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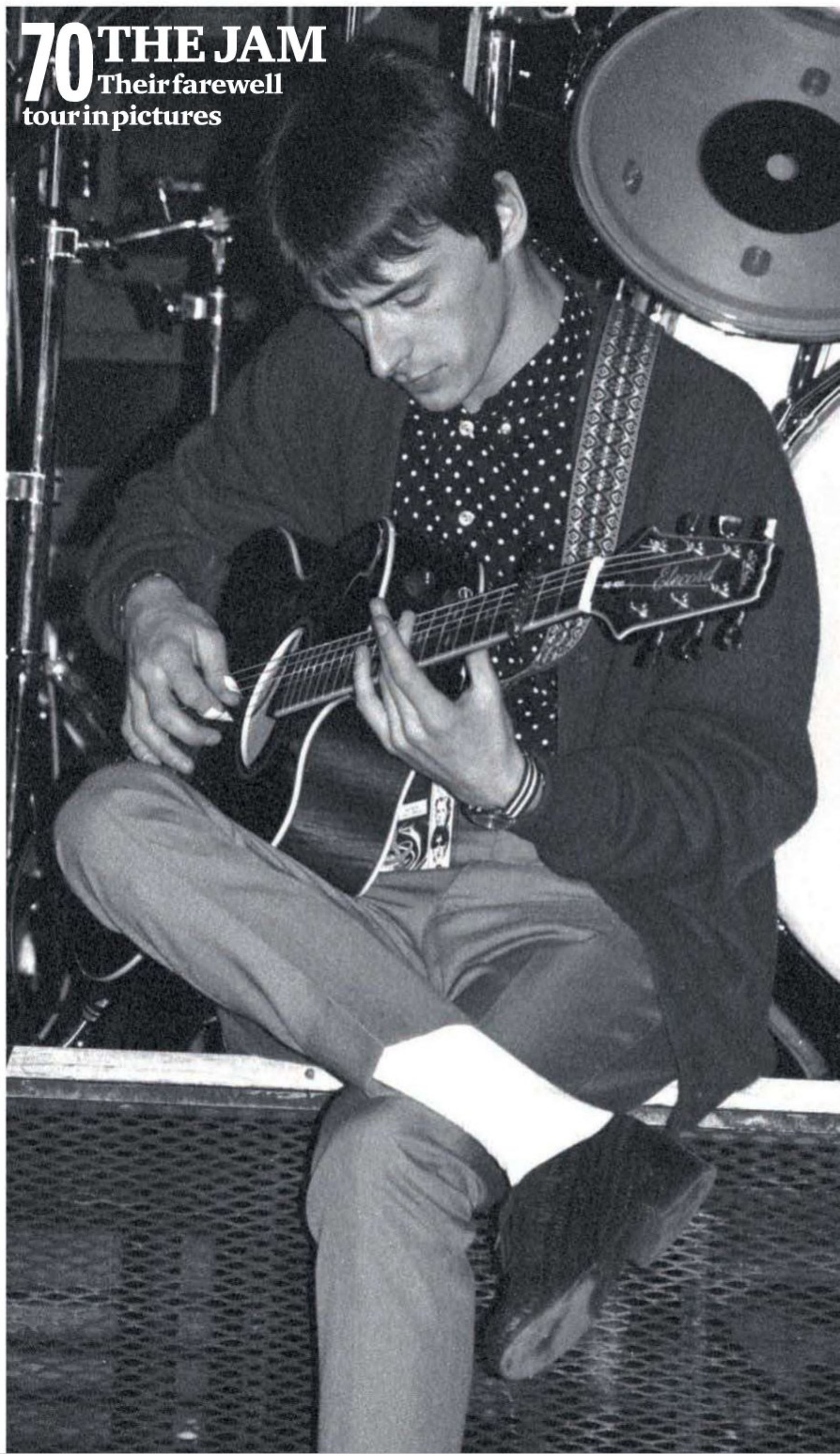
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# THE EDITOR...



I WENT TO the Star-Club once, but I didn't see The Beatles. They'd long since left the building, playing their last residency there 50 years ago, in 1962.

By the time I fetched up on Hamburg's Reeperbahn, that legendary strip where The Beatles and

many more like them served their rock'n'roll apprenticeships, the Star-Club itself was also a place of fond memory. It was by then a sex club, called The Salambo, and busy with lubricious activity the night I was there.

This was May 1978. I was in Germany on assignment for what used to be *Melody Maker*. My mission, as it was explained to me, was to "take the temperature of the German rock scene". To this end, I get in touch with a jovial soul named Teddy Meier, European Artist Development Manager for Chrysalis Records. Teddy has an office on Feldbrunnenstrasse. I tell him I can be there in half an hour, but Teddy's having none of it. He'll come to me. "At once!" he adds with high-pitched urgency. Not long after this, Teddy's on his third or fourth huge stein of a powerful local brew, quaffing for the fatherland from a glass so heavy he has to hoist it from the table in a double-handed grip, like a Viking.

The hotel bar's too dull for Teddy, though. After giving me an astonishingly detailed account of the German rock scene, he suggests a trip to the Reeperbahn. Our first stop is The Salambo, which seems lively enough to me. Teddy, though, is still restless and we go on to another similar establishment, where we're shown to a table by a naked blonde, whose neatly trimmed pubic thatch Teddy is clearly mesmerised by. Soon things are happening onstage that those of a delicate disposition might prefer not to have described to them in too much detail.

I'm thinking especially of the energetic sexual episodes featuring a company of strapping gals and a small but colourful menagerie of animals – principal among them a baffled-looking chimp, a small horse and sundry well-built hounds, the lot of them characterised by much drooling, lolling of tongues, shuddering flanks and visibly alert members. Where the dogs are concerned, there's also a terrific amount of tail-wagging when they are called on to do their bit.

The next night I'm in an equally strange place, a club in Munich, where a palpable weirdness lurks in every murky alcove. The music that's playing is an abstract din, utterly deafening. I sit for a while alone in a booth, at a table streaked by lights the colour of blood. The music's louder than ever, a crushing weight of noise. At some point I'm joined by some creatures of the local night, their garishly lit faces grinning at me like the fucked-up denizens of hell.

I get on with them famously, of course. Drinks arrive at our table with welcome regularity, some pills are passed around and pretty soon we're howling like arctic wolves at a glowing moon. Later, we're at an apartment somewhere in town, although I'm not sure how we got there.

Turns out now these people are former members of some anarchist collective, friends, it turns out, of legendary Krautrock pioneers Amon Düül – coincidentally also featured in this month's issue – with worrying connections to the Baader-Meinhof Gang and the Red Army Faction. I expect at any moment to hear the wail of sirens and the whirr of helicopters, doors being blown off their hinges, radios crackling and gunfire. I take another pill that makes me think the walls of the apartment are on fire, the temperature of the German rock scene rising with the spreading flames.

Anyway, not for the first time, I digress. I have other news to pass on. This is the last issue of *Uncut* in its present incarnation. From next month, the magazine will have a cool new look and there'll be changes to what's in it and how it's presented. You may recall that towards the back end of last year, we invited readers to take part in a research process that gave us an opportunity to

hear at first hand what you think of *Uncut* and the service it provides. I already knew from your many emails that *Uncut* readers have a love and hunger for music that matches our own and how important therefore reviews are to you. Our conversations with readers confirmed that you want to know what's coming up by your long-time favourite bands and artists, and are also eager to be turned on to new music that might otherwise escape your attention. Your trust in us to point you in the direction of stuff you like was flattering and an encouragement to make sure that the service we provide in this particular context is the best we can possibly offer.

So the big change coming up from next month's issue is a major overhaul and expansion of our reviews section, for so many readers the most important part of *Uncut*. The further levels of detail and information we are introducing will make *Uncut*'s reviews more essential than ever as a comprehensive guide to what's coming out. Music reviews will be split into two sections, one dedicated to all the new releases and the other to archive releases, reissues and boxsets.

These days, classic albums are reissued in so many different formats you can be made dizzy with choice. The Beach Boys' *Smile*, for instance, was recently released as a 19-track monaural 'approximation' of the cancelled 1967 sessions available as a single CD, plus a double CD and 5CD deluxe boxset. Vinyl and download versions were also available. So what were the differences between them? Which was 'best'? The £120 *The Smile Sessions* (which included a double-vinyl LP, two 7" singles and a 60-page book) or the 2CD edition, featuring the mono *Smile*, eight bonus tracks and 63 minutes of highlights from the boxset that retailed at a more modest £11? It's our intention to answer these questions and therefore be more useful than ever in helping you negotiate multiple-format reissues and deciding which of them represents the best value for money in terms of sound quality, packaging and assorted extras.

We'll also be introducing a new front section next month, but to reassure the wary among you, regular reader favourites, including *An Audience With...*, *My Life In Music*, *The Making Of...*, *Album By Album* and *Flashback* will all still be part of *Uncut*'s editorial mix. Anyway, see what you think of the new-look *Uncut* when it goes on sale on February 28. We'll be looking forward to your views.

*Max Jones*



## 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](http://www.soniceditions.com/uncut) for details

# FEEDBACK

Email [allan\\_jones@ipcmedia.com](mailto:allan_jones@ipcmedia.com) or write to: **Uncut Feedback, 9th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Or tweet us at [twitter.com/uncutmagazine](https://twitter.com/uncutmagazine)**

## AWE AND ORDER

I was in LA for the holidays and just before returning I purchased a copy of a book on Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Bad Moon Rising* by Hank Bordowitz, which I started reading avidly. Upon arriving home the first thing to greet me was the current issue of *Uncut* with CCR plus CD on the front! I then turn to the letters page and the first paragraph in the lead letter about Jackie Leven refers to his appearance with Doll By Doll at the Blue Note club in Derby which I owned between 1980 and 1986. Next, on page 74 there's a photograph of New Order playing the Blue Note in 1982, a night I remember well. Both Tony Wilson – who I knew from my days working for Island and EMI in Manchester – and Rob Gretton were in attendance and loved the venue. However, the stage was

a portable affair erected on the dancefloor every time a band played – the Blue Note being primarily a disco, with a capacity of 150 – and wasn't the most robust of constructions, hence Terry Mason's fears. I recall one time Southern Death Cult arrived and refused to play because they weren't happy with the stage and security. Hordes of people bussed, trained, drove etc from all over the country for the event but the crowds just went to the pub instead and Derby had its busiest Tuesday night ever. But I digress. I seem to remember actually under-promoting the New Order gig because of the expected huge demand – the evening was a total success and the band were blinding.

**Phil Little, via email**  
Spooky stuff, Phil. – Allan

LETTER  
OF THE  
MONTH



Two of the "blinding" New Order: Gillian Gilbert, left, and Bernard Sumner

## CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVED

Sincere thanks for the superb feature on Creedence Clearwater Revival. OK, so there wasn't anything in there that those of us who have been in awe of the band's (or should I say John Fogerty's work) for decades didn't already know, but if that article encourages a few more people to take another (or maybe a first) look at such an important body of work, then it's a job well done.

In addition to such praise I cannot help but add my opinions to the comments of Doug Clifford and Stu Cook. I think by now everyone accepts the band were sold down the river by Fantasy and, with hindsight, perhaps John made a few errors of judgement along the way, but this does not distract from the fact that virtually all of the songs, production and arrangements were his; Cook and Clifford were no more than a functional (albeit effective) rhythm section. It's perhaps odd then that although they continue to spit venom in John's direction they remain happy to earn a living on the back of his songs with their lacklustre... Revisited project. On that note Clifford's comments that they 'play Creedence songs better than John does' is at best laughable, at worst, a further insult.

Regardless of the history and the fact that it wouldn't serve any realistic purpose, there are few Creedence fans who wouldn't want to see a reunion someday... but as we all know "Someday Never Comes".

**Bob Boiling, via email**

## THE INNER MUSE WRITES

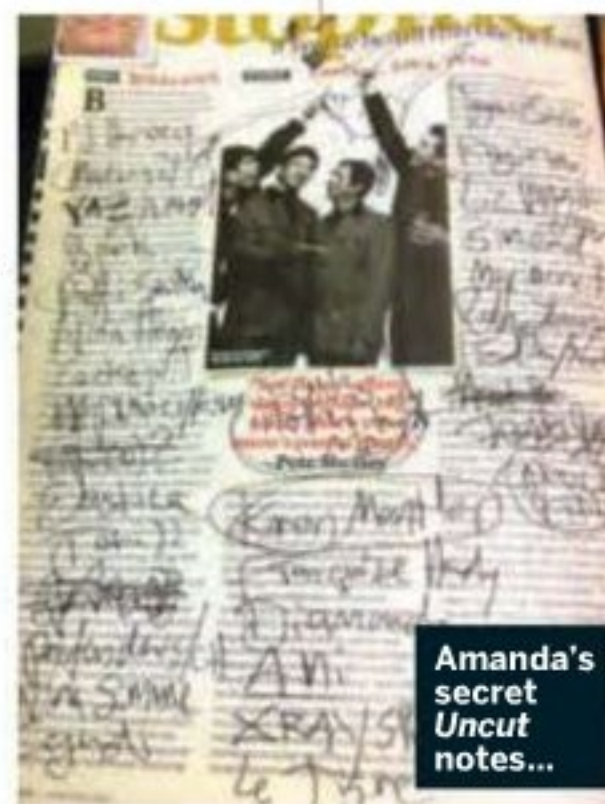
Hola, *Uncut*! I'm an on-and-off-again reader of your wonderful magazine. I occasionally pilfer copies from my husband Neil Gaiman (who's a writer, and has a subscription) but this time I was walking down a rainy NY street, saw PJ Harvey's glorious face [*January issue*] staring at me (I'm about to co-headline a Tasmanian festival with her, a bucket-list moment for me), and wandered into the bodega to buy you. The fact that there was a Johnny Marr interview, too, didn't hurt.

Anyway – THANK you. I took you on the plane that day and read you cover to cover... and both the PJ interview and the Kate Bush piece were nice, nagging reminders to listen to the voices in my head and follow the inner muse instead of the outer critic as I embark on making my new solo album this spring. Both of these women have created such incredible careers on their own terms... and as I stared out the window (somewhere over Kansas or Colorado) I started thinking about the female musical influences in my life. There haven't been many, especially in the singer-songwriter department. My big "list for the journalists" of influences has always been decidedly boy-heavy... in more-or-less chronological order, The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Prince, The Cure,

Robyn Hitchcock, The Legendary Pink Dots, Nick Cave, Depeche Mode, Leonard Cohen... barely a woman to be seen. It got me thinking that it might be a great (and easy-to-narrow-down) project to make a covers record of the women writers, vintage and new, who've influenced me, my listening and my writing.

I didn't have any blank paper on hand, so I used your back page. Sorry Dave Quantick, but you made good notepaper.

**Amanda Fucking Palmer, The Dresden Dolls, via email**



Amanda's secret *Uncut* notes...

## MUSICAL HEAVEN: 2011

I don't usually write in to magazines, but on reading your letters pages in February 2012's issue, I felt impelled to take issue with your reader Vito Morawetz bemoaning the state of music in 2011 ["2011: *The Year Music*

*Broke?*"]. I can't help but feel this person simply hasn't been listening: in my view, 2011 was an excellent year for music.

Just off the top of my head, I've heard very strong albums by: Radiohead, M83, Little Dragon, Twin Sister, The War On Drugs, Feist, Cut/Copy, Wye Oak, Opeth, High Places, Kurt Vile, J Mascis, Jonathan Wilson, Walls, Tom Waits, Ryan Adams, Metronomy, Bright Eyes, Wooden Wand, Ry Cooder, Eleanor Friedberger, ...Trail Of Dead, Asobi Seksu, In The Country, Beastie Boys, Bon Iver, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Dum Dum Girls, Mastodon, The Low Anthem,

Stephen Malkmus And The Jicks, Megafaun and Wilco. And there are a hell of a lot more!

All in all, it's been even harder to keep up with all the great music constantly being released than it normally is. With CDs being cheaper than ever before, I've spent more time in independent record stores this year than I ever have (and spent more money). It's been a great year for music, and a great time to pick stuff up cheaply before the downloaders finally get their way and eradicate the joy of owning a physical record for ever.

It was also a year that saw Foo Fighters release their first good album in a decade, and REM bow out with a record that redeems the terror of *Around The Sun*, both things I thought could never happen. And U2 even spared us another dollop of their vacuous tediousness, too!

I need to suggest that your disgruntled reader makes more of an effort to look beyond the front pages next year. It's a great time for music of all styles, and for those styles colliding in new and exciting ways. Surely that's one of the great joys of being a music fan anyway.

Thanks for the great magazine.

**Giles Lewis, via email**

## DIGGING FOR GOLD

Thanks for publishing the staggeringly humourless missive from Vito Morawetz this month [*February issue*]. *Let England Shake* is anything but "long declamation over a random set of cacophonies", and the idea that there is "nothing worth buying" is patently untrue; there is ALWAYS good music around! Off!, Prurient, Faust, The Fall, Oneohtrix Point Never, Death Grips and Charalambides all made great records that didn't appear on *Uncut*'s list. And I find it a little ironic that the current music scene is "boring" but The Decemberists (the North American Levellers) get singled out for praise. Deary me. Dig around! There's always something new to listen to, even with the industry supposedly dying! Be positive! (He's right about Radiohead, though. YAWN.)

**Chris Jones, via email**

## THEY CALLED HIM JACKIE...

Thank you to Colston Crawford and *Uncut* for remembering the remarkable man known as Jackie Leven. I have many of Jackie's CDs but it is his live performances that really set him apart. I saw him live in many classic Northern towns and every performance was an improvement on the last. And has any other good singer-songwriter ever told such funny anecdotes? Certainly, I will always think of Jackie when I go to Hebden Bridge Trades Club (my favourite of his concert venues and one of his) or drive in the shuffling rain past the Slubbers Arms pub in my hometown of Huddersfield. May you rest in peace, Jackie.

**Keith Rhodes, Huddersfield**

...Thank you for the thoughtful and thorough Jackie Leven obit in your February issue. Music poured from him like pure, clear water from a tap in the desert, now dry. The last time I felt as personally saddened by the death of a recording artist was back in 1974 when a friend slapped a copy of the *NME* down in front

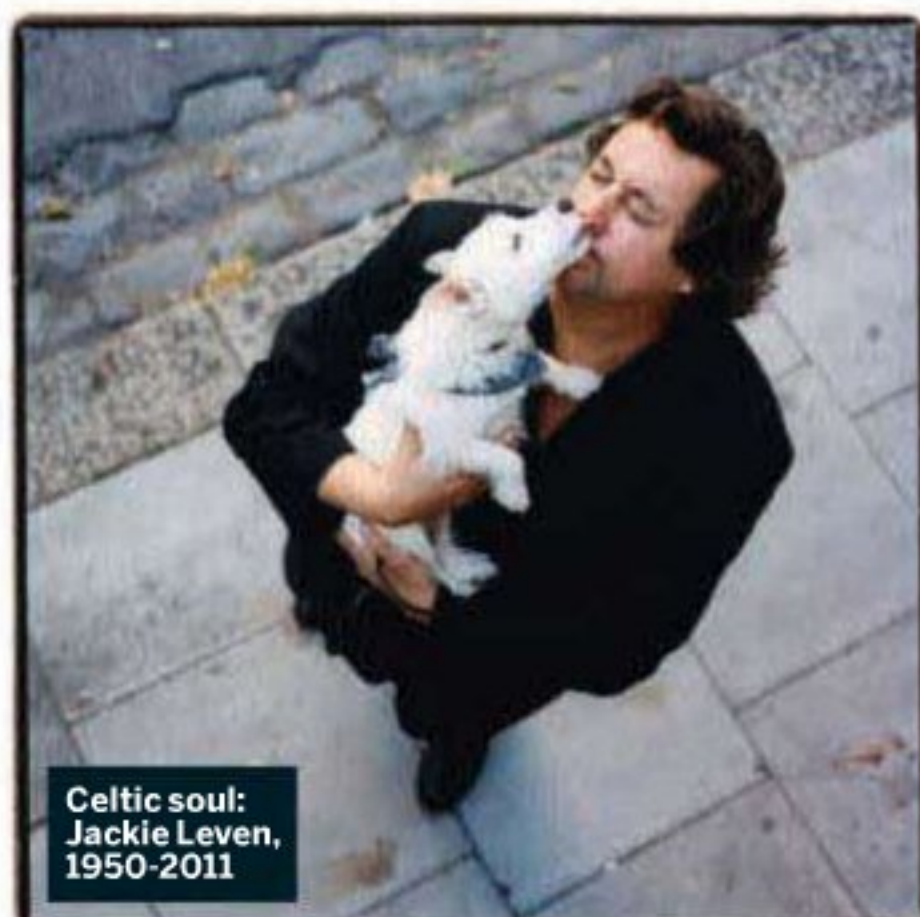


Smashing Pumpkins: saying no to nostalgia

of me, open at a double-page tribute to the late Nick Drake. I knew the music, not the man (which is fine, although it's nice to have a bit of context sometimes). I was unaware, for example, that the long silence preceding *The Mystery Of Love*... was because he'd been the victim of horrific violence. I just remember how excited I was to stumble across a Jackie Leven album in the racks of Spillers Records when it came out. Before that, my Jackie Leven solo collection amounted to six tracks spread across two 12" singles from 1983/4 (it's somewhat larger now). Despite the presence of maverick producer Tom Newman, there wasn't much of interest there, nothing up to Doll By Doll standards, except for one stand-out – a glorious, shimmering song called "Tropic Of Cool" that floats into being like choreographed dust motes dancing in a shaft of sunlight. I'm listening to it right now. Thank you, Jackie, where e'er you may roam. **Nick, pp Mr Tea, via email**

...Fair play to *Uncut* and Graeme Thomson for the superb and heartfelt piece on the late Jackie Leven. All the monthlies carried glowing obituaries, but only *Uncut* gave him the full tribute he deserved. Today I got a chance to pull out my two 1979 vinyl copies of *Remember* and *Gypsy Blood* and play them back-to-back. As we all know, good music is timeless. In 1979, Doll By Doll weren't 'punk' or 'new wave' or 'prog', they were just superb music. In 2012, they still are. These albums could have been released in 2011, and would surely still have made the best album lists in *Uncut*. Alas I never caught them live, nor Jackie Leven solo, as I can't recall them playing Ireland and, for sure, not my area. May he serenade the angels in heaven – they sure have a treat in store.

**John Dundon, Limerick**



Celtic soul: Jackie Leven, 1950-2011

## DON'T SQUASH THE PUMPKINS

Re: *Uncut*'s review of the reissued Smashing Pumpkins albums *Gish* and *Siamese Dream* [*January issue*]. The "hagiographic documentary" referred to in the review makes a series of very interesting and valid points, which the reviewer seems to have entirely missed. Firstly, in the *If All Goes Wrong* documentary, Billy Corgan speaks at length about how we live in a results-oriented society and that people don't show enough interest in process. I think the song about Nazi Germany referred to is merely a glimpse of the creative process. Is the 20-second snippet we hear in the DVD so offensive to make an unnecessary out-of-context attack on it? It isn't available elsewhere, so it hardly seems that Corgan himself thinks it his finest work (it isn't). It reflects something on his mind at that time, which is part of the notion of the creative process, of works-in-progress, of eschewing the result as the only purpose of working.

The other point Corgan makes is his complete unwillingness to turn the band into a nostalgia act. Would the reviewer be less flippant if he had been churning out *Siamese Dream* rehashes for the past 15 years? Much of the documentary is all about the friction between returning to past works and the need to advance creatively and not stagnate. You can take issue with the quality of Corgan's recent work. But let's not have a laugh at the man for trying to stay fresh and continue pushing the boundaries of what he does.

Ultimately, it's very easy to laugh at the surface appearance of things, but please let's give credit to artistic perseverance, particularly in a music industry almost entirely dominated by pre-fabricated nonsense. Also, it seems that Corgan has aired his own demons in public sufficiently to grant him enough credit for including the moment with the fans presenting him with a model of his own head with just a hint of irony.

**Simon Breden, Madrid**

## WHAT A ROTTER!

I feel compelled to weigh in on Ben Marshall's interview with The Horrors' Faris Rotter. I can't remember getting as agitated from reading an interview as I did after reading every response from that skinny twat. Does he really think he's a rock star? I hope Ben clipped that little prick right across his giant hooter at interview's end. Better check your watch, Faris – 14:59, tick-tock.

**RF Kubat, via email**

Ouch. A saucer of milk for Mr Kubat, please! – Allan

# FIRST CUTS

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO **UNCUT**

## ‘Will I see you give more than I can take? Will I only harvest some?’

Forty years on from *Harvest*, did Neil Young reap all that he sowed? By David Cavanagh

**M**ORE BARN. More pedal steel. Fewer silver spaceships. Fewer burned-out basements. By making some revisions—additions, subtractions—to his breakthrough album *After The Gold Rush*, Neil Young’s *Harvest*, which is 40 years old this month, spread its fame epidemically, confirming him as a magnate of the singer-songwriter generation. And what a generation to be a magnate of. Joni, Carole, James: the Christian name goliaths. *Harvest*, in sales and prestige, put Young in a position to lead the pack for years. He promptly pulled the emergency cord, horrified by the implications. *Harvest*, to use an awful word, was a game-changer.

If we imagine a sort of 1972 version of David Gray’s *White Ladder*—one of those albums that even people who don’t like music seem to own—we can appreciate the extent to which Young, that angular and irregular

artist, stunningly connected with the mainstream, as well as understanding why Young, that bloody-minded and unbiddable cuss, recoiled from his new role as a country-rock hit machine. “This song put me in the middle of the road,” he later wrote (about *Harvest*’s blockbuster single “Heart Of Gold”) in his sleeve notes for *Decade*.

“Travelling there soon became a bore so I headed for the ditch.”

The eternally popular “Heart Of Gold” did indeed put him in the middle of the road—and at the top of the US charts, where it followed Nilsson’s “Without You” and preceded America’s “A Horse With No Name”. The latter, a CSNY/*Déjà Vu* homage so consummately executed that many assumed it was Young’s follow-up single, must have made him uneasy. The man on the street had reacted with almost Pavlovian enthusiasm to Young’s style, and he didn’t even have to be present on the record.

CONTINUES OVER»



Harvest  
Neil Young



King of all he surveys:  
Young at his Broken  
Arrow Ranch, Northern  
California, 1971

Making hay (and music): Neil Young in the barn at Broken Arrow, also featured on the sleeve of *Harvest*, left



"Heart Of Gold" had an easygoing tempo and attitude, which rubbed off on how people perceived *Harvest*. Its enduring reputation is that of a 'comfort' album, a ragged old dependable that you file in your collection next to *Tapestry*; but not every track on *Harvest* offers a warm welcome, and the atmosphere is decidedly chilly at times. Has there ever been a more troubling thought in a Young song than this: "*We are leaving/We are gone/Come with us to all alone.*" What the hell is THAT supposed to mean? The sudden sci-fi image ("There's A World") is even more haunting for appearing straight after "Old Man", a song of empathy (or so we think) in which Young attempts to bond—both mystically and sentimentally—with a father figure whom he appears to look up to, and craves to return home to, yet periodically needs to cast off like Steptoe and his dreadful burden. The booby trap is the line, "*Doesn't mean that much to me to mean that much to you,*" which makes it tempting to read too much into their relationship, while instantly complicating a song that seemed to be heading towards mutual harmony. Nor is there much congeniality in "The Needle And The Damage Done". As a Bert Jansch admirer ("Needle Of Death") and a friend of Danny Whitten's, Young was probably predestined to write an anti-heroin song. Nobody, though, could have foreseen the timeless allure of the

heartbroken two-minute dirge that he came up with. Personal enough to focus on Whitten ("*I love the man*"), and specific enough to mention the addict's procedure of extracting heroin-laced blood for reinjecting later, yet ubiquitous enough to be performed at Live Aid, the song became the unlikely anthem of Young's career. The recording on *Harvest*, taken from a concert at the University Of California, is responsible for one of the album's most glaring, even reckless, changes in ambience. The UCLA audience's applause as Young finishes the song is cut off in the editing suite, almost bitterly, as if he never wants to go through the pain of hearing it again.

Don McLean and Carly Simon—to give the impression that he was part of a new guard as well as an existing one.... *Gold Rush* had been his grand entrance to the wider society, but *Harvest* was more of a showcase: he's an acoustic folkie with a harmonica and a strong C&W sensibility; he's an electric rocker with a serrated edge; a grandiose symphonist and poet. In effect, he's made three LPs in one.


These distinctive parts of *Harvest* were all cut in different locations. The country songs date from a visit to Nashville where Young appeared on *The Johnny Cash Show*. James Taylor and Linda Ronstadt were already in town (making it something of a Laurel

## There was a real sense that *Harvest* was not only a career landmark, but a career cul-de-sac

Was *Harvest* an influence on the Americana that followed? Or was it the last hurrah of the solipsists who'd gone before? Its timing is interesting. It was recorded in '71 (the *annus confessionabilis* of *Tapestry*, *Blue* and *Mud Slide Slim And The Blue Horizon*), but wasn't released until '72, a year in which the hysterical acclaim for King, Mitchell and Taylor would slightly start to dissipate. As Dylan held fire and Stills launched *Manassas*, Young burst through with unstoppable force—as did

Canyon reunion), and once Young had had the spontaneous idea of hiring a local studio, Taylor and Ronstadt added their pleasant harmonies to "Heart Of Gold" and "Old Man". Young was upbeat about the productivity of the Nashville session (which also yielded "Harvest" and "Out On The Weekend"), but there was still a way to go yet. A subsequent, electric session at Young's ranch, using the same Nashville musicians, produced "Alabama", "Words (Between The Lines Of Age)" and

"Are You Ready For The Country?" Arranger and pianist Jack Nitzsche oversaw the final piece in *Harvest*'s stylistic jigsaw, flying to England to record the LSO on "There's A World" and "A Man Needs A Maid".

The bombast of the LSO threatens to overwhelm "...Maid" once or twice, lending Young's declaration of domestic bliss the gravitas of a terrifyingly important psalm. He'd begun a relationship with actress Carrie Snodgrass after his first wife, Susan Acevedo, filed for divorce. He tells us about his attraction to Snodgrass after seeing her in a film. He pulls off a nice line ("*To give a love, you've got to be 'part of'*"). He makes a feminist-offending faux pas ("*Just someone to keep my house clean*"). But his most significant statement isn't about Snodgrass or having his meals fixed; it comes at the start: "*My life is changing in so many ways/I don't know who to trust anymore*". If it captures anything, *Harvest* captures Young at that precise moment of uncertainty. The doubts lasted more than a moment, of course. Look what he did next. *Journey Through The Past*, *Time Fades Away*. That's not a man reacting against *Harvest*. It's a man exorcising it. Which is why, until he made his '92 album *Harvest Moon*, in which he revisited *Harvest*'s sound and re-employed The Stray Gators, there was a real sense that his multi-million-selling '72 chart-topper had been not only a career landmark but a career cul-de-sac—a journey that Young no longer had the appetite to take. If it took him 20 years to make his peace with *Harvest*, one wonders how he feels about it after 40. 



## FIRST AID KIT

### The Lion's Roar

"Superb songwriting... glorious" MOJO ★★★★★

"A remarkably mature work" UNCUT ★★★★★

"Intoxicating" THE SUN ★★★★★

"A brilliant second album"

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH ★★★★★

"Nothing short of magical" THE FLY ★★★★★

"Life-affirming" Q ★★★★★

"Bewitching" CLASH 8/10



## WILD FLAG

### Wild Flag

"Electrifying debut" LOUD & QUIET 8/10

"Debut of the Month" UNCUT ★★★★★

MOJO ★★★★★

NME 8/10

"This band want you to have as much fun as they so clearly are" Q ★★★★★

"The sound of alt-royalty still fuelled by youthful fire" THE INDEPENDENT

"Superb" CLASH 8/10



## CLOUD NOTHINGS

### Attack On Memory

The new album from Cleveland's Cloud Nothings. Recorded at Electrical Audio by Steve Albini, this is the first time the band have been in the studio as a four-piece and the resulting songs truly capture the energy of their live show for the first time, whilst also showing a louder, more aggressive and more experimental side to the band.

IN STORES FROM 6TH FEBRUARY.



## PEGGY SUE

### Acrobats

"A darker, cleverer and, well, just better proposition than most of their so-called peers" NME 7/10

"A beguiling, brilliantly unsettling and above all mesmeric listening experience" THE FLY ★★★★★

"A group deserving the same accolades as those far beyond their years" BBC MUSIC

"A superb album" CLASH 7/10

## ON TOUR :

### FIRST AID KIT

#### February

Thurs 23rd  
Kings College,  
LONDON

Fri 24th  
Academy 3,  
MANCHESTER

Mon 27th  
Kings Tuts,  
GLASGOW

Tues 28th  
The Wardrobe,  
LEEDS

Wed 29th  
Thekla,  
BRISTOL

### WILD FLAG

WITH SUPPORT FROM  
PEGGY SUE ON ALL DATES

#### January

Fri 27th  
Thekla,  
BRISTOL

Sat 28th  
The Rescue Rooms,  
NOTTINGHAM

Sun 29th  
The Cockpit,  
LEEDS

Mon 30th  
Oran Mor,  
GLASGOW

Tues 31st  
Sound Control  
MANCHESTER

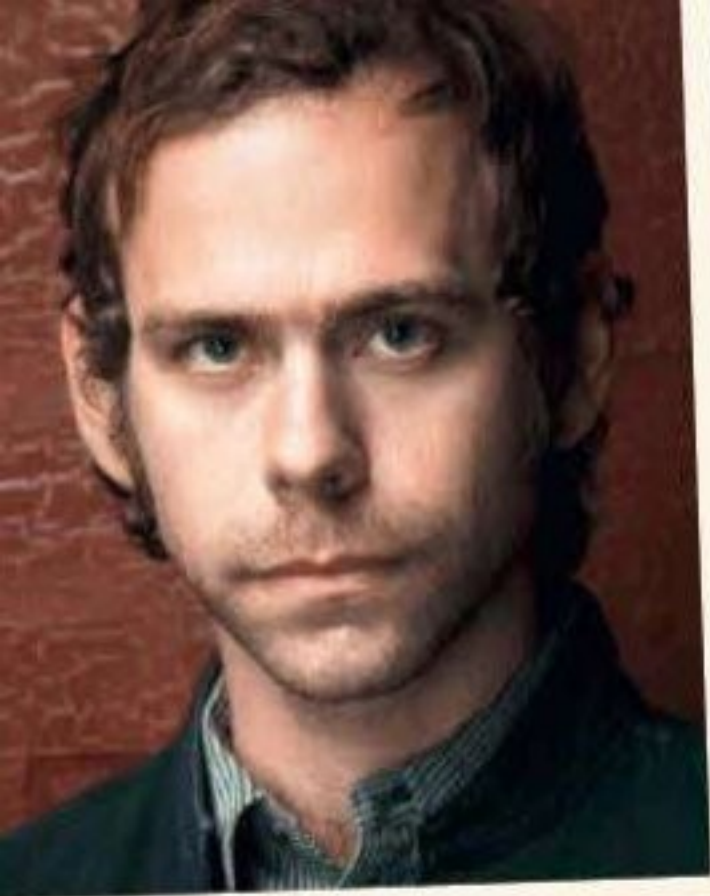
#### February

Weds 1st  
Electric Ballroom,  
LONDON

[www.wichita-recordings.com](http://www.wichita-recordings.com)



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# MY LIFE IN MUSIC

## Bryce Dessner

The National's guitarist – and celebrated composer – reveals the peaks of his impeccable record collection

### THE ALBUM THAT EXPANDED MY SONIC UNIVERSE



#### RAIN DOGS 1985 Tom Waits

I would have heard this when I was around 10 or 11, when the pop music I was hearing was mostly Michael Jackson and Madonna. For me this opened up a whole other universe of creative music. The record has the classic Marc Ribot guitar sound, and Tom Waits was experimenting with the sousaphone and marimba, which were weird for a rock record.

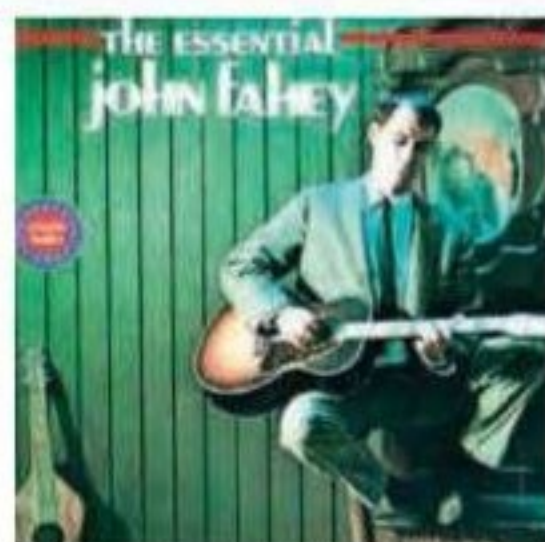
### A PERSONALLY INFLUENTIAL RECORD



#### DIFFERENT TRAINS 1988 Steve Reich

This is the first record I heard of his. It also includes "Electric Counterpoint", the great guitar piece performed by Pat Metheny, and is very influential on Radiohead's guitar style. This record was very important both in terms of my guitar playing and composition. It has all these mysteries to it, but is also very catchy, and the guitar playing is soloistic without being bombastic.

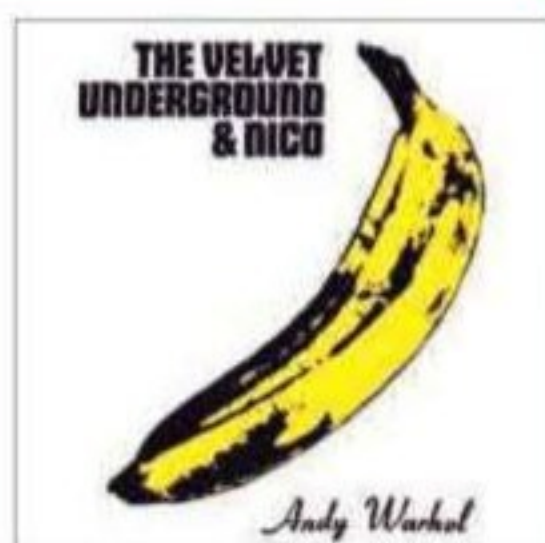
### THE SPRINGBOARD TO MY FORMAL MUSIC STUDIES



#### THE ESSENTIAL JOHN FAHEY 1974 John Fahey

I was self-taught and when I heard that music, I realised I couldn't learn to play that way without studying music formally. I think Fahey was self-taught, but he would quote, say, Robert Johnson and mix in Bartok. The fingerpicking technique is what led me to play classical guitar; I ended up doing a masters degree and studying composition.

### A GREAT PROTO-PUNK ALBUM



#### THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO 1967 The Velvet Underground & Nico

This is obviously a classic pop record; I also think of it as a great guitar album. It's the guitar as object – as opposed to as a character – that sometimes plays things that are unrelated to the harmony or tone. This became crucial to punk and to experimental composers like Glenn Branca and Rhys Chatham.

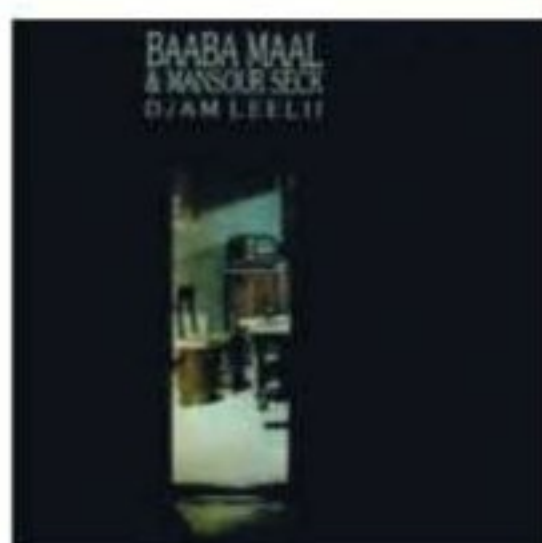
### THE RECORD I ALWAYS RETURN TO



#### BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME 1965 Bob Dylan

Aaron and I grew up with Dylan 'best of' albums, but this was the first record we searched out for ourselves. I remember thinking "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" was a strange song, but "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" is one of his greatest. I've been interested in tons of weird music, but I always come back to Dylan.

### A RECORD I NEVER TIRE OF



#### DJAM LEEII 1989 Baaba Maal/ Mansour Seck

This is a duo record – just two guitars and two voices – and it's one my brother had around the time we made the "Cherry Tree" EP (2004). We love West African-style guitar. This is one of Baaba Maal's lesser-known records, but if you were left with just one record to listen to, this would be a good candidate – you'd never tire of it. Our "Wasp Nest" is related to it.

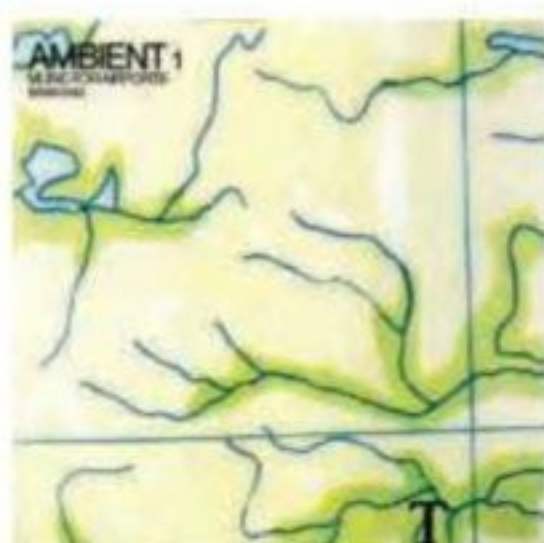
### AN ALBUM I PAID HOMAGE TO ON RECORD



#### MARQUEE MOON 1977 Television

Tom Verlaine is one of my favourite guitarists. Television existed at a time when there was a great expansion in the understanding of what a band could be and there was a big crossover between experimental and rock music. On "Afraid Of Everyone" from The National's *High Violet*, there's a shrill guitar riff, which is me directly quoting Tom Verlaine.

### AN ALBUM THAT SHOWS ENO'S BRILLIANCE



#### MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS 1978 Brian Eno

There's also a version of this record by the New York group Bang On A Can, who I've been involved with over the years. They transcribed the whole thing and played it on actual instruments. Brian Eno's such an ambassador for so many different kinds of music; he produces huge rock records and makes strange experimental music... He's a sound pioneer, important on many levels.

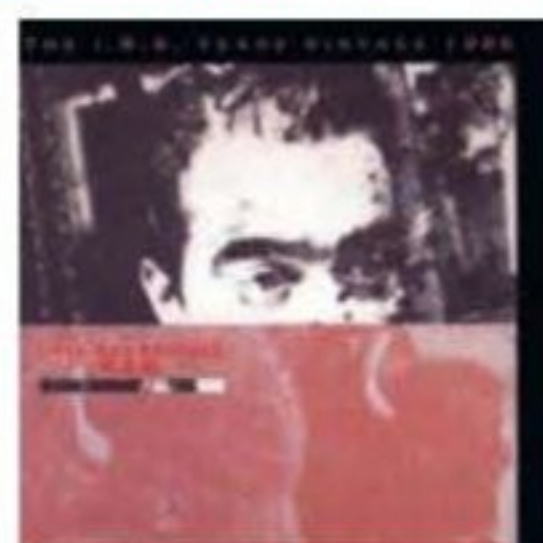
### A CONTEMPORARY CLASSIC ALBUM



#### ALL THINGS WILL UNWIND 2011 My Brightest Diamond

Shara [Worden] is very important in The Long Count project. My brother Aaron and I wrote the music, but we wrote songs with Shara and with Kim and Kelley Deal. Shara's a classically trained soprano who's referencing the American Songbook on this album, but has written classic songs. You can imagine them being covered in 100 years' time.

### THE RECORD THAT MADE THE NATIONAL POSSIBLE



#### LIFES RICH PAGEANT 1986 REM

I love all those early REM records, but in a way, this is their first great album. For American musicians especially, they opened up a door in terms of what they symbolised. They provided an alternative to the mainstream, especially Michael as a frontman. The National wouldn't have existed if REM hadn't. This record features one of my favourite REM songs, "Fall On Me".



# BEN MARSHALL MEETS...

## St Vincent

**The anxieties and amusements of Annie Clark.  
Likes drawing penises on pictures of herself, apparently...**

**You were born in Oklahoma and grew up in Texas, two of America's most proudly conservative states. What effect did that have on you?**  
It's strange because, now that I visit, Texas really feels like home; I get that warm sense of nostalgia. But growing up there I definitely felt more freak than not freak. My parents were not at all conservative – in fact, they were an oasis of liberal values. But suburban Dallas, where I went to high school and junior high, was very conservative.

**So was it like in the movies – where the nerds and goths and weirdos are persecuted by beefy jocks and blonde cheerleaders?**  
Erm, yes. Maybe people don't have quite as cool clothes and haircuts as in the movies, but my school was about as close to the Jock Cheerleader genre as you could get. I mean, recently they spent a million dollars improving their football stadium.

**Did they also spend one million dollars buying books for the school library?**  
No, they didn't. See, you can't generate excitement and monetise the debate team. You can't get large numbers to attend school council meetings.

**It sounds like quite a terrifying place. Which clique did you belong to?**  
It's more terrifying, I think, in hindsight. But see, I have a lot of anxiety in general. I remember always thinking, shall I skip second period 'cos I just can't face being in this enclosed space? But I had it easy, 'cos I had two very beautiful older sisters who paved the way for me and let me skate under the radar. I was neither maligned nor celebrated. I was a theatre nerd and I was in the jazz band. So although I wasn't particularly cool, I wasn't teased.

**Following high school you went to Berklee College Of Music but dropped out. You've been quite scathing about formal musical education. Why?**



**“The internet is tremendously empowering – but kiss goodbye to making a lot of money out of music”**

I don't think I've been scathing, but I have said that you often need to unlearn a good deal of what you're taught. I think trained musicians can sometimes get so focused on the athleticism of music, they forsake the heart of it. When music is studied you can get so far away from the reason people enjoy music, you become more of a mathematician.

**One of the things said about your music is that it's so ecstatically happy it borders on the clinically crazy. Do you think that's true?**

I would say the opposite, that some very dark and distinctly unhappy ideas are being masked by a happy melody. Or maybe that's not the opposite? Just different.

**You've used the internet to your advantage, but how do you feel about its effect on the arts and people's lives in general?**

I think consumer technology has been incredibly helpful for me, in that from a very early age I was able to record music by building a recording studio in my own little bedroom. I was able to take that DIY mentality acquired from a previous generation of indie rockers and truly apply it. I made a record with the help of friends and we put it up on MySpace, back when MySpace still mattered, so to all intents and purposes we had recorded and released an album without any budget or record label. I started getting recognition around the time people like Lily Allen were getting signed on the strength of what she did on MySpace. So now you have this large class of musicians making a small living doing what they want to do. They're not Fleetwood Mac and selling millions of records. The internet is tremendously empowering, you just have to kiss the idea of making a whole lot of money out of records goodbye.

**Yeah, making a fortune out of singing or playing an instrument was a pretty new thing and, as it turns out, a pretty short-lived one...**  
Yeah, it was an anomaly. In the '70s and '80s, when huge hair bands were riding this mad gravy train, you know that could never have lasted. It wouldn't have been a good thing if it had lasted.

**Who, or what, has been the biggest influence on your life?**  
Oh, God. I think a few things. My family. My anxiety disorders.

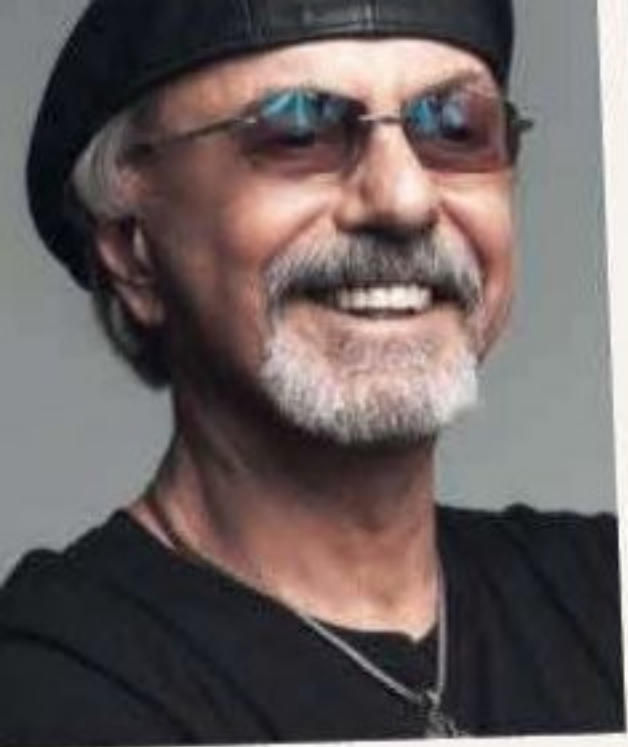
**What did you learn from your anxiety disorders?**  
It forces you to be incredibly existential. And you think about those things from a very young age. Ultimately, my anxieties make me more curious about life and the world because I'm always looking for ways to subvert the fear, and the best way I've found to fight fear is through knowledge.

**If you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you take with you?**  
I would have a guitar. But how practical do I have to be – do I need a machete? OK, not that practical. A tape recorder and a giant stockpile of batteries. And can I take some of the real classic books, ones I know I will never get round to reading? Can they be audiobooks? They can. God, hahaha, how lazy can we get?

**What was the last thing you did that made you truly happy?**  
It was the last night of the European tour and I went out with the band and we had some drinks. We were heading back to the airport hotel when we spotted this huge poster of, erm, me. It had 'Coming soon' written on it, or something. So we stopped and I took a Sharpie and I just started drawing cartoon penises all over it. We were drinking and laughing and drawing these penises.

**So the last time you were truly, unequivocally happy was when you were defacing a picture of yourself with cartoon cocks?**  
Yeah.

FIRST CUTS



# CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

## Dion DiMucci

From New York's mean streets to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame – the remarkable wanderings of Dion. He roamed around, around, around...



### 1 NEW YORK, 1958 [Left]

Dion And The Belmonts. We were on a corner taking some pictures and this girl walked by – I mean, the girl. She had an ass that just turned all our heads. God's handiwork – that was my second thought. We were like the rappers, Dion And The Belmonts – street kids. They dressed us up in suits, and tried to present us – put the cigarettes and the booze down. They didn't want to intimidate the parents buying the records. It was bad enough that some guys making them were black, and Italians came close. At least we were honest in the studio, most of the time.

### 2 NEW YORK, 1960

I found these extraordinary sweaters and shirts in Phil's Men's Shop on 3rd Avenue in New York. I introduced Buddy Holly to it. I have strong memories of Buddy, especially before the crash [Dion didn't board the plane which crashed and killed Holly on February 3, 1959, because he couldn't afford the ticket]. He looked at me and said, "Dion, take care of my guitar like you would take care of your testicles." They didn't have grief counselling then, so I don't know where it went. All of a sudden, your friends are gone. It's just... baffling. But recently I talked about it, and I felt like I could breathe afterwards.



### 3 LONDON, 1961

This is when I did "Runaround Sue" on an English TV show. I'd gone solo from the Belmonts. The label were trying to pull me into a time gone by, into my father's music – these old classics that Tony Bennett sings. I had a vision of where I wanted to go musically: "I'll do an Al Jolson song if you'll let me do 'The Wanderer'." It was a fight all along. Then I started getting a little way out for them, bringing a lot of blues guys from the Apollo Theatre and doing blues stuff. But I stayed with it.

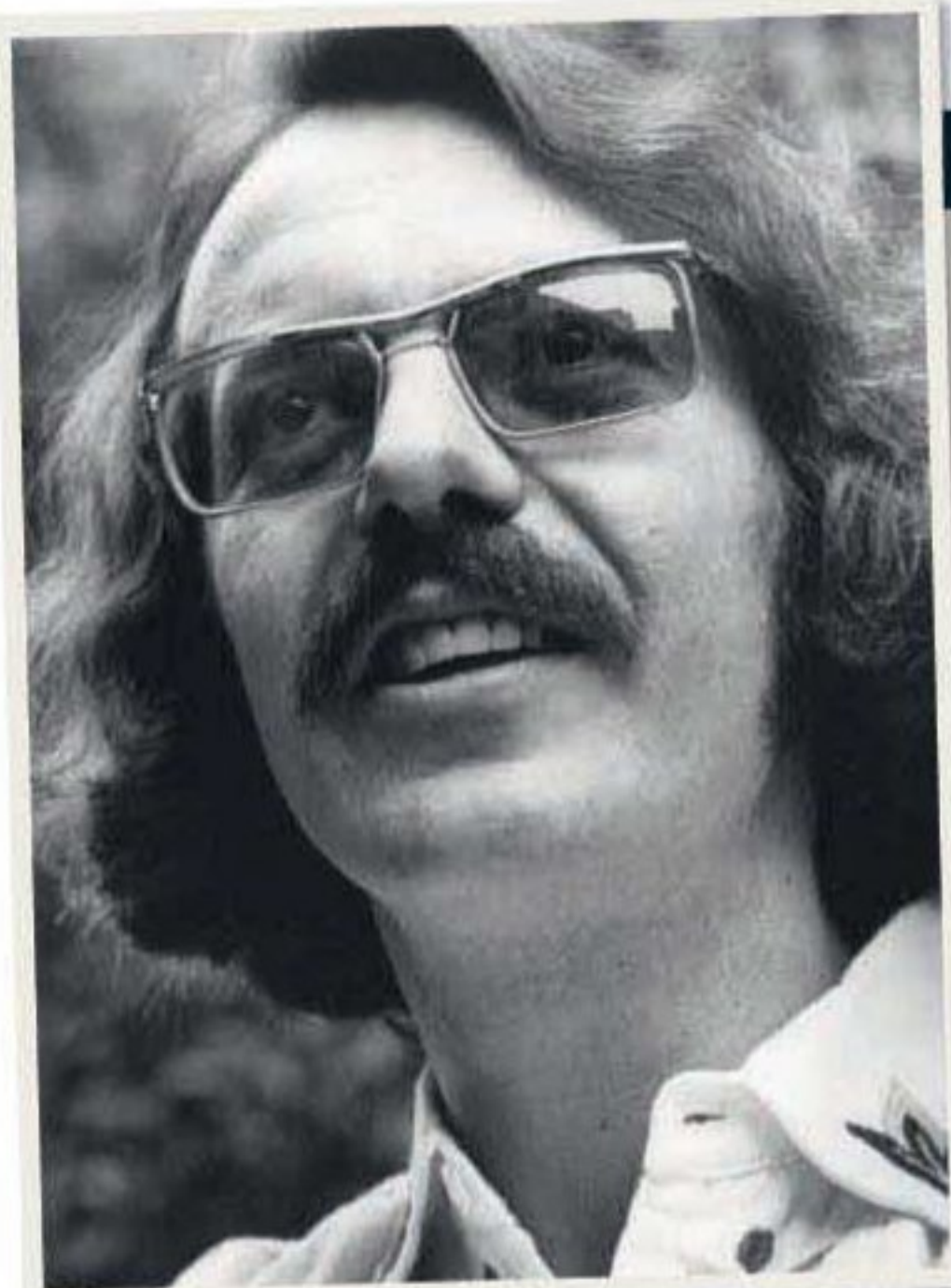
### 4 ENGLAND, 1962

That's me [second left] and Del Shannon [right] with Vera Lynn. We were on tour with Joe Brown. Del and I loved England, we were on that bus eating fish and chips and singing Hank Williams songs the whole way, and going to gambling joints that had just opened up, the penthouses of hotels, private clubs. We just partied all the way through. I was 22. It was something for us, playing these old theatres, where they served us tea and crumpets on beautiful china. Man. And the women in England had skin like milk.



### 5 SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND SLEEVE, 1967

The Beatles didn't ask me about putting my picture on the Sgt Pepper sleeve. I did meet John Lennon and Ringo on 57th Street, February of 1964. We bumped into each other, and they had these little brown sports coats on that they wore later on *Rubber Soul*. They were just shopping like I was. John told me he liked my song "Ruby Baby", they used to do it in Hamburg. When I saw this picture, that's what I first thought about. Because they took the *Ruby Baby* album cover and cut out my head and stuck it on. I'd like to believe that's why I ended up there.



## 6 BURBANK, CALIFORNIA, 1969

Woodstock was that year, and I started growing my hair and a beard. That picture was taken at Warner Bros. when I was playing The Troubadour in L.A. I bought that shirt out there in some health store. When I recorded "Abraham, Martin And John" [in 1968], I must have got about 4,000 postcards from colleges, so I was playing folk houses. And because I was sitting there with just my guitar and all these kids, I started telling some stories. It gave me confidence. It opened me up a lot.



## 7 NEW YORK, 1970

That was when I went home from California, to the Bitter End [club in Greenwich Village]. Kris Kristofferson would stop by, and John Sebastian, it was a real singer-songwriter thing. I've done a lot of kinds of music over the years. To people, it seems very different. But if you're sitting in the living room with me and I pick up my guitar and sing the songs, they all sound like Dion music. It's the producers that make 'em sound different. When you get a guy like Phil Spector, or Steve Barri, who's a pop guy, the window trimmings change.

## 8 NEW YORK, 1975

The cover shot for *Born To Be With You*, which I made with Phil Spector. I believe if you opened him up and looked inside, there was a lot of fear. It's amazing who came into the studio when they heard he was recording – Springsteen was there when he'd just been on the cover of *Time*. In the studio, there were about 82 musicians. 10 acoustic guitarists. In the control room, there were all kinds of journalist and artists. What he did resonated with our sensibilities, so we all wanted to get a touch of it. We used to hang out at the Brooklyn Fox, we started out together. But it was like everything on that record was a dirge. I'd still do it again.



## 9 NEW YORK, 1989

The *Yo Frankie* cover shoot. Dave Edmunds produced that album for me. I wished I'd had more control over it, but it was fun, and I got a lot of support – Springsteen and Lou Reed and Paul Simon were on it. They were playing the album while I was doing this shoot in some kind of warehouse on the Hudson. And someone came in with a telegram. And they opened it up and they said, "You've been inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame." So I felt really good. That's what that picture's attached to for me.

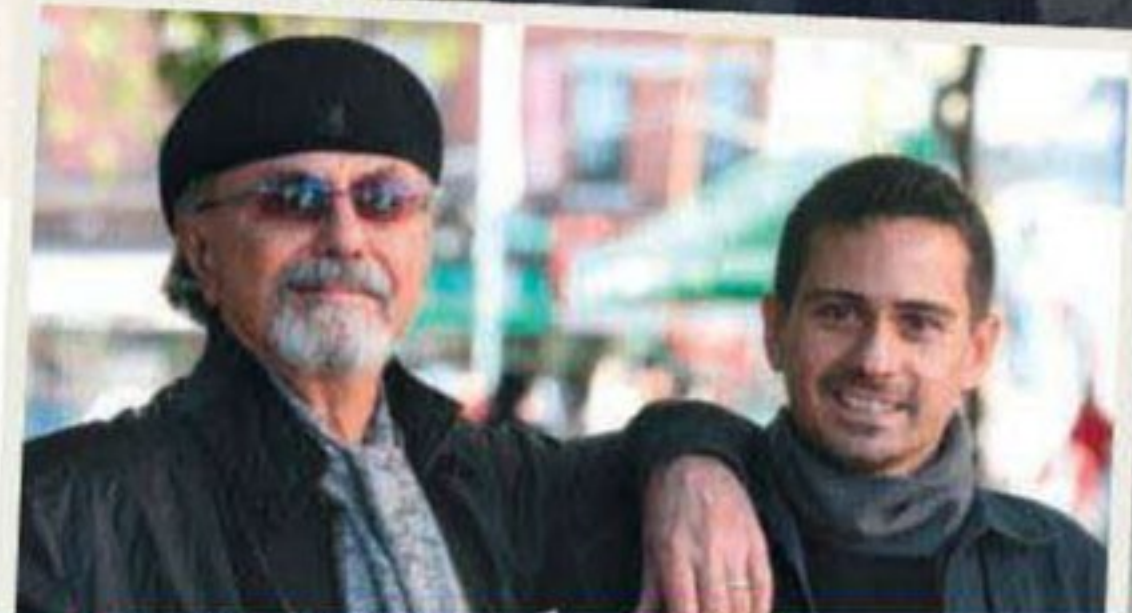
## 10 WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL, NEW YORK, 1989

Lou Reed, my New York friend, inducting me into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. When I had "The Wanderer", I don't think they even had a category for rock'n'roll at the Grammys. I was with a company that wouldn't even give you a gold record. When people like Lou say how much my records mean to them, it's hard to really understand, when you're me. Then you look out at this ceremony and see Springsteen and Bob Seger, and think, "My music has actually reached people. I feel like I made a contribution. I feel like a link in a chain."



## 11 ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME CONCERT, CLEVELAND, OHIO, 1995

I was first introduced to James Brown by Sam Cooke. I was on tour with Sam, and he took me down to a barrelhouse joint, it might have been outside of Memphis, and James Brown was playing there with The Famous Flames. I don't know if he'd even had hit records at the time. Sam Cooke was a pretty quiet gentleman, but when he wanted to be, a real powerful guy. He stood up and protected me in that situation, as I would him in my neighbourhood. James Brown was fucking incredible that night. It was wild.



## 12 THE BRONX, 2011

I'm with my friend, Charles Messina. He's written a play about my life called *The Wanderer* that we're going to try and get done on Broadway. I've also just made an album, *Tank Full Of Blues*. I tell this story on it about Robert Johnson hitching a ride with me to the crossroads, and the conversation we have. I like to make sense of things, which is probably why I'm still here. Hank Williams songs taught me how to live. When I found out I could write a song, boy, that was a bit of salvation.

# UNSUNG HEROES

## Cardinal

**Reunited—the foremost indie control freaks of the early '90s. "Instead of Simon & Garfunkel, we were more like Simon & Simon..."**

**T**HE WELL-WORN MUSIC business adage has it that you have your whole life to write and record your debut album, and then a matter of months to follow it up. *Cardinal*, a duo comprising Australian songwriter Richard Davies and American musician and arranger Eric Matthews, cannot be said to be adherents of conventional wisdom. Their second album, *Hymns*, appears 18 years after its self-titled predecessor.

"That," says Davies, "is 18 years of evidence of how bloody-minded and stubborn we both are."

In that time, *Cardinal*'s debut has modestly accumulated the stature of legend. This is doubtless partly to do with its very singularity as a lone, perfectly formed statement of lo-fi pop, issued by an enigmatic entity never heard from again. It is also, however, related to the timing of its original release. Issued into the teeth of the early '90s grunge gale, a period during which it felt like all music was a bellicose roar of ennui set to thundering guitars, *Cardinal* was adored by a clique of American musicians who felt there must be something more to life. Admirers included REM's Peter Buck, Jane's Addiction's Dave Navarro and The Flaming Lips' Wayne Coyne—the Lips, indeed, served as Davies' backing band on a subsequent solo tour. "It just stood out," says Matthews, asked to account for the chord struck by *Cardinal*. "It was so different to anything else that was happening. Nirvana were the biggest band in the world, and there were all those groups from Seattle with their guitars and their yelling, and we

tried to pretend it was 1967—two young men in the early '90s, enamoured with early to mid-Bee Gees, sitting down and saying, 'Let's make pretty music, simple music, even corny at times, with sophisticated arrangements.' Pop music."

Matthews and Davies were an unlikely partnership. Davies had left his native Sydney with his acclaimed group The Moles, and tried to find a niche for their deadpan pop in London and New York. On an excursion to Boston, Davies was introduced to aspiring producer Matthews by mutual friend Bob Fay of Sebadoh.

"I had no knowledge of him," remembers Matthews. "Though I had some friends who were Moles fans. I turned up at Bob's jam session, and I thought Richard was remarkable, like some relic, some leftover from the British invasion who'd been sitting in a capsule for 25 years. He sounded authentic and old, but he was a young guy."

The partnership, though instantly fruitful, didn't last. Talking separately, Davies from his home in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, Matthews from his, near Portland, Oregon, each describes, in eerily similar terms, a dialogue of two perfectionists niggling each other to distraction. "Instead of Simon & Garfunkel,"



Getting it together in the country: (l-r) Eric Matthews and Richard Davies

### WHY I LOVE...

#### Cardinal



**"Some records you play over and over; some records you remember again and again. Either way, it's spun round in my head for years." Matt Friedberger, The Fiery Furnaces**

says Matthews, "it's more like Simon & Simon. I'm probably the bigger pain in the ass. I have insanely high standards. If something isn't up to snuff, I won't work on it."

"I remember seeing Paul Simon interviewed years ago," says Davies, "and being asked if he'd ever work with Art Garfunkel again. He did this real tears-in-eyes speech, saying, 'I love Art, he's a special human being, and I'm sure we'll work together again.' Then he paused and said, 'No hurry.' It's like that. I mean, don't ever disagree with Eric unless you want to go right to the bottom of the bucket."

*Hymns* has been in gestation, by Davies' estimation, for six or seven years. "We were approached about a reissue of *Cardinal* in 2004," says Matthews. "We hadn't spoken for a few years at that point. The reissue got us talking again by necessity, and a couple of years

after that he started sending me songs, which he wanted me to arrange and produce for a solo record. They turned out so *Cardinal*-sounding that we began discussing it. But each of us quit the project a couple of times."

It wasn't as if either of them had anything else to do. Matthews, since cutting his teeth on *Cardinal*, has made six solo albums of ornately arranged pop and formed a new duo, Seinking Ships, with Christopher Seink, a mostly instrumental enterprise whose 2010 album, *Museum Quality Capture*, featured guest vocals from Lush's Miki Berenyi. Davies has continued to issue records, under his own name and that of Cosmos, a collaboration with Guided By Voices' Robert Pollard, in between pursuing a career as a trial attorney in the Boston area. "I love it," he says, "I love the challenge. It measures with my passion for music."

To the inevitable question of whether there might be a third *Cardinal* album, in about, say, 2041, both are understandably cautious. "I don't know," says Matthews. "I won't say never. If Richard were to start handing me more great songs, then I'd entertain the idea."

"2041?" laughs Davies. "That's a little optimistic, don't you think? Let's see how much we insult each other during the promotional process. I'm taking the high road for now, but the first sign of duplicity and ambiguity, I'm going to tip the bucket on him." **ANDREW MUELLER**

### HOW TO BUY... *Cardinal*



#### CARDINAL

DEDICATED (1994)

★★★★

The blend of Davies' melodic whimsy and Matthews' ear for sumptuous arrangement made what was about the least fashionable record released in the early '90s one of the grunge era's most enduring classics.



#### HYMNS

FIRE (2012)

★★★

Eighteen years on from *Cardinal*, an eerily congruent companion piece. Davies' songwriting has grown no less oblique and tuneful, and Matthews has only become more confident as an arranger.

# NME AWARDS 2012 SHOWS

**CHARLIXCX**  
ICONA POP  
WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON LEXINGTON**  
020 7403 3331

**SLOW CLUB**  
GROSS MAGIC + KWES  
THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HEAVEN**  
0844 847 2351

**THE BLACK KEYS**  
BAND OF SKULLS  
SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY  
**ALEXANDRA PALACE**  
**SOLD OUT**

**PURE LOVE**  
FOE  
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON BUSH HALL**  
020 7403 3331

**BAND OF SKULLS**  
DALE EARNHARDT JR JR  
WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON KOKO**  
**SOLD OUT**

**tUnE-yArDs**  
TRAILER TRASH TRACEYS  
WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY  
**O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE**  
0844 477 2000

**TOTALLY ENORMOUS  
EXTINCT DINOSAURS**  
WILLY MOON  
THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HEAVEN**  
**SOLD OUT**

**CLOUD CONTROL**  
WE ARE AUGUSTINES + DOG IS DEAD  
FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM**  
020 7403 3331

**THE BIG PINK**  
MOZART PARTIES  
MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON GARAGE**  
0844 847 1678

**KURT VILE**  
SONIC BOOM + REAL ESTATE  
TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON KOKO**  
0844 847 2258

**ALABAMA SHAKES**  
JESSIE WARE  
WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON BOSTON ARMS**  
**SOLD OUT**

**THE JEZABELS**  
DRY THE RIVER + KAI FISH + HEY SHOLAY  
WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON KOKO**  
0844 847 2258

*Oh Land* *Little Dragon*  
**ALPINES**  
THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HEAVEN**  
0844 847 2351

**PLUS GUESTS**  
FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HMV FORUM**  
0844 847 2405  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH MEAN FIDDLER

**S.C.U.M**  
PLUS GUESTS  
FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON BUSH HALL**  
020 7403 3331

**MARINA  
AND THE DIAMONDS**  
PLUS GUESTS  
SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY  
**O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE**  
0844 477 2000

**ZULU WINTER**  
PLUS GUESTS  
MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON CARGO**  
020 7403 3331

*the* **DRUMS**  
SPECTOR  
MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON ROUNDHOUSE**  
0844 482 8008

**THE CRIBS**  
SPECTRALS + THIS MANY BOYFRIENDS  
TUESDAY 28 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON ULU**  
**SOLD OUT**

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# John Mulvey's

# WILD MERCURY SOUND

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

**This month: Steve Gunn and Chris Forsyth**

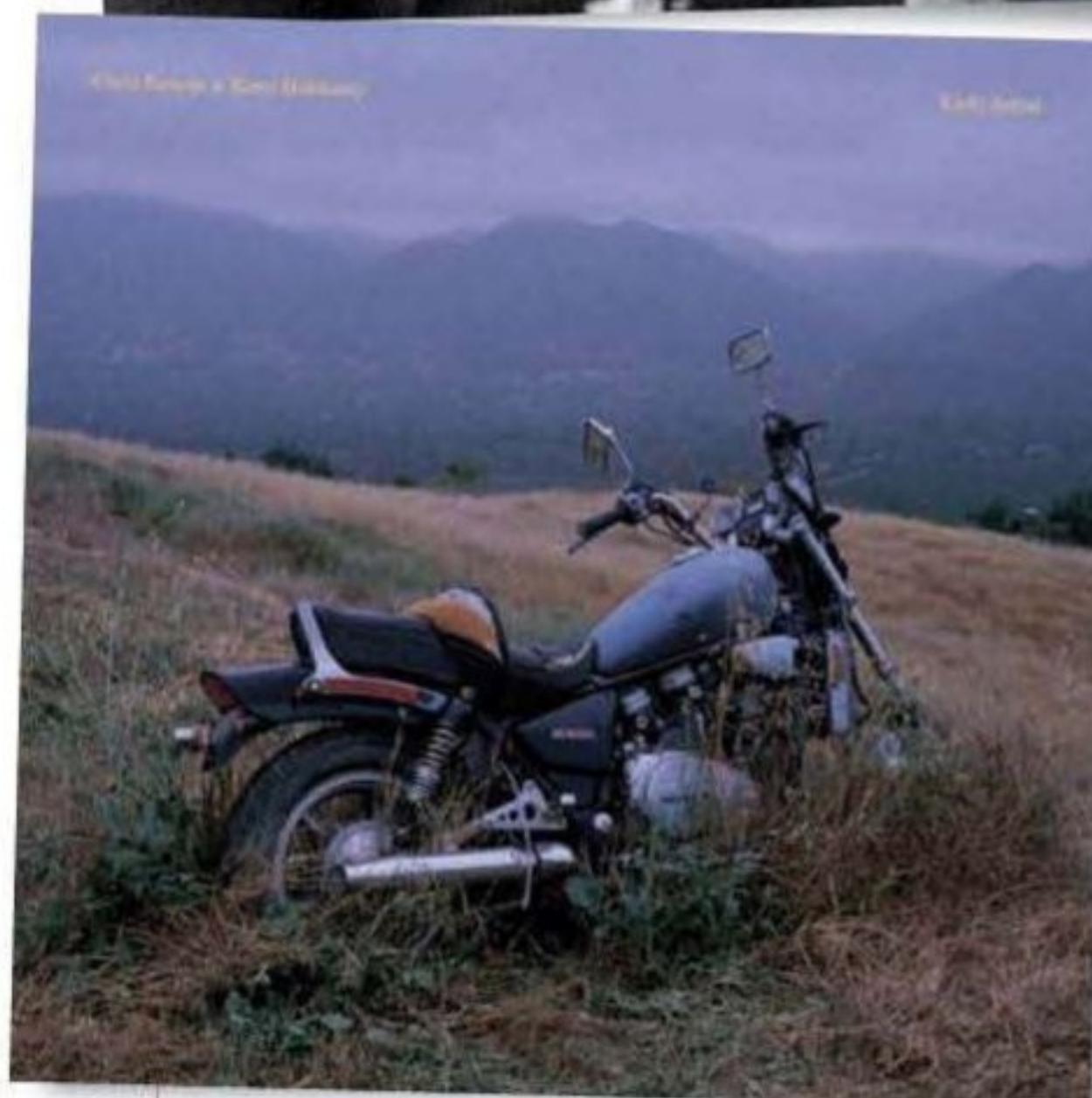
**W**ITH NOT MUCH regret, I should start by saying that, from the next issue of *Uncut*, Wild Mercury Sound will return to being an online-only affair at [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk). There are plenty of good reasons to wrap up a monthly column in the magazine, one of them being that I am more and more tempted to write about musicians I've already covered at length.

This month, for instance, I could happily expound on a new record by the progressive choogling outfit Endless Boogie (tackled in *Uncut* Take 159), though the EP's title – "Twenty Minute Jam Getting Out Of The City" – probably evokes its contents better than a 500-word article. Or I could grapple with the Jamaican adventures of Sun Araw (Take 157), who ended up recording with the venerable vocal group The Congos. We may revisit that story if we have the space, actually.

A couple of new records, though, seem to provide a rather serendipitous conclusion to Wild Mercury Sound in *Uncut*, not least because they reiterate a persistent theme round these parts: an idea of traditional American music being deployed and expanded in adventurous new ways. The patron saint of this scene, and a recurring touchstone in this column, has been the late guitarist Jack Rose, and **Steve Gunn** and **Chris Forsyth** were two guitarists who first came to my attention on a massive tribute project to Rose called *Honest Strings* (Take 158).

Unlike many of Rose's fellow travellers, Gunn and Forsyth focus on electric more than acoustic guitars, with pretty fierce results on two new duo records they're involved with. *Ocean Parkway* (Three-Lobed Recordings) is the second album Gunn has made with the drummer **John Truscinski**, following up 2010's fine *Sand City*. Gunn plays a kind of charged, smudged folk-blues, losing himself in serpentine ragas that nevertheless keep up a rollicking momentum. Truscinski, meanwhile, is one of those freestyling drummers, like Chris Corsano, with a restless jazz invention and a habit of suddenly forcing the music to surge violently forward. The combination makes for a thrillingly unstable listen akin to Sandy Bull and Billy Higgins' '60s jams, and one that recently left me, on a bumpy bus ride, a little seasick as well as exhilarated.

