

*"You didn't even once relent/You cast a long shadow/And that is your testament"*

# UNCUT

**60<sup>TH</sup>**  
BIRTHDAY  
SPECIAL

## JOE STRUMMER

*"I was spokesman  
for a generation..."*

**Madness! Exile!  
Redemption!**

**A secret history  
uncovered**

**AND**  
**M|A|R|R|S**  
**RIDE**

**DEAD CAN  
DANCE**

**LEE HAZLEWOOD**  
**TERRI HOOLEY**

**STARTS  
PAGE 67!**

*Featuring*

**Ry Cooder**

**Paul Simon**

**The Kinks**

**John Fogerty**

**Elton John**

*and more...*

## **CAPTAIN BEEFHEART**

**The whole story, by  
The Magic Band**

## **MARK KNOPFLER**

**"Brothers In Arms  
was a complete  
accident"**

## **ANIMAL COLLECTIVE**

**Album By Album:  
"It was a great trip!"**

## **LYNYRD SKYNYRD**

**The last of a dying  
breed looks back**

**And on piano...  
BOB DYLAN!**

**PLUS**

**THE FLAMING LIPS**  
**CHRIS ROBINSON**  
**GRIZZLY BEAR**  
**THE FUGS**





# A NEW FLAVOUR OF SOUND



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# Are we rolling?



Joe (second  
left), or Woody  
as he was then  
known, takes  
time off from  
gravedigging,  
Newport, 1972

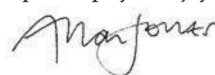
JOE STRUMMER WOULD have been 60 this month, but imagine him for a moment the way I remember him at 20. Let's say, then, that it's early 1973, the start of my last term at art school in Newport, in South Wales. Joe, who everyone knew then as Woody, has fetched up here after dropping out of London's Central School Of Art. He's got a job around this time digging graves for the council, something like that, and is otherwise a regular in the college canteen and at the students' union, a dilapidated place on Stow Hill, not far from where I'm living at the time with my girlfriend, who one day Joe asks to cut his hair. For as long as we've known him, Joe's sported an ungainly frizzy thatch that makes him look like the unnecessary additional percussionist in a tank-topped white funk band. So Kathy gives Joe his first rockabilly haircut, a tonsorial improvement that makes him walk with a newly affected tough-guy swagger.

At the students' union, we usually gather, a regular bunch of us, sometimes including Joe, on a Tuesday night to watch *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in an upstairs room where we sit on beer crates as there are no chairs and argue about the bands on the show. I have an opinion about everyone we see, not always complimentary. I am in other words a lippy sod and people are often incensed by my more unreasonable ranting, especially when it's about groups who are favourites of theirs but not mine. Amazingly, in a little over a year from now, *Melody Maker* will actually be paying me for such opinions. Who could have seen that coming, or that Joe would go on to become who he did. Back then,

he's just someone with a donkey jacket and a shovel with a job digging holes for the dead.

Anyway, one night Joe drops by my digs with a bottle of vodka. He's keen, he says, to find out a bit more about the music I've been talking up so brashly. Ever the gobby evangelist, I pull out some records I think he should hear and start playing them. There's not a lot he immediately likes. I can't for instance get him to listen to The Velvet Underground at all, and he's not keen on The Stooges. I play him "TV Eye" from *Funhouse* and he feigns acute distress, screwing up his face in an approximation of horror that makes me laugh out loud. He's similarly unimpressed by the MC5. He also hates glam, thinks Lou Reed is nothing more than a decadent slut, Roxy Music are the sequinned spawn of a shrieking she-devil and the very mention of David Bowie makes him look like he's going to spew, although this could be the vodka, which we are probably drinking too quickly and straight from the bottle. I play him "Watch That Man" from *Aladdin Sane*, though, and he grudgingly admits it actually rocks. But he's more comfortable with *Exile On Main Street* and we play the first side over and over, no argument between us over the likes of "Rocks Off", "Shake Your Hips" (which he will one day cover with The 101ers) and "Tumbling Dice". *Highway 61 Revisited* also gets a bit of a leathering, "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" a mutual favourite. We're on common ground, too, with Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Jerry Lee, and he especially likes an album showcasing the blues harmonica playing of Little Walter that I've recently found in a great secondhand record shop where I used to spend a lot of time and money, a funky place at the top of Commercial Road, the gateway to an area of Newport called Pill, a place then of ill-repute, shall we say, rough pubs and drug dealers, that sort of thing.

