he's signed to Diplo's label; has been remixed by Beastie Boy Ad-Rock; and Doug Easley, producer of Townes Van

Zandt and Jon Spencer, is behind his debut. Like Spencer, Delrey loves rock'n'roll, but fuses it with drum machines, vintage synths and mischief, giving tracks like "Baby's Got A Blue Flame" a playful Beck quality. "Don Haps", meanwhile, sports a rockabilly curled lip, "Archebold Ivy" throws in glam for good measure, and "Cool Out" is like a Suicide experiment in drum'n'bass. *Wyndham Wallace*

NEIL DIAMOND
Velvet Gloves And Spit

R 1968

CHERRY RED

★★★

Sowing the seeds of stardom

Diamond was working as a jobbing songwriter, riding high on The Monkees' global chart-topper "I'm A Believer", when his third solo album edged him closer to the sound that would make him a top-drawer act in the '70s. It's still a scattergun mosaic of Brill Building shapes, like his earlier releases, but "Two-Bit Manchild" and "Shilo" (the latter added to subsequent pressings after its singles-chart success) are the clearest pointers towards his later trademark moody introspection. However, the jokey social commentary of "The Pot Smoker's Song" is best skipped over. *Terry Staunton*

DILLON
This Silence Kills

BPITCH CONTROL

★★★

Dillon goes electric, again Based in Berlin, the much-travelled post-techno

chanteuse Dominique Dillon de Byington writes songs as exotic as her name. Cooing fragmentary, dreamlike lyrics in a fuzzy-warm purr, this young singer's kittenish vocal affectations will grate on some. But they come nested in artful creations of tumbling pianos, twinkling harps and laptop static. From the hiccupping skip of "Tip Tapping" to the slithering sensuality of "Your Flesh Against Mine" and the urgent electronic pulse of "Abrupt Clarity", Dillon redeems her whimsy with promising nods towards Björk, Joanna Newsom and Lykke Li. *Stephen Dalton*

ELECTRIC SIX
Heartbeats And Brainwaves

TOO MANY ROBOTS

★★

More of the same from low-voltage party rockers

After eight albums in as many years, Detroit disco-rockers Electric Six appear to have long ago sacrificed quality for quantity. *Heartbeats And Brainwaves* suggests little progression has occurred since the sleazoid party-funk of hits like "Gay Bar" and "Danger! High Voltage". Singer Dick Valentine adopts a more gothic growl, lending a doomy, Metallica-ish edge to grimy electro-glam like "Psychic Visions". But by relying on cumbersome riffs and stomping beats to paper over a lack of lyrical wit or melodic flair, E6 increasingly sound like an American Kasabian, two-trick ponies kicking vainly against their limitations. *Stephen Dalton*

SHORT CUTS

World compilations

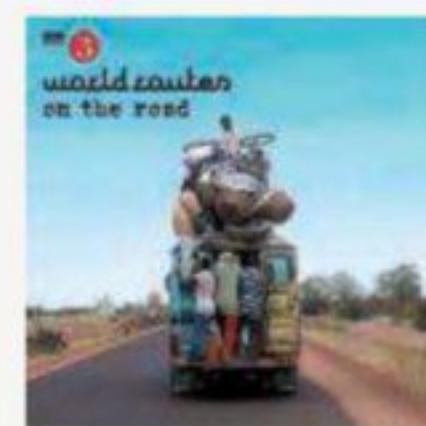
VARIOUS ARTISTS

Havana Cultura: The Search Continues

BROWNSWOOD

★★★★

Like its 2009 predecessor, this 2CD set finds broadcaster Gilles Peterson playing both producer and DJ in the "otherworldly city" of Havana. CD1 brings young vocal talents to a princely studio band led by Roberto Fonseca, with great soul-salsa blends from Dreiser, Sexto Sentido and more. CD2 has 16 hits from "the Cuban underground" – mostly Latin hip hop, with Arema Arega flying the flag for tradition. *Neil Spencer*



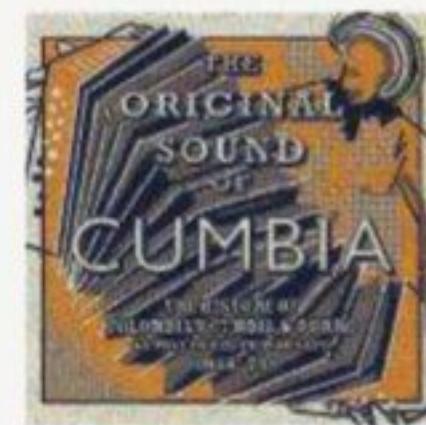
VARIOUS ARTISTS

World Routes On The Road

NASCENTE/BBC

★★★★

Over the last decade, Radio 3's flagship world-music show has put licencepayers' money to good use, travelling the world to record local musicians in their own environments. Somewhere between Alan Lomax and a set of global Peel Sessions, 30 recordings made in 18 countries capture memorable moments from stars such as Toumani Diabaté and Iraq's Ilham al-Madfa'i, to obscure performers who've never left their villages. *Nigel Williamson*



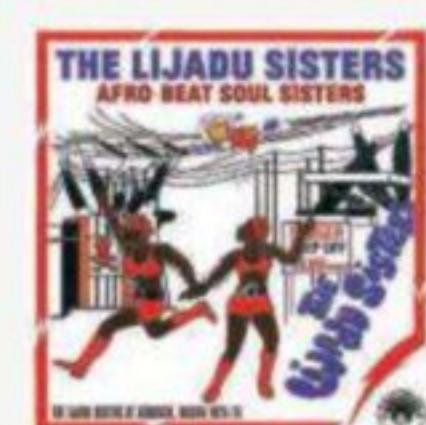
VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Original Sounds Of Cumbia

SOUNDWAY

★★★★

This 2CD collection sees Quantic, the British breakbeat DJ, rummaging through the archives in search of Colombia's dance music. From the late 1940s and '50s he unearths the wheezy accordions, honking saxes and wonky hand drums of Anibal Velasquez and Conjunto Miramar; he also finds some wonderfully rambunctious 1970s dance jams from the likes of La Cumbia Soledéña and Jaime Simanca. *John Lewis*



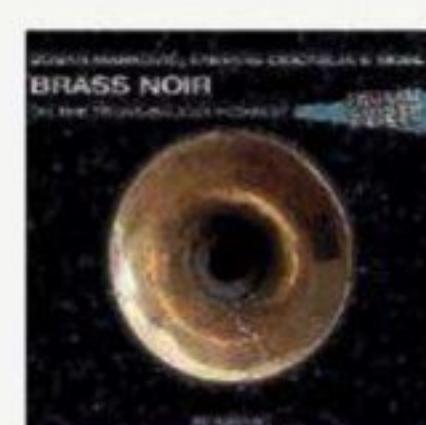
THE LIJADU SISTERS

Afro-Beat Soul Sisters

SOUL JAZZ

★★★★

The recent wave of reissues from 1970s Nigeria has shown a vibrant scene that extended beyond Afrobeat into blues, psych-rock and jazz. The Lijadus, identical twins, enjoyed a decade of diverse hits. "Danger" and "Orere" are Afrobeat-lite, "Gbowo Mi" is stately and Makeba-like, "Come And Dance" is a James Brown homage and "Not Any Longer" channels the Pointer Sisters. *Neil Spencer*



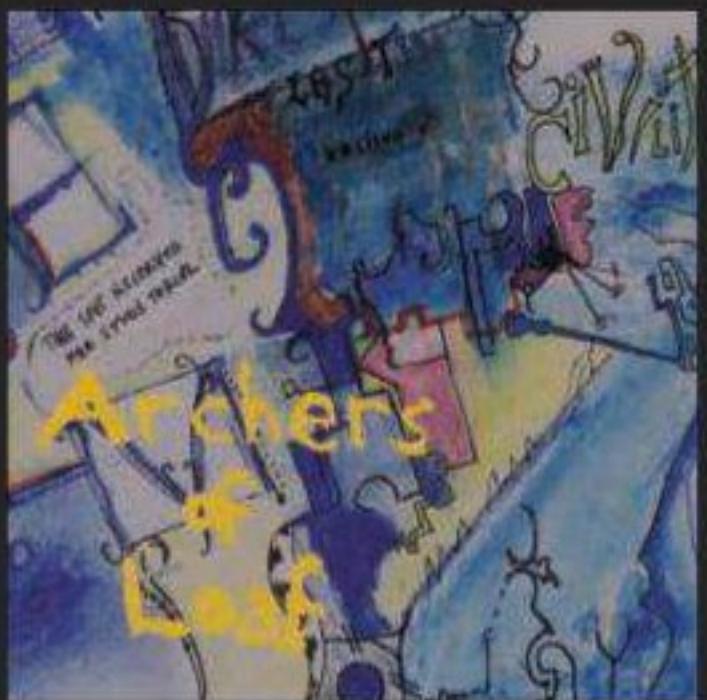
VARIOUS ARTISTS

Brass Noir: On The Trans-Balkan Highway

PIRANHA

★★★★

From Basement Jaxx to Beirut, brass-driven Balkan dance rhythms have invaded the mainstream. It's a rich inspirational source, as this pageant of authentic roots performers showcases. Feral Romanian rumba (Fanfare Ciocarlia), shuffling Turkish melancholia (Mercan Dede) and romantic gypsy flourish (Albania's Fanfara Tirana) can all be filed under "Balkan brass". Still, a collection of impressive musical and emotional complexity. *Nigel Williamson*

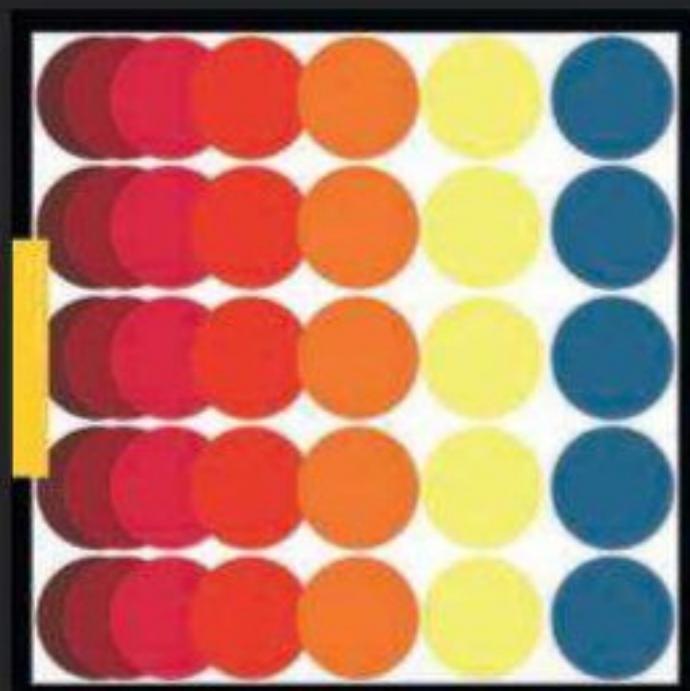


ARCHERS OF LOAF

ICKY METTEL (DELUXE EDITION)

Fire Records LP / 2CD

The acclaimed 1993 debut from Eric Bachmann (Crooked Fingers) and Co. Re-mastered with a bonus disc (CD) and on blue vinyl. 5/5 in Record Collector.



CRYSTAL STILTS

RADIANT DOOR EP

Sacred Bones Records CD / 12"

Opening track "Dark Eyes" may be their strongest song to date, unshackling them from their fuzzy reputation, which, even at its heaviest, could never obscure one from this bands dexterous song-craft.

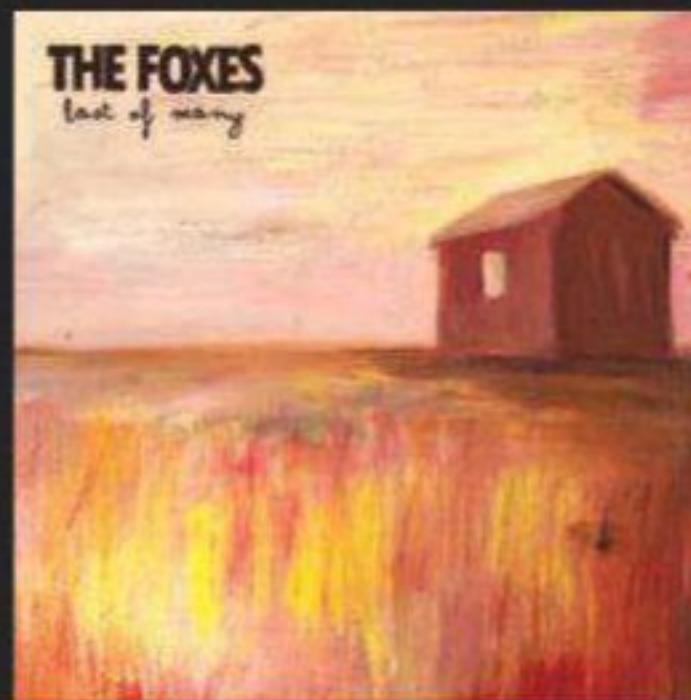


CORRIDOR

REAL LATE

Manimal CD

Sophomore effort from multi-instrumentalist and ex-Warpaint drummer brings the gloomy noise with Scott Walker vocals & early Fleetwood Mac guitar noodlings.



THE FOXES

LAST OF MANY

Room 10 CD

This is the hotly anticipated début album by The Foxes, recorded by acclaimed producer John Cornfield at Sawmills Studios following three critically acclaimed self-released singles.

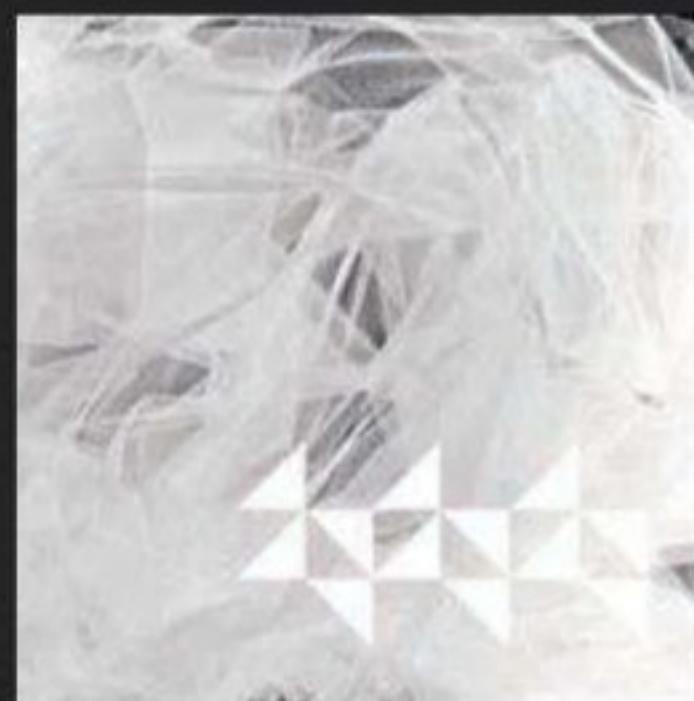


BIRDS OF PASSAGE

WINTER LADY

Denovali LP / CD

"A minimalistic cinematic experimental dark pop trip - the album equally should please fans of Cocteau Twins, Portishead as those of Jonsi & Alex or Zola Jesus".



KORALLREVEN

AN ALBUM BY KORALLREVEN

Acéphale LP / CD

Sincere Scandinavian pop from a duo including a third of The Radio Dept. Elegant, glittering Balearic productions featuring vocals from Julianna Barwick & Victoria Bergsman of Taken By Trees.



CARTER TANTON

FREECLOUDS

Western Vinyl LP / CD

New album from Tulsa/Lower Dens/ Marissa Nadler collaborator. "His voice, as much as the songwriting, makes these songs memorable and gives them an ageless quality." Pitchfork.

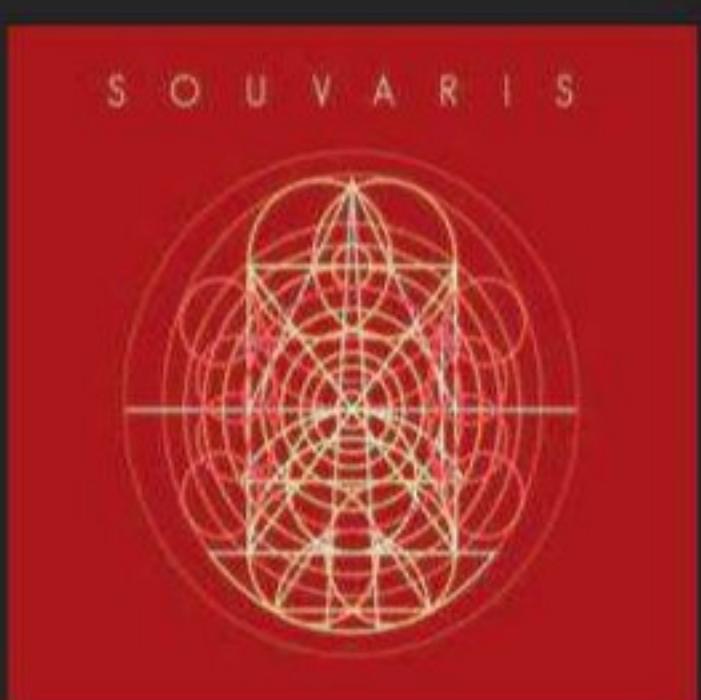


THE LEMONHEADS

HOTEL SESSIONS

Hall Of Records LP / CD

An intimate recording Evan spent recording new songs with an acoustic guitar (and some revealing commentary) in a hotel room in Bondi Beach. The 14 songs include some that never made it on to an official Lemonheads album.



SOUVARIS

SOUVARIS

Gringo CD

Third album from Souvaris, their most focused and varied yet. Kraut synths, clang guitars and downright danceable grooves. A joyous experience.

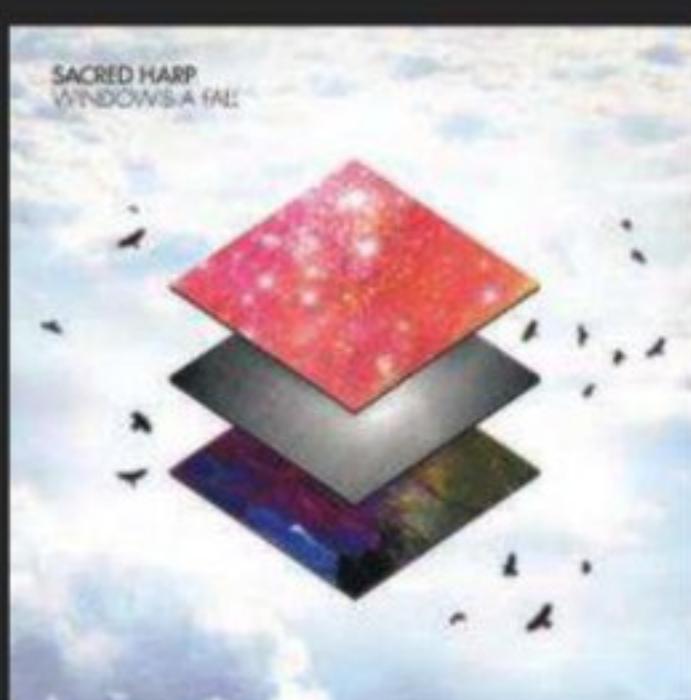


JOHNNY THROTTLE

JOHNNY THROTTLE

Dirty Water LP / CD

Real rock'n'roll, the way it's meant to be, from the former frontman of The Parkinsons - snotty, moronic and straight-to-the-point gonzo-garage punk rock.

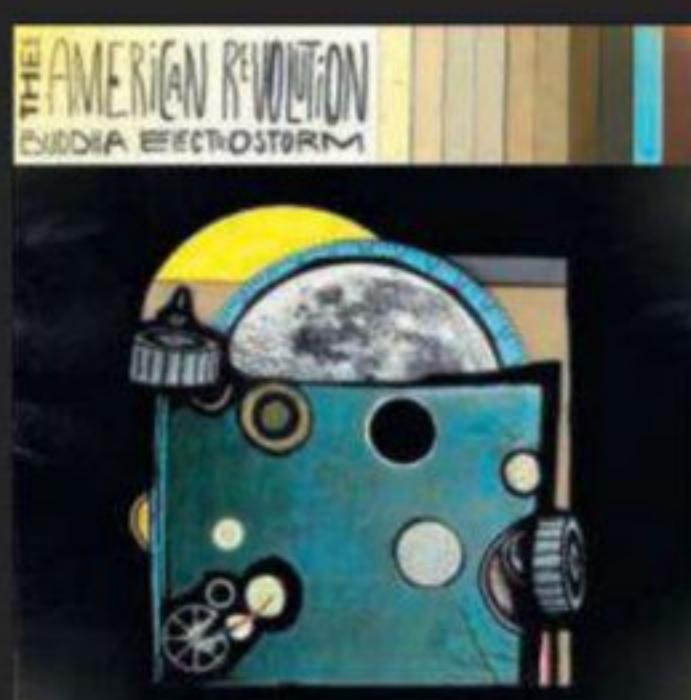


SACRED HARP

WINDOW'S A FALL

Brainlove Records CD

Sacred Harp is the band project of Jessica Sligter (aka solo artist Jæ). Theirs is an expansive kraut-jazz-prog-improv-indie-rock sound that's "terrifyingly intense" MOJO.



THEE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

BUDDA ELECTROSTORM

Fire Records CD

Self-professed psychedelic cavemen Robert Schneider (Apples In Stereo) and Craig Morris power psych stomp and crunch fuzz gems. Turn up the volume for this one.

CARGO COLLECTIVE: AN AMALGAMATION OF RECORD SHOPS AND LABELS DEDICATED TO BRING YOU NEW MUSIC

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EMMY THE GREAT/
TIM WHEELER

This Is Christmas

INFECTIOUS MUSIC

★★★

Ash singer and nu-folk girlfriend get festive

Christmas albums are traditionally the *amuse-bouche* on the musical menu, and this sparky collaboration is no exception. Apart from Phil Spector's "Marshmallow World" all 10 tracks are co-written originals, winking their way from '60s girl-pop ("Christmas Moon", "Mrs Christmas") to kitsch glam stumps ("Jesus The Reindeer") and tinny '80s tearjerkers ("Snowflakes", "Home For The Holidays"). Amid the good-hearted goofing around the pair manage to capture some of the holiday season's melancholy and magic, making *This Is Christmas* neither turkey nor cracker but a sweetly silly trifle.

Graeme Thomson

ESCORT

Escort

TIRK

★★★

Debut from Jake Shears-approved nu-disco crew

Dan Balis and Eugene Cho are upfront about their admiration for August Darnell and Nile Rogers, but as the core of Brooklyn's Escort, they avoid both simple retroism and craven homage. Their hi-NRG disco – featuring terrific soul vocalist Adeline Michèle and performed live as a 17-piece band – is filtered through contemporary club culture, its age-indeterminate sound achieved by using digital drums with analogue synths and vintage mixing boards.

Thus, "Cocaine Blues" could have been lifted (almost) straight from the soundtrack to *Saturday Night Fever*, but "Makeover" recalls Beth Ditto's recent work with Simian Mobile Disco. *Sharon O'Connell*

THE EXPLORERS CLUB

The Californian Suite/
The Carolinian Suite/
The New Yorker Suite

ROCK RIDGE MUSIC

★★★

Intriguing interim nuggets from perfectionist pop archaeologists

This Charleston, SC-based group appeared in '08 with the beguiling *Freedom Wind*, a spot-on homage to the Beach Boys. Here, on a trio of online-only, three-song EPs teasing their 2012 follow-up, *Grand Hotel*, now being mixed by Brian Wilson's engineer Mark Linett, they expand their love affair with '60s and '70s AM radio, covering Dionne Warwick's "Walk On By" and (ulp) Vanity Fair's "Hitchin' A Ride". These recreations provide reference points for pre-Linett mixes of six cuts from the new LP, each vividly recalling the innocent days of yore, delivered with wide-eyed unselfconsciousness.

Bud Scoppa

FDELUXE

Gaslight

ART OF GROOVE

★★★

Belated return from Prince-associated, cult Minneapolis outfit

The Family's self-titled debut, which gave us the original recording of "Nothing Compares 2 U", was one of the gems in Prince's extracurricular

output. Twenty-six years later, now renamed after a disagreement with their former mentor, this return finds the original four-piece on impressively supple, sophisticated and funk-fired form. Eric Leeds' horn and woodwind parts bring joyous colour, light and shade aplenty, and singer Susannah Melvoin's twin Wendy (and the latter's musical partner Lisa) are among the guests adding to the glow. "The Vigil", with its jazzy, Steely Dan-like chord changes, has a natural sensuality typical of the class on display throughout. *Gavin Martin*

FLARE ACOUSTIC ARTS LEAGUE

Big Top/Encore

AFFAIRS OF THE HEART

★★★

Magnificently dour power pop from Bushwick's Irving Berlin

Crooner, composer and designer; veteran of Moth Wranglers, the New Criticism and The Magnetic Fields: LD Beghtol is less renaissance man, more baroque impresario. For this album, he trades in his refined magical nihilism for a more orchestrated disdain. A seasoned worshipper at the Church of Dorothy Parker, Beghtol greets each fresh hell with couplets to zing the strings of your heart: "I threw your fucking smartphone from the Verrazano Bridge/ and it's only fair to warn you, don't look inside that fridge", he croons sweetly on the mariachi-flavoured "Scenario". A swoonsome cover of the Psychedelic Furs' "Yes I Do" is the cherry on top of a splendid confection. *Stephen Troussé*

BEN FOLDS

The Best Imitation Of Myself:
A Retrospective

EPIC

★★★

Three-disc monument to inventive songwriter

The plummeting of album sales has had one positive upshot: it is no longer feasible, when releasing a best-of, simply to cobble together your 12 biggest hits. Folds' retrospective contains one disc of his best work – some in alternate forms – one of live recordings, and another of demos and rarities. Of most interest are three new songs with his first group, Ben Folds Five. "Tell Me What I Did" in particular recalls their trademark belligerent nerdiness, and prompts the hope that there will be more. *Andrew Mueller*

BRUCE FORSYTH

These Are My Favourites

EMI

★

Not nice to hear you, to not hear you, nice

Even after 197 years in showbusiness, Sir Bruce is able to surprise his audience in ways that Neil Young would be proud of. These songs, in BBC Jazz Orchestra-style arrangements, certainly do the job, revealing Bruce's love of music is so great, you would never know he had any at all. For this most status-aware performer, the track selection is interestingly upbeat – "Give Me The Simple Life", "Let There Be Love", etc – while a duet with his melismatic granddaughter will warm the cockles of any pensioner on a tight heating budget this winter. Hopefully, these weren't your favourites, too. *John Robinson*

THEA GILMORE

Don't Stop Singing

MIGHTY VILLAGE/ISLAND

★★★

Brit songstress interprets unheard Sandy Denny lyrics

A cache of 20 unscored Denny lyrics discovered in 1999 set in motion this posthumous co-creation. No-one is going to reproduce Denny's bell-like tones, but Gilmore's sweeter voice convincingly inhabits lyrics like "I can't afford to live in this place/And I can't afford to leave". Would Denny have settled for the mundane orchestral arrangements that swamp, say, "Glistening

Bay"? Possibly; her last albums veered between styles, including the kind of plodding piano balladry on offer here. Better is the jaunty folk-rock of "London", a style that was always Denny's forte. *Neil Spencer*

GOLDEN KANINE

Scissors & Happiness

GLITTERHOUSE

★★★

Swedes' 2009 debut reissued

This international re-release of the quintet's limited-edition first album arrives on the heels of their excellent second, *Oh Woe!* (2010). Compared to that record's nuanced Americana, their early moves – pinging between pop, alt.rock, indie, folk and ska – seem derivative and somewhat scattershot. Still, much impresses. Part Cherry Ghost's Simon Aldred, part Thom Yorke, Andreas Olrog is a powerful singer, while the intensity of "Came Down", the horn-drenched "Happiness" and unhinged oompah of "Call To Arms" are exemplary. Yet for all that, *Scissors & Happiness* still feels like the preliminary sketches for a more ambitious piece of work. *Graeme Thomson*

GORILLAZ

The Singles Collection 2001-2011

PARLOPHONE

★★★

Ten years of cartoon capering, with DVD

It seemed a little silly at the time, but with hindsight, Damon Albarn's idea to form a "virtual band" of cartoon characters was a shrewd move. As both a place to shelter while the tabloid-friendly Britpop Damon faded from the public memory, and a convenient stepping stone into dub, hip hop and world musics, Gorillaz has been a successful vessel for experimentation and reinvention. "DARE", featuring a garrulous Shaun Ryder, and the smoked-out melodica lop of "Clint Eastwood" hit the best, and if the *Plastic Beach*-era material gets a bit bogged down in the concept, it's not without its moments (notably "Stylo", with Bobby Womack). The DVD collects Jamie Hewlett's videos, trailers, BRITs performances and spoof documentary presented by a very deadpan Krishnan Guru-Murthy. *Louis Pattison*



HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

Poor Moon

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

★★★★★

A small but grand statement, recorded in a week, but achieving country-soul greatness, says Alastair McKay



MC TAYLOR, a songwriter and a student of folklore, is not a declamatory man. His songs are compressed and poetic, with nary a syllable out of place.

You will hear echoes of familiar things – a bit of Van Morrison's mystical warmth, or John Martyn's angst. The language will be unfussy, and derived from the folk tradition.

Poor Moon does not sound especially like a record from 2011, but Taylor has a way of explaining the distinction between timelessness and revivalism. His band, Hiss Golden Messenger, are not, he says, "Civil War re-enactors". So, while Taylor can talk about his ambition to follow the lead of The Band and Fairport Convention by adapting and re-tooling traditional forms, there is nothing precious about the way the music unfurls. The effect is emotional, not intellectual, because *Poor Moon* is the sound of a man grappling with matters which go beyond cold reason. It is a record about faith, in which the most startling song is also the least typical. That song is called "Jesus Shot Me In The Head" (you're permitted to laugh).

Hiss Golden Messenger is the collective name for Taylor, the principal songwriter, and his long-time cohort, Scott Hirsch. In a previous life, they both toiled in the San Francisco-based country-rock group, The Court And Spark. Taylor relocated to the rural Piedmont mill town of Pittsboro, North Carolina, to further his studies, and Hirsch moved to Brooklyn to work on film music. Musically, Taylor seems to have been inspired by his move to a rural environment where old-time music is not an affectation, but purists should be aware that his lyrics are as inspired by Japanese haiku as they are by hillbilly tropes. This is no costume drama, remember.

They operate in a way that seems designed to cultivate obscurity. *Poor Moon*, for example, is not available on CD. For now, it exists in a limited edition of 500 hand-tooled copies. (The North Carolina boutique label, Paradise Of Bachelors, is not fond of CDs, believing them to be a poor substitute for a beautiful vinyl artefact.) At a rough count, *Poor Moon*



Single-minded songcraft: MC Taylor of Hiss Golden Messenger

is the fifth HGM album, though digital EPs and bonus releases make the tally unreliable. Two LPs (2010's *Bad Debt* and 2009's *Country Hai East Cotton*) were given a broader release on the Blackmaps label), and – to muddy things further – several of the songs from *Bad Debt* are reworked on *Poor Moon*.

Confusing? Yes. But perhaps that's the price you pay for single-minded songcraft. *Poor Moon* is a beautiful, accomplished record. The songs are autumnal, and linked by swampy sound effects; rain here, cicadas there. In the bloody-mindedness of its vision, I was reminded of that other faith-seeking mongrel, Mike Scott, particularly in the use of gothic language: see the beautifully mellow "Drummer Down", with its archaic talk of hexes, or "Under All The Land", a pained strum, evoking the Israelites and Canaan-land, played out beneath a super-blue crescent moon. "Dreamwood" is a sweet, wiry

instrumental, channelling John Fahey, and "A Working Man Can't Make It No Way" is a straight-up, overalls-on country shuffle about the travails of a hard-workin' family, a song that deserves to be covered by Merle Haggard.

Taylor mentions two albums as being a direct influence: Ronnie Laine's *Anymore For Anymore* (for its deep humility) and Richard & Linda Thompson's *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, not least because it, too, was recorded in a few days (*Poor Moon*'s recording took just a week). Taylor also talks earnestly about pursuing "an organic aesthetic", incorporating traditional sounds within a contemporary framework.

If that makes the record sound like a yoga workshop, it isn't. *Poor Moon* is gospel, played with blue notes. It is the sound of a sweet soul contemplating deliverance; as mellow and fierce and fearful as that.