Chris Forsyth's "New Pharmacist Boogie" appeared on our Creedence tribute CD last month, showcasing the sort of downhome elaborations that graced his *Paranoid Cat* album last year (Take 167). *Early Astral*, though, is a hook-up with **Koen Holtkamp**, one half of the mostly electronic improvising unit, Mountains (Take 152), whose music normally skews towards the



New duo records: far-out sleeves for (top) *Ocean Parkway* and (above) *Early Astral*

atmospheric, even the ambient. *Early Astral*, then, seems to be the perfect place to close this column. It features a meditative folk guitarist sliding into heavier and more psychedelic territory, while a technician/aesthete piles on the loops, drones, deep space interference and generally levitational kosmische vibes. It features just two tracks, each 17 minutes long. And, of course, it is only available as a download or as a heinously limited edition vinyl record (on the Blackest Rainbow label): strongly recommended.

Thank you, anyhow, for your indulgence. Please stay in touch: I'll be blogging most days at our radically upgraded website ([www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk)), and you can also follow me on twitter (@JohnRMulvey).

## THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

### 1 Lee Ranaldo Between The Times

**And The Tides** MATADOR  
Searing rock from Ranaldo and Sonic Youth 2.0 (Steve Shelley, Alan Licht, Jim O'Rourke, John Medeski and Nels Cline!)

### 2 The Dirty Three Toward The Low Sun

BELLA UNION  
On parole from The Bad Seeds/Grinderman, Warren Ellis reconvenes his expansive trio for a feistier than usual session.

### 3 Various Artists Wah-Wah Cowboys Vol II

[HTTP://HISGOLDENMESSENGER.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://HISGOLDENMESSENGER.BLOGSPOT.COM)  
MC Taylor compiles a second playlist of backwoods nuggets, including the unsung genius of Mississippi Charles Bevel.

### 4 Toy Left Myself Behind

HEAVENLY  
Ex-members of indie landfill joke band Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong return, much-improved, channelling Pulp and Stereolab.

### 5 Julia Holter Ekstasis

RVNG INTL  
A crystalline, enchanted hybrid of Joanna Newsom, Julianna Barwick, Fever Ray and Björk... blogosphere sainthood awaits.

### 6 Tindersticks The Something Rain

LUCKY DOG  
An unexpected return to form from the lugubrious groovers, especially with vivid spoken-word potboiler "Chocolate".

### 7 Endless Boogie Twenty Minute Jam Getting Out Of The City

BOO-HOORAY  
Mega-choogles from NYC, in the space between Canned Heat, the Velvets and The Stooges.



### 8 Paul Weller Sonik Kicks

ISLAND  
In spite of Michael Rother's peripheral involvement and that avant-garde 'k' in *Sonik*, an energised Weller tacks away from freak-outs towards safer ground.

### 9 James Blackshaw Love Is The Plan, The

**Plan Is Death** IMPORTANT  
Ninth album of ravishing guitar/piano explorations from gifted and reliable British composer.

### 10 Grinderman Grinderman 2 RMX

MUTE  
Old Nick retires the Grinderman franchise with unlikely goth/trip hop remix set. Robert Fripp and Andy Weatherall come out more or less unscathed.

For regular updates, drop in on the Wild Mercury Sound blog at [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk)

# BOB WESTON

**Fleetwood Mac guitarist (1947–2012)**

**H**ISTORY HAS TENDED to diminish the role of Bob Weston in the convoluted saga of Fleetwood Mac. He joined the band in the autumn of 1972, replacing sacked guitarist Danny Kirwan, and stayed on for just over a year, before he too was ousted amid the kind of interpersonal strife that was to become the group's trademark. But even though Weston arrived during the Mac's slump, his hand in the transition from British blues hounds to MOR globetrotters was a discreetly telling one.

The understated acoustics of "3" offered a more melodic alternative on 1973's *Penguin*, the first of two albums he recorded with Fleetwood Mac. And it was Weston's surging duet with Christine McVie on "Did You Ever Love Me" that prefigured the richer harmonies that came to define much of the Nicks-Buckingham era. Follow-up *Mystery To Me* fared equally poorly in the charts, though Weston's strident guitar on "The City" and "Miles Away" was an undoubted highlight, as was his turn on the AOR-friendly "Hypnotized". He also co-wrote "Forever" and came up with the arrangement on Christine McVie's "Why".

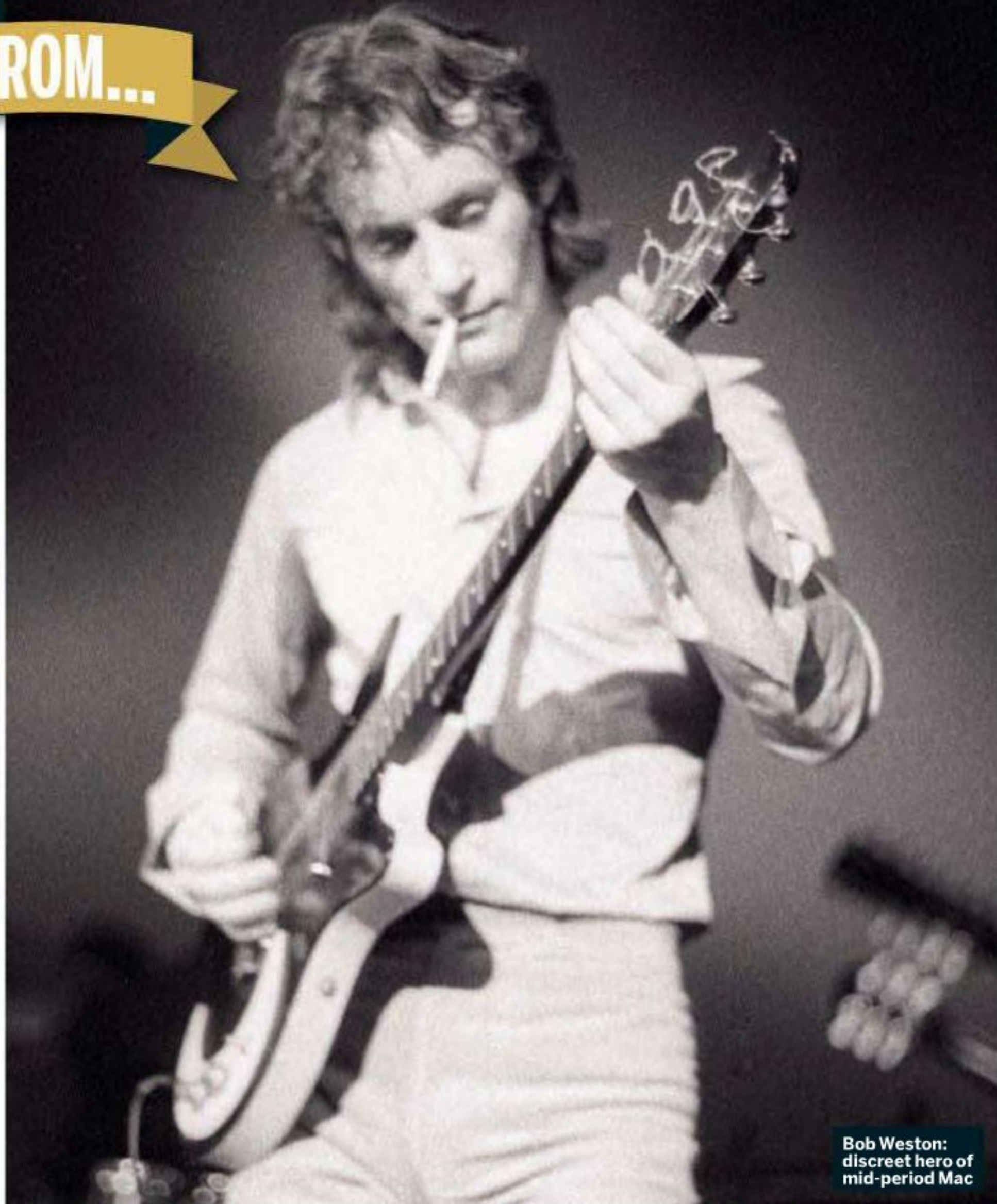
His time was up during a US tour in late '73, when Mick Fleetwood discovered that Weston had been having an affair with his wife, Jenny Boyd. The tipping point occurred after a show in Lincoln, Nebraska. "I got a phone call early one morning," he recalled. "Next thing, there's a knock at the door, and the entire road crew was standing there. They were all looking daggers at me, very menacing, all broken noses and scars..." Road manager John Courage sacked him on October 26 that year, the remaining dates were cancelled and Weston was immediately flown home. All of which

prompted one of the more bizarre episodes in Fleetwood Mac lore. Manager Clifford Davis duly set about recruiting a bogus lineup to perform under the name instead, which itself led to a bitter legal battle.

Plymouth-born Weston had begun playing guitar aged 12, inspired by blues heroes Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin and Muddy Waters. His first rock'n'roll baptism was in The Kinetic, with whom he made 1967's *Live Your Life*, after which

he worked with Graham Bond and singer Aliko Ashman. His break came when he joined Long John Baldry's band in 1970. Weston appeared on 1972's *Everything Stops For Tea*, produced by Rod Stewart and Elton John. He was first introduced to Fleetwood Mac while touring with Baldry.

His post-Mac credits included three solo albums and appearances on Murray Head's *Say It Ain't So* (1975) and Sandy Denny's 1977 farewell, *Rendezvous*.



Bob Weston: discreet hero of mid-period Mac

## HOWARD TATE

**American soul-blues singer (1939–2011)**

Howard Tate's return to music provided one of the most welcome, if unexpected, comebacks of recent times. The Georgia-born singer achieved cult success in 1967 with *Get It While You Can*, his debut LP. The keening entreaties of songs like "Look At Granny Run Run" and "Ain't Nobody Home" served notice of an achingly beautiful voice that predated Al Green. Tate toured alongside Aretha Franklin, while among his devotees was Janis Joplin, who recorded "Get It While You Can" on *Pearl*. But mainstream success proved despairingly elusive and, after the relative failure of both *Howard Tate's Reaction* (1970) and a self-titled album two years later, he had

quit the business by the end of the decade. Tate fell on tough times, during which his daughter died in a house fire and he became homeless and addicted to cocaine and alcohol. After a long spell in rehab he emerged once more with 2003's Grammy-nominated *Rediscovered* and *A Portrait Of Howard* (2006), which included covers of Lou Reed and Nick Lowe.

## RALPH MacDONALD

**US percussionist and hit songwriter (1944–2011)**

The masterful rhythms of Harlem-born Ralph MacDonald provided the subtle backbone for a slew of recordings from the '70s onwards. James Brown, Aretha Franklin, George Benson, Stevie Wonder, Rod Stewart, James Taylor and Carole King were among many

who paid for his services. His early grounding in the calypso traditions of his Trinidadian father brought a Caribbean feel to Paul Simon's "Late In The Evening", though MacDonald was just as capable of driving funk (David Bowie's "Young Americans") as he was swampy R'n'B (Dr John's "Such A Night"). He was also a talented songwriter. In 1972 Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway scored a huge hit with "Where Is The Love", co-authored by MacDonald. His "Calypso Breakdown" performance appeared on the soundtrack of *Saturday Night Fever*, while "Just The Two Of Us" earned him a Grammy when Bill Withers recorded it in 1981. MacDonald, who started off in Harry Belafonte's orchestra, was self-effacing to the last: "I don't want to be a superstar. Above all, I'm a musician first."

## CESÁRIA ÉVORA

**Cape Verde singer and 'Queen Of Morna' (1941–2011)**

French publication *Le Monde* once declared that Cape Verde performer Cesária Évora possessed "a voice to melt the soul". Often compared to Billie Holiday and known as the "Barefoot Diva" for habitually performing without shoes, her soulful contralto made her the foremost ambassador of *morna*, a bluesy blend of African and seafaring music peculiar to her native islands. She started recording late, going to Paris to cut debut *La Diva Aux Pieds Nus* as a 47-year-old in 1988. But it was fourth LP *Miss Perfumado* (1992) that was Évora's breakthrough, shifting over 300,000 copies and prompting an extensive global

tour. Audiences responded to the emotive complexities of her songs, sung in a creole language derived from a mixture of Portuguese and West African dialects. She received the first of three Grammy nominations with 1995's *Cesária*, winning the award in the World Music category for *Voz D'Amor* in 2004. Évora, a staunch advocate of cigarettes and rum, suffered a heart attack in May 2010. Last September she apologised to her fans for having to retire from performing due to ill health.

## FRED MILANO

**Doo wop tenor and Belmonds star (1939-2012)**

New York doo wop group The Belmonds were so named after the street on which their tenor singer Fred Milano lived. Alongside buddies Angelo D'Aleo and Carlo Mastrangelo, Milano began perfecting harmonies as a teenager on street corners in the Bronx, becoming Dion And The Belmonds with the arrival of Dion DiMucci in 1957. Their first Top 30 US hit, "I Wonder Why", landed a year later. Milano sang tenor on their two biggest smashes, "A Teenager In Love" and "Where Or When". The Belmonds carried on as a trio when DiMucci quit for a solo career at the onset of the '60s, scoring less sizeable triumphs in "Tell Me Why" and "Come On Little Angel". Bandmate Warren Gradus noted, "Freddie's harmony kept everything together, made it very tight." In 2003 Milano, who continued to perform with the Belmonds, began working as a legal co-ordinator, educating inmates in criminal law at Rikers Island.

## J. BLACKFOOT

**Stax Soul Children singer (1946-2011)**

"He was a tremendous talent," Stax songwriting legend David Porter once recalled of singer J. Blackfoot, who he signed in 1968. "When I first heard him there was naturalness in his phrasing, in his charm, that was unique." Porter and co-worker Isaac Hayes teamed Mississippi-born Blackfoot with Norman West, Anita Louis and Shelbra Bennett as The Soul Children, who scored 15 US R'n'B hits over the next decade. In 1983, four years after they'd disbanded, Blackfoot reunited with the group's producer Homer Banks and recorded "Taxi", which made a moderate dent in the UK and US charts. He cut nearly a dozen solo LPs before reforming The Soul Children with West for 2008's *Still Standing*. Most recently he was involved in Porter's touring revue.

## SAM RIVERS

**Jazz saxophone legend and Miles Davis sideman (1923-2011)**

Miles Davis had already worked with saxophonist-composer Sam Rivers by the time he issued his signature tune, "Beatrice", in 1964. Though Davis was unconvinced by his spirited contributions to live album *Miles In Tokyo*, replacing him soon after with Wayne Shorter, Rivers was by then building a reputation as one of the hottest new talents at Blue Note. 1964's *Fuchsia Swing Song* was the first of four LPs for the label and a high-water mark in experimental jazz, his quintet improvising freely around formal structures. Rivers' expertise also extended to flute, piano and arrangements. A move to New York in the late '60s saw him and his wife open Studio Rivbea, a performance space in Greenwich Village that became one of the crucibles of the avant-garde scene.

## JIM SHERWOOD

**Frank Zappa's longtime avant-garde sax and sound-effects man (1942-2011)**

A fascination with car mechanics landed Jim Sherwood the nickname 'Motorhead', but it was as free-blowing saxophonist with



Jim Sherwood: frenetic free-blower

Frank Zappa's Mothers Of Invention that he became known to the wider world. He first met Zappa at high school in Lancaster, California in 1956, upon which he began playing with Frank's first R'n'B group, The Black-Outs. He joined another of Zappa's early bands, The Omens, by which time Sherwood's technique was starting to attract attention. "He's one of those guys you say, 'I know this guy who's really weird and I want to show him to you,'" recalled Zappa. Sherwood's association with The Mothers Of Invention began as roadie and sound-effects man, but he played on the band's key albums from 1966's *Freak Out!* up until 1970, including '69's *Uncle Meat*,

where he was credited with "frenetic tenor sax stylings, tambourine, choreography, obstinance & equipment setter-upper when he's not hustling local groupies". Sherwood also featured on several solo Zappa recordings.

## MIKE SMITH

**UK pop producer and 'the man who rejected The Beatles' (1935-2011)**

He may have overseen six UK No 1 singles between 1963 and 1970, but it wasn't enough to rescue Mike Smith's reputation as the man who blundered with The Beatles. The latter had been invited to audition for Decca Records, for whom Smith was in-house producer, on New Year's Day 1962. "They weren't that good," he recalled, and elected instead to sign the other band he was recording that day, Brian Poole & The Tremeloes. Among the major successes he produced for them were "Do You Love Me", "Here Comes My Baby" and "Silence Is Golden". He also helmed Jeff Christie's "Yellow River", Georgie Fame's "The Ballad Of Bonnie And Clyde" and Marmalade's Beatles cover, "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da". And the Fab Four themselves? "I met them subsequently," said Smith, "and they gave me a two-finger salute." ROB HUGHES

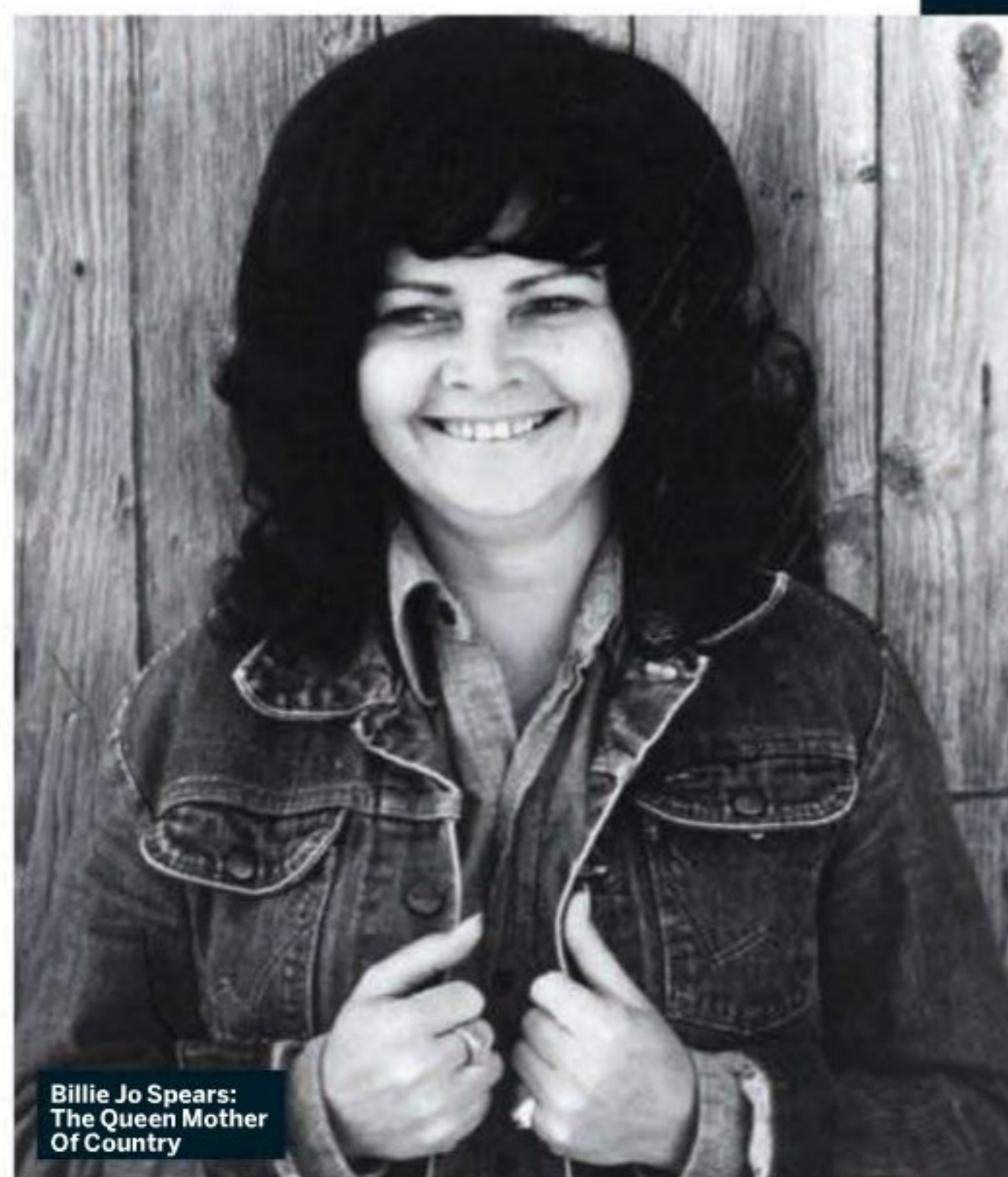
# BILLIE JO SPEARS

**US singer who brought the earthiness to '70s country (1937-2011)**

THE '70S WERE boom years for the highly polished brand of Nashville pop known as 'countrypolitan'. But while Crystal Gayle was the epitome of its sentimental side, Billie Jo Spears was altogether more earthy. Roger Bowling's 1975 song "Blanket On The Ground", written from the viewpoint of a woman attempting to coax her husband into a bout of al fresco sex, was the biggest of her five Top 10 country hits. Unsurprisingly, given the ultra-conservative confines of Music Row, it landed her in bother in the US.

"It sounded like a cheating song," she once said, "and the public don't think girls should sing cheating songs." The tune nevertheless did brisk business over here, where it made No 6. The suggestive "What I've Got In Mind", issued a year later, fared even better. That year saw the Texan named, puzzlingly given that her first hit landed in 1968, as "most promising female vocalist" by the Academy Of Country Music.

Spears' popularity in Britain earned her the sobriquet 'The Queen Mother Of Country Music', playing to sell-out crowds throughout the late '70s and early '80s. She was ubiquitous on the country charts, managing 26 Top 40 singles up until 1984, and even a cover of Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive". Her last album was 2005's *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*.



Billie Jo Spears: The Queen Mother Of Country

# AN AUDIENCE WITH... RANDY NEWMAN

The great American songwriter talks film scores, Sinatra, *Family Guy* and the 'mystery chord' – "I'm slowly realising just how stupid I am!"

**I**T MIGHT SURPRISE you to learn that Randy Newman has only ever bought "around 50" pop records in his life. "Most of my collection is classical, some jazz, hardly any pop. But the pop stuff I like, I really like. And I'm slowly learning more." Over the course of our conversation, he'll enthuse about Ray Charles ("the big guy, the Moses of pop") and Cilla Black ("her version of 'I've Been Wrong Before' is the best recording of one of my songs I've ever heard"), and talk modestly about his work with Ry Cooder, Harry Nilsson and Elton John. Recently turned 68, and the recipient of two Oscars, three Emmys, four Grammys and a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, Newman shows no signs of slowing down. He tours the UK this month in support of his recent *Live In London* LP and he's just finished work on a new film OST. But first, there's the small matter of the *Uncut* mailbag, which holds a bumper crop of questions for him. "The more questions these guys ask me, the less I realise I know," he admits. "I'm slowly realising just how stupid I am."

**Be honest, do you hate the way *Family Guy* portrayed you?**

**Luis, Richmond**



## ★ STAR QUESTION ★

**Have you ever used Scriabin's "mystery chord" in any of your work? *Van Dyke Parks***

Ha ha! This was some weird extended chord Van Dyke Parks once explained to me. I've probably stumbled across it, but not the way he has. I guess myself and Van are both conservatoire-trained musicians, but he wears it rather more obviously than I do. Which is a way of saying that I only use three chords! Van is one of the people you meet in your life where you remember everything they say, whether it's funny, intelligent or whatever. I worked with him a lot in the late '60s and early '70s. He's a tremendous musician. A great pianist, if a little discursive for some, but he has impeccable taste.

No, I don't hate it! For those who've not seen it, I'm the obnoxious songwriter type who is sitting there playing and describing everything that happens around me. "Fat guy walking up to me," and so on. It's really a good joke and a good impression, although I'm not that observational kind of writer. Not many of my songs are descriptive. But hell, it's such a good idea that why not me? The thing is that more people now recognise me and ask for my autograph after being parodied on *Family Guy* than anything else, including *Toy Story*. It's amazing. You slave all your life to make good work – and you end up being recognised for a bad parody in a cartoon!

**You studied music to quite a high level. Can too much musical education be a help or a hindrance to a songwriter?**

**Vicky, Manchester**

It can certainly be a hindrance when you have no real affection or understanding of what's great about R'n'B or gospel music or hip hop. If you have no affection for pop music – if you can't understand the appeal of Fats Domino or Eminem – you shouldn't be writing it. But musical education is no hindrance at all, as long as you remember where you came from. I'm not afraid to just use three chords in a song. You don't ever want your songs to sound laboured. The only time I really start to use my musical education is when I'm doing arrangements, but I don't make it the focal point of what I'm doing. I hope I don't anyway. People make great records without having much theoretical knowledge. They have instincts. People like The Beatles or Brian Wilson, they naturally go to the right places. It takes some of us years of education to get there!

**You're credited as one of the writers on *iThree Amigos!*... what did that involve?**

**Harlan Guthrie, Ontario**

Well, the songs were all mine – "The Ballad Of The Three Amigos",

"Blue Shadows" and "My Little Buttercup", where the Three Amigos hit that long note – but for once I also ended up contributing to the script. It was mainly Steve [Martin] and Lorne [Michaels], but I came up with some ideas. It was a very collaborative process – one of the few genuinely collaborative episodes I've been involved in – and it involved us all chipping in with ideas and developing other people's jokes. I honestly can't remember what lines I wrote. All I can remember is Steve's jokes that I wished I'd written, like where they go into this rough bar wearing stage Mexican outfits and say, "We're not Mexicans..." I remember having a long debate with Steve about the line "the bells tolled with a loud ding". That got funnier the more we discussed it.

**Your lyrics crack me up. What makes you laugh?**

**Kiran, Croydon**

You know, I've been watching *Absolutely Fabulous* lately. It's not often on round here. But man, that's funny. And it's the meanest goddam thing I ever saw – the load that's put on that

CONTINUES OVER ►

## ★ STAR QUESTION ★



**I've read you find songwriting rather excruciating. I feel the same way – co-writing can add yet another dimension of pain. Do you feel there's a qualitative difference between songs that come from one writer versus a team? *Gretchen Peters***

I remember Gretchen supporting me in Boulder in '79, and she was great. I like the idea that co-writing adds another layer of pain! Of course, I've done very little co-writing. I wrote some songs with Jackie DeShannon when I was 18, and a song with Bobby Darin, too. But I have to say I can seldom hear a difference between a collaborative song and a song written by a single writer. From experience, I'd say there's a tendency for a solo songwriter to be more personal and soul-searching. But then you compare Irving Berlin and Rodgers & Hart and it turns that assumption on its head.

## ★ STAR QUESTION ★



**How do you feel now that Dobie Gray is gone?**

**Nanci Griffith**

Oh, I feel worse. I love periods of Southern soul, particularly the New Orleans stuff. Bobby Charles and Dr John and so on. Dobie Gray had some terrific musicians playing on his records. And it seems like one of the greats from that era seems to pass on every few months. Still, it just means that there are now more great gigs for me...



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**“If you have no affection for pop music, if you can’t understand the appeal of Fats Domino or Eminem, you shouldn’t be writing it”**

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God's songwriter:  
The Old Grey Whistle  
Test, March 1972



To infinity, and beyond! With  
Pixar's John Lasseter (right)  
at Newman's star presentation  
ceremony, the Hollywood  
Walk Of Fame, June 2, 2010

daughter, Saffy! I like that. I mainly watch TV comedy, stuff like *Reno 911*, *Modern Family*, *Raising Hope*. And I watch a lot of old shows like *The Honeymooners*. I need to see more stand-ups. Louis CK, I've heard many really bright people telling me that he's very funny. The two things I've seen by him were straight masturbation, that's all it was about. But maybe I need to see more of him.

**Do you miss the days of the Brill Building? And do you think we lost something when pop stars were expected to write their own material?**

**Kevin MacAteer, Aberdeen**

Well, when I started out I was certainly in awe of Carole King. If I ever had a hero, of any kind, it was her. I maybe never gave [Gerry] Goffin the credit he deserved because I wasn't paying much attention to the lyrics. I would occasionally compete to write songs for Gene McDaniels or Bobby Gee or Little Peggy March, but she would always get them, and I understood why, because she was really good. And I also have great affection for Mann and Weil and Sedaka and Howie Greenfield. But no, I don't think the emergence of the singer-songwriter was a bad thing. I liked that being an artist wasn't purely cosmetic. And I'm sure there are still people with the talent of a Carole King who are

writing material. I don't think things got worse.

**Do you ever wonder whether Pixar will collapse, if and when you stop writing songs?**

**Kent Carter, Chicago**

Well, I'm not working for them anymore. I'm sure they'll do OK without me! I mean, I don't think I've finished with them, but there's nothing planned at the moment. What was my favourite movie to work on? It's got to be *Toy Story 2*. It's got space music, cowboy music, happy music, sad music. Jessie is an interesting character to write for. She's got a different kind of depth, a romantic side and a bad temper. Then there are pieces of incidental movie music that people probably don't notice, like the "Ride Of The Doors" scene in *Monsters, Inc.*, which worked out nice. Film writing – actually writing the scores to order – that's the only part of my job which is really hard, you know, really physically exhausting work. They're not nice when I'm doing them, but it makes me happy when it works out, when I feel I've done something good with the scene.

**Harry Nilsson embraced your music and did a great job with many of your songs and I love your version of "Remember" on his tribute album. How well did you know Harry?**

## ★ STAR QUESTION ★



**Following your successful adaptation of *Faust*, do you have any further plans for a stage musical?**

**Willy Russell**

Wow, Willy Russell? The *Blood Brothers* guy? I'm honoured! Well, I've talked for years about making a musical about the life of Jane Fonda. She says she trusts me to write it... although she also trusted every other man in her life! But yeah, it'd be a good one. It divides up into around five perfect scenes. She starts out growing up in a house with this giant movie star – you'd make him bigger than the stage, like they did in *Star Wars* with those pack animals – who's not the warmest father in the world, shall we say. Then her mom commits suicide. Then she becomes a movie star just walking down the street for 45 seconds in *Walk On The Wild Side*. Then there's [Roger] Vadim, scenes in Paris, the extraordinary stuff in Hanoi, Tom Hayden, Ted Turner... and those exercise videos! Inexplicable life changes. Even she can't explain them. A fantastic life, I think, and the most beautiful person I've ever met. Thing is, I'll mention this and now Willy Russell will end up doing it...

**Bob Ferguson, Aurora, Ontario, Canada**

We worked together solidly for a while. And we played together – we would play basketball, ping pong, drugs... and then he just disappeared. In that I didn't see him anymore. Part of the reason for that is me, as I don't have a great capacity for friendship, because I don't reach out, exactly. But I think he met Lennon and all that stuff, and it was a different matter. But working together was great. We would make fun of each other's musical idiosyncrasies. I'd joke that he'd sing "da, da-da, da, da-da" [sings mournfully, like a Jewish cantor] and he'd tease me about shuffling all the time on the piano and mumbling over the top. So there was a lot of teasing. Maybe we were too hard on each other. Thing was, he had even less confidence than I had. And I don't have much! There was a big hole at the centre of that extraordinary talent. I listened to his stuff after he was gone, to pick one to do for that tribute album, and I was reminded of just how good he was.

**What was Frank Sinatra like?**

**Mark Napleton, Hounslow**

I thought it'd be hip if he recorded "Lonely At The Top" – it was pure Sinatra, it'd fit in with all that

leaning-against-the-lamppost, I'm-so-miserable bullshit. So me and Lenny [Waronker] met him at Warner Bros. But it didn't exactly fly with him. He asked me to play "I Think It's Gonna Rain", and he liked it. He never told us that he hated us, but I got the distinct impression that he didn't like that next generation much, The Beatles onwards. It was weird how insecure he was, looking at my manuscripts, pretending he could read music, going on about minor-key this and major-chord that. And he showed us his private airplane, which was *something*. He was a great singer in his day but – and I know this is sacrilege – according to a lot of musicians who worked with him, he stopped being a perfectionist. Nelson Riddle would do these fantastic orchestrations for him, and Sinatra would turn up and just do one take, warts'n'all. Still, he's one of those guys – like Neil Diamond, or Bruce Springsteen – who just inspires such love and affection. He makes people feel good about themselves, and that's an important function. ☺

## ★ STAR QUESTION ★



**Who's your favourite Python? Eric Idle**

Ha, of course it's Eric. A great guy. I became aware of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* the first time I went to England, around 1969. Alan Price had recorded a number of my songs, and I was at his house and he started telling me about this amazing comedy show that had just started and which was on that night. He

didn't have to convince me much, I thought it was amazing and still do. I first met Eric on *Saturday Night Live* in the '70s – he hosted it a lot and I quite often played on the show. And he came to see me in concert, with the show's producer Lorne Michaels, a mutual friend. Recently he presented me with a thing on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame. It was great to see Eric, but yeah, those kind of things aren't that important to me. I don't want to sound ungrateful, but it's like Academy Awards and Grammys, I like having them but I know that it isn't a measure of merit.



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# ALTERNATIVE ULSTER

by Stiff Little Fingers

The sound of young Northern Ireland in '78 – a punk clarion call for peace in Belfast that led to death threats for the band

## THE KEY PLAYERS



**JAKE BURNS**  
Vocals, lead guitar



**ALI McMORDIE**  
Bass



**GAVIN MARTIN**  
Music writer, *Alternative Ulster* fanzine editor



**GEOFF TRAVIS**  
Rough Trade label owner

**“T**HE REALITY OF life in Northern Ireland during The Troubles was that it was boring,” says Stiff Little Fingers’ singer and guitarist Jake Burns. “And ‘Alternative Ulster’ is a

song about having nothing to do, because of the restrictions imposed by the security forces. It’s as close to the classic punk rock ‘God I’m bored’ song as we ever got.”

“You could walk the streets of Belfast at 6pm, and it would feel like four in the morning,” continues guitarist Henry Cluney. “If punk came from young people’s frustration and anger, in Northern Ireland, we had that with a plus on the end.”

With “Alternative Ulster”, their second single [following “Suspect Device”], Stiff Little Fingers became one of the first Belfast bands to write about their own experiences.

The record’s theme is promoting positive change in unpromising circumstances: “alter your native Ulster”. Originally intended to be given away with a Belfast fanzine of the same name – edited by future *Uncut* contributor Gavin Martin – the song offered Belfast’s answer to The Clash’s rapid-fire, punk-rock rhetoric. It was eventually released on the fledgling Rough Trade, initiating a successful relationship for both parties that would yield the song’s parent long player, *Inflammable Material*: the first independent album to chart.

“‘Alternative Ulster’ said, ‘Take a look at where you’re living, is this how you want to grow up?’” concludes Cluney. “Stiff Little Fingers was our way out. It was our alternative.” **NICK HASTED**

**JAKE BURNS:** I’d been in touch with the Belfast columnist Colin McClelland, and he saw us at a gig with [Belfast-based journalist] Gordon Ogilvie. When I met them the following week, Gordon asked if anyone was looking after

**“I wasn’t exploiting The Troubles, I lived it. We had to move house because it got too dangerous”**  
**HENRY CLUNEY**

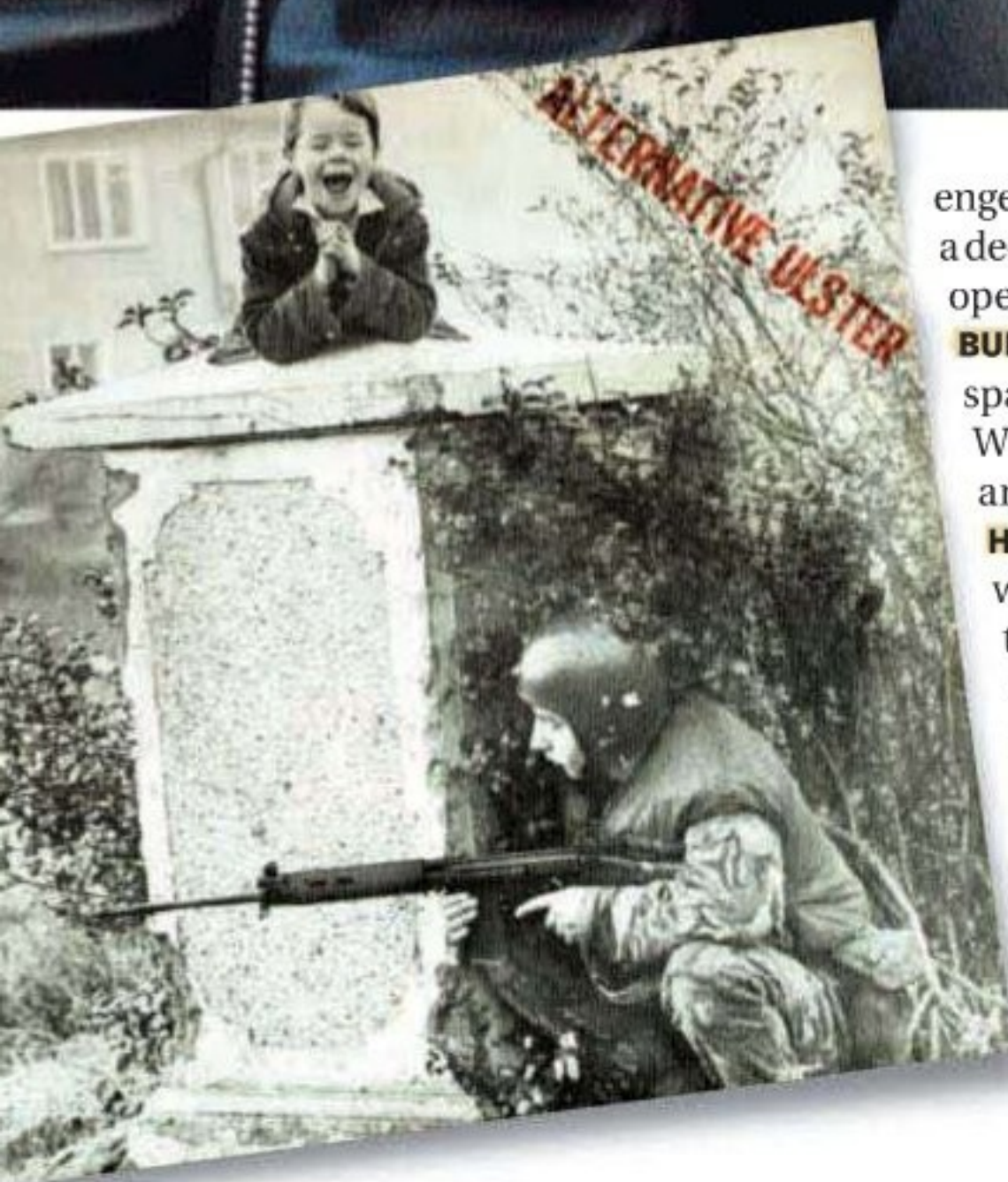
us, and if we had any songs about our own lives. We’d written “State Of Emergency”, but we thought, that’s enough. Gordon pointed out, “They think they’re having a hard time in London. What the fuck do they think you’re

dealing with?” He handed me the lyrics of “Suspect Device” – and I read it, and it was like one of those moments from a bad ’60s TV show, where the rest of the room seems to liquify, and the only thing that stays in focus is the piece of paper you’re holding. I went away and wrote the music for “Suspect Device” and “Wasted Life” almost as quickly as it takes to play. You couldn’t express those frustrations for fear of what would happen to you. But somehow it felt like you could say them in a song and you’d be OK.

**GAVIN MARTIN:** There was a constituency of people who were pretty suspicious of these songs, because they were



In the war zone: (l-r) Brian Faloon, Henry Cluney, Jake Burns and Ali McMordie



engendered by Gordon Ogilvie. There was a deep suspicion of Fleet Street media operators during punk. Shared by me.

**BURNS:** What Gordon did was provide a spark for what I was trying to do. When it came to songwriting, we were an equal partnership.

**HENRY CLUNEY:** [guitarist] It quickly went to, "They're exploiting this and that." But we wanted to write songs about daily life. And how do you ignore what was going on when it's that prevalent and life-changing? We had to move house because it got too dangerous. I think Ali had to do the same. I've slept under beds and my dad had to put furniture in front of the window in case bullets would come in. If people say, "You

shouldn't be exploiting that," well, I lived it. I'm not exploiting anything.

**ALI McMORDIE:** There were death threats, in the early days.

**CLUNEY:** The first time Jake and I were on TV, it was a local news show. And I remember we both thought, 'What have we done?' Because now people know our faces. Which is not the cleverest thing to do, when you're criticising the people causing all the deaths. We were doing a gig in the Republic, and we had a guy saying, "Lads, you can't play here, it's not advisable." It was an IRA threat. And they took us to see the local IRA commander, who happened to be in bed with a broken leg. And the guy said, "Lads, go ahead and play, and nothing'll happen to ya." But we weren't party political. Show us where any of our songs are anti-anything, except killing people.

**McMORDIE:** It was all part and parcel to Jake writing the words to "Alternative Ulster".

**BURNS:** The song bizarrely is almost Gavin Martin's fault. He was running the fanzine *Alternative*

CONTINUES OVER»

# THE MAKING OF...

*Ulster*, and he came up with the idea of putting a flexidisc on the cover to give away. He asked if he could use "Suspect Device", and we'd just that week recorded it as our first single. So I said, "I'll write you a song," and I went away and wrote "Alternative Ulster". Gordon changed maybe one or two lines. We couldn't afford demos, so to hear it, Gavin had to come to the next gig. I said to him, "So what did you think?" And he said he hated it, he thought it was dreadful, he didn't want it at all.

**MARTIN:** They came to us and suggested it. The title was attractive to Jake. They wanted to put it on the cover as a flexidisc, and they played it one night at the bar in Bangor where I lived. I didn't like the song.

**BURNS:** We thought, 'OK, well, we quite like it, we'll hang onto it.' It's a song about self-empowerment as much as anything else – "grab it... it's yours". If your life is miserable, you owe it to yourself to change it.

**CLUNEY:** The first line is, "There's nothing for us in Belfast". It had that feeling that we have to do things ourselves. And that is the truth, that people would set up gigs by hiring hotel ballrooms, not telling what kind of gig it was. In punk clubs, people's religions became so unimportant. We were young guys, and that was what an alternative Ulster was to us. We'd recorded "Suspect Device" at a radio jingle studio. The first pressing was 500, we cut and glued the paper sleeves by hand. Then John Peel played it, I think eight nights in a row.

**BURNS:** We played third on the bill to Eddie And The Hot Rods at Ulster Hall in Belfast, and [their producer] Ed Hollis had come with them. He said he'd really like to take us to England, record some demos, and see if he couldn't get us a deal at Island. We went in there for a weekend, and recorded five or six songs. They were very smooth, and they didn't communicate what the band sounded like. To show how little direction we were getting, if you listen right at the start of "Alternative Ulster", there's what sounds like a weird echo on the guitar. That's not echo, Ed asked me to double-track the guitar, but I was just listening to taped silence, and had to guess when the first note came in!

**McMORDIE:** It was a coffee-table mix. It was really poppy, it lacked depth and punch.

**BURNS:** Island listened to the demos, offered £35,000 up-front, and said, "Quit your jobs, pack your bags and get over here." Which we did. But [Island boss] Chris Blackwell hadn't heard the demos, and when he did, he pulled the plug. So we were back with no jobs in Belfast, where unemployment was one in three.

**McMORDIE:** Oh, it was a killer. We all went up to Gordon's flat. And it was a case of, 'What are we doing this for?' They said it wasn't good enough.

**BURNS:** We were going to quit. You just felt embarrassed going back to your family and friends. There was a huge amount of self-doubt. Peel's continued support, and then getting on as the Tom Robinson Band's tour support were votes of confidence. And also around this time Gordon happened to be in the Rough Trade shop in London.

**GEOFF TRAVIS:** John Peel started to really hammer "Suspect Device", and there was a demand for it in the shop, to such a fever pitch that we approached Gordon to see if they were interested in us taking over the pressing. It was right in the beginning of Rough Trade releasing records. Then we did "Alternative Ulster".

**McMORDIE:** We remixed and fixed those demo tapes as best we could, to bring the single out on Rough Trade. Island tried to get the tapes back. We happily told them to fuck off.

**TRAVIS:** We ended up mixing the record... which we had no experience of doing. We went to Olympic Studios,



London calling: the Fingers live at Brockwell Park, Brixton, 1979 – the gig was later abandoned due to a stage invasion

myself and Stephen Montgomery from the shop. We told a very good engineer there, Doug Western, what we wanted – to keep the power and attack, but give some clarity. And it sold 20-30,000, we couldn't keep it in the shops.

**BURNS:** Rough Trade had never made an album, neither had we. *Inflammable Material* was important because it was the first independent album in the Top 20.

**TRAVIS:** It was really important in establishing the label. I don't know if we'd still be around all these years later without it. And if "Alternative Ulster" had failed, we would have thought twice about *Inflammable Material*.

**BURNS:** Then in August 1978 we went across to England. It was a conscious decision as soon as we touched the tarmac at Heathrow: we're not writing about Northern Ireland any more. Because up until then, we'd had the odd accusation that we were cashing in on our own lives. In the interim 30 years, I've written one song about it.

**CLUNEY:** The other three moved, I didn't. I always loved Belfast. I found it weird, and I felt a big change then, especially in Jake when he went there. It was almost like I was the only one who should answer these questions from journalists about Belfast now. I felt awkward, because what do I say? Do I really say, "These songs used to mean a

lot?" Because to me they still did. On the first album's 13 songs, six are about Northern Ireland. And that's what defined the band – six songs. And that's the real stuff. Because writing in London, you're very unlikely to deal with the possibility that you might get killed. So it really took away that force of belief. That anger just wasn't there anymore.

**BURNS:** What you've got to bear in mind about The Troubles – and only in Ireland could they refer to a fucking civil war as trouble – is they started when I was 11. So it was pretty much all we knew. Being guarded about ourselves was second nature, really. And that carried on even when we left. We were all very watchful. Even now if I meet somebody new, I tend to be the last person to say anything. I'm still wary of people's intentions.

**CLUNEY:** When you're 12 and you know about death in the way we did, it's bound to affect you.

**BURNS:** Once the Good Friday agreement happened, it was like people were breathing more easily. What I was really hopeful would happen to those songs is that they'd become like old folk songs, about a conflict that happened long ago. Which they have. ①

**"It's a song about self-empowerment as much as anything else – 'grab it... it's yours'"** JAKE BURNS

## FACTFILE

**Written by** Jake Burns and Gordon Ogilvie  
**Performers** Jake Burns (vocals, lead guitar); Henry Cluney (guitar), Ali McMordie (bass), Brian Faloon (drums)  
**Producer** Ed Hollis  
**Recorded at** Island Studios, Hammersmith, London; later remixed at Olympic Studios, London

## TIMELINE

**1977** Belfast pub-rock band Highway Star add bassist Ali McMordie and rename themselves Stiff Little Fingers after a line in a Vibrators song. New co-manager Gordon Ogilvie encourages them to write about Northern Ireland.  
**March 1978** "Suspect Device" is released on the band's own label Rigid Digits. John Peel plays it every night for a week. During demo sessions soon after, "Alternative Ulster" is recorded.  
**August 1978** All of SLF bar Henry Cluney move to London and vow never to write about Northern Ireland again.  
**October 1978** "Alternative Ulster" is released.

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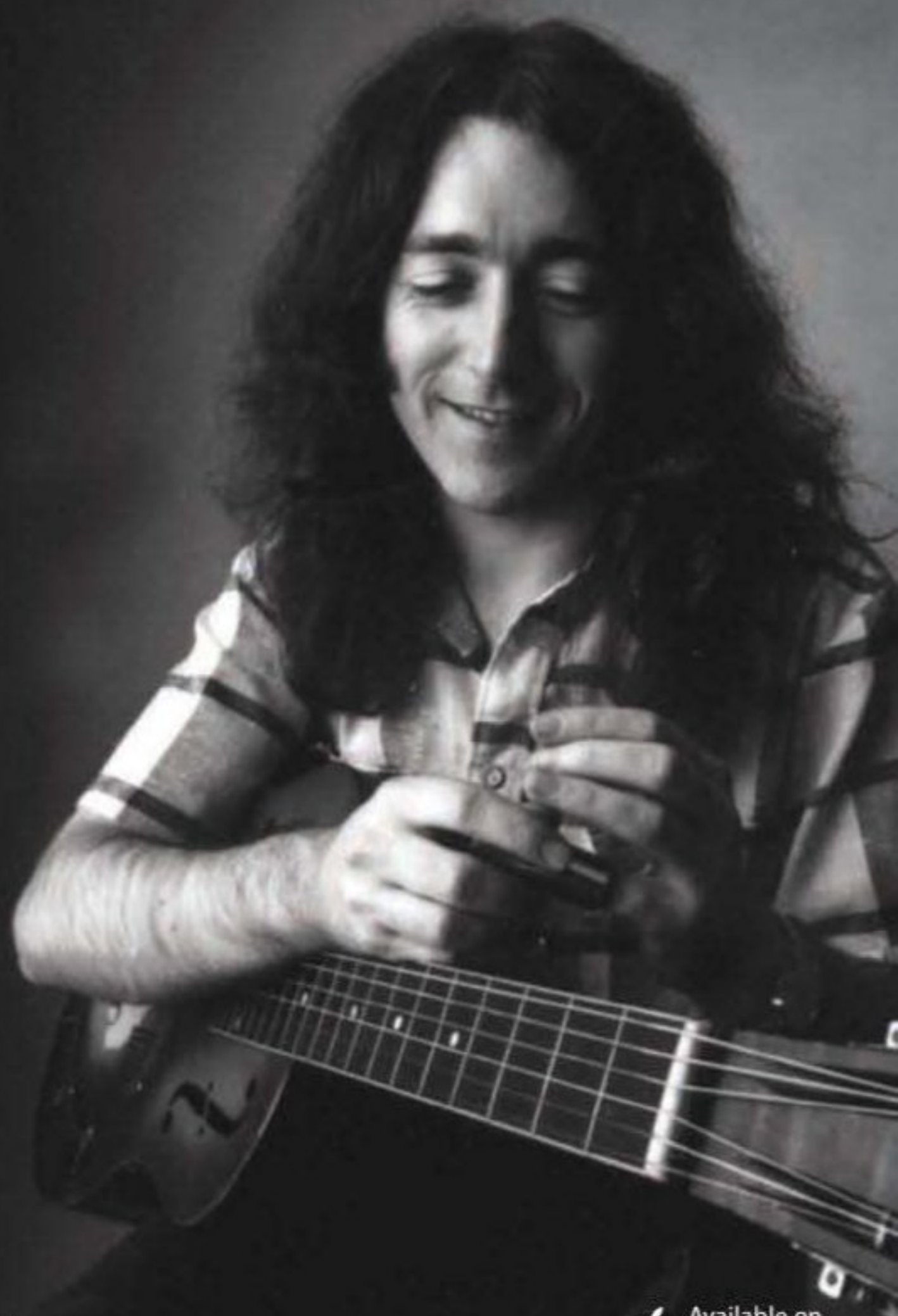
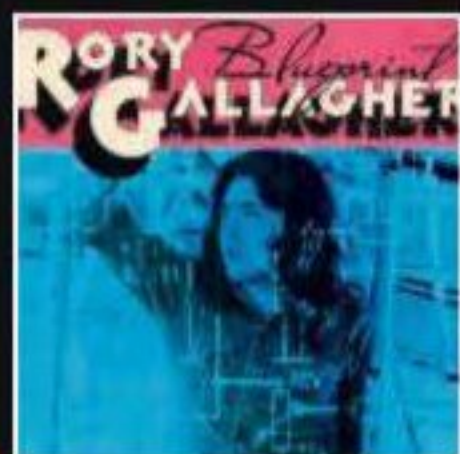
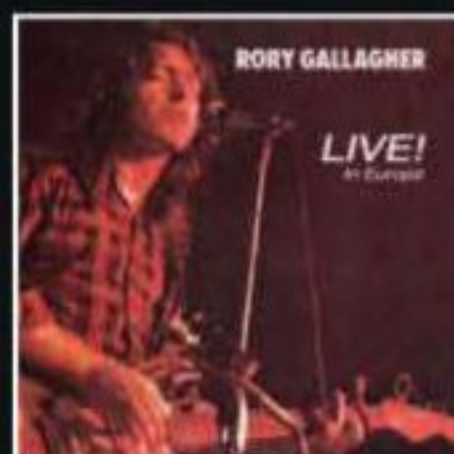
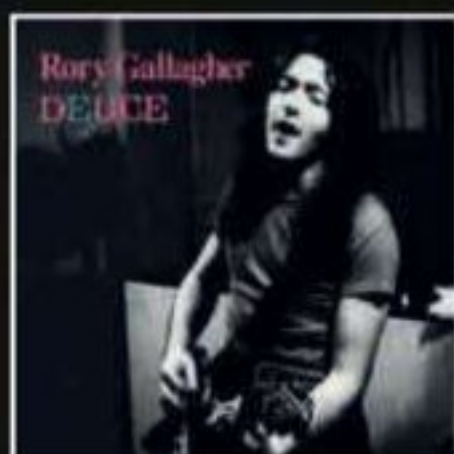
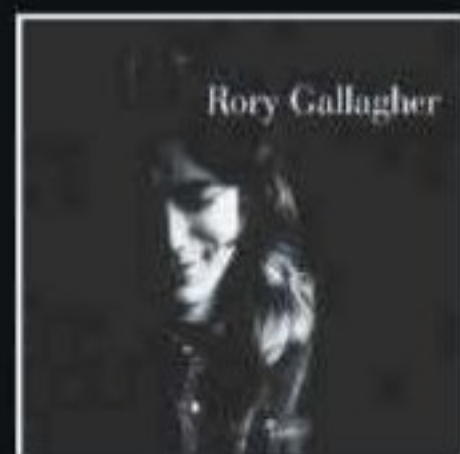
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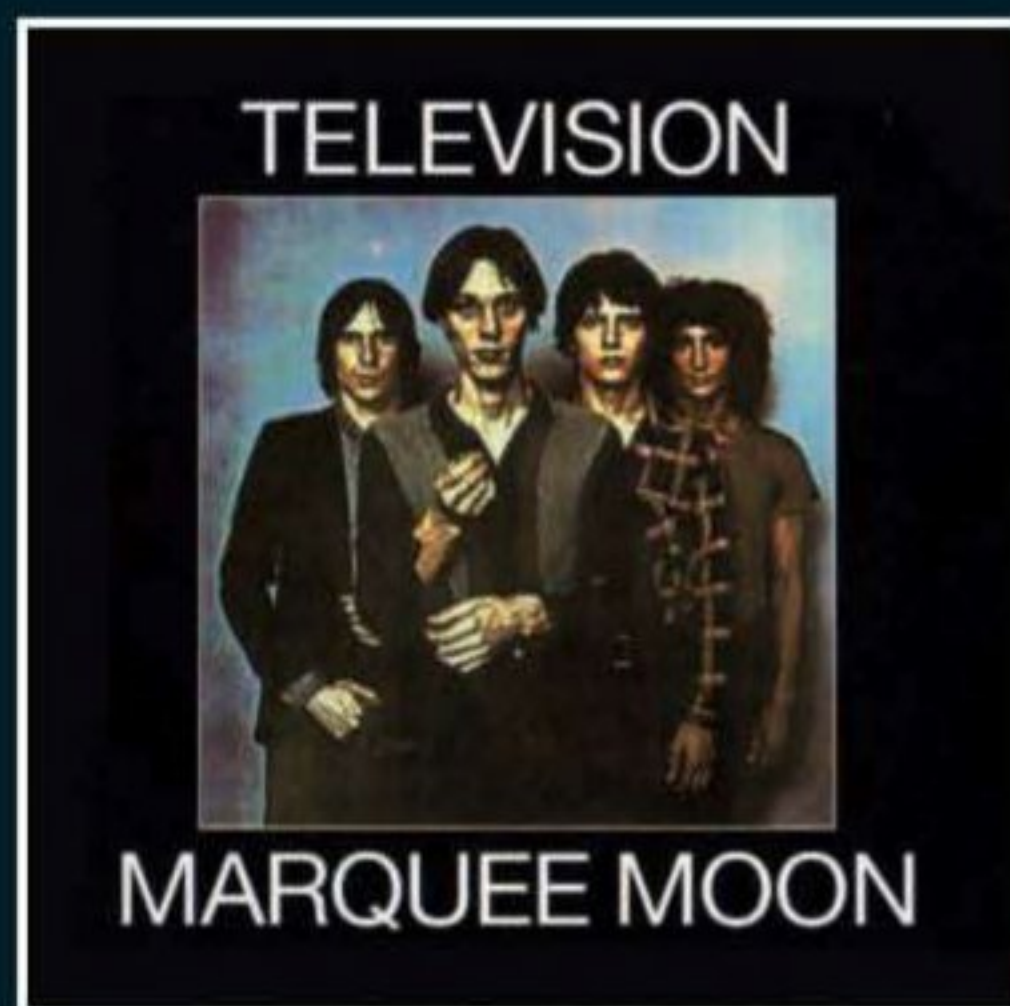
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WORDS **BY** DAMIEN LOVE

PHOTOGRAPH **BY** ROBERTA BAYLEY

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NTHE FALL of 1973, I had just come back to New York City and needed a place to stay.

I was in my early twenties, and had been pretty much leading a vagabond life. I was doing a lot of nightclubbing at Max's Kansas City, in the back room, where I met a fellow named Terry Ork. Terry had a very large loft in Chinatown and a spare room, so I moved in.

Mostly what I did during the day was play my guitar, with no amplifier. I didn't want anybody to hear me, until I was good. Terry's day job was managing a movie memorabilia shop on 13th Street, Cinemabilia. He had this disgruntled assistant, Richard Meyers, who would later become Richard Hell.

One day, Terry said to me, "I know this guy who does what you do."

I said, "Huh? What do I do?"

"You play electric guitar all alone all day. That's all this guy does."

This turned out to be Richard Meyers' best friend, Tom Miller, soon to become known as Tom Verlaine.

Terry told me Tom was going to be playing audition night at Reno Sweeney's, and did I want to go. Reno's was a hang-out for the Broadway set: Liza Minnelli, drag artists, gay wannabe singers. I wasn't too interested. But Terry was going, and I didn't have anything else to do. We got a cab up, Richard Hell came in, and we all sat waiting for Tom to arrive.

He came in with his guitar and an old Fender amplifier, and stood there looking irked already, like it was too much trouble to even open the door. Richard and Tom had between them what I can only describe as universal contempt.

Richard ran over and started helping him with his stuff. He said, "You don't look right." Tom was wearing what looked like a shirt from 1932: old, yellowing, frayed, almost disgusting. Richard put his fingers into a hole by the shoulder, and tore it. Then he enlarged another hole, so one of Tom's nipples could be seen. I sat watching them feeling like an anthropologist watching strange animals and their social habits.

Finally, Tom played. Three songs. The second was "Venus De Milo".

Now, Terry worked as assistant to Andy Warhol by night, and wanted to sponsor a band, like Andy had with the Velvets. His idea was to sponsor a band around me. But when I heard Tom playing "Venus", just all rhythm chords, I knew. I leaned over, shouting in Terry's ear. "Forget my band. Put me and this guy together. You'll have the band you've been looking for."

**T**OM AND RICHARD started coming down to Terry's loft. Tom and I, our guitars meshed *immediately*. I had studied classic rock guitar, where you do whole-step bends, half-step bends. When I was

a teenager, I had a friend who knew Jimi Hendrix. Jimi gave this guy lessons, who passed them on to me, and I met Hendrix and watched him.

Tom played a completely different style. He used the classical vibrato. Like on a violin: you move your wrist, the finger doesn't move. I don't know where he got it. It was more like a sitar player. Never whole-step bends, always micro-bends. But our two styles suited each other beautifully. Between us, we had all the guitar aspects you could want.

The next thing was convincing Hell to play bass. Tom couldn't. Richie said, "I'm not a musician. I can't do it." When Tom wasn't around, I asked him what the problem was. He said, "Listen. Playing with Tom is like going to the dentist. Except you'd rather go to the dentist." Tom and Richard had tried doing a band before.

I said, "But Richard, you've got the *look*. You're like a combination of Elvis and some movie star. You can learn." The compliments got to him. So then we had three.

Tom and I talked about drummers. Tom was insistent the best rock'n'roll drummer he knew was his friend Billy Ficca. We called Billy, and started rehearsing. Three days in, Tom called me aside: "I'm about to pull my hair out. I can't stand it. Billy's turned into a jazz drummer."

And Billy *was* all over the place – but in a good way. I said to Tom, "Look. All the greatest guitarists we know – Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Hendrix, Townshend – they all had crazy drummers."

We were having a great time, although Tom was already growing frustrated with Richard Hell, because Richard never practised. But we meandered along in rehearsals in Terry's loft, and started planning for our first gig. Thing was, there was no place to play. Literally.

## "FROM THE SPEAKERS CAME THIS HUMONGOUS DRUM SOUND. TOM STARTED FREAKING OUT: 'NO NO NO!'"

Finally, we rented a place, The Townhouse, an 88-seat theatre on 44th Street. We put up flyers Hell had designed. The four of us went around with paste and plastered the town. We'd go up to journalists and ask them to come watch us rehearse, so we could get quotes. Terry knew some film people, and asked Nicholas Ray, the director of *Rebel Without a Cause*, to come to the loft to see us. Nick didn't want to. Terry offered him a gallon of wine. Nick said, "OK."

So, Nicholas Ray came down, and sat on the bed in his eyepatch, drinking wine, while we went through our ridiculous repertoire. We'd

knock things over. If a mic fell on the floor, we'd lie down and sing into it. When the wine was almost done, Nicholas said, "Well, I'll tell you, Terry: these are four cats with a passion." Then he proceeded to pass out. So we used Nick's quote.

We took an ad in the *Village Voice*. The night came – March 2, 1974 – and, well: we were like the Sex Pistols that couldn't play. We were all over the map. But we were surprised: 88 seats, and we filled most of them.

**A**FTER WE HAD to rent our own theatre to get a gig, we started talking about where there was to play. There wasn't anywhere.

Tom lived on the Lower East Side, which meant, when he walked to rehearsals in Chinatown, he walked down the Bowery. Now, the Bowery had a reputation, but it was not dangerous. It was just full of drunkards. You could step over them on the street. And had to.

One day, Tom came in and said, "I might have found a place. On the Bowery. It's a dive."

That's what we needed. A dive. Somewhere nobody else wanted to play, where we could move in and take over. Tom said he had seen a guy outside this place, working

on the front. He and I went back to talk to him. We saw the owner, a man called Hilly Kristal, on a stepladder, fixing up this awning: CBGB OMFUG [Country Bluegrass Blues – Other Music For Uplifting Gormandizers]. We looked up at

him: "You gonna have live music?"

We played our first gig at CBGB the last Sunday of March. Sundays were Hilly's worst nights. Terry convinced him to let us play by guaranteeing he'd fill the place with friends who were all alcoholics. So Hilly gave us four Sundays in a row. Pretty soon, other bands started hearing about it, and coming down asking for gigs. Hilly didn't know anything about rock music. Basically, we steamrolled him. Terry offered to start booking the club, so long as it was understood it was Television's place. Bands would audition, and Terry would ask me what I thought. Talking Heads, the Ramones, Blondie: that's how they started playing CBGB. We were picking the bands and playing, and it was like hosting a three-and-a-half-year-long New Year's Eve party. Once we got some steam, CBGB was *it*.

Sure, it was a dive. It was difficult to get people in suits down there, or even the older generation from Max's. We were like hobos to them. But there was almost a glamour to the poverty. Nobody had done that before. Up 'til then, in rock'n'roll, everybody wanted the finest shoes. Everybody was chasing this glamorous high-life.

We weren't. When you hear bands say they don't care about anything? I guarantee you: they do. We were probably the closest to a band that really didn't care.



Black and white TV: the band's first two flyers



Television including Richard Hell (left) live at CBGB, March 1974

**C**BGB WAS TAKING off. Labels were showing interest. Late in 1974, Richard Williams from Island wanted us to go into the studio with him to make a demo, but said, "I don't know much about a studio. Can I bring a guy to help? His name is Brian Eno."

Eno came in with all these whacked ideas. "Let's glue the amplifiers to the ceiling." "Let's cut up the lyrics and throw them in the air." We weren't having any of it.

We did six songs. Hell was upset because he only got one of his songs on the tape, while Tom got five. Richard got scorched. Tom was beginning to push him out.

From the very beginning, when we played live, Tom was on at Richard to "stop moving". He said it was distracting him, and it looked "artificial". It used to be that I stood in the middle of Richard and Tom onstage. I was the George, with the John and the Paul either side. Then Tom suddenly decided he wanted to be in the middle.

That was the beginning of the end of the first Television: the Television that was sloppy, punk-ass, and a mess; but also extremely exciting. That band was like being in a circus. You never knew what was going to happen. A train wreck, sure, but fun.

It was driving Tom nuts, though. Tom was a control freak when it came to music. Without a solid bass player, especially with Billy being nuts all the time on drums, there was no grounding, no solid bottom. Tom was beginning to talk about replacing Hell, but Richard quit. I almost quit myself, because I thought, without Richard, the fun was gone. However, Tom asked Fred Smith to leave Blondie and join us, and asked me: "Come on. Just come play."

Within 10 minutes, I had to admit it. Fred was keeping down the tempo, which meant Billy could go crazy nuts, but we still sounded like a band. Television suddenly made sense.

**W**E WAITED TO sign. We auditioned for Atlantic. Atlantic President Ahmet Ertegun said, "This is not Earth music." Meanwhile, everybody else from CBGB signed as soon as they could, for peanuts. We waited until Elektra made a reasonable offer, and signed in the summer of 1976.

It was time to record an album. Tom and Fred looked for a studio and finally picked this place on 48th Street, A&R, Phil Ramone's personal studio. A small, rectangular room, with a control room that still had old tube boards, volume knobs that were curved, like the old Beatles consoles.

We didn't want a producer. We'd already done "Little Johnny Jewel" as an independent single in 1975. We knew how we wanted to sound. All the songs on *Marquee Moon* were songs we had honed for years playing live. We were ready. Tom, especially, didn't want a producer after the Eno experience. He didn't want someone coming in with their ideas.

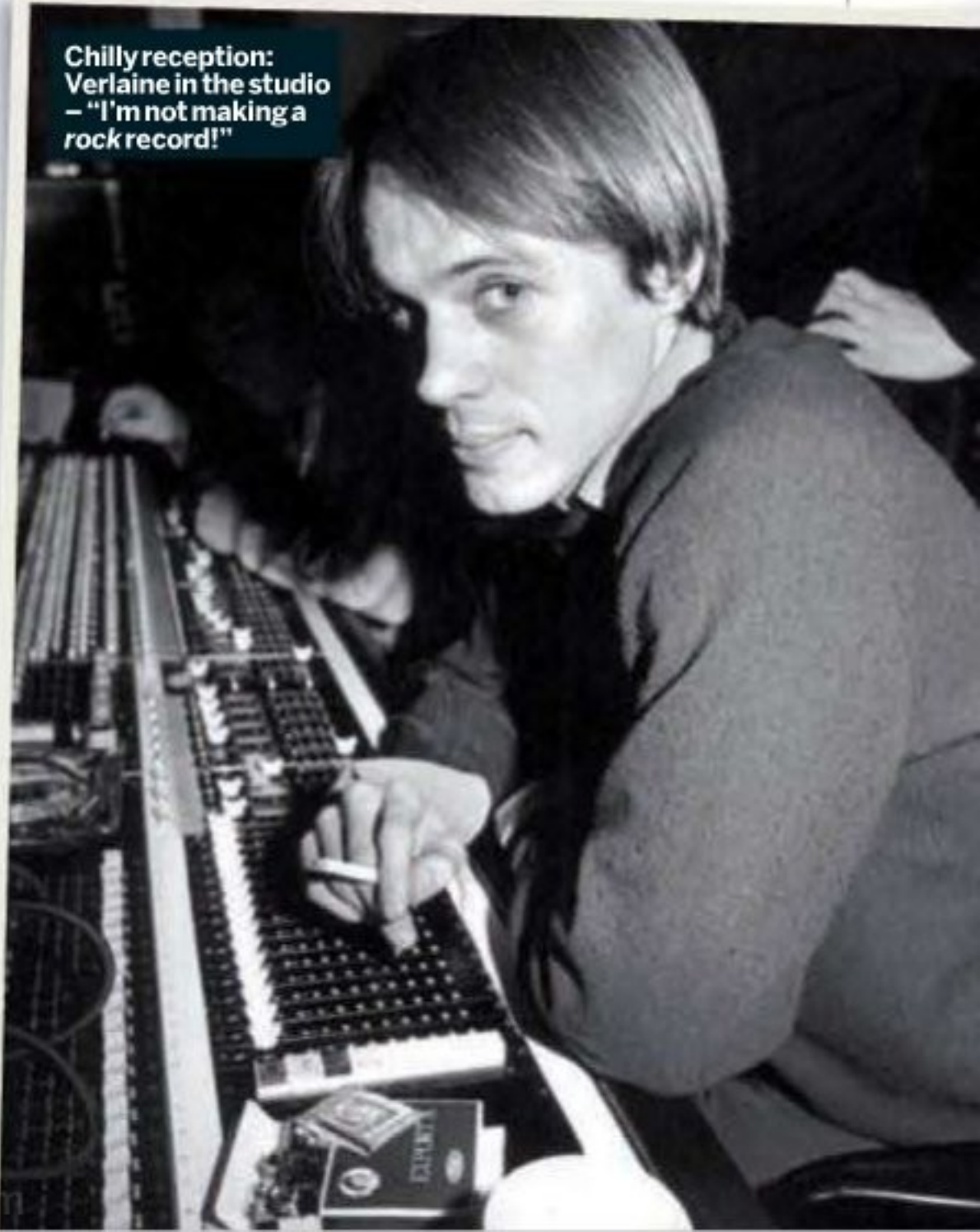
But Elektra would not allow us to produce ourselves. So, we decided to get in someone who was a great engineer—someone who knew his way around, and wanted to produce, but was just starting. We hit on Andy Johns. Andy had been engineer on a great number of great records: the Stones, Zeppelin. He was Glyn Johns' brother. Anything that Glyn produced, Andy was engineer on.

The first day in the studio came in November 1976. We had a 2pm start. Andy was nowhere in sight. Finally, about 4.30pm, he came traipsing in. He said, "I came in yesterday, to see what the place was like, and... I can't work here!" He started listing all the technical tools these old studios didn't have. We tried to calm him down. Finally, grudgingly, Andy said, "Well, I did manage to set the drums up last night. Got a good sound. Wanna hear it?"

He put on this tape he'd made. And, by God, from the speakers came this humongous, pumped-up John Bonham drum sound. Tom started freaking out. "No! No, no, no, no, no! We don't want that! You need to take that apart!"

Andy was outraged. "Well, why **CONTINUES OVER**"

Chilly reception: Verlaine in the studio - "I'm not making a rock record!"





Television backstage at CBGB, New York, February 27, 1977: (l-r) Tom Verlaine, Fred Smith, Billy Ficca and Richard Lloyd

did you hire me? That's what I'm famous for. Fuck this! I'm getting a flight back!"

For the next few days, Andy would mutter, "Oh, right, so, this is some kind of New York thing. You want to sound bad like The Velvet Underground. You want to sound crap like The Stooges. I see..."

But we were recording. I had always wanted to produce, and I was forever thinking, what can I do to prevent this from sounding like simply a live record?

I was thinking about the chiming parts on "Venus", and said, "Let me double that." Tom and Andy said "Huh?" I said, "Well, let me play the part again, so you can have a stereo pair." One ability I've always had is, anything I play, I can do it again, exactly the same. And again and again. Tom isn't like that. When Tom plays a solo, he never plays the same solo twice.

They said, "Uh... well, go ahead and try." So I did it. Tom said, "Holy crap – that sounds great! Do that to everything!"

So, for example, "Elevation": that solo is me playing twice, verbatim. We wanted to rent a rotating speaker to get the sound for that, but

the rental people wanted too much. So Andy took a microphone and stood in front of me in the studio, swinging it around his head like a lasso. He nearly took my fucking nose off. I was backing up while I was playing.

Andy was hilarious. He's a real child of rock'n'roll. Television weren't like that. We were punctual. We were serious.

One day, Andy didn't show up until 6pm. It seems he'd picked up two hookers the night before, who talked him into letting them handcuff him to his bed – then, of course, they took his wallet and blew kisses as they left. The hotel had to free him with a hacksaw. Another day, we came in and Andy was flat out in the producer's chair in the control room, snoring, holding a three-quarters empty bottle of red wine, with empty bottles scattered around on

the floor. We looked at him, then at the tape operator. We said, "Listen. All the mics are set up. Can we just keep the volume down in here and run a song around him?"

So we went in and did "Prove It". Then we

came back to listen back. It sounded pretty good. So we played it back again, a little louder. And we kept increasing the volume until, finally, Andy snorted himself awake.

He sat bolt upright, panicky, paranoid as hell. The music's playing, and he's looking between us all, demanding,

**"WE REHEARSED, WE PLAYED, WE WROTE SONGS – THEN TOM WOULD THROW THEM AWAY"**

"Did I record this?"

We said, "Well, sure Andy." He breathed a sigh of relief. "God, I'm good." That was Andy. And that's the cut of "Prove It" that's on the record.

We delivered the album in late 1976. *Marquee Moon* came out February 8, 1977. In 35 years, it has never been out of print. It's become a permanent fixture in rock'n'roll.

A lot of people were disappointed with Television's second album, *Adventure*. I'm one of them. Sonically, *Adventure* has a colour *Marquee Moon* doesn't. But it was already a losing prospect when we didn't rehearse for the album first. With *Marquee Moon*, we drew from a repertoire we had been playing live for years. And, actually, we had a whole *other* album's worth of songs from that period – "Kingdom Come", "Double Exposure", "Breakin' In My Heart". But Tom, fickle as he is, didn't want to record them. On *Adventure*, only "Foxhole" and "Careful" were in our live repertoire.

That was the demise. On *Marquee Moon*, everybody knew what they were going to do.

## 'I FELT JOY AND KINSHIP...'

PATTI SMITH recalls her first, life-changing encounter with Television



The first time I came into CBGB, around Easter 1974, I heard Television doing some of the songs that became *Marquee Moon* and was immediately struck. I felt immediate joy and kinship. You had two poets, Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine, delivering very heightened lyrics and this music that was both raw and glorious. It was very important, because the void that my band – Richard Sohl, Lenny Kaye and I – were working in suddenly seemed open. We had kinship, fellow workers – who we looked like! We all dressed the same, all tattered, and we all loved poetry, read the same books. No-one played guitar like Tom Verlaine, although Richard Lloyd is a great guitarist. But Tom's sensibility spoke to me. Tom, when he was young, played saxophone and was into Coltrane and Albert Ayler and the same people I was into. He abandoned saxophone for guitar, but you could hear what he'd gained from soloing on the saxophone. It was unique. And remains unique. He's greater than ever, really.