Forty years on from such rowdy nights, our cover story by Chris Salewicz looks back on less innocent days in Joe's life, his so-called post-Clash 'wilderness years', from which he'd eventually emerge in something like heartening triumph. I hope you enjoy Chris' feature and the rest of the issue. As ever, if you want to get in touch, email me at [allan\\_jones@ipcmedia.com](mailto:allan_jones@ipcmedia.com)





# INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring TERRI HOOLEY | DYLAN CARLSON | DEAD CAN DANCE





GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

# Let's spend 50 years together!

**Move over, Blues Incorporated!**  
**The Rolling Stones reconvene for an auspicious birthday**

**K**EITH RICHARDS HAS an all-purpose quip that he likes to use on Rolling Stones audiences, and it's one you imagine he'll soon be adapting for this particular anniversary. "It's good to be here," he generally grins. "But after 50 years in The Rolling Stones, it's good to be anywhere." Every time he says it, he reminds us that the Stones have been more than just a rock'n'roll band. Yes, they are a musical institution, and true enough, the singer is now a knight of the realm. But from their first petrol station urination to their drug busts and dalliances with politicians' wives, the Stones have been synonymous with trouble. And yet, as Keith subtly reminds us, in spite of everyone who's ever tried to stop them, they're still here.

The almost-smiling Stones we see in their first photocall since 2008 are certainly survivors. Keith's fall from a tree (2006). Charlie's cancer (2010). Ronnie's booze troubles (2008 or so). Even if their days as lords of misrule are behind them, their battles against other more health-related recent foes have borne witness to their endurance. Until the end of August, an exhibition, **THE ROLLING STONES: 50**, will honour a career that's now run an unbelievable five decades.

Fifty years. The Rolling Stones began their career (on July 12, 1962, at the Marquee Club, as this *Melody Maker* story announces) in a world where England still had capital punishment and there was smog over London, where the year's big movie was *Lawrence Of Arabia*. Since then, the Stones have changed many times. They started as a blues band fronted by a promising athlete in a cricket sweater, later became sequinned princes in an airborne Camelot, later still pastel-

suited ambassadors for disco-rock. At times they've been Brian's band, Mick's band, and Keith's band. Now, they're everybody's band. A recent reissue campaign has offered definitive versions of their unrivalled recorded work, while Scorsese's 2008 concert film, *Shine A Light*, offered an intimate record of the Stones as many will know them best in recent years: as an energetic, undiminished live band.

Since that time, there have been plenty of exciting Stones rumours: "album shows" around the reissues, a new Jack White-produced LP, but as yet no new activity has been confirmed. Most recently, Mick Jagger has suggested forthcoming shows in "the autumn". Charlie Watts has suggested that the band have been "playing" again, but "not rehearsing". As to whether these informal sessions will prove to be tentative rehearsals for a tour, it's too early to say. Going forward, it seems certain the Stones will proceed by doing what they have for the past 50 years – exactly what they want to. **JOHN ROBINSON**

**THE** Rollin' Stones and the new Long John Baldry Blues Band will play the rhythm - and - blues session at the Marquee, LONDON, on July 12, when the resident group, Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated is appearing on BBC "Jazz Club."

Still together in 2012: Jagger, Richards, Wood and Watts pose for famed photographer Rankin against a mock-up of London's Marquee Club in its '60s heyday

*The Rolling Stones: 50* exhibition is at Somerset House, London, until August 27



## A QUICK ONE

► Steve Wynn has reformed **The Dream Syndicate** to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their debut, *The Days Of Wine And Roses*. The Paisley Underground legends play their first shows in 24 years in Spain in Sept. There will be "very possibly some more," promises Wynn.

► And in more nebulous reunion news, **Stevie Nicks** has claimed **Fleetwood Mac** will tour in 2013. "Everybody's on board," she told CBS.

► Recent **Jack White** activities have included a video for "Freedom At 21" directed by flash hip-hop auteur **Hype Williams** and a visit to Third Man Studios from



**Radiohead**. White's diligent upkeep of his ancient history, though, has also meant a vinyl release of the first ever **White Stripes** gig. *Live At The Gold Dollar* is, as usual, exclusive to members of Third Man's Vault subscription series. Sign up!

► Final confirmation that **End Of The Road** looks like the best UK festival this year comes with the addition of **Patti Smith** to a bill that already includes **Grizzly Bear**, **Grandaddy**, **Van Dyke Parks**, **Roy Harper** and the **Alabama Shakes**. Aug 31-Sept 2, Larmer Tree Gardens, North Dorset.

► For a daily dose of Uncut—news, reviews, video and blogs—check out [www.uncut.co.uk](http://www.uncut.co.uk).