Q&A MC Taylor

What was your plan for the album?

There are some touchstones musically, but we're never going to sound like anyone except for ourselves. So we're just trying to refine what it is that we do. We reference records, and we always think we're being clever about it, but if we got down to it, I think we'd realise that we are referencing the same records time and time again.

What are they?

A lot of my work is framed by American country and western music, folk music, gospel music – American roots music, for want of a better word. I tend to use those kinds of music as a rubric when I'm writing; obviously I depart pretty significantly, but there are certain lyrical motifs that exist in traditional American music, that I carry into what I do.

Which artists do you keep returning to?

All kinds of stuff that we grew up listening to. We're always referencing John Martyn and Fairport Convention records – *Full House* is a really big one for us – and the first couple of records by The Band. A lot of this stuff comes from a time period in Western popular music when people seemed to be searching for their roots.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY

Debuts

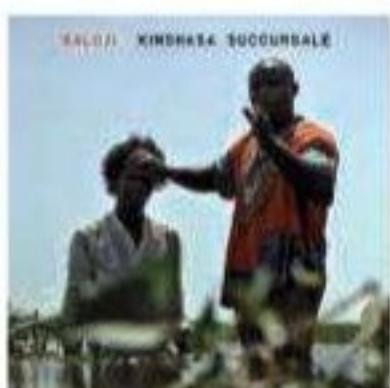
The best new music

BALOJI

Kinshasa Succursale

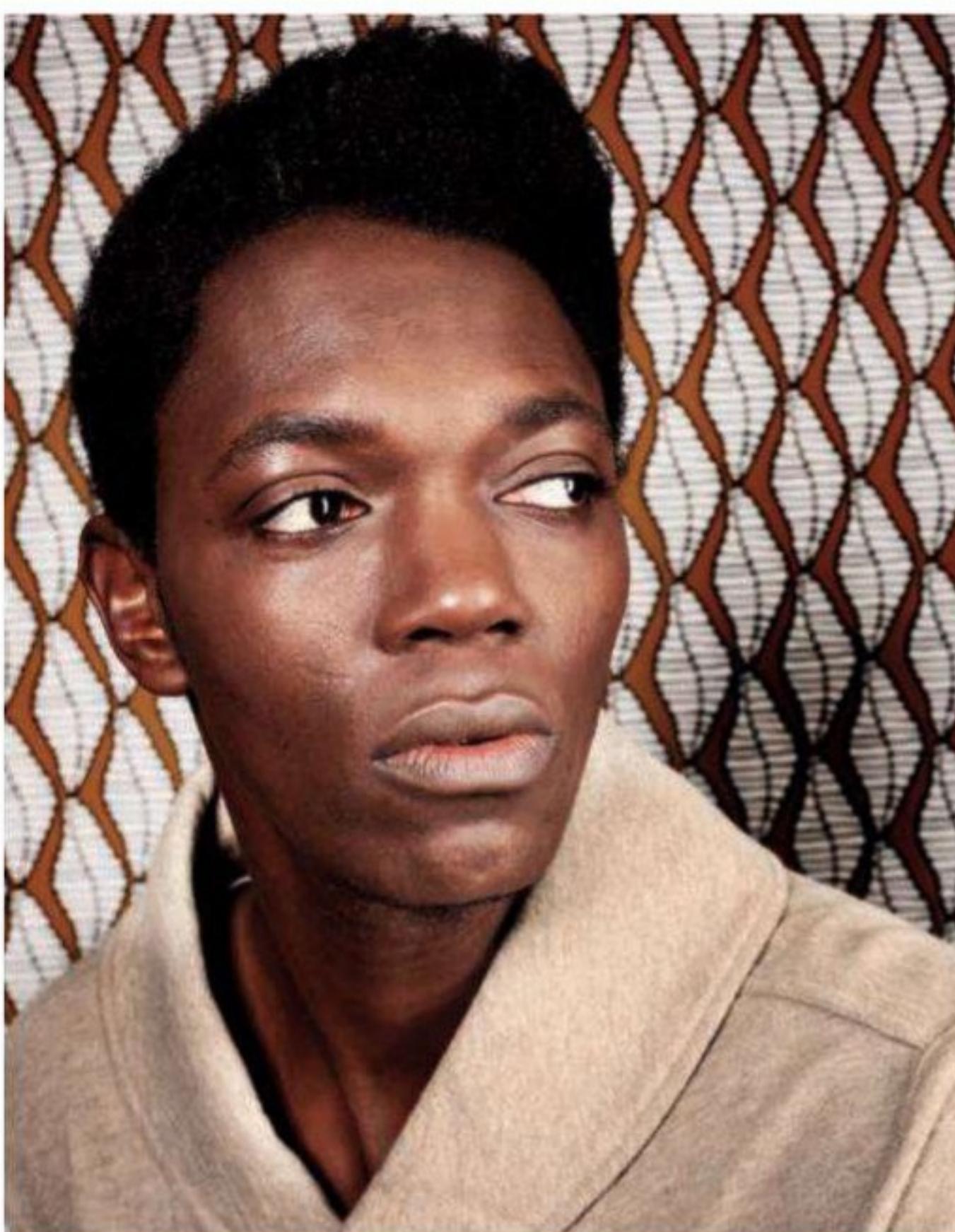
CRAMMED ★★★★

Belgium-based MC's return to Congo. By Louis Pattison



BORN IN Congo in 1978, Baloji moved to Belgium with his father at the age of three, and watched from afar as his homeland slid into bloody ethnic conflict that persists to this day. A lucky escape, some might say, but thoughts of home weigh increasingly heavy on this self-described "Afropean". After quitting Liège hip hop ensemble Starflam in 2004, he received a letter from his estranged mother, which led to his first return to DRC.

Next trip, he and two accomplices – sound engineer Cyril Harrison and bass player Didier Likeng – stayed awhile, recording new songs and reworking material from 2008's Belgium-only release *Hotel Impala* with a loose conglomerate of Congolese players, choirs and street musicians. It feels somewhat appropriate that Baloji's worldwide debut is the one that drops him back on the streets of his homeland, living on his wits, buzzing on Africa's spirit of make-do-and-mend. Congolese guitarists Dr Nico and Franco add sparkling melodies, and Lubumbashi orchestra La Katuba provide a firm bedrock of raw Afro-funk. "Nazongi Ndako" – "return" in Swahili – is an adaptation of Marvin Gaye's "I'm Going Home", Amp Fiddler singing the heartsick hook, that segues into a second movement of racing funk, Baloji's Francophone rhymes in blunt contrast to the music's dancing polyrhythms.



CHILDISH GAMBINO

Camp

GLASSNOTE/ISLAND

★★★

Rapper/comedian neatly avoids comedy-rap trap Childish Gambino is the hip-hop handle of comedian Donald Glover, but while his rhymes are consistently witty, they're not played for laughs as such. Instead he raps about Facebook faux-pas and the inverse snobbery he's encountered as a college-educated rapper ("No live shows 'cos I can't find sponsors/For the only black kid at a Sufjan concert"). Kanye West is the obvious model for such entertaining navel-gazing, and producer Ludwig Göransson imbues the beats with a comparable degree of pomp, although we could have done without diversions into cheesy Swede-pop. *Sam Richards*

RALEIGH MONCRIEF

Watered Lawn

ANTICON

★★★

Sacramento scenester's seductive solo first Raleigh Moncrief has come a long way from recording pitch-perfect covers of video-game music with earlier band The Advantage. Also touring guitarist with Marnie Stern, he's flying solo on this debut, which embraces the Beach Boys' idyllic harmonies, Panda Bear's psychedelic post-house and the glo-fi of Washed Out. His is a dense patchwork of polyrhythmic flurries, twitchy glitch and cascading vocals – blissed-out, but entertainingly unpredictable. Most effective is "Lament For Morning", channelling "O Superman" via Hudson Mohawke's widescreen prog-house. *Sharon O'Connell*

THE CALLAS

Objekt

VELVET

★★★

Greek visual artists play punk-rock dress-up With song titles such as "Gin & Sin", "Call Meet Fuck Kill" and "When I'm Drunk", you'll have a pretty good idea of The Callas's preoccupations before you've heard a note. Which makes it all the more surprising to find that Athens brothers Lakis and Aris Ionas are, first and foremost, visual artists in thrall to Warhol and his acolytes. Though their lyrical pursuit of girls and booze can be a little tiresome, there's no arguing with their ear for a punk-pop hook, most deftly demonstrated on the bass-heavy opener "Against The Day" and the throbbing synth-rock of "Down". *Fiona Sturges*

BEN HOWARD

Every Kingdom

ISLAND

★★★

Pastoral debut from West Country songwriter The fast-growing reputation of 23-year-old Ben Howard shows that, even in these PR-mediated times, word of mouth can still carry weight. *Every Kingdom* is the Totnes troubadour's first proper album (an EP came out this summer) though his gigs have been selling out for well over a year. On this evidence you can see why. There's a dreamy wisdom to Howard's simply arranged paeans to past relationships, while atmospheric descriptions of malevolent shadows on hills and winter "tearing down doors" reveal an unusually poetic songwriter revelling in his proximity to nature. *Fiona Sturges*

SINGLES BAR

Never a band to rush into anything, **Mazzy Star** have just issued their first new material in 15 years, in the form of "Common Burn" **RHYMES OF AN HOUR**. Little has changed since David Roback and Hope Sandoval last worked together, the former providing a wonderfully drowsy backdrop for the latter's enraptured vocals. They return to a music scene where vagueness is very much in vogue. **Youngusband**'s "Constantly In Love", from their "Crystal" EP **SONIC CATHEDRAL**, could almost be Mazzy Star, although Euan Hinshelwood's scuffed vocals don't quite carry the same sense of wonder. The band are better on the psychedelic, candy-striped pop of "Tropic Of Cancer". **Sunless '97** are an intriguing new London band boasting Gang Gang Dance's winning combination of the urgent and the ethereal. Their "Making Waves" EP



ABEANO is an impressively varied first effort, the gauzy boy/girl harmonies of "Illuminations" eventually giving way to a gurgling, aquatic groove. Brooklyn remains the chief disseminator of this kind of stuff, though: see **Young Magic**'s "Night In The Ocean" **CARPKAR**, where bombastic synth is softened by winsome vocals and a lush, spectral coda. Sometimes, however, more clarity is welcome. **The Revival Hour** is the new project of DM Stith and John-Mark Lapham of The Earlies, and debut single "Hold Back" **ANTIPHON** is a melodramatic old-time ballad, each of the 11 musicians involved making their presence felt.

HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT

90 Bisodol (Crimond)

PROBE PLUS

★★★

Album 12 from Wirral miserabilists

Twenty-six largely uncelebrated years since their debut, Half Man Half Biscuit are now the kind of arcane British social institution they themselves might write a song about. That's not to say, however, that Nigel Blackwell can't occasionally rouse himself from his comfort zone of references to TV (Gok Wan; Tommy Walsh) and low-level rock music behaviour ("Rock And Roll Is Full Of Bad Wools") to deliver a genuinely good song. "RSVP" is one here, a straight(ish) country number, wherein a lovelorn psychopath finds himself doing the catering at his ex-girlfriend's wedding. By the time anyone realises who put the antifreeze in the punch, "I'd landed in Wick".

John Robinson

DARYL HALL

Laughing Down Crying

VERVE FORECAST

★★★

Undervalued soul great adds to his considerable legacy
Just as Hall & Oates' body of work is being rediscovered, the duo's lead voice delivers his strongest solo effort since the first, 1980's Robert Fripp-produced cult classic *Sacred Songs*. On these 10 beautifully arranged songs, Hall masterfully revisits his various modes: silky Philly soul ("Eyes For You", "Lifetime Of Love"), H&O's edgy late-'70s rock phase ("Wrong Side Of History", "Talking To Myself") and their folk-pop origins (the title track), throwing in a sultry take on Memphis R'n'B for good measure ("Message To Ya"). The album strikingly captures one of the great singers of the last four decades (no racial or stylistic modifiers needed) in peak form. *Bud Scoppa*

STEVE HACKETT

Beyond The Shrouded Horizon

INSIDE OUT/EMI

★★

Twenty-fourth solo album from ex-Genesis guitarist

To convey the vaulting conceptual reach of this latest opus we require Hackett's own words: "From Sinbad seas to Star Trek oceans of deep sky, it's an odyssey. Let chthonic guitar

forces and power of song take you over the edge of uncharted territories." Hackett is prog rock's equivalent of the Japanese soldier still running around in the jungle fighting World War II. The topography of this album includes grandiose, funkless guitars, bombastic intimations of Araby on "Two Faces Of Cairo" and synthesised sounds intimating what life may be like in the year 1999. It does indeed traverse continents, oceans, the planets themselves, culminating in the lengthy "This Island Earth" – with not a long, grey hair out of place at journey's end.

David Stubbs

RUSSELL HASWELL & FLORIAN HECKER

Kanal GENDYN

EDITIONS MEGO

★★★

Bowel-loosening electronics
This latest emission from the Penn and Teller of gonzo computer music gives new meaning to the idea of "the brown note". *Kanal GENDYN* is a typically vigorous score for an hour-long film of the Zurich sewage system, made in 1992 by the Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss using a remote-controlled camera. Composed in 2004, we find Haswell and Hecker in playful mood, conjuring some nonstop demented cacophony that suggests an orchestra of rabid bagpipers attempting the hits of Altern-8. Weirder fare was to come.

Piers Martin

STEVE HAUSCHILD

Tragedy & Geometry

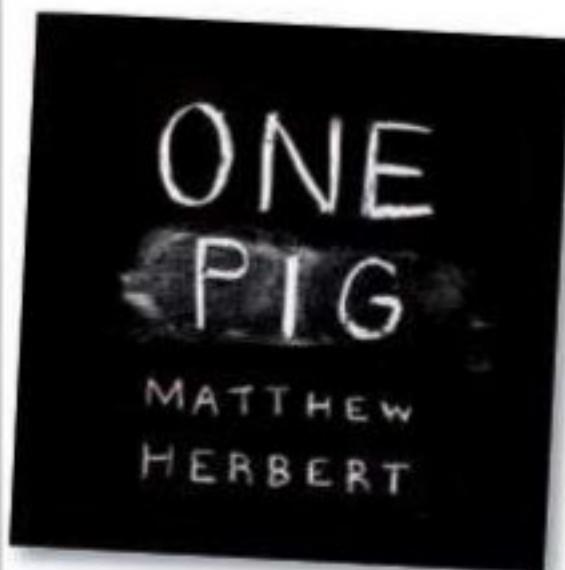
KRANKY

★★★

The quiet man of Emeralds makes his statement
Regular readers of *Uncut* will know that no issue is truly complete without a review of a solo or side-project by one of Cleveland drone-kosmische group Emeralds. Against the hectic, sometimes scattershot recording schedule of his bandmates, though, Steve Hauschilt appears the model of composure. No improv excursions or gnarly freakouts here: in the spirit of the most utopian of synth wizards, *Tragedy & Geometry* is exquisite and detailed to an almost obsessive-compulsive degree, "Already Replaced" and "Blue Marlin" unfurling in long cascades

of meticulously assembled electronics and blissful guitar. Another Emeralds solo album? Oh, OK then.

Louis Pattison



MATTHEW HERBERT

One Pig

ACCIDENTAL

★★★

Album constructed from samples of the life of a pig, from birth to dinnerplate

Matthew Herbert has made a speciality of using sound sources that highlight the relationship between pop, its processes and its sources. For *One Pig*, he composes an album of lush, irregular, ambient electronica based entirely around the rustlings and grunts of a selected porker, from the flurry of activity as it is born in the sty, through its short and merry life and – having not been allowed to record its slaughter – the posthumous use of its skin as an instrument and the sound of it being munchied in a restaurant. Food, literally, for thought for squeamish carnivores; yet as beautiful as all Herbert's musical fare.

David Stubbs

HUMAN SWITCHBOARD

Who's Landing in My Hangar: Anthology 1977-1984

BAR/NONE

★★★

Long-buried Cleveland trio get their digital due, finally
One of scores of manic, mysterious outfits flitting through the late-'70s/early-

'80s US post-punk landscape, Human Switchboard sounded something like a nervous breakdown. Myrna Marcarian's driving, swirling Farfisa, Bob Pfeifer's id-driven, out-on-the-ledge songwriting, boy/girl vocal tradeoffs, and walls of jagged guitar wreckage linked them to forebears like Talking Heads and The Velvet Underground; yet an innately peculiar, deeply personal emotional desolation ensured their uniqueness. Poppier tracks – especially the magnetic "(Say No To) Saturday's Girl" – are the gateway. *Hangar* goes on to collect their lone album, plus singles, live cuts and late-era demos; meanwhile, an associated download card expands the collection to 40 cuts.

Luke Torn

HUSSEY-REGAN

Curios

CHERRY RED

★

The Mission and All About Eve singers go goth cabaret

Presumably seeking reincarnation as a goth Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood, All About Eve's Julianne Regan and Wayne Hussey have created a ghastly Frankenstein with this gravest hits collection of new songs (one each) and appallingly chosen covers. The Mission frontman's growl through Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman" is truly monstrous; his "Ashes To Ashes" sounds like a Mablethorpe pub singer soldiering on bravely with a malfunctioning rhythm machine, and their twin assault on Nick Cave's "Where The Wild Roses Grow" is more brutish and cruel than anything Cave managed to inflict on Kylie Minogue in the original. Forghouls only.

Jim Wirth

Steve Hauschilt: building utopia, one synth at a time



INXS

Greatest Hits

UNIVERSAL

★★

As the latest post-Hutchence lineup prepares to tour, Oz rockers polish silver

Reality TV shows, Terence Trent D'Arby, Rob Thomas and recent Irish recruit Ciaran Gribbon may come and go but INXS' reputation stays stubbornly tied to late frontman Michael Hutchence. Glossy, zeitgeist-flattering standouts like "Taste It" and "New Sensation" have aged pretty well. But over two CDs, the band's erratic output (the dreadful cod-soul of "Searching", the arthritic funk of "Melting The Sun") and the sharp decline that predates Hutchence's demise gets too much perspective. It's also available as a three-disc set featuring a DVD, wherein the band talk publicly about Hutchence's death for the first time.

Gavin Martin

THE ISLEY BROTHERS

Harvest For The World

BBR

★★★

Winning combo of protest and dance

The familiar, anthemic title track, and songs such as "People Of Today" and "So You Wanna Stay Down", initially suggest the Isleys were exploring similar social-conscience avenues to Motown labelmate Marvin Gaye's *What's Goin' On*. However, for the most part, the album stays true to the broader-themed muscular dance-funk of their earlier '70s offerings, getting a serious groove going on "Who Loves You Better". Ronald Isley is in fine voice throughout, his sweet tenor at its most persuasive on the reserved balladry of "Let Me Down Easy". *Terry Staunton*

ETTA JAMES

The Dreamer

VERVE FORECAST

★★★

Godmother of R'n'B goes out with a bang

It was characteristic of Etta James' indomitable spirit that, after 60 years in the business – time that had seen her go from singing in churches to street-corner doo-wop, via the glory days of Chess Records and the birth of soul; then drug addiction, comebacks and Grammy Lifetime Achievement awards – she greeted the news that Beyoncé would sing her signature song "At Last" at the inauguration of Barack Obama by saying she was going to whip Knowles' ass. Just as characteristically, her final release, prompted by the onset of illness, sees her sing – alongside superb versions of Ray Charles' "In The Evening" and Otis Redding's "Cigarettes And Coffee" – a cover of "Welcome To The Jungle" which, miraculously, makes you forget Guns'n'Roses ever existed. A supremely sassy swansong.

Stephen Troussé

BERT JANSCH

Angie: The Collection

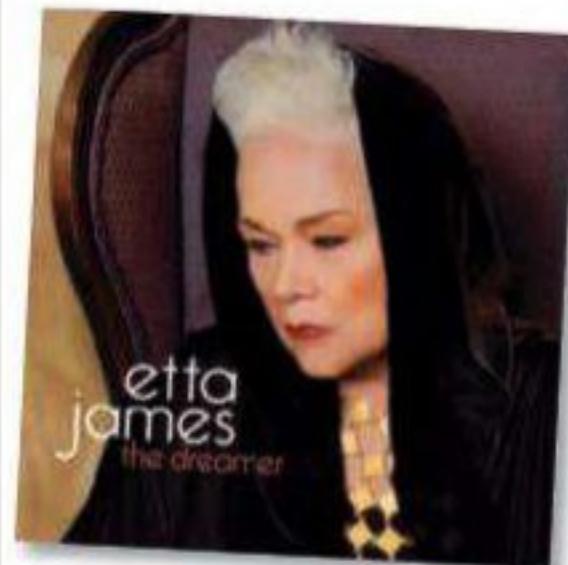
SPECTRUM

★★★

The late fingerpicking master in his pomp

An east-meets-west guitar prodigy with a blithe but bewildered air, Bert Jansch made his version of Davy Graham's "Angi" his calling card, but while it was the Scotsman's fingerwork that dazzled on campus in the 1960s, it is the quiet power of

his songwriting that startles now. "Needle Of Death" and "Come Sing Me A Happy Song..." skewer his sullen majesty, but as the perkily orchestrated "Woe Is Love My Dear" attests, exciting oddities lurk deeper into his back catalogue. Edge closer and see. *Jim Wirth*



JONTI

Twirligig

STONES THROW

★★★

South African producer/multi-instrumentalist goes galactic

A playmate of Mark Ronson, Santigold and the Dap-Kings, on his defiantly homemade debut Jonti applies hip hop's cut-and-paste ethos to '60s pop, easy listening and electronica. Much of *Twirligig* feels like spinning through the dials of some otherworldly radio. "Spooky Sport" is a lurching melange of warped, maladjusted noise; "Firework Spraying Moon" the sound of an intergalactic Beach Boys; "Barmilk" revives the ghost of Bert Kaempfert; while "Passaros" is, literally, a tin-can symphony. It's hit-and-miss but lots of fun, with real skill and joie de vivre behind the incessant experimentation.

Graeme Thomson

THE JUAN MACLEAN

Everybody Get Close

DFA

★★★

Glittering offcuts comp from veteran electro-punk

Working as the sound engineer for John MacLean's Six Finger Satellite inspired James Murphy to come up with the "DFA" moniker and reinvent punk-inflected dance music. After 20 years of bad timing and bad luck, MacLean is now established as one of Murphy's DFA stars, working with LCD Soundsystem's Nancy Whang and remixing Stevie Nicks and Yoko. This release compiles non-album tracks, remixes and a couple of new tunes, but feels like a perfectly focused set of retro-modernist dance, from the acid delirium of "Let's Talk About Me" to the stark synths of "The Robot" and "X2".

Garry Mulholland

GABRIEL KAHANE

Where Are The Arms

SECOND STORY SOUND

★★★

Intricate chamber pop from Brooklyn-based pianist Kahane's *Where Are The Arms* is, as you would expect from an orchestrator who has worked with Sufjan Stevens, Rufus Wainwright and the Kronos Quartet, a refined piece. Classy arrangements surround densely worded narratives, "Charming Disease" and "Merritt Parkway" shoehorning in as much content as the entire oeuvre of less ambitious singer-songwriters. At times, it feels like a gallery of aural still-lifes, lovely but static

– but the whirligig backing vocals on "Parts Of Speech" and the percolating horns and chorale of "Calabash & Catamaran" provide a welcome exuberance.

Bud Scoppa

JEZ KERR

Numb Mouth Eat Waste

HIGUERA

★★★

After 34 years, the solo debut from A Certain Ratio man

If Jeremy Kerr had decided to be a one-man band in 1977, he would've sounded nothing like Mancunian punk-funk progenitors ACR. At least, not if his first solo album's mix of Suicide, Neu! and The Beta Band gives any clues. The vocalist-bassist has self-produced a surprisingly modern and punchy record. Whether reimagining The Jesus & Mary Chain as Krautrockers on "Play Sumthin Fast", hooking into DFA-style disco on "Inland" or locating an eccentric psych-pop minimalism on "Sum Space", Kerr's hushed mumble ties the disparate elements into a satisfying whole.

Garry Mulholland

CAROLE KING

A Christmas Carole

HEAR MUSIC/DECCA

★★

Songwriting legend knits tapestry of tasteful tedium

Jarvis Cocker recently likened modern music to a "scented candle", which perfectly suits the first studio album in a decade by the world's most successful female singer-songwriter. Despite King's agelessly sweet voice and platinum-plated track record,

this festive-themed project quickly sinks to hotel-lounge muzak level. Between piano-jazz reworkings of Rogers and Hammerstein and Irving Berlin, King's daughter and producer Louise Goffin co-writes a handful of ho-hum compositions, including schmaltzy Guy Chambers collaboration "New Year's Day". The sacred Hebrew blues ballad "Chanukah Prayer" is an interesting novelty, but nobody needs to hear this air-freshener of an album more than once. *Stephen Dalton*

KUEDO

Severant

PLANET MU

★★★

Retro-futurist yearning, from Bristol producer

Jamie Teasdale once formed half of heavyweight dubstep outfit Vex'd, but on *Severant*, his long-playing debut under new pseudonym Kuedo, he sounds almost weightless. Airy synthesisers hint at the influence of '80s-era soundtracks such as *Dune* and *Blade Runner*, "Salt Lake Cuts" and "Onset (Escapism)" imagining slow pans over futuristic cityscapes.

Teasdale gives this formula a twist with a hectic rhythmic base, ticks, clicks and digi-drums sped to a strobe-like flicker. *Severant* works better than you'd think, and at its best – see "Whisper Fate" – it is breathtaking.

Louis Pattison

KULA SHAKER

K 1996

STRANGEFOLK

★★★

Including demos and DVD. Not including swastika

Kula Shaker cut a trustafarian dash among Britpop's professional working class, bringing the hard-won multiculturalism of the gap-year traveller to the era's metaphorical eel and pie house. Their 1996's debut, *K*, is still a good pop-rock LP, though a disc of extras and a DVD stretch the point a mite. With hindsight, the band's admiration for '60s garage rock, mystical platitudes and vaguely funky "beats" ("Govinda", "Smart Dogs") makes them sound a better fit with the earlier baggy bands, but "Hey Dude" remains an enjoyable period rock song. *Messy* was their end, but with the Stereophonics incoming, their psych-pop seems comparatively good fun. *John Robinson*



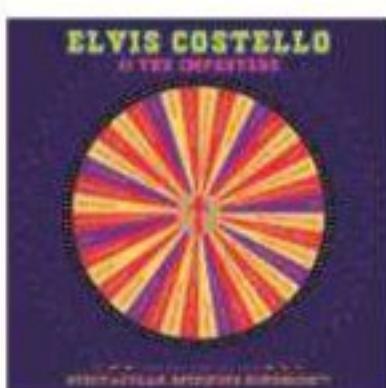
Kula Shaker: mystical multiculturalists



ELVIS COSTELLO & THE IMPOSTERS

The Return Of The Spectacular Singing Songbook UNIVERSAL ★★★

Napoleon Dynamite is back, and keeping it wheel. By Terry Staunton



ELVIS COSTELLO WASN'T himself 25 years ago, the musician credits on the two albums he released in 1986 listing him as Little Hands Of Concrete (*King Of America*) and Napoleon Dynamite (*Blood & Chocolate*) respectively. While the former was a self-mocking reference to his habit of breaking guitar strings, the latter was a more boastful persona who made his stage bow as the mad-eyed master of ceremonies at fairground-like live shows.

Revived in summer 2011 on a lengthy series of dates across America (and coming to the UK in May 2012), *The Spectacular Spinning Songbook* is a novel way for Costello to take requests. A giant, multicoloured wheel resembling a pie chart dominates the stage, containing the names of about 40 songs. Random audience members are plucked from their seats and invited to give the wheel a spin. Wherever it stops determines which number Costello and his Imposters will play next. This elaborate boxset comprises a CD and DVD (plus a bonus 10-inch vinyl "encore" disc) of two shows from the Wiltern Theatre in

Los Angeles. The location raises questions about quite how random the selection of audience spinners might be. Can it really be just by chance that *Mad Men* creator Matthew Weiner and *Sideways/Grey's Anatomy* actress Sandra Oh made the journey from stalls to stage the night the cameras were there?

Whoever spins the wheel, though, it still results in unpredictable sequences of songs, never guaranteeing that big hits or long-term live favourites get an airing. Elvis – or rather, Napoleon Dynamite, an over-the-top circus barker making the alliterative declarations in keeping with Costello's guest introductions on his *Spectacle* TV show – follows the raucous garage of "Stella Hurt" from 2008's *Momofuku* with the baroque lament "All Grown Up" from 1991's *Mighty Like A Rose*. Of course, the song has to be on the wheel in the first place, but it leads to some intriguing inclusions.

A soulful cover of the Stones' "Out Of Time" gives The Imposters (and the manically dexterous Steve Nieve in particular) an opportunity to pretend they're Booker T & The MGs. "Tear Off Your Own Head" enables special guests The Bangles to croon away on the comeback hit Costello wrote for them. But the real surprise is the fatalistic ballad "Earthbound", one of 10 tracks that Elvis allegedly knocked out in a single weekend for a Wendy James album in 1993. "Of all the songs I've ever written, I think this is the truest," he tells us.

As a performing unit, The Imposters take everything thrown at them in their stride, all pomp and majesty on "Man Out Of Time", lean and hungry on a cover of Nick Lowe's "Heart Of The City". And Nieve's delicate new arrangement of "God Give Me Strength" more than compensates for the lack of lush orchestration from the original Burt Bacharach collaboration. The wheel spins, and the mood swings; in the space of an hour and a half, Elvis gets to be the surly aggressor of his youth, the wordy troubadour of the *Imperial Bedroom* era, and the deep baritone crooner of more recent times.

Before 2011, Costello had been averaging an album of new songs every 12 months. Five years ago, he brokered a lucrative deal with Universal, allowing them to exploit his first decade of releases in any way they see fit, in return for leaving him alone to make records at his own pace and as often as he wanted.

Cynics may suggest that while the Allen Toussaint collaboration *The River In Reverse*, the aforementioned, noisy *Momofuku*, the bluegrass-tinged *Secret, Profane & Sugarcane* and last year's *National Ransom* have hardly had the label's sales teams popping champagne corks, by staying away from the studio this year and once again gamely pitching his back pages, Elvis is opening the door for further marketing of former glories.

Certainly, another re-upholstered *My Aim Is True* or *Punch The Clock* may ultimately shift more units than this bespoke offering, a deluxe limited edition of 1,500 copies which, despite the top-notch music, lavish packaging and poster/book/diary/postcard extras, might struggle to justify its £200 price tag.

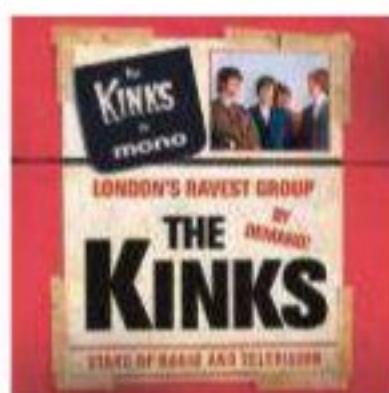
THE KINKS

The Kinks In Mono

UNIVERSAL

★★★

North London scrappers' first seven albums and four EPs, plus "Kollectables". By Neil Spencer



SOMEONE IS GOING to be happy this Christmas, ripping open the wrap to reveal a cute Dansette-style box stuffed with 10 albums of antique Kinkorama, plus *Meet The Kinks!*, a fab 1960s-style booklet with rare pics. For complete retro-authenticity, everything is in mono, this being how the originals were released back in those sacred days (so sacred that "Days" itself is now on a car advert).

It's a lovely package, and at £75 a pop, so it should be, but it adds nothing to the back catalogue of the Muswell Hill wonders. After all, all seven albums here have only this year been reissued in "deluxe" editions that similarly present them in their original mono format, but add stereo mixes, copious out-takes and rarities, all beautifully remastered by Andrew Sandoval, the boffin likewise in charge of *The Kinks in Mono*.

Sandoval has done wonders with the sound quality, but after those deluxe delights, reverting to the originals seems an act of hair-shirted puritanism. What you get instead of all those bonuses is a this-is-how-it-was verity. Except you don't. The Kinks' first seven albums contain just one or two of the singles that blasted them into contention alongside the Stones and The Who, whose early catalogues are also caught between great singles and albums that hadn't yet learned to be albums.