Rad moon rising – the classic lineup onstage at CBGB circa '76

On *Adventure*, nobody knew, including Tom. We got into the studio, and it was just Tom's world. He would try out ideas and it would go on and on. We would talk about the other songs we could record. Tom would just say, "No." That was the end of Television. *Adventure* came out in April 1978. Within three months, we had split up.

**T**HE YEARS WENT by. Then, around 1990, my manager ran into Tom's manager and they decided to see if they could get us together again. We met up, just jammed. And it was there. It was Television.

We started talking about a new record. One day, Tom was complaining about being short of breath when he was singing. Of course, Tom smoked like a chimney and drank coffee all day. That's all he did. I said, "Well, maybe you could take vocal lessons, to get some breathing techniques."

That was it. Suddenly, Tom was screaming at me: "I need singing lessons!?! Listen: I'm not making a *pop* record! And I'm not making a *rock* record!"

I sat thinking, "Jesus. What business does he think he's in? Flamenco?"

That, though, is closer to the truth. Tom is into cowboy music and old TV scores. On that third record, any time it came to record my parts, Tom would say, "I hear the amp buzzing. Could you please look into that?" Often, he would turn it down, until it was barely audible. So that nothing rustled, nothing moved. For me, that third record was Television-lite. It has a beautiful, nice sound. But it's not rock'n'roll.

What happened next, though, was we began playing live again. That's where the real power came out. Songs that sounded tiny on that

record really blossomed to life.

Across Television's final period, we rehearsed, we played – and we would write new songs. Then Tom would throw them away. For 14 years, from 1993 to 2007, when I finally quit, Tom would talk about us making a new record. But nothing ever came of it.

We recorded nothing. Tom would always poo-poo the notion. It was like he didn't want to give anything to Television. Tom never really wants to share credit. When we first signed with Elektra, I found out years later that Tom had tried desperately to make the contract so he would be the only one signed as "Television". The rest of us would be hired musicians. Elektra wouldn't have it.

Tom had a twin, John, who died long ago. I really think Tom has a sibling rivalry thing that started in the womb. It's the only psychological motive I can come up with for some of his behaviour.

Tom, I think, was just done. Finished. In 2007, after I left, Jimmy Rip, Tom's buddy, took my place, and put a message on Facebook, saying he was looking forward to being on the new Television album coming that year. Well, guess what? It's five years later, and it still hasn't happened.

Look at it this way: I left Television in 2007. Within six months, I had my album *The Radiant Monkey* out. Since then, I've put out two more records of my own. Meanwhile, I joined Rocket From The Tombs, we put out the *Rocket Redux* album, and we made a new record just last year, *Barfly*.

Tom Verlaine is wonderful to laugh with. Tom can be the funniest guy on Earth. But, often, Tom just doesn't want to get out of bed. I'll certainly never do *business* with him again.

But there will always be *Marquee Moon*.

I don't think of that album as just a collection of songs. I think of *Marquee Moon* as one thing. It contains so many songs that reach you, but there's no way to separate them. These days, people download a song or two from an album. Well, *Marquee Moon* is not for that.

*Marquee Moon* is the whole thing. One thing. Like Mount Everest. ☺



Verlaine's about to hit the roof: the reunited band back in 1992

# THE MOON AND BEYOND...

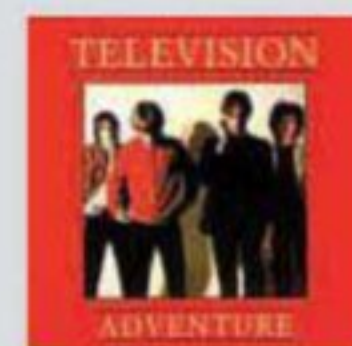
Your guide to Television's albums



## MARQUEE MOON

(ELEKTRA, 1977) ★★★★★

Failed to scratch the Billboard Top 200 on release, though it hit No 28 in the UK. A key New York punk artifact, but its influences are *Nuggets* garage, the sharpest Brit-invasion groups, and, in the guitar trade-offs, the flourishes of Coltrane-esque jazz.



## ADVENTURE

(ELEKTRA, 1978) ★★★★★

Sold even less than *Marquee Moon* in the US, but hit No 7 in Britain. There's a warmer, more delicately shaded sound, though "Foxhole" and "Ain't That Nothin'" hew closest to its predecessor. Elsewhere, calmer, sometime folk-tinged pop predicts the US underground of the '80s.



## THE BLOW-UP

(ROIR, 1982) ★★★★★

This "official bootleg" compiles live performances from 1978, just before Television fell apart (for the first time). It's no-fi, but here is the band in its raw glory: Television live is a fiercely different proposition to Television in the studio.



## TELEVISION

(CAPITOL, 1992) ★★★★★

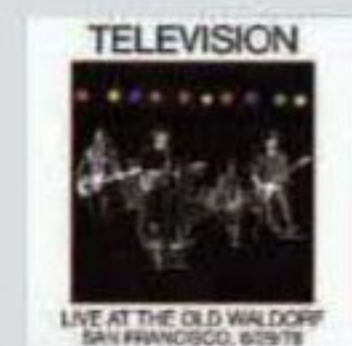
After a 14-year silence, the third album arrived unexpectedly. The burden of expectation saw it indifferently received, but it's worth revisiting. "1880 Or So" and "Rhyme" are among their most gorgeous songs.



## LIVE AT THE ACADEMY 1992

(OHOO, 2003) ★★★★★

"When we began playing live again," Lloyd says, "songs that sounded tiny on that third record blossomed." The proof lies in this document of the 1992 tour, originally self-pressed by the band for sale at 2003 shows. Of 12 tracks, eight come from the *Television* album.



## LIVE AT THE OLD WALDORF

(RHINO HANDMADE, 2003) ★★★★★

Recorded for radio in June 1978, this was a popular bootleg for years, before gaining official release (albeit in maddeningly limited form). Not as insanely wired as *The Blow-Up*, perhaps, but still on fire, and with infinitely superior sound.

# 'A ROARING ROCK'N'ROLL BAND IN



# LEATHERS AND COWBOY BOOTS...



## ...BUT THEY CHANGED'

Between 1960 and '62, THE BEATLES played more than 300 nights in Hamburg, being schooled in the holy mysteries of rock'n'roll. There are pills, girls and fights, but mostly there is "music, music, music" and the company of remarkable characters: the English Little Richard, a protective ex-boxer, and a charismatic singer who will enlist them as his backing band. Fifty years after The Beatles arrived at the Star-Club, *Uncut* discovers the full story of their German apprenticeship and wonders – did Hamburg see the most exciting part of their career?

WORDS BY JOHN ROBINSON PORTRAIT BY ASTRID KIRCHHERR

# 1960

IT HAS BEEN, AS THE WORLD WILL LEARN to say in the not too distant future, a hard day's night. After another long shift spent entertaining lively crowds in Hamburg bars, it is around 9 o'clock on an autumn morning, and after a couple of breakfast beers, Brian "Griff" Griffiths, guitarist in a Liverpool band called The Seniors, and his drinking partner, a 20-year-old Liverpool musician called John Lennon, are walking back to the Indra, the Hamburg club where Lennon's band, The Beatles, are in residence.

As they near the club, they start to discern the sounds of a band rehearsing a poppy, recently released Elvis number called "It's Now Or Never", refitted that summer from the melody of "O Sole Mio". As the pair near the door of the bar, Lennon realises it is his band, and that the voice singing is that of his fellow Beatle, Paul McCartney. Lennon, to put it mildly, is unimpressed by this proposed extension of the group's repertoire.

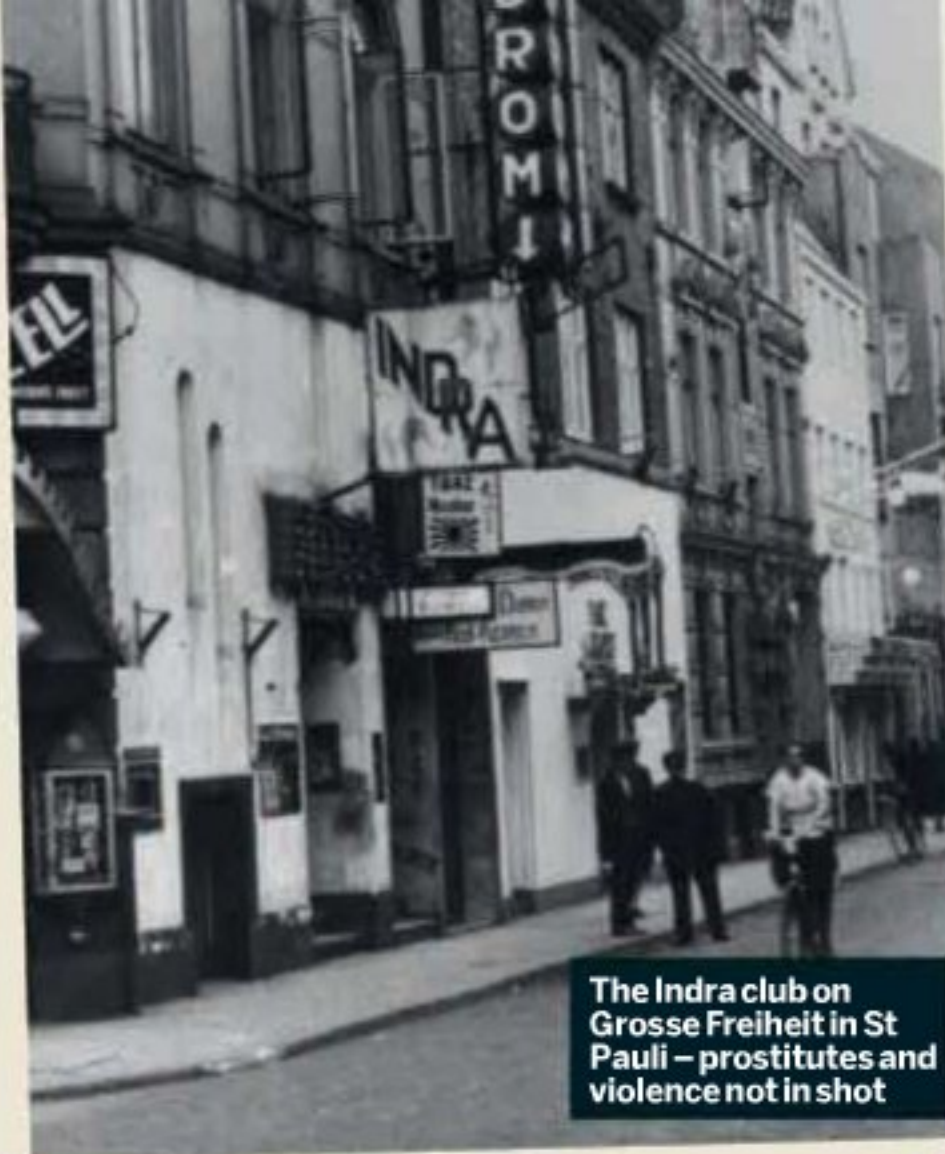
"He said, 'What the fucking hell is he doing now?'" remembers Griff, today. "Lennon was a rocker. He stormed in the club and said, 'What are you doing?' Paul said: 'This is a popular song—they'll love this.' And of course the audiences did."

Pandering to prevailing taste was not, however, the mission on which the young Beatles had come to Hamburg. Their brief, as they originally understood it, was to play pure rock'n'roll—and over some 300 nights spent performing in the city between summer 1960 and the very end of 1962, The Beatles would go on to turn themselves from an amateurish skiffle group with no permanent drummer, into a professional, leather-clad rock'n'roll group. On an album called *Live! At The Star-Club Hamburg, Germany; 1962*, recorded at the very end of their stay in the city, you can hear just how well they did it: they perform versions of "Hippy Hippy Shake" and "Long Tall Sally" that could scarcely be any rawer.

At the time of this 1962 show, the debut Beatles single was in English shops, and what would become an unprecedented recording career had already begun. Looking back, however, there are some who see this juncture not as a glorious new beginning for The Beatles but, in fact, as a sad end.

"We were amazed when they cleaned up, combed their hair and did 'Love Me Do'," says Tony Sheridan, the London rock'n'roller whose 1961 recording of "My Bonnie" gave The Beatles their first ever appearance on record. "We all thought, 'What's this? From being one of the best rhythm and blues groups around, they've suddenly gone to pleasing the teenies.'"

"They sold their soul to the devil for the fame they got," says Ted Taylor, the Liverpool frontman of Kingsize Taylor & The Dominoes, who owns the *Star-Club* tapes, and who has been sued by The Beatles whenever he's tried to release them.



The Indra club on Grosse Freiheit in St Pauli – prostitutes and violence not in shot

## THE FAB FOUR

*The Hamburg clubs where The Beatles were born*

### THE INDRA

Grosse Freiheit 64

PROP: B Koschmider

LENGTH OF STAY: 48 nights, beginning on August 17, 1960

A grubby strip club, repurposed as music venue. The pre-Fabs reside in notoriously poor digs in the storeroom at the Bambi Kino, a cinema.

### THE KAISERKELLER

Grosse Freiheit 36

PROP: B Koschmider

LENGTH OF STAY: 58 nights, beginning on October 4, 1960

The band alternate sets with Rory Storm And The Hurricanes, featuring on drums one Richard Starkey.

### THE TOP TEN CLUB

Reeperbahn 136

PROP: P Eckhorn

LENGTH OF STAY: 92 nights, beginning on April 1, 1961

This was as big-time as it got until the Star-Club opened. Tony Sheridan sits in with The Beatles, who are spotted by A&R man, producer and easy-listening legend Bert Kaempfert. In June, their recording career commences.

### THE STAR-CLUB

Grosse Freiheit 39

PROP: M Weissleder; H Fascher

LENGTH OF STAY: 48 nights (first stint), from the opening night, Friday April 13, 1962

LENGTH OF STAY: 14 nights (second stint), beginning on November 1, 1962

LENGTH OF STAY: 14 nights (third stint), beginning on December 18, 1962

"They always denied the world of the most exciting part of their career."

It was true, a deal *had* been done since The Beatles first arrived in Hamburg—but it hadn't been with the devil. In fact, their contract of January 1962 was with the well-spoken young manager of a Liverpool music shop, whose role, as he saw it, was to realise all possible commercial potential in his new charges. It didn't take him long. By April 1963, the Lennon-McCartney composition "From Me To You" became The Beatles' first UK No 1.



As some of their contemporaries see it, though, it was one thing to make it, and be famous

—if all you wanted was something as simple as wealth and worldwide renown. But wasn't the whole point about their Hamburg rock'n'roll scene that it had been about something more intangible than that? Even something purer?

IF THERE WAS purity available in Hamburg's St Pauli district in the early 1960s, a visitor would have had to look hard to find it. Located on the bank of the Elbe, St Pauli was the go-to destination for the mid-century sailor looking for a good time on leave. Beer, girls, and—in third place, but rapidly on the rise—music were all to be abundantly found in the quarter's single, neon-lit square mile.

"It was just mindblowing," says Ted Taylor, who arrived to play at the Star-Club in early 1962. "The club was right in the middle of the sex district of Hamburg. John Frankland, my rhythm guitarist, was a strict Catholic, and he



The Beatles live at the Star-Club with piano master Roy Young

said, 'Whatever you do, don't tell my mother we're playing somewhere like this...'

The wishes of similarly concerned mothers notwithstanding, British musicians had been drawn to Hamburg since the beginning of the decade, generally arriving via one of two routes. If you were a musician from the south of England, you had likely been recruited at the 2i's coffee bar in Soho by Bruno Koschmider, a German club owner who visited London frequently to mingle with fellow homosexuals in a more liberal climate than that presently available in Hamburg. If you came from Liverpool, your booking was probably arranged by Allan Williams, a Liverpool entrepreneur who owned the Jacaranda coffee bar. So great was the thirst in Hamburg for rock'n'roll that even a callow and inexperienced band like the fledgling, five-piece Beatles were in demand. In August

## BRITISH GROUPS WERE IN A DARWINIAN STRUGGLE: NOT ONLY TO PLAY THE BEST MUSIC, BUT TO SURVIVE THE LIFESTYLE OF HAMBURG'S RED-LIGHT DISTRICT

1960, Williams and The Beatles—John Lennon (vocals/guitar), Paul McCartney (vocals/guitar), George Harrison (lead guitar/vocals), Stuart Sutcliffe (bass/occasional vocals) and new recruit Pete Best (drums) travelled to Hamburg for a 48-night engagement at Koschmider's smallest club, a strip joint called the Indra.

"Before we went over it was all Italian 'Cho-cho-bambino'-type music ('Piove' or 'Ciao, Ciao Bambina' was the Italian entry in the 1959 Eurovision Song Contest). You know, all in white suits," remembers Williams, a spry

81-year-old. "We absolutely wiped the floor with them. We were just there at the right time in the right place—people were hungry for this rawer type of music."

Whether for money or experience, the bands were hungry, too.

"I never hesitated," says Ted Taylor. "My bass player, he'd had an offer from Rory Storm to go and do a summer season at Butlins in

North Wales, so he passed it over. My mother thought I was mental because I was a qualified butcher then, and had a steady job. But in those days you could get another job easily. Everybody jumped at it, it was such an opportunity."

"I quit my job at Birchalls, a printing firm in Liverpool, where I was getting £7 a week," remembers Mike Pender from The Searchers. "At the Star-Club, I was earning £50."

In 1960, rock groups were an emerging new commodity in Hamburg's night-time economy. By 1962, and the

CONTINUES OVER ►



A truckload of talent:  
(l-r) George Harrison,  
Stuart Sutcliffe and  
John Lennon, 1960

opening of the Star-Club, the scene had become comparatively sophisticated. The earliest arrivals, however, found that they were (at times literally) being shoehorned into that very small part of the St Pauli schedule that wasn't occupied by strippers, prostitutes, beer and fighting. Howie Casey, whose band The Seniors were in Hamburg from 1960, remembers the unpleasant conditions at the Kaiserkeller, where they replaced Tony Sheridan.

"We lived underground, like troglodytes," says Howie. "We slept in the club. They'd lock us in the club at night then the cleaners would let us out in the morning."

"We were in a crappy place above a brothel," remembers Mike Pender. "You'd see all kinds of ladies of the night coming and going. The Grosse Freiheit and the Reeperbahn was a nightlife scene, and that was what people would come for – ladies of the night. On the Herbertstrasse, there were ladies in the windows with nearly nothing on. It was things like you'd never seen, only heard about in whispers..."

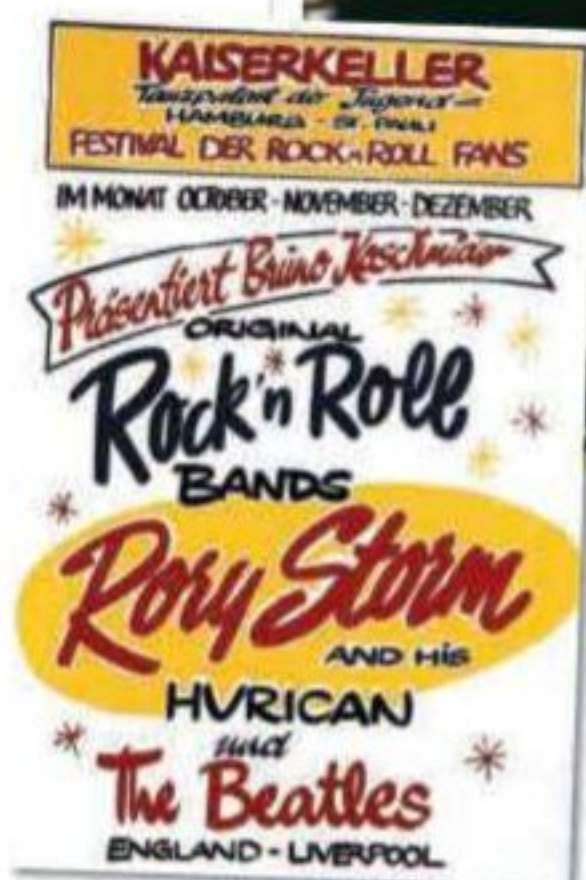
As the new boys in a tough environment, British groups were in a sweaty and Darwinian struggle: not only to play the best music, but also to survive the lifestyle of the red-light district. This was a place best suited to the young, whose constitutions could take the strain, and whose limited requirements could be met by the area. Brian Griffiths, who played guitar with Howie Casey in The Seniors, and later The Big Three, remembers John Lennon asking him what to expect from Hamburg when The Beatles took over from The Seniors at the Kaiserkeller.

"I said, 'The beer's great, the birds are great and they love rock'n'roll,'" he remembers. What more could a British musician have needed?

"They needed us as much as we needed them," Klaus Voormann, the musician, graphic designer and lifelong friend of The Beatles, told me in 2009. "They didn't have anybody – they were away from home, George was 17 years of age. Nobody helped them, no mama, no papa. Living in terrible conditions, no windows, with just a lightbulb. So they were glad that someone was taking care of them: Astrid's (*Kirchherr*, then Klaus' girlfriend, shortly Stuart Sutcliffe's fiancée) mother cooked for them, and stuck them in the bathtub, scrubbed them down. That's how we got to know them."

Undoubtedly, musicians needed some kind of looking after, even if it was only being orientated by people in the know. In summer 1961, Roy Young, later the piano colossus behind David Bowie's *Low* album, then a singer/pianist billed as "England's Little Richard" pulled up at the Top Ten Club in a taxi straight from the airport. He arrived to find the previous incumbents of his slot at the

Happy days:  
live at the  
Star-Club, '62



club packing up their van and getting ready to depart. He was warmly met by a deputation from the group. One bodily picked him up in his arms, then his colleague did the same.

"They definitely had something about them," Young remembers. "I said, 'Who are you?' One of them said, 'I'm Paul McCartney. That's John Lennon, and we're called The Beatles. We've just finished playing here, but when we heard you were coming, we wanted to stay on for the opening night...'"

**"BACK THEN IT WAS NOTHING TO WALK ACROSS THE ROAD AND STEP OVER BODIES. PEOPLE WOULD GET BEATEN UP IN CLUBS AND THEN THROWN OUT"**

The pair left George Harrison and Pete Best packing the gear into the van, and took Roy to a coffee bar where they gave him a bullet point briefing on Hamburg dos and don'ts. Chief among the "dos" was "stay on the right side of the waiters and club staff".

"The Grosse Freiheit was a narrow road with clubs on both sides," says Roy. "Back then, it was nothing to walk across the road and step over bodies. People would get beaten up in the clubs and then thrown out. By the time they paid their bill they were drunk. They'd point at the bill and say, 'I didn't order all that...' And then, wallop. They'd get thrown out in the road."

"You had to befriend them. Paul and John said, 'You've got to stay on the right side of these guys, because they'll be your best friend.' Horst Fascher (*Ex-boxer, itinerant St Pauli bouncer and later stage manager at the Star-Club*) was like that to them."

The assistance of such a protector could be

genuinely helpful, as scrapes were easy to get in to. Whether it was the drink, the effects of the local "upper" Preludin, or "youthful high spirits", there was in John Lennon and in many other young British musicians a Milligan-esque affinity for the goosestep march, the raised arm salute, and for asking German club patrons, 15 years after it had ended, "Who won the war?"

"We're all lucky we didn't get killed," remembers Brian Griffiths. "We were scousers, big mouths, like: 'Who you looking at?' Well, that might be OK when you're playing the church dance in Liverpool..."

but Hamburg? I think Lennon got away with quite a lot. He used to do the 'Sieg Heil', but we all did that. There were quite a few fights between bandmembers and the guys in the audience. Horst was a real hard case, but he had a great loyalty to the bands – he'd make sure you got left alone."

In late 1960, after being deported from Germany for being under-age, George

Harrison bumped into John Gustafson from The Big Three back in Liverpool. After asking if he fancied joining The Beatles as bass player ("I said, no," says Gustafson. "What a mistake..."), Harrison told him about the conditions in Hamburg. Long hours. Blisters. Sore throats. Sailors fighting...

"I thought it sounded great," says Gustafson. "I was from Liverpool, it didn't faze me at all. In our breaks at the Star-Club, we'd go to the bar next door, the Gretel & Alfons, and spend the hour off in there. After you do that for a few hours, you start to struggle – and that's when we found out about the Preludin. For 50 pfennigs the toilet attendant would sell you a Preludin, and you'd be able to get through the next four or five hours a bit easier."

Still, when the rush of the Preludin wore off, a few weeks' stint in Hamburg could prove to have taken its toll on a guy.

"It was three or four weeks of no food, loads of drink and lack of sleep," says **CONTINUES OVER**

## TOP TEN CLUB

Ten top tunes that give a flavour of the Hamburg era

### THE BEATLES

"Long Tall Sally"

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT THE STAR-CLUB

A scorching version, recording quality notwithstanding, as the four prepare to return to England, and the rest of their lives.

### TONY SHERIDAN AND THE BEATLES

"Sweet Georgia Brown"

BEATLESBOP - HAMBURG DAYS

Pre-Fabs back Sheridan on this chestnut in 1961; Sheridan dubs new vocal in 1964, jokily referencing The Beatles' commercial success, haircuts, etc.

### KINGSIZE TAYLOR & THE DOMINOES

"Somebody's Always Trying To Take My Baby"

AS GOOD AS IT GOT - STAR-CLUB TIME DOWNLOAD

Mod-favoured sax and guitar anthem from the Star-Club's resident rocker.

### THE UNDERTAKERS

"(Do The) Mashed Potatoes"

UNEARTHED

Groovy dance number, given surreal edge when played by Jackie Lomax and co, all wearing pall-bearer's attire.

### GERRY AND THE PACEMAKERS

"How Do You Do It?"

THE VERY BEST OF GERRY AND THE PACEMAKERS

From 1963, Hamburg-hardened Gerry and company's first No 1.

### JERRY LEE LEWIS

"Money (That's What I Want)"

LIVE AT THE STAR-CLUB HAMBURG

"JERRY! JERRY!" Fans go rightly mental on this live recording, with the star on witty and super-dextrous form.

### ROY YOUNG

"Big Fat Mama"

THE BEST OF 50 YEARS

Insanely fast tribute to an overweight sweetheart. 18 years later, the pianist would be playing some mean parts on David Bowie's *Low*. Yes, really. His "Bonie Maronie" represents for the thinner lady.

### THE BIG THREE

"What'd I Say"

CAVERN STOMP - THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS

Ray Charles' tune gets another vibrant airing. The crowd, live at The Cavern, go nuts. Could have been an album, not an EP - but Pye accidentally wiped the tapes.

### CLIFF BENNETT & THE REBEL ROUSERS

"You've Got What I Like"

INTO OUR LIVES: THE EMI YEARS 1961-1969

A rolling piano stormer from the real Sir Clifford and his crew.

### THE BEATLES

"Cry For A Shadow"

BEATLESBOP - HAMBURG DAYS

A Harrison-Lennon composition, and the band's first ever studio-recorded original. George and John spoof The Shadows, and sound, these days at least, oddly like newbies Real Estate.



The musical rivals: (c/wise from above) The Big Three; The Searchers; Tony Sheridan; Kingsize Taylor



Gustafson. "When you came home you were a shambling, shaking wreck. It took you weeks to get over it. Even with all that, though, it was enjoyable."

FOR A GUEST artiste, the Hamburg working night lasted 10 hours (6pm-4am) - except on Saturdays, when it lasted 12 (6pm-6am). At lower-end venues like the Indra and Kaiserkeller, bands worked harder, playing more, longer sets, as fewer additional bands had been booked to fill the time. The chaotic nature of The Beatles' life at this time even extended to the lineup of the group. Owner Bruno Koschmider had noticed that when the jukebox was turned on at the Kaiserkeller in between acts, people started to drift away. His solution was to form a new group to fill the gap: taking Stuart Sutcliffe from The Beatles, and having him play bass in a small combo

with Howie Casey at the Kaiserkeller, while the remaining Beatles soldiered on as a bass-less four-piece at the Indra.

"The playing times in Hamburg were outrageous," says Allan Williams. "And doing that seven nights a week for months would make or break any group - it made The Beatles. There's a sign in Mathew Street in Liverpool: 'Where It All Began', but it didn't begin there. It began in Hamburg."

The regimen forced The Beatles to toughen up their sound, and their act. Horst Fascher, who became the band's local guardian angel, later their employer at the Star-Club, remembers seeing them for the first time.

"They weren't very good," says Fascher today. "After a while, I said to my friends, 'This is skiffle music. I'm going back to where they play rock'n'roll.'"

At the time, as Fascher and others there remember it, rock'n'roll was best played by

The Beatles in Hamburg  
with the "god-like"  
Tony Sheridan (right)



Tony Sheridan, a young professional who had already toured the UK as guitarist with US legends like Gene Vincent and Jerry Lee Lewis.

"Everyone looked up to Sheridan—he was a godlike figure," remembers John Gustafson. "All the Liverpool guys looked up to him. A great guitarist, a great singer. He had the legs—the long skinny legs. He had that persona, that 'I'm a rock star' thing. A lot of guitarists copied his style, George Harrison for one."

Certainly, their experiences on the stages of St Pauli had done wonders for The Beatles' endurance and their showmanship, but after hours, a more technical musical education was also underway, in which the musical principles of rock'n'roll abandon were shared and painstakingly learned.

"The Beatles used to come and talk to us about technical musical things," remembers Roy Young. "One thing Tony and I did was where Tony played a shuffle rhythm on guitar, and I'd play a straight rhythm on piano. They'd clash but they'd clash in a nice way. People didn't know how we did it. That was what they were interested in."

"I wouldn't say he would bug me," says Brian Griffiths, "but George used to ask about my guitar solos, and say 'How do you make those notes flow?' George was a very British guitar player—no smoothness to the solos. I said 'I don't really know, but let's play some solos...' This would be around six in the morning."

## "AFTER 12 YEARS OF HITLER, THERE WAS NO MUSIC TO SPEAK OF. WE NOTICED THAT ROCK'N'ROLL WAS THE RIGHT MUSIC TO STRAIGHTEN THINGS OUT"

"There were no teachers, so there was a lot of copying from each other," remembers Tony Sheridan. "Like, how do you do that? It was a small academy of fanatical musicians. The Beatles were of that kind, and so was I. When people talk about sex'n'drugs and rock'n'roll, it wasn't like that at all: it was 80 per cent music, 10 per cent a bit of warmth, and a couple of pills. It was music, music, music."

"Tony was great because he was like a star to us to start with, because we'd watched him and Roy Young on *Oh Boy!* on English TV," remembers Ted Taylor. "He was pilled up and full of drink, like a lot of people. He was a loose cannon—but he was always great."

As Tony Sheridan saw it, for all the distracting onstage hijinks of his younger contemporaries, the passionate insurrection of rock'n'roll served a larger unifying purpose, and formed a break with the attitudes of the previous generation—no matter where you came from.

"Making peace, and reconciliation, was contained within the shows that we did," says Sheridan. "After 12 years of Hitler, there was no music to speak of. We noticed pretty soon that rock'n'roll was the right sort of music to straighten a few things out. We distanced

ourselves from our parents, and back home that meant Churchill and all the rest of the bastards, as well. It started music, but it also started a reconciliation that is still around to this day, in Germany."

"The funny thing about it was that we loved the

English musicians," says Horst Fascher. "We didn't hate those guys, we loved them because they brought us the new style of music. They helped us to do what we wanted to do. Not listening to shit music under Hitler."

"For me, it was very big to be accepted and even loved," Sheridan says. "All of us were on that trip as well—we were all born in the war and had some neuroses, or whatever. Music was the best way to deal with it—it's therapeutic for the guy that's doing it, and for the people who are listening to it as well—it was that kind of thing."

"You'd get home, and the Germans would have written to you," Mike Pender remembers. "We thought, 'They mustn't have had groups before in Germany.' It was just 15 years after the war... but these young people wanted to be friends, like they wanted to put their parents' generation behind them."

Indeed, it was a young German musician who first thought there might be something in the performances of these British groups that was worth recording for posterity. Singer Tommy Kent (born Guntram Kühbeck) visited the Top Ten during the Beatles/Sheridan residency, and

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Ain't he sweet?:  
The Beatles with  
Gene Vincent at  
the Star-Club  
April 1962



advised his own producer Bert Kaempfert to go and check them out. Kaempfert visited the club in the company of publisher Alfred Schacht, and suggested to the two artistes that they pair up for a recording session. Tony Sheridan remembers going over to Kaempfert's house with The Beatles to discuss the recordings.

"The housekeeper wanted to keep us standing up," Sheridan remembers. "Like – not on the sofa, you lot! It was embarrassing for Bert, but that's how people thought of musicians then."

Irrespective of how people thought about his kind, on a handwritten biography he wrote for Kaempfert's production company, John Lennon clearly stated his aims.

Under the heading "Ambition", he had written "TO BE RICH". He had underlined the word "rich".

**"THE BEATLES BELIEVED IN EACH OTHER SO MUCH: IT WAS IN THEIR BODIES AND SOULS – THIS IS WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES..."**

TONY SHERIDAN is not, all things considered, a particularly bitter man. As he sees it, he was a name before The Beatles, and enjoyed an eventful career after his association with them ended, so he has no real complaints. If there's a point that seems to rile him, though, it's

the idea that it should have been possible for anyone who saw the young Beatles to somehow predict their future path. You get the impression he is someone who has often been asked if he could, from their performances of "Twist And Shout", see how they might one day take hallucinogenic drugs and marry Japanese women.

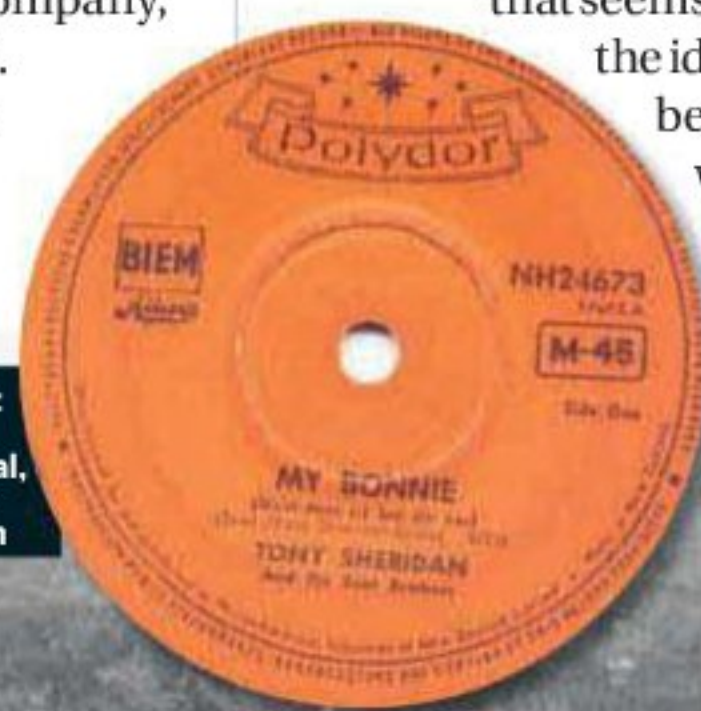
In 1961, after all, as Sheridan knows only too well, the

distinction between The Beatles and their contemporaries was far from self-evident. When Bert Kaempfert came to the Top Ten Club and saw The Beatles playing with Sheridan, he liked what he saw, but made what hindsight has shown to be an eccentric decision about who to record.

"He thought that I was a preferable candidate," Sheridan says. "They were a bit too crazy for him."

Nonetheless, on June 22, 1961, at the Friedrich-Ebert-Halle in the Hamburg suburb of Harburg, The Beatles (with Pete Best on drums; Stuart Sutcliffe attended, but only as an observer) began their recording career. Unaccompanied, they recorded a Lennon/Harrison instrumental called "Cry For A Shadow" and a Gene Vincent favourite, "Ain't She Sweet". What the German label Polydor chose for release, however, were rocked-up versions of two traditional tunes on which The Beatles backed Sheridan, and which duly became the October 1961 single "My Bonnie/The Saints", credited to Tony Sheridan And The Beat Brothers.

Those looking to these recordings – enjoyable renditions of well-worn chestnuts – to offer intimations of Beatles greatness to come will come away disappointed. However, what radiates from this music is a near-palpable charisma and good cheer. Roy Young, who played piano with the combo at another Sheridan session in May 1962, and who by then regularly guested with



The Beatles' first trip: stopping off at the Arnhem War Memorial, Holland, 1960 – shot taken by John Lennon



The Beatles at the Star-Club felt it at first hand.

"What they would bring was themselves," he says. "They were in love with each other and what they were doing. They believed in each other so much – and that's hard to find. It was in their bodies and souls – this is what we're going to do, and we're going to be together for the rest of our lives."

"Bert Kaempfert didn't have the right nose to smell out the talent of The Beatles," says Tony Sheridan. "But it was already there, it was seeable and hearable. He felt there was something good about the guys, but he had no idea what to do with them."

When a Beatles fan named Raymond Jones placed an order for "My Bonnie" at NEMS, his local Liverpool music shop, the store's young general manager decided to investigate the group on it the next time they played a lunchtime session at the local club, The Cavern. If there was one person who actually did have an idea of what to do with The Beatles, it was Brian Epstein.

**B**ACK IN HAMBURG, on April 13, 1962, Manfred Weissleder, in close association with Horst Fascher opened the Star-Club, a top-end nightspot that the pair hoped would become an international leisure destination, akin to the casinos of Las Vegas. A plush place, with room for 2,000 rock'n'roll-hungry souls, the Star-Club was the business-class version of the Hamburg experience, bringing in US legends who would drop by at the weekends after weekday dates entertaining the troops on USAF bases in the country. There were more, and better, bands to go around.

"At the Top Ten, everyone had to work their nuts off. You were lucky if you got away with four or five hours a night," says Londoner Cliff Bennett, who fronted a rowdy rock'n'soul group, Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rousers. "At the Star-Club, there were so many bands on, you could probably get away with just doing an hour."

The Star-Club wanted the best, and for Horst Fascher this meant The Beatles, who were secured as the first resident act, while Roy Young was sent to England to scout for new talent. Yet in spite of the great money and improved conditions, not everyone was convinced they should stay on in Hamburg. The Searchers eventually decided to buy themselves out of their contract, return home and fan the heat that was starting to build around their single "Sweets For My Sweet", a song they had found while in Germany.

The Beatles, however, were encouraged by Epstein to remain in Hamburg, the band becoming the tip of his roster's spear, with other Epstein bands like The Big Three and, later, Cliff Bennett falling in behind them at the Star-Club. Neither band doubted Epstein's commercial nous, though each responded very differently to his captainship.

"At that time I had a manager," recalls Bennett, "an ex-wrestler, called **CONTINUES OVER»**



'Very British players': Stu Sutcliffe and George Harrison

## 'THE STU I KNEW...'

'Mersey Beat' founder Bill Harry recalls his late friend Stuart Sutcliffe

"When we were at Liverpool College Of Art, I saw Stuart's painting and heard about him from other people, and was determined to get to know him. That's how I became friends with Stuart and his best friend, Rod Murray.

"Lennon I saw walking through the cafeteria, dressed like a Teddy Boy, and I thought, 'He's different, I must get to know him.' I went over to the pub with John and introduced him to Stuart and Rod. We made a vow to make Liverpool famous, John with his music, Stuart and Rod with their painting and me with my writing. We became known as The Dissenters.

"All the girls fancied Stuart. He had his own charisma – he was introverted in some ways, but not in others. The passion he had for his art and everything else, and his interesting clothes... he was stylish. He used to wear these winklepicker shoes, tight jeans.

"In the film society we watched the Wajda Trilogy with Zbigniew Cybulski. Stuart was overpowered by him, he thought this was just fantastic, and started wearing dark glasses like Cybulski. He was a big idol at the time.

"I'd been close to John since '58 and championed the group, but I thought Stuart's talent lay in his art. I told Stuart off for joining the band. I thought his art was so good. John couldn't care who was in the group – he said Stu or Rod could join, whoever came up with a bass guitar first. I think their relationship at that time has been very much exaggerated.

"I was at Stuart's flat on Gambier Terrace when they

thought of the name. Stuart was saying, 'Well, we do a lot of Buddy Holly numbers. Why not a name like Buddy Holly's band, The Crickets?' So we started thinking of names of insects, and the most popular one was Beetles. I think Stuart just liked the idea of it – something different from his art to become involved in. I just think he was flattered by it and loved it. John was very cruel to him at times, and used to put him down a lot in front of people. That was John, you had to stand up to him – tell him where to get off, and he'd stop that. But Stuart didn't.

"When he introduced me to Astrid in the Jac [Jacaranda

coffee bar in Liverpool], they were both dressed from head to toe in black, which was the influence of the Existential type thing. Their faces seemed to be ashen – these white faces and tight black clothes.

"But what I liked about Stuart was his passion and intensity. He was a bit out of the ordinary. Pete Best was telling me how good he was in Hamburg and how his 'Love Me Tender' was one of the highlights of the act during their sets in Hamburg. People seem to have decided now that he wasn't a good musician – most of the people at the time said he was very good. He had a good reputation."

The Beats go on: Astrid and Stuart in Hamburg, taken by photographer and friend Jürgen Vollmer circa '61



Dr Death. I didn't relish the thought of telling him I was going to leave him. But him and Brian worked out a deal, so it all worked out in the end.

"Brian loved the band and was instrumental in our success. I couldn't see a hit in front of me, but Brian could. Like we were in the studio, playing 'One Way Love' and Brian said, 'Clifford...'—he always called me Clifford—'I like that song, it's going to be a hit.' I said, 'It's not.' He said, 'Clifford, trust me.'"

Though he had a feel for a hit, for rockier groups, less disposed to being groomed for hit singles, Epstein's policy was less successful. The Big Three's John Gustafson feels that any notion of "artistic development" was completely beyond Epstein's understanding.

Immediately after returning from a gruelling Hamburg engagement, in 1962, The Big Three found themselves in Decca No 2 studio in Hampstead for an audition session. After a ragged take on the R'n'B favourite "Some Other Guy", the band thought they would hear no more about the recordings. Epstein then told them that not only had they passed the audition, their debut single would be out very shortly.

"We said, 'Our single? We haven't recorded anything.' And then he told us it was from the record test. Epstein knew a lot about furniture sales and record sales," Gustafson says, "but not about how to get the best for his artists." Though still slightly annoyed and perplexed by the fact, Gustafson acknowledges that the single did still chart—and that the more unrepresentative the material Epstein chose for subsequent singles, the higher The Big Three's chart placings were.

Offstage, Epstein's main charges had been increasing their repertoire of original compositions. They had replaced Pete Best with Ringo Starr in August 1962, and were by now a powerful live act. Even so, Epstein was eager to tweak the formula to populist perfection. He asked Roy Young to go further than just guesting with The Beatles onstage, and to join the group full-time. Young turned him down.

"Everyone was banging on about them," Cliff Bennett remembers. "I thought, 'They can't be that good.' But they went on about 11 one night, and we sat at the bar and watched them. They were doing their own arrangements, three-part harmonies. I thought, 'This is bloody good,' especially the three-part harmonies. I was well impressed."

After their Star-Club show, Bennett went to say hello, and found that Lennon and McCartney had been working on something—a song that they now played for him.

"It was 'Love Me Do'," says Bennett. "I said, 'That's great, it sounds really American, like a Bruce Channel, 'Hey! Baby'-type thing, it's got a lovely feel to it...'"

"Love Me Do", after Brian Epstein's tireless campaigning on behalf of his clients, would shortly find a home at Parlophone and become the first Beatles single. Yet for all its



**"I SAID, 'LOVE ME DO'? WHAT IS THAT CRAP? IT'S A COUNTRY AND WESTERN SONG.' LENNON SAID, 'ISN'T IT? BUT THEY PICKED IT, NOT ME...'"**


commercial value, it still divided opinion both within the group, and outside it. Not all of the Hamburg rockers appreciated the sophistication of what The Beatles had done quite as Bennett had. "They were a roaring rock'n'roll band in leather jackets and cowboy boots," says John Gustafson. "But they changed, the suits came in. It was the Epstein effect."

Brian Griffiths recalls hanging out with John Lennon on a trip back in Liverpool, and walking in to NEMS to hear the debut Beatles single.

"It was bloody awful," says Griffiths. "I said, 'What is that crap? It's a country and western song.' Lennon said, 'Isn't it? But they picked it, not me.' He didn't care, because he got to do a harmonica solo on the song."

As Epstein had learned through bitter experience knocking on record company doors, rock'n'roll, as The Beatles had

loved it and played it in Hamburg, had commercially had its day. "Love Me Do", effectively an extremely catchy Trojan Horse, provided The Beatles with a way in to making records. Sure, it wasn't rock'n'roll. But this short-term compromise afforded The Beatles the opportunity to change, for all time, the definition of what rock'n'roll could be.

"Musicians were like, 'What the hell is that?'" says Brian Griffiths. "But once The Beatles established themselves, their true selves started coming out. They started to be able to dictate their terms." 

# Live at the Star-Club

Until the time machine's advent, here's the closest we'll get to being back in Hamburg with the pre-Fabs...

**E**VEN THE greatest songwriters have to learn their craft, and when The Beatles were cutting their chops at Hamburg's Star-Club in 1962, there were few original songs in their repertoire. Instead, their material was culled from a wide range of sources, drawing not only on rock'n'roll and rockabilly but also R'n'B, jazz standards, showtunes and pop ballads. On the 40th anniversary of their legendary Hamburg residency, *Uncut* here revisits the songs that inspired the early Beatles.

**1 CHUCK BERRY**  
**ROLL OVER BEETHOVEN**  
Chuck Berry's 1956 hit was part of the group's repertoire from the late '50s until late into '64. The studio version on *With The Beatles* featured George on lead vocal, although John sang it in the early days.

**2 CHAN ROMERO**  
**HIPPY HIPPI SHAKE**  
Raised on a Montana farm, the 17-year-old Romero hitched to LA in '58 and had a hit with "Hippy Hippy Shake" the following year. An early McCartney showstopper, The Beatles sadly never recorded it and left the UK hit to The Swinging Blue Jeans.

**3 CHUCK BERRY**  
**SWEET LITTLE SIXTEEN**  
Lennon so loved this early live favourite that he returned to the song with lascivious intent on '75's *Rock'n'Roll*. A version from closer to the Hamburg era can be heard on *The Beatles' Live At The BBC*.

**4 CARL PERKINS**  
**LEND ME YOUR COMB**  
This '58 B-side of Perkins' final Sun single "Glad All Over" was in The Beatles' repertoire pre-Hamburg and

stayed there until summer '63, when the radio version which appeared on *Anthology 1* was recorded.

**5 FATS WALLER**  
**YOUR FEET'S TOO BIG**  
Waller - who was once kidnapped by Al Capone and ordered at gun-point to play at his birthday party - had a hit in '39 with this Fred Fisher/Ada Benson song, one of several non-rock'n'roll novelties in The Beatles' early repertoire.

**6 LITTLE RICHARD**  
**KANSAS CITY/HEY HEY HEY HEY**  
Richard added one of his own typically wild compositions to Leiber & Stoller's "Kansas City" to create this B-side to 1958's "Good Golly Miss Molly". McCartney introduced the medley into The Beatles' set in '62 and it subsequently appeared on *Beatles For Sale*.

**7 ROY LEE JOHNSON**  
**MR MOONLIGHT**  
Lennon preferred this otherwise obscure B-side to its more widely covered A-side "Dr. Feelgood" on its '62 release, and later recorded the song on *Beatles For Sale*. The original was credited to Dr Feelgood & The Interns, who in reality was bluesman Piano Red backed by Johnson, the song's writer.

**8 THE TEDDY BEARS**  
**TO KNOW HIM IS TO LOVE HIM**  
Spector's breakthrough '58 hit (with suitably gender-altered lyrics) was the first three-part harmony song that The Beatles ever

UNCUT



sounds  
of the  
star-club



**16 original versions of songs covered by The Beatles, including Chuck Berry ★ Carl Perkins ★ Little Richard Gene Vincent ★ Ray Charles and more...**

essayed, according to Macca. The song was also performed as part of their unsuccessful audition for record label Decca.

**9 EDDIE FONTAINE**  
**NOTHIN' SHAKIN' (BUT THE LEAVES ON THE TREES)**  
Fontaine was later convicted of child molestation and paying to have his wife murdered. But such troubles were blissfully distant when he recorded this brilliant rocker in '58 and inspired one of George's first lead vocals.

**10 GENE VINCENT & THE BLUE CAPS**  
**BE-BOP-A-LULA**  
The Beatles' first two weeks at the Star-Club in April '62 were as support to Vincent. But by then they had long been covering his best-known hit, one of the songs Paul played to John when they met at Woolton fête in July '57.

**11 RAY CHARLES**  
**HALLELUJAH I LOVE HER SO**  
Charles recorded this in '56. But it was Eddie Cochran's cover four years later that inspired McCartney to introduce it into The Beatles' set. A rudimentary home-recorded version eventually surfaced on *Anthology 1*.

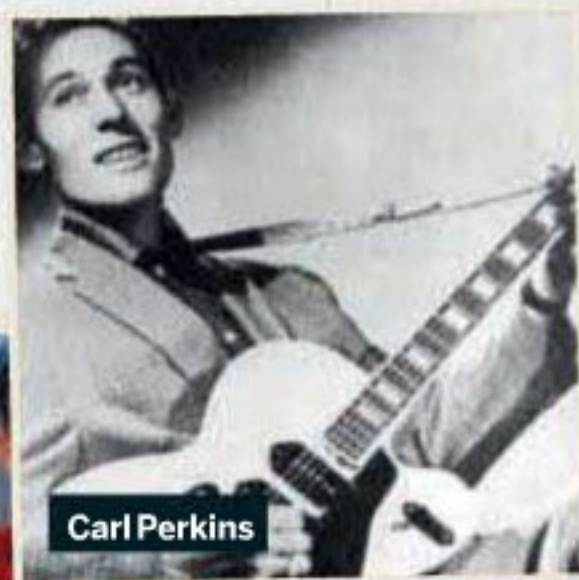
**12 CARL PERKINS**  
**EVERYBODY'S TRYING TO BE MY BABY**  
George sang this in Hamburg and was still singing it at Shea Stadium three years later - one of at least eight Perkins songs in the group's repertoire. Perkins also became the only non-member of the group to have two songwriting credits on a Beatles album when this and "Honey Don't" appeared on *Beatles For Sale*.

**13 CHUCK BERRY**  
**I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU**  
McCartney admitted to lifting the bass part for "I Saw Her Standing There" from this '61 single. After playing it in Hamburg, The Beatles reprised the song eight years later during the difficult *Get Back/Let It Be* sessions.

**14 THE OLYMPICS**  
**SHIMMY LIKE KATE**  
Written in 1915 and variously associated with Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller, The Beatles took their arrangement from the hit 1960 version by this US doo wop group.

**15 ELVIS PRESLEY**  
**I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT DOWN AND CRY (OVER YOU)**  
An estimated 30 songs associated with Presley found their way into The Beatles' repertoire between '57-'63 - including this from Presley's debut album, which they played on their final night in Hamburg on December 31, 1962.

**16 PEGGY LEE**  
**TILL THERE WAS YOU**  
The Beatles learnt the song, written by Meredith Willson for the '57 Broadway musical *The Music Man*, from Lee's 1961 cover version. Perfectly suited to Macca's romantic balladeer persona, he melted a nation's hearts when he sang it at '63's Royal Variety Performance.



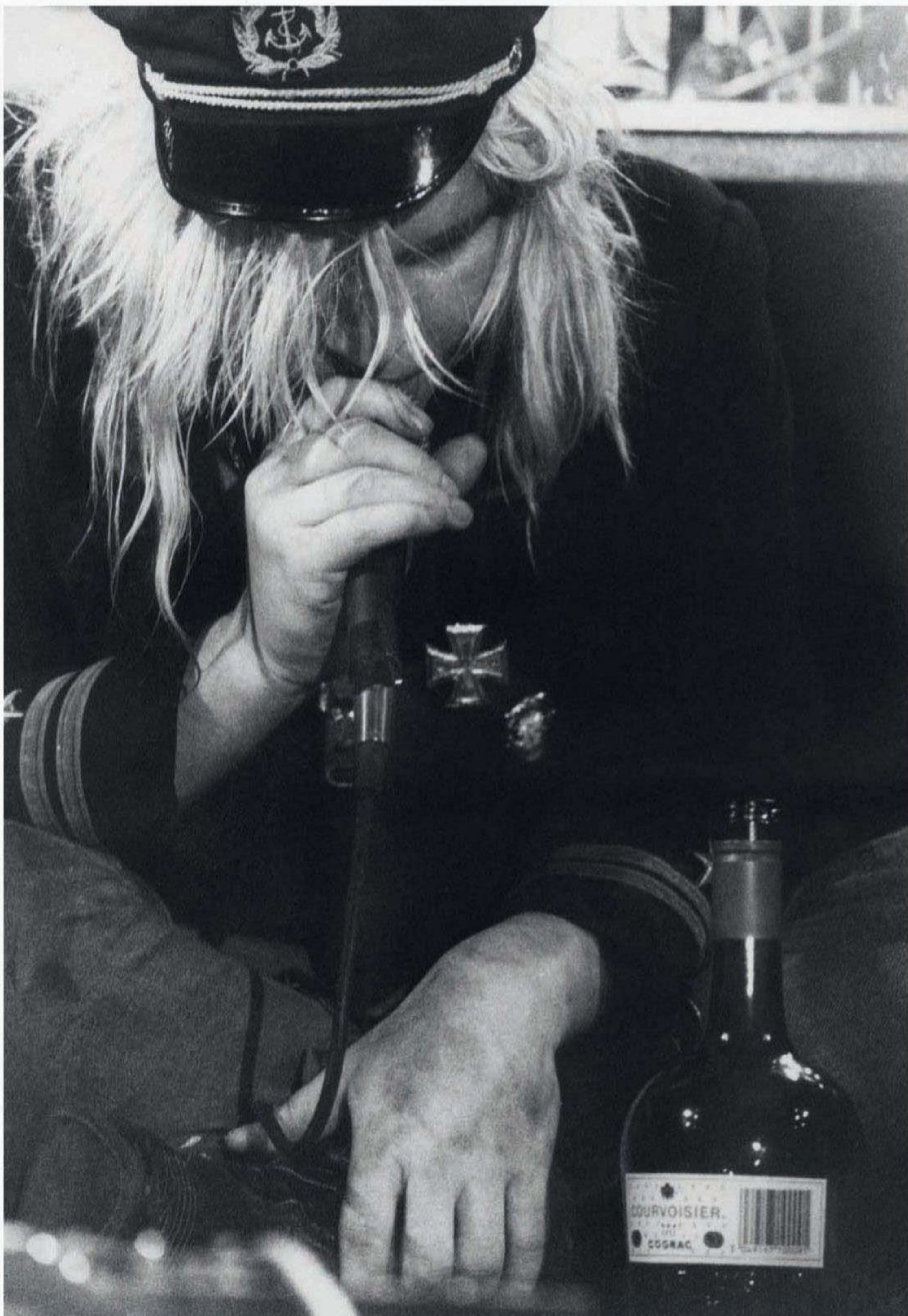
Carl Perkins



Chuck Berry



Gene Vincent And His Blue Caps



KERSTIN RODGERS/REDFERNS/GETTY

XX

# *The ballad of* JEFFREY LEE PIERCE

WORDS BY PETER WATTS PORTRAIT BY KERSTIN RODGERS

Confrontational, original and deranged, THE GUN CLUB were trailblazers for a wild generation of voodoo blues bands. None of their followers, though, were quite as volatile as Jeffrey Lee Pierce, the charismatic and doomed singer right at the heart of the chaos. “People didn’t know if it was a show or not,” says Kid Congo Powers. “Sometimes, I don’t think Jeffrey knew either.”

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**A** short, stocky man with mismatched clothes and bleached blond hair is blowing tunelessly through a battered trumpet. Behind him, three wild-looking musicians, including a woman on bass who is all hair and eyeliner, are thrashing out merry bedlam. The singer is Jeffrey Lee Pierce, and his cohorts are The Gun Club, and soon they will play a spine-tingling set of voodoo blues and punk... but first comes the chaos.

“We’d go onstage and Jeff would blow that trumpet like he was a Mexican Miles Davis while we made noise for 20 minutes just to piss everybody off,” recalls drummer Terry Graham of a typical Gun Club gig circa 1984. “When you get the audience in an agitated state and then start playing your music, they

are so grateful you can get them to do anything. At some point, we’d go into a song.”

Confrontational, even by the standards of the LA punk scene, The Gun Club reconfigured blues, country, Tex-Mex and rockabilly into an exhilarating blend of hoodoobilly long before Jon Spencer and Jack White, both devotees, did the same. But the murky brilliance of The Gun Club was never fully recognised during the band’s lifetime. They were never in the right place at the right time—who else was listening to Robert Johnson in LA during the height of punk? And then there was Pierce, whose own story is inseparable from that of the band: “Jeffrey was volatile from the beginning, and people didn’t know if it was a show or not,” says guitarist Kid Congo Powers. “Sometimes, I don’t think Jeffrey knew either.”

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**T**HE STORY OF The Gun Club's earliest days is essentially the story of two teenage punks growing up in late '70s Los Angeles: Pierce and Brian Tristan, aka Kid Congo Powers. "We saw each other a million times at concerts and record fairs," begins Powers. "Then, in 1979, while we were waiting in line for a Pere Ubu gig at Whisky A Go Go we started talking. At the end of the night, we decided to form a band."

They called themselves Creeping Ritual. Powers taught himself guitar by listening to Marty Robbins records, Pierce sang and Don Snowden and Brad Dunning played bass and drums. In late 1979, they hoodwinked The Blasters' Dave Alvin into letting them support his band during a residency at Los Angeles punk club, the Hong Kong Café. In the audience for one show were Terry Graham and Rob Ritter, the rhythm section for recently defunct LA punk band, The Bags.

"My thought when I saw Jeff up there was that he had a lot of balls," remembers Graham. "He clearly had no idea what he was doing, but he knew it was something. I loved the fact I could hear all of these things bursting out the songs—Delta blues, obscure rockabilly. They were looking for a new bass player and drummer, and we were available. It was a perfect marriage."

Graham recognised Pierce from the LA punk scene. "He was a podgy kid from the suburbs, a record geek who knew a lot about old stuff and would talk your ear off. He wrote for *Slash* magazine and was very good. He was very intelligent and had the guts to say, 'Fuck it, I'm not hearing what I like, I'm going to do it myself.'"

Bob Biggs, publisher of *Slash* and owner of Slash Records, remembers that Pierce "kept asking to work for us and ended up doing reggae reviews [as *Ranking Jeffrey Lea*]. He was an impetuous guy. He'd come in to talk to me and end up sabotaging my coffee machine so that it would dump coffee all over the floor. That's my most vivid image, him fucking up my coffee machine and then running off to hide."

In June 1980, Creeping Ritual were renamed The Gun Club by Pierce's flatmate, Circle Jerks singer Keith Morris, in exchange for one of Pierce's songs, "Group Sex". But despite such friendships with other LA musicians, the band weren't clicking live. "Audiences weren't hostile, more headscratchers," says Graham. "And these were our friends. If your friends don't get what you're doing, you either have a problem or you are in the wrong city."

"You had to get past all this drama of Jeffrey," adds Briggs. "He was confrontational towards the audience and towards the band. There was a cry for love in everything he did. This voodoo blues thing wasn't really what



anybody else in LA was doing at the time." Which, reckons Powers, was precisely the point: The Gun Club were outsiders. Both Powers and Pierce had Mexican-American backgrounds while Graham came from Texas and Ritter from Detroit. "We didn't expect anybody to get it," says Powers. "We were not a typical LA band and had no intention of being a typical LA band. But we got very tight when Rob and Terry joined. And Jeffrey could write songs. That was our ace in the hole."

In mid-November 1980, Powers accepted an invitation to join The Cramps, just a few months before The Gun Club recorded their debut album, *Fire Of Love*. Powers' departure—and the arrival of his replacement, Ward Dotson—signalled the first of many lineup changes for The Gun Club that meant the band rarely sounded the same from one record to the next. Pierce persuaded Slash Records to release the album on their subsidiary, Ruby. "It cost \$2,000," says Graham. "We did half in one studio and half in another. We just set up, raced through the songs and hoped the guys behind the boards would make it sound good."

Boasting wild but beautifully formed songs like the Hank Williams-meets-The Damned strut of "Sex Beat", the chilling punk-blues of "Ghost On The Highway" and voodoo anthem "She's Like Heroin To Me", *Fire Of Love* was a

surprise hit on the East Coast. "That stunned us," said Graham. "We had no idea there were people who liked us. When we played New York, Boston and Philadelphia every show was packed. We were shitting ourselves because we didn't know what to do in front of people who actually wanted to see us."

Pierce, meanwhile, "was very self-destructive, so as soon as he got a little notoriety he became really difficult," explains Briggs. "He had a bad drug habit and got out of control fairly easy. It became a problem trying to navigate his ups and downs."

"It didn't take long before he refused to play anything off *Fire Of Love*," adds Terry Graham. "His drinking was so bad that his perspective was gone, he began to resent the rest of us and his ego was getting twisted."

**I**N EARLY 1982, work began on the follow-up to *Fire Of Love*. Pierce's choice of producer was an old acquaintance, Blondie guitarist Chris Stein: in the days before he began making music, Pierce had been president of the Blondie fanclub. "We had this circle of kids who hung out with us in LA," explains Blondie guitarist Chris Stein. "Jeffrey was one of them, this brooding teenager who transformed himself into an aggregate of Debbie by dying his hair. He was a lovely guy but very troubled. He started sending me tapes and pretty quickly I grasped that he was going to be successful."

Stein remembers a tiring day spent driving round Los Angeles with Pierce, meeting with record labels. "The last place was Warner Bros. Jeffrey disappeared for an hour, came back and said they weren't interested. I found out two years ago that he talked to a guy who





Three-quarters of the classic Club: (l-r) Patricia Morrison, Jeffrey Lee Pierce and Kid Congo Powers. Left: (l-r) Rob Ritter, Terry Graham, Pierce and Ward Dotson circa '81

“If Jeffrey was drunk it could be miserable live, but it could also be amazing. We took our cues from jazz people who are oblivious to the crowd” *Kid Congo Powers*

signed a bunch of early '80s metal bands and offered Jeffrey \$100,000, a video, tour support—an amazing offer. But Jeffrey turned it down because he wanted to sign for Debbie Harry's label, because he was so in love with Debbie.”

Stein agreed to release The Gun Club's new album, *Miami*, on his own Animal Records, through Chrysalis.

By June, the band had moved to New York, and work began on *Miami* at Blank Tape Studios, with Harry herself—as DH Lawrence Jr—contributing backing vocals. The songs were strong—“Texas Serenade” was a country-tinged epic, “The Fire Of Love” oozed malicious glee and there was a raucous take on Creedence's “Run Through The Jungle”—but Terry Graham was critical of the finished record. “It was flat and Rob [Ritter's] bass disappeared,” he sighs. “I don't think Chris really got the band.”

Thirty years on, Stein is sanguine about Graham's remarks. “I've heard some of the kids in the band complain it was too clean, but I can't remember anyone speaking up at the time. Jeffrey was the one I communicated with and he wanted to make something a little less punk. He wanted to bring in steel guitar and give it a country sound.”

Pierce's behaviour, meanwhile, was placing a heavy strain on his band members. Rob Ritter quit first, in June 1982.

“Jeffrey wanted a girl in the band, so Terry Graham recommended me,” says Patricia Morrison, who had played bass in The Bags with Ritter and Graham. “I learnt 30 songs,

had a 10-minute rehearsal when Jeffrey was drunk and did an audition at Santa Monica when we opened for Sparks. Rob was meant to stay in the band on rhythm guitar, but one day I went to pick him up and he burst into tears and said he couldn't take it anymore.”

To her surprise, Morrison watched as another half a dozen musicians came and went from The Gun Club over the next two years. In September 1983, she found herself in Australia, about to go on tour, with Pierce as the only other remaining member of the band. But help was on hand in the form of Pierce's oldest musical collaborator.

“Jeffrey told me the band had abandoned him at the airport and would I come over to Australia, so I did,” explains Kid Congo Powers. “That was it. I was back. Me, Terry, Jeffrey and Patricia was an amazing lineup, magical and volatile. We could go either way depending on Jeffrey. It could be miserable if he was too drunk, but it could also be amazing. We improvised, but we were spot on, like we were playing with one mind. We were going for drama. We took our cues from jazz people who are notoriously oblivious to the audience.”

“It was a very hopeful time,” admits Morrison. “You'd see everybody in the audience from REM to whoever you want to name. I'd see Nick Cave, posing and selling his autograph at our gigs.”

Graham agrees. “It was great. We were four original Hollywood scenesters and now it was 1984. We recorded [third album] *The Las Vegas*

*Story* and went on tour and it was fun. Jeffrey was not being as much of an ass. He liked having Kid in the band, it made him feel good. But the problem came in Europe.”

IT IS NOT unusual for a cult American band to be given a warmer reception in Europe, and particularly England, than at home. So it was for The Gun Club, who found themselves increasingly popular with English audiences. “[In London] we had a touring agent, a manager, a record deal, an audience—everything we needed in one place,” explains Powers. Had they finally found their home? Not quite. Long-suffering Terry Graham was presented the move as a fait accompli and balked. “I couldn't take it,” he says. “Jeff jumped off the cliff. He was drinking heavily, taking lots of drugs. I quit.”

“It was awful when Terry left,” admits Powers. “But we were going to make a go of it. Then when we got to London, we broke up.”

“We were a great live act, but it never translated into anything and it did your head in,” says Morrison. “*The Las Vegas Story* sold well, but all I ever got was £1,000. Jeffrey made these bad decisions relentlessly **CONTINUES OVER**”

and I had to leave, it wasn't going anywhere. But it broke my heart."

That could have been it. It should have been it. Morrison joined The Sisters Of Mercy, Powers became a Bad Seed and Pierce recorded a solo album, 1985's *Wildweed*. Pierce liked London. In Soho's Bat Cave club he met Romi Mori, a Japanese fan, and the pair started dating. He lost weight, stopped bleaching his hair and improved his guitar playing. "He grew up a lot," observes Powers. "He had a more domestic life and that appealed to him, he had somebody take care of him."

He also became friendly with Cocteau Twin Robin Guthrie. "We were drink and drug buddies," explains Guthrie. "We'd hang out at bars and talk about music. He was very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. He was also a total garbage head when it came to drugs and drink. Everything was his preference and then a little bit more."

In 1986, Pierce resurrected The Gun Club with Powers, Romi on bass and Clock DVA's Nick Sanderson on drums. Powers admits he found Pierce's decision to ask Guthrie to produce their comeback album "so perverse I thought it was a great idea".

*Mother Juno* turned out to be one of their best albums, with "Thunderhead" as hard as anything they'd recorded, and songs like "The Breaking Hands" moving into a new, subtler direction. Pierce's singing voice, meanwhile, had matured dramatically.

"It was an experiment for Jeffrey and also for me," explains Guthrie. "Jeffrey wanted to synthesise rock with a more out-there sound, but it was a terrible time to make a record. It was a fight against technology. Everything was expensive and didn't quite deliver the sound you required."

**B**UT BY NOW, Pierce's health was in decline. He had been told by doctors in 1982 that he should stop drinking, but hadn't. Richard Thomas, his manager in London, says: "We never resolved what made

## HOT SHOTS!

Your guide to The Gun Club's greatest albums

### FIRE OF LOVE

(RUBY RECORDS, 1981)

★★★★★



A blast of primitive-sounding but well-crafted rock'n'roll, recorded in two days and boasting unhinged rockabilly, feral blues and belting cowpunk from a songwriter who clearly knew his stuff.

### MIAMI

(ANIMAL RECORDS, 1982)

★★★★★



More refined but still rollicking, with the pedal steel bringing a more countrified flavour to songs like "Texas Serenade" and the sinister yodel of "Devil In The Wood".

### DANSE KALINDA BOOM

(MEGADISC, 1985)

★★★★★



A good recording from Rotterdam of the all-conquering Pierce-Powers-Morrison-Graham lineup at their live peak.

### MOTHER JUNO

(RED RHINO, 1987)

★★★★★



The comeback album. A far less ragged sound, with improved vocals and often beautiful synthesis of raw rock and crystalline '80s production, epitomised by the anthemic "The Breaking Hands".

### RAMBLIN' JEFFREY LEE

(WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT..., 1992)

★★★★★



Gorgeously contemplative solo album of blues covers as Pierce re-engaged with his first love.



"Jeffrey never got the recognition he deserved. I don't know if he ever will" *Patricia Morrison*

him ill. They said before he died that a lot of it was psychological, but he had done a lot of damage to himself. There's a rumour he was HIV positive, but it's doubtful. He had tests in the late '80s and didn't have it. He was ill for 10 years before he died, but it never stopped him working."

Pierce slipped in and out of sobriety as The Gun Club recorded two fine albums – *Pastoral Hide And Seek* (1990) and

*Lucky Jim* (1993) – before imploding when Mori and Sanderson eloped. Pierce was now extremely ill. He was finally deported to Los Angeles after brandishing a sword in a London pub.

Back home, "friends talked us into doing a Gun Club show," says Kid Congo Powers. "We played the Viper Room and it was great so we did another at the Dragonfly, playing stuff from *Fire Of Love*. Jeffrey's weight had exploded, he looked like a frog, but it was fun. It was a bit like how we'd started, barely holding it together but getting away with it. And that was it."

This time, it really was. Pierce relocated to Utah to write his autobiography, *Go Tell The*

*Mountain*, for Henry Rollins' 2.13.61 imprint. "Everybody was incredibly frightened for his health," says Powers. "We talked him into going to his father's. Utah is a dry state and I said if he got himself sorted, we would move to New York and get the band going. But one day I called and his mother answered and said, 'Oh, you've heard,' and I knew what had happened."

Pierce died from a brain haemorrhage on March 31, 1996. He was 37.

"I last saw Jeff at the Viper Room two months before he died," reflects Terry Graham. "He looked pretty good. We buried the hatchet. He gave me his card. It just had his name and one word: 'showbusiness'. I thought that was perfect. He was supposed to be a survivor but he'd ravaged himself to such a degree he had to succumb."

Kid Congo Powers explains, "With Jeffrey you really had to take the good with the bad and that's what a lot of people couldn't understand – that there was a lot of bad you had to take. Hell, even I had to leave the band a few times..."

"He'd read the book of rock'n'roll and thought that's what he had to do," says Patricia Morrison. "But he was so talented. My favourite times were when he'd call me out to his mum's place in the Valley, and he'd play me the new songs. It was thrilling. But Jeffrey never got the recognition he deserved. I don't know if he ever will." ☪



# DRINK ICE COLD



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*Fifty years ago, a collector of old 78s compiled his favourite songs into an **Anthology Of American Folk Music** and inspired a generation – including Bob Dylan – to discover their roots. This is the story of **HARRY SMITH** – archivist, magician, transient, friend of Woody Guthrie, Allen Ginsberg, The Fugs and Charlie Parker...*

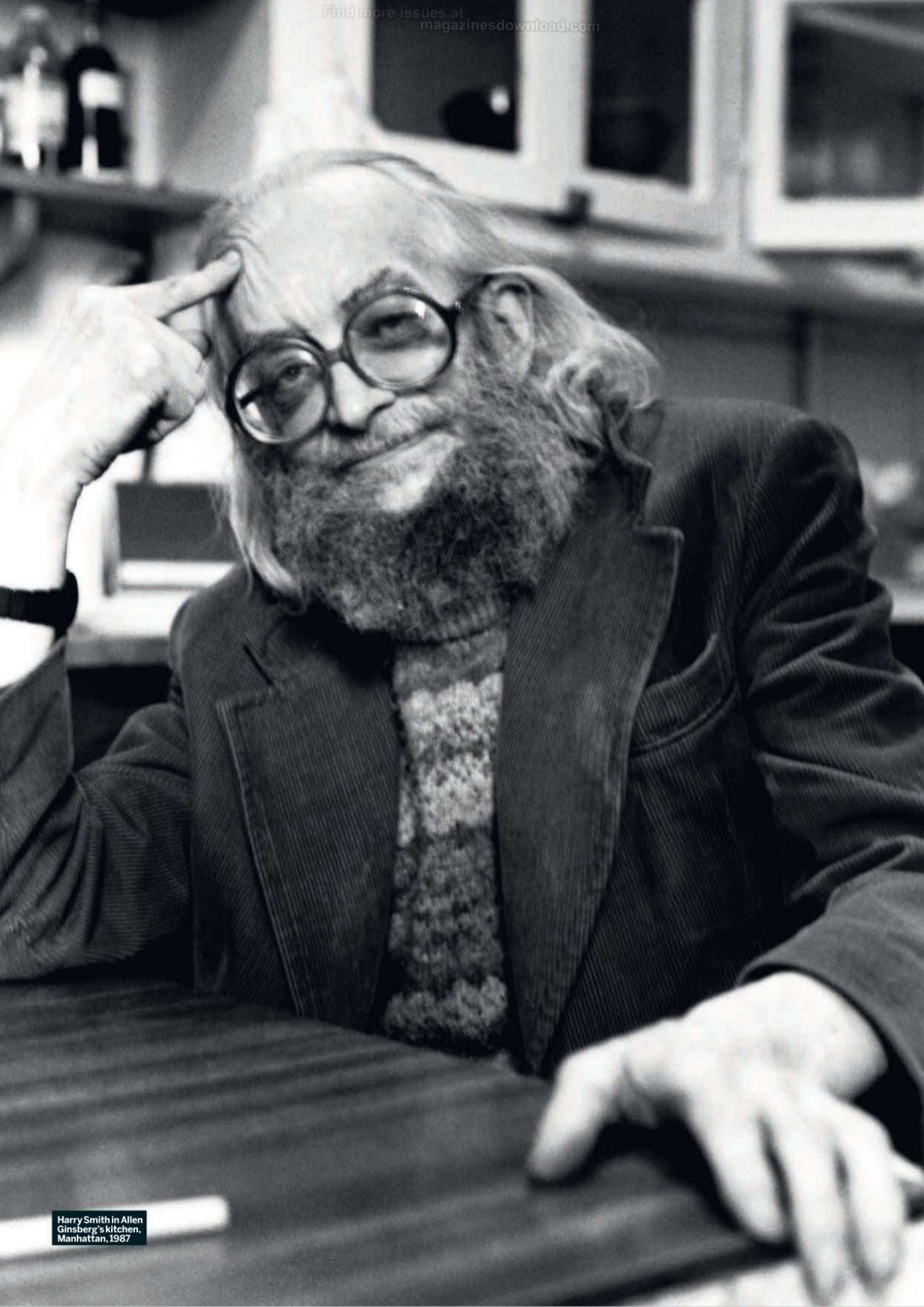
## THE MAN WHO CHANGED AMERICA

ON FEBRUARY 20, 1991, AT THE CLIMAX of the Grammy Awards Ceremony in Radio City Music Hall, New York, the final award of the evening was announced. The Chairman's Merit Award was to be presented to "a creative and eccentric painter, philosopher, anthropologist and political activist... for his ongoing insight into the relationship between artistry and society". A tiny, stick-thin figure in an oversized dinner jacket, skin pale as milk, baggy eyes gazing at the world through enormous round spectacles, stood up from a table, and aided by a couple of young friends, gingerly and unsteadily ascended to the stage. With no preamble, he informed the audience that he had arthritis, and that he had flown in the previous day from Colorado. Then he declared, "My dreams came true: I saw America changed through music." Nine months later, on 27 November, in New York's infamous Chelsea Hotel, he began coughing up blood and died of cardiac arrest in the presence of several of his closest friends, including Allen Ginsberg, who once described the "exquisite impact" the old timer had made on American music. His last decade on earth had

been largely funded by a grant from The Grateful Dead's benevolent Rex Foundation. His name was Harry Smith.

In musical circles, Smith is best remembered as the compiler of Folkways' *Anthology Of American Folk Music*, whose appearance in 1952 practically gave permission for the ongoing folk revival to raise its game, stand up and be counted as a significant cultural phenomenon with clear, traceable precedents, while undercutting the Seeger/Guthrie/Lomax generation's attempts to make folk 'relevant' via political/topical subject matter. Allen Ginsberg declared, "Everybody in the later white blues, art blues, including Jerry Garcia, said they learned blues from Harry Smith's albums." John Fahey said, "I would not be recognised as a significant guitar player had it not been for Harry," while Meg Baird of contemporary folk-rockers Espers celebrates Smith "for finding the dots, connecting the dots, making art of all of that, being so in sync with culture and his own thought process while being totally out of sync with lots of external trends. A real adventurer-explorer." Laurie Anderson, whose panoramic story-maps of





Harry Smith in Allen  
Ginsberg's kitchen,  
Manhattan, 1987

American life owe a debt to Smith's universalist vision, calls him, "One of the great pioneers of almost everything!"

**B**ut the amazing thing about Harry Smith is that music was only one of his countless obsessions. A true renaissance man, he enjoyed a certain fame during his lifetime as a maker of experimental films. He amassed copious collections of folkloric objects, from Russian babushka dolls to Ukrainian painted eggs, from mammals and marine creatures in blown glass and ceramics to paper aeroplanes, meticulously numbered. Artefacts held in the Harry Smith Archives include a library of 4,200 books, 1,200 LPs, 1,000 pages of notes for a study on string figures, and over 200 different sets of Tarot cards. Collecting, Smith once said, is "a psychopathic activity where a great deal of effort is put into something that can't be sold for anything." He saw these objects, products of vernacular rather than commercial culture, as "indexes to a great variety of thoughts. They're like encyclopedias of designs... The designs on the eggs are so ancient, they're like 20 or 30,000 years old, it's like having something superior to a book."

He was born in 1923 to a family from Portland, Oregon with Masonic and occult connections. By 15 he was spending time on Native American reservations, documenting rituals and artefacts and learning the language. In 1943 *The American Magazine* published a photo of him with a wire recorder, taping a potlatch gathering. Almost unique among his peers, Smith united modernist art/avant-garde/magickal practice with ancient folk survivals and craft. He did not seek to



Pioneer: Smith mixed black and white music in divided times. Right: the 1997 *Anthology* reissue, and the three original vinyl releases

*"When the White House wanted to get themselves a record collection, the first record they ordered was the **Anthology**..."*

capitalise on it, nor dilute its power by popularising it, but he managed to anticipate many later countercultural currents, from psychedelia to neo-folk movements. Somewhere at the interface of his disparate activities – listening to day-long ceremonial music, investigating cult rituals and folk dances, devising diagrammatic methods of transcribing all this data – Smith's own art was seeded in a mulch of ethnography, occultism and plastic arts. He studied anthropology at the University of Washington in the early 1940s, but dropped out after reportedly hanging out one weekend with bohemians, intellectuals and artists including Woody Guthrie, during which he smoked marijuana for the first time. He never looked back.

Living in Berkeley, California in the late 1940s, he took up painting in earnest. His earliest animated films, morphing patterns of shapes and colours handpainted on blank celluloid, emerged out of his two-dimensional work, extending their abstract

forms into the extra dimension of time. He called his films "minor accessories" to his paintings but, with most of his canvases destroyed or lost, it's the films that have become the most celebrated and venerated aspect of his output. Smith's early abstractions were focused on finding direct correspondences between sound and image. They were painstaking labours constructed on the floors of his various tiny apartments, spraypainting over batik shapes gummed onto film stock.

**J**azz was the key that uncorked his synaesthetic juices. His paintings from around 1950 he claimed were precise visual transcriptions of what he heard in bebop improvisations. At San Francisco's Jimbo's Bop City nightclub, bebop players such as Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker would be invited to improvise as Smith's film reels spooled in the background. Film *No 4* includes his own response to the Dizzy tune "Manteca", each

brushstroke corresponding to each drum strike and horn blast. *No 11: Mirror Animations*, was intended as a take on Monk's "Misterioso". He spent five years on one Bird-inspired painting, after which he gave up: "It was too exhausting." Seven of these early films were later strung together as *Early Abstractions*, and set to a 23-minute selection of music by The Beatles.

His reputation was strong enough to earn him a two-man exhibition with Marcel Duchamp at the Louvre in Paris in 1951, but he never seemed to be able to hold on to whatever money he made. Around that time he moved to New York, bringing his life's work, including all the collections, with him. One of his first moves in order to raise some money was to visit Moe Asch, head of Folkways Records, hoping to sell a substantial portion of his record collection. The meeting led to one of Smith's most enduring projects.

Once the US joined the Allies in World War II, shellac records began to be requisitioned from American households to be recycled in industry. Smith, who was working in an aircraft factory on the West Coast during the war, saw a generation of recorded music being melted down to feed the war effort, and his record collecting – already prolific – took on a new urgency. By the time he moved to New York, he'd amassed thousands of 78s, which Asch

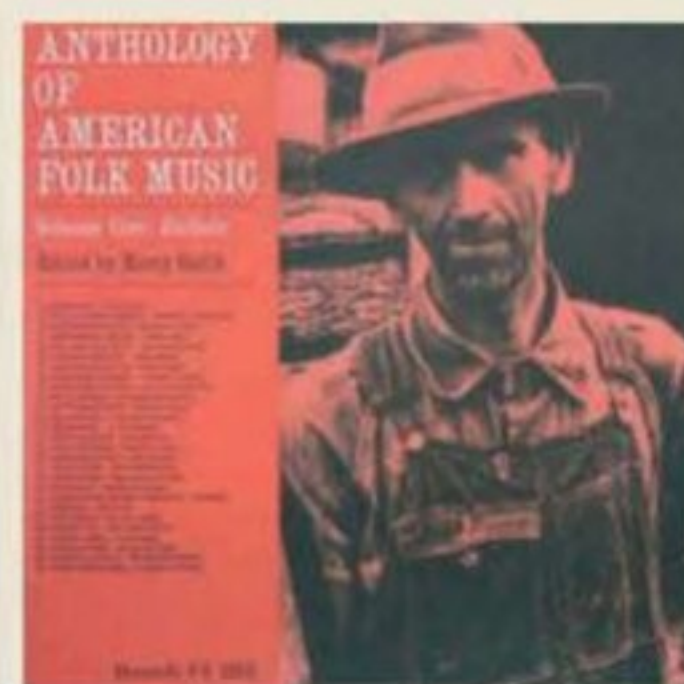
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SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS

# ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC

EDITED BY HARRY SMITH

EIGHTY-FOUR SELECTIONS  ON SIX COMPACT DISCS



## Decoding Harry Smith's Anthology

Plato's *Republic*, celestial monochords, hermetic philosophy... there's more to this legendary compilation than just a love of folk

Released in 1952, the *Anthology Of American Folk Music* is at once a defining survey of the USA's 'traditional' musics – jugbands, gospel choirs, ranting reverends, blues and hillbilly singers, fiddle/Cajun music and Celtic-rooted ballads – and an idiosyncratically curated collection. With Folkways' blessing, Smith took it upon himself to design the total package, and from the artwork and notes to the sequencing of all 84 tunes, the compilation is assembled along strongly conceptual lines. He conceived the *Anthology* to consist of four (double-LP) volumes to correspond with the four elements, but only three were actually produced: Ballads (green/water), Social Music (red/fire) and Songs (blue/air). The set acts as a kind of theatre of folkloric memory. Each LP sleeve came stamped with a 17th-century engraving of the celestial monochord – a diagrammatic representation of Pythagorean musical theory – described by the Elizabethan hermetic philosopher Robert Fludd in his *History Of The Macrocosm And Microcosm* (1617). Smith thus associates folk music with the age-old notion of the 'music of the spheres' – a force bound not to the human realm but dictated by ungovernable, immutable forces of nature.

If the *Anthology* tells any anthropological story, it is of the cultures that imported themselves into North America – European/Anglo-Saxon settlers and their African slaves. The older, truly indigenous Native American music is unrepresented – for the

simple reason that the *Anthology* is drawn from pre-existing shellac records in Smith's collection, and Native American music wasn't generally available in that format. While it includes artists that have become core to the notion of American roots music – from The Carter Family to Mississippi John Hurt – Smith claimed he was more interested in the patterns discernible in the musical structures and linguistic recurrences than in the representation of personalities. In some ways, the records were, for Smith, just one more collection to file alongside his Ukrainian eggs and Seminole quilts. "The problems I'd set myself on have to do with correlating music

leading up to the Great Depression, it is a catalogue of grassroots resistance to the disempowering effects of capital. This is largely 'social music', rough and ready-made outside the channels of mass entertainment. "I'd been reading Plato's *Republic*," Smith confirmed later in the same interview. "He's jabbering on about music, how you have to be careful about changing the music because it might upset or destroy the government."

Under the wing of the Smithsonian Institution, Folkways finally released the *Anthology* as a 6CD boxset in 1997. The running order of the missing fourth volume was completely mapped out in 1952

### *Smith associated folk music with the 'music of the spheres' – dictated by ungovernable forces of nature*

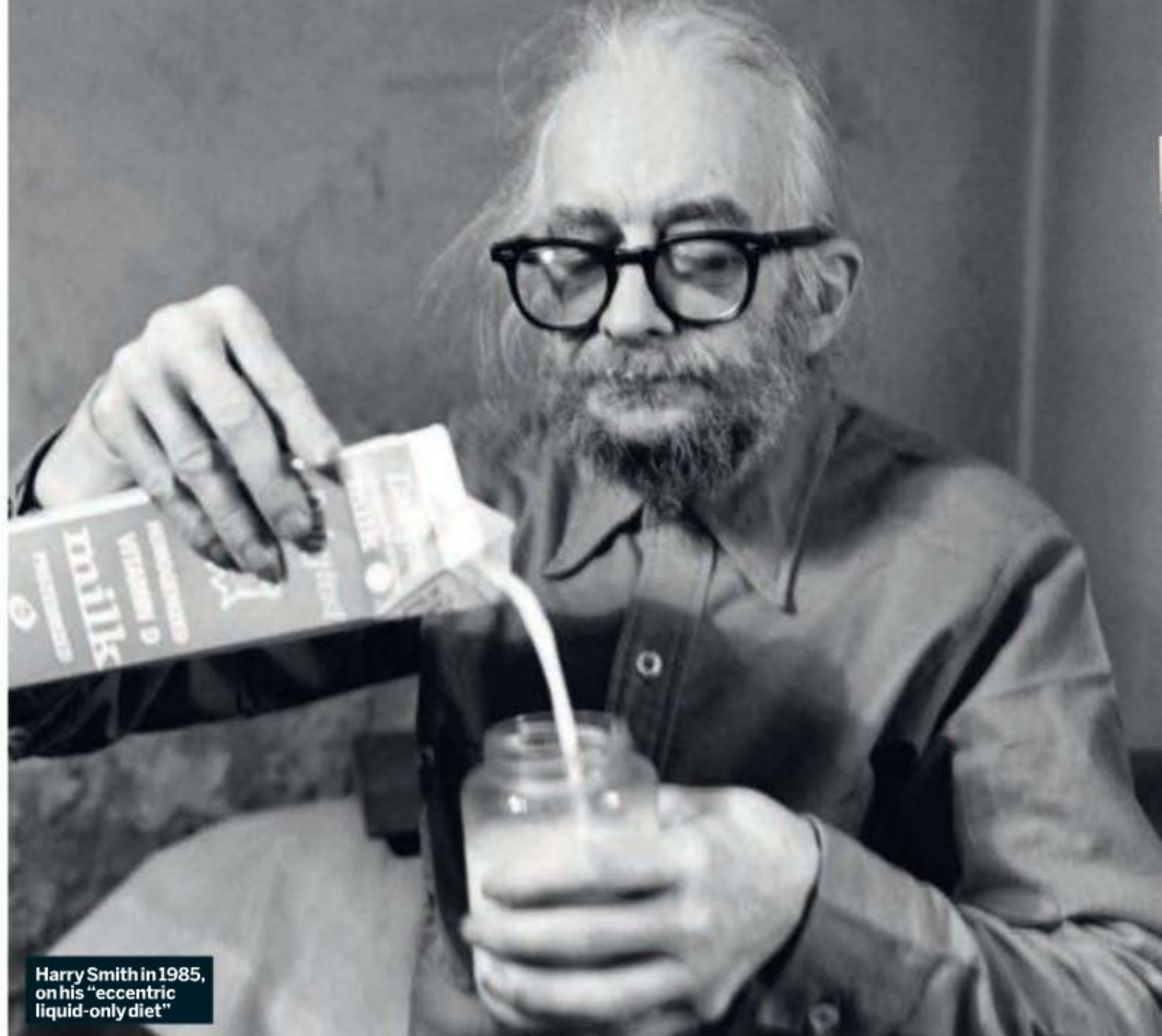
into some kind of visual thing," he told interviewer John Cohen in 1968. "I am interested in getting series of objects of different sorts. There are definite correlations between different artistic expressions in one particular social situation, like a consistency in small lines in Australian aboriginal art, and the music is the same, short words."

But there is another important factor about the *Anthology*: as an aural snapshot of the decade

but failed to materialise, chiefly because Smith lost his notes on the tracks and sold the remainder of his collection to a library. After retrieval by the Revenant label and the Harry Smith Archives, it finally appeared in a beautifully packaged and fully notated edition in 2000. The songs are mostly drawn from the Depression, and strike a bleaker note than their predecessors: a huge, collective groan cutting across social and racial divides.

offered to buy at 35 cents a pop. Shortly afterwards, he realised that Smith would be the only one with the complete understanding of the material to put together a compilation of the best of it, and commissioned the series that became the *Anthology Of American Folk Music*, released in 1952. Issued in three double-LP sets, with a booklet written and designed by Smith himself, it simultaneously opened a window on a lost world, and placed it in a new mythological setting that made it hugely attractive to young audiences of the time, not least Bob Dylan.

Smith's copious and scholarly sleeve notes ensured the material was taken seriously. Moe Asch: "He understood the content of the records. He knew their relationship to folk music, their relationship to English literature and their relationship to the world." The *Anthology* began to take on its influential life almost immediately. "When the White House wanted to get a record collection," recalled Asch, "the first record they ordered was the *Anthology*." Jac Holzman, who founded Elektra Records in 1950 in the back room of his Record Loft store, was an official Folkways dealer. "I was an early owner of the *Anthology* – still have my originals – and I treasure them," he says. "I was inspired by the organisation of the material and Smith's courage – Moe Asch, too. They were pirating existing recordings owned by others, which was unheard of in those days. We all played by the rules. I did think that publishing just one accompanying manual that covered all three volumes was a stroke of genius. It prompted a person who had acquired one volume to buy them all. I learned from that." Nowadays, plundering and reviving archives is common practice, from Honest Jon's and Tompkins Square's explorations of record company vaults to Sublime Frequencies' guerrilla ethnography. Lance Ledbetter of Dust-to-Digital, the contemporary reissue label perhaps closest in spirit to Folkways, sees it thus: "I believe the *Anthology Of American Folk Music* changed America, as well as many other parts of the world. When the LP sets were released in the early 1950s they caused a chain reaction that helped produce a folk music revival in the 1960s. The music he compiled inspired young musicians and helped them to appreciate the traditions that



came before their time. Interest in learning traditional music by seeking out old records, and old-timers who could still play, became extremely high with young Americans during that time. I admired how he annotated each track, how he mixed music by blacks and whites, and how he divided the LP sets by song type. I was amazed at how much thought and preparation went into his production."

Allen Ginsberg claimed it "was a major influence on Dylan and all American pop music. It was the recorded anthology of all the things that people like [Woody] Guthrie and Pete Seeger had been interested in but hadn't actually explored, totally. Harry Smith presented and Dylan picked up, or Dylan told me that that was one of his major educational sources. It turned out to be, for me, a great introduction to American blues poetry."

Smith spent much of the remainder of the 1950s making more films, and studying magickal and hermetic traditions. Throughout his life Smith maintained close links with various secret

societies: a set of Tarot cards he designed were adopted by the Ordo Templi Orientis and reproduced in an edition of Aleister Crowley's Holy Books of Thelema. He studied kabbalah with occultist Lionel Ziprin, and tried to market a set of complex, three-dimensional Christmas cards – a time-consuming venture which failed spectacularly. *Heaven And Earth Magic* (1957) is his masterpiece from this period, a 66-minute black and white animation that plays with spatial illusions, Egyptian symbolism and kabbalistic imagery in a series of dazzling transformations. Considered a seminal art film of the 20th century, it was recently given a live soundtrack by Flying Lotus. Its purposeful yet playful manipulation of collaged and cut-out found images can even be seen as a precursor to Terry Gilliam's animated sequences for *Monty Python*. Smith liked to screen his films as a spectacular performance, with strobe effects, magic lanterns and multiple projectors. "My movies are made by God," he said, "I am just the medium for them."

The complexity and craftsmanship

## Banjos, Pep-Steppers & Jug-Stompers

10 remarkable tracks collected by Harry Smith

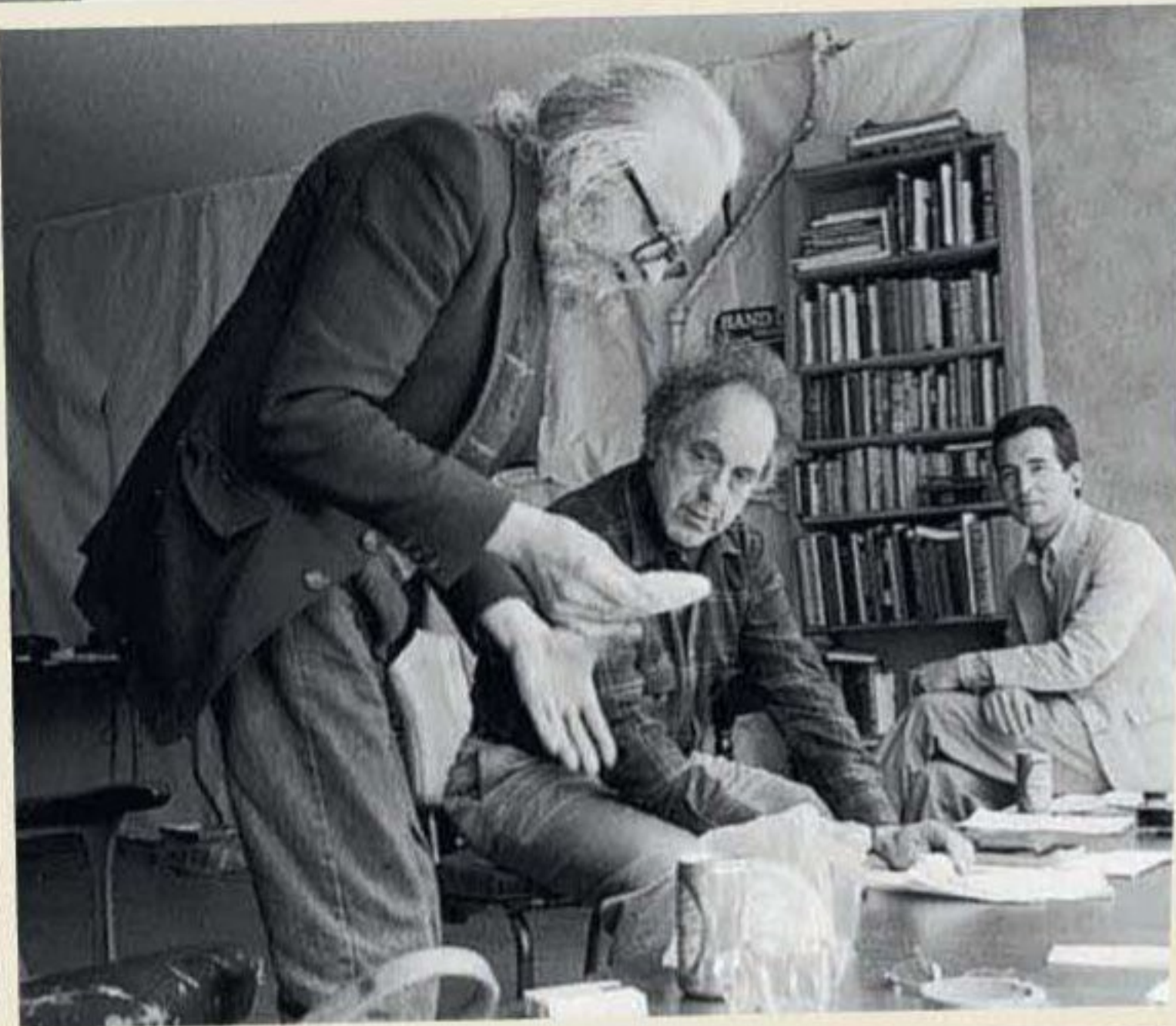
**Clarence Ashley**  
"The House Carpenter"  
ANTHOLOGY VOL 1 – BALLADS  
This began in the Old Country as supernatural ballad "The Daemon Lover", but much of the wyrdness had ebbed away by the time five-string banjoist Ashley – a veteran of Tennessee medicine shows – got his hands on it in 1930. Pentangle rocked it up in the late '60s.

**Chubby Parker And His Old Time Banjo**  
"King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O"  
ANTHOLOGY VOL 1 – BALLADS  
Smith loved deceptively throwaway tunes, and this Kentuckian barndance regular churned 'em out in spades in the '20s. See also: "Nickety Nackety Now Now Now".

**'Uncle Bunt' Stephens**  
"Sail Away Lady"  
ANTHOLOGY VOL 2 – SOCIAL MUSIC  
Opening the 'Fire' part of the *Anthology*, fiddler Stephens weaves a melodic line as tangly as one of Harry Smith's string figures. The five-foot Bunt was once named 'World Champion Fiddler' at the Grand Ole Opry.

**Hoyt 'Floyd' Ming And His Pep-Steppers**  
"Indian War Whoop"  
ANTHOLOGY VOL 2 – SOCIAL MUSIC  
Ming's percussion makes this track great, though it has little to do with Indians. Its appearance on the compilation led the family group to reform and enjoy another 20 years of success.

**Joseph Falcon**  
"Acadian One-Step"  
ANTHOLOGY VOL 2 – SOCIAL MUSIC  
Brilliant, ethereal example of Cajun accordion from 1929. Falcon, from Louisiana, squeezes out a galloping reel, spurred on by a spine-tingling triangle.



Left: Smith with photographer Robert Frank (centre) at the latter's Bleecker Street apartment, NYC; above: Smith with Allen Ginsberg, 1987

involved in making these works took its toll on Smith during the 1960s. Early in the decade, he defaulted on his rent and his landlords tossed all his artwork, books and meticulously documented collections out on the street. From then on, drink and drugs played a larger role in his everyday life. While assisting director Conrad Rooks on the film *Chappaqua* in 1964, Smith fetched up in Anadarko, near Oklahoma City, got himself arrested for drunkenness, and was thrown in jail with a number of local Native Americans whose trust he cultivated. Next year they granted him privileged access to their reservation, where he recorded ritual songs and shamanistic dances. These were released on Folkways as *Kiowa Peyote Meeting* in 1973.

Ed Sanders of The Fugs, who first met Smith in a downtown bar in 1962, recalls him throwing a first edition of an Aleister Crowley

book into a urinal. They bonded over a love of esoteric tomes, though, and Smith – a regular customer at Sanders' Peace Eye bookstore – ended up persuading Folkways to release the debut Fugs album. Smith is credited as producer, and helped Sanders edit the record on a reel-to-reel machine in the Folkways office. "He was very adroit and quick with the splicing and editing razor, and I learned a lot about editing watching him that one afternoon when we sequenced and timed the album," recalls Sanders. "I wrote some notes and it was ready to be released." Smith was at the secret heart of counterculture activity in 1967, when Sanders asked him to devise the exorcism ritual used against the Pentagon by the famous hippy peace demonstration documented in Norman Mailer's *The Armies Of The Night*. "He gave me the basic outline, which was to consecrate the four directions, and to use the symbols of earth, air, fire and water. He also suggested adding Egyptian elements to the

became increasingly incompatible. When Bob Dylan visited the apartment one day, Ginsberg hoped to introduce him to Smith, but Harry insisted on staying in bed. A potential flashpoint was saved when The Grateful Dead's Rex Foundation began sending him cheques for \$10,000, and the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado invited him to become its 'shaman-in-residence', an informal teaching post that Smith apparently found liberating. He was at Boulder when the summons came to be presented with his Grammy in 1991, but he never went back. By then he was suffering terminal ill health: living on an eccentric liquid-only diet and nursing a painful stomach ulcer.

When the *Anthology* was reissued on CD in 1997, it exerted a whole new influence on a generation born long after its first appearance. Meg Baird offers one example: "The formation of Espers was helped along by the reissue of the *Anthology*. It helped to form a handy common language for a lot of people making work at that time, just as I imagine it had in the past."

Lance Ledbetter adds, "I think that the vibrant reissue culture that we enjoy today – with everything from gospel music from the 1920s to Cambodian rock from the 1960s – would look and sound much different had the *Anthology* not been reissued."

"If he didn't change America," concludes Baird, "he definitely changed 'American'."



Genre-defining  
Blind Willie Johnson



Perfect harmony:  
The Carter Family

### Rev Sister Mary Nelson

#### "Judgment"

ANTHOLOGY VOL 2 – SOCIAL MUSIC

Recorded in Chicago in 1927, Nelson's mannish drawl tolls out a checklist of sins and commandments on how to prepare for the Big One, while a pair of fanatical (male) acolytes shrill back their response. Scary.

### Cannon's Jug Stompers

#### "Feather Bed"

ANTHOLOGY VOL 3 – SONGS

Smith had a real affection for jugbands, and includes two track by this Memphis busking combo led by Noah Lewis, who could play two harmonicas at once (using his nose and mouth). Gus Cannon's jug supplies cavernously deep bass.

### Blind Willie Johnson

#### "John The Revelator"

ANTHOLOGY VOL 3 – SONGS

"What's John writing?/About Revelations..." Stung with apocalyptic dread, Johnson's hysterical delivery turns this song into a Big Crunch blues, one that would define the genre's essence.

### Everett Cozad

#### "Comanche Peyote Song"

KIOWA PEYOTE MEETING  
The Kiowa tribe consumed a 'staggering' amount of peyote per capita, according to Smith, who recorded Cozad and friends doing their shamanic thing in Anadarko, Oklahoma in 1965.

### The Carter Family

#### "No Depression In Heaven"

ANTHOLOGY VOL 4  
Recorded in the 1930s, after their heyday, the close harmony group sounds appropriately ground down on this recession-era folk song that dreams of better days to come.

# ALBUM BY ALBUM

## MARK LANEGAN

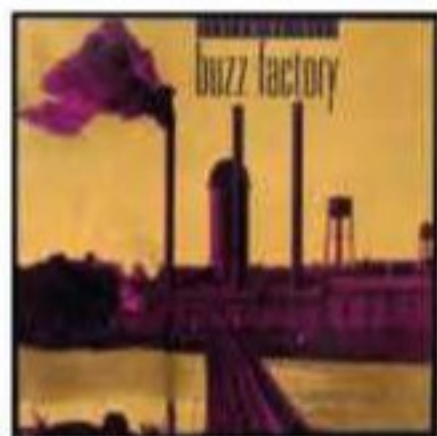
INTERVIEW BY ALASTAIR MCKAY

His reputation precedes him. Over a 25-year recording career that began with grunge godfathers Screaming Trees and has included collaborations with Kurt Cobain, Greg Dulli (ex-Afghan Whigs) and Queens Of The Stone Age, Mark Lanegan has established himself as an artist who prefers to walk on the shady side of the street. The pain he sings about isn't an act: he's wrestled with addiction, and tried the patience of several producers during an erratically brilliant solo career that continues with the release of the (relatively) upbeat *Blues Funeral*. On his solo recordings, he's moved from confessional folk to '80s-influenced gothic rock. So it's a welcome surprise to find this tattooed giant in cheerful mood. "I'm very happy these days," Lanegan says with a dry chuckle. "I'm a little less dark. Though I still hold a daily séance!"

### THE RAW INDIE PEAK

#### SCREAMING TREES BUZZ FACTORY

SST, 1989. PRODUCED BY JACK ENDINO



**The Trees journey from Ellensburg to Seattle, hone hard rock/psychedelic influences and tap into energy of grunge**

Before we did that, we did an entire double album and nobody was happy with the way it sounded. I know that sounds expensive, but back then we made records for a thousand dollars, so it was two thousand to make that record. We made it in a week. But we didn't like it. Right about then I also heard the first Mudhoney EP, "Superfuzz Bigmuff". Hearing Mudhoney made me feel like we were total pussies, because when you hear the bass and the drums, everything's out there. I said, "We gotta get the guy who did this to do our record." It was Jack Endino. So we went to Seattle—I slept on the floor at my sister's—and made it in four or five days. We used maybe one of the songs from the double album; they were all new songs. [Lead guitarist] Gary Lee Conner wrote excessively, he'd write two, three or four a day sometimes: fully formed songs. He was just a machine. And the one song that came from the double album we ended up leaving off the record! It still didn't have the power of the Mudhoney EP but it was a lot closer to being representative of what we sounded like live. And that was our first experience of working with Jack—it was great.

### THE KURT-AIDED SOLO DEBUT

#### MARK LANEGAN THE WINDING SHEET

SUB POP, 1990. PRODUCED BY JACK ENDINO, MIKE JOHNSON, MARK LANEGAN



**Abortive Kurt Cobain collaboration leads to stark first solo outing**  
Me and Kurt Cobain were both listening to a bunch of Lead Belly and diggin' it. We thought: let's do an EP of all Lead

Belly songs. We did a couple, and both of us were like, "Nah, this is a bad concept." We set it aside. [Sub Pop label boss] Jon Poneman came in and said, "Shame you guys didn't finish that record, why don't you make a solo record?" I couldn't play guitar, and had only written some words for the Trees—which consisted of taking words that were already written and changing some to make them have some semblance of personality. Jon told me what they would give me for making the record. I was working in a warehouse, and I thought, 'You know what, I could fuckin' quit that job and live high on the hog!' I got a Mel Bay chord book, and at the end of the day when I was lowering my last conveyor belt of boxes I would come up with a melody. I would have it in my mind on the bus all the way home. I would get home and find the chords. I did it the first day that I tried, and I did it 10, 12 more times, and I also took one of the songs from Kurt and I's session, "Where Did You Sleep Last Night?". I mainly saw it through because of the financial inducements, but I'm glad I did.

### A DARK AMERICAN EPIC

#### MARK LANEGAN WHISKEY FOR THE HOLY GHOST

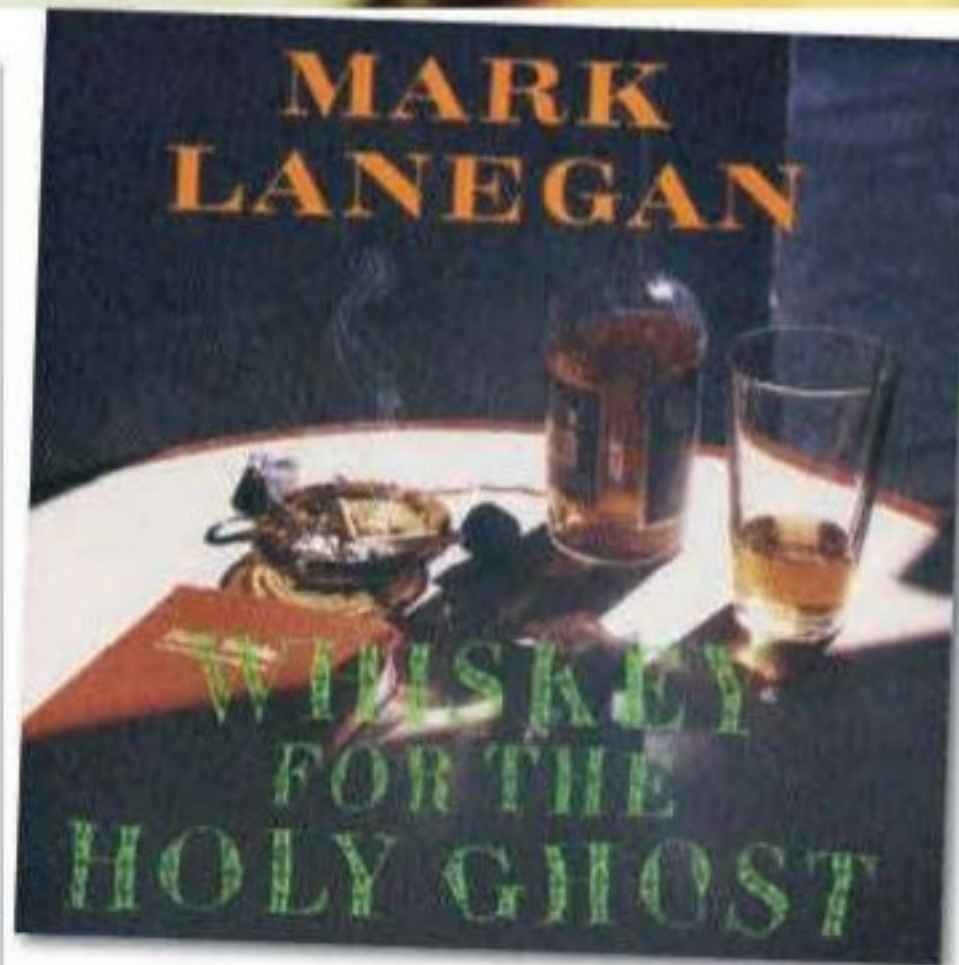
SUB POP, 1994. PRODUCED BY MIKE JOHNSON, MARK LANEGAN



**Modest attempt to write Astral Weeks turns into Fitzcarraldo**

I had heard *Astral Weeks*, and heard how it was made. I thought, 'I'm going to make a record like that: really fast.' So I found a jazz bass player and went to do some songs. What I wanted to do in three days ended up taking almost three years, in many different studios with many different guys. Basically, I lost my mind. I would have it in my grasp, and then would see another possibility. That was the form of my illness. I couldn't be nailed down. I continued to generate more material. I would mix stuff four or five times. And I'm taking about intricate sessions.

I had started this other record with Terry Date, who did the first Trees record on a major, then moved on to several other guys and finally got around to Jack Endino again. We were trying to mix a song that I thought would be easy—but on the second day I was trying to figure out why it wouldn't move forward and be the way I wanted to hear it—this is two, three years into the making of that record... I was like, you know, "Fuck this!" There was a creek out back, I grabbed the tapes, I was actually walking through the yard and he grabbed a hold of me



and said: "No fucking way am I going to let you do that." I was like, "Dude, I'm over this, I need to get rid of it." I realised it was making me crazier, and I wanted to be clear of it.

I was deep in addiction for the entire thing. I travelled the world that way. I went to my sister's house for Christmas dinner that way. I thought about music this way: it's something that I have to do. But it was really a means to an end. It facilitated my lifestyle. Which included a need for a lot of money on a daily basis. It was like *Fitzcarraldo*—it was like dragging a boat over a mountain. But that was something I was compelled to keep doing. Only because I love music. I could have, at any point, put that record out, and it would have been fine. But I was compelled: despite all the extraneous bullshit I was putting myself through, I wanted it to be great. And I couldn't be satisfied that it was great even when it was finished. Or even today.

I'm surprised it ever got finished really. But it came as a relief, to finally let it go.

## THE STYLISH SWANSONG

### SCREAMING TREES DUST

EPIC, 1996. PRODUCED BY GEORGE DRAKOULIAS



**Trees reluctantly embrace big rock sound on their final studio album**

That was the last real record we made. It wasn't an easy time, mainly because of band

relations. Also my personal problems made it difficult to get anything done. We had already done the basics for a record [*with Don Fleming*] that couldn't be finished. It was another year before we started this one. George Drakoulias had been one of the guys we'd talked about when we first started with Epic, and we were like "No!" We were paranoid about sounding good. Although I did want an update on the sound, I was wary of sounding like Black Crowes, for instance, who George produced. So we went with Terry Date, who we knew. That was a good choice. But later, we were like, "Ach, you know, I wonder if that guy George is still available?" And he was. In that regard, it was a great experience. Benmont [Tench] from the Heartbreakers played on some of that stuff—he played two Mellotrons, one with each hand, at the same time. George was, still is, a great guy to be around. But my perception is that my personal stuff overruled everything, and I'm sure those guys would agree—it made everything difficult. Although I was trying to do my best, it was not to be!

## THE NEW LEASE OF LIFE

### QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE SONGS FOR THE DEAF

INTERSCOPE, 2002. PRODUCED BY JOSH HOMME, ADAM KASPER, ERIC VALENTINE



**Collaboration with Josh Homme on Desert Sessions leads to full membership of QOTSA on album simulating a drive from Los Angeles to Joshua Tree**

Josh had toured as guitarist with the Trees on *Dust*, so we knew each other really well. He actually asked me to be on the first Queens record, but that was not to be, because of my problems. I did some singing on the second one, and then started touring with those guys. In between that, I did the Desert Sessions [Volumes 7 & 8] which I only worked on for a day because I was working on a solo record at the same time. And the best thing about that was meeting Alain [Johannes]—and the song that I did for that record, which Al and Josh wrote, "Hangin' Tree", ended up on the next one [*Songs For The Deaf*], so I just joined. My circle of friends, musician-wise, wasn't huge. I only knew these certain guys. Working with Josh has always been so much fun. The result is serious, but the process is a lot of comedy. Writing lyrics with him is one of the funnest things that I do. I can't really describe it but he's a really funny guy, and when we work together, it's a comedy, basically. You either laugh or cry, almost!

CONTINUES OVER»

SAM HOLDEN



The Gutter Twins: charting dark waters with collaborator Greg Dulli

## THE DIFFICULT STEP FORWARD

### MARK LANEGAN BAND BUBBLEGUM

BEGGARS BANQUET, 2004. PRODUCED BY MARK LANEGAN, CHRIS GOSS, ALAIN JOHANNES



**Confessional album, with a more rounded sound and collaborations with the likes of PJ Harvey**  
I always start from some personal place. Some are more fictional, some are

more based on reality, but they all do start from something real. So in that way, it is confessional, but no more so than the rest of them. When we first convened I went MIA for the first month, which caused Chris Goss – who was trying to produce it – dismay. Then I came back and was so over-the-top involved that it caused him further dismay. I burnt him out and moved on to somebody else. There were a lot of the same behaviours as on *Whiskey...*, but in a more condensed time period. I distilled the qualities that had made me so much fun to work with before! The guy who mixed the stuff that Chris produced said I was like Russell Crowe in *A Beautiful Mind*. But it got done. Actually I enjoyed it. I just don't know if the guys who were forced to work with me enjoyed it – I know some of them did not. But at the end I was pleased, because I didn't want to make another dusty strings record. I wanted to make something that I might listen to, like Can or Kraftwerk.

## THE SHOCK COLLABORATION

### ISOBEL CAMPBELL & MARK LANEGAN BALLAD OF THE BROKEN SEAS

V2, 2006. PRODUCED BY ISOBEL CAMPBELL, DAVE PATERSON



**Cast as Isobel Campbell's bit-of-rough, Lanegan embraces his inner Lee Hazlewood**

All the records I've made with Isobel are really special to me. That one in particular. I was a fan of Belle & Sebastian, but I was also a bigger fan of the Gentle Waves records she made. When she contacted me, I was thrilled. I guess she didn't really know who I was, but she had heard my voice and thought I would do for something she was doing. But after we did this EP, "Ramblin' Man", we met in Glasgow and got along really well. I said, "I want to make a record together," and she was like, "Yeah." She immediately started sending me all these great songs. I was like: "Are you kidding? This is fantastic!" Basically I sang them in Los Angeles and sent them back to her. I had no idea it would last three records and six years or whatever. It was really cool, because that's something that's really unique to my personal experience: singing songs written by a woman, and just letting it go. Isobel's a huge talent. Those were records I did not lose my mind on! I was able to just put myself in her hands.

## A 'NOT FUN' PARTY RECORD

### THE GUTTER TWINS SATURNALIA

SUB POP, 2008. PRODUCED BY MATHIAS SCHNEEBERGER, GREG DULLI, MARK LANEGAN



**Lanegan and Greg Dulli explore the dark corners of their psyches**

Working with Greg is a constant comedy. If you've seen *Ishtar*, the songwriting process is very similar to that. It's two guys in a room making up the most inane stuff to make themselves laugh, then we'll go, "Oh, that's not bad," but it probably is. That record was started six, seven years before it was finished. I had guested with The Twilight Singers, and Greg had played in my band. At Christmas time at the end of one of those tours we made up a couple of songs. For years people were going, "What's going on with you and Dulli?" We got together at Christmas a couple of years later and did more. Years went by, and I had even said what the name of the band was, joking around, so we had to finish it. This project is light relief, even though the result sounds pretty heavy. When I heard it I was like, "Oh man, this is pretty dark stuff." It reminded me of the Sly Stone record, *There's A Riot Goin' On*: it's a party, but not a fun one. The record ended up with us in a better state than when we started it. It started on a very dark Christmas and ended on a lighter one. We started on drugs, we finished not.

## THE GROOVY NEW ONE!

### MARK LANEGAN BAND BLUES FUNERAL

4AD, 2012. PRODUCED BY ALAIN JOHANNES



**Some '80s-influenced sounds lend a poppy edge to typically chastening lyrics, but there's no disguising Lanegan's good humour**

Usually I write on guitar. This time I bought a couple of drum machines and a synthesiser, an old Casio keyboard. When we started we sort of had the same thoughts as when we did *Bubblegum*. I did some things with Alain Johannes: the process dictated what the songs sounded like. I didn't mind that we used drum machine, synthesiser, on *Bubblegum*, so it just seemed natural. I rarely play anything for anybody, but I played "Gray Goes Black" to my girlfriend, and she said, "I can't believe you're making something so happy sounding." I said, "Happy sounding? [What about] the words?" She says, "No, it's happy sounding." That's cool. I've always done whatever I felt reflected what was happening. In other words, I never really give it much thought, though in the past I may have been given over to morbid introspection. I listened back to the record in the car, and I thought it was great driving music. Greg Dulli was the first person I played it to; he said it sounded like Echo & The Bunnymen and Peter Dinklage. He thought it was more representative of where I'm at now. I agree. 🎵

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The early days of the commune: (l-r)  
Joris Filanda (child), Wolfgang Krischke,  
Angelika Filanda, Helge Filanda (back),  
Uschi Obermaier (smoking), Rainer Bauer,  
Ulrich Leopold, Peter Leopold

# The family that plays together...

Terrorists in the bedroom... A cover star eaten by foxes... The finest Swiss LSD... and some of the most mind-expanding music of the early '70s. Meet AMON DUUL (and, of course, AMON DUUL II) – the idealistic German commune-dwellers who made radical sounds while fighting German society, the police and even themselves. “We had,” they recall, “professors telling us, ‘You are the life form of the future.’”

WORDS BY DAVID CAVANAGH

**T**HE SNOW WAS eight feet deep in Munich when the police impounded the English band's van. It was a winter's day in 1969 and Kippington Lodge (soon to rename themselves Brinsley Schwarz) had performed at the PN Hit House, a Munich rock club. Now they were heading home, but one of their roadies, 19-year-old Dave Anderson, was staying behind – he'd agreed to audition as bassist with a local group, Amon Düül II. He wasn't sure what he was letting himself in for. "They were the weirdest band I'd ever met," he says. "Their music was completely alien to anything I'd heard before."

Amon Düül II were a prog-psych eight-piece with a crashing tribal sound. They lived in a commune 70 kilometres south-west of Munich, in the pretty lakeside town of Herrsching. Every aspect of their music and lifestyle was geared towards revolution. "They had a policy," Anderson remembers. "If anybody played anything at a rehearsal that sounded either American or English, they would be seriously bad-vibed. They used to call me their 'Mickey Mouse bassist' because I liked English pop."

Amon Düül II became so popular at the PN Hit House that speakers were erected in the street outside, so that the overflow of fans, many of whom had travelled from other countries around Europe, could listen to their concerts. Anderson, meanwhile, quickly got acclimatised to his new life in Bavaria. There were stunning castles and incredible forests, but there were also 30,000 American servicemen stationed at military bases, a visible reminder of World War II. There was a feeling of recovery in the air, but also political turmoil. Anderson realised that he'd joined a truly radical band, an artistic collective determined to forge a new kind of German identity. And Germany, it became clear, would be anything but grateful.

**T**HE STORY OF Amon Düül II is inextricably linked with the international student protests of the late '60s (which exploded in



Berlin in 1967) and the rise of a post-war generation who wanted to grow their hair long, form themselves into Maoist micro-societies and change the political landscape of West Germany (as it was still called) by directly confronting its sinister unspoken secrets. "There was a worldwide youth revolution," says John Weinzierl, one of two singer-guitarists in Amon Düül II, who was 18 in 1967. "The protests had a different focus in every country. In America it was the Vietnam War. In France it was something else. In Germany it was the Nazis."

Many prominent West German politicians of the 1960s had a Nazi past. In a dramatic incident at a 1968 political convention, the country's Chancellor, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, was slapped in the face by an anti-Nazi campaigner, Beate Klarsfeld, who accused him of having been a propagandist for the Third Reich. Down south in Bavaria, former Nazi Party members were openly employed in the judiciary, police and teaching professions. "There was a Nazi vibration everywhere, from the schools upwards," says Weinzierl. "That's what our generation was

fighting against." Weinzierl had first encountered anti-German hostility on a family vacation in Yugoslavia at the age of five. "I was called a bastard and a murderer. But I had no choice about being German." By the late '60s, the opportunity – the necessity, indeed – had come to ask searching questions. Some Amon Düül members wondered if their own fathers had been Nazis. Others knew for sure. "I was born in the deep blue mountains of the Alps," says bassist Lothar Meid, who joined Amon Düül II in 1970. "My father was a Nazi. He had ideas about what a German man should be. I said, 'Look out the window. We have ruins and nothing to eat. You're telling me this is how I should live my life?'"

The determination to live different lives to their parents, and to start new societies and new families with new values, were the founding principles of the original Amon Düül commune, established in a Munich apartment in 1967. The instigators included Ella and Rainer Bauer; brothers Peter and Ulrich Leopold; singer Renate Knaup and her organist boyfriend Falk Rogner; and Chris Karrer, a jazz aficionado and Hendrix fan. The name Amon Düül was derived from an Egyptian god (Amon) and a song ("Dyl") on an album by US raga-rockers The Ceyleib People (featuring a young Ry Cooder). "We changed 'Dyl' to 'Düül', to give it a bit of German attitude," explains Weinzierl. "We've actually dropped the umlauts now, because you can't really spell them on the internet."



Amon Düül II in 1971: (l-r) Peter Leopold, Falk Rogner, Lothar Meid, Renate Knaup, John Weinzierl, Chris Karrer



The original lineup in search of Yeti: (l-r) Shrat, Falk Rogner, Renate Knaup, John Weinzierl, Dave Anderson (in the foreground), Chris Karrer, Dieter Serfas, Peter Leopold



Amon Düül began playing impromptu gigs at parties and communes in Munich and other cities. "I first saw them play at KEins, a commune in Berlin," relates Nik Turner of Hawkwind. "KEins was an alternative creative society, a bit like the Arts Lab in London but with people living in it. Amon Düül's music was very free and experimental."

Dieter Serfas, their then-drummer, recalls: "The group was a big heap of musicians, women and children, all rattling and shaking things. I'd come from playing modern jazz, but I was very impressed by this underground explosion." Drugs played an important part in their lives. Chris Karrer (guitar, violin, sax, vocals) remembers: "LSD was legal at the time. Smoking hash was one thing, but LSD was a drug where we could get the best stuff from Switzerland; very pure. We all checked it out."

Amon Düül described themselves to the German media as "11 adults and two children who have come together to express themselves in every possible way, including music". Their fame spread. Weinzierl: "We

had professors from universities in Paris coming along and telling us, 'You are the life form of the future.'" Karrer, however, became disillusioned with Rainer Bauer's insistence on egalitarianism. Everyone at the commune was encouraged to be a musician in Amon Düül, even those with no ability. Karrer grew

impatient, and increasing tension in the commune was not helped by disputes about how militant their politics should be. "Some of us didn't want to politicise or ideologise," says Renate Knaup, who took Karrer's side. "We just wanted to play crazy music."

A schism resulted. In the autumn of 1968 a group of commune members (including Karrer, Knaup, Weinzierl, Serfas and Rogner) broke away to

form their own commune/band. They called it Amon Düül II. Bauer and his bongo-playing friends soldiered on as Amon Düül I. The story gets confusing; both bands would sometimes omit the number. Karrer remembers "spies" going back and forth between the two camps, anxious to learn what the other commune was up to. Weinzierl advises newcomers to

steer clear of albums released by Amon Düül I ("they're rubbish and bullshit"), but many fans of German rock consider their 1970 LP, *Paradieswärts Düül*, a pastoral deviation from their usual free-form incompetence, to be a near-masterpiece.

Amon Düül II, though, were something else entirely. Their 1969 debut album, *Phallus Dei*—the title is Latin for God's Penis, which secured them instant notoriety—was a miasma and a mindfuck, sung in ancient German and Greek dialects, with wild guitars and a colossal double-drummer attack.

Their next two albums (*Yeti* and *Tanz Der Lemminge* [*Dance Of The Lemmings*]) were doubles. The music was complex and the songs had surreal, elaborate titles like "Syntelman's March Of The Roaring Seventies", "Restless Skylight-Transistor-Child" and "Chamsin Soundtrack: The Marilyn Monroe-Memorial-Church". Another important element was the collage-style album artwork created by Falk Rogner, which was strange and disturbing, and quite unlike the English whimsy of Hipgnosis or the utopian fantasies of Roger Dean. The cover of *Yeti* invokes the dreaded figure of der Sensenmann (the Grim Reaper) who wields his scythe while dressed in a black gown, as a peculiar mist swirls around him like mustard gas. The man in the photo is Wolfgang Krischke, an Amon Düül commune member who mysteriously disappeared in the winter of 1969-70. Months later, his body was found half-eaten by foxes in woods **CONTINUES OVER»**

**"There was always a problem with us in Germany. They wanted to keep it a clean country and here was this band with long hair and drugs. They hated us..."**

*Lothar Meid*

outside Munich. Karrer believes that Kruschke committed suicide, deliberately freezing to death under the effects of LSD, because his family had forced him to cut his hair. Kruschke was worried that the commune would laugh at him. The *Yeti* cover, the most haunting image in German rock, remains Amon Düül's logo to this day.

Life in a commune was evidently not always relaxed. The original Amon Düül – prior to the split – had experienced problems with finances and privacy. “When a couple wanted to make love,” says Renate Knaup, “like me and Falk, or Rainer and Ella, we had to do it in the band’s rehearsal room because the house was so small.” Dieter Serfas departed the commune after *Phallus Dei*. “My woman got a baby. In a community like that, they don’t care about your situation. They say, ‘We all share the money.’ But now you are three people who need to eat. The house was too crowded and chaotic. This was a crazy band.”

Even when they were able to rent a bigger house, Renate Knaup could still be made to feel uncomfortable. “Shrat [*percussionist Christian Thiele*] was in charge of the money,” she says. “If I had a ladder in my tights, I had to go and tell Shrat that I needed new ones, and he would check in the money pot to see if I could afford it.” Dave Anderson is another who remembers money being tight. “We didn’t have a television for a long time. We got an advance from the record company in the week that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. We bought a telly and a load of food and stayed up to watch the moon landing. Just as the Eagle landed, John Weinzierl got up with a spray can and sprayed the entire TV screen silver. So that was the end of that.”

**I**N THEIR THRIFT-SHOP fur coats and their beaten-up old Cadillac, Amon Düül II espoused a revolution – a Europe-wide psychological awakening – via the use of psychedelics and mind-blowing rock’n’roll. They were joined by a new wave of German bands that sprang up between 1968 and 1971:



Can (in Cologne), Kraftwerk and Neu! (Düsseldorf), Popol Vuh and Embryo (Munich), Tangerine Dream, Cluster and Ash Ra Tempel (Berlin). The music press in England called the movement ‘Krautrock’, and that’s how it’s still known today. John Weinzierl, who abhors the word, has been known to spend hours excising all Krautrock references from Amon Düül II’s Wikipedia entry (only for them to be re-inserted by other editors). Renate Knaup thinks Weinzierl’s being foolish. “That’s so stupid! I love Krautrock! Why not? It’s a word that came up because of the war, and the Krauts, and I don’t have any problem with it. *Melody Maker* called us Krautrock, so it’s OK!”

But while Amon Düül II adhered to a revolution-through-music-and-drugs policy, certain other associates of West Germany’s commune scene favoured more extreme tactics. The Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction) was founded by a Munich-born leftwing activist named Andreas Baader and a radical political journalist, Ulrike Meinhof. They became known throughout the world as the Baader-Meinhof Gang. Bent on guerrilla action, they bombed department stores,

robbed banks and kidnapped wealthy industrialists. In all, they killed 34 people. Amon Düül II were, it appears, regarded by Baader-Meinhof as allies. In reality, the band were frightened of them. The Düüls returned from a gig one night in 1970 to find that their house at Herrsching had been broken into. Baader and his girlfriend Gudrun Ensslin were asleep in Renate Knaup’s bed. Ulrike Meinhof was upstairs, crashed out in Karrer’s room. Renate started screaming and ordering them to leave. There was a stand-off. “We didn’t realise they had machine guns,” says Karrer, “and they’d just stolen a car. They could have killed us.” Dave Anderson adds: “We eventually got them out of the house. But they wanted to know if we’d play some benefit concerts to raise money for weapons. Absolutely bloody no way.”

Seventy kilometres away in Munich, future Düül bassist Lothar Meid was living next door to a quiet couple who were friendly with his daughter. He thought nothing of it, but he later learned that the couple were Rolf Heissler and Brigitte Mohnhaupt, a pair of notorious Baader-Meinhof terrorists. Mohnhaupt subsequently received five life sentences for murder and an attempt to assassinate an American general with a rocket-propelled



Body in the boot? German police investigate a car linked with a Baader Meinhof kidnapping in '77. Left: Amon Düül's 'ally' (or not), Rote Armee Fraktion terrorist Andreas Baader

## Amon feel the noise! The best of the Düül...

### PHALLUS DEI (1969)



Track one: the Lord’s Prayer sung in Ancient Greek. Track two: the death-cry of a castrated child murderer (complete with screeching falsetto). Track four: a woman dies in a car-crash. Track five: a 20-minute improvisation/cacophony. The simply astonishing debut.

### YETI (1970)



Begins with a bizarre 13-minute song-suite (“Soap Shop Rock”) and ends with the Astral Weeks-like “Sandoz In The Rain”, a reunion between Amon Düüls I and II. Also features Renate Knaup’s garage-rock classic, “Archangels Thunderbird”. Cover star is Wolfgang Kruschke (see also main pic, page 64, second from left).

### TANZ DER LEMMINGE (1971)



The emphasis is on 16-minute Kraut-prog wig-outs (“no more three-minute bullshit” – John Weinzierl), and the ambition is admirable, but some tracks suffer from the absence of Knaup, temporarily expelled from the commune.

### CARNIVAL IN BABYLON (1972)



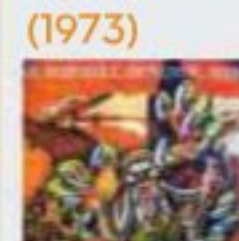
Sweet melodies, acoustic-electric textures. Quite a change. Songs include the semi-autobiographical “All The Years ‘Round” (starring a reinstated Knaup) and Weinzierl’s “Kronwinkl 12”, the story of a typical day at the band’s 28-room mansion.

### WOLF CITY (1972)



A real favourite of the Düüls. A powerful, well-written album with sudden gear-shifts and fascinating dynamics. Completely mad at times: “Jail-House-Frog” descends into a goofy piano lark-about with amphibian croaks and avian shrieks.

### LIVE IN LONDON (1973)



The Düüls toured Europe several times. Not all gigs were great. The audience shouted “Heil Hitler” one night in Paris, and guns were waved in Manchester, but this 1972 show at the Croydon Greyhound is intense and top-notch, showcasing Karrer and Weinzierl as guitar soloists.



The mid-'70s lineup: (l-r) Chris Karrer, John Weinzierl, Falk Rogner, Renate Knaup, Nando Tischler, Peter Leopold, Robby Heibl

grenade launcher. Lothar Meid found himself thinking back to the times his child had played happily in their apartment. Meid describes himself as “not a peace-lover but not a killing man either”, and can understand – even if he does not condone – the anger of Baader, Meinhof, Mohnhaupt and the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF). “You could change nothing by talking,” Meid says. “People didn’t respect us. They saw young people as stupid, dirty, long-haired animals who should all go to jail. I understood why the RAF said, ‘OK, if you won’t listen to us, we’ll shoot you.’ That doesn’t mean I would have done it myself.”

**M**EID replaced Dave Anderson when the latter returned to England to join Hawkwind. Meid, several years older than the others, was an ex-bebop musician whose claim to fame was that he’d jammed with an unknown Jimi Hendrix in a Munich nightclub in 1966. Today, Meid can look back on an impressive history of Munich session work (he played on Giorgio Moroder’s mid-’70s productions for Donna Summer), but he recalls his Amon Düül years as a time of confrontation and danger. “There was always a problem with us in Germany.

They wanted to keep it a clean country and here was this band with long hair and drugs. What do you say in English? We weren’t *sophisticated* enough. They hated us. One time the police chased me in two BMWs, with nothing but fences and factories around, no escape, and I was so scared I howled for help. I just managed to get away in time.”

**“Some of us in the band didn’t want to politicise or ideologise. We just wanted to play crazy music...”**

*Renate Knaup*

Weinzierl and Karrer both confirm that in Herrsching, an affluent community next to the picturesque Lake Ammersee, the Düüls had to walk around in packs for fear of being physically attacked by the locals. The police raided their house virtually on a weekly basis. “Germany was nothing like England,” Weinzierl stresses. “There was absolutely no tolerance of long-haired people. It was the bullshit people against the new people – all

because of hair. A few years later, of course, all the soccer players suddenly had long hair.”

Amon Düül II peaked some time around 1972. After that, their music became more conventional and the commune began to buckle as individuals got on each other’s nerves. Money went missing. Minor personal habits became a source of major irritation. Karrer: “Everybody overdosed on each other. Everybody wanted to be alone.” The

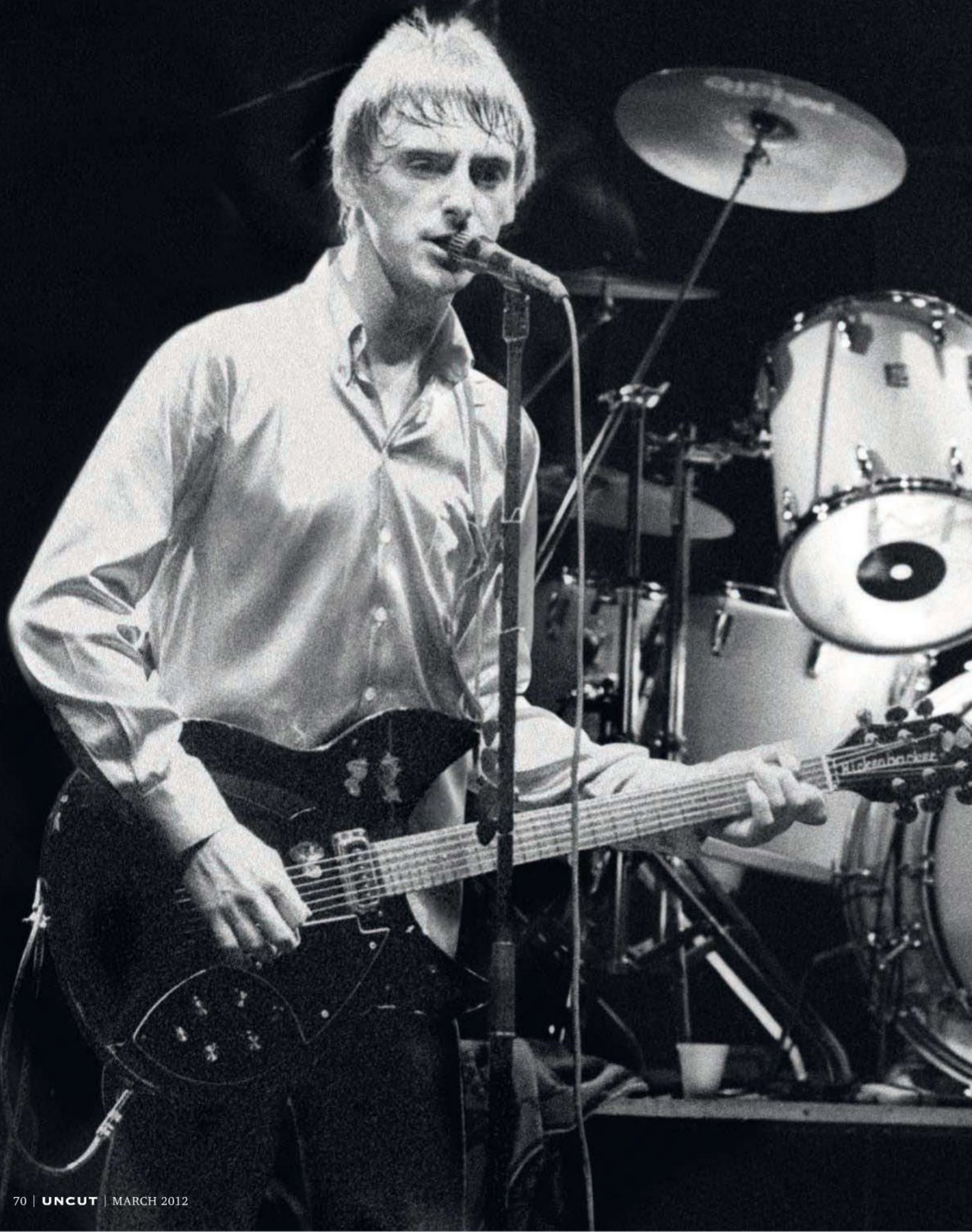
commune broke up in the mid-’70s, but the band continued to release records until 1981.

In modern-day Germany, the Düüls often feel like prophets without honour. None of them are famous people; not even Renate Knaup, who was once hailed as Krautrock’s very own Grace Slick. Now 63, with a 30-year-old daughter, Knaup says wryly: “It’s not like the young people scream at me in the street and ask for my autograph. All of us in Amon Düül are poor. Poor as church mice.” But Knaup is proud of the battles she fought as a young woman to have her voice heard: the battles with the police, with Herrsching residents, with the male chauvinists in her own band. Lothar Meid, who’ll be 70 this year, agrees it was a special time to be a German musician. “Life was beautiful,” he sighs. “We didn’t care about money or success. We just played the yellow of the egg... the soul!”

In recent years, the Düüls have been recording and touring again. They made an album, *Bee As Such*, in 2009 – core members Knaup, Karrer, Weinzierl and Meid were all involved – and even though it doesn’t compare with the glories of *Phallus Dei* or *Yeti*, it at least has a 26-minute track called “Psychedelic Suite” for those who enjoy Düül’s epic voyages. Meid admits the group could have gone much further in recent years. “The problem is, Germans have learned to play polished music now,” the bassist says in despair. “I have to fight the attitude of the other Düüls. They say, ‘We must be good musicians.’ But I say, ‘There are too many good musicians in the world. We should play like we always played – NOT so fucking good! But exciting!’”

# FLASHBACK

Great rock moments revisited



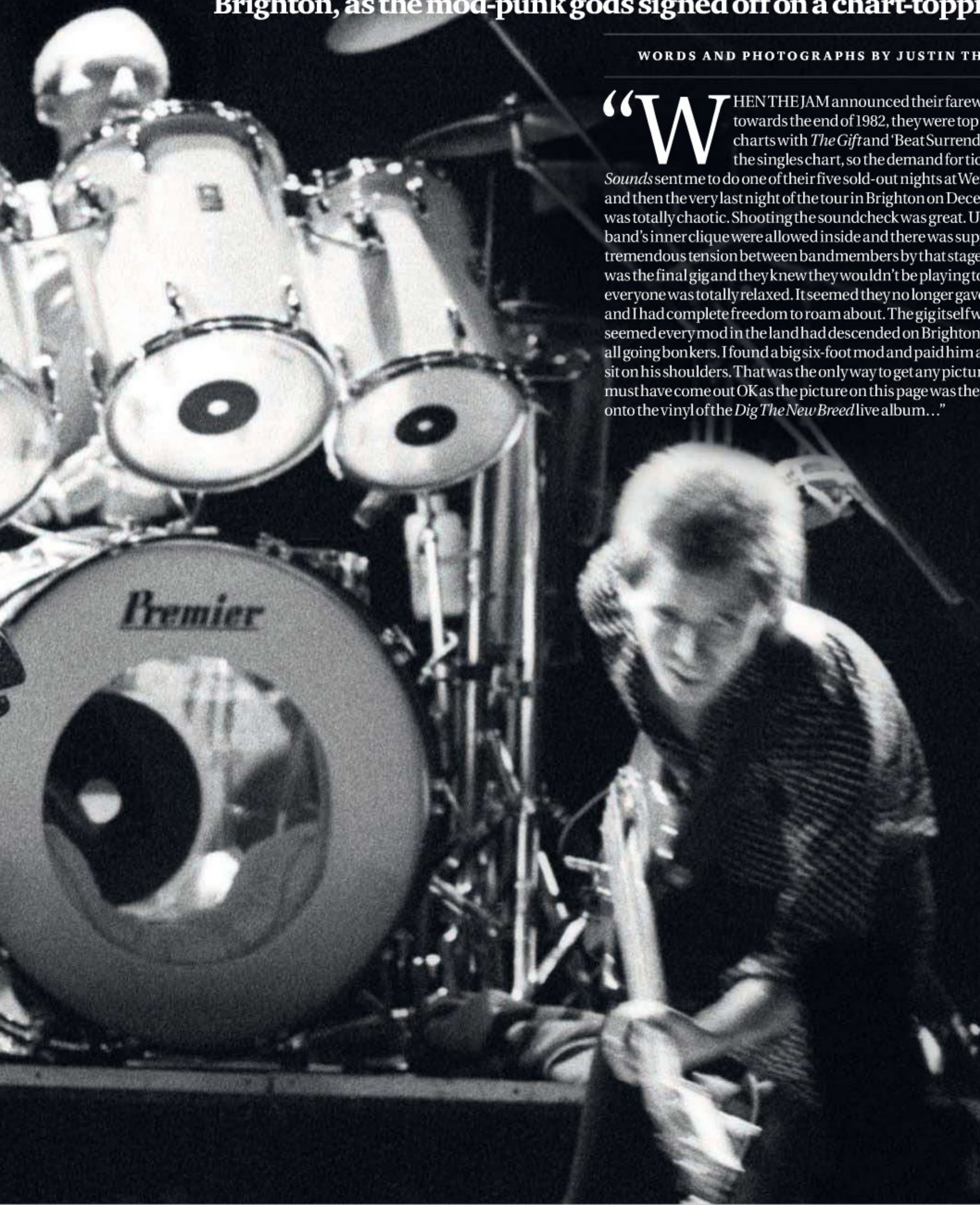
# The Jam's Farewell Tour

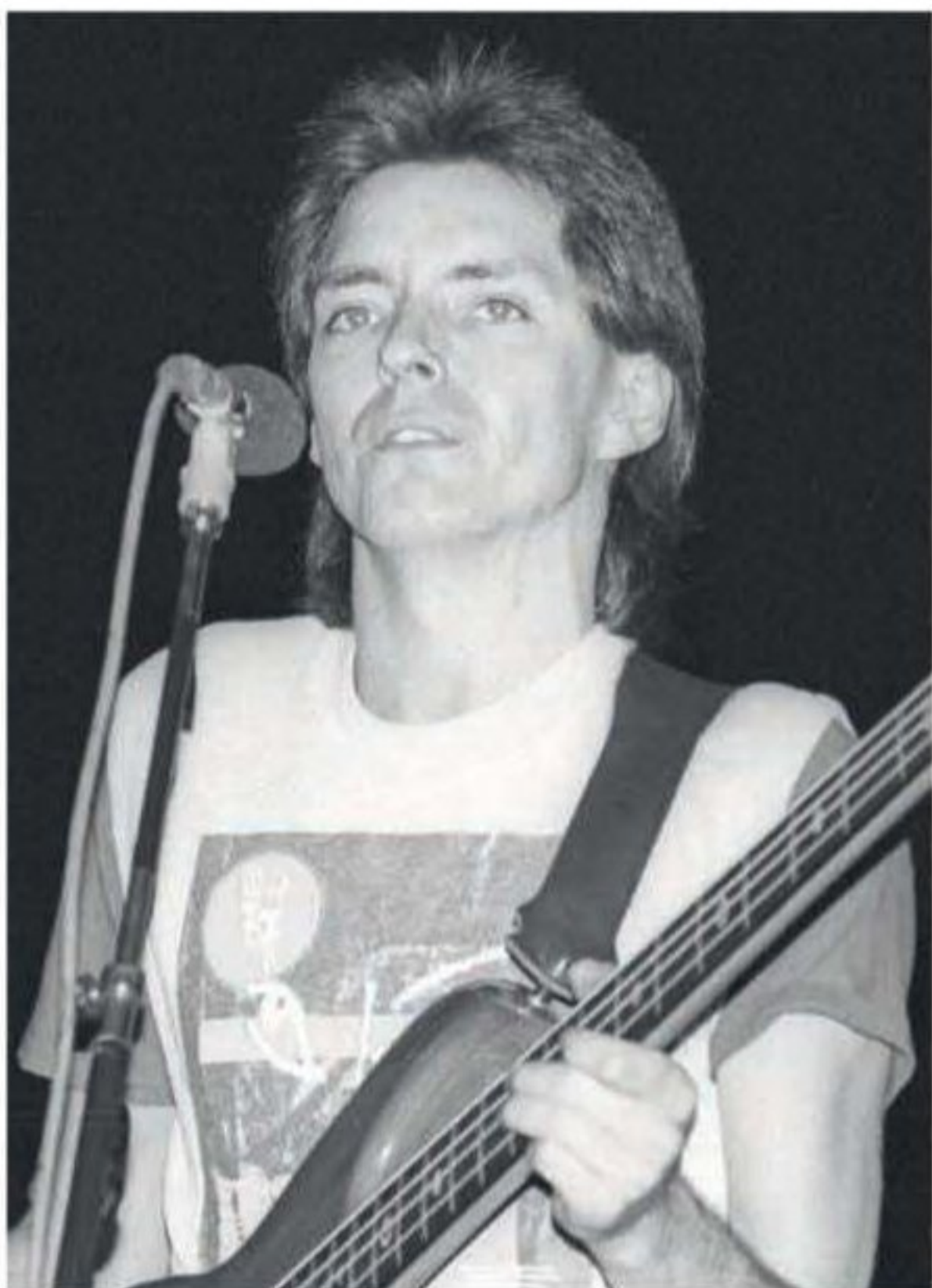
Nov/Dec 1982: five sold-out shows at Wembley Arena and a last night in Brighton, as the mod-punk gods signed off on a chart-topping high

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN THOMAS

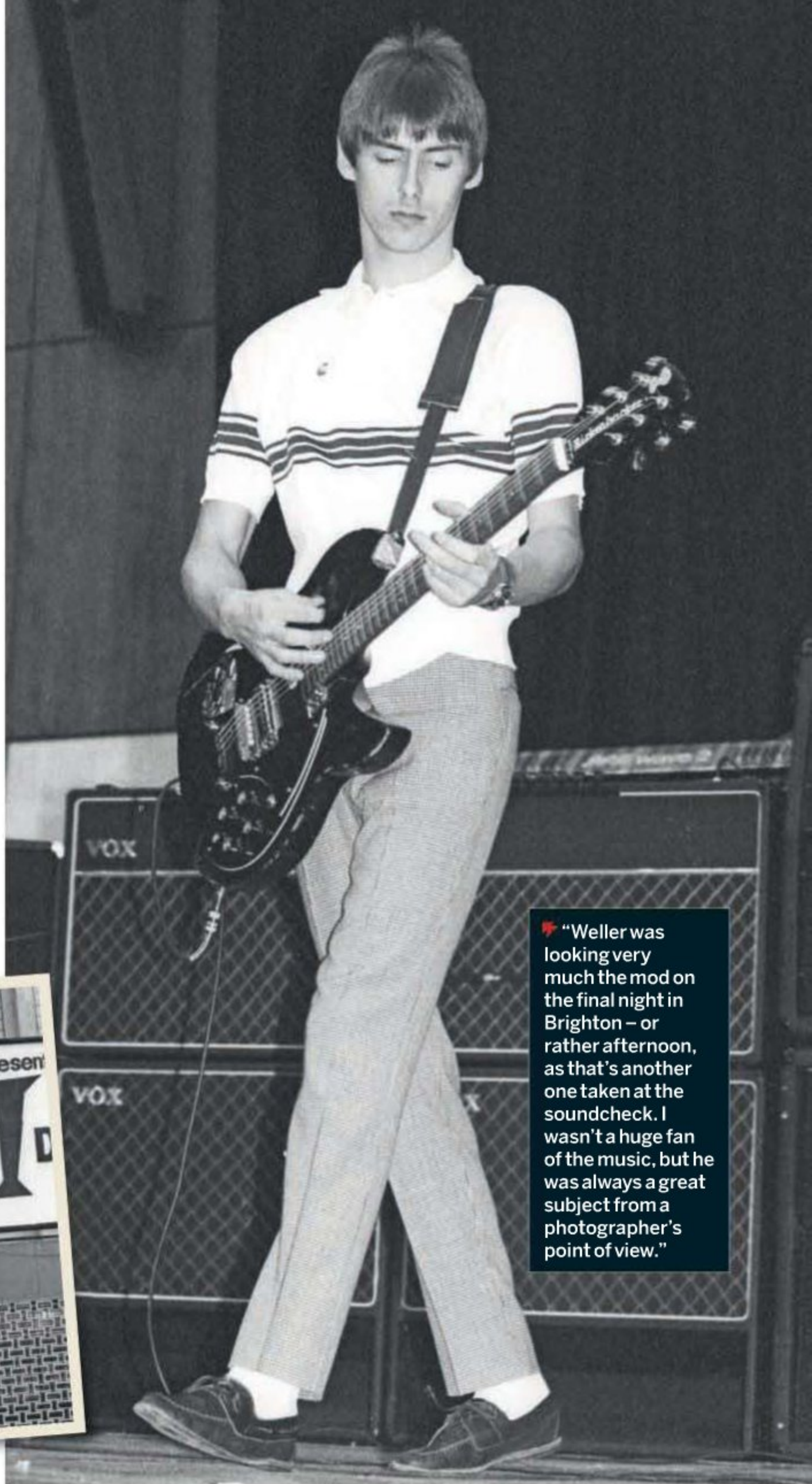
**“W**HEN THE JAM announced their farewell tour towards the end of 1982, they were top of the album charts with *The Gift* and ‘Beat Surrender’ was No 1 in the singles chart, so the demand for tickets was huge. *Sounds* sent me to do one of their five sold-out nights at Wembley Arena and then the very last night of the tour in Brighton on December 11, which was totally chaotic. Shooting the soundcheck was great. Usually only the band’s inner clique were allowed inside and there was supposed to be tremendous tension between band members by that stage. But because it was the final gig and they knew they wouldn’t be playing together again, everyone was totally relaxed. It seemed they no longer gave a monkey’s and I had complete freedom to roam about. The gig itself was insane. It seemed every mod in the land had descended on Brighton and they were all going bonkers. I found a big six-foot mod and paid him a fiver to let me sit on his shoulders. That was the only way to get any pictures. But they must have come out OK as the picture on this page was then embossed onto the vinyl of the *Dig The New Breed* live album...”