For the first great slew of hits – the guitar squall of "All Day And All Of The Night", the airy social satire of "Well Respected Man" and the mournful Indian drone of "See My Friends" – you have to jump to disc eight, to the band's four EPs, recorded in a manic spell between '64 and '66. For the second wave – "Dead End Street", "Autumn Almanac", "Days", "Lola", the substandard "Apeman" – you have to rummage among the 37 tracks of *The Kinks Mono Collectables, Volumes 1& 2*. There are "collectables" here – that parable of sinful swinging London, "Big Black Smoke" – but that these were all singles released outside the UK isn't much of an organising principle (and results in duplicate tracks). Contrary to what one might expect from a 10-album box, the narrative arc of one of British pop's greatest bands emerges fractured.

The albums do, of course, tell a tale of their own. *Kinks* (1964) and *Kinda Kinks* ('65) reflect a group that was still a gang of R&B brawlers, knocking out none too special



The Kinks in '68:
(l-r) Ray Davies,
Pete Quaife, Dave
Davies, Mark Avory

versions of Bo, Chuck and Motown, Ray's early writing paying less than subtle homage to The Beatles, Beach Boys and The Kingsmen ("You Really Got Me" being a rinse of "Louie Louie").

Kinda Kinks (1965) is a transitional affair, with Ray's songwriting talents growing, ready to blossom into the pop-art wonder that is *Face To Face* (1966). Burned out from touring and business wrangles, Davies wrote its 14 songs in recuperation while the band toured with a stand-in. "Sunny Afternoon" is the gem in its crown, but the album has a conceptual

unity, its crisp social vignettes including send-ups of the nouveau riche on "Most Exclusive Residence" and young rakes on "Dandy". *Something Else* (1967) maintains the mood and momentum with the mockery of "David Watts", the family drama of the harpsichord-driven "Two Sisters" and the cadent back-street romance of "Waterloo Sunset".

One can see Davies' obsession with the local and the domestic as either strength or weakness. It showed conviction to turn away from the cosmic visions that swept pop between 1966 and '68 and instead bring forth *The Village Green Preservation Society*, with its ode to "The Last Of The Steam-Powered Trains". The album extended hippy's nostalgic strand into a Betjeman-esque portrait of an English landscape that Davies sensed was about to disappear. Critically acclaimed, it proved an act of near commercial suicide.

Unabashed, Davies wrote another concept album, *Arthur (Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire)*. Envisioned as a musical drama (a concept so far ahead of its time that

the BBC never aired it), it swings between the rousing "Victoria" and the sly social observation of "A Hat Like Princess Marina"; an underestimated work. *Kollectables Vol 2* offers mostly also-rans like "Hold My Hand" that pale alongside "Days" or "Lola", though Dave Davies'

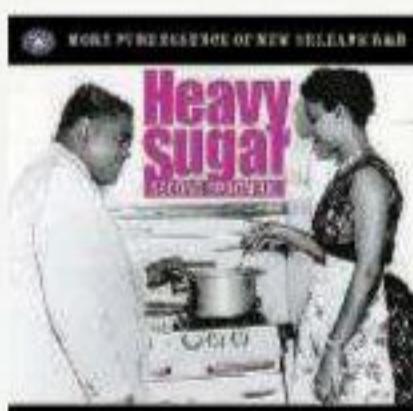
"Creeping Jean" is tough pop-psych that deserved better exposure, even a place on an album. Dave would no doubt agree.

From this 10-album box, the narrative arc of one of British pop's greatest bands emerges fractured



SHORT CUTS

Various Artists



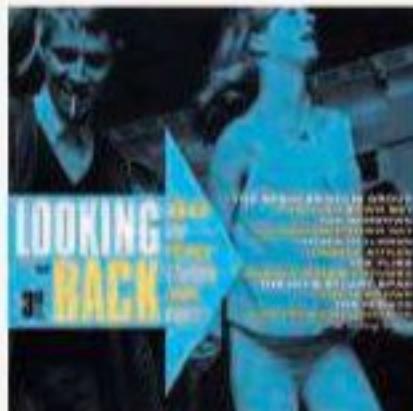
VARIOUS ARTISTS Heavy Sugar: Second Spoonful

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

★★★

This latest three-disc collection delves further into New Orleans' rich musical history, when the good-time feel that was heard in the clubs was transferred to record. With many tracks on CD for the first time, it's a delight to hear unknowns like Johnny Love and Alonzo Stewart juxtaposed with Fats and Little Richard.

Mick Houghton



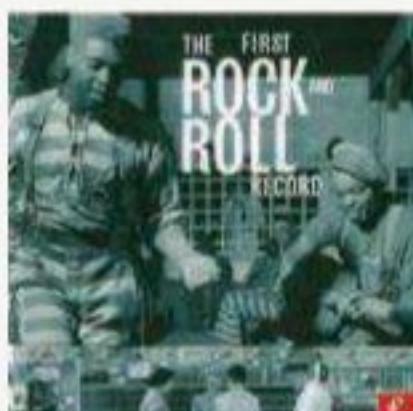
VARIOUS ARTISTS Looking Back: 80 Mod, Freakbeat & Swinging London Nuggets

RPM

★★★

This expertly and enthusiastically compiled collection breathes new life into what might otherwise be just another trawl through a well-trodden era. Brimming with soul obscurities (Maynell Wilson, Hoagy Benson), explosive garage bands and Who-wannabes (The Others, The Trekkas), this is a bone-shaking, thrill-a-minute ride.

Mick Houghton

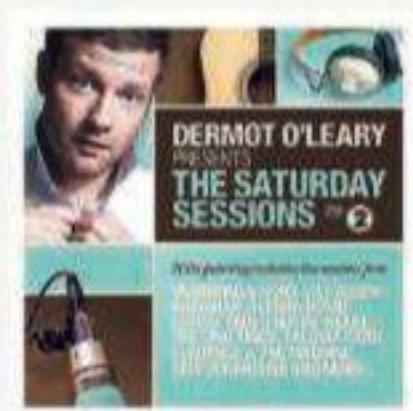


VARIOUS ARTISTS The First Rock'n'Roll Record

FAIRY FLAMES

★★★

Who invented rock'n'roll? It's a debate that has raged across the decades, and, while this compilation doesn't provide an answer – acknowledging as it does that rock'n'roll was never invented, it simply evolved – it has a blast tracing its development through the early 20th century. Trixie Smith, Charley Patton, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Bill Haley, Fats Domino and, yes, Elvis all contribute to this fascinating narrative. *Fiona Sturges*



VARIOUS ARTISTS Dermot O'Leary Presents The Saturday Sessions 2011

SONY

★★★

Dermot's not a man of the fringes and nor does his radio show voyage very far out there – what this package offers is a slightly lesser-spotted glimpse of major artists letting their hair down with covers (Kasabian doing Del Shannon's "Runaway"; Elbow's "Way Down In The Hole", say) or alternate versions of no particularly profound meaning. Still, one to play in the car, as Dermot himself might say. *John Robinson*



VARIOUS ARTISTS Eccentric Soul – The Nickel and Penny Labels

NUMERO

★★★

Soul anorak heaven: two dozen "Chicago dusties" – obscure 1960s singles masterminded by the late producer Richard Pegue. Northern Soul blitzers like "Do The Pearl, Girl" are *ordinaire*, but there's treasure among deep-soul slowies like The Extentions' "This Love Of Mine" or Jerry Townes' "Nevermore". Meanwhile, Joyce Williams' *Shaft*-era "First Thing I Do In The Morning" is a song Bill Withers forgot to write. *Neil Spencer*

LARK

I Don't Got

CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

★★★★

Second LP from unorthodox London art-rockers Lark are fronted by abstract painter Karl Bielik, who hollers and shrieks his way through these 15 tracks, sometimes resembling Nick Cave's baritone-voiced preacher ("The Bible Rhymer"), sometimes lurching off into a demented falsetto ("Palucca"), and occasionally sounding like Mark E Smith fronting The Cramps ("The Scream"). His Beefheart-ish backing band maintain a similarly unhinged and studiedly amateurish variety of skronk – all squalling guitars, one-fingered basslines and plinky-plonky Casiotones. It throws up myriad references – Daniel Johnston, Tom Waits' junkyard jazz, early Human League – but the wonky, unsettling world it creates is very much Bielik's own. *John Lewis*

LIL DAGGERS

Lil Daggers

SONG BY TOAD

★★★

Miami psychers' debut covers a glowering sonic spectrum

Lil Daggers harness the vintage Vox Continental keyboard-centred sound of ? And The Mysterians, adding their own blend of brutish primitivism and nonchalant swagger. Early EPs "Stragglers" and "King Corpse" only hinted at the dark portents and skull-penetrating heaviness of this full-length debut. There's surf pop with atonal seepage on "Give Me The Pill", a clammy House Of Horrors drone escape on "Ghost Herd" and sun-kissed harmonies with an eerie twist on "Dead Golden Girls". Well-worn fare, but the makeovers boast vitality and variety. *Gavin Martin*

LITTLE AXE

If You Want Loyalty Buy A Dog

ON-U SOUND

★★★

On-U's sonic pioneers return with a rootsy blend of blues and reggae

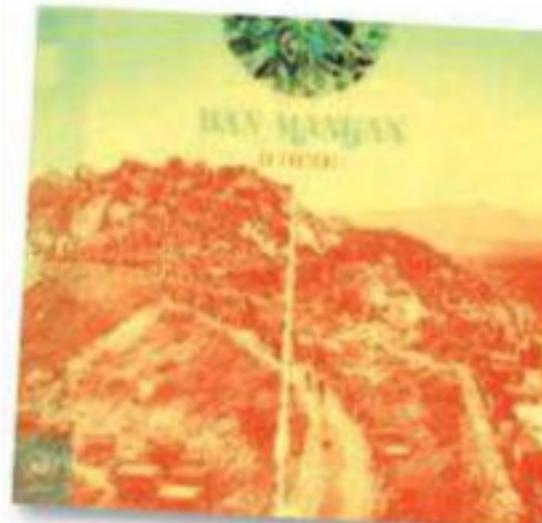
Twenty-five years on, guitarist Skip 'Little Axe' McDonald and dub maestro Adrian Sherwood continue to meld blues and reggae in singular style. On dreamtime soundscapes like "Come



The Manics: loud, alienated and proudly rockist

Here Dog" and "Song To Sing" they amalgamate archived vocals with McDonald's chops, bottleneck and fine picking, while "I Got Da Blues" includes clattering nyabinghi drums. Elsewhere, instrumentals like "Call It What You Like" clip along on the interplay of McDonald's elegant lines and Sherwood's roots rhythms. The mood flickers between foreboding and playful; blues for modern times.

Neil Spencer



DAN MANGAN Oh Fortune

CITY SLANG

★★★

Third album for Polaris Prize nominee

Vancouver's Dan Mangan broadens his audience by trading in his folksy roots for a more orchestrated approach. "How Darwinian" and "Leaves, Trees, Forest" offer the same nostalgic elegance that Richard Hawley and Ed Harcourt aspire to, while his weary tone on "If I Am Dead" recalls Micah P Hinson. Highlights include the waltzing "About As Helpful As You Can Be Without Being Any Help At All", and a breathless canter through the Broken Social Scene stylings of "Post-War Blues". *Wyndham Wallace*

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

National Treasures – The Complete Singles

COLUMBIA

★★★★

The Welsh wonders' enduring design for a rock'n'roll life

At a time when the classic rock single is missing presumed extinct, trust the Manic Street Preachers to be the last surviving dinosaur. This chronological blast through 37 of their A-sides – including the affectionate new cover of The The's "This Is The Day" – starts loud, alienated and proudly rockist and stays right there, as if Messrs Bradfield, Wire and Moore opted to treat the traumatic disappearance of Richey Edwards as permission to never get old. Orchestras and elegiac choruses signalled the Manics' late-'90s power-ballad phase, but it's the riff-driven intensity of "Faster" and "Found That Soul" that defines their Clash-meets-Guns N'Roses rage and joy. The trio are taking an indefinite hiatus; could this be the last Manics album? If so, it's a triumphant epitaph. *Garry Mulholland*

THE MOMMYHEADS Delicate Friction

DROMEDARY

★★★

NYC indie-poppers have a future as well as a past

Led by singer/guitarist Adam Elk (née Cohen), this little-heard but immensely appealing band made some of the smartest indie pop of the '90s, but broke up after their self-titled '97 LP fizzled. On their second outing since reuniting in 2008, the band is on top form, referencing Steely Dan in the virtuosic "IWanna Stay", nodding to their antecedents with "Another Crowded House" and grinding out a Beefheartian rave-up in "Saints Preserve Us". Amid the artiness, the band throw in what sounds like a surefire mainstream rock hit in "Just Gimme A Reason", with its yearning falsetto chorus hook. *Bud Scoppa*

Americana

By Rob Hughes

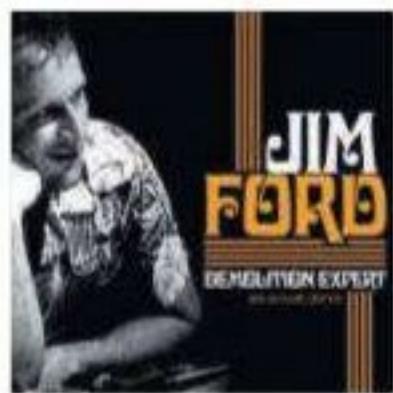
JIM FORD

Demolition Expert

BEAR FAMILY



Ravishing set of unheard demos from fabled US country-soul brother



THE STORY OF Jim Ford is steeped in Southern myth. Revered by good buddies Bobby Womack and Sly Stone, covered by Aretha, sometime beau of Bobby Gentry (he even claimed to have written "Ode To Billie Joe"), mentor to Nick Lowe and the pub-rock boom of the early '70s, boozier, brawler and drug abuser. It's a reputation that survives way beyond that of the sole album issued during his lifetime, 1969's glorious *Harlan County*, through decades of seclusion in Northern California and his still-suspicious death in a trailer park in 2007.

German label Bear Family have done more than most to keep Ford's recorded output alive, releasing four albums of rarities since his demise. *Demolition Expert* is the most nakedly personal set of songs yet, sifting through Ford's home-recorded acoustic demos and dusting them down for consumption. The rough ambience is heightened by the sometimes intrusive voices of others in the room, yet Ford, even in this no-frills state, was clearly a consummate songwriter.

Nothing illustrates this better than "Looking Over My Shoulder (Still Alright After All)", a hunk of sly country-gospel that could easily have been torn from Spooner Oldham or Dan Penn. Or "Happy Man", a ringing



acoustic beauty that recalls both Gram Parsons and Joe South, with a carefree disposition at odds with Ford's own, more troubled existence. Other songs seem to be preoccupied with taking flight from demons only he could see, be they his absent father, his hardscrabble early life in rural Kentucky or old friends and lovers.

The interludes are often telling. At one point Ford answers the phone to his drug dealer and starts negotiating a coke deal. Later, he declares he doesn't really take to anybody: "Basically I'm a fuck-you and kiss-my-ass person". It all makes the stark, tumbledown beauty of "Jessie", or the tender Southern soul-mining of "Tonight", all the more unlikely. A complex man all right, and a supreme talent to boot.

GROANBOX

Guts, Lungs & Bones

GROANBOX RECORDS



Flinty fifth from US threesome

Don't let the faux-lumberjack look put you off. Groanbox, the trio of Paul Clifford, Cory Seznec and Michael Ward-Bergeman, are pluralists in the truest sense, stirring their deep Southern blues with liberal earfuls of Cajun music, European gypsy reels and woolly mountain folk. That it trips along so convincingly is testament to both their skilful chops and a raw production that makes everything sound vividly alive. Accordions and banjos share the floor with stomping heels and hammers, which make the likes of "Running Down The Tiger" literally jump in their boots.

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE

How Do You Plead?

DRUMFIRE



George 'n' Tammy in excelsis
Husband-and-wife team Michael Weston King and Lou Dalgleish first recorded together as part of homegrown country heroes The Good Sons. Ten years on, My Darling Clementine finds them twinned again, this time cast in the deathless spirit of Gram and Emmylou or George Jones and Tammy Wynette. Wonderful it is too, King's rich baritone and Dalgleish's emotive voice delivering a baker's dozen of duets that carry the sting of authentic country classics. There's hi-stepping honky-tonk, chick-a-boom shuffles and gloriously weepy ballads, backed by a crack team of ensemble players clearly versed in Nashville lore.

PAUL CURRERI

The Big Shitty

TIN ANGEL



Fair old stink from Virginia songwriter
Curreri may have already issued seven albums of often stirring roots-rock, but he's perhaps better known as the other half of singer-songwriter Devon Sproule, serially colouring his wife's records with waspish guitar textures and harmonies. *The Big Shitty* is something of a break from tradition, Curreri summoning up his inner rock beast and unpacking a bullish set that leaves rural folk at the starting gate and hoofs headlong into Neil Young/Crazy Horse territory. "Who Got Gang" and "The Water Tower (Kill My Teacher)" are cases in point, though it's also tempered with the countryish "JuJu".

VARIOUS ARTISTS

This May Be My Last Time Singing

TOMPKINS SQUARE



Rarefied country-soul from the pulpits of the US
Subtitled "Raw African-American Gospel On 45rpm (1957-1982)", this roaring 3CD set is the brainchild of Portland collector Mike McGonigal, who also compiled 2009's great *Fire In My Bones*. These latest tunes were mostly recorded on the skimpiest of budgets, which serves to make sanctified shouters like Deacon James Williams, or the stonking soul of The Whirlwinds or The Detroit Silvertones, all the more primal. It's not all gospel: the seeds of country, rock'n'roll and '60s garage are scattered throughout these obscure treasures, a mighty broad church indeed.

ROUND-UP

North Carolina's **Stiv Cantarelli** has been knocking about for some years now, fronting alt-ish bands like Satellite Inn and Gold Rust. *Innerstate* **★★★** **EL CORTEZ** is his first solo effort, released on Richmond Fontaine's own label and propped up by the band's rhythm section. Even singer Willy Vlautin is at hand for the gnarly duet "A Farewell Letter". No prizes for guessing what the record sounds like then, though Cantarelli is more concerned with creating a mood – gruff acoustics, songs that move at a snaking pace – than weaving a narrative. Plenty of promise here, not least the lowdown delights of "The Rookie".



Altogether more windblown is **Delaney Davidson**, whose *Self Decapitation* **★★★★** **VOODOORHYTHM** paints the New Zealander as a latter-day juju man, from its schlocky freak-circus sleeve to its hoodoo grooves and rousing countrybilly. There are shades of vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley and '50s rock'n'roll in Delaney's approach, be it merrily tossing expletives into the air on "Dirty Dozen" or driving hard on "Magpie Song". Yes, it feels somewhat contrived, but it's a blast all the same. The fourth LP from Texan **Scott H Biram** makes a decent racket too. *Bad Ingredients* **★★★** **BLOODSHOT** is full to brimming with titles like "Killed A Chicken Last Night" and "Black Creek Risin'", which show off his elemental psychobilly and pedal-to-metal country-blues. It's patchy in places, but Biram in full flight is a powerful experience.

NEW COUNTRY REHAB

New Country Rehab

NCR

★★★

Toronto sessioners head for indie country

NCR's debut channels Hank Williams via The Band's first two albums, adds a hipster glaze that's more Arcade Fire than Lady Antebellum, and comes out sounding like Canada's answer to those recent Dylan collaborators, Avett Brothers and Mumford & Sons. Like Arcade Fire's Win Butler, singer John Showman's robust delivery owes something to Springsteen, whose "State Trooper" is covered as a primitive cow-punk boogie. Three Hank songs pay tribute to their primary inspiration, the best of which is a spookily dubbed-up reinvention of "Ramblin' Man", while the adrenaline-fuelled shuffle of "Angel Of Death" and "Bury Me" are a powerful testament to the band's own songwriting abilities.

Nigel Williamson

RICK NELSON

Stay Young : The Epic Recordings

RETROWORLD

★★★

Country-rock pioneer's late-'70s recordings

Following his "Garden Party"-propelled comeback, Nelson's 1970s career, blighted by personal and business problems, faltered. A deal with a new label would prove hit and miss, but the otherwise anodyne Epic debut *Intakes* was lifted by the thoughtful original "Something You Can't Buy", while previously unreleased Al Kooper-helmed versions of Dylan's "Mama You've Been On My Mind" and the genuinely weird evolutionary caper "Carl Of The Jungle" subverted the homey Nelson image. This compilation is boosted by back-to-his-roots recordings from the posthumously released *The Memphis Sessions* album, free of the jarring overdubs that featured on the original. *Gavin Martin*

RANDY NEWMAN

Live In London

NONE SUCH

★★★

Arch-ironist gets his hits together with the LSO

"I know I am working with people who have spent 12-14 years alone in a room getting good at what they do," snaps Newman on this CD/DVD,

recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra. "Much like snipers." Sniping is something of a speciality for the man who carried the baton for American satirical songwriting between Tom Lehrer and Weird Al Yankovic. Here, 16th century colonialists ("The Great Nations Of Europe") and Karl Marx ("The World Isn't Fair") are among his targets for lyrical assassination, but his straight writing—not his Ray Charles-via-Yogi Bear voice—may be his crowning achievement. Girls singer Christopher Owens said of "I Think It's Going To Rain Today", *Live In London*'s much-covered closer: "Even when Randy Newman sings it and his voice is obviously bad, you still say to yourself that it's a fucking knockout song." *Jim Wirth*

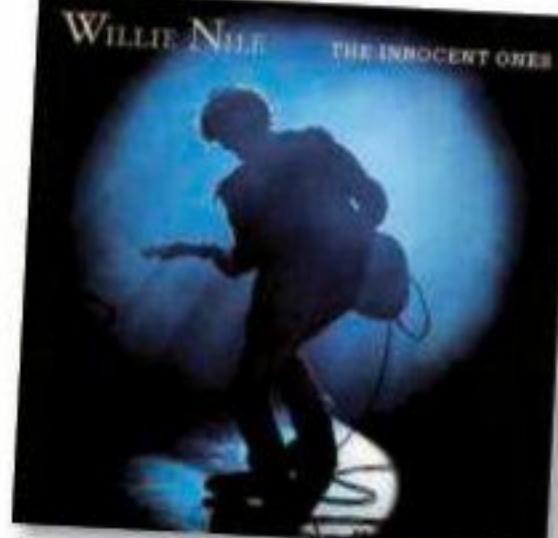
WILLIE NILE

The Innocent Ones

RIVER HOUSE

★★★★

On a roll: latest in dark-horse New York songwriter's remarkable renaissance Few, if any, rock'n'rollers are still writing the kind of stirring anthems Willie Nile comes up with—check "Cell Phones Ringing (In The Pockets Of The Dead)". But *The Innocent Ones*, with its buzzing melodies, harmonies, and heart-of-gold sentiments, presents almost nothing but. Third in a guitar-centric trilogy that started with 2006's *Streets Of New York*, Nile here sharpens the pop sense, softens the politics with love songs, and throws in a hard-driving, Stonesy rocker ("Topless Amateur") for good measure. "One Guitar" is the would-be hit, emblematic of a restless, righteous enthusiasm.

Luke Torn

NIOBE

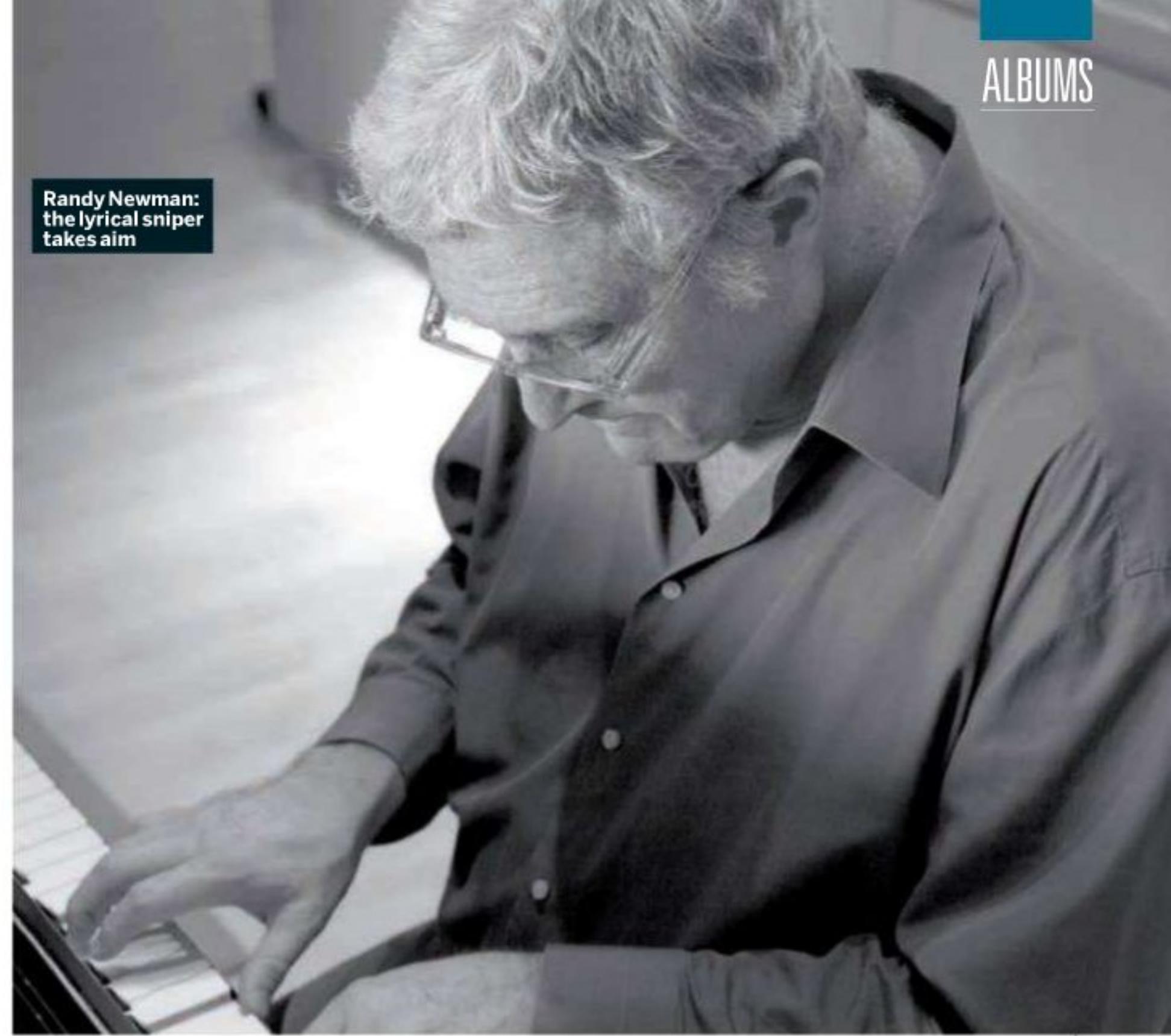
The Cclose Calll

TOMLAB

★★★

Character studies from shapeshifting vocal artist Across five albums since 2001's *Radio Ersatz*, Niope,

Randy Newman: the lyrical sniper takes aim



aka German-Venezuelan singer/sound-artist Yvonne Cornelius, has been fascinated by the possibilities of technology and the human voice. For *The Cclose Calll* she takes this to a logical extreme, distorting, pitch-shifting and disguising her voice to act out 12 characters pondering the lives they didn't lead: the female art-singer considering an alternative career as a commercially successful lounge singer ("You Have To Be More"); the seedy male gambler, dreaming of a life of breezy ease and cultivation ("Does He Gallop Or Walk"). Esoteric, intriguing, frequently bewildering, *The Cclose Calll* is suggestive of a dream Laurie Anderson/ Matmos collaboration.

Stephen Troussé

HAZEL O'CONNOR

I Give You My Sunshine

SFE/CHERRY RED

★★

Breaking Glassstar returns with jazz-blues trio

In the early '80s, Hazel O'Connor was considered something of a joke—someone grabbing the wrong end of the punk stick to beat her way to pop stardom. This new album, a low-key, torchy affair featuring Clare Hirst on sax and Sarah Fisher on keyboards, is hardly an explosive riposte to her critics—Little Annie is currently doing this sort of neo-cabaret much better. However, in today's super-bland pop climate she comes across as relatively unorthodox and intriguingly understated,

whether covering Nina Simone's "Feeling Good" or on "Rebecca", a heartfelt paean to a friend who died too young of cancer.

David Stubbs

OLD 97'S

The Grand Theatre Vol 2

NEW WEST

★★★

Revitalised alt.country veterans do it again

Last year's *Vol 1* was hailed as the best album in a decade from Rhett Miller's Texan crew, helped by a high-profile Bob-approved recasting of "Desolation Row", with the impressive writing credit "Dylan/Miller". The band's creative resurgence was made evident by their desire to put out a double album. Their label preferred two bites, and if the second stash contains a suspicion that the best stuff got smoked first time around, the spirit and energy of the first record are still here in abundance. The rambunctious, rockabilly "Bright Spark" and Monkees-inspired "I'm A Trainwreck" are as potent as anything they've ever recorded.

Nigel Williamson

GILBERT O'SULLIVAN

Himself

1971

SALVO

★★★

Reissued debut collection of pocket-sized soap operas

O'Sullivan's first album hung around the charts for 18 months, a testament to the broad, enduring appeal of his melodramatic kitchen-sink soliloquies. The cloth-cap

image may have seemed a novelty at first, borne out by the music hall comedy of "Matrimony" and the laugh-out-loud tale of shameful pregnancy, "Permissive Twit". But the lyrical eloquence of the desperate "Nothing Rhymed" (later covered by Morrissey) marks him out as the social-chronicler link between Ray Davies and Chris Difford.

This expanded edition's eight bonus tracks include the delicate lullaby "We Will" and two curious early demos, the skewered Berlin cabaret of "What Can I Do" sounding like a young Tom Waits.

Terry Staunton

PAPER DOLLHOUSE

A Box Painted Black

BIRD

★★★

Neo-gothic atmospherics from London songstress

Listen to this album with the utmost concentration; otherwise you'll risk missing the delicate minimalism at the heart of Astrud Steehouder's debut. Amid the acoustic strumming in "William", you can make out the sound of an aeroplane flying overhead, while the bewitching "I Dreamt You More Than Ever" contains ghostly snatches of prose against a distant hissing—running water, perhaps? With their intense aural imagery, these songs would be at home soundtracking films by Lynne Ramsay or Andrea Arnold, though they each stand up beautifully by themselves.

Fiona Sturges



Dark Side-era
Floyd: poised for
megastardom

CARLOS PAREDES

Guitarra Portuguesa 1967

★★★

Movimento Perpétuo 1971

DRAG CITY

★★★

Fado-inspired guitar from Portugal's "man with a thousand fingers"

Paredes was the 20th century's champion of the Portuguese guitar, a short-necked 12-string with ancient origins. Drag City's Six Organs Of Admittance are fans, and his works have been played by the Kronos Quartet and Charlie Haden. Woven out of the legendary, subversive fado tradition, his compositions defy belief—check "Danças Portuguesas No 2" on *Movimento*, which creates the illusion of two simultaneous players—or channel a distinctly Iberian melancholy, as on his music for the film *Verdes Años*, on the earlier LP. *Rob Young*

PINK FLOYD

A Foot In The Door: The Best Of Pink Floyd C

EMI

★★★

"Wot no 'Pigs On The Wing'?"

Unchronological comp ticks boxes, if not in order

The current Floyd reissue campaign is called "Why

Pink Floyd?" but this best-of compilation is more like "When Pink Floyd?" as it starts near the end, with "Hey You" from *The Wall*, before retreating to "See Emily Play". Syd got his own best-of a year or so ago, so this is more of a testament to the group in their million-selling pomp, the more toothsome moments ("The Fletcher Memorial Home" from *The Final Cut*; "High Hopes" from *The Division Bell*; "Learning To Fly" from *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*) swamped by the quality stuff from *Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Wish You Were Here*, and the rest. Only *Animals* is excluded, its tracks perhaps deemed too thorny for inclusion.

John Robinson

PINK MARTINI & SAORI YUKI

1969

EMI

★★★

Polished pan-Pacific project from Portland

Million-sellers in the US, Pink Martini are a 13-strong chamber orchestra of classically trained musicians from Portland, Oregon, who combine highbrow easy-listening arrangements with exotic world-music ingredients. Temporarily trading regular singer China Forbes for occasional guest

vocalist Saori Yuki, all of the tracks on this gently conceptual collaboration first surfaced in 1969, the year the veteran Japanese chanteuse began her career. The breezy Brazilian bossa novas and twinkly French *chansons*, plus a bizarro bilingual take on "Puff The Magic Dragon", are engaging enough. But the quiet devastation and lush orchestration of Yuki's Japanese torch-songs burn brightest, shaking off any hint of retro-kitsch irony.