CONTINUES OVER»

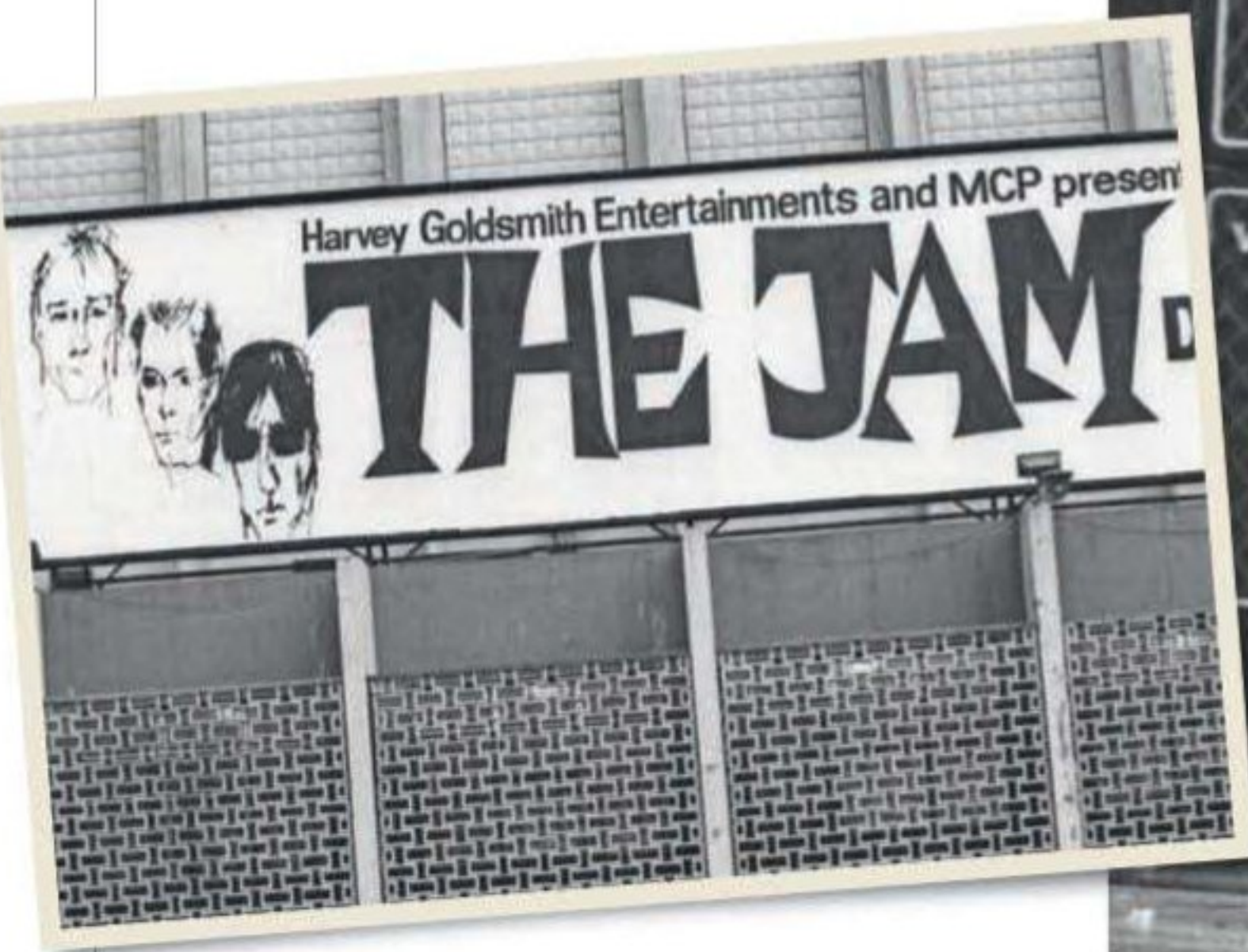




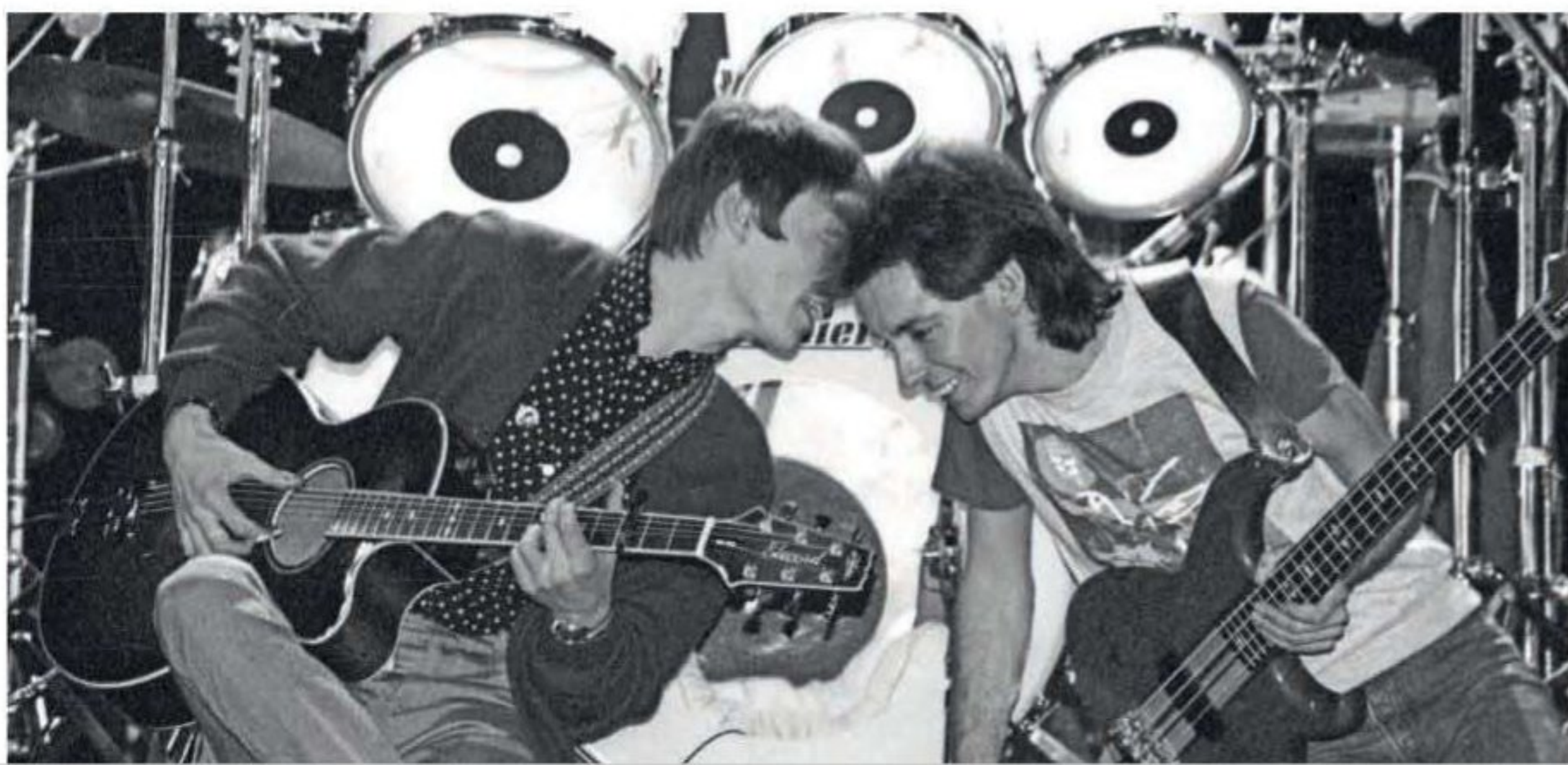
★ “At the end of the Brighton gig, Bruce Foxton gave a ‘thank you’ speech. He knew it was an ending – but I doubt he could have guessed it would be another 28 years before he got on a stage with Weller again!”



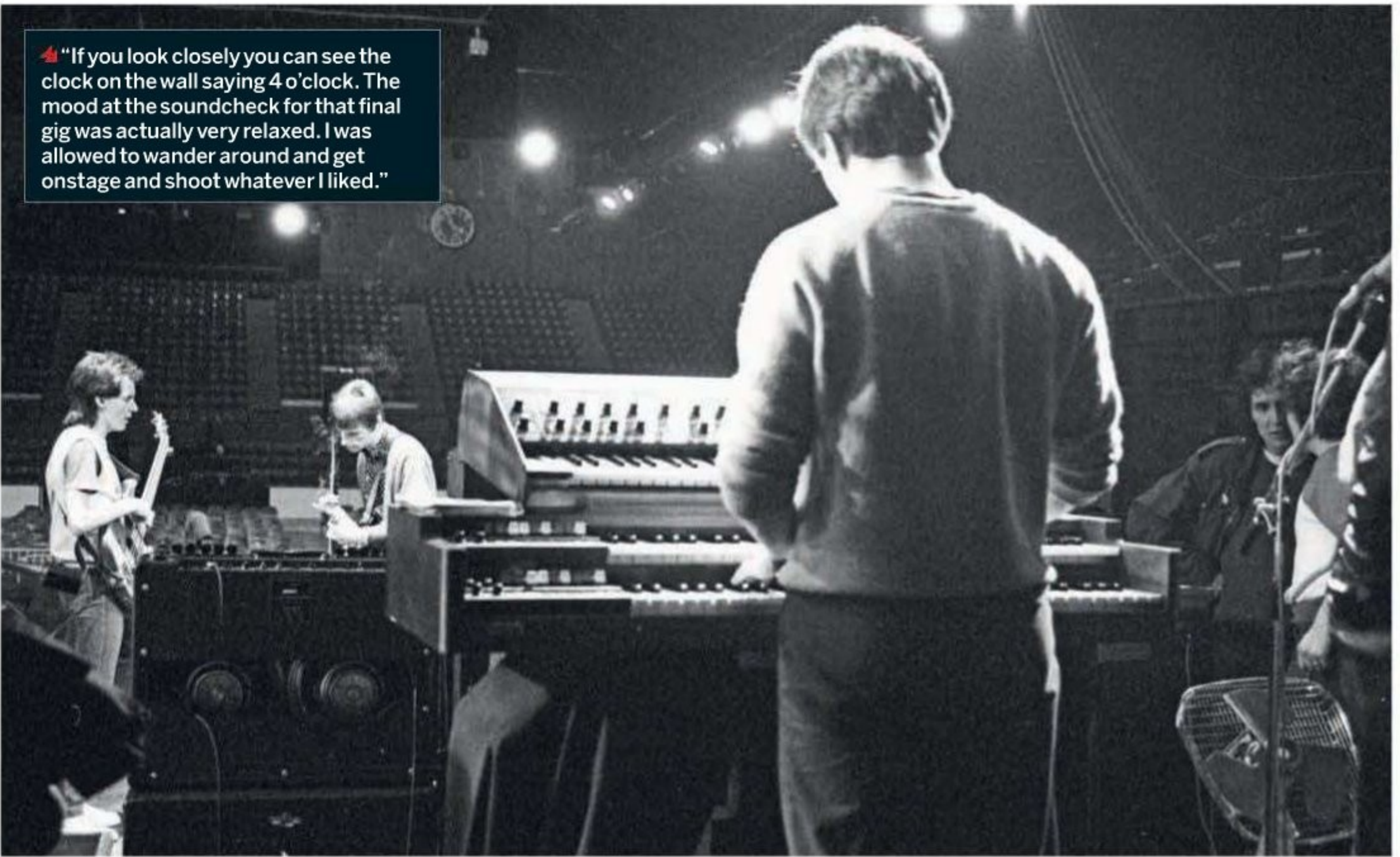
★ “Weller was looking very much the mod on the final night in Brighton – or rather afternoon, as that’s another one taken at the soundcheck. I wasn’t a huge fan of the music, but he was always a great subject from a photographer’s point of view.”



» “It was widely held that by the final tour the band were hardly speaking to each other and there was supposed to be a wall of silence between Weller and Bruce Foxton. But you can see that wasn’t entirely true...”



★ "If you look closely you can see the clock on the wall saying 4 o'clock. The mood at the soundcheck for that final gig was actually very relaxed. I was allowed to wander around and get onstage and shoot whatever I liked."



★ "They did five nights at Wembley in early December as part of the final tour and I took this in the little cafeteria backstage. That's the band's press officer turning round to look at me and I think the guys on the right were a couple of French journalists."



★ "Paul and his late father John at the soundcheck in Brighton. John managed him for about 30 years and in those days went everywhere with Paul. He probably saw every Jam gig all around the globe."

★ "Weller was obviously glad to be bringing it to an end, but he was determined The Jam would go out on a high. I remember him saying, 'I want this to count for something.'" 🎵



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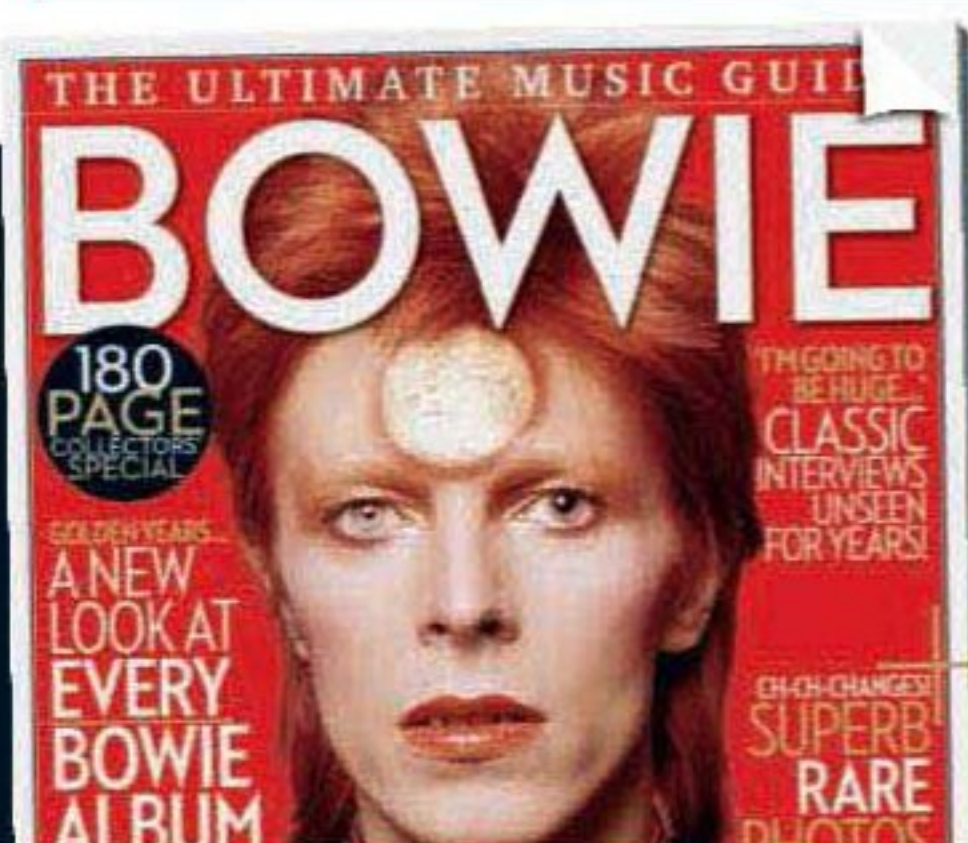
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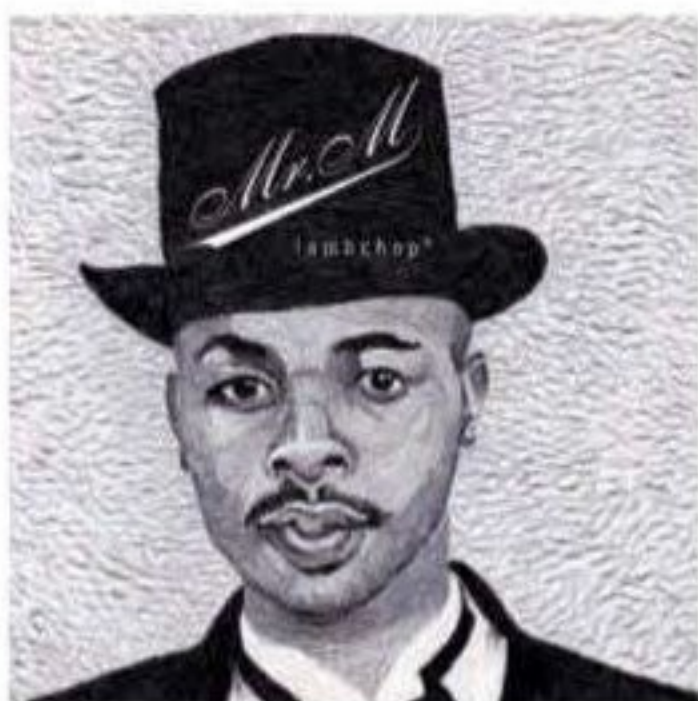
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# LAMBCHOP

**Mr M** CITYSLANG



Using a Sinatra cut-up technique, and inspired by Vic Chesnutt's tragic death, Kurt Wagner and co's latest is a dark gem. *By Alastair McKay*

ALBUM  
OF THE  
MONTH

THE SOUND ON *Mr M* is funereal, with flecks of hope. True, that description might not help distinguish it from the rest of Lambchop's back catalogue, on which

Kurt Wagner and his cohorts have pioneered their own take on the Nashville Sound. Just as Chet Atkins added strings and pop manners to hillbilly music, so Lambchop – working with producer Mark Nevers at his Beech House studio – have patented a melancholy sound; filed under Americana, yet steeped in soul. Lambchop's Nashville Sound is well-mannered, yet Wagner's lyrics are frequently dark, and sometimes comic.

So what's changed? Well, everything, and nothing. The surface of *Mr M* is smooth, tending towards jazz. It is punctuated by cinematic flourishes. But, while Lambchop's last album – 2008's *OH (Ohio)* – attracted apologetic compliments about how they keep re-making the same record, *Mr M* is bold in parts, and surprisingly experimental.

Four years is a long time between albums, and there is perhaps a sense that Wagner also felt that Lambchop had reached the end of their rope with *OH (Ohio)*. After touring that album, he channelled his artistic impulses into painting. The apparent suicide of his friend and occasional collaborator Vic Chesnutt in 2009 hit hard, but provided an inspiration for the songs. And, just as Wagner was beginning to sense a way forward, Nevers came to him with an idea.

The spark was Frank Sinatra's version of "September Song". Nevers found himself struck by the string arrangements. They didn't just colour in the background to the vocal, though they did that beautifully. The orchestra also swirled ominously, taking up arms against the melody.

On previous Lambchop albums, the strings had offered support to the tunes, smoothing down the rougher edges of Wagner's songs. For *Mr M*, the approach was different. This time, the songs would be sent to an arranger, then the string parts would be deconstructed and reassembled by Nevers, who would play the sounds as a single instrument, like

a guitar. The term Nevers and Wagner coined for this approach was "psycho-Sinatra", though Nevers concedes modestly that they never came close to capturing the essence of Frank, "because we are stupid and drunk".

Still, you can hear the boldness of their intent on the opening song, "If Not I'll Just Die", which swirls in like a Sunday matinee, before settling into a mood of elegant despair. "Don't know what the fuck they talk about", Wagner croons, "Maybe blowing kisses, maybe blowing names/Really, what difference does it

sings. "Love made us idiots/Fear makes us critical/Knowledge is difficult". It's a strange song, punctuated by heavenly strings.

"2B2" is no less affecting. The tune is florid with gloom, while the lyrics are apparently a record of Wagner's response to the passing of his friend. The opening line is a startling evocation of emotional dislocation: "Took the Christmas lights off the front porch, February 31st". "Nice Without Mercy" offers a sideways reflection of Chesnutt's funeral. It's nostalgic in tone, musically understated, and quite lovely: "And the shadows disappear", Wagner sings, "in a day that breathes, forever".

Elsewhere, the mood is brighter. "Gar" is instrumental mood music, with outer-space Beach Boys harmonies. "Betty's Overture" is like a '70s TV theme: something starring Peter Falk, perhaps, or Harry Dean Stanton as a horse doctor with a past he'd rather not confront. By the end, on "Never My Love", the emotional journey is complete, with Wagner musing hopefully on the nature of love. Here, the musical arrangement is delicate, and rather experimental, with melancholy strings brushing against angelic harmonies.

So, death is all around, with Wagner slumped uneasily in his easy chair. But this is Lambchop, so the tough stuff comes rolled in cinnamon. Psycho-Sinatra doesn't quite capture *Mr M*'s spirit of jazzy strangeness. Maybe you could call it Frankadelic.

But, ultimately, this is lounge music. Departure lounge.

## Death is all around – but this is Lambchop, so the tough stuff comes rolled in cinnamon

make?" He doesn't sound like a member of the Rat Pack; more like an insomniac speed-dialling The Samaritans.

Wagner is reluctant to quantify how much of *Mr M* is directly about Chesnutt, saying only that the record reflects what was going on in his life at the time the songs were written. But it's a fair bet the gorgeous "Mr Met" is informed by the sense of stumbling through grief. "Friends make you sensitive", he

## Q&A Kurt Wagner

### What was the idea for the record?

It was something that developed in the studio, mainly. I was just trying to get back to writing songs, and trying to make 'em count. As I was doing that, Mark Nevers had this production idea he wanted to try. We put those two things together and built the record up slowly.

### Why had your songwriting dried up?

Partially, it was due to my friend Vic [Chesnutt]'s passing. But also when we finished *OH (Ohio)*, and toured, I started going back to painting, trying to make painting part of my life again. Vic passed away right around that time, and it was difficult for me to get my head around making music without him around.

### Is the song "Nice Without Mercy" about Vic's funeral?

Yeah. Of course everything I do comes about in a sideways kind of way. I was working on a book where I'd create text with a photographer, so part of the song is taken from that, then I went off and tried to deal with it. It's important for me to recognise Vic's passing; I want to make sure people remember him. It's just difficult to share. My point in general is that it's really a record about love and the discovery I made about love by experiencing a loss. On paper that could look like a pretty big downer, but ultimately it's fairly hopeful. It just drags you through my experience of working through it.



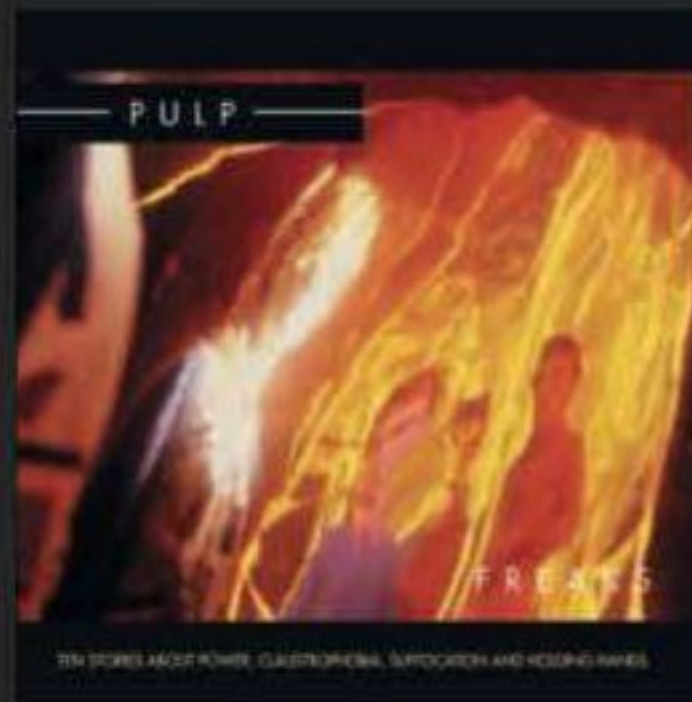


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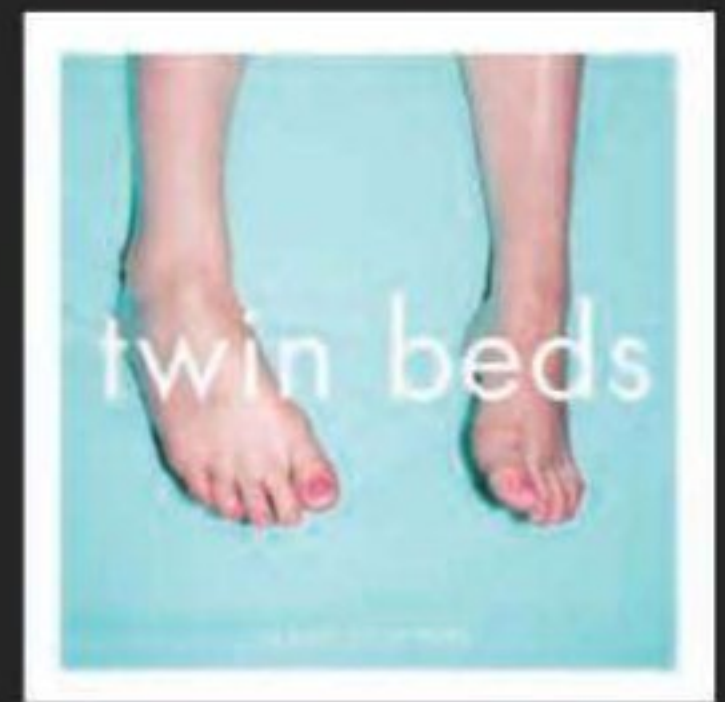


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## NEW AGE STEPPERS

### LOVE FOREVER

On-U Sound CD

'Love Forever' is the first new recording under the New Age Steppers name since 1983's 'Foundation Steppers'. On this album, Adrian Sherwood's legendary On-U Sound collective includes Ari Up (RIP) on lead vocals, plus Skip McDonald, Ghetto Priest, Adamski, and other guests.

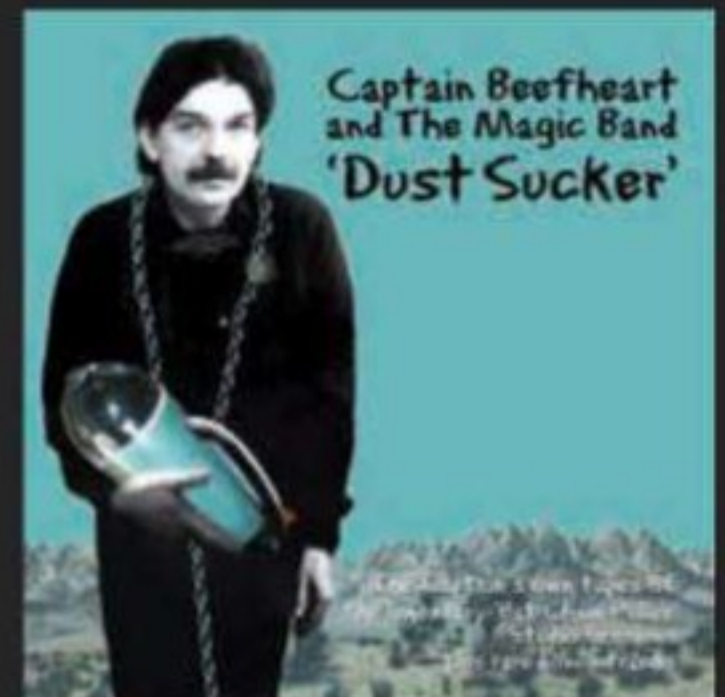


## JOHN FOXX AND THE MATHS

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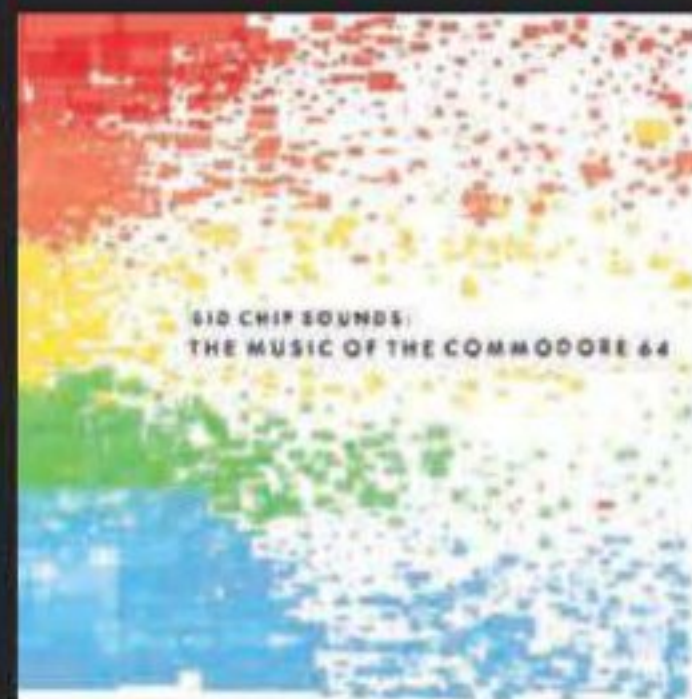


## MARY LORSON & THE SOUBRETTES

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Mary Lorson began her career 20 years ago as the lead singer of the noise pop band Maddler Rose & steered the jazzy artrock group, Saint Low. For her latest CD, Lorson has dressed her rhythmic guitar & piano-based compositions with subtle banjo & standup bass support



## V/A

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### THE EYE OF TIME

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## BARRY ADAMSON I Will Set You Free

CENTRAL CONTROL

★★★★★

Former Magazine and Bad Seeds bassist reinvents himself as '60s pop crooner Adamson's 2008 album, *Back To The Cat*, saw him move away from making (real or imaginary) film soundtracks and chancing his arm as a Las Vegas-via-Moss Side crooner, backed by a rough-and-ready garage funk band. Here he explores that territory in more detail. The backing lurches between meticulously arranged soul pastiches ("Black Holes In My Brain"), Scott Walker-ish ballads ("If You Love Her") and finger-bleeding post-punk ("Destination"), but the songwriting is always of a high quality. Sometimes, Adamson's voice is oddly reminiscent of Nick Cave's gothic croon, but it's a more technically agile and emotive instrument. *John Lewis*

## AIR Le Voyage Dans La Lune

VIRGIN

★★★

Little atmosphere on French duo's latest moon safari While their progeny M83 compose IMAX soundtracks, Air have stepped back to the dawn of cinema for inspiration, finding, when commissioned to soundtrack a restoration of Méliès' 1902 short *A Trip To The Moon*, material for an entire new album. In truth a more playful group like Yello might be a better fit for Méliès' pataphysical screentrickery, and Air seem to have found little fresh inspiration in his bricolage, instead revisiting their stock repertoire of interstellar moodscapes from the *Barbarella*-ish lullaby "Seven Stars" to the Floydian overdrive of "Lava". *Stephen Troussé*

## ALABAMA 3 Shoplifting 4 Jesus

HOSTAGE MUSIC

★★★★

Street riots and samples by lovable London mavericks Larry Love's Brixton collective have been mixing American blues, gospel and country with acid house beats for over 15 years now, but we've never heard them quite like this. Full of sampled riffs 'shoplifted' from tracks by Lennon, Zevon, Hawkwind, Status

Quo and others, *Shoplifting 4 Jesus* is a concept album inspired by the 2011 London riots and given a biblical theme, with scriptural passages read by the likes of Ray Winstone, and even dear old Bez, who improbably delivers the Sermon on the Mount as the intro to the trip hop shuffle "We Stole The Moon". *Nigel Williamson*

## ALBERTEEN Metal Book

RHYTHM & NOIR RECORDINGS

★★★★

The Auteurs? Gone, but not forgotten by this trio With so many bands still desperate to emphasise their street cred, it's unusual to find a bunch boasting backgrounds in academia (their singer is a professor of English literature) and theatre (the bassist is a successful playwright/director). Neither of which Alberteen tap directly, but these interests have surely helped shape their "rhythm & noir", an archly literate blend of '60s R'n'B-pop and Lynchian soundtracks. If this debut at times sounds too much like the work of two different bands, then the likes of the loungey and twanging "Falling Down" readily compensate. *Sharon O'Connell*



## ALL THE SAINTS Intro To Fractions

SOUTERRAIN TRANSMISSIONS

★★★★

Nicely turned second album from Atlanta noiseniks This Atlanta noise-pop trio's second album is a step up from their 2009 debut, *Fire On Corridor X*, even if it often sounds just as entertainingly deranged. The opening song, "Half Red, Half Way", is typical, combining tight and controlled rhythms with occasional cacophonous splurges of chaos. They are probably at their best when lost in the maelstrom of "Preachy" or the ferocious "Alterations", but are also surprisingly good at more refined rock, like the indie-pop "Buster" or the thuggish

stoner rock of the excellent "Host", which both bring focus to Matt Lambert's vocals. *Peter Watts*

## A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS Onwards To The Wall

DEAD OCEANS

★★★★

Bludgeoning post-rock from New York It seems entirely appropriate that the opening track of this mini-album (the rumbling, rolling thunder of "I Lost You"), ends with what appears to be an explosion: this is one of the loudest songs you will hear all year. While closing track "Drill It Up" is also as heavy as they come, featuring a dense fog of pummelling percussion, feedback and flashes of electronics, other tracks like the post-rock disco-beat "Nothing Will Surprise Me" and the sublime JAMC-meets-Sonic Youth stoner-pop of "So Far Away" hide catchier tunes amid the quagmire of guitar. *Peter Watts*

## AZARI & III Loose Lips

ISLAND

★★★★★

Toronto quartet party like it's 1989 Simian Mobile Disco arguably set the UK ball rolling, but the global house revival is now in full swing, with artists from Julio Bashmore to Tensnake and Waifs & Strays flying the classic, Chicago house flag. Todd Terry and Masters At Work's percolating euphoria warms every groove on this intelligently realised debut, which follows in the full-band footsteps of Hercules & Love Affair but avoids their craven retroism. Prince-styled, synth-pop banger "Undecided" is proof of that, but the highlights here are disco-funk single "Reckless (With Your Love)" and "Infiniti", a lush, deep-house epic. *Sharon O'Connell*

## BAHAMAS Bar Chords

BRUSHFIRE

★★★★★

Intimate sophomore LP by tropically named Canuck Afie Jurvanen (aka Bahamas), who played in Feist's touring band and on Kathleen Edwards' *Voyageur*, follows his uncommonly spare 2009 debut *Pink Strat* with an album that's only marginally fuller and more upbeat than its



Barry Adamson: gothic croon with a view

predecessor. The throwback craftsmanship of *Bar Chords*' dozen songs recalls the work of fellow Toronto-based Ron Sexsmith, while Jurvanen's tamped-down vocals on the old-school ballad "Time And Time Again" and his tonally tasty electric guitar licks on the catchy "Caught Me Thinkin'" are dead ringers for M Ward. There's a striking purity on this record, as Jurvanen shows again that the silences can be as expressive as the sounds. *Bud Scoppa*

## THE BALFA BROTHERS ...Play Traditional Cajun Music

ACE

★★★★

Louisiana-born roots purists collected Despite working steadily since the early 1950s, the five Balfa brothers didn't get round to releasing an album until '67. That debut appears in full here, alongside a second LP from '74 and a handful of bonus tracks, all staying true to the traditional roots of Cajun music. The lusty two-step of "Lacassine Special" (later covered by Emmylou Harris) is typical of the siblings' barn dance vibes, while "Parlez Nous A

Boire" finds them veering closer to a bluegrass sound. The constant duel between Dewey's fiddle and Harry's accordion leads the charge throughout, celebrating an oft-overlooked part of America's musical heritage. *Terry Staunton*

## BAND OF SKULLS Sweet Sour

ELECTRIC BLUES RECORDINGS

★★★★★

Shameless yet sexy trad rock. From Southampton Bands mentored by the singer's dad should sound like pampered wannabes. But Russell Marsden's Band Of Skulls pull off the nigh-impossible: Americanised rock'n'roll that sounds as modern as it does vintage 1970s and effortlessly blends AC/DC riffage, Fleetwood Mac AOR and White Stripes punk-blues pyrotechnics. The trio's magic is created by the haunting twin harmonies of Marsden and bassist Emma Richardson, and songwriting that effortlessly connects old-school guitar crunch with sensual folk-rock melodies. Richardson's "Navigate" is a mystical sex ballad that both Polly Harvey and Stevie Nicks would be proud of. *Garry Mulholland*



# PAUL McCARTNEY

## Kisses On The Bottom ★★★★★

HEAR NOW/MPL

Sir Paul's romantic (and loving) take on standards. *By David Quantick*



FUNNY TO THINK that Ringo beat everyone to it, on 1970's *Sentimental Journey*, the first ever collection of standards and showtunes by someone from a rock

music background. And now, 42 years later, his surviving bandmate becomes one of the last artists of his generation to step up to the podium and record an album of the songs of his parents' generation.

Of course, Paul McCartney is rooted in the music of the 1930s and '40s; if he wasn't crooning songs like "Bésame Mucho" and "Till There Was You" in The Beatles, he was pastiching the oldies in a long line of songs from "When I'm 64" to Wings' "You Gave Me The Answer" and even punting his own "Suicide" to Frank Sinatra. Although it was

George Harrison who wrote the song that Sinatra actually covered, "Something". Mind you, Frank always credited it to Lennon and McCartney...

Anyway, an album of standards from Paul McCartney is long overdue and this set—which could also be seen as a collection of love songs to his new missus, Nancy Shevell—shocks only in that you keep wanting to go back over McCartney's discography to make sure that he hasn't done this before, possibly under the name of Percy Thrillington, that this isn't *Kisses On The Bottom 2*. But it's not, and so in 2012, the album after ballet soundtrack *Ocean's Kingdom*, and after 2007's utterly superb *Memory Almost Full*, is finally the full-on swoon'n'croon, 12 genuine oldies and two brand new Macca songs, "My Valentine" and "Only Our Hearts", that fit right in like olives in a Martini. There

are no dub metal collaborations with Youth, no rockers, nothing of a classical or operatic nature, and not even any Ringo (which is a shame, as both Starr and McCartney cover "Bye Bye Blackbird" on their respective albums—there's a mash-up waiting to happen).

It ought to be the hoariest old lug of clichés, stuffed with every one from the retro Shure microphone to the black and white shot of Paul in a tuxedo. But it's not, for a number of very decent reasons. For a start, McCartney is a great songwriter, and thus his choices are made for reasons of quality rather than popularity; unlike the *X Factor* contestants on Standards Night, Paul McCartney not only grew up with these songs, via the radio and his father Jim's playing, he's studied them. Even the more familiar songs here—Harold Arlen's "It's Only A Paper Moon", Billy Hill's "The Glory Of Love"—aren't Porter or Berlin megaliths, there's a smattering of daft but lovely child-friendly tunes ("Inchworm", "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive"), and there's no sense of crowd-pleasing here—the album opens with the song from which its daft title comes, "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter", which is just on the right side of obscure. By the time we've reached "My Very Good Friend The Milkman" and "We Three (My Echo, My Shadow And Me)", we are entirely in the great man's hands.

The other cliché avoided is the Orchestra. Instead of the dead sweep of some fake Nelson Riddle arrangements, the music here is provided by jazznik Diane Krall's band. Krall (married to former Macca collaborator Elvis Costello) and her musicians provide a lighter sound reminiscent of Nat King Cole and his Trio, and when strings do come in, they seep under the door like mist rather than hang like lead curtains. And McCartney's voice fits these arrangements; a higher tenor than usual as befits the older vocalist, but investing each lyric with meaning and respect, full of lightness when required. There's only one song here where his voice doesn't have the airiness of an Astaire or the calm of a Crosby, and that's "Get Yourself Another Fool", in which we may or may not detect a controlled anger at a previous lover.

And then there are the two new songs. In other hands, tacking your own compositions onto a set of classics might be seen as hubris, but in this case, it's perfectly allowable. "Only Our Hearts" could be from some lost Broadway show, and is propelled into new excellence by Stevie Wonder's best harmonica playing for decades (and even contains a properly Wings-y "*whoo ooh hoo*" at the end). And "My Valentine", clearly written for Nancy Shevell, is beautiful, a waft of a song that exists in the gap between Sinatra's "A Very Good Year" and Nat King Cole's "Nature Boy". "*And I will love her for life*", sings Paul, and even though you know he's sung it before, you also know he means it.

In a genre mostly attempted from lazy despair, this album is made with care, love and expertise and it shows on every song. *Kisses On The Bottom* is all Valentine's Day and no massacre.

## THE BATS

### Free All The Monsters

FLYING NUN

★★★★★

**First-rate, breathless, glistening pop songs**

Of all the 'first wave' Flying Nun groups to come out of New Zealand in the early '80s, The Bats are the most reliable. This is partly because they've stuck to their guns – no daft aesthetic swerves – but it's largely because leader Robert Scott has a knack for post-Velvets melodic drone-logic. Full of effortless guitar pop, *Free All The Monsters* shares a pacific wisdom that comes from having a three-decade history. If you fell for Real Estate and their peers, here's the root. **Jon Dale**

## BIRDEATSBABY

### Feast Of Hammers

DEAD ROUND EYES

★★★★

**Shipwrecked shanties from burlesque Brightonians**

Citing Freddie Mercury, Matt Bellamy of Muse and fellow Brighton resident Nick Cave as influences, Brechtian chamber-pop quartet Birdeatsbaby make a kind of orchestral punk-folk racket best suited to gothic waltzes and wracked requiems for laudanum-addled, passion-spent love affairs. Flame-haired Mishkin Fitzgerald's voice hovers on the edge of nerve-jangling shrillness at times, slipping too easily from a whisper to a screech. But the most effective songs are those poised just the right side of camp melodrama, like the cheerfully fatalistic maritime shanty "Anchor" and the macabre tale of simultaneous tragedies on land and sea, "The Sailor's Wife". **Stephen Dalton**

## BITCH MAGNET

### Umber

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE LTD

★★★★★

**Remastered reissue from proto post-rock iconoclasts**

Their short career saw them caught in the slipstream between hardcore's waning popularity and the emergence of grunge, but Bitch Magnet are now widely recognised as post-rock pioneers. Every bit as influential as Slint, the Chapel Hill, NC outfit – who featured Squirrel Bait/Slint alumnus Brian McMahan – deserve equal acclaim for their first full-length, released in 1989. Reissued as a package with their *Star*

*Booty* mini-LP from 1988 and 1990's *Ben Hur* (plus rare and unreleased tracks), *Umber* is the sound of a bench being marked. Its mix of hardcore's energy, blowtorch emotional intensity and fractured but compelling quasi-classical rhythms and counter-rhythms tracks a path from Hüsker Dü and Big Black to Mogwai and Battles, who convinced BM to reform for 2011's ATP. Every track is a precision-tooled triumph, "Americruiser" a long overdue reminder that the quiet/loud/quiet dynamic was birthed here.

**Sharon O'Connell**

## BLONDES

### Blondes

RVNG INTL

★★★★

**Debut full-length from Brooklyn hipster house duo**

Inspired by periods spent living in the UK and Europe, former Oberlin College students Sam Haar and Zach Steinman have developed a brand of chunky Balearic house that wouldn't sound out of place on Junior Boy's Own circa 1993. Blondes' expansive synth jams can sometimes feel a little directionless, but the slow, luxurious shimmer of tracks such as "Water" and "Wine" is occasionally sublime. A bonus disc of remixes is superfluous, save for the taut interventions of Bicep and Andy Stott. **Sam Richards**

## MATTHEW BOURNE

### Montauk Variations

LEAF LABEL

★★★★

**Elegiac pianist: not to be confused with choreographer of same name**

This Matthew Bourne is an award-winning young British pianist whose recorded output has lurched between free improv, tricky electric fusion and collaborations with the likes of Spring Heel Jack and Nostalgia 77. This is the first recorded example of him in his most engaging format, playing meditative improvisations for solo piano. These 16 originals (and one delicious deconstruction of Charlie Chaplin's "Smile") can get annoying when they stray into wilful atonality, but really hit the spot when he lingers on simple themes, as with the hypnotic "Infinitude" and "Juliet", and the Satie-esque "Phantasie". **John Lewis**



The Bats: flying wizards of guitar pop

## PETER BRODERICK

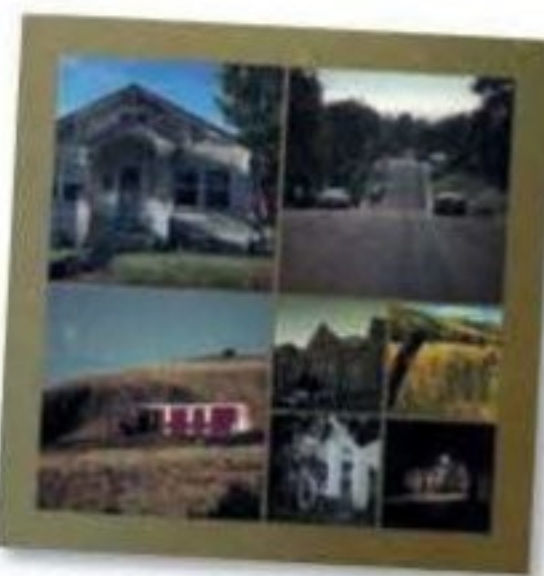
<http://www.itstartshear.com>

BELLA UNION

★★★★★

**Sometime Efterklang man embraces download culture**

Maine-born Broderick builds on the drifting melancholy of his terrific 2008 debut, *Home*, with an album of minimalist, classically inclined folk, defined by gently racked reflections on memory and loss. "A Tribute To Our Letter Writing Days" suggests Simon & Garfunkel at their most baroque, while "Blue" and "Colin" recall Red House Painters. There's playfulness, too, in his stab at geek-rap ("With The Notes On Fire") and the amusingly literal chorus ("http, colon slash slash, www dot, it starts hear dot com") of the jaggedly funky title track. It's all unceasingly beautiful and is available (artwork and all) via the titular web link. **Graeme Thomson**



## BUXTON

### Nothing Here Seems Strange

NEW WEST

★★★★★

**Faultless psych folk-rock by upstart Houston quintet**

Armed with Sergio Trevino's hazy, haunted vocals, demonic guitar outbursts, and an arid, enigmatic, textured sound, this young Texas group is on the cusp of something special. An old-soul feel and strong writing, accented by accordion,

banjo, mandolin and pedal steel, permeates this, their third LP, though the group's inherent melancholy and dread is very 2012. While the vocal swirls of "Boy Of Nine", for example, aren't far from Fleet Foxes territory, it's "Fingertips", hinging on gospel piano but wafting into the ether amid some serious guitar wreckage, that shows them off best. **Luke Torn**

## COTTON MATHER

### Kontiki

STAR APPLE KINGDOM

★★★★★

**Criminally obscure 1997 headphone masterpiece gets expanded reissue**

This hi-fi power-pop extravaganza, concocted by bandleader Robert Harrison and producer Brad Jones using decidedly lo-fi tools, got a five-star review from *Uncut* on release, also drawing rhapsodic endorsements from the Gallagher brothers and Spoon's Britt Daniel. "Camp Hill Rail Operator" captures the lysergic intensity of *Revolver* to uncanny perfection, "Church Of Wilson" acknowledges the Austin band's love of The Beach Boys with a snarl and a power drill, and "My Before And After" shimmers with Harrison and Whit Williams' ecstatic guitars and harmonies. Throughout, Harrison sounds like he's channeling John Lennon in performances startling in their improbable fusion of ferocity and poignancy. **Bud Scoppa**

## DAMON & NAOMI WITH GHOST

### Damon & Naomi With Ghost

DRAG CITY

★★★★★

**Ex-Galaxie 500/Japanese avant folkies lay down on the wraith-tracks**

Damon Krukowski and

Naomi Yang first met Japanese psych-folkies Ghost during a 1995 tour, and discovered an unusual kinship with the group's guitarist Michio Kurihara and vocalist Masaki Batoh, which led to this one-off song collection. The texture is generally petal-delicate acoustic folk-rock, with metallic cymbal trails bedecking the Mellotron swirls of "The New World", and Kurihara's guitar a persistent, ectoplasmic presence on "Judah And The Maccabees". Drag City have included a rare 7" as part of the package. **Rob Young**

## DESERTSHORE

### Drawing Of Threes

CALDO VERDE

★★★★★

**Almost a Red House Painters reunion**

Desertshore's 2010 debut, *Drifting Your Majesty*, drew an unusual degree of acclaim for an instrumental album, lulling many with the dreamy prog summoned by guitarist Phil Carney and classical pianist Chris Connolly. The main selling point of *Drawing Of Threes* is the appearance, as vocalist and bassist, of Mark Kozelek, Carney's former collaborator in Red House Painters and Sun Kil Moon. While it would be a delight to report that the result is a gem of world-weary, balefully funny balladry to file alongside the Painters' '92 debut *Down Colourful Hill*, *Drawing Of Threes* is rather a chore, rarely displaying enough of the wry self-mockery that usually redeems Kozelek's consumptive reflections. The exceptions are therefore all the more frustrating: the triumphantly insincere apology "Mercy" and underplayed yet sumptuous "Randy Quaid". **Andrew Mueller**



The Brewis brothers aka Field Music: plumbing the depths of chamberpop strangeness

## DODGY Stand Upright In A Cool Place

STRIKE BACK

★★★★★

**Britpop veterans' grown-up return**

Although the original trio reformed three years ago, Dodgy have taken their time over the "comeback" album, a markedly more mature and intricate affair than the radio-friendly pop of 1996's *Free Peace Sweet*. Self-produced but mixed by Matt Spence (Midlake, John Grant), the focus is on folky three-part harmonies and baroque Americana on the epic opener "Tripped And Fell" and the Gram Parsons-like "Shadows". Having said that, the band's pop roots are still detectable on the mid-tempo singalongs of "Waiting For The Sun" and "Only A Heartbeat", the latter reminiscent of the Bee Gees' elegant landmark album, *Odessa*.

*Terry Staunton*

## JIMMY DONLEY In The Key Of Heartbreak

ACE

★★★★★

**Tragic Southern crooner's singles output**

Married four times and a regular guest of the Southern states' jailhouses, Mississippi-born Donley's troubled private life arguably informed the pain and suffering of his soul-baring country and swamp rock. His greatest success came via covers of his songs by Fats Domino and Jerry Lee Lewis, but Donley's own pleading voice best serves the

desperation of "You're Why I'm So Lonely" and "Two Sides To The Story Of Love". This two-disc set offers up 56 tear-jerking testaments, marking out musical territory later explored to more acclaim by the likes of Lee Dorsey and Ernie K-Doe, although Donley himself may have become more of a star had he not taken his own life in 1963, aged 33.

*Terry Staunton*

## THE DOOZER Keep It Together

WOODSIST

★★★★★

**Homebrewed pop surrealism, Cambridge-style**

Part of an errant gang of English outsider artists like Pete Um and NOCHEXXX, The Doozer has already recorded a clutch of iconoclastic sides of woodshed psychedelia. *Keep It Together* is his most straight-laced and -faced record yet, and it's just great to hear his songs – fanciful confections that remind variously of The Soft Boys, Syd Barrett, The Puddle, or any number of mysterious '60s pop-psych 45s – played with a full band, strings and rogue tuba, their melodies setting forth in all kinds of unpredictable directions.

*Jon Dale*

## BOB DYLAN Life And Life Only: Radio & TV 1961-1965

LEFT FIELD MEDIA

★★★★★

**A young titan takes to the airwaves**

The cuts on this album are cribbed from five radio and

television appearances between 1961 and 1965 – or, measured in Dylan's budding discography, between *Bob Dylan* and *Highway 61 Revisited*. Taken in one sitting, it's a stop-motion fast-forward from the nervy ingénue stuttering through "Handsome Molly" in a New York radio station's church hootenanny in 1961 to the poised Bohemian troubadour snarling a frenetic "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" on ABC's *The Les Crane Show* in 1965. Inevitably, the sound quality is erratic, but this somehow contributes to the edgy energy of the recordings as they capture Dylan's comet in full, thrilling flight. The jarring between the included hokey radio cues and Dylan's incendiary, unbound performances further illuminate Dylan's electrifying effect on American music – even before he'd gone electric.

*Andrew Mueller*

## THE EXPLORERS CLUB Grand Hotel

ROCK RIDGE

★★★★★

**Bubblegum as a connoisseur's delight rather than a guilty pleasure**

These preservationists out of Charleston, South Carolina, no longer have the element of surprise working for them, as they did on their 2008 debut *Freedom Wind*, an uncannily spot-on evocation of The Beach Boys, but their follow-up is equally unexpected. The band's palette has expanded to include the entirety of AM radio pop, including The Four Seasons

("Anticipatin'"), Burt Bacharach ("Summer Days, Summer Nights"), Neil Diamond ("Open The Door") and Herb Alpert (the title instrumental), (re)captured with fan-like immediacy rather than scholarly pedantry. The attention to period detail extends to the mix by Mark Linett, Brian Wilson's engineer. A musical time machine.

*Bud Scoppa*

## FANFARLO Rooms Filled With Light

CANVASBACK

★★★★★

**Light literate art-pop from bookish quintet**

Sweden's Simon Balthazar took his group's name from a Baudelaire novella, found Brit bandmates who play enough instruments to form an orchestra, and hates love songs. So it's no surprise that Fanfarlo's second album is packed with quirky, anti-rock production twists. But beneath all the twinkling keyboards, Peter Hook basslines, classical touches and lyrics about microbiology and comets lie pretty melodies sung by a conventional pop vocalist. Opener "Replicate" is a beautiful mix of Philip Glass, "Eleanor Rigby" and China Crisis, but this rather too eager-to-please set doesn't quite live up to its promise.

*Garry Mulholland*

## FIELD MUSIC Plumb

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

★★★★★

**More homespun brilliance from Sunderland's pop perfectionists**

Initially it's a bit of a disappointment to discover Field Music have retreated from the classic rock path trod by 2010's stunning double album [*Measure*] in order to revisit the quirky chamber pop of their early records. But Peter and David Brewis, frantically swapping instruments and lead vocal duties as always, are artful enough to be able to mine considerable emotional capital from their seemingly parochial concerns, such as getting stuck in traffic, or fretting about the work/life balance. Impeccably arranged, the whole thing plays out like an extended, pragmatic version of "A Day In The Life".

*Sam Richards*

## FRAZIER CHORUS

Sue 1989

CHERRY RED

★★★★★

**Late-'80s debut from underrated dream poppers**

The inspiration for his brother Martin's character in *The Office*, Brightonian Tim Freeman combined a love of kitchen sink drama and an appreciation of electro-pop, jazz and classical instrumentation. With his articulate, witty lyrics – delivered in a mannered whisper and full of rainy days, cups of tea and Little Chefs – the four-piece refined a carefully orchestrated, colourful contrast to The Smiths' recent monochrome take on the English condition. "Dream Kitchen" and "Typical" grazed the charts, but it's "Ha-Ha-Happiness", with its mournful clarinet, and "Ski-head"'s subtle bitterness – "*The day gets longer and my temper shorter*" – that linger longest.

*Wyndham Wallace*



## BURNT FRIEDMAN Bokoboko

NONPLACE

★★★★★

**Can-style take on 'world music'**

Burnt Friedman sometimes collaborates with ex-Can drummer Jaki Liebeck, and here he develops Can's idea of "ethnological forgery". Using a mix of percussive instruments including modified oil barrels, as well as monochord, rubber band guitar, sarod (courtesy of Takeshi Nishimoto) and field recordings from David Franzke, Friedman creates a layered, shifting, organic sound that goes beyond the exotic pretensions of pseudo-world music, or the old aesthetics of plunder. *Bokoboko* (Japanese for "uneven") is determinedly irregular, singular as snow flakes, and so departed from its sources, so thoroughly developed and intertwined, it can rightfully claim to have evolved into some new state of originality and authenticity. *David Stubbs*

# MARK LANEGAN BAND

## Blues Funeral 4AD ★★★★★

Grunge-blues giant returns, now digging deeper and – shock! – nu-disco, says Sharon O’Connell



TO SAY THAT Lanegan’s reputation precedes him is a monumental understatement. Over a 25-year career, he’s carved himself a profile as resolutely rock as any

on Mount Rushmore – one that includes spells of homelessness, imprisonment and frequent rehab. He’s also been extraordinarily prolific and a tirelessly enthusiastic collaborator, fronting volatile psychedelic grunge exponents Screaming Trees, joining Josh Homme in Queens Of The Stone Age and Greg Dulli in both The Twilight Singers and The Gutter Twins, fronting grunge-blues soundscapers Soulsavers and across three albums playing Lee Hazlewood to Isobel Campbell’s Nancy Sinatra. None of which has done much to shift the perception of Lanegan as a troubled and notoriously taciturn, heavily tattooed titan of brooding alternative rock.

His seventh album as the captain of his own ship may not overturn that reputation, but it is Lanegan’s most accessible to date and boasts two tracks that are such a departure from his familiar, self-described “death dirges” that they might well see him cross over from cultish acclaim to commercial success. All things are relative, however, and *Blues Funeral* – the title almost comic in its playing to expectation – features the man’s trademark blend of slow-burning menace, lowering, blues-stained melancholy and gnarly alt.rock. It’s hardly a cheerful listen and Lanegan’s voice – a ravaged, bottom-of-the-well growl – is as compelling as it ever was, but the experimentation of 2004’s *Bubblegum* has now bedded in, flourishing alongside a textured heaviness and easy-swinging grooves that source classic rock and country, electronic punk and Krautrock, as well as Lanegan’s own history. QOTSA mates Homme and guitarist Alain Johannes (also at the recording desk) are again on board, along with Dulli and former Pearl Jam drummer Jack Irons.

“Gravedigger’s Song” opens, its throbbing, Neu!-like pulse establishing the album’s motorik framework much as the title does its gloomy lyrical concerns, which inform both

the sulphurous “Bleeding Muddy Water” and “St Louis Elegy”, a terrific, Morricone/Orbison hybrid full of cavernous echo, where an electronic whine whips around Lanegan’s voice like an Arctic wind. The pace picks up with “Gray Goes Black”, its insistent swing as much that of hips on a club floor as a hangman’s rope, and for “There’s A Riot In My House”, whose needling riffs bear Homme’s hallmark. Elsewhere, there are nods to Johnny Cash (“Phantasmagoria Blues”), Alice Coltrane (“Leviathan”) and Fairport Convention (“Deep Black Vanishing Train”).

Lanegan’s is a seductive, highly personal take on blues rock, his expression one of few that renders archetypes – the addict, the doubter, the drifter, the damned soul – as flesh and blood, rather than clichés. All of which makes the album’s wild cards appear doubly odd. Both strikingly atypical of a Mark Lanegan record, if not radical in their actual sound, “Quiver Syndrome” and “Ode To Sad Disco” show just how much he’s changed since the bare-boned, confessional alt. country/folk of his 1990 debut, *The Winding*

*Sheet*. The former is an unapologetically heads-down, party-starting nod to “Sympathy For The Devil” that suggests Screaming Trees jamming with Primal Scream and was born to be blasted out of a car stereo on the open road, while “Ode To Sad Disco” sounds – impossibly, brilliantly – as if Lanegan has been bending an ear to Goldfrapp. Intended as an homage to “Sad Disco”, a piece of instrumental music by Keli Hlodversson from the second film in Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn’s *Pusher* trilogy, it marks the album’s halfway point. The nouveau disco/hi-NRG-house thump is tempered by notes of Killing Joke and lyrics that seem to underline the dark side of chemical euphoria, but its pumped-up, sweet hit potential still comes as a shock.

Lanegan recently joked that should the cultish acclaim he’s enjoyed for years ever translate to commercial success, he’d move to a beach in Tahiti and stay there for the rest of his life. On the evidence of “Quiver Syndrome” and “Ode To Sad Disco” alone, he might want to start packing his floral shirts.

## Q&A Mark Lanegan

### How did it feel to take the wheel again, after years of collaboration?

It felt so good. I enjoyed all the other stuff in between the last LP and this one, but I look at these records as a chance to do whatever I’m into at the time, whereas with the other stuff I’m helping support someone else’s vision or I’m in a partnership with someone else.

### What were you into at the time?

During the writing and recording I was listening to a lot of Krautrock; it’s not new for me, but it was a particularly heavy phase. Bands like Kraftwerk, Kluster, Neu! and Harmonia – I used

some of that electronic stuff on *Bubblegum* but in a noisier, harsher way. This time, I wanted to use it in a way that was a little more... beautiful.

### Why did you choose to write some of the new songs on electronic gear?

I ended up buying a couple of drum machines, Casios and a synth and was messing around on them, so the LP came out of that – although half the songs were written on guitar. That forced me to write a different kind of song. I was trying to make something representative of a record I’d personally like to listen to, I guess.

INTERVIEW: SHARON O’CONNELL





Alison Goldfrapp:  
shining art-pop hits

## GANG COLOURS The Keychain Collection

BROWNSWOOD RECORDINGS

★★

**Hampshire beatsmith cures insomnia**

First Ghostpoet, now Gang Colours: you wonder what Brownswood boss and Radio 1 DJ Gilles Peterson has against the record-buying public. On his debut, 24-year-old Southampton triphopper Will Ozzane comes across as a milder version of James Blake, smudging rhythms and vocal effects to create a vague sense of urban ennui on the likes of "Fancy Restaurant" and "Heavy Petting", but he doesn't totally convince. Rather than this lightweight half-hour, it might've been wiser to wait 'til Ozzane can sculpt his navel-gazing into something more distinctive. *Piers Martin*

## THE GARBAGE AND THE FLOWERS

**Stoned Rehearsal** 2008

QUEMADA

★★★★

**Glibly descriptive title masks unkempt jewels**

Initially released as a private press cassette, *Stoned Rehearsal* might be the most accurate representation yet of this most mysterious of pop groups, originally from NZ, but now resident in

Sydney. It pretty much does what it says on the tin: this is a supremely disconnected practice set, with fluffed beginnings, meandering outros and between-song banter. But buried in there are incredible songs, with all the secretive, gem-like beauty and blasted lo-fi consciousness of the third Velvet Underground album. *Jon Dale*



## GOLDFRAPP The Singles

MUTE/PARLOPHONE

★★★★

**Greatest hits from last of the English art-pop odd couples**

It's hard to believe that the ingeniously kinky Goldfrapp were initially perceived as anemic chill-out merchants; on the basis of this greatest hits collection you have to conclude they were the supreme British pop group of the past decade. These 45s chart their beautifully perverse, impressively successful, oddly influential

progress from sumptuously sinister soundtracks ("Lovely Head") to S&M electro-vixenry ("Strict Machine"), supernatural disco ("Ooh La La") and intravenous rehab pop ("A&E"). The selections from 2010's airbrushed *Head First* are staid in comparison, and two new tracks, the mellow "Yellow Halo" and "Melancholy Sky", suggest they may struggle to refresh themselves for a new decade. Nevertheless this collection is ample testament to one of the last great English avant-pop careers. *Stephen Troussé*

## ROBERT GLASPER Black Radio

BLUE NOTE

★★★★

**Houston jazz pianist with a penchant for grunge**

Much of *Black Radio* is familiar in its fusion of velvet-smooth jazz noodles and rhythmical borrowings from hip hop to lend a modern edge. The likes of "Afro Blue", featuring the seductively abrasive vocals of Erykah Badu, as well as further collaborations with, among others, Lupe Fiasco and Mos Def slip predictably by. But then Glasper covers Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit". It's an ingenious arrangement, featuring juddering, minimal percussion, spare piano chords and vocoders that soar to the edge of the studiosphere, worth the price of the album alone. *David Stubbs*

## KEVIN GORDON Gloryland

SELF-RELEASED

★★★★

**Volume of short stories set to music by Louisiana native**

Gordon, who runs a folk art gallery in Nashville, delivers his detailed narratives in distinctly Southern, blues-based settings that feature his barbed-wire electric guitar bursts. On the swampy shuffle "Bus To Shreveport", he recalls getting buzzed for the first time at a ZZ Top show in a gritty baritone that sounds like Mark Knopfler with a drawl. The gospel-inflected "Side Of The Road" bears the vivid imagery of Lucinda Williams, Gordon's onetime duet partner. The album's centrepiece is the autobiographical 10-minute "Colfax/Step In Time", a richly detailed remembrance of a run-in between his high school marching band and the KKK. *Bud Scoppa*

# SHORT CUTS

Various Artists



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Tally Ho! Flying Nun's Greatest Bits**

FLYING NUN

★★★★

Great compilation from New Zealand label: two discs divvied up loosely between pop and non-

pop. But Flying Nun are actually best at breaching that divide, from The Clean's manic pop thrills, through to The Dead C's deconstructions of rock's formal properties. *Jon Dale*



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Rangarang: Pre-revolutionary Iranian Pop**

VAMPISOUL

★★★★

It would be lovely to report that pre-'79 Tehran was rocking out to weird and wonderful psych-

punk, but most of the 28 tracks here sound like dodgy Greek wedding bands or wrought Bollywood ballads. The exceptions, however, are fantastic: the moody Farfisa funk of Pooran, the Tarantino-friendly Leila Forouhar and the Persian wah-wah disco of Hamid Shabkhiz all hit the spot. *John Lewis*



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**The Flash Records Story**

ACE

★★★★

Flash Records ran for just four years from 1955 until 1959, an outgrowth of Charlie 'Flash' Reynolds' LA-based record store.

Drawing initially from neighbourhood talent, Flash is best remembered for gritty doo wop, notably The Jayhawks, raw blues and jaunty R'n'B. Although the original singles are much sought after, this is a patchy collection. *Mick Houghton*



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Masterpieces Of Modern Soul**

KENT

★★★★

Masterpieces might be overstating the sales pitch but this is a shrewd compilation proving

that classic, smooth '60s soul wasn't entirely wiped out by funk and disco. Standout tracks come from Candi Staton, as you'd expect, plus Loleatta Holloway's slow-burning "This Man's Arms" and Tommy Bush's Curtis Mayfield-soundalike "Stop And Think!". *Mick Houghton*



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**New Orleans Blues, Soul & Jazz Gumbo**

UNION SQUARE

★★★★

A lively two-disc tour of the Crescent City, its 50 stops taking in such pioneers as Louis

Armstrong, King Oliver and Champion Jack Dupree, before moving on to the spicy rock'n'roll of Roy Brown and Shirley & Lee. The most distinct N'awlins flavours, however, are served up by Allen Toussaint, Lee Dorsey, Mac Rebennack and Art Neville. *Terry Staunton*

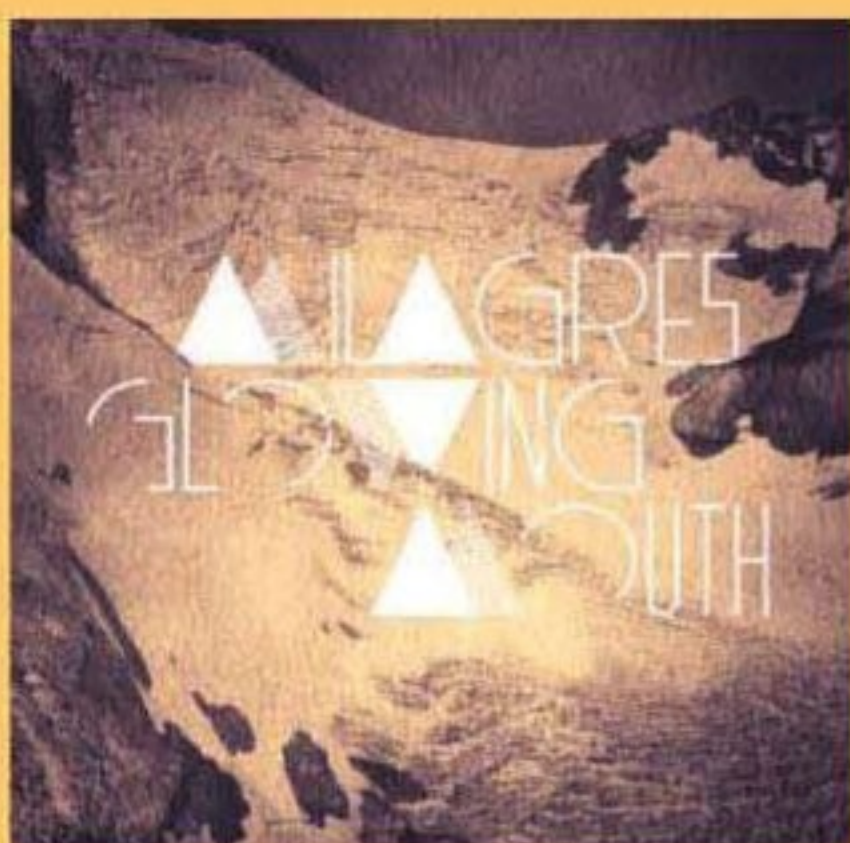
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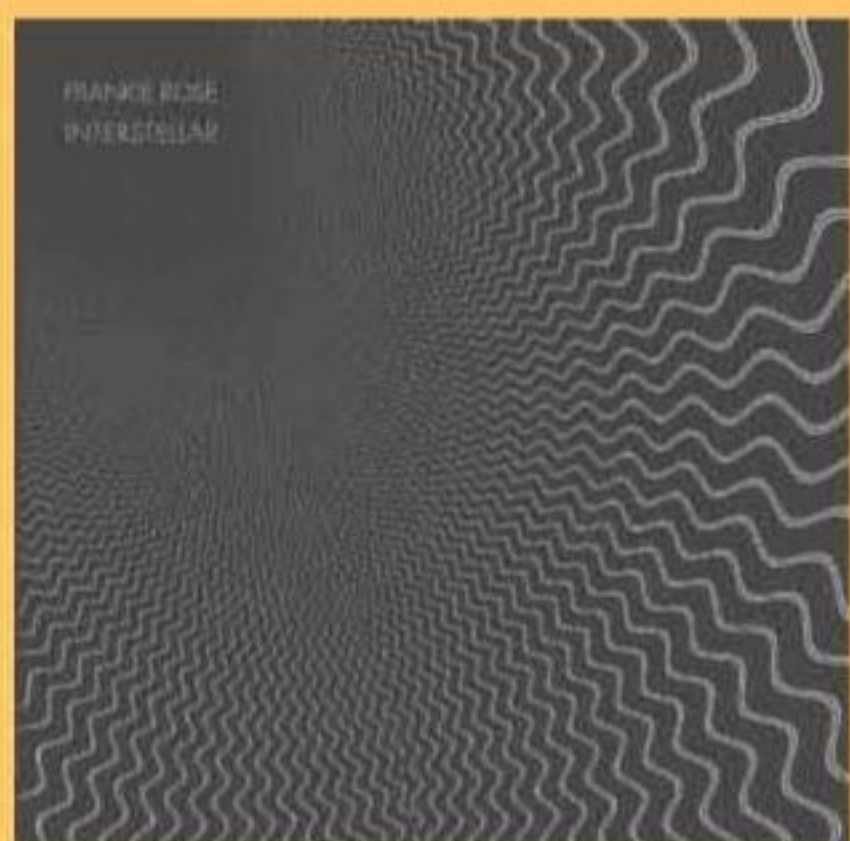
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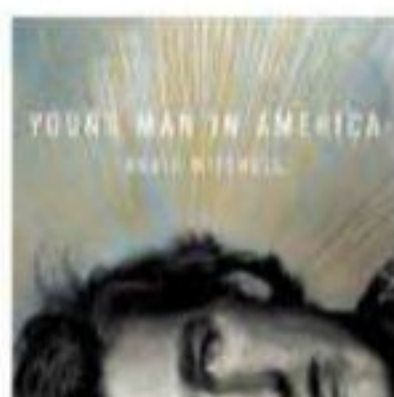
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# ANNAIS MITCHELL

## Young Man In America

WILDERLAND ★★★★★

**Complex follow-up to *Hadestown* seals songwriter's pre-eminence, says Neil Spencer**



WHAT'S THE NEXT stop after *Hadestown*? Mitchell's brilliantly realised 2010 'folk opera' elevated her from the ranks of classy US songwriters to

recognition as a true original. When she matched the acclaim for her ambitious creation – a re-telling of the myth of Orpheus and Persephone set in Depression-era America – with engaging performances as both a solo act and with a full ensemble cast, it was clear a vibrant new voice had arrived.

Mitchell's high, spiky voice is not everyone's idea of a classic, but it's immediate and insistent. Most importantly, it's that of a poet, spraying out phrases that first capture attention and then resonate. "*Your daddy didn't leave a will/He left a shovel and a hole to fill,*" (from "He Did") is a line that Gillian Welch would surely be glad to own.

Something of Mitchell's qualities were apparent on the LPs she made in her twenties, 2004's *Hymns For The Exiled* and 2007's *The Brightness*, the latter after she was signed by Ani DiFranco, one of her early influences. Collections of mostly earnest, confessional songs delivered to acoustic guitar, neither record prepared us for the character-led drama and layered arrangements of *Hadestown*, or its deft update of mythology.

*Young Man In America* follows on in convincing style. With *Hadestown* producer Todd Sickafoose again at the helm and an array of seasoned players providing backings, this is a more complex creation than Mitchell's trade description as 'singer-songwriter' suggests, full of delicately played fiddles, mandolins and guitars, with the odd touch of rhythmic thunder. Its 11 songs are likewise far removed from forlorn navel-gazing, belonging to characters inhabiting a semi-mythical America, the kind of frontier landscape conjured by Dylan's *John Wesley Harding*, which is evoked in language that's part modern, part drawn from folk tradition.