Stephen Dalton

PRECIOUS JULES

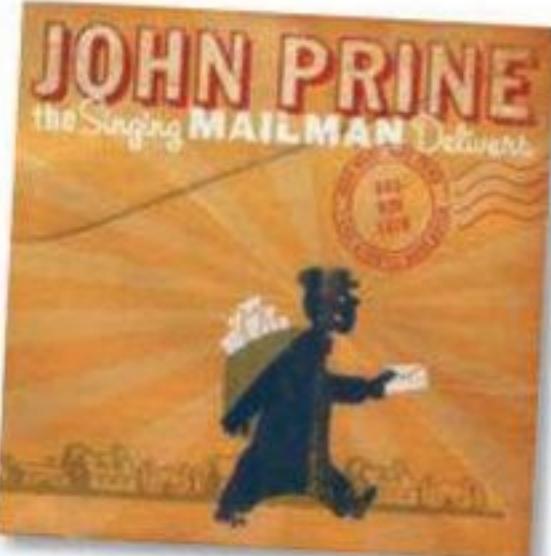
Precious Jules

AGITATED

★★★

Veteran Aussie noisenik's latest incarnation. Bonza! As lynchpin of The Scientists – whose bass-weighted, punky swamp-blues was a prototype of grunge – and a founding member of the Beasts Of Bourbon, singer-songwriter/guitarist Kim Salmon has always dwelt on the dark and distorted side. His new project sees him teaming up with a fellow Antipodean, drummer Michael Stranges, to wrangle the sounds of the Stooges, MC5 and New York Dolls in their own garage-pop, glammed-up way. There's no new ground broken here, but the retake of "Cheap'n'Nasty", a song from Salmon's Perth days with The Cheap Nasties, shows he can still hit the ramalamama punk spot with righteous force.

Sharon O'Connell



JOHN PRINE

The Singing Mailman Delivers C

OH BOY

★★★

People's poet: the songwriter's songwriter at career ground-zero With lethal doses of pathos, humour and subversive politics, proto-Prine expressed more with an unadorned acoustic guitar than leagues of amped-up, psychedelic hard-rockers. *Mailman* offers an insider's

glimpse into his beginnings – a spirited 1970 club set and a priceless disc of stripped-down, gloss-free demos. Built on a musical foundation that's part Hank Williams, part Bob Dylan, this is Prine's scandalous core canon, played with subtle, austere power: a staggering account of a Vietnam vet in freefall ("Great Society Conflict Veteran's Blues"); "Hello In There", concerning the bleak melancholy of ageing; and "Paradise," his haunting allegory on never going home again. *Luke Torn*

PUSHA T

Fear Of God Part II: Let Us Pray

DECON RECORDS

★★★

Clipse MC invites Neptunes – and lamer producers – to his solo debut

Pusha T is half of hip-hop duo Clipse, and is well-regarded enough to attract the likes of Kanye West, P Diddy and 50 Cent to guest on his debut solo album. He also invites old Virginia Beach buddies the Neptunes to produce two tracks: the bluesy "Raid" (featuring Fiddy) and the martial "Trouble On My Mind" (featuring Odd Future mastermind Tyler, The Creator). Even though the Neptunes have long gone off the boil, their contributions are so much better than those of the other assembled "star" producers that you can only conclude that contemporary hip hop has some serious problems.

John Lewis

RED HORSES OF THE SNOW

Territories

FLASHBACK

★★★

Nu-gaze from portentously named London duo

With the first seam of original shoegazing pioneers well mined, Red Horses Of The Snow dig even deeper into early '90s indie for their debut album. The fey, somewhat grey, mannerisms of "Screens" and "The Cyclic" could have drifted in from Ride's second, less caustic album; "Airborne" drone-rocks like Catherine Wheel; while "Santa Irini" and "Rosemary's Song" pair the contemplative delivery of Red House Painters with the atmospherics of Bark Psychosis. Their psychedelia is a little too whimsical, sadly, and the songwriting less effective than their guitar pedals, but there's still a

pleasant nostalgia in such unexpected revivalism. *Wyndham Wallace*

REM

Part Lies, Part Heart, Part Truth, Part Garbage 1982-2011 C

WARNERS

★★★

It's the end of their world, plus three new songs

Taking its title from Peter Buck's own description of the band's DNA, this double-disc farewell focuses largely on REM's singles output – even the long out-of-favour "Shiny Happy People" gets a look-in. The chronological sequencing, kicking off with the delightfully sloppy "Gardening At Night" from the "Chronic Town" EP, charts a course from indie college jangle to pensive AOR, and tracks from their latter days on the IRS label ("Fall On Me" and "Finest Worksong" in particular) sparkle with eloquence and grandeur. Selections from the final two albums, *Accelerate* and *Collapse Into Now*, suggest a desire to return to their stripped-down roots, although these albums' underwhelming sales perhaps prompted the band's demise. As for the three new tracks, the strummed acoustics of "We All Go Back To Where We Belong" and "Hallelujah" both flirt with Bacharach motifs, while the sparse and spiky "A Month Of Saturdays" is in early Pixies territory. *Terry Staunton*

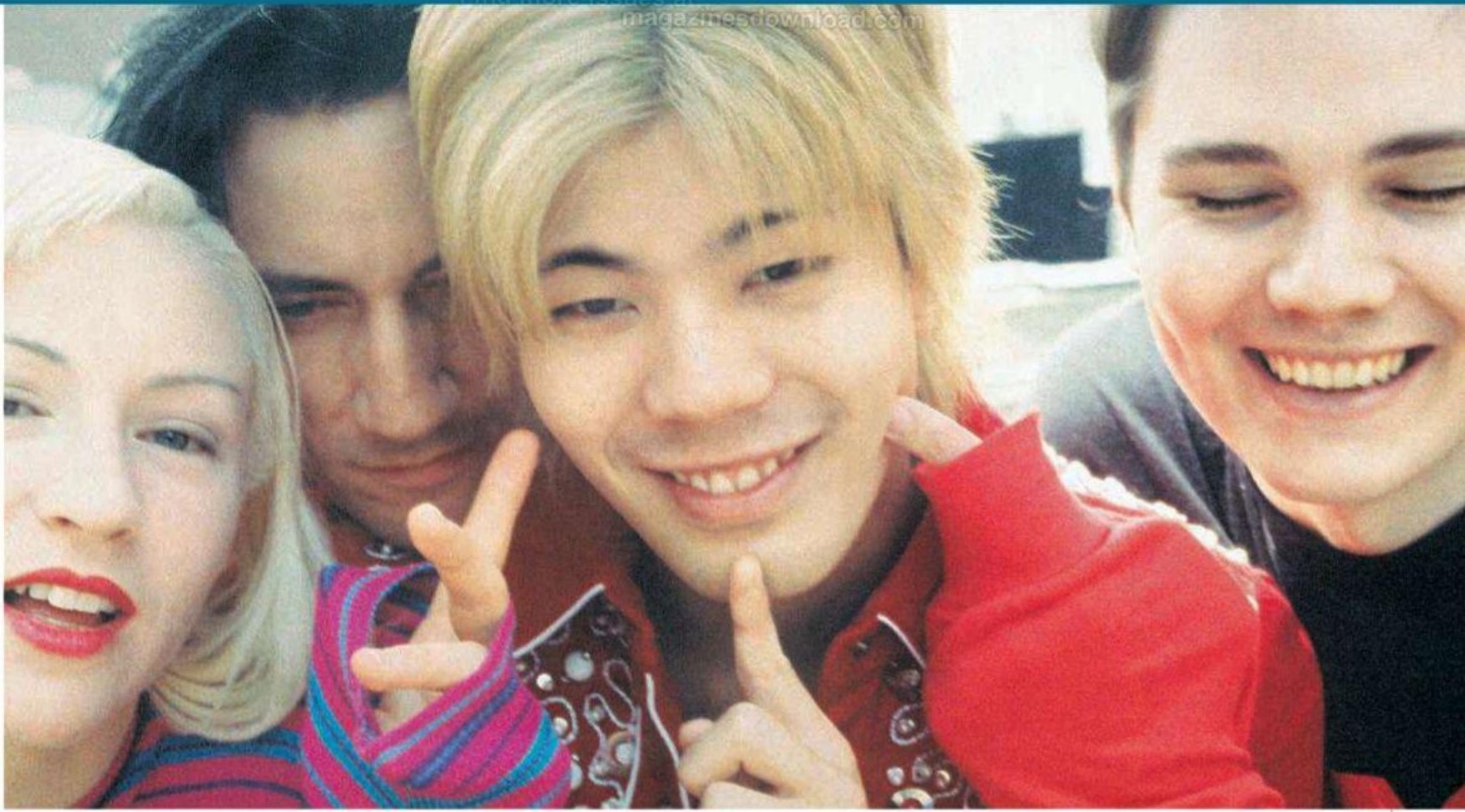
RKC

British Plastic

SYCAMORE CLUB

★★★

Third adventure from ex-Babyshambles drummer Shortened from the original name Roses Kings Castles, RKC – aka Adam Ficek – plays everything here, save some spiky lead guitar, delegated to fellow Babyshambles refugee Patrick Walden. Unsurprisingly, given Ficek's former job description, these 10 tracks are built on inventive rhythmic beds, over which he layers scratchy, techno cloudbursts of sound. Yet these are essentially pop songs. "I Can't Say" and "Kittens Become Cats" pick up where The Beta Band left off, full of catchy melodies and quixotic lyrics that owe more to Syd Barrett than Pete Doherty, sung in a voice of quirky Englishness. *Nigel Williamson*



SMASHING PUMPKINS



Gish ★★★★

Siamese Dream ★★★★

EMI/VIRGIN

“Grunge Monkees” remastered, with many extras – but what about me? By Louis Pattison

BEFORE THE RAMPANT egomania, before the bloated double albums, before the mass band purgings and the hagiographic documentary in which Billy Corgan, saintly in white bathrobe, sits in a hotel room writing songs about Nazi Germany and receiving a pair of fans who present him with a huge plaster model of his own head... yeah, it's easy to forget that before all that stuff, the Smashing Pumpkins used to be a pretty great rock band. In part, their preposterous success – over 30 million albums sold – should be considered fortunate timing. Rising out of the Chicago club scene in 1991, just as Seattle's alternative rock underground had hit on the formula of turning angst into dollars, the Pumpkins' mix of bruising dream-rock and bruised introversion made them seem, if not kin, at least a foil – fey flower children, adrift in grunge's forest of tormented lumberjacks.

Whereas Nirvana, Mudhoney and Screaming Trees slotted into a lineage of American punk-rock that stretched back to Black Flag and Minor Threat, Corgan had experienced no such DIY weaning: his totems were Cheap Trick, Queen, Yngwie Malmsteen. He was also ambitious, deeply so, and in a way that rubbed up the alternative gatekeepers: Steve Albini called them “by, of and for the mainstream”, while Bob Mould coined the fabulous term “the grunge Monkees” – jabs Corgan would return on *Siamese Dream*’s

“Cherub Rock”, a sardonic riposte to what he regarded as snippy hipsters out to spoil his deserved success.

Gish was the first evidence of Corgan's exacting manner. Recorded in a 30-day stint at Butch Vig's Smart Studios, where Nirvana had laid down the demos for *Nevermind* eight months earlier, this was, by alternative standards, a fastidious piece of work. Vig speaks of hours perfecting guitar tone, and Corgan reportedly (and not for the last time) played the lion's share of guitarist James Iha and bassist D'arcy Wretzky's parts himself. Lyrically, it's not much to speak of – a vague angst, sophomoric at best – but *Gish* is a gem nonetheless. Vig's warm, radiant production proves a neat fit for Corgan's dreamy guitar expressionism, and while “I Am One” and “Siva” neatly blend the ethereal and the heavy, it is the record's softer moments – the lullaby-like “Crush”, and the Wretzky-sung “Day Dream” – that glow the brightest. Bob Ludwig's remaster job adds fine detail, and a second CD collects 18 tracks, mostly diverting: fresh mixes of B-sides “Plume” and “Starla”, Peel sessions (including a Hendrix-channelling cover of the Animals' LSD hymn “Girl Named Sandoz”) and “Hippy Trippy”, a fragile early take on “Crush”.

Corgan may not have harboured the troublesome integrity of Kurt Cobain, but the Pumpkins' alternative success brought with it

its own problems. Iha and Wretzky hooked up, then broke up; in accordance with grunge cliché, the band's trump card, powerhouse drummer Jimmy Chamberlin, got hooked on heroin; Billy got married, and grappled with the monumental responsibility of being the genius Billy Corgan. From all this came *Siamese Dream*. In places, one might call this an album of love songs – “Luna”, “Soma” and “Hummer” all address another with affection. Really, though, the subject is me, me, me.

The Pumpkins may not have been “authentic” in the DIY punk sense, but it's clear that when Corgan said he was a fuck-up, he wasn't exaggerating. “Disarm” muses on a childhood of abuse and neglect, strummed acoustic guitar and cello laced with, as Corgan has it, “The bitterness of one who's left alone”. Two booming anthems, “Cherub Rock” and “Today”, are equal parts earnestness and irony, on the surface wide-eyed and innocent, but coloured with a sickly patina. The winsome “Spaceboy” gives way to a snatch of audio pulled from some American TV show, a housewife complaining her partner “ends up just masturbating himself, and I end up feeling very alienated and unsatisfied...” And then there is “Silverfuck”, which finds Billy locking bits of his past self in a box under his bed – any thoughts, Dr Freud? – before the song goes up like a catherine wheel and burns out in a squall of screaming feedback.

Corgan's megalomania hides a damaged soul, and on *Siamese Dream*, he swaddles his dysfunction in layers upon layers of cotton-wool guitar fuzz. Its essence, more or less, is, “I'm not OK, you're not OK... but enough about you”. Still, everyone needs a refuge, and never did the Pumpkins build one more sonically gorgeous than this. Extras? Mostly inferior takes, or material similar to that on '94's out-takes collection *Pisces Iscariot* and 2005's *Rarities And B-sides*, although for those that haven't plumbed the depths of the Pumpkins catalogue, it's a fair brace.



THE ROLLING STONES

Some Girls

R 1978 UNIVERSAL



Fired up by disco and punk, Jagger's swagger returns, with a disc of unreleased songs. By Andrew Mueller

REISSUE
OF THE
MONTH

WRONGLY OR
RIGHTLY, the
allegations against
the Stones came thick
and fast in 1977. They'd
lost their edge. They'd
become gluttonised,
lazy, too rich and bored

to care. Some of them had the temerity to be in their mid-thirties (NME called them "The Strolling Bones"). The urgent sound of punk had made their jet-set rock seem passé. These accusations were nothing, however, compared to the charge hanging over Keith Richards – possession of heroin with intent to traffic – which left the black-toothed Prince of Darkness facing the possibility of life imprisonment in Canada.

The Stones survived 1977 (and avoided lengthy porridge) by an unholy synthesis of fortitude, stoicism and chance, and *Some Girls*, the album they began recording in Paris that autumn, would see them reborn and vindicated as musicians. Jagger, in particular, wrote like a man possessed, galvanised not only by punk (England) but by disco (America) and a desire to shove the critics' words down their throats. Look at the sleeve for "Miss You", the album's lead-off single (and worldwide superhit): the Stones recline against a wall, glowering in PVC and leather, looking like the original punks, the ultimate dissident gang. Released in

June 1978, *Some Girls* was a reminder of how dangerous a cornered animal can be when its freedom is on the line. It was like the Stones of old. It got rid of the coo-chi-coo ballads, timbales and ARP string ensembles (*Black And Blue*); it pissed anywhere; it was not concerned with your petty morals. The title track oozed arrogance, making wildly salacious generalisations about girls of various ethnicities and not giving a toss whom it offended. "Respectable" dismissed one woman as "The easiest lay on the White

House lawn", a putdown of gross audacity at a time when the international media was speculating on Jagger's relationship with Margaret Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister's wife. The Stones' swagger was back. The guitars attacked in formation (Keith, Mick, Ronnie), amped-up with rat-pack electricity, more aggressive than any Stones album since *Exile On Main St*, a definite move back to uncouthness after years of Mick Taylor finesse. Yet, for all that, the slow songs – "Beast Of Burden"; their cover of The Temptations' 1971 hit "Just My Imagination (Running Away With Me)" – were spacious and had time to breathe. There was a wry C&W number, "Far Away Eyes", played for laughs but also meticulously arranged for Bakersfield authenticity. There were charismatic additions to the Stones' sound: Sugar Blue's harmonica ("Miss You"), Ronnie's pedal steel, Keith's metallically phased guitar on "Shattered". And there was "Before They Make Me Run", in which Keith philosophically contemplated his extraordinary lifestyle – dead friends, "medicine", the loneliness of the long-distance rock star – before defiantly concluding: "I did all right". As a self-absolution moment, it's his equivalent of an "Only God Can Judge Me" tattoo.

Above all, *Some Girls* teemed with the sights, sounds, distractions and energy of New York. "Miss You" allowed us a glimpse

into Jagger's socialite bubble – and like Keith, he sounded lonely at the top – with an awesome disco walking bassline that Bill Wyman had literally gone to nightclubs to research. "Shattered",

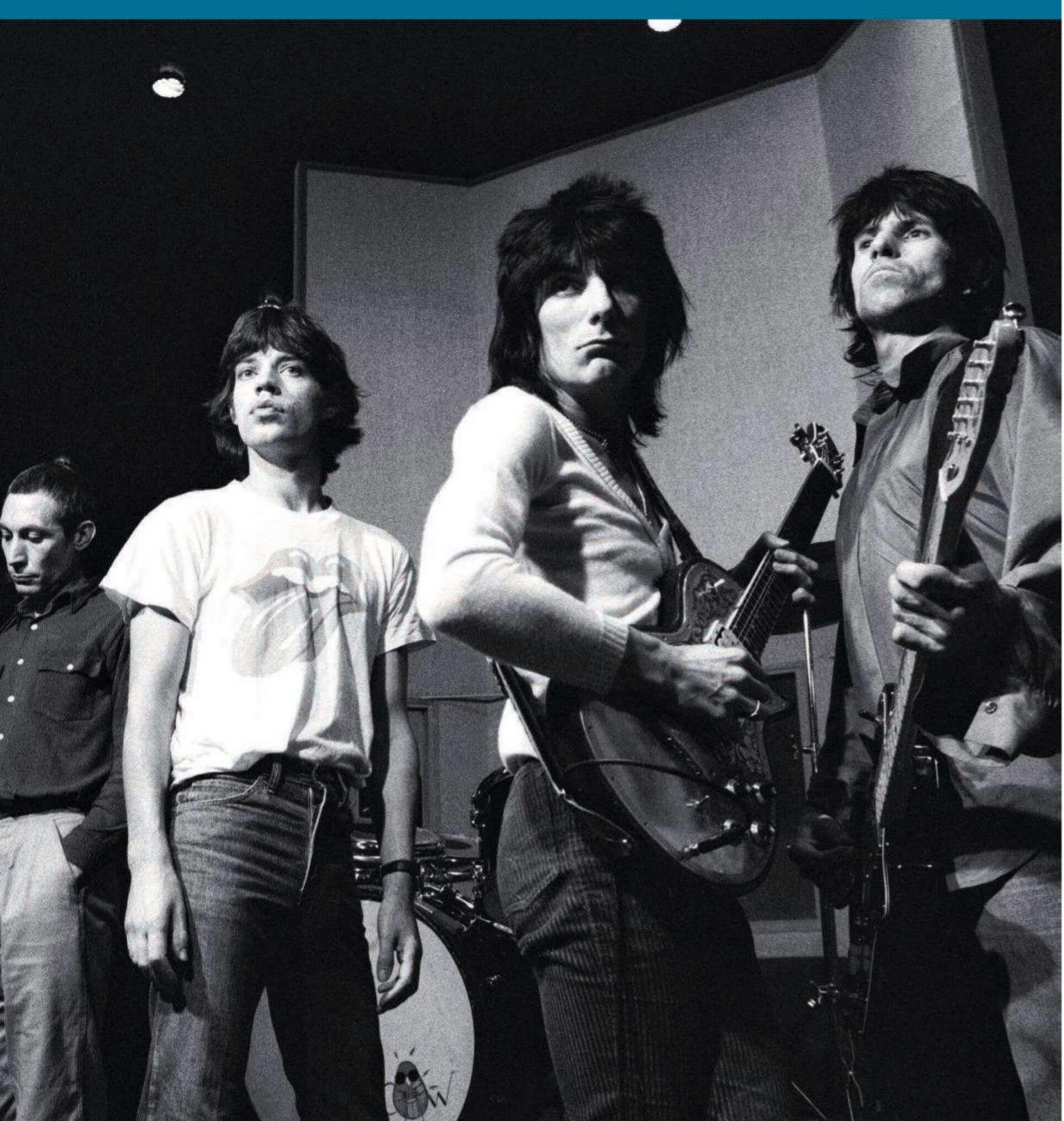
at the other end of the album, flashed through fast-moving images of NYC, this "cocktail party on the street", this city full of rats, bedbugs, crooks and punkettes in plastic bags. It was the sort of sardonic reportage that Jagger used to excel at, and the waspishness extended to the album's cover – a lingerie advert juxtaposing the

**Some Girls teems
with the sights,
sounds and energy
of New York**



Stones' faces with famous actresses, some of whom threatened to sue – where, on the reverse, someone (Jagger himself?) had written bitchy, gossipy blurbs about the band-members. Keith was described as a mysterious Swedish recluse. Wyman was a chic, intelligent lesbian. Charlie Watts was looking for a husband who could meet "her rigorous specifications".

More than 40 songs were recorded at the *Some Girls* sessions, resulting in a legendary bounty of outtakes. A few of them, such as "All About You" and "Hang Fire", were revived for *Emotional Rescue* (1980) and *Tattoo You* (1981), but most were consigned to the vaults.



Now, following the success of the *Exile* reissue in 2010 (which featured a bonus disc of outtakes), *Some Girls* has been given the same treatment. Released in deluxe and super-deluxe editions (the latter comes with a DVD and a 100-page book), its bonus disc contains 12 rarities from 1978-9, widening the brief – as did *Exile* – to include tracks from the *Emotional Rescue* sessions in Paris and Nassau. Interestingly, the 42-minute disc has a different musical identity to either *Some Girls* or *Emotional Rescue*, being generally rootsier, and revealing among other things that country music, as much as punk or disco, was very much in the Stones' thoughts during

the late '70s. "Do You Think I Really Care" is spirited, sprightly, a bit like "Dead Flowers", with cute guitar licks and a rollicking Ian Stewart piano solo. "No Spare Parts" is sadder, slower, with Ronnie recreating his familiar Faces-era guitar fills. Then there's "We Had It All", Waylon Jennings' heartbreaker about a terminated relationship, which the Stones considered for inclusion on *Emotional Rescue*. It's sung by Keith – quietly, tenderly, and surely to Anita Pallenberg, from whom he separated in 1979.

But C&W doesn't monopolise proceedings. There's some Chicago blues ("When You're Gone"), Latin-flavoured romance ("Don't Be

A Stranger") and stripped-down rock'n'roll ("Tallahassee Lassie", "Keep Up Blues"), as well as the notorious "Claudine", a rockabilly tune about a real-life French singer who fatally shot her boyfriend. It's immediately obvious that Jagger, just as he did on the *Exile* out-takes, has overdubbed new vocals onto these songs; he probably felt he had no choice, since the tracks had either unfinished guide vocals or none at all. Some fans condemn this as jiggery-pokery and would rather hear vintage instrumentals. Others, mindful that we're unlikely to see another Stones album, are grateful for these old-new hybrids. The proof is in the music; it sounds just great.

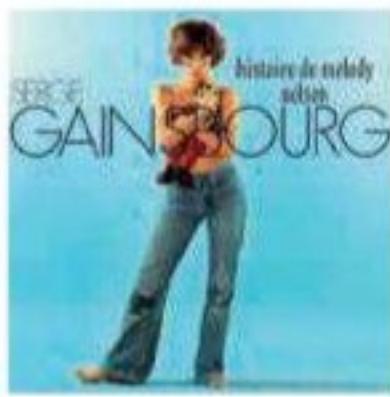
SERGE GAINSBOURG

Histoire De Melody Nelson: Deluxe Edition R1971

UNIVERSAL

★★★★★

Vintage Gallic sauce, expanded with new DVD. By Rob Young



PARIS, 1968. ON the set of a nondescript film called *Slogan*, 22-year-old English actress Jane Birkin finds herself playing the love-interest of a washed-up advertising executive undergoing a midlife crisis. In real life, Birkin's three-year marriage to Bond-theme composer John Barry is falling apart. She embarks on an affair with her leading man, a French pop star called Serge Gainsbourg, ushering in a year that he would later call *un année érotique*, during which the duo would record a hit single, "Je T'aime... Moi Non Plus", banned by the BBC for its suggestive sexuality.

The age of free love produced surprisingly few outright celebrations of sex in music, with "Je T'aime..." a notable exception. But two years later, with Birkin playing the gamine muse to the hilt, Gainsbourg recorded *Histoire De Melody Nelson*, a concept album that fictionalised their affair in a voyage to the dark side of the libido.

Melody Nelson is generally regarded as Gainsbourg's career high, feted by the likes of Jarvis Cocker, Beck, David Holmes, Portishead and Air. Its musical appeal is greatly indebted to composer-arranger Jean-Claude Vannier and producer Jean-Claude Charvier, who took the original backing tapes from a London session (featuring Dougie Wright, Herbie Flowers, Big Jim Sullivan, Vic Flick) and painstakingly married them up with a 30-strong string section that swoops and wheels around the loping backbeats in a kind of concerto for funk group and chamber orchestra.

But any pleasure in its seductive texture must be tempered as soon as its disquieting subject matter unfolds. Birkin's voice wafts in like a refrain, whispering "*Melody Nelson*" as intensely as though she's trying to pull Gainsbourg out of a coma. Which she may well have been, as he vocalises throughout in a subdued, vaguely menacing speech-song that sounds emptied out by experience.

And it goes something like this: a 43-year-old man, cruising in his Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost, knocks a teenage girl off her bike. This introduction is a sustained dream sequence,



Serge, contemplating his "voyage to the dark side of the libido"

in which Gainsbourg describes running his Roller onto the pavement "in a zone, an isolated spot" (whether geographical or psychological is unspecified) in which every last detail becomes mythical – even his limo's figurehead transforms into an embodiment of Venus. Double basses chop out channels in the deep id, and the funk is languorously laid back, draped across the air like an electrostatic charge.

The accident is framed not as a chance meeting of a sleazeball and a nymphet on a sidewalk, but as if Gainsbourg has actually crashed into the essence of music itself (Melody's name is not randomly chosen). She responds to his concerned approach by becoming his lover, and the couple briefly share an ecstasy in which "*The surrounding walls of the labyrinth/Open up on the infinite*". Then, on "L'Hôtel Particulier", it all goes a bit *Eyes Wide Shut*, as the narrator gives a coded knock on the door of an anonymous residence, is ushered into the "*Cleopatra suite*", and embraces Melody on a rococo bed under a mirrored ceiling, watched by carved ebony slaves.

Disaster strikes, as Melody, wishing to "*see the sky of Sunderland again*", is involved in a plane crash and is never seen again. In the astonishing finale, "Cargo Culte", Gainsbourg imagines the smash from the perspective of a New Guinea tribesman waiting to plunder fallen jets in the jungle, and merges with that primitive figure, greedily "*hold/ing onto that*

hope of an air disaster/That might bring Melody back to me". And with that, the band goes ape, the fat ladies sing, and the curtain rings down.

It's preposterous, yet in its orchestral earnestness and its jolts of novelistic detail (on "Cargo Culte", he pictures "*Those naïve shipwreckers armed with blowpipes/Who sacrifice to the cargo cult/By puffing towards the azure and the aeroplanes*"), Gainsbourg bypasses cheesiness in favour of a fanaticism rarely achieved in pop music before it. It's as if his infatuation with Jane Birkin allowed him to embrace a self-contained, claustrophobic universe of desire, rapturous and celebratory, disquieting and doomed.

Melody Nelson, the longest wish-fulfilment fantasy in the history of pop, takes only 27 minutes to play out. As such, I find the CD of out-takes and alternate versions included with the edition completely unnecessary. But the DVD is another matter: a 40-minute documentary featuring Birkin, Vannier and others, which genuinely enlarges on the release, with studio footage plus extracts from a rarely seen 1971 promo film.

Revelations abound. Birkin offers proof that Gainsbourg already had the character of Melody in his head before meeting her; Gainsbourg, speaking in 1971, recalls asking Vladimir Nabokov for permission to set the Humbert poem from *Lolita* to music. Like *Lolita*, *Histoire De Melody Nelson* is a kind of oratorio of desire, sung by one who's not yet slipped its parasitic grasp.

THE SPECIALIST

This month... Impulse!

Record labels don't come any more world-changing than Impulse!. In its glory years, 1960-'75, Impulse! grew a catalogue synonymous with jazz history, an outlet for the exploratory, militant mood of the era – achievements reflected on the 25 "2-on-1" albums (two originals per CD) released to celebrate the label's 50th anniversary. Impulse! is also known as "The House That Trane Built", being home to sax colossus John Coltrane, whose genius was allowed to flourish unhindered by producer Bob Thiele. While the Impulse! logo became a badge for exponents of "The New Thing", the label drew from every branch of a fertile scene, putting "free" cats like sax upstart **Albert Ayler** alongside statesmen of melody like Coleman Hawkins and Duke Ellington. Ayler's *Love Cry/The Last Album* (★★★★) is a delightful mayhem of "free" playing, featuring chants, poems and bagpipes alongside gospel-tinged saxes. By contrast, *Ellington Meets Hawkins* and *Ellington And Coltrane* (★★★) are low-key sessions, warm and inclusive.

With Coltrane's death in '67, his legacy passed to sidemen like drummer Elvin Jones and saxman Pharaoh Sanders. **Alice Coltrane**, his second wife, also pursued her husband's grail of spiritual music, embracing Indian and Egyptian themes. The jazz scene of the early 1970s struggled with a harpist, let alone one steeped in Eastern mysticism, but Alice's reputation revived with a '90s interest in "cosmic jazz", and these days she looks an inspired pioneer. 1969's *Huntington Ashram Monastery* (★★★★) has gales of harp sweeping over taut basslines and floating drums. Its 2-on-1 twin, 1972's *World Galaxy* (★★★★) features Alice playing harp and organ to majestic, Indian-flavoured strings, and includes versions of her husband's "My Favourite Things" and "A Love Supreme". 1972's *Universal Consciousness* (★★★) is more contemplative, while its 1973 twin, *Lord Of Lords* (★★★★) is a full orchestral exposition whose discordant strings and stern melodies are as much classical as jazz (it includes excerpts from Prokofiev's *Firebird Suite*). Impulse!'s championing of the "free" continued when Ed Michel replaced Thiele as producer. **Pharaoh Sanders**' 1973 *Village Of The Pharaoh/Wisdom Through Music* (★★★★) is a fearless exploration of metaphysical realms, Sanders' lyrical saxes blowing alongside voices, drones and bells.

Archie Shepp, another Coltrane devotee, tried out soul on *For Losers* (★★★). Not his finest hour, but its twin *Kwanza* (★★★★) is a cracker, shot through with Afro-centric blues and funk. Of the other acts here, **Charles Mingus**' *Black Saint And The Sinner Lady/ Mingus Mingus Mingus* (★★★★) contains two classics from the wayward composer. Impulse!'s creativity petered out in the mid-1970s, but **John Handy**'s funk-influenced *Hard Work/Carnival* (★★★) is a sweet signoff, the former's title track becoming a jazz-dance standard. NEIL SPENCER

Cosmic queen:
Alice Coltrane



Rödelius Schneider:
mensch maschinen
power down

RODELIUS SCHNEIDER

Stunden

BUREAU B

★★★

Roedelius (keys) and Stefan Schneider (synths, etc) offer *acoustische*, if you will

Roedelius has been the subject of a huge reissue programme over the last three years, which has done a fine job of making the fringe solo works pertinent to the man's time in Cluster and Harmonia available again. Here, he presents a new work, *Stunden*. In common with his *Selbsportrait* albums of the late 1970s, it has a deliberately minor, low-key feel, and his enjoyment of the ambience of uncluttered, untreated, barely accompanied piano themes like "Stunden II" is self-evident. The Enossifications on "Upper Slaughter", meanwhile, are a pleasant evocation of collaborations past.

John Robinson



ARTHUR RUSSELL

24>24 Music

GET ON DOWN

★★★

Late NYC great's disco cuts, over 2CDs or four LPs

The critical reappraisal of Arthur Russell that's unfolded over the last decade mirrors that of Nick Drake 10 years before; a prodigious but introverted young musician, overlooked in his day, but canonised after his

death. Songwriter, cellist, composer, Russell covered many bases – so many that it's easy to forget the one that made most impact at the time: his late-'70s disco music, popular at clubs like the Paradise Garage. Cuts like "Go Bang!" and "Clean On Your Bean" are limber, very musical disco, Russell's avant-garde ideas given playful expression. *24>24* collects originals, edits and remixes from Walter Gibbons and Larry Levan.

Louis Pattison

ANOUSHKA SHANKAR

Traveller

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON

★★★

Glorious global fusion from Ravi's daughter

Like her father, Anoushka Shankar has shown a bold willingness to step outside the classical sitar tradition. After a collaboration with electronica auteur Karsh Kale, she now explores the links between Indian music and Spanish flamenco, forged long ago by Gypsy migration. It works a treat, her thrillingly uninhibited sitar pitched against fiery flamenco guitars and clicking percussion in the furious buleria 12-beat style. Singers Duquende and Buika deliver the lyrics – some traditional, some written by Shankar and her father – with passion, and it's buffed to a sparkling sheen by world music's producer of the moment, Javier Limon.

Nigel Williamson

SHE & HIM

A Very She & Him Christmas

DOMINO

★★

Credible indie duo turn to festive schmaltz

Hollywood actress Zooey Deschanel (She) and Portland guitarist and producer M Ward (Him) make an improbable return with an album of seasonal standards, including "Silver Bells", "Baby, It's Cold Outside" and "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas", each drawing on a sparse instrumental palette of piano and echo-laden guitar. It's a sweet-natured and seemingly uncynical exercise which, while pretty enough, brings nothing new to these well-worn ditties. That said, Deschanel's voice fits well with the saccharine mood of an album that seems to position her, somewhat surprisingly, as the rightful heir to Doris Day.

Fiona Sturges

PAUL SIMON

Songwriter

SONY

★★★

Rhymin' Simon's 2CD personal best

With the great iPod of his back catalogue set to permanent shuffle, Paul Simon compilations have outnumbered albums of original material by nine to five since the release of 1986's *Graceland*. The USP of this 32-track trawl – aside from an exclusive 2011 live version of "The Sound Of Silence", one of three Art-less Simon & Garfunkel tunes featured – is that this is the native New Yorker's own personal selection, with the 70-year-old ignoring the populist likes of "You Can Call Me Al", "Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard" and "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" in favour of a skein of wordy and worthy album tracks.

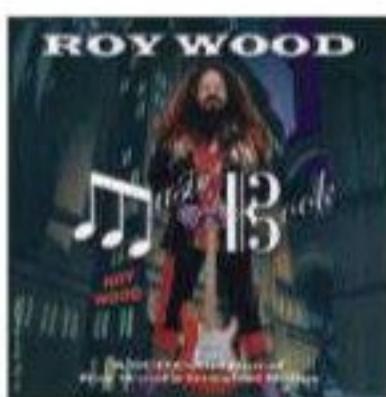
Jim Wirth

ROY WOOD

Music Box EMI 

★★★★★

Maverick songwriter's own collection of work. It's the Christmas gift that keeps on giving, says Peter Watts



IT IS A SAD fact of life that a man from any walk of life – even the often preposterous world of music – will struggle to be taken seriously if he wanders about wearing a beard the size of Gibraltar, decorating his face with white stars and red warpaint, growing his hair down to his waist, then dying it yellow on one side and blue on the other. So it is with Roy Wood, still best remembered for his day-glo clan-chief appearance than the succession of superb pop songs he wrote for The Move, ELO, Wizzard and – perhaps most impressively – as a solo performer.

This retrospective – hand-picked and remastered by Wood himself – attempts to right that wrong, showcasing 36 of Wood's songs over two CDs. Wood formed The Move in Birmingham in 1966 and they had their first big hit in 1967, with "Night Of Fear" (absent from this set, as is anything much before 1970, bar "Fire Brigade" and a rearranged version of 1969's Beatles-esque "Blackberry Way"). Although deeply attached to Motown and '50s rock'n'roll, Wood was an inventive arranger and composer from the start, incorporating classical elements into his songs to produce crackers like 1971's wonderfully weird, Kinks-like "Chinatown" or the semi-metal stompathon "Brontosaurus". When his pop side and his experimental side gelled, the results were fascinating, but sometimes the differences were irreconcilable.

It was his desire for more flexibility than he could get with The Move that led to the formation of ELO (represented here by the instrumental "First Movement"), but Wood soon left them to form Wizzard, while continuing to record as a solo artist. It's the latter – all from the early 1970s – that form the most revelatory aspect of this collection: "Forever" is a beautiful Motown ballad; "Dear Elaine", a semi-classical pop song that recalls Pink Floyd and Queen; and "Oh What A Shame", a delightful collision of The Beach Boys and Neil Sedaka. These are all gorgeous examples of the three-minute pop song, but there's also experimentalism in the form of the distorted Monty Python-does-Fairport Convention oddity "Miss Clarke And The Computer". The bulk of these are culled from the twin high-points of Wood's career, solo albums *Bounders* (1973) and *Mustard* (1975). Surprisingly, *Music Box* has no space for other classics of this era, such as "You Sure Got It



Now" and "Songs Of Praise". Wood's gifts as a songwriter were now noted by others – covers of The Move's "I Can Hear The Grass Grow" and "Flowers In The Rain" are featured here, by Status Quo and Nancy Sinatra respectively.

Alongside these gems, Wood was becoming better known for the hard-edged good-time rock'n'roll he recorded with Wizzard, epitomised by singles like the Slade-influenced bagpipe-rocker "R U Red E 2 Rock" and the belting glam-rock of "See My Baby Jive" and "Ball Park Incident", as well as the smash hit "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday". But even with Wizzard, Wood was pushing boundaries. In 1974, he recorded what was intended to be a double album – one

album of rock, the other of jazz-rock. The label balked and the jazz-rock album was only released in 1999 as the bizarre but fascinating *Main Street*. There are two tracks from it here – "French Perfume" and "Main Street" – and both are splendid. If the album had been released as planned, Wood feels his career would have taken a different route. But it was at this point that the desire for invention began to fade. He continued to pound the pop-rock circuit and recorded decent synth-heavy '80s wannabe anthems like "Down To Zero", "Lion's Heart" and "Green Glass Windows". And he can always be seen on a TV screen at least once a year, dressed like *Braveheart* and bellowing about Christmas.

Q&A Roy Wood

How did the retrospective come together?

Over the years there have been a few compilations, but they never ask the artist what tracks they'd like on and they usually put it in chronological order, which doesn't always make a great album. I wanted to do an album that had songs on it I was proud of.

Why did you use covers and re-recorded versions of some songs?

I wanted to make sure there was plenty to listen to, so I used different versions if they sounded good – like a live "Californian Man" and Quo's "I Can Hear The Grass Grow", because I prefer it to ours. I did a new string arrangement for "Blackberry Way" and had to re-record "Fire

Engine" because the original tapes had been dumped in a cellar and were unusable.

Are there any surprises on the album?

There are certain album tracks that get lost over time and it's nice for people to get a chance to hear them. Songs like "Why Does Such A Pretty Girl...", "Raining In The Night" and "French Perfume" are alright.

Did you have to think twice about including the Christmas song?

You'd think by now I'd be fed up with it, but if it comes on the radio I still listen and think it was alright. I have got some other versions which I thought about using, but none of them are quite as good as the original. INTERVIEW: PETER WATTS

SONIC YOUTH Hits Are For Squares

UNIVERSAL/POLYDOR

★★★★★

NYCavant-rock vets draw on starpower to curate career-spanning compilation

Key band buddies – actors, artists, directors and musicians all – were polled for their fave SY songs. The resulting 16 tracks make for a fine sequence, a zesty opening gambit kicking off with "Bull In The Heather" (selected by Catherine Keener) and followed by "100%" (Mike D's choice), "Sugar Kane" (Beck) and "Kool Thing" (Radiohead), on which Public Enemy's Chuck D came up against the formidable Kim Gordon on women's issues. For a group that rarely released singles, this feels like a Greatest Hits, with the ineffable "Teenage Riot" (Eddie Vedder) and mystical "Expressway To Yr Skull" (The Flaming Lips) taking pride of place. Exclusive new track "Slow Revolution" seals the deal. *Rob Young*

JD SOUTHER You're Only Lonely

RETROWORLD

★★★

Eagles songwriting alumnus' cameo-studded solo outing

With a hand in such mega-sellers as "New Kid In Town" and Don Henley's solo classic "The Heart Of The Matter", Souther's backroom credentials are assured. His less successful, fitful solo career yielded its one and only hit with the Roy Orbison-accented title track from this, his third album. Backed by all the Eagles and Jackson Browne, the *fin de siècle*, dark-side-of-the-California dream theme is played out on nondescript rockers "Trouble In Paradise" and "Til The Bars Burn Down". Yearning ballad "White Rhythm And Blues", originally written for former girlfriend Linda Ronstadt and here featuring Phil Everly, is the standout. *Gavin Martin*

CHRIS SPEDDING

Pearls

REPERTOIRE

★★

Sideman pays ho-hum homage to his bluesy roots

The sleeve of Spedding's latest low-key collection sports a wry warning: "May Contain Jazz". A former novelty hitmaker, early Sex Pistols producer and

evergreen session player for everyone from McCartney to the Wombles, the 67-year-old guitarist indulges himself here with heavily instrumental back-porch blues jams and trad-jazz grooves tailor-made for Jools Holland-loving suburban Saxondale types. The title track and "Temple Heath" have some of the gravelled authority of Mark Knopfler or even latter-day Dylan, but most of these indifferent efforts hover just a notch above generic busker level. The cumulative effect is like eavesdropping on a competent hobbyist tinkering away in his shed. *Stephen Dalton*

SPIRIT FREE Plays Starship

NUMERO GROUP

★★★

Ambitious jazz-fusion escapades from long-lost Vegas ensemble

Numero Group are great music journalists – the tunes they get behind are great, but sometimes secondary to the accompanying yarn. Here it's a close tie. By day, Spirit Free's members played in casino orchestras in Las Vegas. By night, they retired to their suburban bungalows with like-minded players and worked up music in the spirit of pioneering fusion works like Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* – a strong influence here. These 1971 recordings are accomplished, and even if Spirit Free's path had been previously trodden by heavier feet than theirs (on the Coltrane-like "Horizon", say), that isn't to say the band don't bring the feeling of unison music-making to the enterprise. *John Robinson*

STANDARD FARE Out Of Sight Out Of Town

MELODIC

★★★

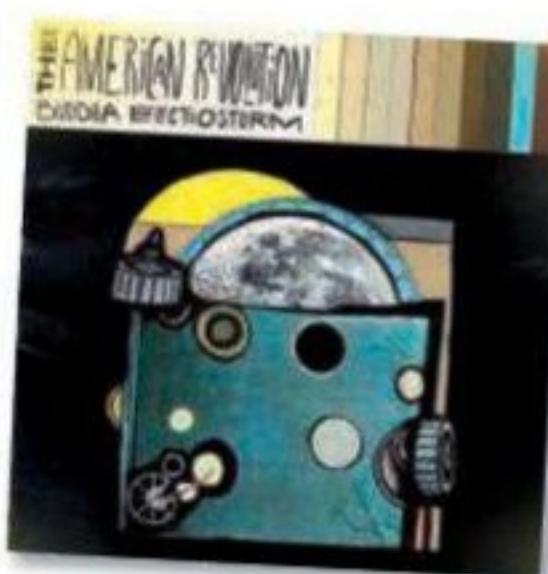
Second album from Sheffield indie-poppers

Standard Fare's heritage is obvious enough: *NME*'s famous C86 cassette, what the Americans call "twee-pop" and a lovable line of bands that runs from Orange Juice to Belle & Sebastian. Standard Fare don't bring anything particularly new to the aesthetic, but they do freshen up its template tropes and curlicues with a bunch of surging melodies, all delivered with a self-effacing charm. Emma Cooper sings



Sonic Youth: build a Greatest Hits with a difference

her half of the boy/girl vocals in the required deadpan style and extra texture is added to the exuberantly ramshackle guitar/bass/drums fizz by the addition of trumpet ("051107") and violin ("The Look Of Lust"), while "Suitcase" (about a Holocaust survivor) transcends the album's otherwise determinedly kitchen-sink concerns. *Nigel Williamson*



THEE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Buddha Electrostorm

FIRE

★★★★

Mid-life gem from Apples In Stereo frontman

One of Robert Schneider's many extra-curricular projects, Thee American Revolution's much-delayed first album is a fuzzily upbeat affair. Ignoring for a moment the band's average age, which hovers around the 40 mark, this is the sound of young men with explosive hormones trading unashamedly retro guitar licks in a cramped suburban basement. There's greater sophistication to be found in the lyrics: having borrowed Deep Purple's "Smoke On The Water" intro,

"Grit Magazine" punctures the bubble of invincibility created by a 17-year-old girl, while "Haircut" betrays its writer's age as it reflects on the foolish confidence of youth. *Fiona Sturges*

DWIGHT TWILLEY Soundtrack

VARESE SARABANDE

★★★

Solitary heartland auteur continues his late-career resurgence

Twilley's 12th studio album was created as the autobiographical soundtrack to an as yet unreleased documentary. The Tulsa native is a worthy subject – like Memphis' Big Star, the Dwight Twilley Band's '70s albums and classic single "I'm On Fire" brought a solipsistic twist to first-generation power pop, and he's been plying his insular, stacked-up style ever since. *Soundtrack* is packed with anthems of operatic scale, as Twilley once again references his touchstones, Elvis Presley ("Bus Ticket") and the British Invasion ("You Close Your Eyes"). It resonates with poignancy, being the final recording of original DTB member Bill Pitcock IV. *Bud Scoppa*

VARIOUS ARTISTS Whaur The Pig Gaed On The Spree: Scottish Recordings By Alan Lomax 1951-1957

DRAG CITY

★★★★

Pipe, drum, tales of yore. Scottish culture, served raw

Alasdair Roberts, from beginning his career as an ersatz Will Oldham, has since evolved into a raw and compelling folk performer, his *a capella* performances reaching particularly spectacular heights. Here, he takes on a role as curator of Alan Lomax's Scottish recordings from the 1950s. Anthropological interest and charm ("My Mother And Your Mother" by 'Aberdeen Schoolchildren' being an example of both) are key here, but there's also rousing music from Jimmy Shand and more. The *a capella* mumbling of Jimmy McBeath is a particular highlight. *John Robinson*

VARIOUS ARTISTS Gold Panda: DJ Kicks

!K7

★★

Laptopper's sober headphone session

Until James Blake surfaced, Derwin 'Gold' Panda's 2010 debut *Lucky Shiner* enjoyed heavy rotation at student dinner parties. Here the indie-dance enigma leafs through his iTunes folder to compile a personal mix that, in the tradition of these things, flags up his influences (lovely moments from Drexciya, SND, Closer Musik) while touching on tracks that place his own pastel-hued electronica in a broader context: funkier gear by 2562, Zomby and Bok Bok, for example. All totally fine, of course, but next time a little passion and personality won't go amiss. *Piers Martin*

THE V-ROYS

Sooner Or Later

FAY RECORDINGS

★★★

Short-lived Tennessee country rockers collected

Signed to Steve Earle's E-Squared label in the mid-'90s, Knoxville's V-Roys strutted their rocked-up Americana across just two studio albums and a live release before calling it a day. This compilation precedes a one-off hometown reunion show, its strongest selections originally heard on the Earle-produced, souped-up debut *Just Add Ice*, all twang'n'harmony ("Guess I Know I'm Right", "No Regrets"). Material from the later *All About Town* tends to be more folky and rustic, while a jaunty power-pop cover of Neil Young's "Burned" stands out among the handful of previously unreleased tracks.

Terry Staunton

TOM WAITS

Round Midnight: The Minneapolis Broadcast 1975

LEFTFIELD MEDIA

★★★

Much-bootlegged solo radio show goes legit

What strikes you immediately is the sheer deluge of words. The live solo show of a pre-stardom Waits was a tsunami of gags, puns, similes and tall tales that display a virtuosity with language to intimidate the most accomplished freestyle rapper. This fascinating recording is an "unplugged" companion piece to the same year's official double live album *Nighthawks At The Diner*, where Waits's barbed-wire rasp is accompanied by piano or, on occasions, acoustic guitar, foot-stomp, finger-snap and helpless audience laughter. Nevertheless, once you get past the sozzled barfly patter about towns "where the average age is deceased", you

realise that his somewhat maudlin, meandering jazz-tinged songs were still some way off the classicist quantum leap that was 1977's *Small Change*. Bonus extras from later Don Lang and Letterman TV shows undercut better music with poorer sound.

Garry Mulholland

BILL WELLS

Lemondale

DOUBLE SIX

★★★

Scottish maverick's one-day recording coup

Pianist and guitarist Bill Wells has collaborated with Kevin Ayers, Isobel Campbell, Maher Shalal Hash Baz and Aidan Moffat, and dubs his music "jazz by default" – apt, given his easy flitting between the Scottish indie and Japanese avant-rock worlds. Here he teams up with guitarist Jim O'Rourke, MSHB's Tori Kudo, Berklee-trained pianist Satoko Fujii and others for a work of light-filled, lyrical loveliness, playful and pristine. Wells' inter-disciplinary talents shine particularly bright on "Toon City", where a spy-movie theme gets a Canterbury-scene makeover; and "Courtin' Love", which sees electronic whistles and whines piped through a piece of Astrud Gilberto-like pop.

Sharon O'Connell

WHITE RING

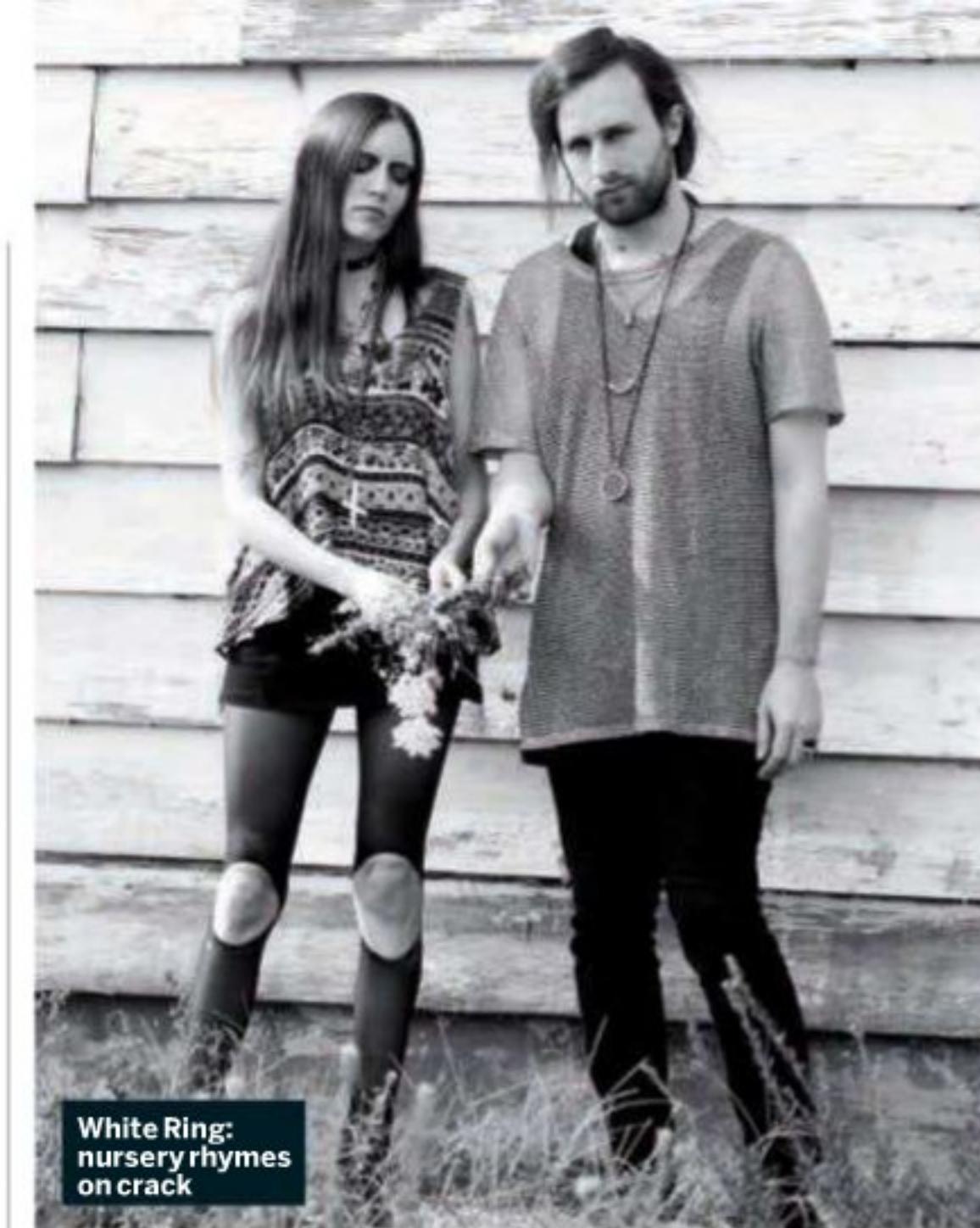
Black Earth That Made Me

ROCKET GIRL

★★★

Sallow NYC duo's hard-to-find singles compiled

Just when you thought it was safe to come out from behind the sofa, another bedraggled witch-house act rocks up and stares at you from a distance. With their distorted synths, gunshot claps and ghoulish diva, White Ring pick up where Salem left off, evoking a horribly claustrophobic



White Ring: nursery rhymes on crack

atmosphere on tracks such as "We Rot" and "Roses". Connoisseurs of "drag" may well be familiar with Bryan Kurkumilis and Kendra Malia's limited output thus far. Newcomers should head for "Ix999", a nursery rhyme on exceedingly good crack.

Piers Martin

ZOMBY

Nothing

4AD

★★★

Rave miniatures from a shameless nostalgic

A somewhat ravier companion to his *Dedication* album from earlier in 2011, *Nothing* nevertheless retains all of Zomby's spaciousness and melancholy. It's bookended by two tracks that pastiche liquid funk and jungle with such faithfulness they might seem pointless to anyone but nostalgic former ravers, but in between there's much to love. "Digital Fractal" is 2-step after the champagne's gone sour, and the way "Equinox" shifts seamlessly from anxious 4/4 into a loping, skipping beat and back again is a masterful touch. Let's hope he manages to finally let go of the past on his next release.

Ben Beaumont-Thomas

ZZT

Partys Over Earth

TURBO

★★★

Techno mavericks play dumb

Toronto dandy and occasional BBC 6 Music presenter Tiga – the T in ZZT – delayed production of this album by a week while he deliberated over the spelling of the title's first word: "parties" was not quite right. He and production partner Zombie Nation apply similarly fanatical attention to detail to *Partys Over Earth*'s primitive house jams, resulting in a set of Dadaist club bangers called "Zzafrica" and "ZZTMF" that jerk and twitch like a Dalek guzzling Red Bull. "Lower State Of Consciousness" rounds matters off, circuits fizzing and eyebrows arched.

Piers Martin

UNCUT RECOMMENDS

The best releases of the past few months



KATE BUSH

50 Words For Snow

FISH PEOPLE/EMI ★★★★

Elton John! Stephen Fry! Snowman sex! Such are the ingredients of Kate Bush's winter wonderland. Ethereal majesty still very much in evidence, if more terrestrially voiced.

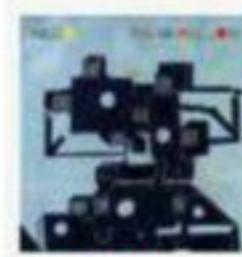


LAURA MARLING

A Creature I Don't Know

VIRGIN ★★★★

Marling displays a rich, Joni Mitchell-reminiscent palette for *A Creature I Don't Know*. A decidedly accomplished third.



WILCO

The Whole Love

DBPM ★★★★

Jeff Tweedy's band successfully broker a peace 'twixt experimental and melodic selves. A redemptive return.



THE BEACH BOYS

The Smile Sessions

EMI ★★★★★

The unfinished symphony to God, finally released. Many CDs. Much greatness. Much madness. Brian Wilson can't believe it's coming out, either.



FEIST

Metals

POLYDOR ★★★★

Giant pop hooks erupt at unexpected moments in a marriage of solipsistic risk-taking. Lustily appealing from top to bottom.

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Heads together: (l-r)
David Byrne, Tina
Weymouth, Chris Frantz

TALKING HEADS

Chronology ★★★★

EAGLE VISION

Excellent, lovingly assembled live compilation, spanning the art-rockers' career from nervy soup to funk nuts. *By Damien Love*



"DAVID BYRNE, ALL neurasthenic nettles pointing inward. He looked like someone who'd just OD'd on Dramadine – all cold sweat clammy and nerve net exoskeleton... like some nut just holidayed from the ward with a fresh pocket of Thorazine, that's all. There was something gentle, shy, reflective and giving about his hideous old psychosocial gangrene."

That's Lester Bangs, recalling the first time he saw Talking Heads live, in a rambling, sometimes flashing essay written in 1979 as a review of the *Fear Of Music* album, but only published now, as an accompaniment to this superbly conceived DVD.

In fact, given Talking Heads' particular concern for objects, the things we surround ourselves with, and are surrounded by – buildings, food, electric guitars, lampstands, paper – it's worth mentioning the packaging. The DVD case itself is a little hardback book (the feel brings on instant sense-memories of Ladybirds), with Bangs' piece spilling across 20 pages or so, illustrated with photographs, facsimiles of old flyers, and the original hand-scribbled lyrics to "Psycho Killer," "Life During Wartime," and "Heaven". Simply put, even before you remove the DVD, it's a nice thing.

When you play the disc, it just gets better. *Chronology* is an aptly named collection, gathering up snapshot fragments of live footage to create a collage-portrait of the band that works on a couple of levels. Taken individually, each performance is an exquisite time-capsule of the version of Talking Heads that existed at a certain moment: in 1975, say, captured on black-and-white videotape, when they were still an unsmiling, drivily awkward anti-rock trio, huddling close on the surprisingly clean stage at CBGB's, looking and sounding like the herky-jerky children of Anthony Perkins and the Modern Lovers (of this period, in the accompanying commentary, Tina Weymouth recalls Dictators singer Handsome Dick Manitoba asking: "What are ya, a buncha lesbians?").

Taken as a whole, meanwhile, these 17 performance clips, spanning 1975-83, when Talking Heads did their Beatles thing and stopped touring, offer a summary of the unlikely evolution the group went through: mutating from a compact, wire-thin, (nerve-) jangling and very white NYC art-rock combo, to that world-roaming, weird-dancing rhythm monster of the early-'80s, when *Fear Of Music* and *Remain In Light* delivered odd, ominous, fractured news you couldn't quite understand but couldn't stop moving to, laying challenges for pop that were never really picked up.

Chronology does a valuable job in unearthing Talking Heads as a ceaselessly brilliant live band. This might seem an odd thing to say, when one of their most famous artifacts, *Stop Making Sense*, is a contender for best concert film of all time. But that was a carefully designed, directed and edited movie, and by its release, the band had given up playing live, disappearing from view behind the famous videos of the *Little Creatures* era.

The performances here, drawn from early fan recordings and TV shows like *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and *Saturday Night Live*, have little flash. No big suits or stop-motion. Just the facts, drenched in sweat: how tight the original trio were; how Weymouth and Frantz found it impossible to do anything but the right thing at the right moment; how chopped and vicious Byrne's guitar was back then; how insanely correct the original 1980 "big-band" Talking Heads sounded when Adrian Belew's noise was added to the mix. The disc ends with a flash-forward to grey hair and 2002, when the group got back together to play for their induction to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame – as close to a reunion we're ever likely to see.

If there's one quibble, it's that the clips leave you hungry to see the full performances they were culled from. Complete recordings certainly exist – different songs from some of these same concerts were previously used as the DVD extras on the 2006 album remasters; meanwhile, bootlegs videos are in circulation. But that's beside the point. *Chronology* does what it sets out to do beautifully, and then some, psychosocial gangrene and all.

EXTRAS: All four heads assemble for a worthwhile commentary. There's also a 1978 interview with Byrne. Best of all, though, is the 1979 *South Bank Show* special, an excellent, impressionistic cut-up profile worth the price of admission in itself. ★★★★

KEVIN COYNE

1979 LIVE AT WDR-STUDIO1 COLOGNE

BLAST FIRST PETITE

★★★★★

Coyne admits to feeling unwell, and breaks a sweat almost as soon as he opens this German *Rockpalast* set, but the fever stokes his diseased, cynical and self-loathing songs. Lapsing into Beefheartian squawks on "Right On Her Side", declaiming heretically over a Suicide-style drum machine on "Saviour", and bravely doing "Marjorie Razorblade" *acappella*, Coyne is on manic, overdriven form, resulting in a musical theatre of cruelty that's impossible to switch off.

EXTRAS: None.

Rob Young

THE DOORS

MR MOJO RISIN': THE MAKING OF LA WOMAN

EAGLEVISION

★★★

Documenting The Doors' final descent into "rock'n'roll film noir", this hour-long film drills down into the detail of their 1970 album. The results are hardly revelatory. The story is, by now, a familiar one, while the interviewees (including remaining Doors, engineer Bruce Botnick and Jac Holzman) lean towards rather heavy-handed lyrical analysis. Still, there's some excellent archive studio footage, and the bawdy, bluesy music still thrills.

EXTRAS: Extended interviews, live footage.

★★ *Graeme Thomson*

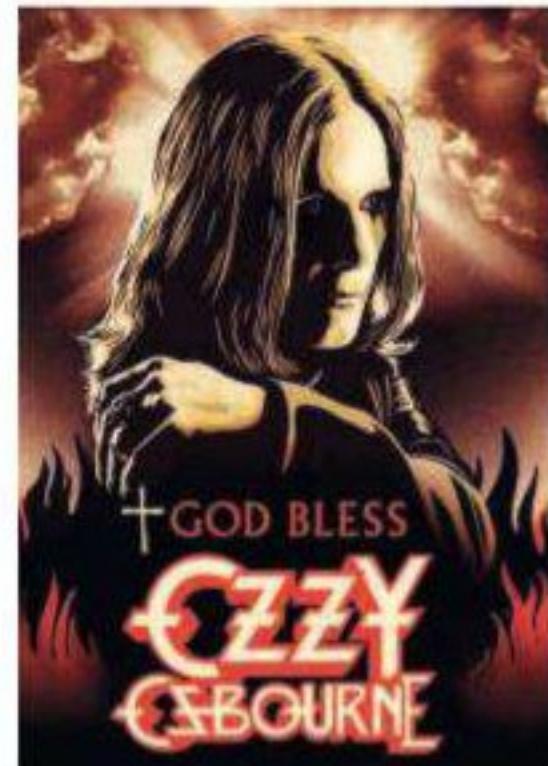
OZZY OSBOURNE

GOD BLESS OZZY OSBOURNE

EAGLE ROCK

★★★

Covering a two-year period, including Ozzy's 60th birthday, this intimate and



engaging portrait combines the day-to-day comic elements of the rocker's life, familiar to viewers of his reality TV series, with a more serious examination of his upbringing and career. From poverty-stricken childhood (six kids sharing a bedroom) to prison to superstardom to drugs and rehab, Osbourne is suitably candid throughout, while famous fans including Paul McCartney and Henry Rollins heap praise on the Prince of Darkness.