If *Young Man* isn't quite a concept album, its songs are strongly themed, revolving around issues of children and parenting. The title track is central, conjuring a boy who "*arrived like a cannonball*" and who will "*blow like a hurricane/Everyone will know my name*". With a father who was "*a repo man, put me out on*



*the street*", this is the cry of an avenging orphan. The shadow of the father likewise hangs over the delicately picked "He Did", describing a man who loved his offspring and "*kept a blue-grey eye on you*" but "*couldn't draw you near to him*". "Tailor" turns the tables, dealing with a child's desire to please. With its gentle air and almost singalong chorus, it has something of a kid's song about it, yet ends on a desolate note, with the apparently orphaned singer wondering "*there isn't anyone to say if I'm a diamond or a dime a dozen/Who am I?*"

Other songs are less specific. The sprightly "Venus" addresses the glories of womanhood in a way that might refer to either mother or beautiful lover – "*My love moved inside me/A*

*snake waked up in my body*". The one clearly romantic song is "Ships", whose dreamy atmosphere has an abandoned sailor's woman longing for her departed man. Then there's "Shepherd". Set to rippling guitars, it's a tale of a shepherd torn between saving his flock and farm or being with his wife at childbirth. It turns out to be inspired by a story written by Mitchell's father, whose picture at age 30 is on the cover of *Young Man*, and whom Mitchell admits is "a presence" on the album. Mitchell grew up on her parents' farm in Vermont, and although the tale is imaginary, she insists that "the sheep are real". As much is true of the deep emotional currents captured on a remarkable, genre-defying album.

## Q&A Annaïs Mitchell

### Is this another concept album?

It's not a narrative like *Hadestown*, more a meditation.

### The title track seems like an allegory for the USA.

It's certainly influenced by the recession. The idea of a father who's a repo man came from seeing people turned out on the streets with their furniture. Other lines got thrown away; people unable to pay for medicine, or spending Christmas on a Greyhound bus. There's a feeling the American is something of an orphan, that we can't trust we're going to be taken care of.

### Any event in your life that's triggered its themes?

My dad lost his dad recently and to see his loss was very affecting. "Shepherd" is based on a story he wrote at my age, 30. I'm not a mother yet and I'm not being parented. In the old days that time in life wasn't long, now it's stretched out. Maybe I'm longing for a place I'm not at.

### What's next?

I'm working on a collection of British Child Ballads. That has affected the way I write. I love the sound of old English language and the mix with US frontier language. INTERVIEW: NEIL SPENCER

## GOTYE

### Making Mirrors

COMMUNION/ISLAND

★★★★★

#### Belgian émigré on big-time brink with his fourth LP

For every successful Lana Del Rey, there are countless failures—proof that social-media interest can carry someone only so far. Melbourne-based multi-instrumentalist Wally De Backer, however, has enjoyed YouTube adulation, the patronage of Drew Barrymore and a No 1 single. As Gotye, he's developed a sophisticated but warm style of electronic pop that mixes sampling with live instrumentation, while acknowledging Peter Gabriel, Eurythmics and Paul Simon. The lustrous "In Your Light" alone should see his name on billboards. *Sharon O'Connell*

## NANCI GRIFFITH

### Intersection

PROPER

★★★★★

#### A great voice, again ill-served by its owner

Like many country artists of a certain age, Griffith has spent too much of her career deferring to the chimera of tastefulness. She does it again on "Intersection", her 20th studio album, and approximately her 20th that would have benefited from having a few corners left unsmoothed. Her voice has never suited a polished backdrop—it's a fractious, serrated instrument with enormous (and too often untapped) potential for expressing anguish and grief. She unshackles herself intermittently on "Intersection", to thrilling effect. "Hell No (I'm Not Alright)" is a snarling inversion of "Summertime Blues", and she does wonders with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's "Waitin' On A Dark-Eyed Girl". Too much of the rest is forgettable, however, and the self-penned "Bethlehem Steel" suggests she should give the socio-economic commentary a miss—intended as a Springsteenian elegy for the decline of working-class dignity, it sounds like a beer commercial. *Andrew Mueller*

## GRUPPO DI IMPROVVISAZIONE NUOVA CONSONANZA

### Niente

ROUNDTABLE/OMNI

★★★★★

#### The sound of '70s Italy, free-improv style

Gruppo Di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza are best known as one of Ennio Morricone's outfits, though their membership was a virtual who's-who of '60s and '70s Italian avant-garde. *Niente* is the previously unreleased '71 follow-up to the legendarily rare '68 LP *The Feedback*. Remarkably, this one bests its predecessor. It's an unruly beast, with free improv brass blurring over prepared piano, noise rupturing like broken glass, and some of the funkiest drumming to come straight outta academia. A wild ride. *Jon Dale*

## HARPERS BIZARRE

### Anything Goes [Deluxe Mono Edition] 1968

NOW SOUNDS/CHERRY RED

★★★★★

#### Kitchen sink psych: Sunshine Pop stalwarts' ambitious third long-player

The summer '67 arrival of *Sgt Pepper* at once resulted in some of the most oddball albums in pop history. For Santa Cruz quintet Harpers Bizarre—formerly surf group the Tikis—they became a Rorschach test for the aspirations of producer Lenny Waronker. Couched in lush arrangements, creamy harmonies and glistening strings, the material veers from obtuse covers (Doug Kershaw, Cole Porter) and cute '20s-style radio throwbacks, to intricate Beach Boys/Jan & Dean-type flourishes. All in all, though, *Anything Goes* is more arcane artefact than magnum opus. *Luke Torn*

## ISAAC HAYES

### Don't Let Go 1979

CHERRY RED

★★★★★

#### Expanded version of funk-disco hybrid

Although he'd been moving ever further from his signature elaborate orchestral funk, *Don't Let Go* found Hayes briefly revisiting the splendour of his days at Stax, his longterm home until 1975. Case in point is the 12-minute extended version title track (previously an MOR hit for vocal group Manhattan Transfer), on which he manages to dovetail the grandeur of his complex former glories to a leaner disco groove. However, the disco makeover of Peggy Lee's "Fever" doesn't quite gel, and sounds more like a novelty exercise one might expect from a lesser talent.

As is often the case, it's when Hayes allows his bass voice to freeform across epic ballads ("A Few More Kisses To Go", "Someone Will Take The Place Of You") that the listener is able to wallow in deep soul familiarity, but that's to take nothing away from the master's urgent brass arrangements and clipped rhythms.

*Terry Staunton*

## HOOD

### Recollected

DOMINO

★★★★★

#### 6CD set from the wintry Yorkshire miserablists

Before Domino Records signed Franz Ferdinand and the Arctic Monkeys, Hood were typical of the UK end of their roster, a Leeds group whose slowcore-tinged vignettes of their lives and surroundings were aptly encapsulated by the title of their 1998 record, *Rustic Houses, Forlorn Valleys*. This collection of four albums of Domino fare, plus EPs and extras, confirms that while never coming in sight of a hit single, their sensitive touch made for some exquisite melancholy. Their masterpiece remains 2001's *Cold House*, where spindly guitars and strings are augmented by clicks, cuts and doleful raps from Doseone and Why? of Anticon. *Louis Pattison*



## HANNE HUKKELBERG

### Featherbrain

PROPELLER RECORDINGS

★★★★★

#### Delicately anthemic fourth from versatile Norwegian

Akin to fellow high-pitched, slightly dotty female Scandos like Maja Ratkje, Jenny Hval and Björk, Hukkelberg adds another to her already impressive catalogue. The nursery nap-time vocals of her earlier work are still here, but with rougher tones added, as on "My Devils" where she channels early Liz Fraser. Delicacy and doom also duel on the backing, with thumb pianos and videogame tones rubbing



Hanne Hukkelberg: delicacy and doom

against booming drums and bells. A duet with her 88-year-old neighbour ends proceeding on a ghostly whistle—the creepy house at the end of this album's winding path.

*Ben Beaumont-Thomas*

## MICHAEL HURLEY

### Fatboy Spring

SECRET SEVEN/MISSISSIPPI

★★★★★

#### More uncovered gems of downhome Americana

Michael Hurley is one of the great journeymen of American music. From Folkways to free-folk, he's been an idiosyncratic yet central presence in the folk underground, which perfectly suits his songs, full of wry, observational humour. *Fatboy Spring* resurrects some previously unreleased '70s cuts with the group he christened Automatic Slim & The Fatboys, and it's a quietly riotous set of slow-breathing, deceptively simple tunes. There's something beautifully colloquial about these songs, with Michael Hurley's flair for the everyday shining through the group's rough-housing harmonies. *Jon Dale*

## JANIS IAN

### Best Of Janis Ian

EDSEL

★★★★★

#### Respectful retrospective of veteran singer-songwriter

It's not difficult to admire Janis Ian, whose stop-start, 45-year career has always seen her take on the mantle

of a cultural and social provocateur, yet her recordings are far from satisfying. Stylistically she can shift almost too easily from the country of "My Tennessee Hills" to the Giorgio Moroder pop of "Fly Too High" but where's the true Janis Ian? Slightly loaded towards her later work, the familiar hits—"Society's Child", "At Seventeen", "Jesse"—are dutifully present on this upgrade of 2008's *The Essential Janis Ian*. The bonus DVD of live performances from 1979 reveals a warmer, more intimate artist. *Mick Houghton*

## ITAL

### Hive Mind

PLANET MU

★★★★★

#### Mi Ami and Sex Worker producer goes deep house

"Hipster house" is the slightly snotty term given to a wave of US underground artists who have started folding house and techno into their work—Ital is one of the main players, having released the inaugural 12" on key label 100% Silk. While house purists might find it juvenile, and there are some aimless passages, the lo-fi production is beautiful, recalling the aquatic pastures of early Aphex Twin and Drexciya. With the brittle snares and boiled-down samples of Chicago's juke scene also added, as well as the vintage washes of Oneohtrix Point Never, this is a genuinely fresh hybrid. *Ben Beaumont-Thomas*

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# Debuts The best new music

## DJANGO DJANGO

**Django Django**

BECAUSE



**Spirited art-rock from swashbuckling quartet.**

*By Piers Martin*



YOU DON'T NEED to be Sarah Lund to detect the fingerprints of The Beta Band on fellow Scots adventurers Django Django. The

cavalier, mix'n'match approach to songwriting and live performance, the way a percussive tattoo named "Zumm Zumm" dissolves into tear-stained campfire singalong, the art-school bloody-mindedness – it's writ large across the newcomers' enormously enjoyable self-titled debut.

Nor has it gone unnoticed that Django Django's drummer and driving force, David Maclean, is the younger brother of The Beta Band's programmer and art director John Maclean. Their parents, perhaps, have a cracking record collection, and, noting his sibling's career choices, presumably David now has a good idea of how far a canny outfit like Django Django can push things. "You should never be afraid to make a fool of yourself for art," he said in a recent interview. Realising that opener "Hail Bop" could be an Everly Brothers number, he clearly means it.

Connected to no scene in particular, the four Djangos – Maclean, singer and guitarist Vincent Neff, bassist Jimmy Dixon and keyboardist Tommy Grace – met at art



school in Edinburgh and regrouped a couple of years ago when each member had drifted down to London. There, in his Dalston bedroom, Maclean took his time to piece together and produce a record that draws heavily on the music he loves to DJ – vintage soul and funk, Bo Diddley and disco – while scooping up the twang of The Shadows, Beach Boys harmonies and glam-rock's swagger, all with one eye on the dancefloor in the style of, say, Hot Chip or labelmates Metronomy.

So the discernible influences pile up, then, but Django Django are skilful enough to draw the strands together and thread a generous melody through each of the 13 tracks, Neff's searching vocal lending the likes of "Firewater", "Love's Dart" and "Silver Rays" that dolorous quality beloved of The Beta Band. Above all, this handsome debut bristles with ideas that could lead to some truly remarkable music later on.

## SINGLES BAR

The all-new **Matador Singles Club** launches in unexpectedly hard-rocking fashion this month, with **Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks** enthusiastically covering LA Guns' 1989 hair metal classic "Wheels On Fire" with the aid of Jesper Eklow from Endless Boogie. Even more bodacious is the fact that **LA Guns** have reciprocated by reworking Malkmus' "Gorgeous Georgie" on the flip, which they do magnificently. The **Too Pure Singles Club** has already been active for a couple of years, and its first release of 2012 is "Om Mani Peme Hung" by Icelandic trio **Dead Skeletons**. The title is a Tibetan Buddhist mantra, while musically the song locks readily into a sinewy spacerock groove nicely reminiscent of '90s Krautrockers Quickspace, and Wooden Ships.

**Toy** (pictured) are a new Horrors-endorsed London outfit formed from the ashes of short-lived indie-



### EMELI SANDÉ

**Our Version Of Events**

EMI



**Hugely hyped Brits winner makes disappointing debut** "Heaven", the first track on Emeli Sandé's debut album, leads the listener up the garden path, seemingly paving the way for a series of similarly exhilarating fist-pumping club classics in the mould of Massive Attack's "Unfinished Sympathy". Venture further into *Our Version Of Events*, however, and it's clear that Sandé, the winner of this year's Critic's Choice Award at the Brits, has in fact modelled herself on Leona Lewis with a series of sappy ballads bulging with lyrical truisms and begging to be performed in billowing frocks with gallons of dry ice. Shame.

*Fiona Sturges*

### KEATON HENSON

**Dear**

OAK TEN/ATC



**Frank bedsit confessions from fragile-voiced London songwriter**

Home-recorded Lindsey Buckingham-style with nothing but an old cupboard for percussion and noises courtesy of the Heathrow flight path, Henson's self-released first single "You Don't Know How Lucky You Are" became a cult radio hit last year – and the good news is it's not even the best song on his debut album. In a voice so fragile he makes Nick Drake sound like Meatloaf, songs such as "Not That You'd Even Notice" and "Charon" find him singing of romantic agony, anxiety and isolation so candidly that you feel guilty for invading his privacy. *Nigel Williamson*

### TRIBES

**Baby**

ISLAND



**Swaggering indie anthems from the last band in Camden**

North London's Tribes are a throwback to a time when the pop charts welcomed pouting young guitar bands with open arms. Essentially they're a slightly grungier Razorlight, with all the intoxicating self-belief, occasionally brilliant tunes and routinely awful lyrics that implies (as chat-ups go, "Do my pheromones make you happy?" needs some work). Tribes belt out these familiar coming-of-age anthems with admirable gusto. Yet they're not quite smart enough to offer anything new, and already it feels like they're playing to a rapidly disappearing crowd. *Sam Richards*

### HOSPITALITY

**Hospitality**

MERGE



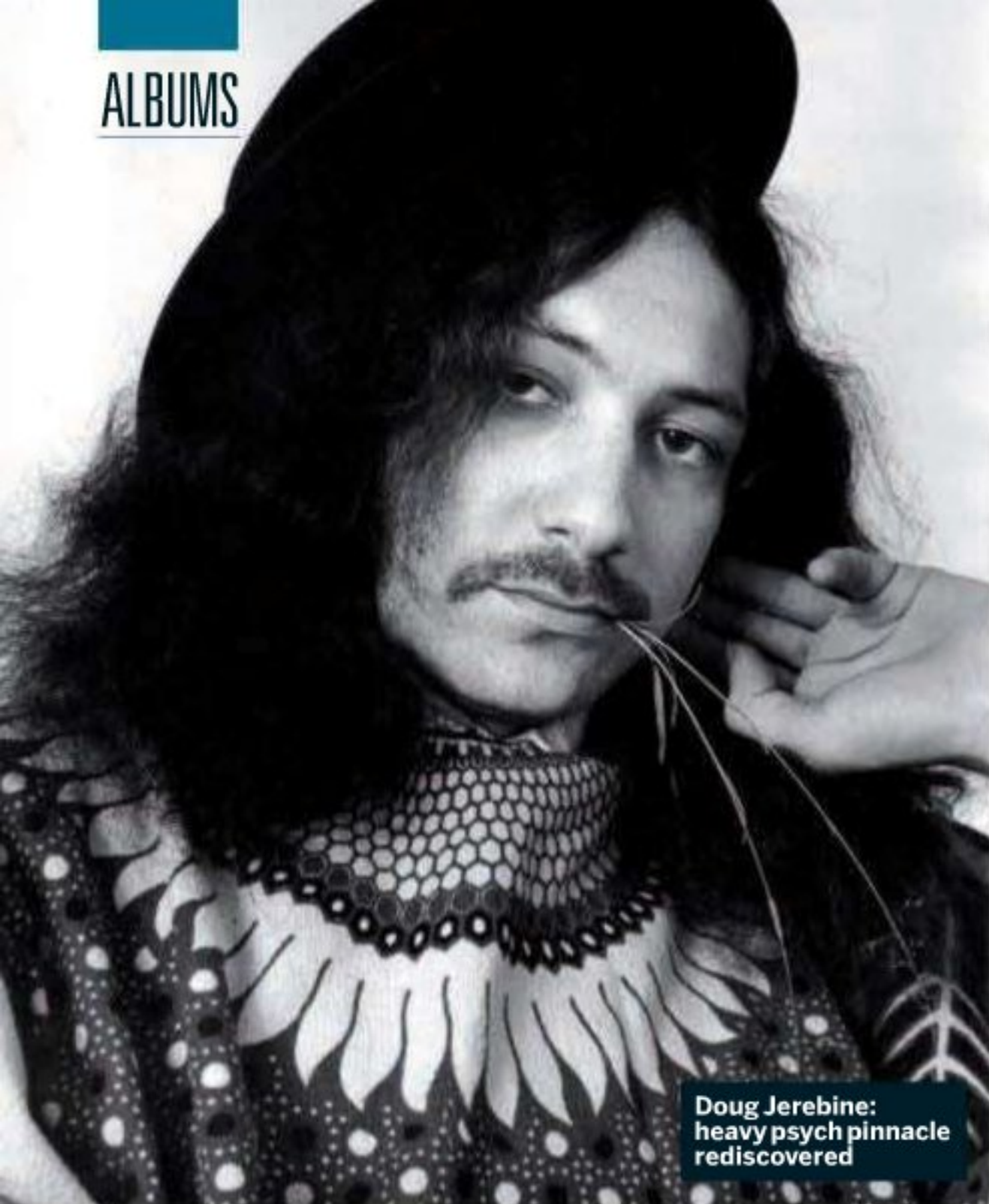
**New-ish Brooklyn band are a promising work in progress**

Hospitality's full-length debut thrums with the street-level energy of NYC, which provides the backdrop for several of gamine Amber Papini's songs. The high-IQ of early Talking Heads powers "Friends Of Friends", while the elliptical character sketch "Betty Wang" recalls Fountains Of Wayne. Some of the arrangements – dominated by the playing of multi-instrumentalist Nate Michel – are busier than they need to be. They're at their most appealing when they keep the focus tight, as on the laser-beam rockers "The Right Profession" and "The Birthday".

*Bud Scoppa*

pop sensations Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong (minus Joe Lean himself). But try not to hold that against them – "Left Myself Behind" **HEAVENLY** is a valiant new beginning, its gloomy guitars and gratuitous noisy coda unable to disguise the band's pop smarts. XL's Richard Russell and Rodaigh McDonald were both part of last year's Damon Albarn-led DRC Music project, but that wasn't the pair's first African jaunt – in 2010 they visited Addis Ababa under the name **Fresh Touch** to record "The Ethiopian EP" **ANGULAR** with a bunch of local musicians. "Harar Rhythm" is a pungent waft of electro-funk voodoo just begging for an MIA vocal.

*SAM RICHARDS*



Doug Jerebine:  
heavy psych pinnacle  
rediscovered

## DOUG JEREBINE

...Is Jesse Harper

DRAG CITY

★★★★★

**Mind-burning Kiwi psych finally goes legit**

The story of the... *Jesse Harper* album is a classic 'lost '60s masterpiece' tale, with guitarist Jerebine moving to the UK, cutting one classic chunk of psych-rock that easily equals Hendrix's finest moments, and then turning his back on the scene to join the Hare Krishna movement. Originally bootlegged from a rare acetate in the '90s, now released legitimately, it's a real pinnacle of the heavy psych movement, Jerebine playing with fiery insistence. With any luck, this one'll re-write some history books for good. *Jon Dale*

## JETHRO TULL

**Aqualung 40th Anniversary Collector's Edition** 1971

EMI

★★★★★

**Multi-formatted watershed album from the mighty Tull**

It tends to be forgotten that Jethro Tull once breathed new life into the tired and formulaic British blues boom with their singular '68 debut, *This Was*. Three years and three albums later, *Aqualung* retained some of those blues-based elements but, more significantly, it was the first of Ian Anderson's much maligned concept albums loftily exploring pro-God/anti-religious themes. *Aqualung* was no self-indulgent broadside, though, even if it did signal Anderson's descent into

pretentiousness. It includes some of Tull's finest songs in "My God" and "Locomotive Breath" but, whatever it unleashed, *Aqualung* was where Tull's then-daring mix of hard rock and folk melodies reached its apotheosis. *Mick Houghton*

## JO JO GUNNE

**Jo Jo Gunne** 1972

EDSEL

★★★★

**Beefy rock workouts from Cali boogie merchants**

After the psych-prog leanings of Spirit, keyboard player Jay Ferguson and bassist Mark Andes opted for a more streamlined, no-nonsense sound for their next band. Andes' guitarist brother Matt was integral to the driving barroom rock shapes, pitching Jo Jo Gunne's 1972 self-titled debut towards fans of the then-massive CCR. This two-disc set includes all four of the group's albums, with '73's *Bite Down Hard* the synth-heavy sore thumb of the bunch. Their '74 swansong *So Where's The Show?*, with Ferguson the only surviving original member, is arguably their most accomplished collection, "She Said Alright" and "Falling Angel" becoming enduring AOR radio staples. *Terry Staunton*

## EYVIND KANG

**The Narrow Garden**

IPECAC

★★★★★

**Exotic pastorals and choral works by Seattle composer**

Kang is very much a musician's musician, having chalked up guest spots and collaborations with the likes

of Sunn O))), Laura Veirs, Mike Patton and Bill Frisell. Here, though, we find the multi-instrumentalist in his natural habitat, leading a band in seven pieces that blend Eastern-tinged melody, courtly medieval music and modern composition. The highlights, invariably, feature the vocals of Jessika Kenney, whose high, keening voice floats like a spectre over winding flute, woodwind; most notably, the solemn, Popol Vuh-ish "Mineralia". *Louis Pattison*

## JO ANN KELLY

**Key To The Highway** 1999

SUPERBIRD

★★★★★

**Streatham's own Memphis Minnie**

South London-born Kelly was without doubt the most expressive female British blues singer of her time. Yet none of her albums – recorded between her self-titled 1969 debut and premature death in 1990 – consistently capture the gritty power of her singing. This collection of rare recordings from 1968-1975, first released in 1999, is arguably the finest representation of her work during what are deemed Kelly's best years. Largely acoustic Delta-style blues, sometimes backed by Tony McPhee, pianist Bob Hall or her own underrated slide guitar, Kelly's huge voice and presence is thrilling and authentic. The unaccompanied "Levee Camp Holler" is simply stunning. *Mick Houghton*

## BEN KWELLER

**Go Fly A Kite**

THE NOISE COMPANY

★★★★★

**Former wunderkind still boyishly endearing on fifth solo set**

After a side trip into country on 2009's *Changing Horses*, the onetime leader of the teenage band Radish returns to the recipe he cooked up on his delightful self-titled 2006 LP, doling out crunchy rockers and dreamy ballads that showcase his ingenuous vocals and neoclassic impulses. The jubilantly kickass "Mean To Me" meshes a Velvets-meet-T.Rex groove with Stones-y horn stabs, the ramshackle waltz "Gossip" sports a rousing Dylan-esque bridge, the earnest "I Miss You"

blossoms into lush Beach Boys harmonies. A veteran at the age of 30, Kweller is a disarming presence and an unpretentious sonic architect. *Bud Scoppa*

## THE LAW

**Trigger**

LOCAL BOY RECORDS

★★★★★

**Fiercely confident Scottish trio tread a familiar path**

Oasis may be gone, yet their shadow still looms over indie rock, and Dundee's The Law can't quite emerge from it. Their second album suffers from an over-familiar cockiness designed for festival crowds, and "Paraglide"'s Gallagherisms are surely a step too far, like The Beatles phoned in with two cans and some string. They're redeemed by "Gimme Some Love", a jaunty, laidback opener, while "No Surprises" offers a sax-heavy glam swagger and "Letter" suggests a sympathetic tender side. But though there's plenty of craft in their songwriting, it doesn't feel quite like their own. *Wyndham Wallace*



## LINDA LEWIS

**Lark** 1972

BBR

★★★★★

**Enduring vibrant pop from genre-crossing songstress**

First in a series of reissues of Lewis' Reprise albums, this adds her breakthrough hit "Rock A Doodle Doo", a typically effervescent performance showing off Lewis' wide vocal range. Originally released in 1972, *Lark* established Lewis as a songwriter who, like Leslie Duncan, had a background in pop rather than folk. It helps explain the genres Lewis straddles, freely mixing folk, pop, jazz and soul, positioned somewhere between Joni Mitchell and Minnie Riperton. At her best – the warm, soulful "Reach For The Truth" or more simplistic, folksy "It's The Frame" – Lewis is hard to resist.

*Mick Houghton*

## LINDSTRØM

**Six Cups Of Rebel**

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

★★★★

**Nordic space cadet charts the dark matter of prog disco**

Despite his recent acclaim as cosmic disconaut and, on 2010's sparkling *Real Life Is No Cool*, dance-pop auteur, Lindstrøm began life in a Deep Purple tribute band. This goes some way to explaining the turn on his second solo album, which begins with a five-minute church organ workout and grows only more prog, brewing a heady fusion of funk chops, 808 basslines and noodling. At times, as on "De Javu", it's a dazzling new dimension, but some may await his return to more conventional zones.

*Stephen Troussé*

## LOOPS OF YOUR HEART And Never Ending Nights

MAGAZINE

★★★★★

**Deluxe chillax sounds from Nordic electronica boffin**

Recording under various guises, Sweden's Axel Willner is most famous for his highly manicured techno-tronic dance tracks as The Field. Now resident in Germany, his latest project strips away the beats and slows the tempo, creating sumptuous ambient sound paintings with vintage analogue synths and heavily processed guitars. Willner hits a few gorgeous highs, notably with the rippling minimalism of "End" and the heart-tugging 11-minute epic "Cries", a softly pulsing lava-lamp of woozy drone-tronica which puts the sublime into subliminal. *Stephen Dalton*

## LOWRY

**Emporia**

ENGINE ROOM RECORDINGS

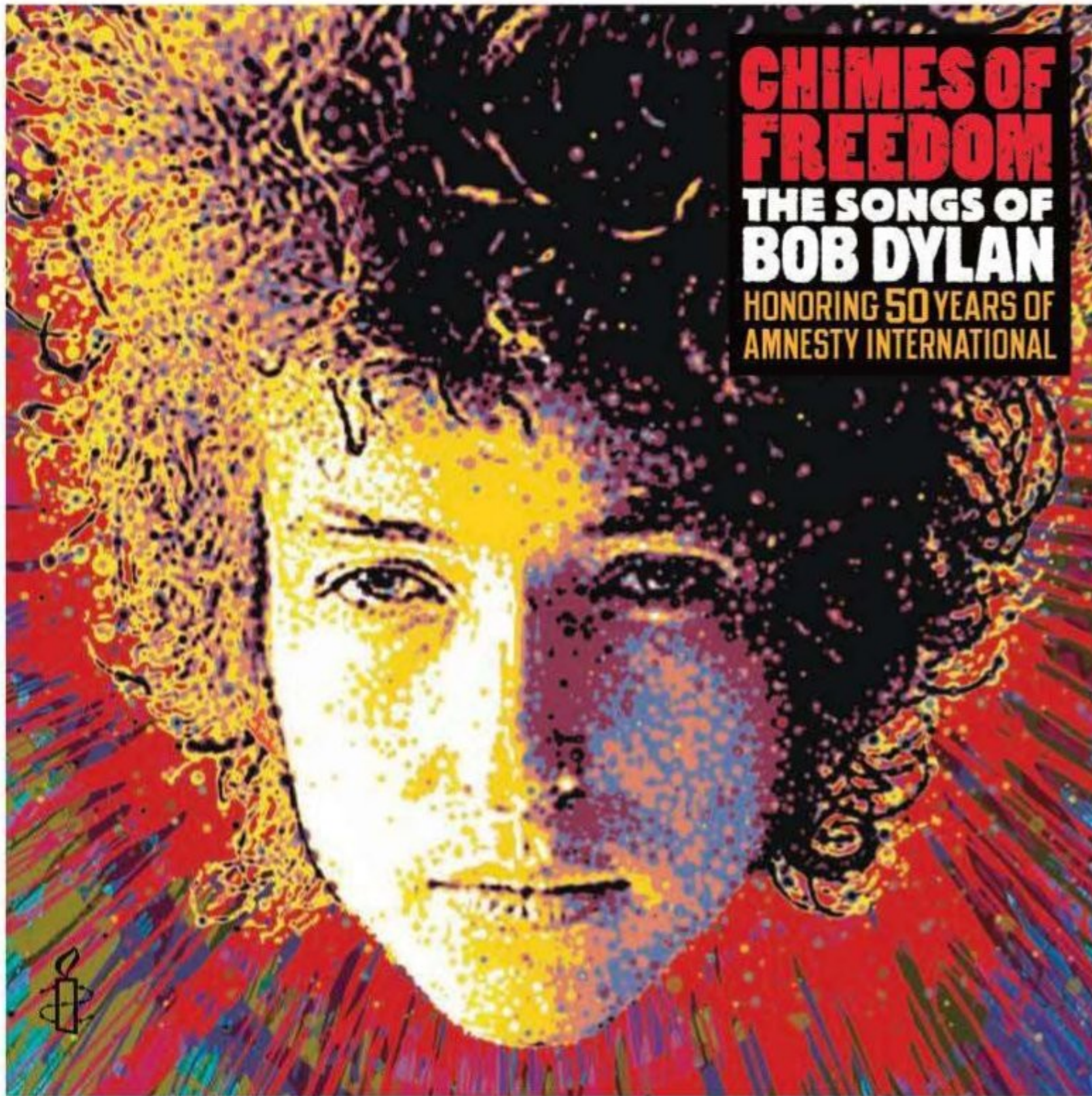
★★★★★

**Last chapter in personal trilogy for Brooklyn rockers**

Chameleons of sorts, Lowry have been tagged as anything from NYC anti-folksters to electropop mavens. The sprawling *Emporia* is just as elusive, its songs never quite resorting to mere convention. But, alternating a wintry, wispy sound, brittle melodies and jagged guitars with singer Alex Lowry's affable persona and singular lyrics, repeated listens reveal depth of vision. They're best when they add a little rhythmic kick, though – "Thunderbird Trailer Court" is the go-to cut. *Luke Torn*

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Mouse On Mars: still following the same electronica back road

## RAUL MALO Around The World

FANTASY

★★★★

**Ex-Mavericks vocalist shines accompanied by orchestra**

Possessed of an impressive power and reach, the real magic in Malo's mighty baritone is his delicate phrasing. This one-off concert recorded in Gateshead last July features solo and Mavericks hits and covers including a sumptuous rendering of Rodgers & Hammerstein's "Indian Love Call". Whether tackling the dreamy waltz of "L'Appuntamento", the sprightly, foot-stomping "I Said I Love You" or the hot-blooded palpitations of "Bésame Mucho", Malo has the stamp of a seasoned interpreter, always lending extra sparkle to the most familiar tune.

Gavin Martin

## SCOTT MATTHEWS What The Night Delivers

SAN REMO

★★★★

**Wolverhampton troubadour hits the heights**

After two albums on Island, who thought they'd signed a homegrown Jeff Buckley, Matthews finds himself back on the tiny label that launched him six years ago. That means no celeb guests like Robert Plant, who appeared on 2009's *Elsewhere*. But he may not be unhappy with the outcome: freed from big label expectations he's come up with his most assured set yet. On songs such as the autobiographical "Myself Again", his high, ethereal voice resonates achingly over cellist Danny Keane's string arrangements, while the gossamer beauty of "So Long, My Moonlight" finally lives up to those Buckley comparisons.

Nigel Williamson

## MEMORYHOUSE The Slideshow Effect

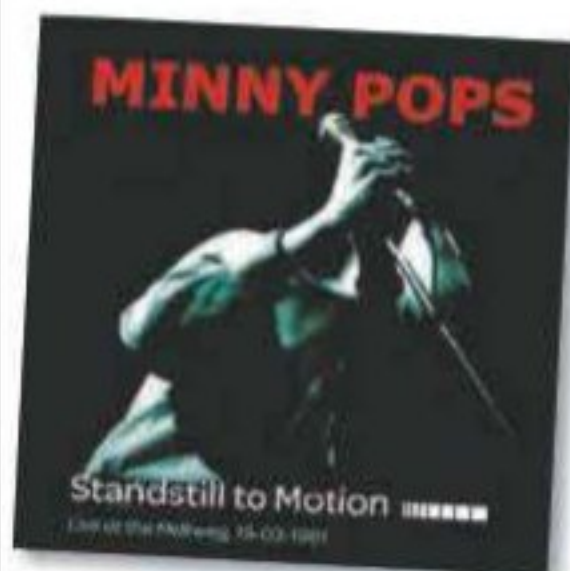
SUB POP

★★★★

**Simple elegance from former multimedia project**

Though they take their name from Max Richter's 2002 debut album, Ontario duo Evan Abeele and Denise Nouvion's debut full-length is far from experimental, instead recalling the warm, breezy charms of labelmates Beach House. Nouvion's vocals, curiously detached and yet engaging, hover gently over Abeele's sparse instrumentation, his quietly jangling guitars occasionally embellished by delicate touches of steel amid "Bonfire"'s nostalgia and "Punctum"'s charming modesty. There are also hints of more dynamic tendencies on the closing "Old Haunts", which builds from Slowdive at their most dreamy to a powerful, if brief, climax.

Wyndham Wallace



## MINNY POPS Standstill To Motion

LTM

★★★★

**Factory oddballs' lost Dutch masters**

Recording for Factory was the making of Amsterdam analogue experimentalists the Minny Pops, but it was an opportunity that came with strings attached; yes, they became the first Dutch act to record a Peel session, but – as this live CD and DVD combo underlines – Wally Van Middendorp's post-punk art-project was too weird and wild to thrive in New Order's

shadow. Immortalising the lineup that recorded that November 1980 BBC session but dissolved before 1982's under-the-radar masterwork *Sparks In A Dark Room*, the glowering "Tracking" captures the quintessence of their Human League klang and Pere Ubu klang.

Jim Wirth

## DAVE MONOLITH Welcome

REPHLEX

★★★★

**Classy intro to West Country knob-twiddler**

While the world waits for new Aphex Twin material, his label Rephlex fills the gap by peddling the occasional producer who sounds quite like him. Nothing wrong with that, particularly when they've the programming chops of local talent such as Wiltshire's David "Monolith" Barnard. *Welcome* showcases Barnard's flair for nimble funk and jazzy toplines, and draws attention to his enlightened approach to songwriting: "Vortexeur" and "Zunker" will spice up any dancefloor yet the casual way these elegantly unravel suggests Barnard has dozens more aces up his sleeve.

Piers Martin

## MOUSE ON MARS Parastrophies

MONKEYTOWN

★★★★

**German glitch vets soldier on**

Last heard in 2007 as Von Südenfed helping Mark E Smith on to the dancefloor, after 18 years together Düsseldorf duo Mouse On Mars have burrowed so far into their own niche they've lost their bearings. With its fidgety electronica and shredded rave, 11th album *Parastrophies* might've raised eyebrows in 1996, but today there are few Spotify playlists that would unironically accommodate squiggly chip-tunes like "Gearknot Cherry"

and "Imatch". Yet when Andi Toma and Jan St Werner strip it back, as on "Weinuss", their touch is immaculate.

Piers Martin

## MARK MULHOLLAND The Cactus And The Dragon

CANNERY ROW

★★★★

**Well-travelled Glaswegian takes time off from his Two Dollar Bash band**

Among the million Dylan copyists, Mulholland may be the first deliberately to cultivate the hoarse croak of "Love And Theft"-era Bob. A ripe collection of restless tales-from-the-road, the default style on his second solo LP is classic American roots-rock, heard to best effect on the laconic "Why'd You Treat Me This Way", an inspired homage to Dylan's "Things Have Changed". But there are shredding psych guitars on "Floodgates" and the title track, jangle-pop on "Something New" and Jansch-like fingerpicking on "Another Falling Star".

Nigel Williamson

## NAUGHTY BY NATURE Anthem Inc

ENTERTAINMENT ONE

★★

**Hip hop stars reunite and re-record hits for 20th-anniversary outing**

Seeking to stake a claim on their influential status, Treach, Kay Gee and Vin Roc's first album together since 1999 uneasily straddles their past and present. Packed with second string guest stars (Joe, Jaheim and early associate Queen Latifah), new material such as "Perfect Party" are passable entrees into the modern rap R&B crossover market. Sped-up remakes of "O.P.P." and "Hip Hop Hooray" sound like after thoughts, adding nothing to the originals. Overall the sound of an outfit who feel they've nothing left to prove. An anti-climax.

Gavin Martin

## BILL NELSON The Practice Of Everyday Life

ESOTERIC RECORDINGS

★★★★

**Long overdue overview of Be-Bop Deluxe man's oeuvre** Following the oft-derivative flamboyance of Be-Bop Deluxe, Nelson's career ripened after 1981's *Quit Dreaming And Get On The Beam*. Since then his solo work has been consistently

absorbing but overlooked compared to contemporaries Eno, Fripp or Sylvian. This 8CD box revels in ambient and oriental compositions, stirring guitar pieces and creative curveballs like '96's Kerouac-inspired, drum'n'bass-influenced *After The Satellite Sings*. The cottage industry recordings since 2003 for Sonoluxe, Nelson's mail-order label, are particularly impressive, none better than *Rosewood's* uncharacteristic acoustic improvs. Mick Houghton

## NEWAGE STEPPERS Love Forever

ON-U SOUND

★★★★

**Ari Slit's final testament**

Remembering Ari Up, the manic, Germanic Slits vocalist who died in 2010 aged 48, foundation New Age Stepper Adrian Sherwood recalled her "almost unhinged enthusiasm" for music. This collaboration with On-U Sound's in-house collective was completed as she was battling terminal illness, and while only valedictory instrumental "Death Of The Trees" matches up to her best work – 1981's afro-dub apocalypse, *Return Of The Giant Slits* – cancer clearly did not temper her nutty dreadlocks style. Rinky-dink dancehall rhythms spliced with space invaders techno, *Love Forever* captures the one-time Notting Hellion's wildcat glee if not her spooky otherness. Fervently good rather than wildly revelatory. Jim Wirth

## NNEKA Soul Is Heavy

DECON

★★★★

**Nigerian-born soul songstress takes wing**

Songs in Igbo with lyrics about African corruption have in the past seen Nneka filed in the world music racks. In truth, she sits proudly in the post-Lauryn Hill school of soul divas rather than the Afrobeat traditions of Fela Kuti, and *Soul Is Heavy* should end any confusion. From roots-reggae opener "Lucifer" and the slamming hip hop beats of "Sleep" (feat Ms Dynamite), to the subtle Baduisms of "Don't Even Think" and the title track, this is urban-global rather than world music. If you want a specifically African analogue, a female K'Naan is probably the closest. Nigel Williamson



## Q&A Jay Farrar

### How would you quantify the continuing influence of Guthrie on American music?

Woody seems to be that elemental source that had a ripple effect on American music. The ethos and musical aesthetic of Woody influenced the folk movement of the '50s, which in turn inspired Dylan. Woody might not have been the first person to write protest songs but he did show that music can have a powerful effect for generations down the line. When Woody didn't like the status quo he wrote a song with the intent to change it.

### How intimidating or otherwise is the task of writing music for Guthrie's lyrics?

Maybe the initial walk up the steps to the archives was intimidating, but after finding inspiration in his philosophy and work ethic, the music seemed already written.

### How much unused Guthrie stuff is still awaiting examination?

Woody was prolific in a way that all writers can aspire to. Will, Anders, Jim and I only made it through a fraction of the material. The archives are ready for the next in line.

### How did you reconcile the influences and ideas of the four contributors?

There was never any masterplan; the project came to fruition through happenstance and visceral propulsion. From the start it seemed an approach that didn't focus on any singular theme or sound would be the best. There is a breadth to Woody's artwork and songs that was apparent after visiting the archives. Woody wasn't afraid to tackle any subject from STDs to prostitution to street drugs. I guess our job here, which we found along the way, was to show another side of Woody Guthrie. INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER

# JAY FARRAR, WILL JOHNSON, ANDERS PARKER, YIM YAMES

**New Multitudes** ROUNDER ★★★★★

Alt.Americana supergroup finish what their Daddy started. Good stuff, says *Andrew Mueller*



HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE BEGAN its slow, remorseless work of destroying Woody Guthrie, physically and mentally, in the late 1940s, just prior to the advent of the technology that might have permitted the capture of definitive, more or less modern-sounding versions of his songs. However, the fact that Guthrie's original canon exists primarily as scratchy, lo-fi, live-to-tape performance – and unrecorded, unfinished scrawlings in notebooks – has kind of worked to its benefit, permitting uncountable successors the space to rework and interpret.

Farrar, Johnson, Parker and Yames indisputably possess the necessary qualifications. Their combined histories in Son Volt, Gob Iron, Uncle Tupelo, Centro-matic and My Morning Jacket were at least sufficient to impress Nora Guthrie, Woody's daughter and custodian of his archives, who allowed the quartet to fossick through her father's scrap-books in search of snippets worth vivifying.

*New Multitudes* is scarcely the first such project. Billy Bragg and Wilco (alma mater of Farrar's former Uncle Tupelo compadre Jeff Tweedy) recorded two sets of previously unheard Guthrie lyrics under the *Mermaid Avenue* marque. Jonatha Brooke did something similar with *The Works*, The Klezmatics on *Wonder Wheel* and *Happy Joyous Hanukkah*. All faced the same challenge – that of paying due respect to a

titanic figure while summoning the nerve to stamp their own mark. Farrar, Johnson, Parker and Yames manage this with almost supernatural ease, though this may say at least as much about the adaptability and accessibility of Guthrie's writing as it does about them.

There are 12 tracks on *New Multitudes* (and a further 11 on a bonus disc issued with the limited edition). In no case have messrs Farrar, Johnson, Parker and Yames done the easy, obvious thing (ersatz campfire singalong) or the obtuse, perverse thing (attempting to haul Guthrie's words beyond their natural milieu of recognisable Americana). Opener "Hoping Machine", indeed, is irresistibly evocative of Uncle Tupelo at their more stately, Farrar lending a song of optimism-despite-it-all ("Don't let any earthly calamity knock your dreamer and your hoping machine"), an appropriately striving melody and hesitant arrangement. The four collaborators split lead vocal duties equally. In general, Farrar's songs tend toward the gently pugnacious, Johnson's to the sombre and guttural, Parker's to amiably ragged country rock, Yames' to ambitious excursions to the edge of where Guthrie's songs might feel comfortable ("Changing World" is rendered as a punky, snotty lament sounding curiously, and curiously aptly, like Wreckless Eric; "My Revolutionary Mind" is a string-soaked ballad that builds to a cacophonous climax before cutting out with a suddenness not heard since Dinosaur Jr's "Just Like Heaven").

Inevitably, *New Multitudes* is essentially an exercise in imagining how these songs might have sounded had their author lived long

enough to record them. It says much for the chops and the passion brought to the project by the quartet, that Woody Guthrie also becomes a Slobberbone-style alt.country snarler (Johnson's "VD City"), a Jackson Browne-variety West Coast balladeer (Parker's "Fly High"), a swaggering Tom Petty-ish Southern rocker (Parker's "Angel's Blues"), or a reverent dustblown roots crooner very much in the vein of, funnily enough, Son Volt (Farrar's closing title track).

Any approach of Guthrie's legacy is a step into a long, dark shadow – he is, along with his approximate contemporaries Robert Johnson and Hank Williams, no more or less than a founding father of modern American popular song. But his work endures because of its essential big-hearted hospitality – and Farrar, Johnson, Parker and Yames have made themselves right at home.



Sinéad O'Connor: still brave, still belligerent

## NOUVELLE VAGUE

### Version Française

KWAIDAN

★★★★

Waggish Gallic covers band turn their hand to French punk

This French outfit first caught our attention by transforming English post-punk classics into bossa-tinged Left Bank whimsy. Now they do the same with French new wave songs of a slightly later vintage. Their unfamiliarity (Wunderbach? Indochine?) means that these unorthodox versions lack the necessary cognitive dissonance for most rosbif listeners: still, Etienne Daho's "Le Week-End À Rome" (featuring Vanessa Paradis) and TC Matic's "Putain Putain" (with Camille) are both sublime. *John Lewis*

## HEATHER NOVA

### 300 Days At Sea

SALTWATER

★★★★

Belated full distribution for 2011 privately released studio album

As a child the Bermuda-based Nova grew up on a boat in the Caribbean and it was the discovery of its wreckage on the seabed that inspired her to pen these dozen songs about memory and loss. After 2008's insipid *The Jasmine Flower*, tracks such as "Beautiful Ride" mark a return to the upbeat guitar-rock of successful '90s albums such as *Oyster* and *Siren* on which she predated the likes of Dido and KT Tunstall. If the band setting best suits the rock-chick

bravura of her elastic voice, piano ballad "Good Ship Moon" displays her reflective side to equally potent effect. *Nigel Williamson*

## SINEAD O'CONNOR

### How About I Be Me (And You Be You)?

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

★★★★

Pop eccentric reunites with first husband and producer John Reynolds

Her messy private/public life will lead many to analyse this as a psychological case-file, although its most apparently soul-baring track, "Queen Of Denmark" ("I wanted to change the world/but I couldn't even change my underwear") is actually a John Grant cover. Opener "4th And Vine" reads like a girl dreaming of marriage, set to a Celtic dub backing. Elsewhere we have veiled digs at Bono ("VIP"), meditations on motherhood ("I Had A Baby") and attacks on the Vatican ("Take Off Your Shoes"). Brave and bonkers. *John Lewis*

## OF MONTREAL

### Paralytic Stalks

POLYVINYL

★★★★

More paisley-shirted torment for Elephant 6 affiliate

After the funky interlude of 2010's *False Priest*, the Athens, GA mutants return to the gates of psychedelic delirium for their 11th LP, with Kevin Barnes bemoaning his mental state while Todd Rundgren's *A Wizard, A True Star* decomposes behind him. "Lately all I can produce

is psychotic vitriol", he worries on the typically schizoid "Spiteful Intervention", setting the tone for the unhappy – but never tiresome – racket that follows. If you sat through 2007's *Hissing Fauna, Are You The Destroyer?*, you will know what to expect – in this mood, 57 minutes with Barnes is exhausting. *Jim Wirth*

## O'HOOLEY & TIDOW

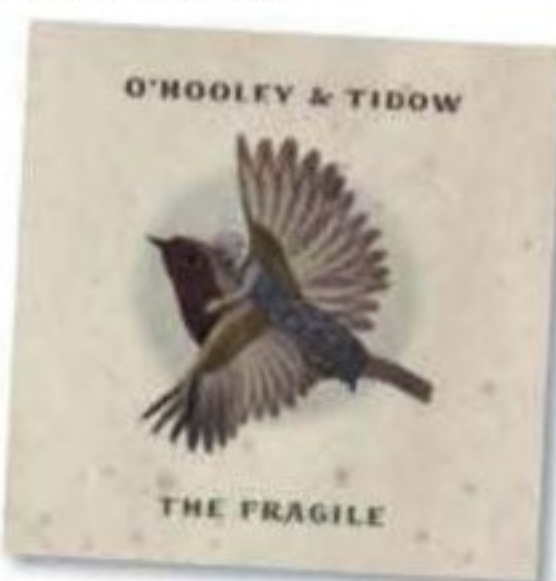
### The Fragile

NO MASTERS

★★★★

Not for the faint-hearted

A former member of The Unthanks, Belinda O'Hooley was responsible for some of the key songs on their breakthrough album *The Bairns*, before leaving in 2007 to team up with fellow Yorkshire singer-songwriter Heidi Tidow. Two years on from their persistently dark debut *Silent June*, this is initially less forbidding but gathers intensity with the dramatic "Mein Deern" and "Ronnie's Song", both accounts of their character's dying moments. The duo's self-written, reflective songs are heightened by stark but beguiling arrangements and their stirring voices. *Mick Houghton*



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

### These Things Too/ The Use Of Ashes

FLOATING WORLD

★★★★

Melancholy Rapp music

After two eerie albums for ESP, Pearls Before Swine found an unlikely home with Reprise Records. 1969's transitional *These Things Too* was patchy, and by *The Use Of Ashes*, only idiosyncratic singer-songwriter Tom Rapp remained. The tracks, written in Holland, were recorded in Nashville with the Area Code 615 musicians who expertly create a distinctly European flavour. The affecting "The Jeweler" is full of Old World charm while "Rocket Man", inspired by Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man*, influenced Bernie Taupin's song of the same name. *Mick Houghton*

## SHORT CUTS

### Jazz/funk/soul



## LUIS GASCA

### Collage

BGP

★★★★

This Texan trumpeter is best known as a sidekick to Santana, Stan Kenton and Mongo Santamaria. His second LP as

a leader features Herbie Hancock's drummer Harvey Mason, who lends a heavy Headhunters feel to several tracks. Lavish string arrangements make much of it a little cloying, but the closing Latin-jazz version of Stevie Wonder's "Visions" is a corker. *John Lewis*



## FREDDIE HUBBARD

### Splash

BGP

★★★★

By 1981, this legendary hard bop trumpeter hadn't entirely given up jazz – he also cut a cracking LP for Enja called *Outpost*

– but his focus was on slick LA jazz-funk sessions like this, featuring drummer James Gadson and *Thriller* guitarist Paul Jackson Jr. Hubbard's tone is always lovely, particularly on ballads "Mystic Lady" and "Jarri", but it's desperately bland material. *John Lewis*



## PLEASURE

### Accept No Substitutes

BGP

★★★★

Mentored and produced by Crusaders trombonist Wayne Henderson, this octet from

Portland, Oregon were a riff-based act in the mould of early War, EWF, Kool & The Gang or The Commodores. The second of their seven albums features some tight, brilliantly played funk: "Ghettos Of The Mind" was a minor R&B hit, but the frenetic Latin-jazz closer "2 For 1" stands out. *John Lewis*



## SPIDER'S WEBB

### I Don't Know What's On Your Mind

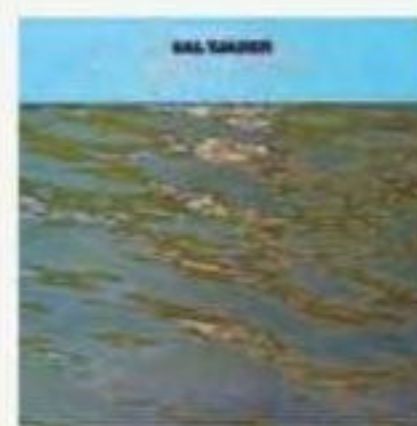
BGP

★

Every rock snob knows about Carol Kaye – session bass legend behind The Beach Boys, Quincy

Jones and hundreds more – but few will know this band she fronted with her session drummer husband Kenneth Ronald Rice, aka "Spider Webb". Sadly it's not much cop. Despite some eminently sample-friendly grooves, it's a musicianly but unfocused disco-funk set, with Kaye on wah-wah guitar rather than bass.

*John Lewis*



## CAL TJADER

### Agua Dulce

BGP

★★★★

Vibraphone player Tjader gets short shrift in jazz circles for his featherweight take on Latin jazz. He was never a particularly

adventurous soloist, but his arid, bluesless style rather suits this funky boogaloo set. It features an appealingly icy, Moog-driven take on "Gimme Shelter", a spacious interpretation of Tito Puente's "Ran Kan Kan" and a title track co-written by Shuggie and Johnny Otis.

*John Lewis*



American Pastoral:  
Jonathan Meiburg

# SHEARWATER

**Animal Joy** ★★★★★ SUB POP

Okkervil River lifeboat sails into rockier waters. *By Rob Young*



SINCE JONATHAN MEIBURG and Will Sheff splintered off from Okkervil River in 2001, the reason was ostensibly to create a backwater in

which they could explore quieter material. With Sheff now departed, Shearwater, based in Austin, Texas, have coalesced around the songwriting of Meiburg alone, and with a fluid lineup he has completed a string of albums, of which *Animal Joy* is the band's eighth. Over the past few releases, including *Rook* and *The Golden Archipelago* he has taken the group, now a trio including ex-wife Kimberly Burke (bass) and Thor Harris (drums), into rockier waters. Last year's live improvised joint, *Shearwater Is Enron*, introduced Andy Stack of Wye Oak and members of tour buddies Hospital Ships.

If *Animal Joy* were a movie, its cinematography would resemble the bleak white skies of *Winter's Bone*, or the muddy waters of *River's Edge*—it emanates from the last remaining rural corners of America which are still, nevertheless, never all that far away from a factory chimney or outlet mall. Meiburg, a renowned twitcher with a Geography MA, drops images from the natural world all over his lyrics, from the “watching the flood stage rise” of “Breaking The Yearlings” to the “You were the flashing

wings of the swallow/You were the light in a lion's eye” of “You As You Were”. Musically, I'm continually put in mind of the kind of sincere 1980s alternative groups that you often heard on the radio but who never broke the charts—The Icicle Works, Let's Active, The Wild Swans. Meiburg's troubled tenor is abetted by sinewy arrangements full of the disquiet of that decade, as on “Breaking The Yearlings”, with its taut guitars reminiscent of early Pixies, or the malevolent presence that hovers over “Dread Sovereign”. “Pushing The River” is a disgruntled two-step that ends in a searing

## Meiburg sings of the disconnect between America's beauty and its warlike outward face

guitar feedback whine that burrows deep inside your sinuses.

But I'm betting my last plaid shirt that Meiburg and co have been caning Talk Talk tapes in the tour van over the last couple of years, because that's the group that looms largest over *Animal Joy*. “Insolence”, the

album highlight, lurches and soughs like a *Spirit Of Eden* outtake recorded in an underground cistern. Burke's Danny Thompson-like contrabass is mixed to the fore, while Harris bounces brushes on a hollow snare like a beetle trapped in a matchbox, leaving wide open lacunas for Meiburg to slam down great plunging, petulant piano chords. “Sometimes I think of welcoming what you are frightened of”, he mutters, before the chorus washes across it like a flash flood. “Open Your Houses” would have sat comfortably on *The Colour Of Spring* (as would the title of track 10, “Believing Makes It Easy”), with Meiburg paying homage to Mark Hollis' dying-swan vocal timbre. Harp (Elaine Barber) and clarinet (Sam Lipman) beautifully ornament “Run The Banner Down”, where Meiburg waxes melancholic about the disconnect between the moment-to-moment beauty of living in America and the nation's predatory, warlike outward face. In this refined company, “Immaculate”, a jittery new wave thrash—perhaps an answer to the fans who keep worrying that Shearwater don't rock out enough—feels misplaced.

Like Bon Iver's last album, *Animal Joy* is the sound of Americana meshing its cogs with the machinery of the world outside its grimed window. “Star Of The Age”, the closing track, achieves the simultaneous effect of cynicism (for the flags and heraldry of nationhood) and hope. “Trade the darkness of your mind for the star of the age”: it sounds like a clause that dropped off the manuscript of the Constitution; some lost jotting clipped from Benjamin Franklin's ledgers. But the way that Meiburg sings it, you really believe that such sentiments can unclog rivers and make them flow clean again.

## JIM WHITE

### Where It Hits You

LOOSE

★★★★★

**Rousing fifth solo LP from peripatetic US maverick**

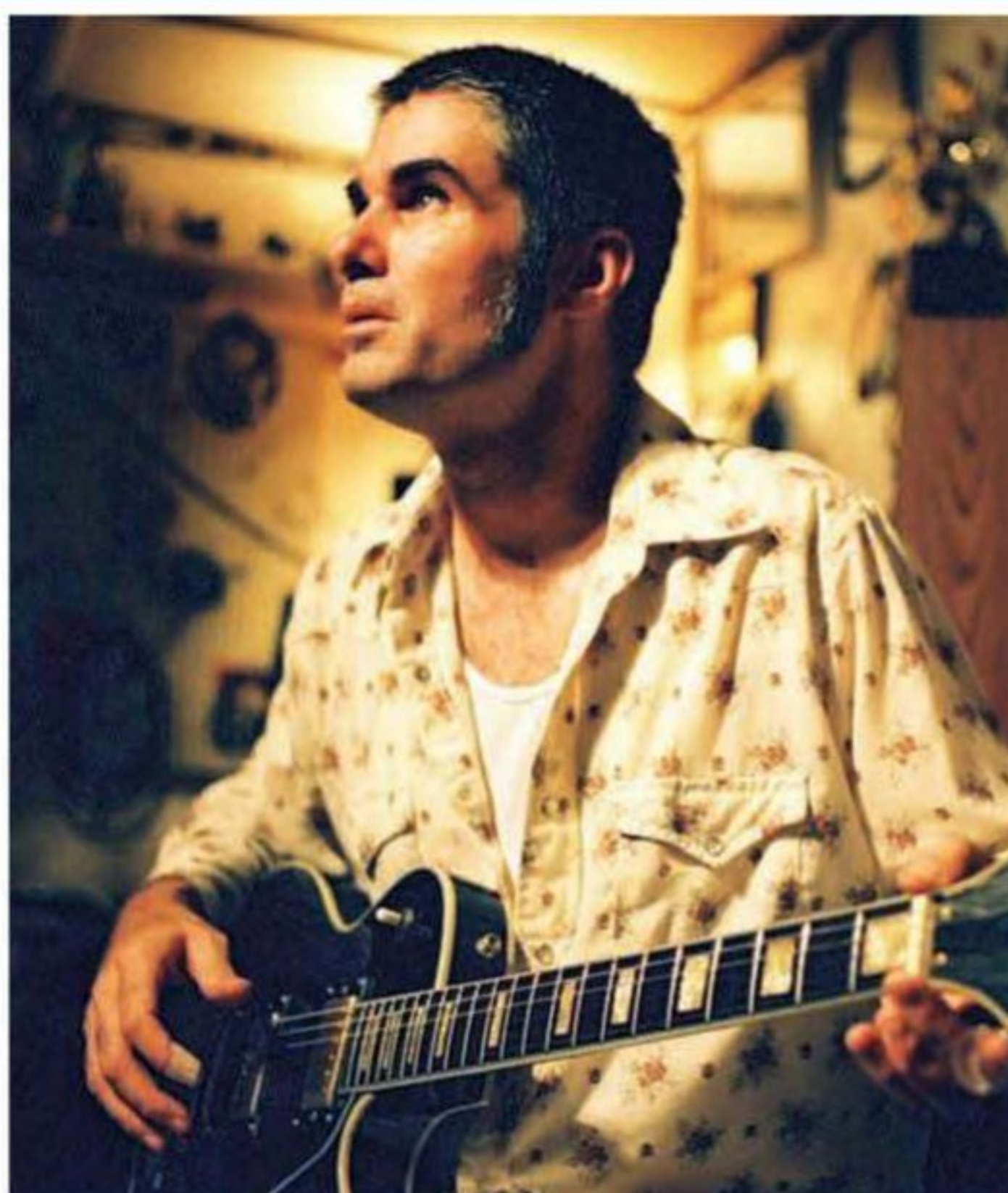


JIM WHITE'S extraordinary first two records, 1997's *Wrong-Eyed Jesus!* and 2001's *No Such Place* (2001), were modern signifiers of a new kind of Southern

gothic, drawing deep from tradition yet riven with the existential dread of a fallen punk. Since then White has immersed himself in many creative endeavours, often with like-minded souls. There have been art projects, gallery exhibitions, books, theatre scores and musical collaborations with Johnny Dowd and Tucker Martine in bands with names like Hellwood and Mama Lucky. The results have never been less than interesting, sometimes inspiring, but at times you still hanker for the intense mindtrips of those early solo albums.

Now along comes *Where It Hits You*. It's tempting to read more into the back story of this record than is perhaps pertinent, but its often ominous tone may have something to do with the recent upheavals in White's life. Cut loose by Luaka Bop, he suddenly found himself label-less and with very little budget. Then, halfway through recording, his wife left him for another man.

There's a genuine sense of loss, and certainly anguish, in the resigned feel of "That Wintered Blue Sky", while the gentle country shuffle of "Epilogue To A Marriage" bemoans the fact that even "*on the best of days, still there's hell to pay*".



Which isn't to say that this is some maudlin break-up record. Its overriding sentiment is instead one of temperate defiance and musical uplift. The addition of various back-up singers and musicians, including Centro-matic's Will Johnson and a strong contingent from Ollabelle, bring a lovely Southern gospel vibe to "State Of Grace" and a skinny groove to "Here We Go". At other times White's delicate incantations are seasoned by banjo and crying steel ("The Way Of Alone") or, as on the baleful "Sunday's Refrain", tiny squeals of electric guitar and jazz trumpets.

White has not only fashioned a terrific album from less than ideal circumstances, but one that finally feels like a worthy successor to *No Such Place*.

## ROUND-UP

**Penelope Houston** was formerly lead singer with 'Frisco punks The Avengers, who supported the Sex Pistols on their infamous last stand at the Winterland Ballroom in '78. She's now seven albums into a solo career, and *On Market Street* ★★★★★

**GLITTERHOUSE** is her latest, a languid folk-blues record with a strong whiff of Southern soul and trace elements of Lucinda Williams. There's a bucolic vibe to "Come Back To The Fountain", while "Scrap" adds a splash of country funk. Austin sextet

**Deadman** (pictured) are similarly weighted on arresting debut *Take Up Your Mat And Walk* ★★★★★

**BLUEROSE**, decanting country-soul into a bunch of songs that could have been recorded at any time since 1969. Highlights include the Burritos-like "This Old World's Not Gonna Change". Old-time sounds abound on *LIVE!*

★★★ **SELF-RELEASED**, the debut from Blighty country-pokes

**Appalachia**. Recorded at the Withywood Community Centre,



Bristol, the quartet offer up a fairly predictable bag of bluegrass, trad folk and blues, crisply delivered with harmonies to boot. Essex outfit **The Lucky Strikes** have been putting out fine records for a few years, but now comes the ravishing self-titled debut ★★★★★ **STOVEPONY** from **The Whispering Pines**, a solo project from leader Matt Boulter. There's much of The Duke & The King in the shanty-folk of "Curse You, John", while "The Poetry Society" sounds like a tune from some glazed English idyll. Gorgeous, in a word.

### GIANT SAND

#### Cover Magazine

2002

FIRE

★★★★★

**Howe Gelb and co do Black Sabbath, Johnny Cash, Nick Cave and more**

2002's *Cover Magazine* serves to mark the final instalment of Giant Sand's 25th anniversary reissues. The ambulatory feel of these 15 covers perfectly illustrates Gelb's deconstructivist approach to making music, not to mention bloody perversity (even redoing his own "Blue Marble Girl"). As such it's intermittently wonderful, the mash-up of Marty Robbins' "El Paso" and Neil Young's "Out On The Weekend" laying bare Giant Sand's mercurial inner logic. Calexico are at hand to help out, as are PJ Harvey and Neko Case.

### JEB LOY NICHOLS

#### The Jeb Loy Nichols Special

CITY COUNTRY CITY/DECCA

★★★★★

**Best yet from US country-soul brother**

The Welsh hills have been Nichols' home for some time, but it's clearly impossible to shake the Southern soul from his Missouri roots. This ninth LP is the best expression yet of his early grounding in the sweet tones of Bobby Womack and Al Green, heaping Nashville tropes with a fair sprinkling of dancefloor dust. As befits the curator of the Country Got Soul series, the outstanding "Country music disco 45" feels like a genuine modern-day classic. Elsewhere there are sumptuous covers of Larry Jon Wilson and George Jackson and a lazy, lovely take on Pablo Gad's "Hard Times".

### JENNIFER CASTLE

#### Castlemusic

NO QUARTER

★★★★★

**Glistening ambient folk from Toronto**

Castle has already issued two albums as alter ego Castlemusic, though, somewhat confusingly, here she borrows her moniker for the title of her first under her own name. Followers of Doug Paisley, Constantines and Fucked Up may already recognise her vaporous tones from guest spots on recent LPs, though this solo record proves to be something of a revelation. She's reminiscent of Marissa Nadler or Sarabeth Tucek at times, her sad-sweet voice quietly persuasive on an impressionistic spread of songs that nibble at the edges of rural folk yet occupy a place altogether less distinct.

### THE ROSIE TAYLOR PROJECT

#### Twin Beds

ODD BOX

★★★★★

**Appealing second from Leeds six-piece**

Last year's upbeat single "Sleep" suggested that The Rosie Taylor Project were jaunty popsters of C86 vintage, but its parent album, which includes a guest turn from Wild Beasts' Tom Fleming, proves otherwise. Instead their music carries the same languid air of defeat as Belle And Sebastian (especially the doleful "For Esme") and a similar sense of bedsit Americana as The State Broadcasters. There's a very English melancholy to these songs about thwarted love and girls they can't have, heightened by deadpan vocals and some of the most desolate trumpets this side of an old Hovis ad.

## PERFUME GENIUS

## Put Your Back N 2 It

ORGANS

★★★★

Bedroom troubadour's second is pretty. Until you listen to the lyrics

Seattle-based Mike Hadreas makes music that's pretty on the outside – but dig a bit deeper, it's a different story. This, the follow-up to his lo-fi 2010 debut *Learning* is a dark business: taking in porn on "AWOL Marine", body issues on "17" and dead people's rooms on "Sister Song". You wouldn't know from the sparse, sparkling music, though, Hadreas' voice peeling out like Antony Hegarty amid the crystalline, Badalamenti-like synths of "Floating Spit" or the minimalist Eno gospel of "Dirge". *Tom Pinnock*

## GRETCHEN PETERS

## Hello Cruel World

SCARLET LETTER RECORDS

★★★★★

Warm and intelligent country songwriting 2007's *Burnt Toast & Offerings* established her as the natural successor to Lucinda Williams – this does not contradict the notion. Her songs combine swagger with sensitivity – "I'm a girl without a safety net/I'm a cause for some concern" she boasts on the title track – using simple language and strong themes to sell powerful stories about women and life. "The Matador" – written with Tom Russell, with whom she has much in common – is a marvellous late-Springsteen metaphor masquerading as a border ballad, "Paradise Found" is belting Southern rock, while "Idlewild" offers a personal slant on national drift. *Peter Watts*

## PET SHOP BOYS

## Format

PARLOPHONE

★★★★

Second B-sides collection from synth-pop's most durable duo

With almost any other band, a compilation of B-sides and bonus tracks from multi-format singles would resound with the scraping of barrels. But the uniquely prolific Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe have clung to a belief in the glories of the classic pop single even as it's declined in influence and popularity, and know that truly classic pop singles include great B-sides.

Cue a 2CD follow-up to 1995's *Alternative*, featuring 38 archetypal synth-pop mini-symphonies that easily match the quality of their album tracks. Like The Fall, PSB are always different, always the same.

*Garry Mulholland*

## PHANTOM LIMB

## The Pines

NAIM EDGE

★★★★

Muscle Shoals, West Country-style

A robust alliance of sessioneers, backing singers and songwriters, Bristol's Phantom Limb mine a solid seam of Southern soul, rock, country and gospel, leading from the front with the righteous holler of Yolanda Quartey. Think a post-op Black Crowes. "Laugh Like You're Mad" is graceful and light, and "Badge Of Descension" and "Hollow Eyes" rather moving, but much of the rest is well-intentioned stodge in which everything – Hammond stabs, crunching sevenths, swelling "ooohs" – is in the right place, but nothing soars. *Graeme Thomson*



## PULLED APART BY HORSES

## Tough Love

TRANSGRESSIVE

★★★★

Light-hearted screamo, somewhere between Black Flag and Black Lace

These Leeds tykes' 2010 debut, which successfully dressed up screamo for indie fans, was raucous, if slightly hammy, fun. This follow-up doesn't alter their formula of big riffs and bad jokes, although the riffs are even more anthemic – "V.E.N.O.M." and "Give Me A Reason" are madcap mixes of Fugazi and garage-rockers The Datsuns – and the humour sillier – "When I was a kid I was a dick/But nothing changes" ("Wolf Hand"). While there's progression on the atmospheric "Everything Dipped In Gold", PABH do their trademark full-throttle thrills better – even if they're closer to The Darkness than they think. *Tom Pinnock*



Gretchen Peters: she's got the cruel world in her hands

## QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE

## Live From The Summer Of Love

FLOATING WORLD

★★★★

Not so happy trails

Distilled from the five live archive releases on the group's own Bear Records in 2008, this 2CD set mercifully jettisons recordings that were rank in sound quality and group performances that were shambolic and often out of tune. Largely drawn from two Fillmore shows in February 1967, these feature the original (otherwise unrecorded) five-piece Quicksilver, vocalist Jim Murray departing after Monterey Pop that summer. The material is heavy with heavy handed, expanded blues covers which typify the approach, attitude and sound of the 'Frisco ballroom in that era.

*Mick Houghton*

## ZOE RAHMAN

## Kindred Spirits

MANUSHI

★★★★★

Groundbreaking British pianist mixes Bengali folk with spacey jazz

Zoe Rahman's 2006 breakthrough, *Melting Pot*, was a muscular postbop set which received a Mercury nomination, while its 2008 follow-up *Where Rivers Meet* saw her revisiting her Bengali roots. This album melds the two – strong, Eastern-tinged melodies meet fizzy, propulsive rhythms to create a thrilling astral jazz. There are nods to McCoy Tyner (including a cracking version of Stevie Wonder's "Contusion"); three songs by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (including the Alice

Coltrane-ish "Imagination"); an ululating flute solo by Courtney Pine ("Conversations With Nellie"); and "Butlers Of Glen Avenue", an Irish folk song done in the style of Keith Jarrett. *John Lewis*

## TRENT REZNOR AND ATTICUS ROSS

## The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo OST

MUTE

★★★★★

Nine Inch Nails man scores again for *The Social Network* director

Trent Reznor's reinvention from industrial bruiser to Oscar-winning soundtracker appears to have been conducted with rather suave ease, although this score to David Fincher's 2011 adaptation of the Stieg Larsson public transport favourite – composed again with studio righthand man Atticus Ross – suggests many of those Nine Inch Nails tricks hold good. A cover of Led Zep's "Immigrant Song", starring Karen O, reworks the original as stern body-music pulse; elsewhere, murky Eno-style synth washes and Reznor's echo-soaked piano lines go to some gloomy, emotionally wrenching places. *Louis Pattison*

## MITCH RYDER

## The Promise

MICHIGAN BROADCASTING COMPANY

★★★★★

Detroit soulman's long-overdue, Don Was-produced comeback

Reflecting on his downtrodden Detroit hometown circa 2012, Mitch Ryder here astutely merges heartbreaking social realism with accomplished, funky Motown/James Brown

grooves, his first high-profile studio effort in some 28 years. His voice, weathered and emotional, is strong and spot-on throughout, infusing the Stax-drenched "My Heart Belongs To Me" with Joe Tex-style grit, serenading like a preacher on the darkly wrought "Everybody Loses". The funky title cut, which boasts shades of 1971 Curtis Mayfield and is emblematic of Was' enveloping, wide-angle style of production, is the centrepiece of the album, a rich message of life amid decay. *Luke Torn*

## ULRICH SCHNAUSS &amp; MARK PETERS

## Underrated Silence

BUREAU B

★★★★

Anglo-German duo pool their nu-gazing tendencies

The debut collaboration between German fuzzy-warm electronica composer Ulrich Schnauss and Mark Peters, leader of British neo-shoegazers Engineers, is a marriage made in footwear-fixated heaven – indeed, Schnauss has actually been a semi-permanent member of Engineers since 2010. The album's heavily layered ambi-rock confections indulge the duo's mutual love of spangled guitar effects, tinselly twinkles and pearly dewdrop shimmers, so the not-too-distant echoes of Sigur Rós and the Cocteau Twins will surprise nobody. More agreeably unpredictable is the neo-Krautrock electro-throb of "Rosen Im Asphalt", while "Ekaterina" is almost Floydian in its slow-snoozy, warm-oozy, liquid-treacle drift. *Stephen Dalton*



Ringo Starr: bigger than Buddha?

## SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS Ghostory

FULL TIME HOBBY

★★★★

**Impressive third from the harmonising nu-gazers** Since 2007 New York's School Of Seven Bells have cut a sleek figure in neo-shoegaze, Blahniks in a soundworld of Converse. Reduced to a duo following the departure of Claudia Deheza, their third album is their most polished confection yet, marrying immaculate harmonies to a purring rhythmic chassis, suggesting a world where Wilson Phillips signed to 4AD. They struggle with anything as vulgar as a song, however – *Ghostory* is supposedly a concept-album song-portrait, but feels as evanescent as expensive perfume – and still find it impossible to shake their indebtedness to MBV's "Soon". *Stephen Troussé*

## SLEIGH BELLS Reign Of Terror

MOM + POP MUSIC

★★★★

**Tunes beneath riffs on noisy duo's second** Unless Sleigh Bells plan to nuzzle listeners into submission, *Reign Of Terror* seems a curious title for a record that finds New York's peppy response to The Kills rolling out lovestruck teen pop – one song's called "Leader Of The Pack" – on a blanket of Eddie Van Halen shredding. Aiming to fill that void between The White Stripes and Crystal Castles, on "Born To Lose" and "DOA" Derek Miller's flashy axemanship and Alexis Krauss' swoon are compromised by sanitised

production. But these Bells still rock. *Piers Martin*

## SOKO I Thought I Was An Alien

BECAUSE MUSIC

★★★★

**Engaging anti-folk first from French actress turned musician**

Given that some of the hallmarks of anti-folk are self-conscious naivety, kooky confessionism and a deliberately lo-fi aesthetic, the arrival of any new talent might seem like little reason to enthuse. However, Stéphanie Sokolinski plays very much by her own rules. Daniel Johnston and (especially) Kimya Dawson are her touchstones, but this straight-edge, vegan singer-songwriter neatly balances the darkly troubled with the charmingly childlike, acoustic clunkiness with intricate guitar finger-picking, occasional references to her Polish roots – as on the roisterous "Don't You Touch Me" – further proof she's not just a hipster arriviste. *Sharon O'Connell*

## SPEECH DEBELLE Freedom Of Speech

BIG DADA

★★★★

**London rap-poet returns, hardened, for second** Corynne Elliot's *Speech Therapy* confounded outlier status to scoop the Mercury Prize in 2009, although modest sales and a spat with her label seemed to confirm the prize itself could be more albatross than career boost. On *Freedom Of Speech*, she sounds rather more assured; there are still hints of little-

girl vulnerability on "Angel Wings", but the mellifluous, jazzy backings have toughened up – see the pugilistic "Studio Backpack Rap" – and the themes have followed: see "Blaze Up A Fire", a musing on civil unrest, featuring a gnomic Roots Manuva. The odd gauche moment remains, but her plaudits are not undeserved. *Louis Pattison*

## BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN Bound For Glory: The Rare 1973 Broadcasts

LEFT FIELD

★★★★

**The Boss does his apprenticeship**

These twelve tracks are from two broadcasts between the release of Springsteen's first two albums. One is his first radio appearance, for Boston's WCBN-FM, the other a live show recorded for Philadelphia's WMMR-FM at Bryn Mawr's Main Point (Left Field released a 1975 gig at the same venue last year). There are interesting developmental snippets – a "Circus Story" yet to evolve into "Wild Billy's Circus Story", an already commanding and exuberant 11-minute "Thundercrack" – but, unfortunately, the sound throughout is very much evocative of early 1970s radio broadcasts. *Andrew Mueller*

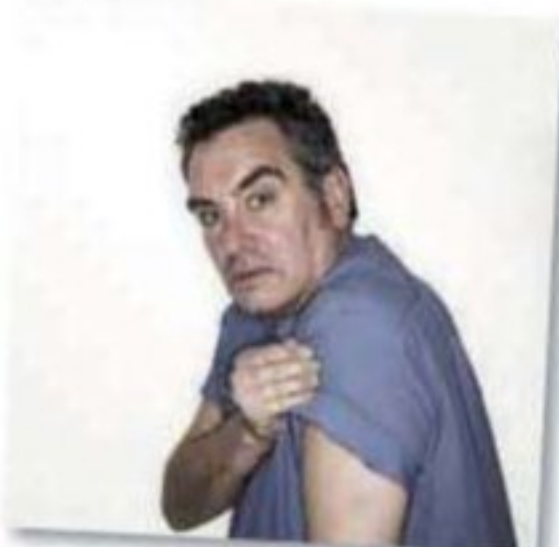
## RINGO STARR Ringo 2012

UMC

★★★★

**Hard to dislike as ever** While The Other One engages in epic stadium tours and writes ballets, Ringo Starr continues in more conventional fashion,

releasing regular albums of session-man pop and playing reasonable venues with his All-Starr Band. In this sense, his career resembles that of his '70s heyday, except then his collaborators were George Harrison, Paul McCartney and John Lennon. Now there are songs co-written by Glen Ballard ("Anthem"), Dave Stewart ("In Liverpool", a cousin in its droll candour not so much to Harrison's "When We Was Fab" as to Captain Sensible's "Croydon") and, best of all, Van Dyke Parks ("Samba"). The effect could be absurdly eclectic were it not all tied together by Ringo's personable voice and personal lyrics. A tight band, a well-produced sound, and lyrics both grounded and hippyish make *Ringo 2012* (a title which makes him sound like he IS the Olympics) a perfectly likeable listening experience. *David Quantick*



## MARK STEWART The Politics Of Envy

FUTURE NOISE MUSIC

★★★★

**Splattergun capitalist realism from ex-Pop Group frontman**

"Let me talk to the driver", wails Stewart on "Codex", "he is taking me somewhere I don't want to go". Political metaphors abound on this eclectically ramshackle collection, whose dubstep twiddles ("Vanity Kills"), Free-style rock stomp ("Autonomia") and vacuous Eurodisco ("Baby Bourgeois") add up to an album as ragged as an Occupy campsite and as toxic as a well-aimed Molotov. He even covers early Bowie ("Letter To Hermione") and references autodestructive art ("Gustav Says"). You can't say that about too many records these days. *Rob Young*

## THE STORY UK Joy Ride On Memory Lane

RAINBOW QUARTZ

★★★★

**Pleasing folk-pop from**

## FATHER-AND-SON DUO

The initial interest here is that The Story's Martin Welham was a founder member of Forest who recorded two albums for Harvest at the end of the '60s. Welham has rekindled Forest's English charm and melancholy mystery since teaming up with his son Tom at the turn of the millennium. "Sixty Eight" namechecks past fellow travellers, but the best moments on this, the duo's third album, are when they sidestep folk, as on the Beatles-derived singalong pop of "A Stone's Throw Away". *Mick Houghton*

## SWEET SWEET LIES The Hare, The Hound & The Tortoise

SOMETHING NOTHING

★★★★

**Subversive debut from Brighton's premier evil wedding band**

Anglo-Scottish sextet Sweet Sweet Lies dress nasty themes in sweet acoustic melodies and sharp suits. Twin lead singers/composers/guitarists Dominic Arnall and Michael Hayes take inspiration from folk and pre-rock pop, but their debut album's heart lies in caustic lyrics that excavate self-lacerating truths about men in love. Early Costello, Neil Hannon and Nick Cave bond over revenge and guilt on the likes of "Overrated Girlfriend" and "Breathless", and for "No-One Will Love You (Like I Do)", Arnall's alternately charming and sneering tenor leads a stunning ballad that could have entire stadiums weeping in waltz-time. *Garry Mulholland*

## JOHN TALABOT Fin

PERMANENT VACATION

★★★★

**Catalan newcomer drifts off** A former club DJ born Oriol Riverola, Barcelona's laidback disco doyen John Talabot has been flavour of the month for well over a year on the strength of remixes for The xx and his own sunset starbursts such as "Matilda's Dream". Stretched across an LP, his blend of house and Eurodisco soon settles into a bland formula of bittersweet Balearic fare ("Destiny"). Fruitier numbers like "When The Past Was Present" offer flickers of humour as Riverola trudges to the end. *Piers Martin*



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# PALACE

**There Is No-One What Will Take Care**

**Of You**  1993 ★★★★★ **Days In The Wake**  1994 ★★★★★

**Hope**  1994 ★★★★★ **Viva Last Blues**  1995 ★★★★★

**Lost Blues And Other Songs**  1997 ★★★★★

Will Oldham's incognito early years reissued. *By John Robinson*

LONG BEFORE ANYONE called it that, Will Oldham was making his musical home among the farm animals, pitchforks and clapboard churches of the old, weird America. Nor was he on any kind of short vacation to this hard country. Over the course of four full-length studio albums made before he abandoned the "Palace" persona, Oldham scratched out his living from the earth, so to speak, a place where the songs were shaped by the fundamentals: warmth, food, drink, violence, and thoughts of God. In this landscape, lust and horses also often reared their heads.

So powerfully did Palace records do their work in the unglobalised world of indie rock circa 1993, the scant reliable information there was about the person who made them created a vacuum that instantly filled with

rumour and surmise, something Oldham's own mild eccentricity only encouraged. I met him in 1995, when this eccentricity seemed limited to his not particularly rating Teenage Fanclub, but if he'd turned up to the interview covered in manure, carrying a Bible, one wouldn't then have been hugely surprised.

The strength of this impression was the doing, primarily, of the debut Palace Brothers album *There Is No-One What Will Take Care Of You* (1993), backward in grammar and setting, but supremely prescient in devising a route out of post-hardcore guitar music (every bit as ingenious as that made by the "post-rock" band Slint, his contemporaries from Louisville, Kentucky, for whose *Spiderland* LP Oldham took the cover photo, and most of whose members appear on his first album).

The album presents music utterly stripped back – "(I Was Drunk At The) Pulpit" comprises a single chord; the album, produced to be thus, feels cold and isolated – but not in a way we'd now call "folk". Oldham, as his subsequent oddball catalogue proved, is no purist. But perhaps if there was a point being made here, it's that the bare essentials are what will survive of music, and of us.

1994's *Days In The Wake* by comparison feels less of an auteur-directed work, and more a fly-on-the-wall documentary piece – its songs come with chaircreaks, and fingers squeaking on the fretboard. This intimacy was at the expense of none of Oldham's drama, however, or his wit. If anything, this was a singer-songwriter album, but one conducted on a knife edge, its concise half-hour containing what was starting to become recognisable as Oldham's unique beat: mock heroic, grand delusions, touching domestic details, near madness, horses. The thunderstorm that could be heard on "No More Workhorse Blues" reminded you that this was (as we said at the time) a "lo-fi" recording, but it also seemed a Shakespearean indication of the tempest within.

Such rough edges prevented some from enjoying Palace music (a point which Oldham addressed himself a decade later, re-recording his "greatest hits" in a no-less-divisive "Nashville" style for a 2004 album ... *Sings Greatest Palace Music*), but perfection was the casualty of creativity in music that was evolving constantly. It could be exquisite (hear the vocal harmonies on "Agnes, Queen Of Sorrow" on the 1994 mini-album *Hope*), and it could be surprising (the 1997 collection *Lost Blues And Other Songs* collects singles, B-sides, waifs and strays and experiments, including a version of "Riding" that pitches Oldham in a battle with deafening electric guitars). It's hard to imagine, however, that this music could have done a better job of uniting true believers and floating voters than it did with the final album reissued here.

1995's magnificent *Viva Last Blues* is simply recommended to all. Its medium for the most part a warm and even Stonesy folk-rock, it finds Oldham writing songs that still sound ad hoc but are also – a new thing completely – genuinely groovy. It's an album that's rocking ("Cat's Blues", "More Brother Rides"), amusing ("The Mountain Low" begins with the line: "*If I could fuck a mountain...*"), and canonically moving ("New Partner", which evokes the Old West, but is in truth more about partnership of a domestic kind) but still retains, among the clavinetts and wah-wah guitar, some essential Oldham qualities: mystery, profanity, a sense of landscape and, yes, horses.

In the enjoyable, Oldham-starring 2006 film *Old Joy* (just one of the divergent paths his career has taken post-Palace), Oldham's character Kurt and his buddy Mark reminisce about their 1990s youth, spent in independent record shops in the Portland area, one lately closed. That was Palace's youth, too, and in these albums, one is privileged to join Oldham's saga at the start of his journey, the road ahead filled with promise, but still alive with strangeness and uncertainty.

## TANGERINE DREAM

## Sorcerer

ESOTERIC 1977

★★★★

## Froese and co's first Hollywood soundtrack commission

William Friedkin once declared that, had he heard Tangerine Dream earlier, it would have been their music that graced *The Exorcist*, rather than the now-iconic Mike Oldfield score. Instead, Edgar Froese's synth visionaries made their Hollywood soundtrack debut on Friedkin's 1977 follow-up. Released a month after *Star Wars*, *Sorcerer* flopped at the box office, but TD's score is a fine specimen of their most vital period. The tone is mainly one of grim portent, "Search" and "Rain Forest" firing sequenced synth pulses through inky-black atmospherics, but "The Journey" takes an inviting turn into blissful Fourth World pastures.

Louis Pattison

## TEAM ME

## To The Treetops!

PROPELLER

★★★★

## Full-blown debut from Norwegian pop mavericks

Already a big noise in their native Oslo, Team Me's latest hyperactive, complex pop tunes are bolder and more adventurous than on last year's debut EP. Chief songwriter and singer Marius D Hagen has expanded the line-up to a six-piece, making for a multi-layered melodic sound on "Riding My Bicycle (From Ragnvalsbekken To Sørkedalen)" and "Dear Santa", which sound like Broken Social Scene fronted by Syd Barrett. They ransack the indigenous folk of their homeland on the accordion-led "Weathervanes And Chemicals", while "With My Hands Covering Both Of My Eyes..." recalls the elaborate soundscapes of Todd Rundgren's work with Utopia. *Terry Staunton*

## TENNIS

## Young And Old ATP

★★★★

## Sultry noughties indie-pop, produced by a Black Key

After taking inspiration from a seven-month sailing trip on their debut, *Cape Dory*, Denver couple Alaina Moore and Patrick Riley (plus drummer James Barone) have stayed landlocked for their second album of keyboard-led indie-pop.

Recorded in Nashville with The Black Keys' Patrick Carney, *Young And Old* boasts stylish, retro arrangements, as on the lush, girl-group-influenced "Take Me To Heaven", but still peers into the 21st century on "It All Feels The Same", sharing stately DNA with fellow melancholy Americans Beach House, Chairlift and Grizzly Bear. Ultimately, though, Tennis are too polished and MOR to rival the peaks of the trio's edgier peers. *Tom Pinnock*

## THOSE DARLINS

## Screws Get Loose

OH WOW DANG

★★★★

## Ace snotty girl garage punk

Those Darlins – who consist of three unrelated women, Jessi, Kelly and Nikki Darlin, and a bloke on drums – were formed as a cowpunk act, and that is how they recorded their first album, but they have now taken things in a decidedly garage rock direction. *Screws Get Loose* is crammed with infectious pop and arch lyrics that recall The Runaways or Shampoo, revelling in a brattishly teenage way of looking at the world (ie boys). "Be Your Bro" is an ode to not being a girlfriend, "Hives" and "Fatty Needs A Fix" are as self-descriptive as Ramones songs, while "\$" still has some Southern rock sass. *Peter Watts*

## THREE TRAPPED TIGERS

## Numbers: 1-13

BLOOD AND BISCUITS

★★★★

## Debut EP collection shows London trio surging out of the traps

This compilation of TTT's early EPs (2008–10) cleaves the air with its opening chord. Pre-dating last year's *Route One Or Die*, these tracks harness the splatter-jazz of Big Flame with the wayward sprawl of King Crimson. Occasionally ("3", "7") they veer close to live drum'n'bass, daubed in hotwired, splodgy electronics. If "8" bursts its bonds like shaken cava, "4" holds their deluge back enough for Matt Calvert's trebly guitar to rear from the mix. What could have been bloodless math-rock noodle feels infused with guts and verve. *Rob Young*

## TINDERSTICKS

## The Something Rain

LUCKY DOG

★★★★

## Nottingham miserabilists return, groovily

The ninth Tindersticks album begins with a story, "Chocolate", narrated by the band's Dave Boulter, of a man discovering a little too late ("There was a hard dick poking me in the eye") that he has pulled a transvestite. If it's a shock to him, it's not much less so to us that this far into their career they should be able to pull new tricks – soulful female backing singers; hip hop-like hooks; VU-style narration jams – out of the bag. The violin-soaked melancholia of old remains on "Medicine", particularly, and Terry Edwards guests on sax magnificently throughout, but the album's highpoints, particularly "Show Me Everything" and "This Fire Of Autumn" showcase a band who seem to have rediscovered new ways of putting together their already impressive constituent parts. As "Chocolate"'s narrator says himself – what the fuck? *John Robinson*

## THE TING TINGS

## Sounds From Nowheresville

COLUMBIA

★★★★

## Tings can only get better

Katie White and Jules de Martino sold two million copies of their 2008 debut, *We Started Nothing*, largely thanks to their insanely catchy chart-topping smash "That's Not My Name". This solid made-in-Berlin sequel persuasively transcends the limitations of the Salford-based duo's brittle, bratty, bubblegum punk-pop formula. It is certainly eclectic, spicing the indie-disco stompers with Spectorish weepies, "Wordy Rappinghoo" grooves and

reggae-pop confections – plus the electro-rock anthem "Silence", which impressively approximates the marbled grandeur of early New Order. One-hit wonders no more, White and de Martino now sound prepared for a big pop future. *Stephen Dalton*

## THE TWILIGHT SAD

## No One Can Ever Know

FATCAT

★★★★

## Scottish trio unleash the darksynths

Activate the analogue! On their third album, The Twilight Sad's intense, melancholic folk-rock has been upgraded to something chilly and abrasive, indebted to Krautrock and the post-punk alienation of Siouxsie & The Banshees, Faith-era Cure, Joy Division and PiL, alongside contemporary compatriots like Meursault. And it works. "Sick", "Dead City" and "Nil" are darkly magnificent, pulsing with euphoric dread. For the waverers, "Don't Look At Me" harks back to the warmer sounds of 2009's *Forget The Night Ahead*, while James Graham's ragged brogue remains deeply affecting, humanising this unsettling music. *Graeme Thomson*

## UNDERWORLD

## 1992-2012 Anthology

COOKING VINYL

★★★★

## Stadium technoheads celebrate 20th anniversary. Chants of "Lager! Lager! Lager!" optional

Soundtrack composers, heads of a multi-media collective and now musical directors of the opening ceremony at this year's Olympic Games, Underworld have always appeared more forward-thinking than many of their contemporaries from the early '90s dance scene.

This 3CD set sketches out the band's trajectory, from the stadium techno of "Mmm... Skyscraper I Love You" and "Rez" via their breakthrough, "Born Slippy (Nuxx)", to the more meditative soundscapes of their film work like "8 Ball" and "To Heal". The nostalgic tug of the earlier, dancier singles remains strong, but as a bonus disc of rarities demonstrates, their experimental side is equally compelling. *Michael Bonner*



## SHARON VAN ETTEN

## Tramp

JAG JAGUWAR

★★★★

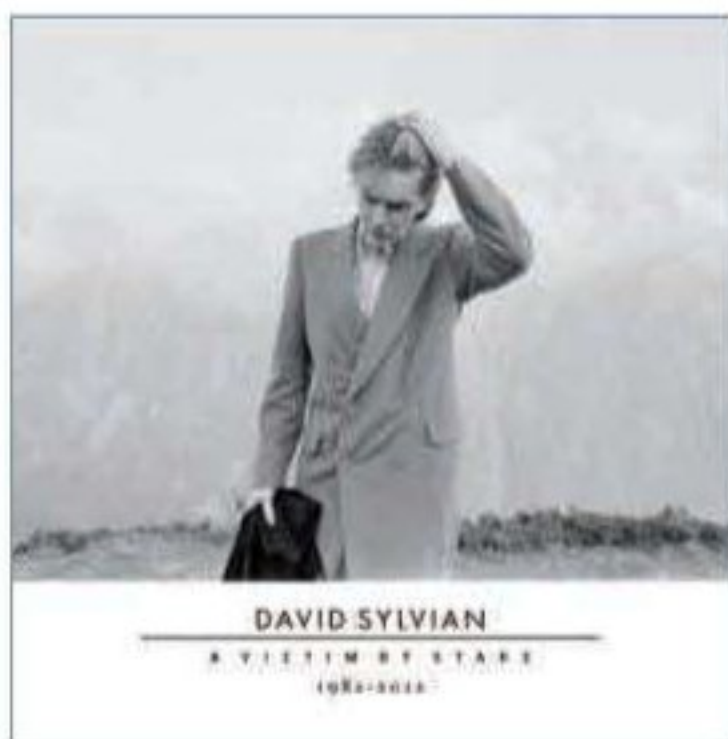
## Brooklyn gang show supports stellar breakthrough set

Despite impressive guests (Zach Condon from Beirut, The Walkmen's drummer Matt Barrick, Wye Oak's Jenn Wasner) and production from The National's Aaron Dessner, Van Etten never becomes swamped on this major step forward. Robust alt.rock in the Arcade Fire tradition is applied to meandering structures that hint at the dreamworlds of Julianna Barwick (who also guests on "Leonard"). Van Etten's voice has the impact of Florence Welch and the ruminative burr of Rufus Wainwright, but without their grating self-regard, resulting in a graceful, distinctive album.

Ben Beaumont-Thomas

Mirror mirror on the wall,  
who's the dourest of  
them all? Tindersticks





# DAVID SYLVIAN

## A Victim Of Stars, 1982-2012

EMI



A visionary musician, revealed under the make-up. *By Andy Gill*



WHEN DAVID SYLVIAN first became a presence on the pop scene on the cusp of the '80s, it was obvious that, like many of that decade's performers,

he was hugely influenced, to the point of being besotted, by Roxy Music. Not only did he and his fellow travellers in the band Japan brandish the outlandish fashions of glam-rock, but Sylvian's voice was clearly modelled on Bryan Ferry's tremulous croon.

The combination of that erogenous baritone and his pop star looks seemed to point inevitably to a mainstream pop position alongside the Duran Durans and Culture Clubs when, in 1982, Japan found themselves with a bona fide hit single in the shape of the winsome "Ghosts", from the previous year's *Tin Drum* album. But it speaks volumes about Sylvian's ambitions that by then he had already effectively turned his back on "pop" music, breaking up the band to pursue more exploratory musical directions. Ironically, while his singing style was sometimes characterised as an affected copy of Ferry's already affected lounge-lizard style, in time the aesthetic balance between the two would shift the other way, as Sylvian found far better uses for the louche croon than Ferry's endless repetitions of a static position.

Musically, too, he became far more adventurous than both Roxy Music and the New Romantic legions, his work paralleling that of questing artists like Scott Walker and Talk Talk. Across a series of artful solo albums, Sylvian delved ever deeper into the worlds of jazz and avant-garde, ultimately reaching the point where, with 2009's *Manafon*, he would be constructing songs completely from improvised recording sessions involving the likes of saxophonist Evan Parker, guitarist Keith Rowe, pianist John Tilbury and laptop schemer Christian Fennesz, albeit somehow managing to impose a sense of "song-ness" on the pieces simply by dint of his vocal tracks. It's as if he's constantly striving to find out how little structure is necessary for there to still be a song, as such – a journey that has taken him to a position where his music has become an almost elemental presence.

The track which opens this two-and-a-half-hour anthology of Sylvian's work cleverly embodies the course that his career has followed. It's a version – either a remix or re-recording – of Japan's hit "Ghosts" made for his 2000 compilation *Everything And Nothing*, on which the presence of apparently random smudges of sound creates a link to the most recent pieces from *Manafon*, as if the hit was always intended to be heard this way.

It's followed by a couple of singles – "Forbidden Colours", the haunting theme from *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, and the double A-side "Bamboo Houses"/"Bamboo Music" – made with Ryuichi Sakamoto, who would become a frequent collaborator over the ensuing decades. Their Oriental tone, gamelan percussion, wooden and metallic synth textures, and the latter's innovative bouncy electro beats that would prove influential on subsequent generations of hip-hop producers, now sound more or less commonplace. Other important collaborators have included Robert Fripp, whose

**Over the years, his music has become an almost elemental presence**

Frippertronics guitar glows at the heart of "Silver Moon" alongside BJ Cole's pedal steel; and synthesist/producer Burnt Friedman, with whom Sylvian and his brother, drummer and longtime accomplice Steve Jansen, formed the group Nine Horses, a sort of avant-rock lounge-music ensemble.

Sylvian's own first solo single was "Red Guitar", a slice of jazz-funk-lite blending fretless bass, skittish drums and cool piano. Perhaps helped by the success of "Ghosts", it reached the UK Top 20, which enabled Sylvian to pull off the remarkable feat of getting his 1984 debut *Brilliant Trees*, an album featuring musicians such as Mark Isham, Jon Hassell, Kenny Wheeler and Holger Czukay, into the Top 5. The latter's strangulated French horn fills are still a wonder to behold.

*Secrets Of The Beehive* (1987), found Sylvian further entrenched in chamber-jazz terrain, with the brooding horn colouration and lowering strings of tracks like "Let The Happiness In", "Waterfront" and "Orpheus" reflecting what was clearly a brooding, introspective personal character. But despite his introvert tendencies, Sylvian still managed to dominate 1991's Japan reunion as Rain Tree Crow, on which Bill Nelson's glistening sheets of guitar seemed more decisive musical contributions to tracks like "Blackwater" than those of the singer's former bandmates. The reunion was short-lived. A couple of years later, he collaborated again with Robert Fripp on *The First Day*, from which comes "Jean The Birdman", a fable of aspiration whose line "Ambition is a bloody game" seemed to sum up Sylvian's disillusion with the music industry.

He would release no new studio album for the next six years, a period of inactivity eventually broken by the release in 1999 of *Dead Bees On A Cake*. It was a further refinement of his increasingly austere aesthetic: in "Darkest Dreaming", wisps of steel guitar and electric piano ebb and flow in quiet ripples, while Djivan Gasparyan's duduk flute settles like the dust on a moth's wing. But in the nine-minute-long "I Surrender", he somehow managed to blend Kenny Wheeler's flugelhorn, Lawrence Feldman's flute and Mark Ribot's subtle curlicues of guitar into a compelling ambience of erotic languor, the perfect habitat for a vocal that seemed to open up an abyss of yearning.

By 2009's *Manafon*, the music has all but dissolved to just a few flecks of sound on tracks like "Manafon" itself, whose lyric speaks of rustic isolation and deep-rooted reproach. Tinted with austere streaks of strings and gentle swells of noise, these tracks offer spooky envelopments for Sylvian's vocals, which somehow impose the sense of recurrent structure that the music seems to deny. It's a fascinating exercise in the kind of minimalism that doesn't involve repetition, but rather erosion – an intriguing position to reach, especially for a musician who started out looking like a cosmetics model. As the years have passed, the made-up face has been worn away to reveal a truly interesting, uncategorisable artistic countenance.



## **Q&A** David Sylvian

### **What would you say has been the most significant change in the way you approach music-making, since you started out?**

Incorporating greater degrees of improvisation into the process as musician, composer, and producer. Certainly, embracing the philosophy of 'first thought, right thought' when writing has been revelatory on some level. Writing as one records leaves little room for revision as such, you simply sit in the present moment and embrace what surfaces. It's not that far removed from traditional songwriting as I've experienced it, more like a slight but perceivable shift in operation, opening previously inaccessible areas of the unconscious.

### **Apart from your brother, who has been your most fruitful collaborator?**

Ryuichi Sakamoto and I have collaborated frequently over the years. He's also very much a brother to me in that respect. In recent years there's been work with Christian Fennesz, Jan Bang, and Arve Henriksen that has proved particularly fruitful. My most fruitful collaborations may not be overtly musical but have had an indelible influence on my musical life. I've had the most creative of relationships with my friend (manager/label manager/publisher) Richard Chadwick for over 30 years. Likewise, I've had a creative dialogue running with my dear friend Yuka Fujii for virtually the

same duration. These two wonderful people underpin all my solo work in one form or other.

### **Who or what do you spend most of your own time listening to?**

There are label owners I admire such as Mike Harding at Touch or Rune Kristofferson at Rune Grammofon. More or less one-man operations which, in the current climate, is something that requires joyful passion and commitment. Genres mean little to me, I'll listen to just about any style of music. I favour the cutting edge in whatever field a musician operates. If the edge isn't there then it's got to have plenty of soul. Mercifully, there are a lot of soulful musicians making a noise out there.



The Original Last Poets: ghetto blasters supreme

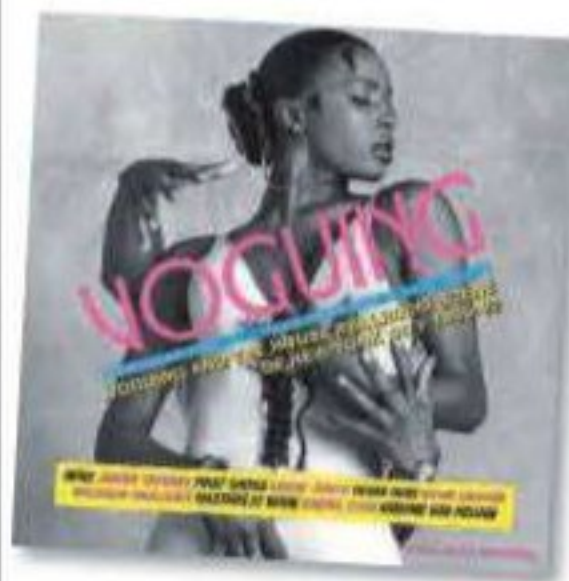
## VARIOUS ARTISTS Pop Ambient 2012

KOMPAKT

★★

**Cologne techno label's annual ambient survey**

At a time when ambient music finds itself curiously in vogue thanks to synth shredders like Oneohtrix Point Never and the "cloud rap" productions of Clams Casino, it's a shame to find Kompakt's *Pop Ambient* series falling back on the same old names for some familiar polite twinkling. Two Kompakt stalwarts do provide the highlights, in the form of Superpitcher's "Jackson" and "Riding The Bikes" by Loops Of Your Heart (aka Axel Willner of The Field). Otherwise it all rather blurs into one – although perhaps that's the whole point. **Sam Richards**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS Voguing And The House Ballroom Scene Of New York City 1989-92

SOUL JAZZ

★★★★

**Strike a pose! NYC house and disco romp**

The majority of people's sole encounter with voguing came with Madonna's 1990 hit "Vogue", for which Madge ruthlessly mined the most glamorous New York club scene since Studio 54's disco boom; but there's a lot more to it than that. This 2CD companion to Chantal Regnault's photobook on the city's black and Latino gay ballroom circuit mixes the fierce ("Cunty" by Kevin

Aviance) with the fabulous (Diana Ross' "Love Hangover"). Solid gold pumpers are provided by Armand Van Helden and Junior Vasquez. **Piers Martin**

## VARIOUS ARTISTS Listen, Whitey! The Sounds Of Black Power 1967-1974

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

★★★★

**Fascinating document of revolutionary era**

More education than compilation, this anthology of music and spoken word was put together by producer Pat Thomas to accompany his similarly titled book. It's packed with diverse performances by the likes of The Original Last Poets, Marlena Shaw – her awe-inspiring Montreux recording of "Woman Of The Ghetto" – and activist Elaine Brown. Lennon, Dylan and Roy Harper also feature alongside Eldridge Cleaver's powerful monologue rejecting Timothy Leary's belief that "freedom means getting high". **Wyndham Wallace**

## VARIOUS ARTISTS Trevor Jackson Presents Metal Dance

STRUT

★★★★

**Formidable round-up of '80s industrial floor-fillers**

This compilation pulls together 27 under-appreciated tracks from the industrial and synth-pop hinterlands of the 1980s, expertly charting the evolution of metal machine music from post-punk to techno. As a DJ, Jackson has an ear for cuts that achieve a danceable momentum, even though their creators were often grappling with primitive technology. Who knew that Alien Sex Fiend could be so groovy? Or that Sydney – home to SPK and the marvellous Severed Heads – had as big a part in

the development of dark electronic pop as Sheffield or Berlin? **Sam Richards**

## VIRGIN FOREST Easy Way Out

PARTISAN

★★

**Phosphorescent sidemen take a side trip down the rabbit hole**

New York-based Virgin Forest seem to take their cues from Neil Young & Crazy Horse's *Arc/Weld* on this darkly atmospheric LP. Brittle shards of distorted guitar chords, a thudding fuzz bass and funereally paced snare hits pummel Scott Stapleton's choirboy tenor as he spews the bile of anxiety and dread. Stapleton's songs eschew conventional hooks in favour of psychological probing, leaving the impression on "Don't Be Afraid" and "Get Away" that this is one tormented dude. The album is so lugubrious that it tends to sink under its own weight, but it doesn't lack in enveloping intensity. **Bud Scoppa**

## VOIVOD To The Death 84

ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES

★★★

**Live reissue from eccentric Quebecois quartet, now in their 29th year**

Metal never dies, it simply sharpens its teeth and moves to a fresh feeding ground. Veterans Voivod cannibalise their past with this double LP, initially recorded live in their rehearsal space. It's an odd mixture of punk and speed metal, meshing a brutal heaviness with frilly solos and barely comprehensible yowling. Sabbath, Discharge and Motörhead are kindred spirits, but a segueing of Voivod's "Suck Your Bone" into a cover of Venom's "Buried Alive" reveals an unlikely admiration of Can's motorik grooves. **Sharon O'Connell**

# THE SPECIALIST

This month...

Country in the '60s



Bear Family's country hit-parade series – *Dim Lights*, *Thick Smoke And Hillbilly Music* – rolls into the Space Age. The rock'n'roll storm having subsided, rockabilly and hillbilly boogie now passé, country music entered the 1960s in a state

of sober consolidation. Professionalism, plus a measure of bland conformity, was now de rigueur, and powerful auteur producers shaped and shepherded artists from songwriting-germ-to-radio-fame in a slick new style: The Nashville Sound.

German roots-music exemplars Bear Family, who began this series with volumes covering 1945-1950, now present five new sets, 156 tracks, surveying country music primetime, 1961-1965. With detailed liner notes giving every cut a mini-historical narrative, it's a near-perfect crash course, a contextual glimpse into country's glory years (1961, ★★★★★; 1962, ★★★★★; 1963, ★★★★★; 1964, ★★★★★; 1965, ★★★★★).

Within the new dynamic (generally, goodbye fiddles and pedal-steel, hello strings and garrulous vocal harmonies), musical sophistication and playful songwriting took precedence. It was a transition propelling the suave, milquetoast Jim Reeves into superstardom, and playing into the strengths of Patsy Cline ("I Fall To Pieces"), perhaps country's greatest singer. Yet there was room for chicanery – take a bow, Roger "Dang Me" Miller – and subversion (Johnny Cash's "The Ballad Of Ira Hayes"). Dave Dudley's "Six Days On The Road", two minutes of anarchy waxed in 1963, ignited the truck-driver craze. A simmering class-consciousness often lurks beneath happy-go-lucky tunes ("We was poor folks living in a rich folks' world", Bill Anderson chirps in "Po' Folks").

Just as often the system churned out virtual nonentities (George Hamilton) and elevated minor artists (Eddy Arnold) into major attractions. Still, for all Nashville's newfound constraints, Cash ("Ring Of Fire") and George Jones ("The Race Is On") hit their strides, and veterans Don Gibson and Lefty Frizzell recorded signature songs. Meanwhile, Buck Owens cut hit after hit in Bakersfield, such as the irresistible "Love's Gonna Live Here".

The set's surprising pleasures revolve around lesser-known firecrackers: Stonewall Jackson's brooding "I Washed My Hands In Muddy Water"; Joe Carson's stinging "I Gotta Get Drunk"; and Warner Mack's 1965 smash "The Bridge Washed Out". Brilliant young songwriters – Harlan Howard, Willie Nelson – fuelled the run, while key players in country's next chapter arrived: Porter Wagoner, whose outsider psychodramas eclipsed the era's dreary romantic foibles; Loretta Lynn, whose determination and pure voice cut through the sexist mire; and Bakersfield boy Merle Haggard, whose rugged artistry would, in time, repudiate Nashville's ways with a vengeance. **LUKE TORN**



George Jones (with Melba Montgomery)



Pulp circa '83: (l-r) Jarvis Cocker, Saskia Cocker and Tim Allcard

# PULP

**It ★★★★★ | Freaks ★★★★★ Separations ★★★★★** FIRE

**Their Legendary Back Catalogue. Lesser-known 1980s works of Jarvis Cocker – all that's missing is the acclaim, says Peter Watts**



SOME BANDS, AS John Peel said of The Smiths, “spring fully armed as if from nowhere”, while others take longer to find their feet. Pulp are the headline act for the latter category. Before the breakthrough “Babies” in 1992, Pulp slowly felt their way into music with three albums in the '80s – *It*, *Freaks* and *Separations* – all of which have been reissued on Fire. It's impossible – and pointless – to listen to any of them without cocking half an ear towards the future, and comparing the tentative '80s Pulp with the triumphant force that would blossom in the '90s.

Pulp had already been around for five years when *It* came out on Red Rhino in 1983. The ‘schoolboy Pulp’ had split by the time Simon Hinkler (later of The Mission) persuaded 19-year-old Jarvis Cocker to go into the studio with a pick-up band. *It* begins, unsettlingly, with the sound of seagulls and the album, co-written by Cocker and Hinkler, is out-of-kilter with the post-punk mood, soft and acoustic, heavily influenced by Leonard Cohen, even if Cocker's vocals are disturbingly reminiscent of Morrissey. His needy crooning on the flute-ridden “Wishful Thinking” is very

different to what was to come, and on much of the LP there's an odd tension between the knowledge that Cocker is trying too hard, while also holding something back. This is broken in places, such as the romp of “Love Love”, sung with a lusty wink rather than a teenage eagerness to please. It's jazz-pop, LSD-meets-music hall, but it's definitely Pulp. As is one of the bonus tracks, an alternative mix of “Blue Girls”, with organ swirling and tempo raised accordingly, offering a tantalising glimpse of the ghost of Pulp's future. But that is still half a lifetime away.

By the time *Freaks* came out in '87, Pulp were refreshed, Cocker having been persuaded to stick with music by the addition of Russell Senior and Candida Doyle. Senior's influence is crucial, taking lead vocals in the manic “Fairground”, a gurning celebration of the grand guignol. This is the sound of a band coming together, Doyle's organ transforming the mood, while the lyrical themes have got darker, smarter, Pulp-ier. “I Want You” is one of the few '80s songs the band still perform, while “Being Followed Home” is paranoid and queasy, an evil sibling to future suburban classic “David's Last Summer”.

*Freaks* is a break-up album, though, and consequently as depressing as anything they would record until *This Is Hardcore*. On the morose triptych “Master Of The Universe”, “Life Must Be So Wonderful” and “There's No

Emotion” the bonkers promise of the first few tracks gets lost amid self-pity and solipsism. But ultimately it's the simplicity of “Don't You Know”, that foretells the future: no histrionics, just a catchy tune and witty lyric. This is the skeleton of all future Pulp hits – only the tunes would get catchier and the lyrics wittier: a bonus disc of *Freaks*-era singles – including the superb “Little Girl (With Blue Eyes)” – confirms the direction they were moving in.

“Give me the city...” is the telling opening line on “Love Is Blind”, the first track of *Separations*, released in '92 but recorded in '89 after Cocker had moved south and allowed London to expand his mind. This is the first ‘real’ Pulp album, with Steve Mackey and Nick Banks on board, and Mackey's love of acid house proves to be the missing ingredient. The first side is decent but humdrum – the punchy but forgettable “Don't You Want Me Anymore?” is typical – recognisably a Pulp album, just not a particularly good one. Things pick up on side two, with the acid influence driving “My Legendary Girlfriend”, “Death II” and “Countdown” close to pop perfection. Cocker confidently gasps, oohs and leers over trademark beats of fleapit disco, lapsing into conspiratorial spoken word when the mood demands and mining his past for inspiration – the key first line of “Countdown” is “Oh, I was 17...”. Pulp, looking back with panache, have finally arrived.

## Q&A Simon Hinkler

### How did you get involved with Pulp?

I was in a band called Artery and the early Pulp supported us. I got friendly with Jarvis and started going out with his sister. Jarvis and I were playing music around the house and I persuaded him to make an album. We wanted it to be laidback and introspective. I was into Leonard Cohen and we both liked The Velvet Underground, and wanted something stripped down and simple. We split up, but I continued to produce the EPs around the time of *Freaks*.

### Did you ever expect them to get so big?

Jarvis was immature but had something about him. He was the smartest kid in school, but for a long time he was his own worst enemy. He wouldn't compromise. When he moved to London I persuaded my girlfriend at the time to see Pulp, and she offered to manage them. She made them do things properly and got them signed to Island. They had the attention they'd needed for years, all they had to do now was let Jarvis carry on being Jarvis.

# SIMPLE MINDS

**X5** ★★★★★ EMI

**Their post-punk early years, boxed. By Graeme Thomson**



THERE BE GOLD in them stadium rock foothills. Before the superannuated MTV anthems, the spotlit spouses, the charity mega gigs, Simple Minds were the very opposite

of boring. They made dark, dazzling, unconventional records whose influence would later echo through the music of U2, Primal Scream, Manic Street Preachers, The Horrors and Blur (speed up the carnival rhythms of "Life In A Day" and "Girls & Boys" drifts into view).

A new boxset assiduously tracks this alternative narrative. It contains remastered versions of the band's first five albums (though it lacks, sadly, any unreleased treasure) and begins with the callow charm of John Leckie-produced debut *Life In A Day* (1979). Although they've outgrown their early incarnation as Johnny & The Self-Abusers, the spirited music remains highly derivative, a post-punk mélange of Cockney Rebel, The Doors, Roxy Music, Bowie, Magazine and Neu!. Dodgy eight-minute dirge "Pleasantly Disturbed" is prog-rock-meets-the-Velvets.

Significant progress is made on *Real To Real Cacophony* (1979). The work of a band in rapid transition, it features an experimental concatenation of styles. "Naked Eye" and "Carnival" are nightmare vaudevilles, the aural equivalent of a hall of mirrors. "Veldt" is incipient world music, nodding to Peter Gabriel and Bowie's *Lodger*. Elsewhere, the interplay between bassist Derek Forbes and drummer Brian McGhee edges songs onto the dancefloor. "Premonition" is futuristic Euro-funk; "Changeling" metallic post-punk with sawing synth. Both are wonderful.

On *Empires And Dance* (1980), Leckie's final album with the band, they follow this path into the heart of disco-rock darkness. Jim Kerr's agitated travelogue observes Old Europe decadence, pre-war "drug cabarets" and contemporary New European turmoil: Baader-Meinhof, bombs in Rome and Paris. It's both disturbing and bleakly romantic. On the almost unbearably taut "Thirty Frames A Second", existential panic and the lure of the glitterball unite in perfect lockstep. "I Travel" is whirling dance-rock, while "Today I Died Again" and "This Fear Of Gods" are suffused with dread. You can certainly see why *Empires And Dance* might have made a profound impression on Manic Street Preachers, whose *The Holy Bible* drew on everything



from its cover art to its unsettling themes.

The mood changes again on *Sons And Fascination/Sister Feelings Call* (1981). Recording with Gong-master Steve Hillage, the original intention was to make a double album and, although the two records were eventually released simultaneously but apart, they share the same sinister, bass-heavy atmosphere. North African melodies snake through "League Of Nations" and "Boys From Brazil", while Kerr's bark is now pitched so low he almost swallows his own words.

Yet at the same time something less ominous is emerging from the shadows, evident in almost-hits "Love Song" and "The American", which expires in Charlie Burchill's thrilling squall of wah-wah. The ability to shackle artfully alienated dance-rock to a warm, hummable chorus points towards *New Gold*

*Dream*, which appeared in 1982 lit up from within by an ambient pop glow. "Promised You A Miracle" may be persuasive, but it's "Big Sleep" and Herbie Hancock's sublime keyboard solo on "Hunter And The Hunted" which attain true transcendence.

Sultry assassin's song "King Is White And In The Crowd" reprises the old menace, but the dawning of a new age in which the cover of *Smash Hits* was as coveted as that of *NME* brought these outsiders in from the cold. Simple Minds became a very different band, sucked into the rock slipstream. Anyone who knows only that part of the story is urged to immerse themselves in these albums which, though far from flawless, are fascinating, endlessly inventive and magical. Not only have they never sounded better, they've rarely seemed so in tune with the times.

## Q&A Jim Kerr

### Why do X5 now?

Over the past few tours we've been delving into more obscure early songs and finding that some of them had a contemporary vibe. They have a new context. A wealth of newer bands seem to be drawing on, not Simple Minds in particular, but that period in general.

### Did you want to set the record straight in some way?

Nobody owes us anything, but the Simple Minds story has been too condensed. After Live Aid and "Don't You (Forget About Me)" there hasn't been quite the credit for those first few records. I think they contain some really

special music. I can hear the flaws but there's something about the spirit and imagination in them that feels good. They draw from such a wide range of influences. We'd go from really obscure krautrock to Chic and Sister Sledge to Beefheart to Bowie and Eno, but the spirit of it was always Simple Minds. There was no identity loss.

### Do you have a favourite?

*Empires And Dance*, a travelogue with spiky dance music. We were young men travelling through classical Europe, reading Camus, and it was all feeding the machine.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON

## DON WILLIAMS

Volumes 1 & 2    
1972/1973

HUX

★★★★

### Country's Gentle Giant reissued

Although (and perhaps because) he was a country superstar in the 1970s, Don Williams has never been fashionable. The smooth-singing Texan was no outlaw, though he graduated from the Pozo-Seco Singers, a folk trio managed by Albert Grossman. This reissue collects his first two solo albums, from 1972-73, and hindsight reveals them to be beautifully understated, with none of the era's production quirks. Doubters are directed to the honeyed despair of the self-penned "Oh Misery", and the elegant self-deception of Mickey Newbury's "I Don't Think About Her No More". *Alastair McKay*

## WIRE

### The Black Session

PINKFLAG

★★★★

### Paris exhibition mounted by British art-rock institution

On tour in 2011, Wire popped into Radio France to record this live session with invited audience. 13 tracks cover their 35-year history, with their pared-down sound beefed up by new guitarist Matt Simms (in Bruce Gilbert's absence). Angular oldies like "Map Ref 41°N 93°W" and "Kidney Bingos" still sparkle, and the relentless "Drill" is boring in all the right ways. The heavier approach of recent material like "Red Barked Tree" feeds into the closing "Pink Flag", a 10-minute power-jam that self-combusts into ambient smog. *Rob Young*

## DUSTIN WONG

### Dreams Say, View, Create, Shadow Leads

THRILL JOCKEY

★★★★

Second album for Baltimore pedal specialist



Live Wire: beefing up their sound

Dustin Wong is deceptively gentle – but like a frog in a pot of slowly boiling water, the listener is liable to be caught unawares when these tracks build in intensity. Using a combination of pedals, including octave and distortion, and employing the techniques of Steve Reich and Terry Riley on tracks like "Feet Prints On Flower Dreads", Wong works up from trickling sounds as seemingly innocuous as mid-morning TV music to a rumbling, looped ferocity. He refers to his methods as akin to a "textile factory" but closer "Diagonally Talking Echo" is truly Industrial with its deadly accumulation of morse code electronics. *David Stubbs*



## XIU XIU

### Always

BELLA UNION

★★★★

### Latest fraught confessional from avant-pop troupe

Over eight albums, Jamie Stewart's Xiu Xiu have built a catalogue every bit as challenging, bloody-minded and sporadically beautiful as Michael Gira's Swans, albeit

coming from a somewhat different perspective. Stewart's preoccupations – narcissism, sexuality, body horror – translate into a sort of febrile synth-pop, dotted with orchestral excursions and abrupt electronics. Some will hear Stewart's lamentations on "Joey's Song" and hail him as their Morrissey; others may find the whole thing rather hard work, although "The Oldness", in particular, is wonderful, a bare piano ballad in the vein of Antony Hegarty. *Louis Pattison*

## THE YARDBIRDS

### Glimpses

EASY ACTION

★★★★

### Revealing alternative history

This resourceful five-disc set utilises entirely unofficial Yardbirds recordings – only the BBC radio sessions have been legitimately released anywhere before. Otherwise, *Glimpses* draws from live tapes, demos, American and European TV and radio broadcasts, plus archived interviews and some moments best left unheard, notably a recording from an excruciating Italian festival performance. Each of the group's stellar guitarists regularly gets to shine: Clapton at the Crawdaddy in 1964, Beck at the NME Pollwinners Concert in 1966 or Jimmy Page's exploratory "Dazed And Confused", captured in an early version on French TV in March 1968, six months before Led

Zeppelin was unveiled.

*Mick Houghton*

## YOUNG MAGIC

### Melt

CARPARK

★★★★

### Globally informed dream-pop from new New Yorkers

This freewheeling trio's origins and bases take in Australia, New York, Indonesia and Mexico, which perhaps explains the far-flung influences that coalesce into their adventurous bush of ghosts. Isaac Emmanuel, Michael Italia and Melati Malay make a dubby, psychedelic stew from equal parts African and dubstep rhythm, arty electronic textures and shoegazing harmonies. Emmanuel's showy production erects a wall of reverb-laden sound that resembles a soundclash between Burial, Cocteau Twins, Animal Collective and early Peter Gabriel. It's frequently impressive and occasionally lovely, but often loses its soul in Emmanuel's restless barrage of spectacular effects. *Garry Mulholland*

## NEXT MONTH...

**PAUL WELLER** The Mod's palette now includes Neu!, but there's no disguising the cut of his distinctive suit of musical clothes on *Sonik Kicks*. Psych. Dub. And the rest.

**SPIRITUALIZED** *Sweet Heart Sweet Light* channels the Velvets in its most driving parts and Richard Ashcroft's solo stuff in its more reflective and romantic moments.

**THE SHINS** Fourth from James Mercer's quirky indie band, now no longer indie, nor particularly quirky. MOR tune-smithery of a powerful kind on *Port Of Morrow*.

# 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.



## THE ROLLING STONES

### Some Girls

POLYDOR ★★★★★

A companion piece to the *Exile* reissue, *Some Girls* finds the band responding to the changing musical climate of the '70s: funk, disco, punk and Ron Wood are all now in their mix. Plus a CD of rootsy extras.



## LEONARD COHEN

### Old Ideas

COLUMBIA ★★★★★

Laughing Len pores over the passing and the past with defiant, deadpan nobility.



## THE BEACH BOYS

### The Smile Sessions

EMI ★★★★★

The unfinished symphony to God, finally released. Many CDs. Much greatness. Much madness.



## 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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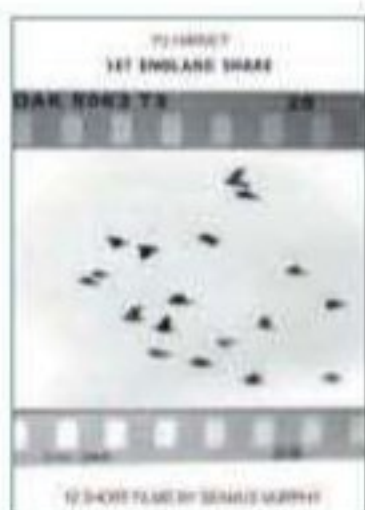
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# PJ HARVEY LET ENGLAND SHAKE: 12 SHORT FILMS BY SEAMUS MURPHY

★★★★★ ISLAND DVD

The photographer's work is as poignant as the album it accompanies. *By Rob Young*



ON *Let England Shake*, winner of 2011's Uncut Music Award, Harvey gave her music a bony, volkish edge, flaying it back to strummed autoharp, electric guitar and crude drums, mongrelising it with awkwardly intrusive

sampling of Middle Eastern singers, dub interjections and bugle calls. Seamus Murphy's cinematography complements this approach perfectly: collaged from journeys around the country made during 2011, from the remotest hedgerows to the heart of London. In doing so he innately understands *Let England Shake*'s problematic elixir of melancholic poetics, progressive patriotism and anti-war critique, using a visual language that speaks of England from the ground up.

Harvey reportedly saw Murphy's exhibition of war photographs, *A Darkness Visible: Afghanistan*, and commissioned him as a result. "I never wanted to interpret the album," Murphy has commented, "but to capture something of its mood and force." His films, made on lone trips, are largely in the mode of a travelogue, their photo-gallery approach recalling at times the British

Transport Films of the late 1950s and '60s, or the static landscape framing of Patrick Keiller's *Robinson In Space*. England can be, as he reminds us, "a gratifyingly odd place".

Harvey, who has held a tight rein on her visual representation throughout her career, allows Murphy frank and up-close access. He films her alone in her Dorset house, shuffling through a ringbinder of lyrics and rehearsing her songs with a guitar, autoharp and playback tapes. She fluffs a line with an "oh bugger" and lets slip shy, slightly embarrassed smiles after the tracks have finished. It's a very human portrait of an artist often represented via distancing techniques.

But the films mostly consist of arrays of landscape photography. Murphy frames the bugle of "The Glorious Land" with a shot of blurred treetops. "All And Everyone" ends with a desolate shot of a motorboat, tiny against the pewter sea, chugging away from Chesil Beach, a triangle of pebbles in the corner of the screen. It's an image entirely suited to a record that has so much to do with England's separateness from its neighbours.

Intercut with the landscapes are plenty of people: chance encounters and faces from across the spectrum of society. Several videos feature scenes of soldiers and mourners at

Wootton Bassett, the conduit for Britain's war dead. Heavy metal fans and video gamers appear in "The Words That Maketh Murder". In "England", an archer watches his arrow's dying fall and the camera tracks around a pub's crooked picture frames containing the 1966 World Cup squad and other past English glories. Each track is prefaced by a member of the public reading out a section of the song's lyrics. Best of these is a car mechanic whose running commentary on the car he's fixing serves as an epitaph to the nation itself: "She'll soldier on, the good old girl. The old ones are the good ones."

Harvey's group – Mick Harvey, John Parish and Jean-Marc Butty – crop up in footage taken at St Peter's Church in the village of Eype, near Harvey's home, where the album was recorded. "The Colour Of The Earth" is a real treat: the quartet huddle against the cold on the lane outside, performing the song a cappella, like a modern-day Watersons in denim and leather. We're left with a bonus solo version of "England", just Polly facing the sea outside her window, vocally battling against Said El Kurdi's ululations, telling how "*England leaves a sadness*". It leaves you with an arresting and enchanting image of quiet resistance and creative determination.

## FROM STRAIGHT TO BIZARRE

SEXY INTELLECTUAL

★★★★

Unsanctioned examination of Frank Zappa and Herb Cohen's Straight and Bizarre labels which, between 1968 and 1973, enabled both LA weirdoes (GTOs, Wild Man Fischer) and unconventional talents (Tim Buckley, Beefheart) to record freely. Plenty of archive clips, often annoyingly tantalising – Lord Buckley with Groucho Marx – plus interviews with assorted commentators. Magic Band members John French and Bill Harkleroad stand out; recounting Beefheart's bullying tactics while recording *Trout Mask Replica*.

**EXTRAS:** Further interviews.

★★★★

Mick Houghton



## MOTÖRHEAD

THE WORLD IS OURS VOL. I: EVERYWHERE IS FURTHER THAN EVERYPLACE ELSE

UDR

★★★★

This opening salvo in an ongoing visual history of Lemmy and co down the years focuses on two 2011 gigs, in front of a massive, frenzied crowd at Chile's Teatro Caupolicán and a more humble affair in Manchester. All the big hitters are there, and it's the charismatic frontman's stage presence and between-song banter that elevates proceedings, but hopefully

future volumes will feature footage of a much more interesting vintage.

**EXTRAS:** Lemmy interview, bonus live footage from New York. ★★★★★

Terry Staunton

## RADIOHEAD

THE KING OF LIMBS: FROM THE BASEMENT

TICKER TAPE LTD (DVD & BLU-RAY)

★★★★★

Originally broadcast on the BBC in July last year, this live set captures the band performing *The King Of Limbs* in its entirety, complete with a second drummer (Phil Selway clone Clive Deamer), horns and woodwind. With the laidback vibe of a rehearsal, it's hardly visually compelling, but the band's interplay, particularly on even newer tracks "The Daily Mail" (a trademark Yorke piano lament which blooms into a brassy jam) and "Staircase", is scintillating. *Stephen Troussé*

## U2

FROM THE SKY DOWN

MERCURY

★★★★★

Though *Achtung Baby* is a terrific record in itself, the mythology surrounding its gestation has served U2 nearly as well, allowing them a dignified retreat from the cowboy-hatted, chest-beating hubris of the *Rattle & Hum* epoch. Davis Guggenheim's fine film recalls U2's end-of-the-'80s rebirth capably, but also serves as an unusually stark illumination of a rock group's creative process, some of which U2 understand, and much of which, to their hearteningly apparent wonder, they don't.

**EXTRAS:** Press conference, photo gallery, acoustic versions. ★★★★★

Andrew Mueller

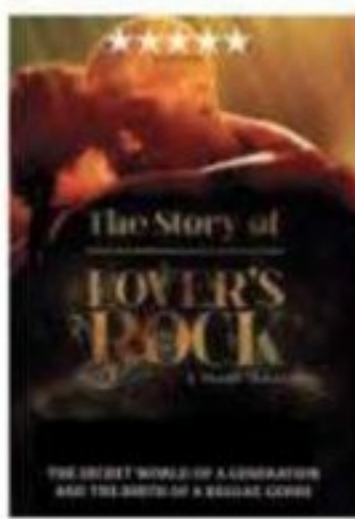


Lemmy: the world is his, all right?

# THE STORY OF LOVERS ROCK

★★★★★

Smart doc unzips a lost chapter of UK reggae, says *Neil Spencer*



THE HISTORY OF British reggae is customarily told through 1970s bands like Aswad and Steel Pulse, acts modelled on Marley's Wailers but who gave Jamaica's pulse an Anglo twist.

Alongside them came the punky cross-pollinations of The Clash, The Police and The Slits, followed by the ska-pop of The Specials and Madness.

Yet for the teens and twenties of black Britain in the late '70s and early '80s, the era's defining sounds were found mostly in the soundsystem and blues dance. Here, cavernous dub and militancy had to share space with the more immediate demands of young love and the desire to be wrapped in a warm embrace. The crowded, darkened dancefloor was the spawning ground of Lovers Rock, whose slow, stickily sweet tunes became a genre as distinctly British as 2-Tone, albeit one less celebrated.

Beginning with Louisa Mark's 1975 hit "Caught You In A Lie", homegrown romantic reggae grew into a mini-industry, with female singers (and fans) to the fore. The Lovers Rock label (the name came from an Augustus Pablo tune) sealed the generic title and with Matumbi's Dennis Bovell masterminding, turned out a stream of hits. The singers' youth was a characteristic; Brown Sugar's Kofi

recalls going to sixth form to be told by a friend that the trio's "I'm In Love With A Dreadlocks" had topped the reggae charts.

While such hits sold by the crate load, few Lovers singles crossed over to the national charts, Janet Kay's 1979 "Silly Games", another Bovell production, being the exception. Mostly the music stayed within the black community, as important a part of its identity as the era's more fêted bands. "Lovers gave a new generation a voice and an escape," says author Neferatiti Ife, adding that the music's obsession with two-timing and break-up had "a healing element – we could go through anger".

Menelik Shabazz tells the Lovers story with pizzazz, mixing archive footage with numerous interviews and footage from a recent revival concert. It's an affectionate, insightful portrait of an era. Using an array of black comedians to comment on the genre's conventions (amid recreations of the dancefloor and its fashions) proves inspired. The slow, grinding dance that accompanied Lovers tunes is a source of glee and send-up.

As the 1980s progressed, Lovers soundsystems, notably Saxon, produced solo stars, among them Maxi Priest (still the only Brit reggae singer to top the US charts, with "Close To You") and Levi Roots. The latter, now a noted foody, describes Lovers as "Britain's special contribution to the recipe of reggae".

**EXTRAS:** Trailer only.



Charlize Theron, left, in a comedy of delusion

# YOUNG ADULT

Directed by Jason Reitman. Starring Charlize Theron, Patton Oswalt, Patrick Wilson, Elizabeth Reaser. Opens February 3, Cert 15, 93 mins



Smalltown comedy as dark as it is funny. *By Jonathan Romney*

**T**HE GOLDEN RULE of contemporary American comedy is: be sure to have a protagonist that viewers will like. It's the default recipe for crowd-pleasing, stress-free entertainment, but it also explains why so much current fodder is formulaic and desperately afraid to ruffle the audience's feathers. But one notable dissenter is director Jason Reitman, who favours less likeable lead characters like George Clooney's hard-nosed management consultant in *Up In The Air* and Aaron Eckhart's tobacco lobbyist in *Thank You For Smoking*.

Mavis Gary (Charlize Theron) is another such character. She's left her Minnesota home and escaped to the big city – Minneapolis – to pursue her dreams of being a writer. But pumping out high-school romance novels for the young adult market clearly isn't fulfilling as she'd perhaps have hoped.

A narcissist who never moved on from her teenage high as a prom queen, Mavis has a bee in her bonnet about the past, and particularly The One That Got Away – her school beau Buddy (Patrick Wilson). Like the heroine of many a small-town romcom (the spectre of Jennifer Aniston may manifest itself before you here), Mavis embarks on a mission to revisit her roots and recapture her old love. But here's

where *Young Adult* subverts the template: not only is Mavis a severe case of arrested emotional development, fixated on her moment of teenage glory, she's hair-raisingly insensitive to the emotions of others, and sociopathic, her pursuit of the married Buddy effectively stalking.

Where other comedies might have made light farce out of Mavis, *Young Adult* takes her seriously enough to make her a genuine study in psychological horror. The moment she breezes back into town, treating everyone around her with a city girl's lofty contempt, we realise we're dealing with someone seriously damaged. In one scene, Mavis runs into ex-schoolmate Matt Freehauf (Patton Oswalt), whose life has been scarred by a horrific incident of gay-bashing – not that Mavis is remotely able to comprehend anyone's pain but her own.

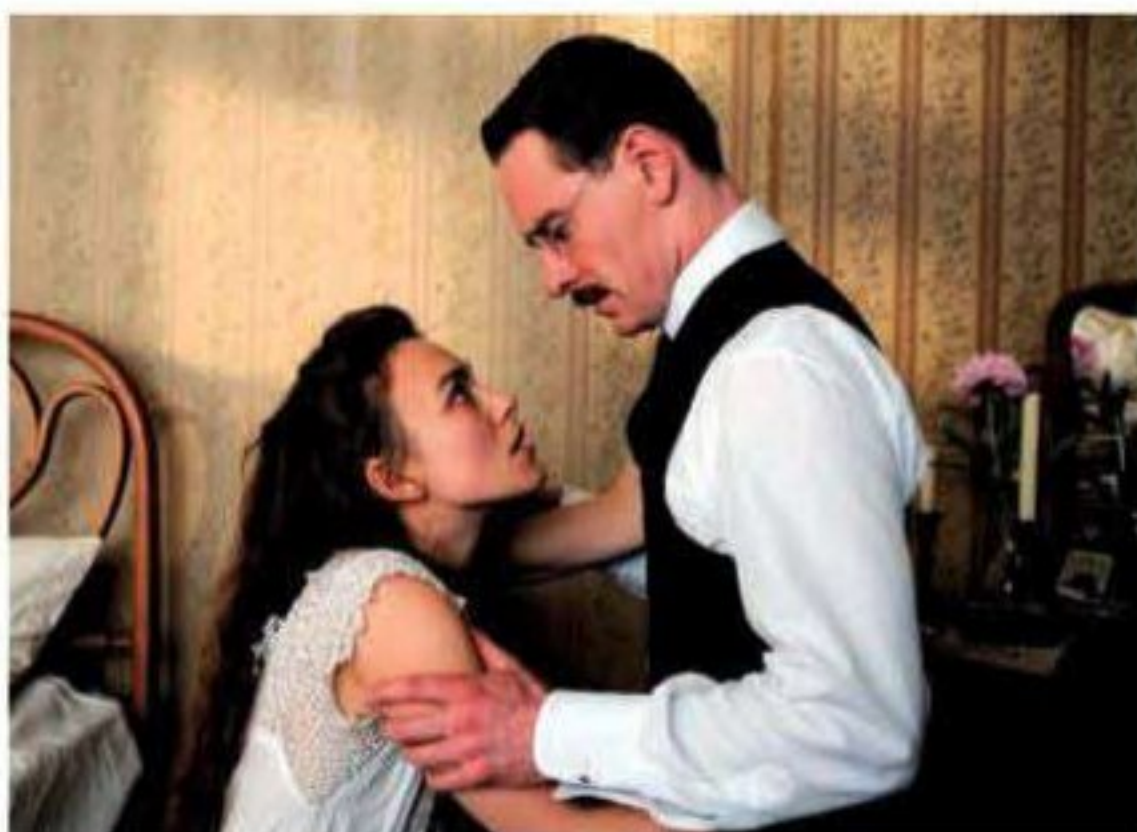
The film's bitter, revealing comedy is rooted less in farcical situations than in acute characterisation. *Young Adult* is written by Diablo Cody, whose much gentler script for Reitman's *Juno* established her as the most prominent cult screenwriter since Charlie Kaufman. This pitiless depiction of female disappointment is nevertheless remarkably subtle: for all its scenes of excruciating

misbehaviour, the film turns out surprisingly poignant, albeit in a singularly acidic way. Unusually, too, for Hollywood comedy, the film never mocks its smalltown characters, but suggests that it's saner to live a mundane life than to wreck your soul with dreams of self-aggrandisement: a stark corrective to the bogus 'anything can happen' fantasies of much US cinema. The highly likeable flag-bearer for balanced normality is Buddy's wife Beth (Elizabeth Reaser) who enjoys playing Teenage Fanclub covers in a shaky moms' bar band (the twist for Mavis is that TFC's "The Concept" was supposed to be *her* and Buddy's song).

As Mavis, Charlize Theron proves a revelation. A somewhat underrated performer despite her Oscar-winning role as killer Aileen Wuornos in 2003's *Monster*, Theron has recently shown herself to be a brisk comic player, and downright good sport, in her self-mocking turn as a dorky Brit in TV's much-lamented *Arrested Development*. In *Young Adult*, Mavis' rebarbative neurosis gives Theron plenty to run with: watch the scene where Mavis badgers an unimpressed bookshop assistant about displaying her books more prominently. This is the comedy of delusion, and it really hurts – not least because Theron makes us understand Mavis but never courts our sympathy.

Theron has a terrific foil in comedian Patton Oswalt (best known in the UK as the voice of the lead rat in *Ratatouille*), who takes what seems the generic role of the long-suffering barroom confidant and turns it into something very unexpected. Oswalt's characterisation is just one example of the way that *Young Adult* bends the comic rules. Another is the way the film flouts the much-vaunted law of 'character development'. With a black wit and a bracingly hard-boiled heart, *Young Adult* is pithy and pitiless – adult comedy through and through.





## A DANGEROUS METHOD

Directed by David Cronenberg  
Starring Michael Fassbender, Keira Knightley  
Opens Feb 10, Cert 15, 100 mins ★★★★★

### Period look at dark Freud and Jung love triangle

As the historical trappings suggest, Cronenberg doesn't make body horror like he used to, but don't be fooled. He's still peeling away the veneer of humanity to show our bestial natures beneath. That's all the more fun here in the context of 19th-century Europe, where ideas are the agent of subversion, especially Freud's theories of the subconscious.

Freud's disciple, Carl Jung (Fassbender), is the focus of this lurid but apparently true story. His application of Freud's "talking cure" to a hysterical Russian woman (Knightley) is so successful they indulge in a sado-masochistic affair. Jung's marriage and Oedipal issues with his mentor (Viggo Mortensen) only add complications. It's a torrid love triangle, but one where the players are articulate about their own impulses, destined to become those of our whole society, the film suggests. It's all the better for its restraint – a quality Cronenberg never used to have much time for. *Steve Rose*



## DON'T THINK

Directed by Adam Smith  
Starring Tom Rowlands, Ed Simons  
Opens February 1, Cert U, 85 mins ★★★★★

### Brothers gonna work it out live in Japan

*Don't Think* captures The Chemical Brothers in their element: roasting thousands of saucer-eyed Japanese halfway up a mountain with their blistering live show. If Tom Rowlands and Ed Simons' music has sometimes struggled to fully convey their psychedelic inclinations, this remarkable concert film – shot on 20 cameras over the course of their headline set at last summer's Fuji Rock Festival – goes some way to correcting that. Director Adam Smith, the duo's longtime visual designer, avoids the pitfalls of every clunking concert film by furiously editing and tweaking footage of the crowd, the Chems and their eye-popping graphics to produce an innovative portrait of mega-rave euphoria that, regardless of your feelings towards the material, is never dull. The lads themselves, Simons forever stage right arms aloft, Rowlands sliding faders, are mere bit-players in their own epic adventure. *Piers Martin*



## CARNAGE

Directed by Roman Polanski  
Starring Kate Winslet, Jodie Foster, Christoph Waltz  
Opens February 3, Cert 15, 78 mins ★★★★★

### Polanski continues as an expert in confinement

Whether Adrien Brody hiding in a bombed-out house in *The Piano* or Catherine Deneuve confronting her demons in *Repulsion*, his films are full of people in cooped-up spaces (in reality, he recently spent months under house arrest fighting extradition to the US). His new film, *Carnage*, based on a play by Yasmina Reza, takes place almost entirely in a New York apartment where two couples are discussing an incident involving their young children at school. This is one of the few comedies Polanski has made. It is well performed by the leads – Foster as the mousey Penelope, John C Reilly as her boorish husband, Waltz as the businessman who cherishes his BlackBerry as much as his child, and Kate Winslet as a career woman with a weak stomach. Polanski's project is akin to Luis Buñuel's searing dissections of bourgeois mores. At times, the pace drags but the film only lasts 80 minutes and has a barbed and vicious undertow. *Geoffrey Macnab*



## RAMPART

Directed by Oren Moverman  
Starring Woody Harrelson, Ned Beatty  
Opens February 10, Cert 15, 120 mins ★★★

### Gritty police drama from James Ellroy

Set against the Rampart Division scandal that rocked the LAPD in the late '90s – the rampant corruption and brutality that similarly inspired *The Shield* – James Ellroy's story makes a hazier, less pulpy companion to his underrated *Dark Blue*. Harrelson plays Dave "Date Rape" Brown, a defiantly old-school cop with a vigilante philosophy, nicotine-and-pills diet, and messed-up private life. Pressure mounts when his latest bout of summary street justice makes headlines. The Department wants him out; Dave suspects he's been set-up as scapegoat. Another chapter of *LA Confidential*, we're in familiar territory, yet despite a superb cast *Rampart* slips out of focus. Still Harrelson, a sly and wired dinosaur, cuts through it like a knife. His second hook-up with Moverman after 2009's *The Messenger*, this incredible performance makes you wonder why so few filmmakers put him at the centre of a film for so long. *Damien Love*

## ALSO OUT...

### BEST LAID PLANS

**OPENS FEBRUARY 3**  
Hard knocks on the mean streets of Nottingham await Stephen Graham and Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje.

### JACK AND JILL

**OPENS FEBRUARY 3**  
Adam Sandler plays both a brother and a sister. Al Pacino plays himself. It's a comedy.

### MAN ON A LEDGE

**OPENS FEBRUARY 3**  
Thriller, involving a heist and a suicide attempt, with Sam Worthington and Jamie Bell.

### CASABLANCA

**OPENS FEBRUARY 10**  
Lovely reissue for the Bogart classic.



### THE MUPPETS

**OPENS FEBRUARY 10**  
They're back! What's not to like?

### THE WOMAN IN BLACK

**OPENS FEBRUARY 10**  
Ghost story, with Daniel Radcliffe's lawyer engaged to settle the estate of a recently deceased old woman...

### EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE

**OPENS FEBRUARY 17**  
From Jonathan Safran Foer's post-9/11 novel. Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock star.

### GHOST RIDER: SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE 3D

**OPENS FEBRUARY 17**  
Nic Cage pisses fire in bonkers-looking sequel.

### RED DOG

**OPENS FEBRUARY 17**  
Australian family drama about – yes – a red dog.

### SAFE HOUSE

**OPENS FEBRUARY 24**  
CIA handler Ryan Reynolds has to keep Denzel Washington safe from bad dudes.



## MARTHA MARCY MAY MARLENE

**Directed by Sean Durkin**  
**Starring Elizabeth Olsen, John Hawkes, Sarah Paulson**  
**Opens February 3, Cert 15, 102 mins**

★★★★

**Dark, psychological cult-escapee drama**

THE FIRST TIME we see Martha (Elizabeth Olsen), she's slipping out of a ranch house, nestled deep in some isolated rural idyll, and bolting for the cover of nearby woods. Fetching up in a nearby town, she phones her sister – but when asked, she's confused as to her location and, later, is unable to account for where she's been the last two years.

Martha, we learn, is on the run from a cult, presided over by charismatic leader Patrick (John Hawkes). It was Patrick who gave Martha the name Marcy May, as part of a process in breaking down her identity. Marlene,

meanwhile, is the name all the women in the cult are instructed to use when answering the telephone. All this we discover in flashback: the film slips seamlessly between timelines, from the present day, following Martha's escape from the cult, as she recuperates in the care of her yuppie-ish elder sister Lucy (Sarah Paulson) and brother-in-law Ted (Hugh Dancy), to her time spent in Patrick's tyrannical household.

This is the feature debut of writer/director Sean Durkin, a follow-up to his 2010 short film, *Mary Last Seen*, which similarly found a young woman caught up in the pernicious influence of a controlling male. Durkin delivers an accomplished, disturbing drama, that at times feels like a horror movie: the idea of a female lead trapped in a remote environment and threatened by a predatory male echoes films from *Psycho* to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest*. Elizabeth Olsen, the younger sister of the twins, brings a measured intelligence and fierce vulnerability to the part of Martha. John Hawkes – so good as the demonic Teardrop

in *Winter's Bone* – is tremendous as Patrick. He bestows or withholds his favour, gaining psychological hold over his followers. The new members – predominantly fragile young women, like Martha, who drift into his orbit – outdo each other to prove how fully they have accepted his ideology (which includes rape). Brady Corbet – clean cut, cold-eyed and gently menacing – is a suitably reptilian second in command, Watts.

Martha might have escaped the physical boundaries of the cult's ranch, but emotionally she is still very much a prisoner there. At her sister's home, Martha broods, lashing out at anyone who tries to help her. There is something of a wounded wild animal about her. Whether or not the cult still pose a genuine threat to her or not is a moot point – we are never told as much, though Martha is convinced they do. She is spooked at the slightest noise, or an unfamiliar car, convinced Patrick or Watts are coming for her. "Fear is the most amazing emotion of all," Patrick tutors Martha. It's a lesson she never forgets. *Wendy Ide*

## TRAILERPARK

See them all at [www.apple.com/trailers](http://www.apple.com/trailers)



### MOONRISE KINGDOM

Wes Anderson returns. Witness meticulous composition, stylised colour palette, '60s soundtrack and – yep – that's Bill Murray in there, too.



### THE HOBBIT

Back to Middle Earth we go, for more Hobbit hi-jinks with Bilbo and the gang, thanks to director Peter Jackson. Expect dwarves.



### PROMETHEUS

Ridley Scott revisits the *Alien* universe for this semi-prequel. What's that in those big eggs Michael Fassbender's looking at? Oh...

## MOUTHPIECE



"Why would I make any more when everybody yells at you and says what a terrible person you are...?"

**GEORGE LUCAS** on why he won't make any more *Star Wars* movies

# ROLLING THUNDER



STUDIO CANAL (DVD &amp; BLU-RAY)

Welcome return for Paul Schrader's long-unavailable '70s Viet vet revenge thriller. *By Damien Love*



IN 1971, WHILE STILL a young film critic, Paul Schrader published his essay *Notes On Film Noir*. To the point, slightly crazy, it's one of the seminal pieces on the subject, a perfect introduction to the black stuff. But Schrader's essay is just as fascinating as a manifesto for the kind of films he was about to start making himself. A key condition, he writes, is "War and post-war disillusionment... a serviceman returns to find his sweetheart unfaithful or dead, or his business partner cheating on him, the whole society something less than worth fighting for." Most revelatory is Schrader's declaration that "the cream" of noir was its "third and final phase, the period of psychotic action and suicidal impulse. The noir hero... started to go bananas."

Here you have the blueprint for the neo-noir triptych with which Schrader launched his screenwriting career. First came *The Yakuza* (1974), with Robert Mitchum iconic as a WWII veteran called to modern Japan to fight shadows of his past, before chopping off his own finger. Next, *Taxi Driver* (1976). And then, this, the most bananas of the bunch: 1977's *Rolling Thunder*, featuring a protagonist whose prime weapon is the specially sharpened prosthetic hook he wears after the bad guys liquidise his hand in a garbage disposal.

As in *Taxi Driver*, our anti-hero is an alienated Viet vet, Major Charles Rane, played by the shark-toothed, routinely undervalued William Devane. After seven years of torture in a Hanoi POW camp, he's returned to his San Antonio hometown and given a hero's welcome – flags, parades and gifts including a lipstick red Cadillac convertible and a box containing one silver dollar for every day of his captivity, over \$2,500 in all.