EXTRAS: Bonus interviews, deleted scenes. ★★

Terry Staunton

THE GRATEFUL DEAD

THE GRATEFUL DEAD MOVIE

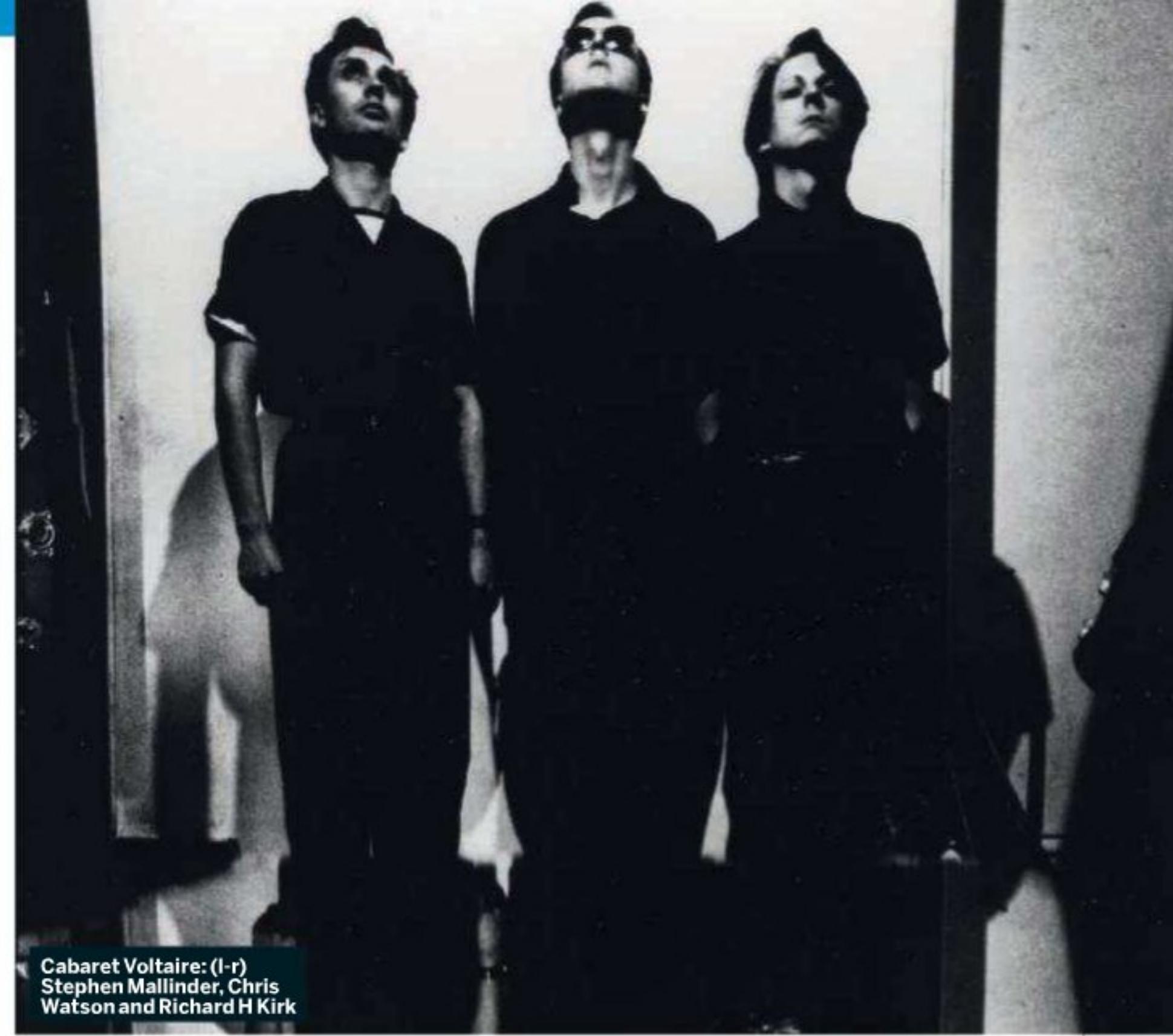
SHOUTFACTORY/DVD & BLU-RAY

★★★

The film was shot over five nights at the Winterland Ballroom in October 1974, where the Dead unveiled jazzier, more controlled improvisations befitting that year's *Blues For Allah*, loosening up for old favourites. There's a pleasing period sense in the multi-camera approach, though the animated sequences look dated. Issued on DVD in 2004, this features the same content on Blu-ray.

EXTRAS: 95 minutes of bonus songs, plus making-of documentaries.

★★★ *Mick Houghton*

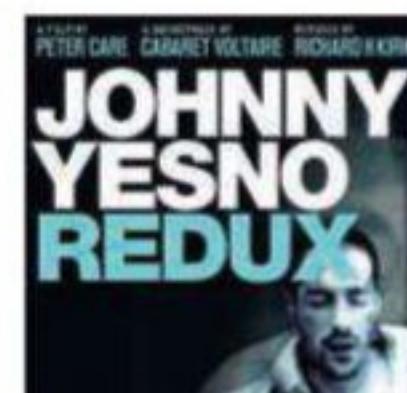


Cabaret Voltaire: (l-r) Stephen Mallinder, Chris Watson and Richard H Kirk

JOHNNY YESNO REDUX

★★★★★ MUTE

Cabaret Voltaire score the hallucinogenic violence of this 20-minute Steel City noir, now rewired with extras. By Rob Young



IN 1982, THE year Channel 4 began, Sheffield electronic act Cabaret Voltaire announced the launch of their own VHS label,

Doublevision. In an age when video was beginning to make an impact, Doublevision reflected the promise of a more DIY approach to filmmaking – a cinematic equivalent of punk's "here's three chords – now form a band" credo. The label's flagship release was *Johnny YesNo*, a 20-minute short directed by filmmaker Peter Care, slathered in the Cabs' primitive samples, needling frequencies and tape loops.

Care has since become a successful commercial director, with a CV that ranges from promos for, er, CV as well as Thomas Dolby, Depeche Mode and REM, to lucrative TV commercials and an episode of *Six Feet Under*. *Johnny YesNo* certainly feels like a testbed for an MTV vid, though its sleazy prurience and explicit drug ingestion would have given broadcasters at the time – three years before the Beeb's ban on "Relax" – tachycardic seizures. Filmed around the neon-lit nightclub district of Sheffield, it's often called an example of Steel City noir, except that description conceals the vivid colour scheme that leaps out of the screen.

Johnny, played by square-jawed Jack Elliott, gets mixed up in some violent gang business thanks to his attraction to a

mysterious femme fatale who recurs as a club dancer, angelic moll, and a strung-out junkie with a gunshot wound.

Hallucinating on a bloodstained hotel bed with a hypodermic in his arm, Johnny can't seem to separate these incarnations or sort the narrative of what appears to have been a very eventful 24 hours. But plot takes second place to ambience, and the action gives way to an incredible, disorientating close-up of Johnny lying in a shale quarry, the ground shifting illogically under his ripped shirt.

For this redux reissue package, Care has additionally "reimagined" the film, this time using a handheld digicam with two actors in an LA motel. It works as an interesting commentary on the original, making the male character less knowable than the female, although the ending is left far less resolved. Both DVDs include plenty of sketches and alternate sequences, a kind of workbook towards the finished item, though the end results are at best impressionistic. The 1982 version paints Sheffield's streets as a tawdry Yorkshire take on Vegas, and its transitions from misogynistic violence to shots of the moors and industrial wastelands echo the Ripper case. At the same time, *Johnny YesNo*'s restless, strobing edits connect the dots between Kenneth Anger and Darren Aronofsky. Cabaret Voltaire's punishing electronics never found a more appropriate setting.

EXTRAS: Out-takes, two CDs of Cabaret Voltaire tracks. ★★★★



The Doors: can they still thrill?



There are no words:
Jean Dujardin and
Bérénice Bejo star
in *The Artist*

THE ARTIST

Directed by Michel Hazanavicius. Starring Jean Dujardin, Bérénice Bejo, John Goodman. Opens December 30, Cert PG, 100 mins

★★★★★

An unsentimental tribute to the silent era. By Geoffrey Macnab

IT IS VERY easy to become consumed by a cosy nostalgia for the silent era. We all know Gloria Swanson's anguished protest as the ageing silent queen from *Sunset Boulevard*: "We didn't need dialogue. We had faces!" We've seen Chaplin's bow-legged walk, Keaton's stony-faced escape-artistry and Harold Lloyd dangling from the clock face.

In depicting the Hollywood of the late 1920s, French director Michel Hazanavicius risked lapsing into maudlin kitsch. To make a silent movie in 2011 seems, at first glance, a highly perverse endeavour. It could easily have turned into an excruciating exercise in which actors pulled faces, performed pratfalls and goofed for the camera.

Memories of Mel Brooks' misfiring *Silent Movie*, with its contemporary setting, and of the Two Ronnies' recreations of silent films don't inspire confidence. Hazanavicius' own OSS spy movies were pastiches. But this is a film of extraordinary grace and elegance.

The plot is conventional. The writer-director offers us yet another variation on *A Star Is Born*. George Valentin (Jean Dujardin) is a movie star who hits hard times when the talkies arrive. Bérénice Bejo is the pretty young flapper who flourishes as he declines. So far, so familiar. But

what makes *The Artist* immediately enrapturing is the sheer zest of Dujardin's performance. Anyone who has seen Douglas Fairbanks leaping off balconies, on and off horses and conducting swordfights with multiple adversaries without ever losing his carefree quality will recognise Dujardin as an actor in a very similar mould. His ease of movement, his smile and his winning tendency toward self-deprecation make him completely plausible as a silent-movie idol. His

irrepressible quality is matched by Bejo as Peppy Miller, the ambitious young chorus girl on the make. Both have wraparound smiles and can hoof it like old-time vaudeville performers.

Another of the film's strong points is its unsentimental depiction of Hollywood. We have John Goodman as an unforgiving, cigar-chomping mastodon of a studio boss who judges even his most favoured actors by their box-office results. The moment Valentin fails to make enough money, he is cast out. The public, the studio boss tells him, wants "fresh meat". Only his dog, a precocious Jack Russell, and his old butler (a morose James Cromwell) stay loyal as all his old friends melt away and his money evaporates. The world the film depicts when Valentin is on his uppers is reminiscent of that described in

F Scott Fitzgerald's *Pat Hobby* stories, about an alcoholic screenwriter who once knew the bigshots and had a house with a pool, but is now scrambling for any job he can get.

Hazanavicius uses absurdity to undercut the sentimentality in his depiction of Valentin's fall from grace. The most poignant moments always come laced with irony. A suicide attempt turns into one of the film's most rousing (and comical) set-pieces.

"The more research you have done, the more you can play with it," the director has commented of his exhaustive work in studying silent cinema and reading the many biographies of the stars who, like Valentin, fell from grace. Strangely, silent cinema – once a hugely powerful popular cultural form – has now fallen into the hands of the academics. Scholarly researchers pore over restorations of old silent classics or argue the merits of rediscovered films. Silent-movie compilations, once a mainstay of kids' TV scheduling in the UK, have largely vanished. When they're shown or discussed, it's invariably on art shows on minority channels. If *The Artist* is the success that many are predicting, it may help to bring a neglected form back towards the mainstream.

Initially, the lack of spoken dialogue is discomfiting. Once you've adjusted to its storytelling conventions, though, you almost forget that this is a silent film. The gorgeous black-and-white cinematography by Guillaume Schiffman, the dramatic music and the sheer verve and pace of the storytelling are likely to disarm even the most critical of viewers. *The Artist* is an audience-pleasing comedy melodrama, as sure-footed throughout as Dujardin and Bejo in their dances together. Why did we ever doubt that images work better than words?

FILM
OF THE
MONTH



LAS ACACIAS

Directed by Pablo Giorgelli
Starring Germán De Silva, Hebe Duarte
Opens December 2, Cert 12A, 85 mins ★★★

An old heart thaws, gradually, on this sparse road trip
"Slow-burning" doesn't even begin to convey the creeping pace of this feature film debut from Argentinian writer/director Giorgelli. And yet gradually, despite sparse dialogue and a camera fixed in the cab of a lorry for much of the film, this story of human connections works a kind of magic.

German De Silva is Rubén, the taciturn long-distance lorry driver who agrees to drive Jacinta (Hebe Duarte) to Buenos Aires from Paraguay, only to discover that she has a six-month-old child with her. De Silva's face is as lined as a road map; his eyes slide across to his unwelcome passengers in consternation. But Jacinta's serenity and kindness – not to mention her disarmingly cute baby – undermine Rubén's defences. The corniness of the premise – old soul learns to love again – is counterbalanced by the extreme austerity of style. The warmth and humanity of the piece is beguiling, but Giorgelli makes us work for it. *Wendy Ide*



THE LAST WALTZ

Directed by Martin Scorsese
Starring The Band, Bob Dylan
Opens December 2, Cert U, 117 mins ★★★

Scorsese's epic rock doc on The Band's final bow
Scorsese's seminal concert film, capturing the bash The Band threw on Thanksgiving Day 1976 as their final concert, is lovingly restored to mark the 35th anniversary of its 1977 premiere. It's worth seeing in a cinema, partly because Scorsese took uncommon care over little things like camera placement and content, but also because they really crank the volume. The staggering cast includes Muddy Waters, Van Morrison, Neil Young (wide- and wild-eyed on "Helpless"), Joni Mitchell, Eric Clapton, Ringo and, of course, Bob Dylan – a tense affair because, 15 minutes before he was due to play, Dylan announced he wouldn't. Indeed, with cocaine and ego flying, with Levon Helm having since dubbed the entire event "the biggest fuckin' rip-off that ever happened", and rumours that much of The Band's "live" playing was overdubbed, it would be something if Scorsese raided his archive to make a documentary on making this documentary. *Damien Love*



DREAMS OF A LIFE

Directed by Carol Morley
Opens December 16, Cert 12A, 96 mins ★★★

The life and death of a lost soul, reconstructed
Morley's painstaking documentary investigation pieces together the story of Joyce Vincent, discovered dead above a shopping centre in Wood Green in 2006. Her body had lain undisturbed for three years. Your initial assumption is that she must have been a lonely old lady. Morley shows otherwise. Joyce was an attractive, seemingly happy-go-lucky woman who just slipped from view. "You'd like to think everybody has got someone who'll look after them," a local journalist reflects on how Joyce ended up so alone, in spite of her family and friends. Morley has tracked down many of her acquaintances, some of whom are obviously wracked with guilt. Her film is at once a piece of detective work and a belated act of tribute. Some of the reconstructions are a little clunky but the film is fascinating, with the air of a film noir. The Joyce who emerges in the recollection of friends is a femme fatale, a nomad and a vulnerable, deeply contradictory personality. *Geoffrey Macnab*



A VERY HAROLD & KUMAR 3D CHRISTMAS

Directed by Todd Strauss-Schulson
Starring John Cho, Kal Penn
Opens December 9, Cert 18, 89 mins ★★★

Stoner hyucks, this time with a Chrimbletime twist
They got a burger. They escaped Guantanamo. Now the bumbling buddies need to get hold of a 12-foot Christmas tree before Harold's father-in-law (Danny Trejo) gets home from midnight mass. Yes, Harold (John Cho) is married, one of the Wall Street one per cent, and he's put childish things like drugs – and Kumar (Kal Penn) – behind him. But not for long! This slyly subversive/ridiculously offensive (delete according to taste) satire is the baddest Christmas movie since Billy Bob Thornton pulled on his Santa suit. There's something to offend the majority of minorities and more than a minority of the majority, but it's all in jest. And very merry too. Hard to resist a flick that puts 3D to such useful service as wafting clouds of pot smoke into the faces of its stoner audience – topped off with a cameo from Harold's phallus. *Tom Charity*

ALSO OUT...

THE BIG YEAR

Opens Dec 2
Younger readers may not remember Jack Black and Owen Wilson from their earlier, funnier films. Here they are, together again.

HUGO 3D

Opens Dec 2
A kids' film in 3D from Martin Scorsese. Think about those words, just for a minute.

HAPPY FEET 2

Opens Dec 2
More penguin-shaped animated fun from *Mad Max* director George Miller.



SURVIVING LIFE

Opens Dec 2
A married man meets another woman... in dreams! Animation from Jan Švankmajer.

THE THING

Opens Dec 2
A prequel to John Carpenter's chilly horror. The dog lives, that much we know.

PUSS IN BOOTS 3D

Opens Dec 9
Shrek spin-off, with Antonio Banderas.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS

Opens Dec 16
The redemption of Guy Ritchie continues.

WRECKERS

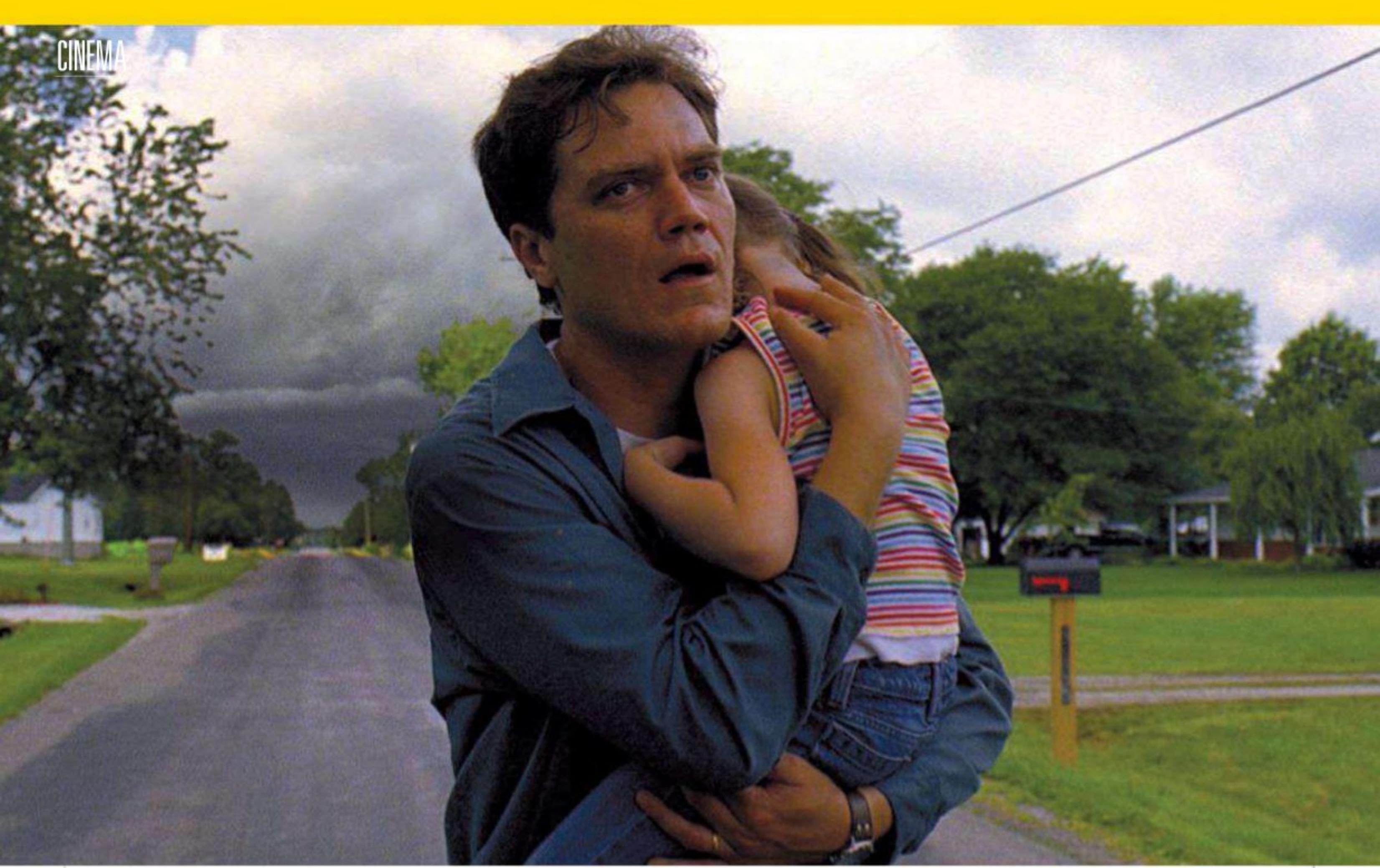
Opens Dec 16
TV's Sherlock, Benedict Cumberbatch, in sibling rivalry drama.

THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO

Opens Dec 26
David Fincher remakes the Swedish thriller. With Daniel Craig.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - GHOST PROTOCOL

Opens Dec 26
Tom Cruise. Anyone remember him?



TAKE SHELTER

Directed by Jeff Nichols
Starring Michael Shannon, Jessica Chastain, Shea Whigham, Katy Mixon, Kathy Baker
Opens November 25, Cert 15, 120 mins
★★★

Dark clouds are brewing in this disaster flick with a difference

Worried nothing truly remarkable is emerging from American cinema's independent sector these days? Take heart from the arrival of writer-director Jeff Nichols, who debuted with 2007's powerful *Shotgun Stories*, the tale of a divided Southern clan that channelled Greek tragedy in its evocation of brutal inevitability. That film's lead, Michael Shannon, returns in Nichols' follow-up, a tale of apocalyptic anxiety that doesn't let up for a second, while the film walks a tightrope between everyday realism and terrifying psychological fantasy.

Shannon plays Curtis, a man who holds down a steady job in an Ohio sand-mining company, and who has a happy life with his wife Samantha (Chastain) and their six-year-old daughter Hannah (Mixon), who is deaf. Curtis's sleep starts to be disturbed by extreme visions of environmental apocalypse, and he starts to fear that, like his elderly mother (Baker), he might be showing signs of mental disturbance. But even while the rational part of Curtis' mind keeps him on the straight and narrow, he's driven to take precautions against the peril he believes he's been granted presages of – "a storm coming, like nothing you've ever seen". As Curtis sinks the family money into a storm shelter for the backyard, the film gets us wondering whether he's really losing his grip or whether, like an Old Testament prophet, he knows something the rest of us don't.

Grounding his story firmly in a solid context of blue-collar realism, Nichols nevertheless takes us inside Curtis' mind, in nightmare sequences that, familiar and even contrived

as they sometimes seem, nevertheless have a fiendish, Hitchcockian vividness. To a degree, Nichols is playing with the conventions of the Hollywood disaster movie – and in some ways, *Take Shelter* might be seen as a sardonic riposte to the overblown apocalyptic flim-flam of movies like M Night Shyamalan's *Signs*. But you never for a moment feel you're being led up the garden path, partly because of Nichols' taut narrative control, partly because of superb actors playing credible characters facing an incredible situation. Jessica Chastain makes a more forceful, feisty mother than she did in Terrence Malick's *The Tree Of Life*, while in the lead, Shannon is as riveting as ever. We're used to this ungainly, anxious-looking golem of a man playing troubled, dangerous figures – for example, in William Friedkin's *Bug* and Werner Herzog's *My Son, My Son What Have Ye Done?*. But he's at his best here as an ordinary man looking inside himself and trying to balance his sanity against what seems to be his – and the earth's – fate. *Jonathan Romney*

TRAILER PARK



SHAME

Sex addict Michael Fassbender is let loose on the streets of New York. What could possibly go wrong? Gripping drama from *The Hunger* director Steve McQueen.



ROADIE

He spent 25 years as a "rock'n'roll butler" to Blue Oyster Cult. Now... he's moved back home to live with his mum. Indie comedy/drama, co-starring the great Bobby Cannavale.

See them all at www.apple.com/trailers



THE IRON LADY

You may remember seeing Jennifer Saunders playing Meryl Streep playing Margaret Thatcher in *The Comic Strip Presents....* Here, you can see Meryl actually doing the Thatch.

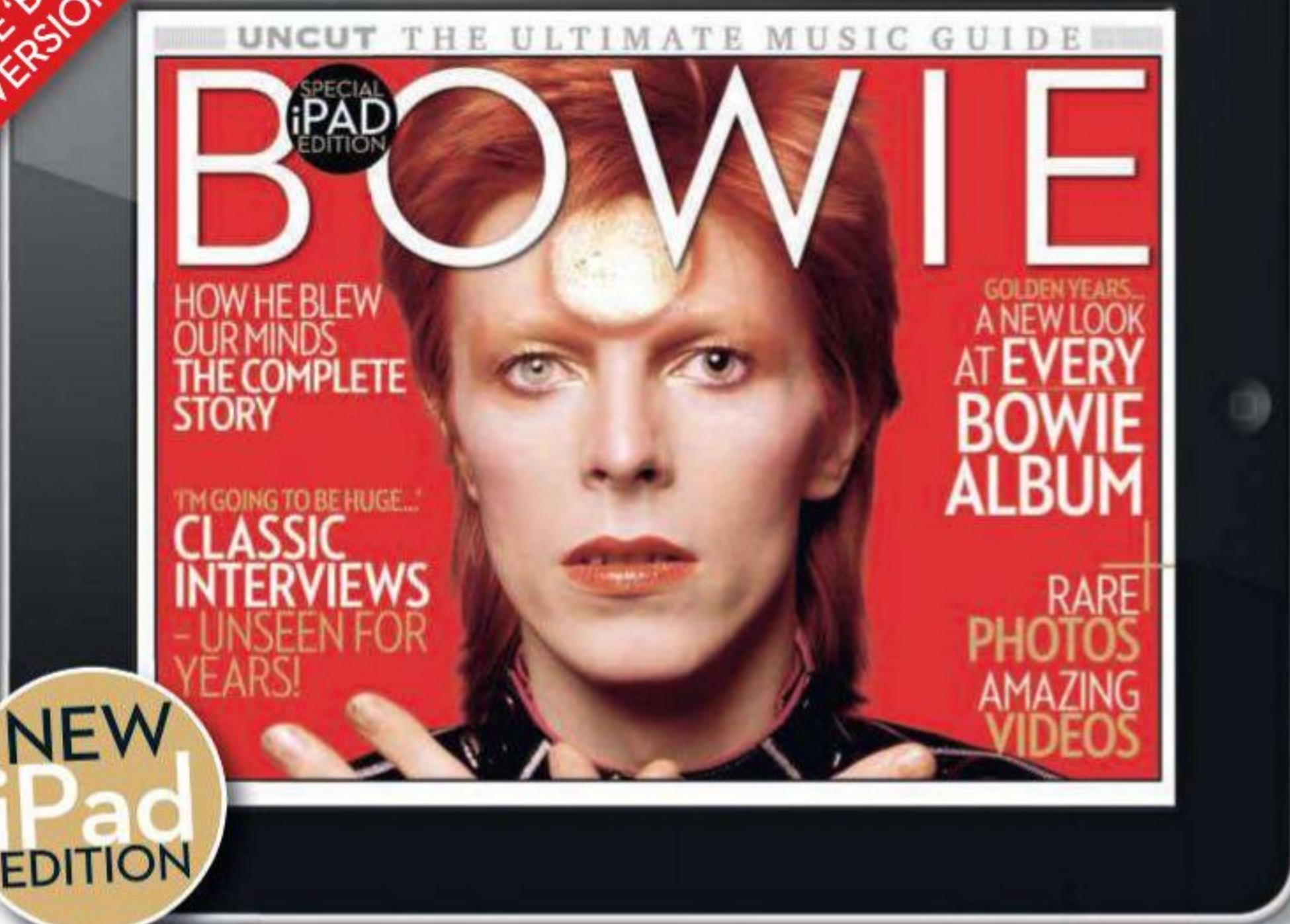
MOUTHPIECE



"The only reason why Woody Allen and I are still friends is because I've diagnosed all of his ailments"

SCARLETT JOHANSSON on the famously neurotic filmmaker

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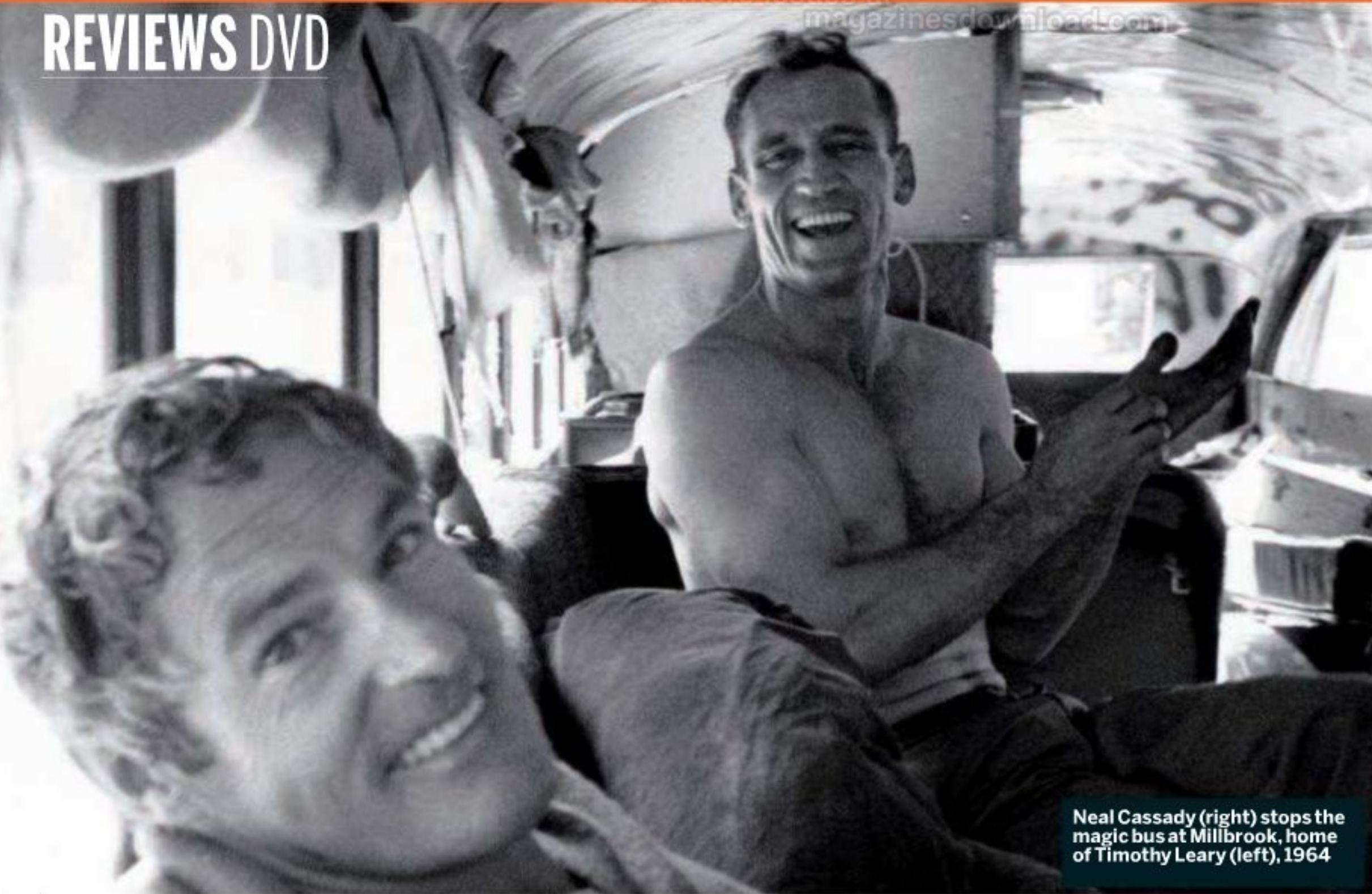
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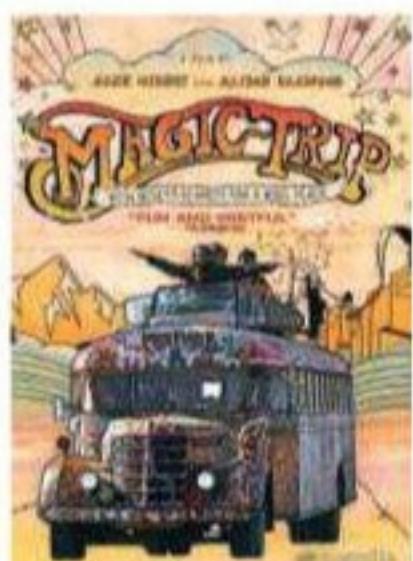


Neal Cassady (right) stops the magic bus at Millbrook, home of Timothy Leary (left), 1964

MAGIC TRIP: KEN KESEY'S SEARCH FOR A KOOL PLACE

★★★★ MAGNOLIA PICTURES

The birth of the hippy dream, caught on camera. By Rob Young



MOSS CARPETS THE floorboards. A gearstick flops loose in its housing and lichens attack the murky paint-swirls left on the coachwork. The camera is panning around the remains of Further, the "magic bus" formerly belonging to Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, whose excursion from California to New York, ostensibly to visit the 1964 World's Fair, has passed into underground legend. It's not hard to see why. Many of psychedelia's familiar tropes were birthed – grooved into being – on this trip, from tie-dye T-shirts – made during a stopover by a lake, into which they poured tins of enamel paint – to the sense of childlike carnavalesque that dominated proceedings.

I'm reluctant to call *Magic Trip* a documentary, as that implies frustratingly brief bursts of archive footage interlaced with present-day talking-head commentary. This is different. Apart from the archaeology of the bus at the very end, the entire hour and three quarters is composed of footage from the period – making use, for the first time, of the scores of hours of 16mm footage shot by the Pranksters' own cameraman. Directors Alex Gibney and Alison Ellwood have reconstructed the whole trip, adding digressive sequences, laminating it with creative animations and graphics that illuminate rather than intrude. On the soundtrack, a mix of voiceover, interviews and music tells the tale, actors reading the transcribed words of deceased participants. It's an imaginative response to a morass of material that plugs you directly into the period, placing you there on the bus. There's a scoop, too: a tape of Kesey's first LSD trial as part of the MK-ULTRA programme. The animated sequence accompanying this is brilliantly imagined, riffing off his words and suggesting the unlocking of mental doors.

Kesey and co fell between the countercultural cracks of their fast-changing times: too young to be Beatniks, too old for hippiedom. The bus contained a microcosm of the new America: a pregnant woman (Jane Burton), an exhibitionist girl ('Stark Naked'), a cameraman (Sandy Lehmann-Haupt), an ex-Vietnam soldier (Babbs). And, behind the wheel, a goddamn liability: Neal Cassady, speed-freak, motormouth, real-life model for *On The Road*'s Dean Moriarty. Throughout the journey Cassady appears as a daemonic, gesticulating helmsman, forever spouting a froth of undecipherable incantations, jazz-scat and Beat-nuttiness. Their uniform – a visual motif throughout – was the red stripes of the US flag; they were no enemy within, but a celebration of American vitality and frontiership. There was no Occupy St Paul's General Assembly earnestness here: decisions were taken on the hoof by the fried hive mind. "We went wild," says Kesey, "because we'd been caged for 50,000 years."

The acid broke barriers. Off their nuts in Louisiana, they jump into a waterhole before it dawns on them it's for blacks only: "Shit, we just reintegrated this place." Moments reveal how close they came to disaster, and the film is honest about the journey's dark side: jealous casualties of a free-love ethic that left "the whole bus fucking" by the end of the trip; the fate of Stark Naked, committed to an insane asylum halfway along; the anticlimactic arrival in NYC, where the Pranksters are banned from filming at the World's Fair. But while the film refuses to glamourise, you are left with the feeling that something did change as a result of the experience, as it fed into the ideology of the hippy movement (The Grateful Dead can be seen jamming at the Pranksters' "acid test" screenings immediately after). Exuberant and full of delight, *Magic Trip* ventures beyond '60s stereotypes, reminding you, as Kesey puts it, that "some things take precedence over enlightenment".

THE FADES

★★★

ENTERTAIN

Aiming for BBC Three's *Being Human* spot, if not quite hitting it, this gory supernatural fantasy from *Skins* writer Jack Thorne focuses on an even yowier hero whose weighty paranormal problems are sometimes compounded by more earthly concerns. Iain de Caestecker plays Paul, a troubled teen who, you know, sees dead people and stuff, and has a weird effect on the local crows. Soon he's into an apocalyptic battle to prevent the end of the world and all that.

EXTRAS: Interviews, Making Of, deleted scenes. ★★★
Damien Love

FIST OF FUN

★★★★

GO FASTER STRIPE

Stewart Lee and Richard Herring were students' darlings when this first series of their sketch and mock-magazine show aired in 1995 (transferred from Radio 1). The former's now familiar sardonic stage presence is beginning to take shape, the latter largely playing a dim-witted stooge. The groundbreaking gone-in-a-second footnote graphics encouraged viewers to tape the shows and read them back later, and there are early sightings of Al Murray, Sally Phillips and Kevin Eldon in an impressive supporting cast.

EXTRAS: Commentaries, deleted scenes, non-broadcast pilot. ★★★
Terry Staunton

THE HANGOVER PART II

★★★

WARNER HOME VIDEO

(DVD, BLU-RAY & DOWNLOAD) No surprise that the success of the original film should prompt a sequel, and one with an almost identical plot. Three men on a stag do wake up with sore heads the day before Stu's (Ed Helms) wedding, and then have to piece together events so they can locate a missing friend. The budget is bigger and the humour more laboured, but it still has its moments.

EXTRAS: Making Of, gag reels, featurettes... ★★★
Peter Watts

THE INBETWEENERS

★★★

(DVD & BLU-RAY)

Essentially shadowing the TV-to-movie trajectory of shows like *Are You Being*

Served? and *Steptoe & Son* by relocating overseas (Crete, in this instance), the *Inbetweeners* film continued Will, Kay, Neil and Simon's dogged pursuit of the clunge through the bars and clubs of Malia. Critically, it's very, very funny—not necessarily a claim you can make for many other sitcoms transferring to the big screen.

EXTRAS: Two hours of unseen material, Making Of, featurettes, etc.

★★★

Michael Bonner



THE KILLING: SEASON 2

★★★

ARROW

If you cherished the Danish thriller's first series less for the twisty whodunnit and more for the opportunity to sink into a satisfyingly gloomy atmosphere, Series Two holds a disappointment—at just 10 episodes, it's only half as long. We first discover our ambivalent detective heroine, Sarah Lund, demoted and banished to a dingy port. But she's soon called back to help with a murder that quickly becomes a dense investigation of her country's political and psychic state in these "war on terror" times. (Nearly forgot: she wears a jumper.) A boxset of both seasons is also available.

EXTRAS: Making Of. ★★

Damien Love

THE MOLLY DINEEN COLLECTION: VOLUME THREE

★★★

BFI

Dineen specialises in thoughtful, thorough, sympathetic documentaries about the British establishment, but *Geri*, the key film in this volume—the last of the BFI's reissues—concerns Geri Halliwell. It is a fascinating meditation on the absurdities of fame, as Dineen gains extraordinary access in a bid to comprehend the reality of modern celebrity. Accompanying films cover more typical topics such

as the House of Lords and foxhunting.

EXTRAS: New interview with Halliwell. *Peter Watts*

THE MOON AND THE SLEDGEHAMMER

★★★

MOON & SLEDGEHAMMER FILMS

This 1971 cinematic antique is an anthropological snoop at the Page family—father, two idiot-savant sons and two daughters—who had preserved a rural lifestyle in the Sussex Weald. Servicing their rusting traction engines and rhapsodising the steam age, their presence offers a benign resistance against modernity, peppered with surreal monologues on pet lions, submarine-building and childhood ploys to reach the moon. File this film—which plays at the family's organically decelerated pace—alongside David Gladwell's *Requiem For A Village*.

EXTRAS: Crew reunion documentary. ★★

Rob Young

REV: SERIES ONE

★★★

2ENTERTAIN

Tom Hollander's put-upon inner-city man of the cloth was a perhaps surprising BAFTA winner, but a refreshing antidote to the cosiness of *The Vicar Of Dibley*. Recently arrived from a rural Suffolk parish, Reverend Adam Smallbone and his wife (Olivia Colman) struggle to appease all aspects of their new congregation, from well-to-do social climbers (Miles Jupp) to boozy ne'er-do-wells (a scene-stealing Steve Evets), the series poking fun at class conflict as much as the role of the church in modern society.

EXTRAS: Commentaries, Making Of, character sketches, out-takes. ★★★★

Terry Staunton

RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

★★★

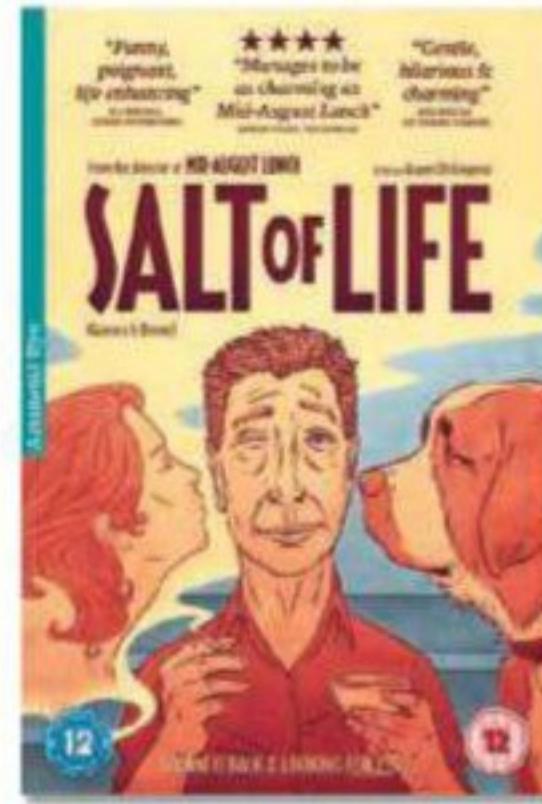
20TH CENTURY FOX
(DVD, BLU-RAY & DIGITAL DOWNLOAD)

The eighth film in the *Apes* series essentially reboots the plot from the previous instalment, *Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes*, while Andy Serkis—for it is he—does his motion-capture thing to play intelligent chimp, Caesar, who leads his simian siblings to revolution. The best of the woefully thin crop of summer

blockbusters. James Franco and the mighty John Lithgow add thesp gravitas.

EXTRAS: Loads, some of them about the "genius" of Andy Serkis. Most of them less interesting than the film, amazingly. ★

Michael Bonner



SALT OF LIFE

★★★

ARTIFICIAL EYE

If it seemed unlikely that Gianni Di Gregorio, who wrote Italy's brutal, modern Mafia epic *Gomorrah*, would next write and star in *Mid-August Lunch*—a small, delightfully gentle comedy about a (late-) middle-aged man and a bunch of old women—it was entirely unexpected he'd follow that with a semi-sequel. Once again, Di Gregorio, a hangdog antihero looking for romance, is dominated by the women around him, feeling time slip away. A beautiful, melancholy but wickedly sly movie, it's utterly disarming, and every frame feels real.

EXTRAS: Di Gregorio interview, trailer. ★★

Damien Love

SARAH'S KEY

★★★

STUDIO CANAL
(DVD, BLU-RAY & DIGITAL DOWNLOAD)

Kristin Scott-Thomas stars in this thoughtful drama about French complicity in anti-Semitic atrocities during the Second World War. Flashbacks follow Sarah, a

young Jewish girl who is taken away by French police one day in 1942, while Scott-Thomas plays a present-day journalist tracking down the truth behind what happened that day. The emerging tale looks at guilt, truth and closeted memories.

EXTRAS: Making Of, trailer.

★★ *Peter Watts*

THE TIN DRUM

★★★

ARROW (DUAL FORMAT DVD & BLU-RAY)

In 1979, Volker Schlöndorff was obliged to keep his queasy, unforgettable adaptation of Günter Grass' grotesque parable—with David Bennent extraordinary as Oskar, the little German boy who refuses to grow up as Nazism grows around him—within a certain running time. Schlöndorff recently assembled a director's cut, adding almost 30 minutes that don't change so much as amplify its haunted horror. This set includes the new cut (Blu-Ray only) alongside a restored print of the original.

EXTRAS: Schlöndorff interview and commentary, Making Of, trailer, booklet.

★★★★ *Damien Love*

TOUR OF DUTY – COMPLETE FIRST SEASON

★★★

FREMANTLE HOME ENTERTAINMENT

The first TV series about Vietnam, *Tour Of Duty* was conceived in the afterglow of *Platoon*, and ran for three years. This box contains the 21-episode first season from 1987. It hasn't weathered well. The Hawaii locations look like Hawaii, and—deprived of their novelty—the themes now seem hackneyed. You know that the harmonica-playing pacifist is going to kill someone before the pilot episode ends. "War is wrong," he complains. "Maybe," his commanding officer replies. "But that's not the point."

EXTRAS: None.

Alastair McKay



ALSO OUT...

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Marvel's campaign for movie domination continues; but how long before the superhero bubble bursts?

HANNA

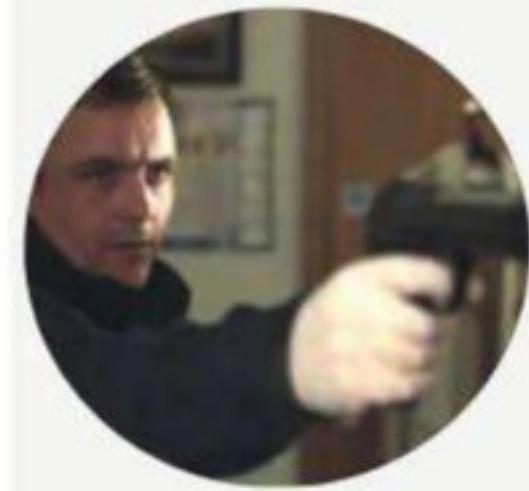
Atonement's Joe Wright directs an exquisite fable about a girl who becomes an assassin. More Red Riding Hood than *Leon*.

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

One of the more enjoyable 3D movies of late, set in Olden Times where dragons are, indeed, trained.

PAUL

Simon Pegg and Nick Frost jump the shark in a lightweight comedy about two loser dudes who befriend an alien.



KILL LIST

Superb British thriller (above), with shades of *The Wicker Man*.

SCARFACE

On Blu-ray: enjoy your favourite chainsaw sequence in hi-def.

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

A bloodthirsty reimagining of the Arnie original that tanked at the flicks.

APOLLO 18

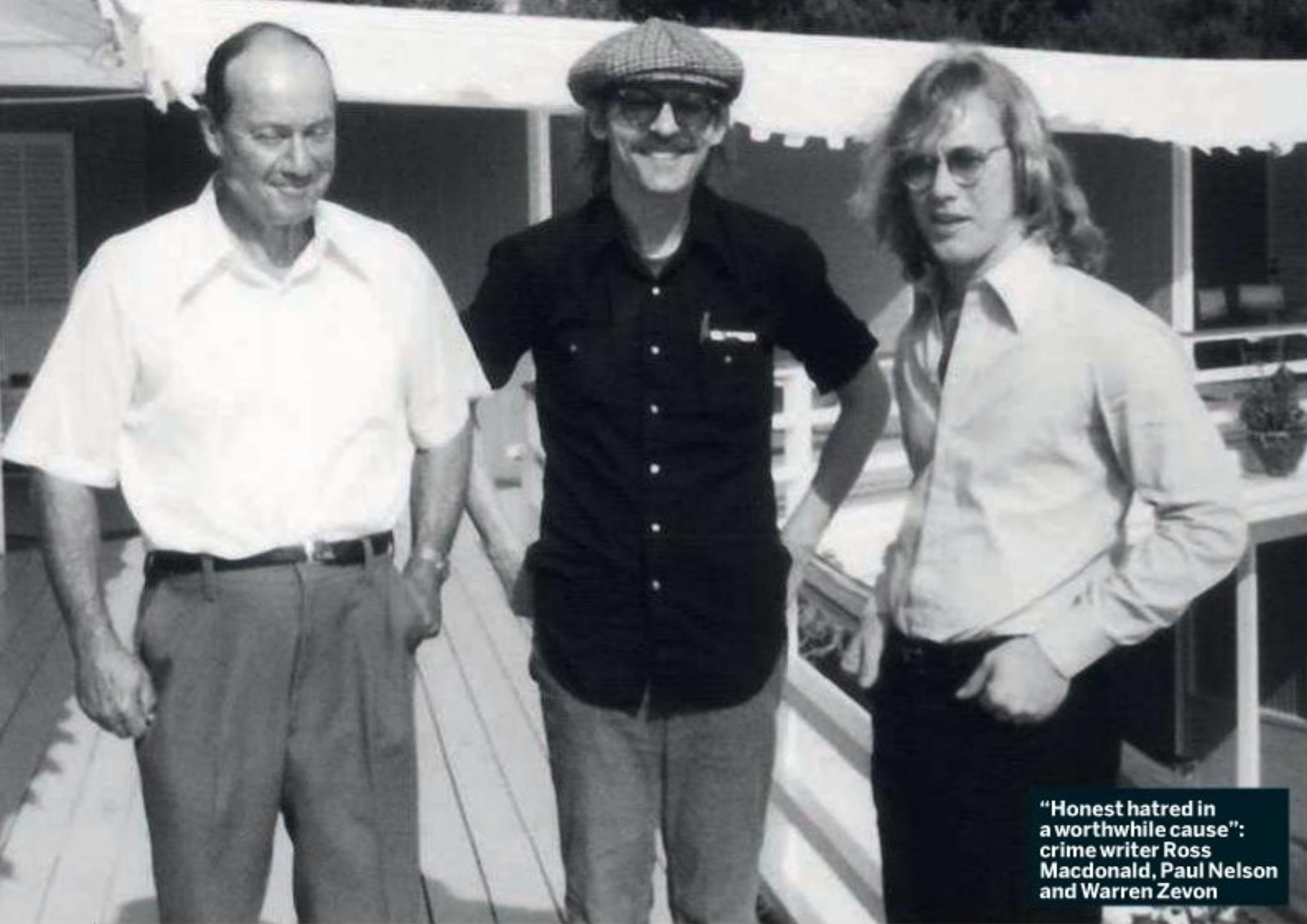
Look, there were aliens and this is, like, found footage, and stuff.

NED KELLY

Not, sadly, the Jagger version. A very good retelling of the story, with Heath Ledger as the Aussie outlaw.

THE SKIN I LIVE IN

Brilliant chiller from Pedro Almodovar with Antonio Banderas as a plastic surgeon, doing all sorts of nasty things to a poor girl. Or is he?

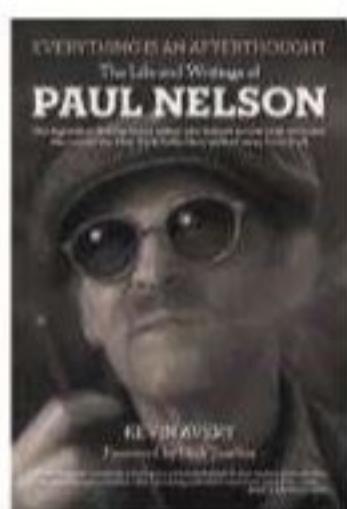


EVERYTHING IS AN AFTERTHOUGHT: The Life And Writings Of Paul Nelson

Kevin Avery FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

★★★

Influential, ill-fated critic who left the world behind



THERE'S A CHARACTER in Jonathan Lethem's great satirical novel *Chronic City* called Perkus Tooth. Perkus is a once-celebrated critic of dizzying originality and radical thought, with an especial passion for rock music and movies, who has been reduced to a life of paranoid isolation on New York's Lower East Side, where he lives surrounded by the fraying evidence of an illustrious past. No-one is much interested in what he thinks about anything any longer. His life, therefore, is without much consequence.

Lethem's likely inspiration, at least in part, for Tooth was Paul Nelson. Formerly a revered and hugely influential critic, by the end of his life Nelson was marginalised, with nothing more to say, in print at least, about the films and music he had loved, written about and championed in the pages of some of America's most prestigious publications – including *Rolling Stone*, where he edited the reviews section at a time when the magazine was a crucial cultural touchstone.

Nelson also worked briefly for Mercury Records, first in their publicity department, then in A&R, signing the New York Dolls. When their career bombed, Nelson was sacked. He returned to journalism, writing principally for *Rolling Stone*. Nelson was an advocate of the long-form album review and thought nothing of dedicating editorial space to notices that

sometimes ran to thousands of words. When *Rolling Stone*'s commercial imperatives dictated a shift towards abbreviated reviews, Nelson walked, becoming only an occasional contributor. He subsequently wrote for *Musician* and *People* magazines, laboured for years on a screenplay for a movie that would never be made and ended up working at a video store until the onset of Alzheimer's made him unemployable. By the end of his life he was not far from destitute, given to wandering the streets, sometimes sleeping rough when he lost his bearings. He survived for a time on handouts from friends and former colleagues distressed by his current circumstances. In July 2006, his body was found in his Manhattan apartment. Early reports suggested he had starved to death. The body had been there for a week during the height of a New York summer, and not much of it was left. Heat and decomposition had left it an unspeakable mess, and it had not escaped the attention of hungry rats. Nelson was 69.

Kevin Avery's *Everything Is An Afterthought: The Life And Writings Of Paul Nelson* is both a succinct biography of Nelson, whose writing Avery first encountered as a teenager, and an anthology of some of Nelson's most notable work. Both aspects of the book are equally fascinating and illuminate not just the life of its subject, but the times through which he moved and the people he shared it with.

While he was a student at the University of Minnesota, Nelson and his friend John

Pankake launched *Little Sandy Review*, a folk music magazine. Bob Dylan, then still Bobby Zimmerman, was working the local Minneapolis coffee-houses and, via the magazine, met Nelson, already a keen record collector. "He had a whole lot of records which probably couldn't be found anywhere else in the Midwest," Dylan says in Martin Scorsese's 2005 documentary *No Direction Home*, in which Nelson appeared. Dylan was so taken by some of Nelson's albums that he believed him of their ownership, helping himself to them when Nelson was out of town and learning songs that ended up in his early repertoire.

Nelson eventually followed Dylan to New York, becoming managing editor at the pre-eminent folk magazine of the time, *Sing Out!*. In 1965, when Dylan went electric, as they say, at the Newport Folk Festival, folk purists were appalled. Nelson leapt to Dylan's defence and later claimed he went electric himself, at the same time as Bob. As tired as Dylan of the restrictive outlook of the folk establishment, Nelson quit *Sing Out!*, finding work at *Circus* magazine, *Village Voice* and, of course, *Rolling Stone*. Along with contemporaries like Greil Marcus, Mikal Gilmore, Nick Tosches, Jon Landau and Dave Marsh, Nelson brought an almost professorial scrutiny to rock writing – the critical glare you might usually associate with heavyweight literary criticism, say.

That's not to suggest his writing was stifled by academic fustiness or dry analysis. Nelson wrote in a vernacular style that might first be attributed to *The New Yorker*'s fabled film writer Pauline Kael, and which was evident in the work of Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer – the so-called "New Journalism". Nelson also co-opted the hardboiled prose style of Chandler, Hammett and, especially, Ross Macdonald, for whose LA noirs he shared a passion with his friend, Warren Zevon, the subject of one of his finest pieces (Warren Zevon: How He Saved Himself From A Coward's Death, a hilarious but harrowing account of Zevon's battle with alcoholism).

Nelson was sometimes criticised for often writing about musicians who were also his friends, but he never allowed friendships to compromise his point of view. He believed, as he put it, in "honest hatred in a worthwhile cause". If there were harsh things to be said, he said them, whatever the consequences. A brilliantly rude destruction of the haplessly vain JD Souther ("If narcissism paid two bucks an hour, JD Souther would be a billionaire") cost him not only Jackson Browne's friendship but also Browne's collaboration on a book that would have made Nelson a lot of money, of which he was always in desperate need. Nelson's reluctance to be seen to any extent a mere mouthpiece for the stars he wrote about may also partly explain his future reluctance to write a book on Neil Young, for which Neil, astonishingly, promised his full co-operation.

Avery tells Nelson's story with skilful affection and is much-helped by the vivid and uniformly insightful testimony his interviews with Nelson's many illustrious peers and protégés, at *Rolling Stone* and elsewhere, have elicited. The common opinion they share is that he may have been the best of them.

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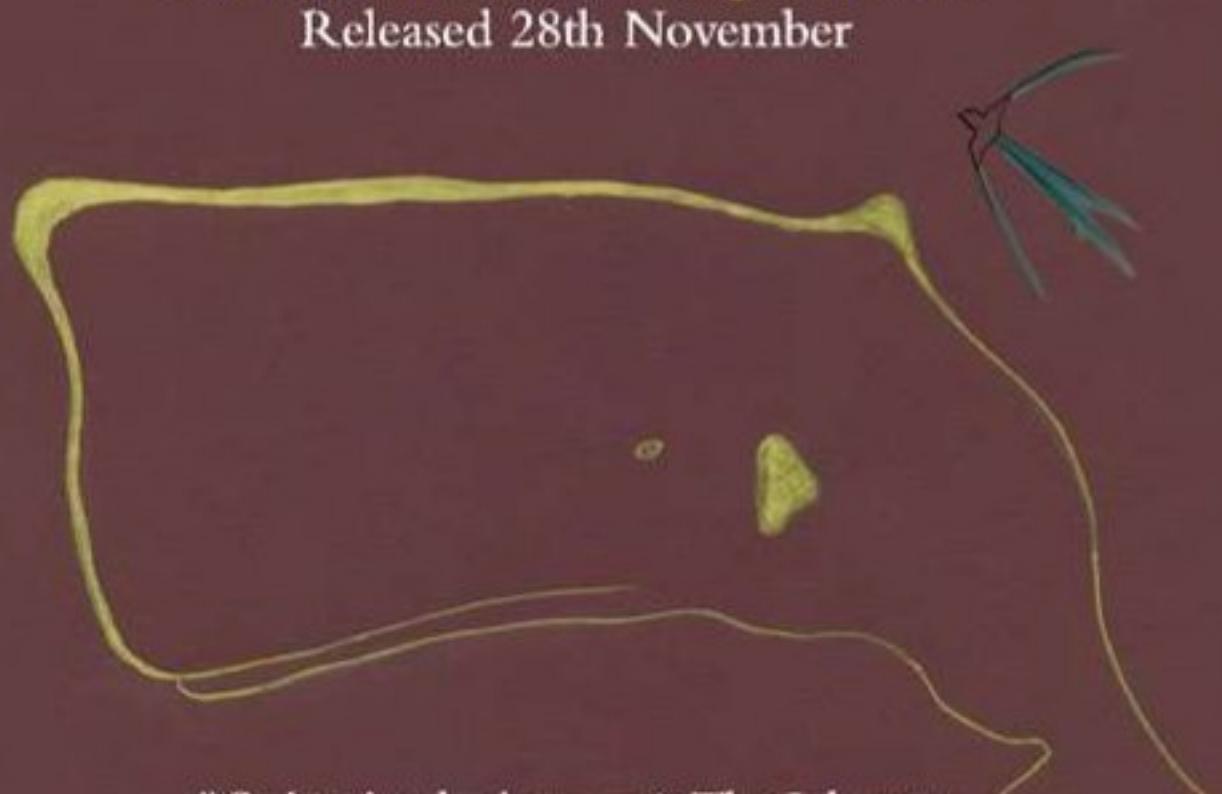
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Robert Wyatt

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05 Hebden Bridge Picture House / 06 Hebden Bridge Picture House / 07 Lincoln Drill Hall
08 Birmingham Town Hall / 09 Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms / 10 Falmouth Princess Pavilion
11 Canterbury Gulbenkian Theatre / 12 Brighton Dome

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05 Glasgow, Oran Mor
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06 Manchester, Cathedral
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07 Bristol, The Fleece
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WEDNESDAY 01 FEBRUARY
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FRIDAY 03 FEBRUARY
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08

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SATURDAY 28 JANUARY
LEEDS MET UNIVERSITY
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MONDAY 30 JANUARY
BIRMINGHAM HMV LIBRARY
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TUESDAY 31 JANUARY
BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2
 01273 673 311

WEDNESDAY 01 FEBRUARY
NORWICH WATERFRONT
 01603 508 050

FRIDAY 03 FEBRUARY
BRISTOL UNIVERSITY ANSON ROOMS
 0117 929 9008

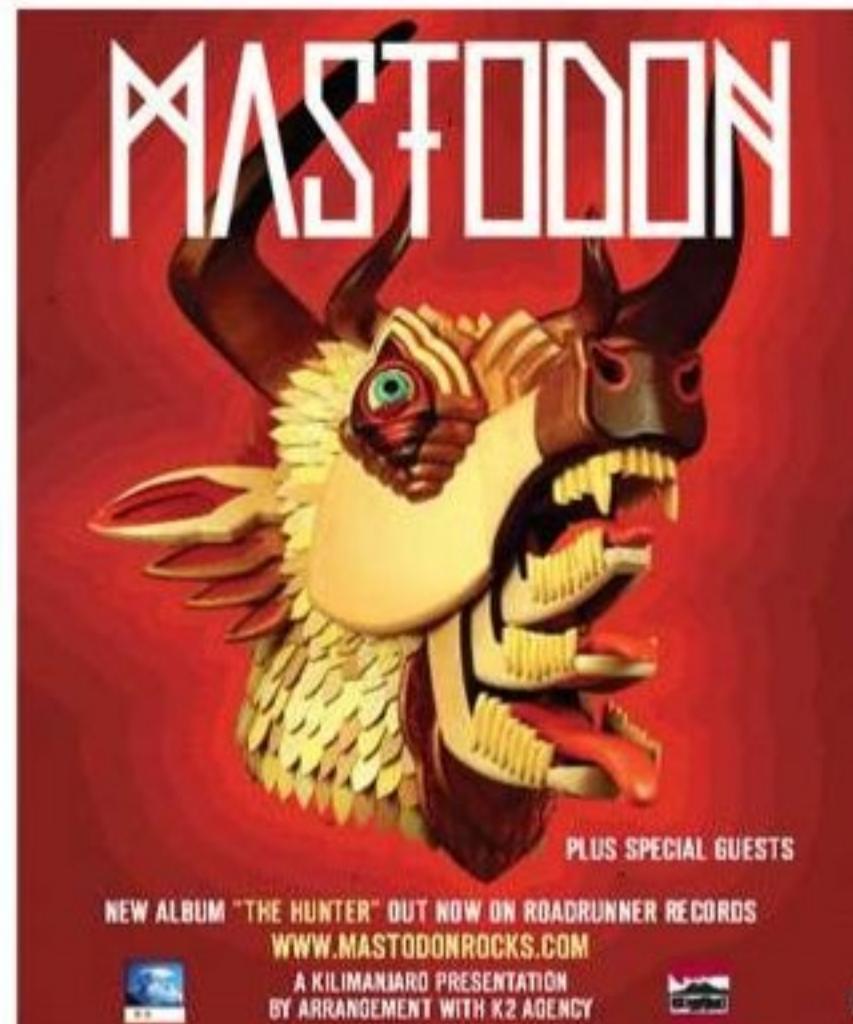
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TUESDAY 07 FEBRUARY
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THURSDAY 09 FEBRUARY
NORWICH UEA
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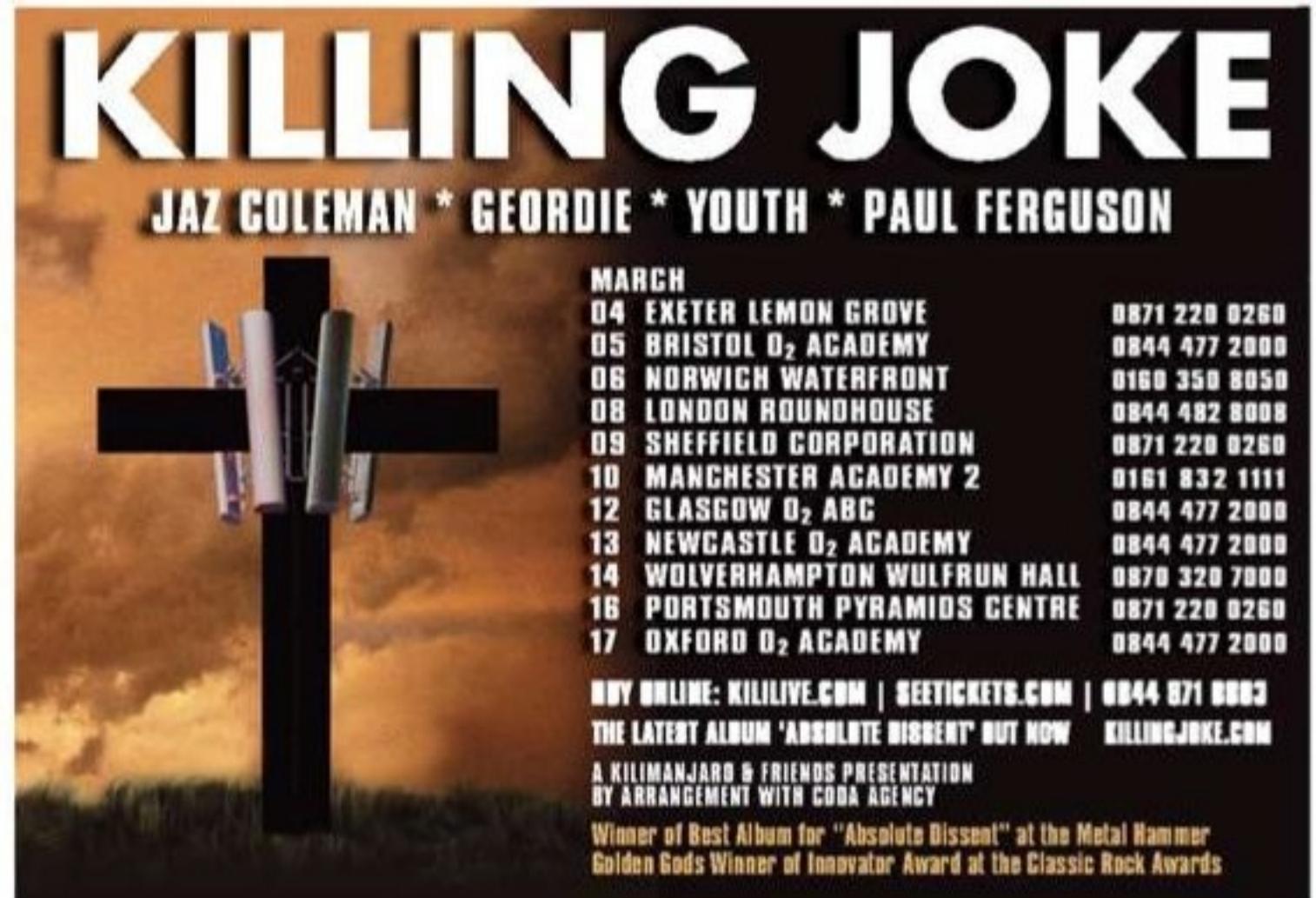
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0844 248 5037