Beneath the surface, however, all is not well. In his absence, Rane's wife has taken up with another man. His young son has long since forgotten him. He drifts around town like a dead man until, one afternoon, he comes home to discover a gang of lowlifes waiting for him in his lounge, demanding that box of money. By the time they've left, Rane has lost his wife, his son and his hand. But he's gained something that he's been missing: finally, he has a grim new sense of mission. When he gets out of hospital, he loads his car with every weapon he can find, looks up an equally disturbed ex-comrade (a ghostly Tommy Lee Jones), and heads after the gang, down into Mexico, towards the kind of apocalyptic whorehouse showdown rarely seen this side of a Sam Peckinpah movie.

*Rolling Thunder*'s ultra-violence and ultra-weirdness saw it shabbily treated. Producers 20th Century Fox demanded that Schrader's original script was toned down, then dumped the movie anyway, selling it to exploitation

specialists AIP for the grindhouse circuit. Since its original release, it has become difficult to see, a victim of legal tangles over ownership, but has attracted a cult that includes Quentin Tarantino, who named his production company after it.

He's fussy about it now, but *Rolling Thunder* is a key Schrader work. It's very much *Taxi Driver*'s flat, hard echo, but, rolling out across a shabby backdrop of small towns and dusty backroads, it's somehow smaller, trashier, stranger. The director is John Flynn, a workman whose brutally efficient style was honed to perfection with this and *The Outfit* (1973), another key entry in the '70s noir revival.

Flynn's movie is blunt, shorn of Scorsese's dazzling expressionistic flourishes, but this TV-movie-like aspect makes it all the more unsettling. Beyond fragmentary flashbacks, we're given none of the glimpses we get into Travis Bickle's interior state. Stiff and hidden behind aviator shades, Rane is a hard, blank surface, impossible to read. Devane is an actor who often tears into roles with grinning lust, but he's brilliantly minimal here. Few of his reactions make much emotional sense, until you realise: he has no emotions left. It takes a while to understand just how crazy he is.

When Rane does finally go into action, there's a terrible sense that he's motivated not by any love for his family or even desire for revenge. He just wants to get back into war, back to torture. It's war he misses, torture he loves. Strange stuff, indeed. Schrader has been a little off the boil recently, but it's worth noting his new movie, *The Jesuit*, coming later this year, is about a man heading into Mexico for revenge after his wife is killed... No sign of a hook, but we can at least hope.

**EXTRAS:** Interview with co-star Linda Haynes, original trailers, and comments from celebrity fan Eli Roth. ★★★



William Devane sees some ultra-violence looming on the horizon



# GAME OF THRONES: SEASON ONE TV

★★★★★ WARNER HOME VIDEO (DVD/BLU-RAY)

It may inhabit a fantasy world far away, but HBO's epic saga stalks familiar territory. *By Terry Staunton*



SKY ATLANTIC'S LAUNCH promotion last year largely focused on two offerings courtesy of safe hands in the HBO stable. *Boardwalk Empire* ("from the makers of *The Sopranos*") and David Simon's post-*Wire* series *Treme* came pre-packaged with hallmarks of quality, presumably seen as easier "sells" than a drama based on a series of fantasy novels.

However, to dismiss *Game Of Thrones* as a run-of-the-mill swords-and-sorcery yarn that might have characters from *The Big Bang Theory* coveting action figures and tie-in role-playing software would be a mistake. Not that creators David Benioff and DB Weiss played down the otherworldly elements of George RR Martin's original *A Song Of Fire And Ice* novels, but neither did they ignore the stories' broader themes.

Motifs familiar to earlier HBO successes are never far from the surface, be they political intrigue and power struggles (*The Wire*, *The Sopranos*, *Deadwood*) or troubled dynasties seemingly on the verge of collapse (*The Sopranos* again, *Carnivàle*, *Six Feet Under*). This is meaty, multi-layered and

most definitely grown-up television, its graphic sex and violence confidently underpinned by weightier concerns, not to mention superb direction, writing and performances.

Four rival dynasties battle for control over the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros, unforgiving landscapes where seasons last for years rather than months. As the series opens, our chief protagonist is Lord Eddard "Ned" Stark (chiselled jaw and steely eyes provided by Sean Bean), a man with family headaches at home and more pressing life-or-death issues on the fields of war. Elsewhere across the Seven Kingdoms, Prince Viserys Targaryen (Harry Lloyd) forges a new alliance to regain the Iron Throne. Small wonder Benioff himself, perhaps only half-jokingly, describes the show as "*The Sopranos* in Middle Earth".

The "fantasy" tag may have initially been off-putting to some, but word-of-mouth boosted viewing figures and dispelled any notions that *Game Of Thrones* belonged in the same category as *Xena...* or *Hercules* in the '90s, or more recent 300 knock-offs like *Spartacus*. The action may take place in a make-believe world, but the brutality, corruption and other human failings are as tangibly real as in any modern-day drama.

**EXTRAS:** Featurettes, commentaries, character profiles. ★★★★★

## ACCATTONE

★★★★★

MASTERS OF CINEMA

Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1961 debut is a magnificent picture of Roman lowlife. The director's muse Franco Citti is a force of nature as a pimp lording it over a world of wiseguy backchat and casual brutality, while the tone of sordid realism is elevated by superb black-and-white photography. Also included is the 1965 documentary *Love Meetings*, a vox pop survey of Italian attitudes to sexuality – a portrait of the nation that Pasolini would soon go on to scandalise.

**EXTRAS:** Trailers, booklet.

★★★★★

Jonathan Romney

## ADAM RESURRECTED

★★★★★

TRINITY FILMS

Paul Schrader's 2008 adaptation of Yoram Kaniuk's 1968 novel, a Holocaust story focusing on survivor's guilt. Jeff Goldblum plays a sardonic regular in a '60s Israeli psychiatric clinic, gradually confronting his past: a Jewish nightclub entertainer in '30s Berlin, he survived the camps by becoming Commandant Willem Dafoe's "pet dog". A kind of *Life Is Bleak*, it's flawed, oddly remote, borderline mad, but also a serious attempt at examining the unimaginable, driven by Goldblum's astonishing performance.

**EXTRAS:** Making Of, trailers.

★★★★★

Damien Love



## BOCA DO LIXO

★★★★★

UNIVERSAL

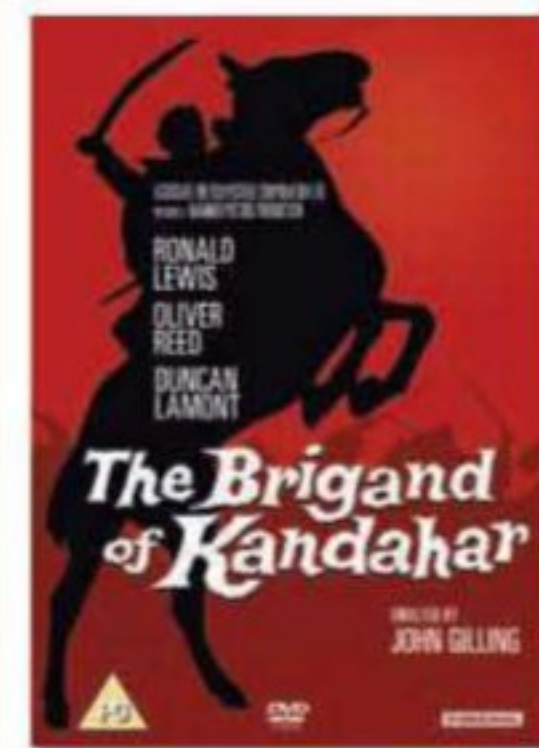
Named after São Paulo's most notorious red-light zone of the period, this Brazilian crime saga comes adapted from the perhaps self-serving autobiography of gangster Hiroito de Moraes Joanides (played by Daniel de

Oliveira in natty black-rimmed glasses), recounting his climb to top of the heap as loverman kingpin of the area across the '50s and '60s. Director Flavio Frederico gives it a handsome strut and flash, but not enough to overcome the familiarity of the rise-and-fall trajectory.

**EXTRAS:** Director commentary, trailer, stills.

★★★★★

Damien Love



## THE BRIGAND OF KANDAHAR

★★★★★

STUDIO CANAL (DVD & BLU-RAY)

Under the brown shoe polish and turban, Ollie Reed makes a dashing, slightly psychotic tribal chief in this piece of 1965 colonial hokum from the Hammer forge. Theatrical sets creak, and the exteriors look suspiciously like Cumbria, but the battle scenes are superbly choreographed and the storyline – a mixed-race English officer goes over to the other side – touches on some uncomfortable home truths about the British Imperial project.

**EXTRAS:** None.

Rob Young

## CITIZEN JAMES TV

★★★★★

ACORN MEDIA

An early '60s comedy vehicle for Sid James, conceived and initially written by a post-Hancock, pre-*Steptoe* Galton & Simpson, *Citizen James* finds its star (ably assisted by Hancock alumni Bill Kerr and Liz Fraser) as a likeable down-at-heel Soho spiv always on the look-out for the next big scam. It's all frustratingly hit-and-miss fare, though, and the most appealing episodes – namely the four surviving instalments from the second and third series – are the work of Morecambe & Wise gag merchants Sid Green and Dick Hills.

**EXTRAS:** Liz Fraser interview.

★★★★★

Terry Staunton



## THE DEBT

★★★

**UNIVERSAL (DVD & BLU-RAY)** Director John Madden's thriller stars Helen Mirren as part of a retired Israeli secret service squad given a second chance, 30 years later, to complete a botched mission to capture a Nazi war criminal. Flitting back-and-forth from 1996 to 1966 (with Jessica Chastain as the younger Mirren character) the intricacies of plot can be hard to follow, the film's wordy script a frequent obstacle. Tom Wilkinson and Sam Worthington add weight to proceedings, but viewers will have to keep on their toes.

**EXTRAS:** Commentary, featurette. ★★★  
*Terry Staunton*

## HER PRIVATE HELL

★★★

**BFI FLIPSIDE (DVD & BLU-RAY)** Billed as the UK's first narrative sex film – although there is considerably more narrative than sex – this taut 1968 drama follows a European model (Italian Lucia Modugno) as she is exploited by a series of improbably haired men and women. It's astonishingly tame by today's standards, but with flourishes that foreshadow director Norman J Warren's future direction as a horror expert.

**EXTRAS:** Some of Flipside's traditionally superb accompanying shorts.

★★★  
*Peter Watts*

## JANE EYRE

★★★

**UNIVERSAL (DVD & BLU-RAY)** Cary Fukunaga's foray into Brontë country is probing and intelligent but also strangely muted. Even Michael Fassbender's Rochester seems a little wan in comparison with some of the actor's other performances. Mia Wasikowska impresses as Jane Eyre, conveying the character's vulnerability but also her reckless defiance.

The film, though, could surely have benefited from a little more gothic sweep. For once, this is a Brontë adaptation that isn't melodramatic enough.

**EXTRAS:** Making Of, deleted scenes, commentary.

★★★  
*Geoffrey Macnab*

## LEGEND **SE**

★★★

**20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT (BLU-RAY)** Ridley Scott followed up *Blade Runner* with this fantasy adventure, wherein Tom Cruise's forest sprite battles Tim Curry's Lord of Darkness to save the last unicorn from destruction. It's beautiful to watch – Scott's painterly settings are, as you'd expect, rich and detailed – and Curry has fun as the bad guy. But Cruise is overly self-conscious, too far outside his comfort zone. His teeth, too, are awful, pre-dental work...

**EXTRAS:** European theatrical cut, Ridley Scott's Director's Cut, plus trailer.

★★★  
*Michael Bonner*

## LOS BASTARDOS

★★

**ARTIFICIAL EYE** In the have-you-had-enough-yet tradition of Michael Haneke at his worst, Mexican director Amat Escalante's drama is the arthouse equivalent of a message movie, jazzed up with a little outré sickening shock-gore. Two illegal Mexican labourers in LA have a hard time being dehumanised while they go about unregistered work,

then relax by staging a home invasion on a woman, topped by rape and slaughter. The atmosphere of dread is there, but a little undermined by sheer predictability.

**EXTRAS:** Trailer, featurette.

★★  
*Damien Love*

## PUNISHMENT PARK

★★★★★

**EUREKA! (DVD & BLU-RAY)** 1960s cult classics *It Happened Here*, *Culloden* and *Privilege* established Peter Watkins as a director prepared to film the unthinkable. In this 1971 speculative fiction, the Englishman imagined a US police state hunting youthful dissidents around the harsh Californian desert. The documentary-style cinematography and improvised dialogue makes for incredibly convincing viewing, and the entire scenario is uncannily prescient of Guantánamo and the recent anti-Occupy assaults. Cinema of a kind rarely seen today: engaged, cathartic, confrontational.

**EXTRAS:** Director's introduction/commentary, booklet. ★★★  
*Rob Young*

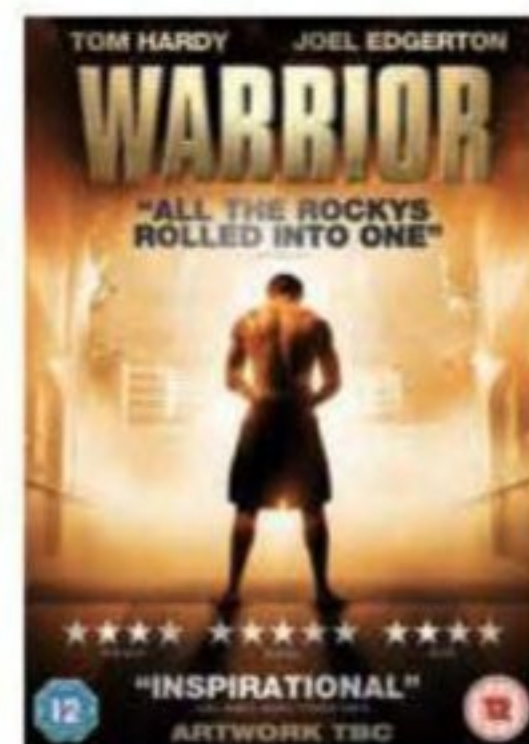
## REPO MAN **SE**

★★★★★

**EUREKA! (BLU-RAY)** Alex Cox has never bettered his feature debut, a brilliantly off-kilter thriller-of-sorts, with Emilio Estevez signing up to repossess cars and finding himself caught up with UFO conspiracists, the CIA, nuclear scientists and rival

repo men, all in pursuit of a '64 Chevy Malibu. As Estevez's partner, Harry Dean Stanton has never looked so, well, Harry Dean Stantonish.

**EXTRAS:** Tons! Doc, missing scenes, TV version, commentary from Cox and exec producer Michael Nesmith, booklet, Stanton interview. ★★★  
*Michael Bonner*



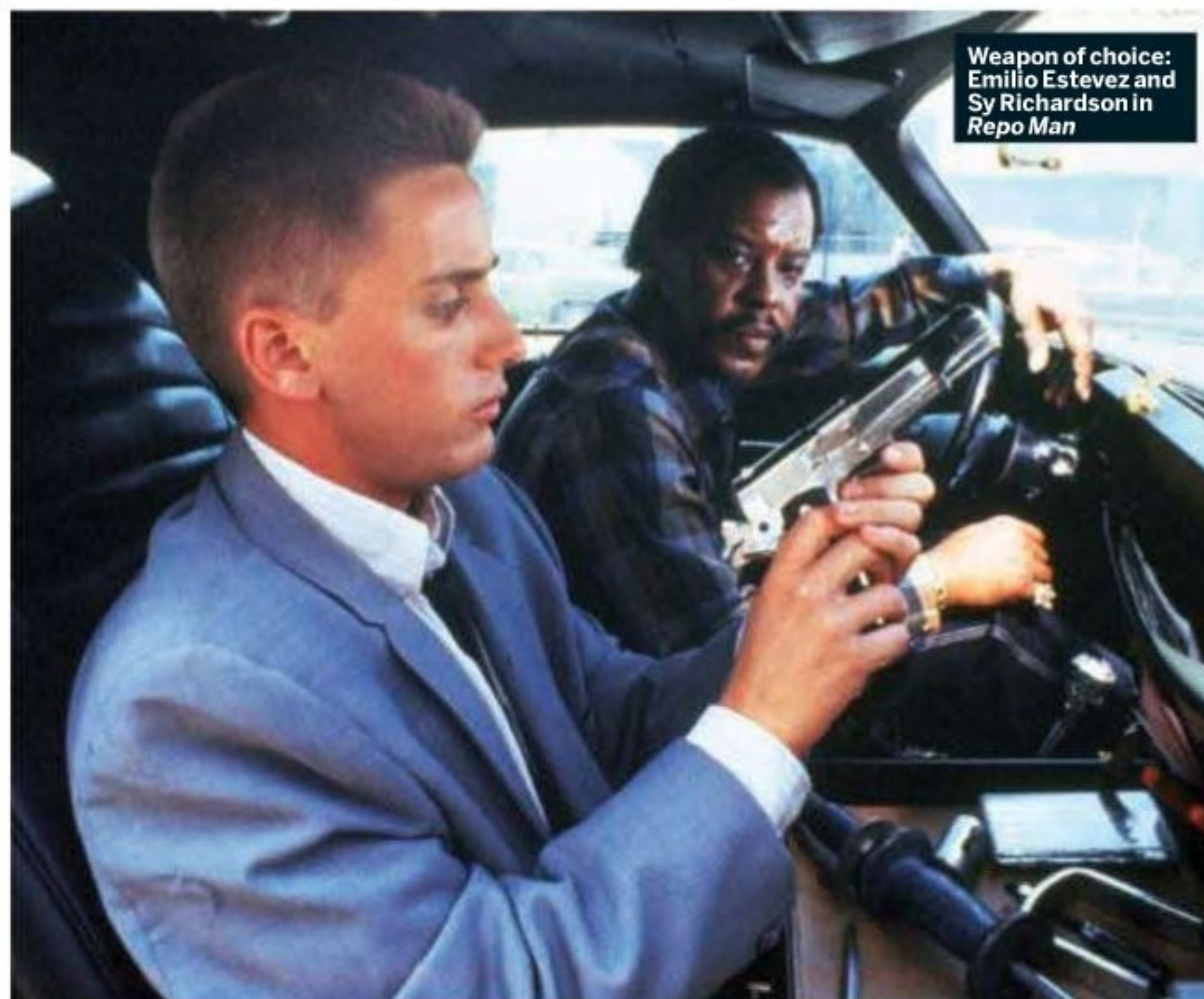
## WARRIOR

★★★★

**LIONSGATE (DVD & BLU-RAY)** If you like your Method acting raw, you'll relish *Warrior*. On one level, this is an exercise in testosterone-fuelled cliché but it is made with such grunting, red-blooded conviction you forget how creaky its storyline is. Tom Hardy, more bulked-up than normal, is a mixed-up Iraq vet/mixed martial arts fighter. Joel Edgerton is his estranged brother, a teacher struggling with his mortgage. Nick Nolte is their recovering alcoholic father.

**EXTRAS:** Deleted scenes, commentary, Making Of.

★★★  
*Geoffrey Macnab*



Weapon of choice: Emilio Estevez and Sy Richardson in *Repo Man*

## ALSO OUT...

### DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

Haunted house horror produced by Guillermo del Toro.

### JACK GOES BOATING

Serious indie drama, directed by and starring Philip Seymour Hoffman.

### JOHNNY ENGLISH REBORN

Rowan Atkinson returns as the accident-prone English spy.

### MIDNIGHT IN PARIS

Surprising late-period hit for Woody Allen.

### MR POPPER'S PENGUINS

It's for kids! Jim Carrey inherits six penguins. Much hilarity ensues, unsurprisingly.

### TYRANNOSAUR

Gruelling, but impressive, domestic drama from actor Paddy Considine in his full-length directorial debut.



### THELMA & LOUISE

Blu-ray for Ridley Scott's women-on-the-run drama, which still numbers among his best films.

### THE THREE MUSKETEERS

Latest take on the Alexandre Dumas novel, with Orlando Bloom buckling a swash.

### 21 JUMP STREET

Late-'80s American cop show. Johnny Depp's career started here.

### WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

Tilda Swinton heads up this much-admired adaptation of the shocking literary sensation.



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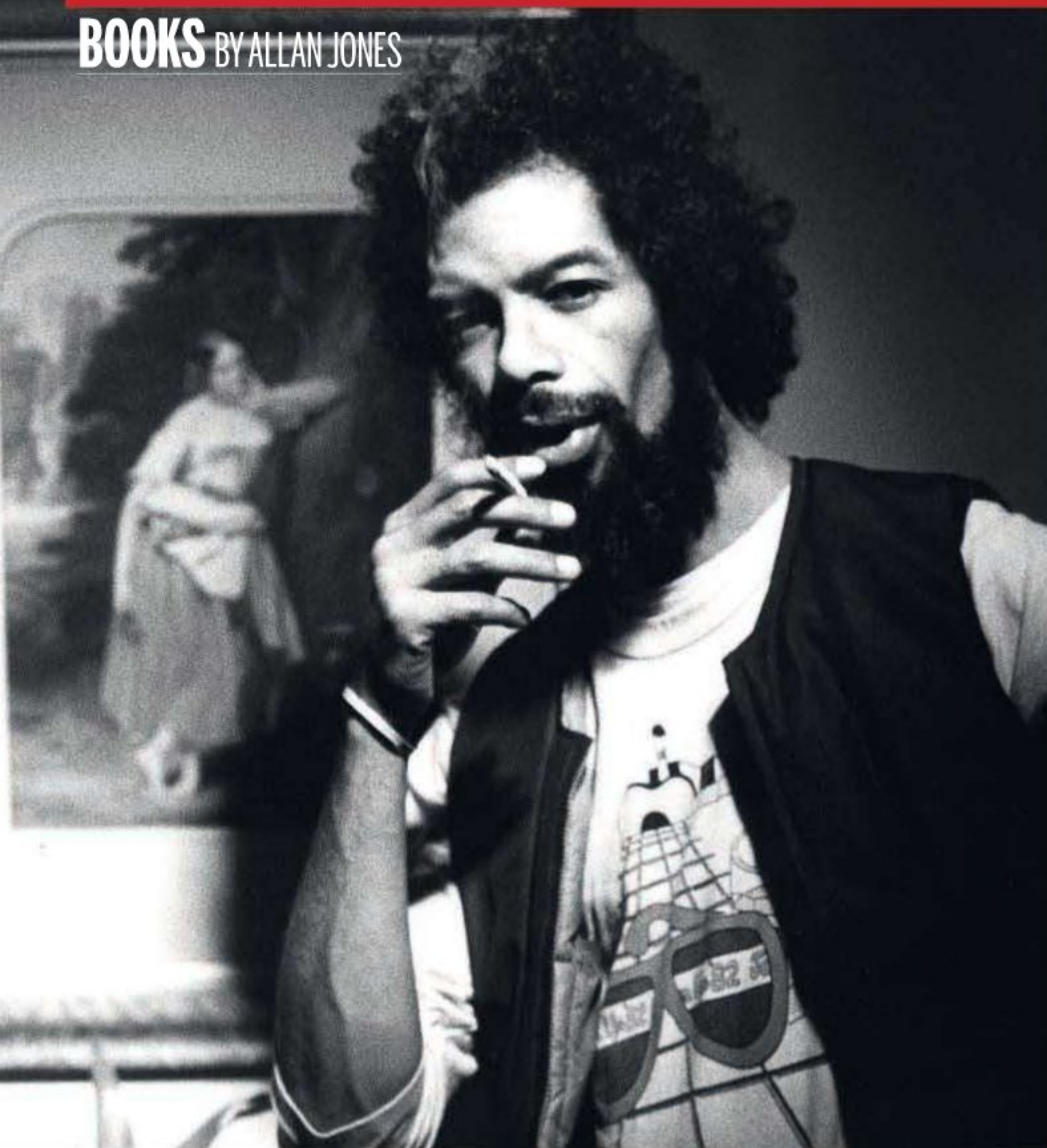
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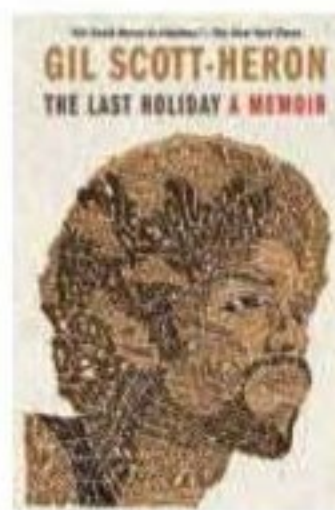


# THE LAST HOLIDAY: A MEMOIR

Gil Scott-Heron CANONGATE

★★★★

**'Godfather Of Rap's evasive tome provides glimpses of an extraordinary life**



IN A BRIEF but illuminating afterword to Gil Scott-Heron's posthumous memoir, Canongate publisher Jamie Byng describes the problems of bringing the book to the page. According to Byng, Scott-Heron started the thing in the early '90s.

It seems Scott-Heron's original intention was to write a third-person narrative, in which he referred to himself only as 'The Artist'. The book, less a memoir at the time, was further intended to celebrate the efforts made by Stevie Wonder in his campaign to make Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday in the United States. It would largely consist of an account of Wonder's 1980 Hotter Than July tour, which ended with a rally in King's honour in Washington, where the murdered Civil Rights leader had once delivered his 'I have a dream' speech. Scott-Heron was the opening act on the tour,

uniquely placed as a witness to events.

Among the first chapters Byng read, in the late '90s, were digressions, taking in Scott-Heron's childhood in Jackson, Tennessee, where he was brought up by his redoubtable grandmother, but as envisaged by the author it would not to any recognisable extent be a conventional autobiography.

Due no doubt to the many ruinous aspects of Scott-Heron's life at the time, including a debilitating cocaine addiction and, just ahead of him, periods of incarceration, the book remained unfinished. Work on it was resumed in 2004, when at Byng's suggestion Scott-Heron started rewriting it, this time in the first person. You imagine that it was in response to Byng's further promptings that the book assumed a more autobiographical drift, with the Hotter Than July tour still a vital part of the narrative, but no longer its central or exclusive focus. On the evidence of the thankfully short "Interlude", a surviving chapter of the book's initial incarnation and a frankly incoherent mess, Byng's intervention was crucial. In its

original form, recounted by 'The Artist', *The Last Holiday*, you fear, would have been nigh on unreadable.

As it is, the book is still deeply frustrating. Byng in his Publisher's Note hints that up to six editors may have had a hand in the final manuscript, which was pieced together from the instalments delivered over a number of years, their chronology random. This may explain the book's frequently lurching tone, the dreary anonymity of much of the writing. You will look hard for the nimble wit of Scott-Heron's greatest songs and not find it here, the songs offering a much more vivid account of America's turmoil in the '60s and '70s that inspired them than anything in these pages.

Scott-Heron's best writing here is in the passages that recall his grandmother and mother, about whom he writes with pride, affection and gratitude. You get a sense of these people and what they meant to him, but elsewhere Scott-Heron is cursory, evasive, unrevealing. We get glimpses of an extraordinary life, but Scott-Heron writes about it as if it had happened to someone else.

By 20, he was a published poet and novelist and was soon making the first of the many albums on which his reputation rests. But there's no insight into his collaborative relationship with composer and arranger Brian Jackson, with whom he co-wrote his most famous songs, and the end of their bountiful partnership is deemed worthy of less than a full sentence. He is unforthcoming, too, about his three marriages, his children, and there is no reference at all to his later drug problems, although they almost completely took over the latter part of his life. There's also nothing on his incarcerations. Even the accounts of his political activism, the student protests he led, his involvements with radical causes, are inclined towards vagueness, half-heartedly recalled, as if he'd rather have been writing about something else.

It could be argued that such confessional detours belong to a different, more personal book – one that will no longer be written, Scott-Heron having died last May. *The Last Holiday*, as originally conceived, was after all meant to be about Stevie Wonder and Martin Luther King, not so much a telling of his own story.

His continued attachment, however, to the book's first intentions, as far as they survive here, seems by the end a convenient way of avoiding much of consequence (that is, the last 30 years of his life up to and including his 2010 comeback with *I'm New Here*) that followed the Hotter Than July tour. There's a post-script, of sorts, to the narrative, in which apologies and self-recrimination prominently feature, but the absent years loom large with too much surely left unsaid.

Ironically, the sections on the tour, so precious to Scott-Heron that he wanted to devote the whole book to it, are the worst written things here. They now bookend the narrative and, from the awful opening poem, "Dr King", to the sketchy description of the Washington rally that presumably was meant to provide a noble climax, are meagre reminders of what this book might have been.

SJM CONCERTS PRESENT

*A night that must not grow to distant paper prints his face, for he cannot be dead or not in place. That moment that I left his eyes, it stayed in my mind to have my friends. He said that was a sign of my life, and I was not alone, and yet I was alone. That night, they were all there.*

# Laura Marling

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SAT 11	LONDON O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE	0844 477 2000
SUN 12	READING HEXAGON	0115 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
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MONDAY 05	LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
TUESDAY 06	NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY	0845 413 4444
THURSDAY 08	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE	01223 357 851
FRIDAY 09	LONDON ROUNDHOUSE	<b>SOLD OUT</b>
SATURDAY 10	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
MONDAY 12	OXFORD O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
TUESDAY 13	PORTSMOUTH PYRAMIDS CENTRE	023 9282 4355
THURSDAY 15	LINCOLN ENGINE SHED	0844 888 8766
FRIDAY 16	BRIGHTON DOME	01273 709 709
SATURDAY 17	BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
MONDAY 19	LEAMINGTON SPA ASSEMBLY	0844 854 1358
TUESDAY 20	GUILDFORD G LIVE	0844 770 1797
THURSDAY 22	NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
FRIDAY 23	SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
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- |        |                            |               |
|--------|----------------------------|---------------|
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| THU 15 | READING SUB 89             | 0871 220 0260 |
| FRI 16 | WOLVERHAMPTON SLADE ROOMS  | 0870 320 7000 |
| SAT 17 | DURHAM LIVE LOUNGE         | 0871 230 2360 |
| MON 19 | YORK THE DUCHESS           | 08444 77 1000 |
| TUE 20 | PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS | 0239 286 3911 |
| WED 21 | NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS    | 0845 413 4444 |
| THU 22 | BRISTOL THE FLEECE         | 0117 929 9008 |
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**SI CRANSTOUN** 19 APR  
**DAVE ALVIN & THE GUILTY ONES** 20 APR  
**MANFRED MANN'S EARTH BAND** 03 MAY

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13 L <b>SOLD OUT</b> THE MACBETH	16 BELFAST SPRING & AIRBRAKE
14 BIRMINGHAM THE LIBRARY @ HMV INSTITUTE	17 GLASGOW O <sub>2</sub> ABC
15 DUBLIN ACADEMY	18 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
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Weds 01 Feb  
FIN

Fri 03 Feb  
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Sat 04 Feb  
NEXT BIG THING: THE HEAVY / HANNI EL KHATIB / CRYBABY

Mon 06 Feb  
NEXT BIG THING: SWEET BILLY PILGRIM / CHARLENE SORAIA

Tues 07 Feb  
NEXT BIG THING: DIRTY HIT NIGHT: LITTLE COMETS / GENERAL FIASCO / FOSSIL COLLECTIVE

Sat 08 Feb  
HYRO DA HERO

Thurs 09 Feb  
JOE PUG

Fri 04 Feb  
BROTHERS & BONES

Sat 05 Feb  
BRENDAN ROGERS

Sat 07 Feb  
KEVIN DEVINE

Sat 05 Mar  
4 DEAD IN OHIO

Mon 06 Mar  
DAWES

Thurs 08 Mar  
CHAIRLIFT

Sat 07 Mar  
JJ GREY & MOFRO

Mon 09 Mar  
JENNY HVAL

Weds 14 Mar  
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APRIL 2012

<b>SUNDAY 15</b> <b>CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE</b> 0844 847 1515	<b>FRIDAY 20</b> <b>EDINBURGH CORN EXCHANGE</b> 0844 499 9990	<b>WEDNESDAY 25</b> <b>LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL</b> 0116 233 3111
<b>MONDAY 16</b> <b>BRIGHTON CENTRE</b> 0844 847 1515	<b>SATURDAY 21</b> <b>LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY</b> 0844 847 1515	<b>FRIDAY 27</b> <b>BLACKPOOL EMPRESS BALLROOM</b> 0844 856 1111
<b>TUESDAY 17</b> <b>WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL</b> 0870 320 7000	<b>MONDAY 23</b> <b>PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS</b> 0845 146 1460	<b>SATURDAY 28</b> <b>LONDON ALEXANDRA PALACE</b> 020 7403 3331
<b>THURSDAY 19</b> <b>YORK 3ICAN</b> 0844 811 0051	<b>TUESDAY 24</b> <b>PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL</b> 023 9282 4355	

0844 811 0051 - 0844 576 5483 - gigsandtours.com - livenation.co.uk  
All shows are all ages or 14+, check venue or band website for details  
New Album "A DIFFERENT KIND OF FIX" out now on Island Records - bombaybicycleclubmusic.com



# RYAN ADAMS 2012 TOUR

APRIL

SUN 22	GATESHEAD THE SAGE	0191 443 4661
MON 23	LONDON PALLADIUM	0207 403 3331
WED 25	NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL	0115 989 5555
THU 26	GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL	0844 847 2487
FRI 27	SHEFFIELD CITY HALL	0114 278 9789
MON 30	LONDON PALLADIUM	0207 403 3331

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# THE HORRORS

MAY 2012

TUE 15	GLASGOW O2 ABC	0844 499 9990
WED 16	SHEFFIELD LEADMILL	0114 221 2828
FRI 18	BIRMINGHAM HMV INSTITUTE	0844 248 5037
SAT 19	MANCHESTER HMV RITZ	0844 248 5117
SUN 20	CARDIFF UNIVERSITY SOLUS	029 2078 1458
TUE 22	PORTSMOUTH PYRAMIDS CENTRE	023 9282 4355
WED 23	BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
FRI 25	LONDON O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON	0844 477 2000

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APRIL 2012

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SUNDAY 22 / 0844 499 9990	DUNDEE FAT SAM'S
MONDAY 23 / 0844 499 9990	INVERNESS IRONWORKS
WEDNESDAY 25 / 0844 477 2000	LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
THURSDAY 26 / 0161 832 1111	MANCHESTER ACADEMY
FRIDAY 27 / 0844 477 2000	BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
SATURDAY 28 / 0844 847 2405	LONDON HMV FORUM

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SAT 28 APRIL - LONDON O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON - 0844 477 2000  
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11	SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK	0238 055 5366
12	OXFORD O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2	0844 477 2000
13	MILTON KEYNES THE STABLES	0190 828 0800
14	STOCKTON THE ARC	0164 252 5199
15	SHEFFIELD THE PLUG	0844 478 0898
17	GATESHEAD THE SAGE	0844 478 0898
18	ABERDEEN LEMONTREE	0844 478 0898
19	GLASGOW ARCHES	0844 478 0898
20	INVERNESS IRONWORKS	0871 789 4173
23	LEAMINGTON SPA THE ASSEMBLY HALL	0192 631 1311
24	EXETER PHOENIX	01392 667 080
25	FALMOUTH PAVILLION	0132 621 1222
26	BATH KOMEDIA	0845 293 8480
28	WOLVERHAMPTON ROBIN 2	0190 240 1211

**MARCH 2012**

01	BIRMINGHAM O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2	0844 477 2000
02	LONDON O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON	0844 477 2000
04	YORK DUCHESS	0844 477 1000
06	HULL THE WELLY	0844 477 1000
08	DURHAM LIVE LOUNGE	0871 230 2360

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**UK TOUR FEBRUARY 2012**

THU 09	WHITEHAVEN CIVIC HALL	0844 477 1000
FRI 10	LEEDS CITY VARIETIES	01132 430 808
SAT 11	LIVERPOOL O <sub>2</sub> 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 O <sub>2</sub> SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE	0844 477 2000
MON 20	BUXTON OPERA HOUSE FESTIVAL	0845 127 2190

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stargreen.co.uk / 020 7734 8932  
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**FEB 2012**

WED 08	SOUTHAMPTON BROOK	02380 055 5366
THU 09	WREXHAM CENTRAL STATION	0870 444 5556
FRI 10	SHORPSHIRE OSWESTRY THE IRONWORKS	0169 167 9123
SAT 11	LEEDS BRUDNELL SOCIAL CLUB	0113 275 2411
SUN 12	GLASGOW KING TUTS	0844 499 9990
MON 13	YORK FIBBERS	0844 477 1000
WED 15	BRISTOL FLEECE	0871 220 0260
THU 16	LONDON O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON	0844 477 2000

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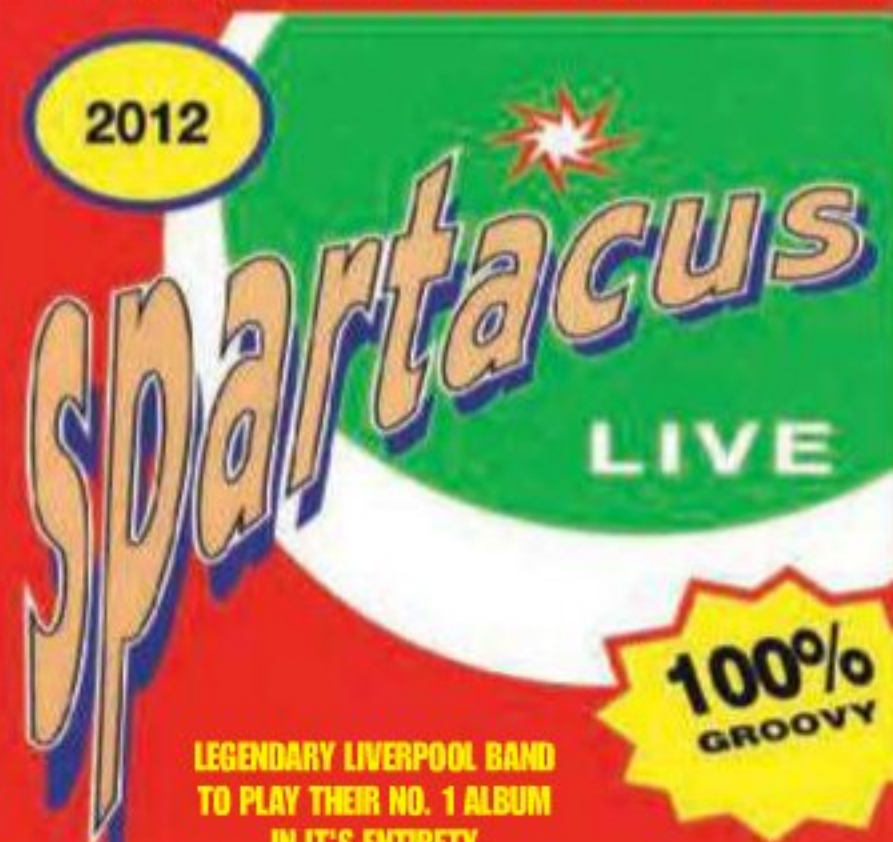
'Human's Lib' and 'Dream Into Action'  
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April 12th	Sheffield O <sub>2</sub> Academy	April 18th	Glasgow O <sub>2</sub> ABC
April 13th	Liverpool O <sub>2</sub> Academy	April 20th	Bournemouth O <sub>2</sub> Academy
April 14th	Birmingham O <sub>2</sub> Academy	April 21st	London O <sub>2</sub> Shepherd's Bush Empire

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2012



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TO PLAY THEIR NO. 1 ALBUM  
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28	EDINBURGH LIQUID ROOMS	0131 225 2564

**MAY**

04	MANCHESTER HMV RITZ	0844 478 0898
05	HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDOME	0844 478 0898
06	CLEETHORPES PLEASURE ISLAND	01472349222
11	NUNEATON QUEENS HALL	02476 347402
12	BLACKBURN KING GEORGES HALL	0844 847 1664
17	WOLVERHAMPTON THE ROBIN 2	0190 240 1211
19	LONDON O <sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON	0844 477 2000
20	SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK	0238 055 5366

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& THE UPSETTER BAND

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**SATURDAY 04 FEBRUARY**  
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MARTIN CHAMBERS - DRUMS

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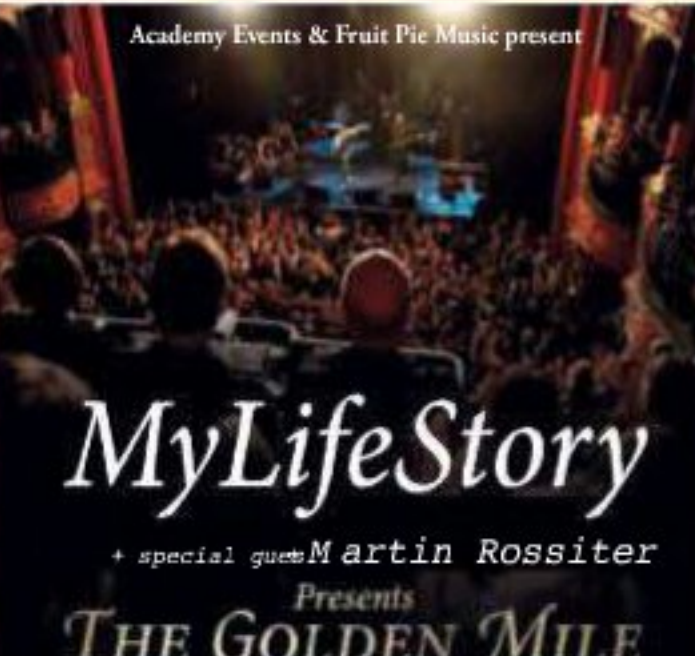
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09/03	GLASGOW O2 ABC	0844 844 4747
10/03	LEEDS COCKPIT	0113 243 6743
12/03	BIRMINGHAM HMV INSTITUTE	0843 221 0100
13/03	LONDON O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE	0870 771 2000

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THE CLEARING OUT ON MARCH 6

MEAN FIDDLER BY ARRANGEMENT WITH CNL PRESENTS



# STRANGE BOYS

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30/03	GLASGOW CAPTAINS REST	0844 477 1000
31/03	NEWCASTLE THE CLUNY	0191 230 4474
01/04	LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB	0113 275 2411
02/04	LONDON THE GARAGE	0844 847 1678

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12	GLASGOW THE ARCHES	0141 565 1000
15	LEICESTER THE MUSICIAN PUB	0116 283 5533
18	BRIGHTON KOMEDIA	0845 293 8480
19	OXFORD BULLINGDON ARMS	01865 244516
20	LONDON JAZZ CAFE	0843 221 0100
21	MANCHESTER NIGHT & DAY	0844 477 1000

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Fri 24	YORK Fibbers	01904 651 250
Sat 25	LINCOLN Tokyo	0871 220 0260
Sun 26	NOTTINGHAM Rescue Rooms	0845 413 4444
Tues 28	COLCHESTER Arts Centre	<b>SOLD OUT</b>
Wed 29	PORTSMOUTH Wedgewood Rooms	023 9286 3911

MARCH

Thu 01	BRISTOL Trinity	0870 44 44 400
Fri 02	OXFORD O2 Academy	0844 477 2000
Tue 20	BOURNEMOUTH Fire Station	01202 963 889
Wed 21	CAMBRIDGE The Junction	01223 511 511
Thu 22	SHEFFIELD The Plug	0114 241 3040
Fri 23	CARDIFF Coal Exchange	0292 0494 917
Sat 24	LEAMINGTON Assembly	01926 311 311

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# CHARLENE SORAIA

APRIL 2012

10	SHEFFIELD MEMORIAL HALL	0114 2789 789
11	EDINBURGH PLEASANCE	08444 999 990
12	ABERDEEN LEMON TREE	08444 999 990
13	GLASGOW ORAN MOR	08444 999 990
14	MANCHESTER RNCM	0161 832 1111
15	BIRMINGHAM GLEE CLUB	0871 472 0400
17	BATH KOMEDIA	0845 293 8480
18	EXETER PHOENIX ARTS CENTRE	01392 667 080
19	PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS	023 9286 3911
20	OXFORD O2 ACADEMY	0844 477 2000
22	NORWICH OPEN	01603 763 111
23	CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION	01223 511 511
24	BRIGHTON THE OLD MARKET HOVE	0844 412 4628
25	LONDON UNION CHAPEL	020 7734 8932
27	LIVERPOOL STANLEY THEATRE	0844 477 2000

24 HOUR TICKET HOTLINE: 0844 811 0051  
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29 Feb Komedia BRIGHTON  
01 Mar Union Chapel LONDON  
02 Mar Islington Mill MANCHESTER  
03 Mar Nice & Sleazy GLASGOW

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[artistticket.com](http://artistticket.com) • [alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk) • [gigsandtours.com](http://gigsandtours.com) • [gigsinscotland.com](http://gigsinscotland.com)

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FEBRUARY

23 OXFORD, BULLINGDON [alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)  
24 LIVERPOOL, SHIPPING FORECAST [ticketweb.co.uk](http://ticketweb.co.uk)  
25 NOTTINGHAM, BODEGA [alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)  
27 MANCHESTER, THE DEAF INSTITUTE [alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)  
28 NEWCASTLE, O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY2 [ticketweb.co.uk](http://ticketweb.co.uk)  
29 LEEDS, BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB [jumborecords.co.uk](http://jumborecords.co.uk)

MARCH

01 WOLVERHAMPTON, SLADE ROOMS [wolvescivic.co.uk](http://wolvescivic.co.uk)  
03 SOUTHAMPTON, JOINERS [joinerslive.co.uk](http://joinerslive.co.uk)  
04 BRIGHTON, PRINCE ALBERT [seetickets.com](http://seetickets.com)  
05 BRISTOL, COOLER [alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)



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[alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)  
21 GLASGOW, STEREO  
[ticketweb.co.uk](http://ticketweb.co.uk)  
22 ABERDEEN, THE BLUE LAMP  
[oneupmusic.co.uk](http://oneupmusic.co.uk)  
23 EDINBURGH, BONGO CLUB  
[ticketweb.co.uk](http://ticketweb.co.uk)

24 NEWCASTLE, THE CLUNY  
[ticketweb.co.uk](http://ticketweb.co.uk)  
25 LEEDS, THE BRUDENELL  
[ticketweb.co.uk](http://ticketweb.co.uk)  
27 BRISTOL, COOLER  
[alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)  
28 BRIGHTON, THE HAUNT  
[wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com)

29 LONDON, BUSH HALL  
[alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)

EXTRA DATE DUE TO  
PHENOMENAL DEMAND  
26 LONDON, BUSH HALL  
[alt-tickets.co.uk](http://alt-tickets.co.uk)

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# Chuck Prophet

## & the Mission Express

### March

8 LONDON The Barbican \*

### April

10 LEICESTER The Musician  
 11 MANCHESTER The Deaf Institute  
 12 LONDON Dingwalls  
 13 OXFORD Bullingdon Arms  
 14 WINCHESTER The Railway (2 shows)  
 15 BRIGHTON The Haunt  
 16 BRISTOL The Tunnels  
 29 NOTTINGHAM The Maze  
 30 SHEFFIELD The Greystones

### May

1 LEEDS Brudenell Social Club  
 2 GLASGOW King Tuts Wah Wah Hut  
 3 NEWCASTLE The Cluny

new album "Temple Beautiful"  
 out soon on yep roc

\*March 8 solo support to the Jayhawks. For more ticket details go to  
[www.chuckprophet.com](http://www.chuckprophet.com) [www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com) and [www.wegottickets.com](http://www.wegottickets.com)

# RICHMOND FONTAINE DUO



March 8 LEICESTER The Musician  
 March 9 TINGEWICK Village Hall  
 March 20 CARDIFF 10 Feet Tall  
 May 3 BURY The Met \*  
 May 7 LONDON Cecil Sharp House \*  
 May 8 NEWCASTLE The Cluny 2 \*

\* with RICHARD BUCKNER

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17 Mar	TORQUAY	Princess Theatre	0844 871 3023	<a href="http://atgtickets.com/torquay">atgtickets.com/torquay</a>
19 Mar	GUILDFORD	G Live	0844 7701797	<a href="http://GLive.co.uk">GLive.co.uk</a>
20 Mar	DARTFORD	Orchard Theatre	01322 220000	<a href="http://OrchardTheatre.co.uk">OrchardTheatre.co.uk</a>
22 Mar	BRISTOL	Colston Hall	0117 9223686	<a href="http://colstonhall.org">colstonhall.org</a>
24 Mar	LLANDUDNO	Venue Cymru	01492 872000	<a href="http://venuecymru.co.uk">venuecymru.co.uk</a>
25 Mar	BIRMINGHAM	Town Hall	0121 7803333	<a href="http://thsh.co.uk">thsh.co.uk</a>
27 Mar	BASINGSTOKE	The Anvil	01256 844244	<a href="http://anvilarts.org.uk">anvilarts.org.uk</a>
28 Mar	BUXTON	Opera House	0845 1272190	<a href="http://buxtonoperahouse.org.uk">buxtonoperahouse.org.uk</a>
29 Mar	CAMBRIDGE	Corn Exchange	01223 357851	<a href="http://cornex.co.uk">cornex.co.uk</a>
31 Mar	ST ALBANS	The Alban Arena	01727 844488	<a href="http://alban-arena.co.uk">alban-arena.co.uk</a>
01 Apr	BRIGHTON	Theatre Royal	0844 871 7650	<a href="http://atgtickets.com/Brighton">atgtickets.com/Brighton</a>
03 Apr	PETERBOROUGH	Cresset Theatre	01733 265705	<a href="http://cresset.co.uk">cresset.co.uk</a>
04 Apr	YORK	Opera House	0844 871 3024	<a href="http://atgtickets.com/york">atgtickets.com/york</a>
05 Apr	LIVERPOOL	Philharmonic	0151 7093789	<a href="http://liverpoolphil.com">liverpoolphil.com</a>
07 Apr	BRADFORD	St. George's Hall	01274 432000	<a href="http://bradford-theatres.co.uk">bradford-theatres.co.uk</a>
12 Apr	LEICESTER	De Montfort Hall	0116 2333111	<a href="http://demontfonthall.co.uk">demontfonthall.co.uk</a>
13 Apr	DERBY	Assembly Rooms	01332 255800	<a href="http://derbylive.co.uk">derbylive.co.uk</a>
15 Apr	GLASGOW	Royal Concert Hall	0141 3538000	<a href="http://glasgowconcerthalls.com">glasgowconcerthalls.com</a>

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## FEBRUARY 2012

- 10 TORRINGTON | PLOUGH  
 01805 624624, [THEPLOUGHARTSCENTRE.ORG.UK](http://THEPLOUGHARTSCENTRE.ORG.UK)
- 11 DARTFORD | FLAVEL  
 01803 839530, [THEFLAVEL.ORG.UK](http://THEFLAVEL.ORG.UK)
- 12 BRISTOL | COLSTON HALL 2  
 0117 922 3782, [COLSTONHALL.ORG](http://COLSTONHALL.ORG)
- 13 SWINDON | ARTS CENTRE  
 01793 614837, [SWINDON.GOV.UK/ARTSCENTRE](http://SWINDON.GOV.UK/ARTSCENTRE)
- 15 BANBURY | MILL ARTS  
 01295 279002, [THEMILLARTSCENTRE.CO.UK](http://THEMILLARTSCENTRE.CO.UK)
- 16 DERBY | DARWIN  
 01332 255800, [DERBYLIVE.CO.UK](http://DERBYLIVE.CO.UK)
- 17 GOOLE | JUNCTION  
 01405 763652, [JUNCTIONGOOLE.CO.UK](http://JUNCTIONGOOLE.CO.UK)
- 18 BARNSELY | CIVIC  
 01226 327 000, [BARNSELYCIVIC.CO.UK](http://BARNSELYCIVIC.CO.UK)
- 20 BROMSGROVE | ARTRIX  
 01527 577330, [ARTRIX.CO.UK](http://ARTRIX.CO.UK)
- 21 NEWARK | PALACE  
 01636 655755, [PALACENEWARK.COM](http://PALACENEWARK.COM)
- 22 BRADFORD | ALHAMBRA STUDIO  
 01274 432000, [BRADFORD-THEATRES.CO.UK](http://BRADFORD-THEATRES.CO.UK)
- 23 DURHAM | GALA  
 0191 332 4041, [GALADURHAM.CO.UK](http://GALADURHAM.CO.UK)
- 26 INVERNESS | ONE TOUCH  
 01463 234234, [EDEN-COURT.CO.UK](http://EDEN-COURT.CO.UK)
- 28 GLASGOW | ARCHES  
 0141 565 1000, [THEARCHES.CO.UK](http://THEARCHES.CO.UK)
- 29 STIRLING | TOLLBOOTH  
 01786 274000, [STIRLING.GOV.UK/TOLBOOTH](http://STIRLING.GOV.UK/TOLBOOTH)

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## MARCH 2012

- 1 DARLINGTON | CIVIC THEATRE  
 01325 486555, [DARLINGTON.GOV.UK/ARTS](http://DARLINGTON.GOV.UK/ARTS)
- 2 BARROW | FORUM 28  
 01229 820000, [THEFORUMBARROW.CO.UK](http://THEFORUMBARROW.CO.UK)
- 3 BLACKBURN | THWAITES EMPIRE  
 01254 685 500, [THWAITESEMPIRETHEATRE.CO.UK](http://THWAITESEMPIRETHEATRE.CO.UK)
- 5 WIMBORNE | TIVOLI  
 01202 885566, [TIVOLIWIMBORNE.CO.UK](http://TIVOLIWIMBORNE.CO.UK)
- 6 ANDOVER | THE LIGHTS  
 01264 368368, [THELIGHTS.ORG.UK](http://THELIGHTS.ORG.UK)
- 7 GREAT BARDFIELD | HIGH BARN  
 01371 811291, [HIGH-BARN.COM](http://HIGH-BARN.COM)
- 8 MARGATE | THEATRE ROYAL  
 0845 130 1786, [THEATREROYALMARGATE.COM](http://THEATREROYALMARGATE.COM)
- 10 HAVERHILL | ARTS CENTRE  
 01440 714140, [HAVERHILLARTSCENTRE.CO.UK](http://HAVERHILLARTSCENTRE.CO.UK)
- 11 EXETER | CORN EXCHANGE  
 01392 665866, [EXETER.GOV.UK/CORNEXCHANGE](http://EXETER.GOV.UK/CORNEXCHANGE)
- 12 BRIGHTON | KOMEDIA  
 0845 293 8480, [KOMEDIA.CO.UK](http://KOMEDIA.CO.UK)
- 13 BIRMINGHAM | GLEE CLUB  
 0871 472 0400, [GLEE.CO.UK](http://GLEE.CO.UK)
- 15 OXFORD | GLEE CLUB  
 0871 472 0400, [GLEE.CO.UK](http://GLEE.CO.UK)
- 16 CARDIGAN | THEATR MWLDAN  
 01239 621200, [MWLDAN.CO.UK](http://MWLDAN.CO.UK)
- 17 CAERNARFON | GALERI CREATIVE ENTERPRISE CENTRE  
 01286 685222, [GALERICAERNARFON.COM](http://GALERICAERNARFON.COM)
- 18 CARDIFF | GLEE CLUB  
 0871 472 0400, [GLEE.CO.UK](http://GLEE.CO.UK)
- 21 NOTTINGHAM | GLEE CLUB  
 0871 472 0400, [GLEE.CO.UK](http://GLEE.CO.UK)

## APRIL 2012

- 12 BISHOPS STORTFORD | RHODES  
 01279 651746, [RHODESBISHOPSSTORTFORD.ORG.UK](http://RHODESBISHOPSSTORTFORD.ORG.UK)

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## FEBRUARY

- 21 Cambridge Corn Exchange 01223 357 851 [www.cornex.co.uk](http://www.cornex.co.uk)
- 22 St Albans The Alban Arena 01727 844488 [www.alban-arena.co.uk](http://www.alban-arena.co.uk)
- 23 York Barbican 0844 8542757 [www.yorkbarbican.co.uk](http://www.yorkbarbican.co.uk)
- 25 Burnley Mechanics 01282 664400 [www.burnleymechanics.co.uk](http://www.burnleymechanics.co.uk)
- 26 Liverpool Philharmonic 0151 709 3789 [www.liverpoolphil.com](http://www.liverpoolphil.com)

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[www.portisaacsfishermansfriends.com](http://www.portisaacsfishermansfriends.com)

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02	STROUD SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS	01453 740 900	04	GLASGOW THE CAPTAINS REST	08444 155 221
03	BRISTOL THEKLA	0845 413 4444	05	PORTREE SKYE AROS CENTRE	01478 613 750
09	YORK FIBBERS	08444 771 000	06	FORT WILLIAM VOLUNTEER ARMS	01397 702 344
10	WALSALL BESCOT STADIUM HUNTER SUITE	08444 771 000	07	DUNFERMLINE PJ MOLLOYS	08444 771 000
13	STRAFORD-UPON-AVON COX'S YARD	01789 404 400	08	DUNDEE THE DOGHOUSE	08444 771 000
14	LONDON BORDERLINE	08444 771 000	13	YEDVIL THE QUICKSILVER MAIL	01935 424 721
16	FALMOUTH PRINCESS PAVILION	01326 211 232	14	TAVISTOCK THE WHARF	01822 611 146
17	EXETER PHOENIX	01392 667 080	18	BRIGHTON THE ALBERT	01273 325 440
30	MANCHESTER BAND ON THE WALL	0845 2 500 500	19	POOLE MR KYPs	08444 771 000
31	LIVERPOOL MELLO MELLO	08444 771 000	20	FARNHAM MALTINGS	01252 745 644
			21	PLYMOUTH THE WHITE RABBIT	08444 771 000

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13	STROUD SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS	01453 740 900	22	STRAFORD-UPON-AVON COX'S YARD	01789 404 400
14	STAMFORD ARTS CENTRE	01780 703 203	25	BRIGHTON KOMEDIA	0845 203 8480
15	COLCHESTER ARTS CENTRE	01206 500 000	26	LONDON THE BORDERLINE	08444 771 000
18	GATESHEAD THE SAGE GATESHEAD	0191 443 4001	27	BRISTOL THE FLEECE	01179 290 000
19	LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB	08441 771 000	28	OXFORD THE JERICHO	08444 771 000
20	NOTTINGHAM BODEGA	08441 771 000	29	OSWESTRY THE IRONWORKS	01800 678 123
02	LIVERPOOL THE SHIPPING FORECAST	08441 771 000	12	DARTMOUTH DART MUSIC FESTIVAL	01803 833943
03	MANCHESTER BAND ON THE WALL	0845 2 500 500	13	DARTMOUTH DART MUSIC FESTIVAL	01803 833943
04	WORKINGTON NUTS IN MAY FESTIVAL	01800 102 122	17	YEDVIL THE QUICKSILVER MAIL	01935 424 721
09	MILTON KEYNES THE STABLES	01908 280 000	18	GUILDFORD BOILERROOM	01483 440 022
10	EXETER PHOENIX	01392 667 080	19	ANDOVER THE LIGHTS	01264 308 308
11	FALMOUTH PRINCESS PAVILION	0871 220 6200	20	KEDLESTON HALL BEARDED THEORY	08432 001 835

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THU 19 APR **EXETER PHOENIX**  
01392 667080, exeterphoenix.org.uk

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0844 477 1000, unionchapel.org.uk

FRI 20 APR **BRISTOL COLSTON HALL 2**  
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SUN 11 - <b>GLASGOW</b>	Oran Mdr, 08444 771 000	SUN 11 - <b>GLASGOW</b>	Oran Mdr, 08444 771 000
FRI 02 - <b>CARDIFF</b>	Bogiez, 02920 230 130	THU 15 - <b>GLOUCESTER</b>	Guildhall, 01452 503 050
SAT 03 - <b>BRISTOL</b>	Fleece, 0117 929 9008	FRI 16 - <b>NOTTINGHAM</b>	Rock City, 0845 413 4444
THU 08 - <b>LEAMINGTON SPA</b>	The Assembly, 0844 854 1358	SAT 17 - <b>LONDON</b>	229 The Venue, 08444 771 000
FRI 09 - <b>EDINBURGH</b>	Citrus Club, 0131 220 6227	SUN 18 - <b>SWANSEA</b>	The Garage, 01792 654 226
THU 22 - <b>SOUTHAMPTON</b>	The Brook, 023 8055 5366	FRI 23 - <b>LEEDS</b>	Brudenell Social Club, 08444 771 000
SUN 25 - <b>BRIGHTON</b>	Concorde 2, 01273 673 311	THU 28 - <b>EXETER</b>	Phoenix, 01392 667 080
FRI 30 - <b>WOLVERHAMPTON</b>	Robin 2, 01902 401 211	SAT 31 - <b>LIVERPOOL</b>	Eric's, 08444 771 000

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6 SALE WATERSIDE ARTS CENTRE  
7 CLITHEROE GRAND  
12 NEWBURY ARLINGTON ARTS CENTRE  
13 TAVISTOCK WHARF  
14 PENZANCE ACORN  
15 BRISTOL TUNNELS  
19 HUDDERSFIELD LAWRENCE BATLEY THEATRE  
20 STOCKTON ARC  
21 LINCOLN DRILL HALL  
22 BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX  
26 LEEDS WARDROBE  
27 DUNFERMLINE CARNEGIE THEATRE  
28 STAFFORD GATEHOUSE  
29 BRIDPORT ELECTRIC PALACE

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Sun 11 March  
*Salford Quays, The Lowry*  
Box Office 0843 208 6010

Thurs 15 March  
*Bristol, The Tunnels*  
Box Office 0845 605 0255

Fri 16 March  
*Tavistock, The Wharf*  
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22 Bath Komedia  
23 Cardiff St David's Hall  
24 Warrington Parr Hall  
25 Buxton Opera House  
26 York Grand Opera House  
28 Salisbury City Hall  
29 Birmingham Town Hall  
30 Holmfirth, Picturedrome  
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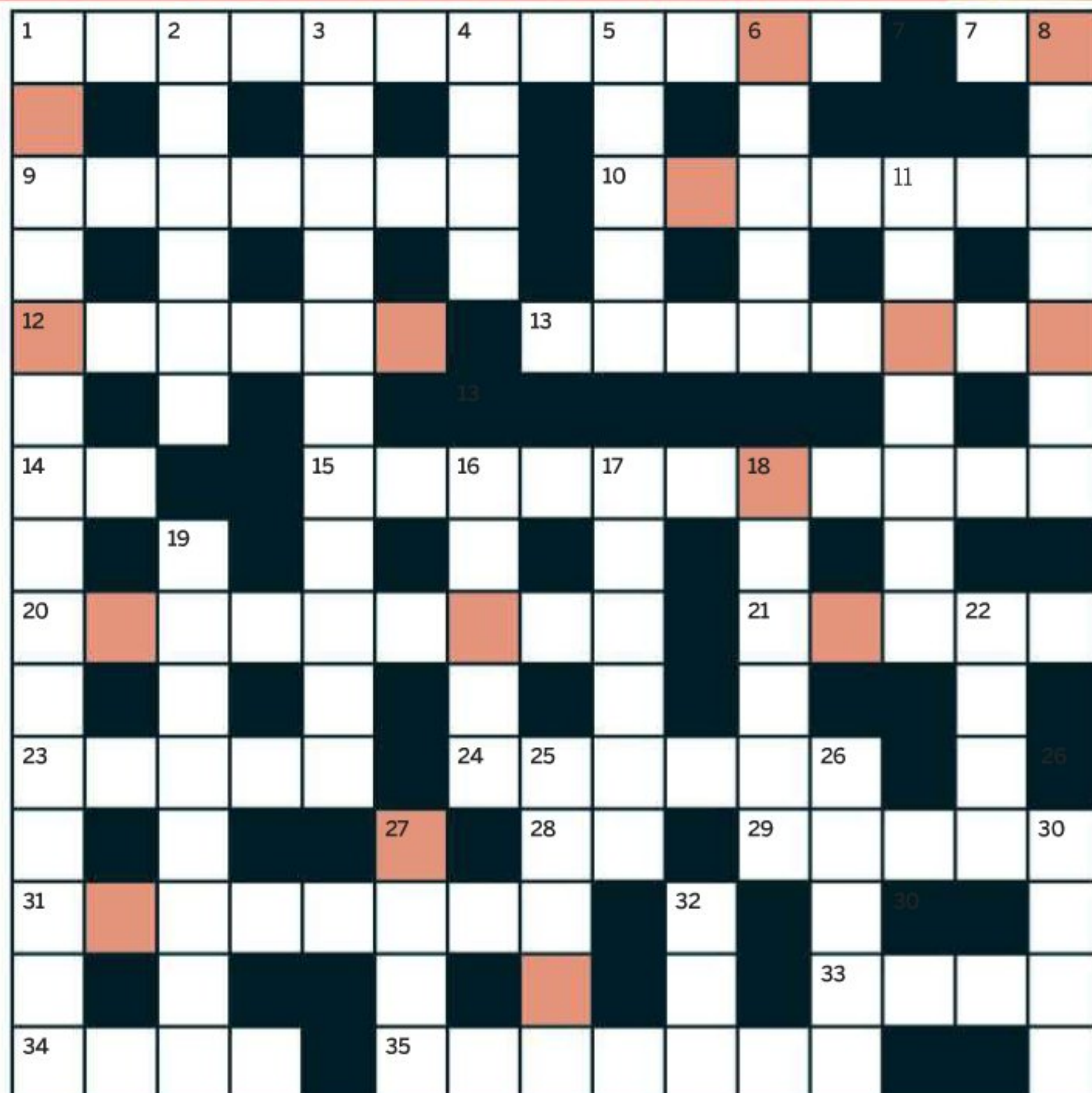
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## ACROSS

- 1+8D** Guided By Voices' 17th album comes off the conveyor belt – we'll get totally fed up with them soon (4-2-3-3-7)  
**7** Bluetones song taken from Frank Ifield (2)  
**9** "The \_\_\_\_\_ we know so well, they shine in your eyes when they kiss and tell", Culture Club (7)  
**10+19D** Belgian who had 1978 Top Ten hit with "Ça Plane Pour Moi" (7-8)  
**12** Blondie couldn't find a way out of recording this album (2-4)  
**13** "Baby Jane's in \_\_\_\_\_, we are flying down to Rio", from Roxy Music's "Virginia Plain" (8)  
**14+15A** Track from U2's *The Joshua Tree* that charted as a single but through import sales only (2-4-7)  
**20** Mystery Jets' album has a number on it (6-3)  
**21** "Herode into the night, accelerated his motorbike", 1964 (5)  
**23** Punk band formed in 1976, for whom Dee Generate banged away on the drums (5)  
**24** (See 5 down)  
**28** Echobelly album taken from Glastonbury (2)  
**29** Max \_\_\_\_\_, guitarist who might duck playing with Jazz Butcher (5)  
**31** Rana mail order set-up for bassist with The Only Ones (4-4)  
**33** Her albums include *Shepherd Moons* and *Watermark* (4)  
**34** A Rolling Stones *Big Hits* compilation was subtitled *High \_\_\_\_\_ And Green Grass* (4)  
**35** "Well you know you had it comin' to you / Now there's not a lot I can do", 1975 (7)

## DOWN

- 1** "Outside their lives go on much faster / Oh, we won't give in, we'll keep \_\_\_\_\_", Jethro Tull (6-2-3-4)  
**2** Maureen \_\_\_\_\_, drummer for The Velvet Underground (6)  
**3** Somehow I turn sad gig into a performance by Cast (7-4)  
**4+26D** Movie which featured the music of The Band, Hendrix and Steppenwolf (4-5)  
**5+24A** Push a truck a different way for a rapper (5-6)  
**6** Stringed instrument has musical note within for Muse live album (5)  
**8** (See 1 across)  
**11** Film in which Carl Barât played Gene Vincent and James Corden played Clem Cattini (7)  
**16** Albums *Ten Silver* \_\_\_\_\_ by Secret Machines or \_\_\_\_\_ *Of Jupiter* by Train (5)  
**17** (See 32 down)  
**18** "You know that it would be \_\_\_\_\_", the first line on The Doors' "Light My Fire" (6)  
**19** (See 10 across)  
**22** Not entirely proper release from Foo Fighters last year (4)  
**25** *Dark* \_\_\_\_\_ was an album, and also record label, for George Harrison (5)  
**26** (See 4 down)  
**27** "The neighbours complain about the noises above, but she only comes when she's on top", 1993 (4)  
**30** "One more hit oughta do it / This joint, ain't nothin' to it, one more for the \_\_\_\_\_", from Boz Scaggs' "Lido Shuffle" (4)  
**32+17D** Jam cringe terribly at guitarist with Family and Cockney Rebel (3-6)

## HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by The Beatles. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut March 2012 Xword Comp, 9th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE10SU. The first entry picked at random will win the prize. Closing date: February 27, 2012. This competition is only open to European residents.

## ANSWERS FOR TAKE 176

### ANSWERS ACROSS

1+17D The Sea Of Memories, 9 Hombre Lobo, 10 Dogs, 11 Subways, 12 Avalon, 14+6D Life Model, 15 Mainstream, 18 Harry, 19 You Send Me, 21 Audio, 22 Naughty Girl, 25+26A Turin Brakes, 27 FM, 28+7D Ted Nugent, 29 Orb.

### ANSWERS DOWN

2 Home Before Dark, 3 Scream, 4 All I See Is You, 5 Fabian, 8+6A This Old Heart Of Mine, 13 Amerie, 15 My Bonnie, 16 South, 20 Niggaz, 23 Geno, 24 Tubbs.

### HIDDEN ANSWER

"To Bring You My Love"

Crossword compiled by Trevor Hungerford

# UNCUT

TAKE 178 | MARCH 2012

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# Stop me

if you've heard this one before

**WHO:** THE LA'S **WHERE:** NEW YORK, WASHINGTON AND NEW JERSEY, AUGUST 1991

I'VE NEVER ENJOYED cult acts. Poor Syd Barrett and Roky Erickson would surely be less interesting to their fans if they'd been of entirely sound mind. Big Star had as many hits as they deserved, and it's possible that not every record by The Fall is more than awful. But the worst of all for adulation beyond ability, talent or charisma has to be The La's, the Gerry And The Pacemakers of cult acts. Singer and occasional songwriter Lee Mavericks' inability to make more than one album had more to do with insecurity about their abilities than some nonsense about the wrong kind of dust in the deck—while the utter lack of more than one “classic song” means that The La's are just another '80s nearly band, a couple of steps up from The Pleasers. But all this inflated reputation business wouldn't bother me at all if I once hadn't had to spend a week on the road with The La's.

My assignment was quite simple; interview Lee Mavericks, who would be sharing hotels, minibuses and backstage areas with me for the next few days. It started well. We arrived in New York to find them a friendly crew, mocking my T-shirt which advertised fellow obscure Liverpool band Top (themselves no strangers to inter-Scouse mockery, once telling me that OMD's Andy McCluskey looked like “a teacher who couldn't control his class”) and winding up Go! Discs' representative on this jaunt, Cathal Smyth (aka Chas Smash). According to my notes, Lee Mavericks said, “How do?” to me. Had I known how the rest of the week would go, I'd have cabled those two words back to the office and gone home, job done.

Instead, after a decent gig which was oddly heavy on songs by bassist John Power (most notably “Fine Time” and “Alright”, which would later both be hits for Power's Britpop-era band Cast) and a night's hangover preparation, we head off to Washington in a minibus, a four-hour drive which sees me sitting inches from Lee Mavericks with nothing to do. When I bring up the idea of an interview, Mavericks looks unhappy. “Just soak it up, la,” he says. “Soak it up and do it that way. You don't need to do an interview.” Paul McCartney comes on the radio, singing his Unplugged version of “We Can Work It Out”. Mavericks calls it “slack” and falls asleep. This is the template for the rest of the journey. Mavericks nods out, a record he likes comes on, he says he likes it, and he nods out again. Four hours later I've learned that Lee Mavericks finds the masturbation references in “Captain Jack” by Billy Joel funny and quite likes “Honky Cat” by Elton John.

We finally arrive at Washington's tiny 9.30 Club. In the dressing room someone has written something quite appalling about Lee Mavericks



Greetings from Lee Mavericks, NJ: not an easy man to interview

## The worst band of all for adulation beyond ability, talent or charisma has to be The La's...

containing the words “lickspittle”, “Scouse”, and a libel of a medical nature. The gig goes well, but Mavericks takes against being photographed by NME's Tim Jarvis and keeps telling him to fuck off during songs. I feel an interview may not be forthcoming. In the dressing room after the show, most of The La's are affable and relaxed. “808 State are techno bullshit,” says Lee Mavericks.

Next morning, we are driving to Asbury Park, New Jersey, which was the inspiration for Bruce Springsteen's LP, *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ* and to pass the time, I'm interviewing John Powers in a car. John is charming, funny and so happy to be interviewed he even claims to be “Mister Interview”. I raise the issue of The La's' spectacular lack of productivity. “There's loads of new stuff, la,” says Power. “There's stuff we've never even done live, which is going to make it even more exciting. Lee's got loads of tunes.”

A minibus passes, and in it we can see Lee Mavericks, sound asleep.

Asbury Park isn't great even if you like Bruce Springsteen. There's a Springsteen museum, which looks a bit creepy, but the most Springsteen-esque thing is an abandoned miniature golf course, which has so many of the attributes of a classic Bruce song—decay, melancholy, a poetic sense that the best days are gone—that I find myself making up a Springsteen song called “Abandoned Miniature Golf Course” in my head (“Oh, Wendy, do you remember meeting by the little model windmill...”). It passes the time until we meet in a bar and Lee plays pool with some locals. The rest of the evening is something of a blur. The local hotel, situated on the New Jersey boardwalk, is large and full of La's fans and hangers-on. I remember a lady astrologer, and people tipping tobacco out of Marlboro Lites and replacing it with cocaine. I remember drinking a lot, and waiting until everyone had left to find Lee Mavericks and get an interview. I find him in his bed, counterpane tucked under his chin. “Do you want to do the interview now, Lee?” I say. “No, man, I'm tired,” he replies.

The next day, Tim Jarvis tries to take some portraits of Lee Mavericks, as Mavericks walks up the beach, deliberately getting further away from Tim every time Tim tries to take a shot. With the photos done as much as they'll ever be, The La's depart, Mavericks presumably getting his head down for another much-needed kip. I point out to Cathal Smyth that I have, as yet, no interview with the lead singer of the band his label has paid for me to go to America and interview. Cathal says he'll see what he can do and sure enough, the next day as we sit in a New York hotel waiting to go to the airport, Lee Mavericks phones me up. He's in a very cheerful mood. He talks about the next La's LP (“We're gonna do it ourselves. We're not gonna let anyone interfere with the broth and we're gonna dish it up as we like...”). He talks about Happy Mondays (“very good”). And he talks about what will happen next. “What keeps us going is memories of the future, the spirit of the thing. The flames are dampened but there's life there.”

The La's second album never materialises, and their next appearance in the charts comes when the US Christian group Sixpence None The Richer record a cover of “There She Goes”. John Power's Cast enjoy considerable success in the 1990s with an album partly composed of the songs he wrote in The La's. Lee Mavericks continues to be a cult figure who plays pubs and still talks about releasing a new record.

*David Quantick*

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# CLASH

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