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09	SHEFFIELD CORPORATION	0871 220 0260
10	MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2	0161 832 1111
12	GLASGOW O2 ABC	0844 477 2000
13	NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
14	WOLVERHAMPTON WULFRUN HALL	0870 320 7000
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Sun	18	LEEDS WARDROBE lunatickets.co.uk / 0113 245 5570
Mon	19	LONDON O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE kililive.com / 0871 220 0260
Wed	21	BRIGHTON KOMEDIA kililive.com / 0844 871 8803
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WED 08	NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
THU 09	LEEDS O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
SAT 11	LONDON O2	0844 477 2000
	SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE	0844 477 2000
SUN 12	READING HEXAGON	0118 960 6060
MON 13	NORWICH UEA	01603 508 050
WED 15	BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
THU 16	NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY	0845 413 4444
FRI 17	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
SAT 18	SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000

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0870 320 7000THURSDAY 19 YORK BARBICAN
0844 854 2757FRIDAY 20 EDINBURGH CORN EXCHANGE
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0844 477 2000MONDAY 23 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
0845 146 1460TUESDAY 24 PORTSMOUTH GUILDFHALL
023 9282 4355WEDNESDAY 25 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
0116 233 3111FRIDAY 27 BLACKPOOL EMPRESS BALLROOM
0844 856 1111SATURDAY 28 LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE
020 7403 33310844 811 0051 - 0844 576 5483 - gigsandtours.com - livenation.co.uk
All shows are all ages or 14+, check venue or band website for details

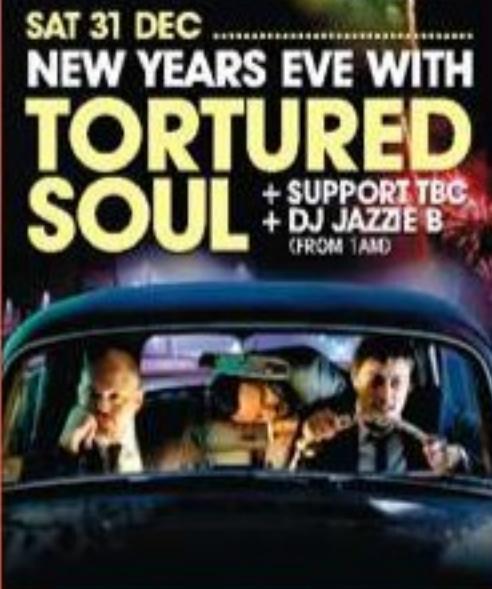
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Wednesday 7 December MEAN FIDDLER PRESENTS THE SWELLERS	Saturday 14 January MEAN FIDDLER PRESENTS EMANUEL & THE FEAR	bedrock
Thursday 8 December MEAN FIDDLER PRESENTS ROCKINGBIRDS	Friday 16 January MEAN FIDDLER PRESENTS ENTER SHIKARI	EVERY FRIDAY
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Saturday 10 December DOP PRESENTS PRESENTS SCOUNDRELS	Sunday 22 January MEAN FIDDLER PRESENTS THE XCERTS	TEAR THIS OUT & GET CHEAPER ENTRANCE
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07 Bristol Colston Hall 0117 922 3686
09 Liverpool Philharmonic Hall 0151 709 3789
10 Nottingham Royal Concert Hall 0115 989 5555
11 Usher Hall Edinburgh 0131 228 1155
13 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall 0141 353 8000
14 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall 0141 353 8000
15 Leicester De Montfort Hall 0116 233 3111
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Sun 15/LONDON/Cecil Sharp House
Tues 17/CARDIFF/St David's Hall
Wed 18/NORWICH/Norwich Arts Centre
Thurs 19/POCKLINGTON/Pocklington Arts Centre

Fri 20/GATESHEAD/Gateshead Town Hall
Sat 21/BURY/The Met
Sun 22/GLASGOW/Celtic Connections
Wed 25/BELFAST/The Errigle Inn (The Real Music Club)
Thurs 26/PORTSTEWART/The Flowerfield Arts Centre
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28 GATESHEAD THE SAGE GATESHEAD	0191 443 4661
29 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL	08444 999 990
MARCH	
02 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL	0151 709 3789
04 MANCHESTER THE BRIDgewater HALL	0161 907 9000
05 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL	0114 278 9789
07 BRISTOL COLSTON HALL	0117 922 3686
09 SALISBURY CITY HALL	01722 434434
10 BASINGSTOKE ANVIL	01256 844244
12 IPSWICH REGENT	01473 433100
13 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL	0121 780 3333
16 LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL	0844 847 9910
17 LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL	0844 847 9910
19 OXFORD NEW THEATRE	0844 847 1585
20 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL	0115 989 5555
22 CARDIFF WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE	029 2063 6464
23 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS	08451 461460
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12 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY2	0844 477 2000	25 FALMOUTH PAVILLION	0132 621 1222
13 MILTON KEYNES THE STABLES	0190 828 0800	26 BATH KOMEDIA	0845 293 8480
14 STOCKTON THE ARC	0164 252 5199	28 WOLVERHAMPTON ROBIN 2	0190 240 1211
15 SHEFFIELD THE PLUG	0844 478 0898	March 2012	
17 GATESHEAD THE SAGE	0844 478 0898	01 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY2	0844 477 2000
18 ABERDEEN LEMONTREE	0844 478 0898	02 LONDON O2 ACADEMY ISLINGTON	0844 477 2000
19 GLASGOW ARCHES	0844 478 0898	04 YORK DUCHESS	0844 477 1000
20 INVERNESS IRONWORKS	0871 789 4173	06 HULL THE WELLY	0844 477 1000
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FRI 03 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY2	0161 832 1111	10 Bristol Thekla	0845 413 4444
SAT 04 GLASGOW O2 ABC2 (IN ASSOCIATION WITH CELTIC CONNECTIONS)	0844 499 9990	11 Portsmouth Wedgwood Rooms	0239 286 3911
SUN 05 LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY2	0844 499 9990	12 Falmouth Princess Pavilion	0132 621 1222
TUE 07 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY3	0844 477 1000	14 London O2 Academy Islington	0844 477 2000
WED 08 LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY2	0845 413 4444	15 Southend Chinnerys	0170 246 7305
THU 09 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY2			
FRI 10 LONDON O2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON			

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24-7 SPYZ USA

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Sun 18 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy2	0844 477 2000
Mon 19 LONDON Scala	0844 477 1000

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Sat 11 LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
Sun 12 MILTON KEYNES STABLES	01908 280 800
Tue 14 GATESHEAD THE SAGE	0844 477 1000
Wed 15 LEAMINGTON SPA ASSEMBLY	0844 854 1358
Fri 17 FROME CHEESE & GRAIN	01373 455 420
Sat 18 LONDON SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE	0844 477 2000
Mon 20 BUXTON OPERA HOUSE FESTIVAL	0845 127 2190

the ordinaryboys



December

01 Leeds Cockpit	0113 244 4600	09 Birmingham O2 Academy2	0844 477 2000
02 Manchester Club Academy	0161 832 1111	10 Bristol Thekla	0845 413 4444
03 Aberdeen Lemon Tree	0844 499 9990	11 Portsmouth Wedgwood Rooms	0239 286 3911
04 Glasgow King Tuts	0844 499 9990	12 Falmouth Princess Pavilion	0132 621 1222
06 Newcastle The Cluny	0844 477 1000	14 London O2 Academy Islington	0844 477 2000
07 Nottingham Rock City Basement	0845 413 4444	15 Southend Chinnerys	0170 246 7305

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Friday 16 December
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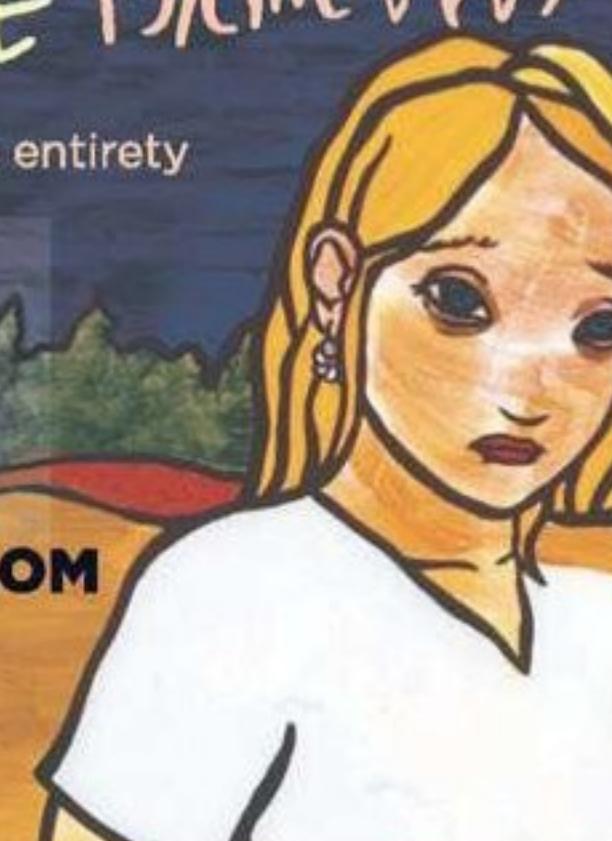
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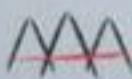
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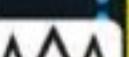
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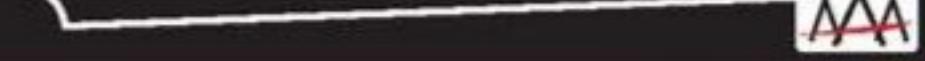
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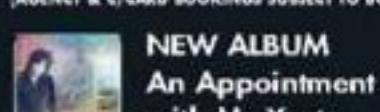
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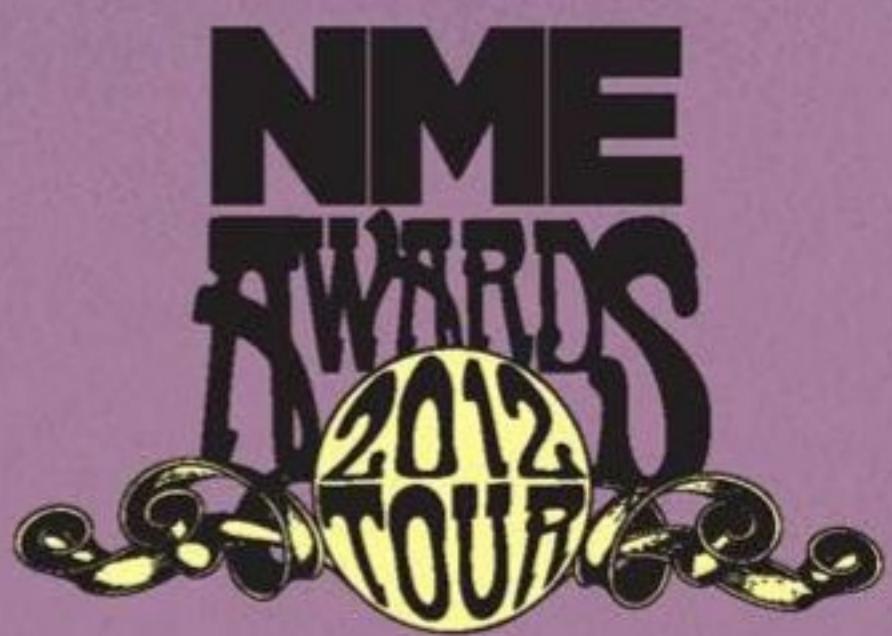
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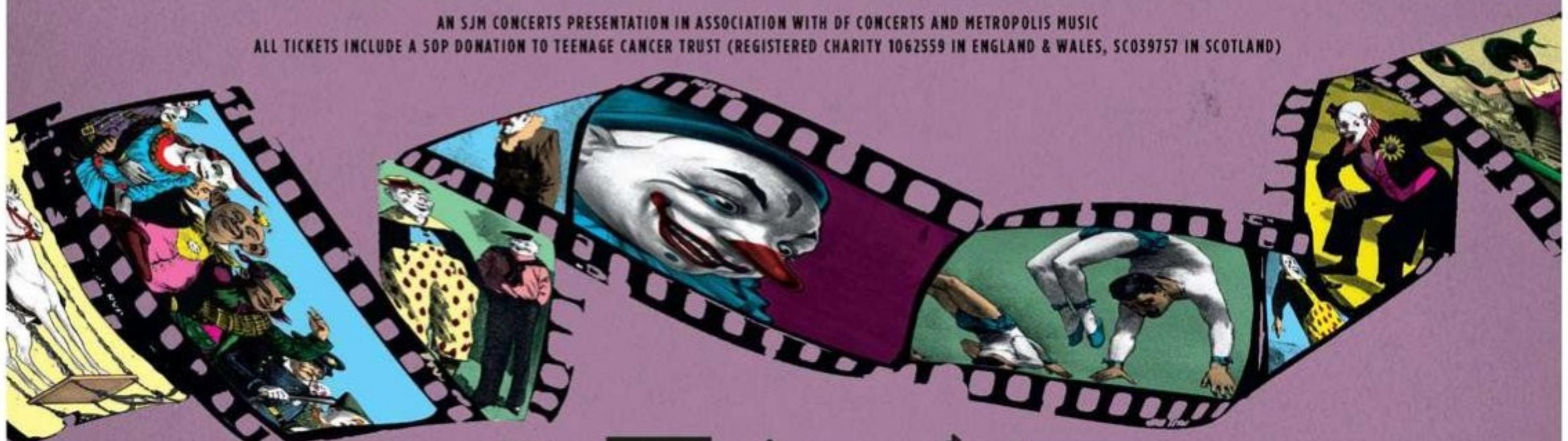
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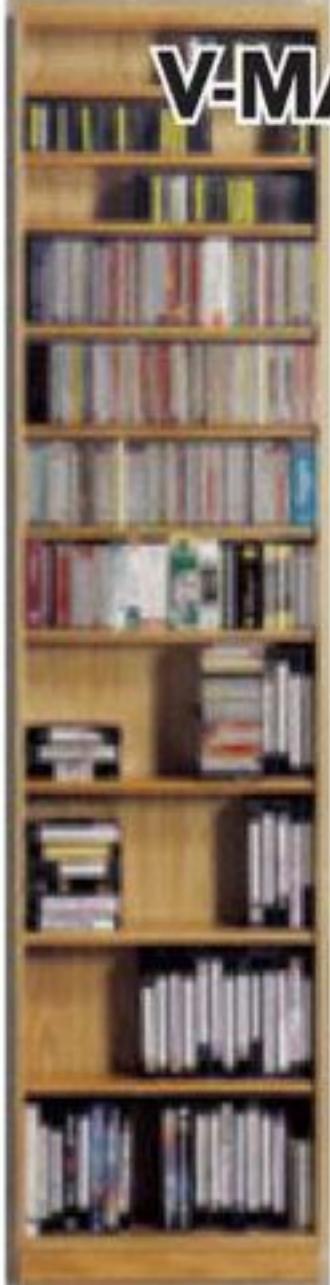
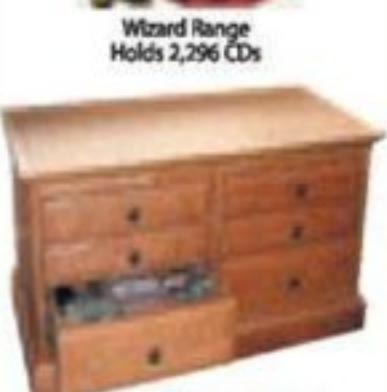
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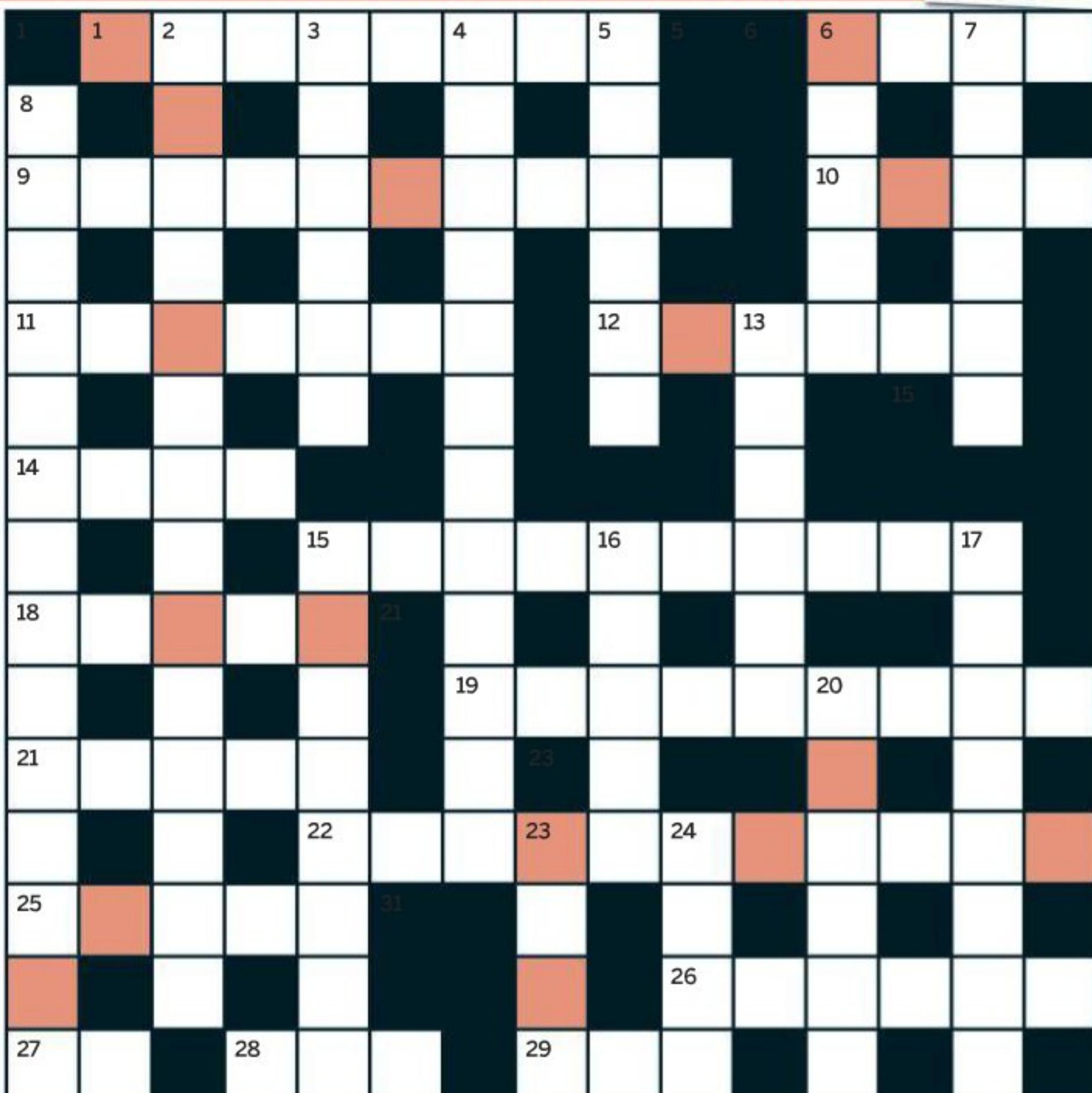
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ACROSS

1+17D After 10 years without Bush, they've come flooding back (3-3-2-8)
6 (See 8 down)
9 The Eels let slip their Spanish werewolf in 2009 (6-4)
10 You better you bet The Who had a winner here in 1968 (4)
11 Billy Lunn's band who are part of the underground scene? (7)
12 Roxy Music No 1 album, the title track was a Top 20 hit (6)
14+6D For this Blue Aeroplanes work of art, this person was just a poser (4-5)
15 Lloyd Cole's album equivalent of being middle of the road, although in a very watered-down way (10)
18 "And _____ doesn't mind if he doesn't make the scene / He's got a daytime job, he's doing alright", from Dire Straits' "Sultans Of Swing" (5)
19 Both Sam Cooke and Rod Stewart used my one incorrectly (3-4-2)
21 Justice is now being done to _____. Video, Disco (5)
22 Beyoncé should get her bottom spanked for acting like this (7-4)
25+26A London band who went "Long Distance", having to slowdown in Italy (5-6)
27 Through which Steely Dan tuned in with no static at all (1-1)
28+7D Formerly with The Amboy Dukes, going solo for him was a Free-For-All (3-6)
29 They went on their ambient way with Bicycles & Tricycles (3)

DOWN

2 Neil Diamond back from working on another album, and there's still a brilliance about him (4-6-4)
3 Michael and Janet Jackson together in full voice in 1995 (6)
4 "I tried so hard all summer through not to think too much of you", opening line to Dusty Springfield hit (3-1-3-2-3)
5 American teen idol whose only UK hit was in 1960 with "Hound Dog Man" (6)
6 (See 14 across)
7 (See 28 across)
8+6A "But if you leave me 100 times, 100 times I'll take you back", 1966 and 1975 (4-3-5-2-4)
13 Are EMI about to name a female singer who has "1 Thing" (6)
15 The Beatles backed Tony Sheridan on this song – which charted in 1963 – during their Hamburg days (2-6)
16 Joe _____, whose song "Hush" was covered by Deep Purple and Kula Shaker (5)
17 (See 1 across)
20 NWA's album _____ 4Life, often referred to by its cover image, as Efil4Zaggin (6)
23 An '80s No 1 hit that's gone wrong (4)
24 Ernest _____, honky-tonk countryman who went "Walking The Floor Over You" (4)

HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by PJ Harvey. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut January 2012 Xword Comp, 9th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first three correct entries picked at random will win the prize. Closing date: January 3, 2012. This competition is only open to European residents.

ANSWERS FOR TAKE 174

ANSWERS ACROSS
1+19A A Creature I Don't Know, 9 Steve Cropper, 10+24A Sub-Culture, 11+17D Apple Venus, 12 Lambert, 13+25D Sweetest Thing, 16 Greed, 18I.R.S., 20 Easter, 26 Who's, 27 Gig, 28 Vivid, 29 Noel, 31 Dr Dre, 32 August

ANSWERS DOWN

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"Our Prayer"

Crossword compiled by Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

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Stop me if you've heard this one before

WHO: **Buzzcocks**

WHERE: **LONDON, APRIL 1990**

BUZZCOCKS ARE MY favourite band of the punk era, if not of all time. While other punks spat and raged and gurned, Buzzcocks (not, please, The Buzzcocks – because, as singer Pete Shelley liked to point out, “Buzzcocks are the definite article”) brought both wit and world-weary romance to the times. They were arty and accessible, romantic and cynical, and both the best guitar band in the world and melodic in a way most singer-songwriters could only dream of.

Buzzcocks were my first big concert when I moved to London from Devon. They were supported by Joy Division, a band with whom I was not impressed, for the simple reason that they weren’t Buzzcocks (in time I have come to make allowances for this). When they split up, in a fizz of LSD and depression, it wasn’t so bad, because Shelley immediately released “Homosapien”, a single as good as anything by Buzzcocks.

By the time I became a music journalist, in spring 1983, things were less great. Shelley’s singles were still good, but less successful, while co-cock Steve Diggle had moved on to the rockier Flag Of Convenience. By now, though, I could meet my idols when I went out. I interviewed Pete at least once in the solo years and, at a party at the Embassy Club, where *A Clockwork Orange* was on a loop behind the bar and Lemmy was always on the fruit machines, I found myself at the bar, unable to get a free drink because I couldn’t get a drink pass. Shelley looked over with his eyes full of innocence and said, in a voice part Clitheroe Kid and part Manchester art-punk, “You see, David, girls don’t give passes to men who wear glasses.”

Years passed and Buzzcocks, like almost all great bands, reformed. They did some comeback shows before drummer John Maher left for the second time, to return to the world of fast cars. Buzzcocks decided to put their reunion on a permanent footing, and invited Mike Joyce from The Smiths to join them. *NME* commissioned me to write about this and so it was I found myself walking through the grey streets of King’s Cross, not to a rehearsal room or a press conference, but to Pete Shelley’s wedding reception. As I walked in the door and saw Pete with his new bride and his mum and dad on the top table, he invited me to sit down with the words, “Bet you never thought this would happen, did you, Dave?”

He had a point. Pete was one of rock’s genuine bisexuals. My friend Jackie had a picture of him on her wall snogging Steve Diggle. Pete was about as likely to marry a lady as Morrissey was to sell meat pies for the Stone Roses. And yet he



Going steady again:
Buzzcocks, 1990

“See those sailing ships with the big sails? That’s your mum’s pants, that is”
–Pete Shelley

had, and here we were. I had a chat with his brother and his parents and then we decamped to a stretch limo to drive around London while I interviewed the band. I was interviewing Buzzcocks! Drunk on champagne! Mike Joyce was charm in human form and revealed his great love of the band (he continues to play their songs even now in more recent bands).

It was a marvellous day, one not even surpassed by the concerts I attended, or even the trip to Los Angeles I somehow managed to blag to review Buzzcocks live, where they played the Viper Room and I managed to get completely pissed with Alan McGee in the Mondrian Hotel. (“Fuck me, Dave,” said Alan as we fought our way into more cocktails, “you can certainly fucking drink.” Not soon after, Alan stopped drinking for good.) I stayed in touch with Buzzcocks and it was not an enormous surprise when I was asked by their record company if I’d like to be the off-camera

interviewer for their video singles compilation, *Playback*.

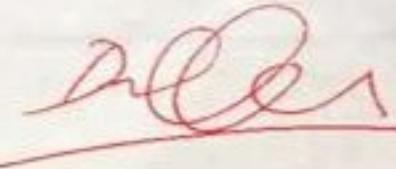
I spent a brilliant afternoon with Pete and Steve in a studio somewhere in West London as they reminisced about their glory years. After the interview, someone suggested we all go for a drink. The nearest venue known to the three of us was the Columbia Hotel, the most rock’n’roll building in all of London at this point. Here, bands would hole up in cheap rooms for days on end, only emerging to drink, take drugs in the toilets, and stare at the few poor tourists who’d booked a room here.

In the Columbia’s bar, there was us, and there was a young band in the corner, full of lager and entourage. We paid them no heed, despite their Northern accents and cheery leeriness. Instead, we drank a lot and talked about the fact of Buzzcocks’ reunion. As a fan, I was – well, a fan. But Pete wanted to make sure. “So, Dave,” he said, “what do you think of us getting back together? Be honest, I won’t mind.” I decided to be honest, and told Pete that, while I was personally delighted, I felt that some people – not me – might see it as another reunion for the money. To which Pete responded, “Why don’t you get out of your ivory tower then and live in the real world?”

Luckily, talk moved on to our favourite comedy. Pete was especially fond of Newman and Baddiel’s brilliant History Today routine, in which the comics, dressed as elderly Oxbridge historians, called each other out in playground language, ending each bout with the words, “That’s your mum, that is.” By now we were quite refreshed, and Pete decided he needed to spread the word. He approached the band in the corner of the bar, themselves glowing from the evening’s labour, and decided – with no introduction – to try out his favourite routine.

“You see that Geoff Capes?” Pete said to one, who failed to provide the next line (“Yes, I am familiar with the athlete of that name”). Taking silence for assent, Pete continued, “That’s your mum, that is.” And, without waiting for laughter, he went on, “You see those sailing ships with the big white sails? That’s your mum’s pants, that is.” And on he went, until the band member furrowed his thick eyebrows and said, “Listen mate, I don’t care who you are or what legendary fucking punk band you were in, fuck off.”

And that, unless memory fails me, is how Noel Gallagher met Pete Shelley.


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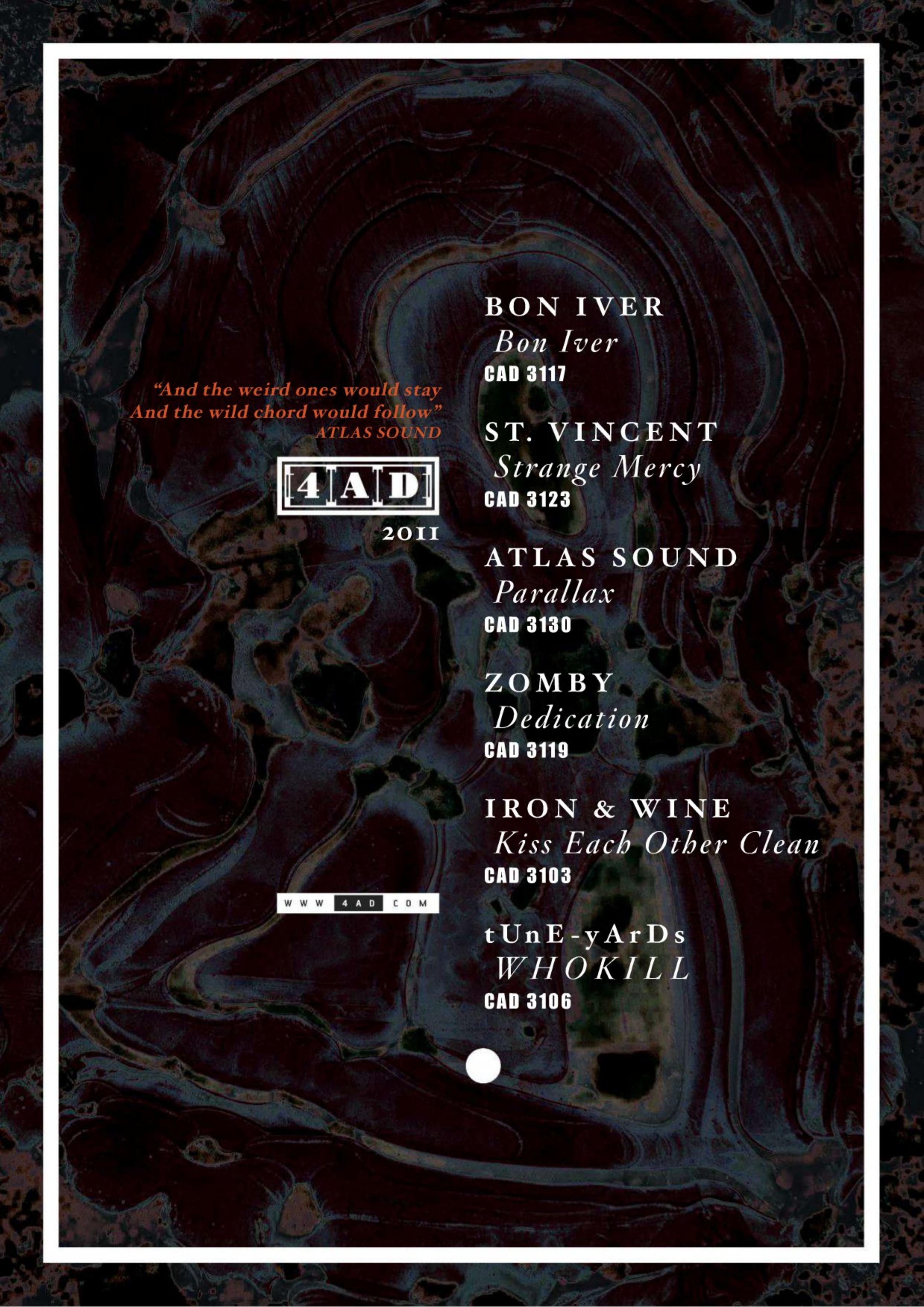


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*“And the weird ones would stay
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