# 'I need excitement, oh I need it bad!'

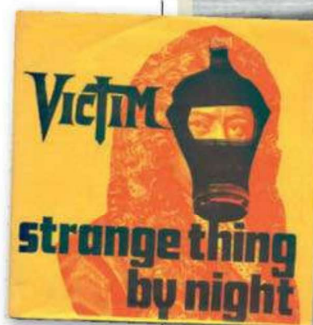
## How **TERRI HOOLEY** and his **Good Vibrations** label brought punk to Belfast

**"I**F ANYWHERE IN THE world needed punk it was Belfast," says Terri Hooley – and, as the rowdy godfather of that music in Northern Ireland, he should know. "The area I grew up in was full of painters, poets and musicians. When the Troubles came, I couldn't believe how quickly Belfast became ghettoised; people retreated to their own areas. Punk was the first time since the Troubles started that Catholic and Protestant kids could come together in a venue and mix."

Hooley, now 63, created a vital hub for the nascent Belfast scene, opening a record shop called Good Vibrations. He would eventually run a label of the same name, too, immortalised in rock history as the first home of The Undertones and "Teenage Kicks". Hooley's story is much more far-reaching, though, and the ex-hippy's tales of paramilitary beatings, arson and bankruptcy have now been dramatised in a movie, also called *Good Vibrations*. A celebration of both Hooley's anarchic socialism and a youth movement sickened by violence, the movie was made in Belfast with a local cast and crew. Hometown stars helped out: Snow Patrol (drummer Jonny Quinn used to work in the shop) and David Holmes (an avid customer who provided the soundtrack) produced the film.

"I used to buy records from Terri all the time," recalls Holmes. "When I was 15 he gave me a box of records that I'll be forever grateful for – among them was a signed copy of Lee Dorsey's 'Ride Your Pony' on Sue. For a young mod DJ it was like Christmas morning."

Hooley lost an eye in an election-time skirmish, and was regularly beaten up because his father would repeatedly stand as a Labour candidate. Music, though, was his main obsession. When Dylan played Belfast in 1966, he found time to tell Hooley to "fuck off". Later, there was an altercation with John Lennon over the latter's involvement with Irish paramilitaries. By the time of punk, Hooley – like Malcolm McLaren and Tony Wilson – was a generation older than the youngsters he gravitated towards. "I felt it was hippies' revenge," he says. "You didn't listen to us in the '60s – look what you've got now!"



On the road to chart stardom: The Undertones. Above: 'hippies' revenge' Terri Hooley

Hooley was never a svengali, though. He derided Stiff Little Fingers as "a showband" when, under the guidance of an English journalist, they began writing songs about the Troubles. Hooley preferred to enable bands

to record and perform. Fanzine writers such as myself were introduced to Dave Hyndman, his business partner, who ran a print workshop, Just Books, housed directly above Good Vibrations.

Hooley's generosity was matched by a righteous fervour. The movie shows him smashing up a record company boardroom after The Undertones were turned down for the umpteenth time. "I smashed a few windows later on, too," he adds. "The money I asked for The Undertones was so small, Sire never paid me."

Belfast in 2012, the sort of city that hosts the MTV Awards, is a far cry from the fear-gripped, music-starved place in which Hooley first opened up for business. *Good Vibrations* shows the opportunities that exist for him to capitalise on his reputation. Any windfalls, however, are inevitably handed over to a deserving local cause.

Instead, he's happy to run a small retail outlet in a city café, though his label itself is due to return this month with a release for post-punk band The Mighty Shamrocks' long lost album, *Paddy*.

"The thing is to keep the Good Vibrations name alive," smiles Hooley. "It stood for something, it meant a lot to a lot of people."

GAVIN MARTIN

*Good Vibrations* will be released in UK cinemas in November

## ALTERNATIVE ALTERNATIVE ULSTER!

Five great Good Vibrations singles

### RUDI

**Big Time** (GOT1, 1978)

The East Belfast band, led by Johnny Thunders obsessive Brian Young, prompted Hooley to start Good Vibrations. The well-aimed putdowns in this ebullient debut single show why.

### VICTIM

**Strange Thing By Night** (GOT2, 1978)

Melodic, hard-hitting powerpop from sharp-suited three-piece, inspired by the arrival of outlandishly garbed punks in Belfast. After moving to Manchester, Victim briefly included Mike Joyce in their lineup.

### THE UNDERTONES

**Teenage Kicks** (GOT4, 1978)

The EP which launched the Derry band's hit-filled career. So beloved by John Peel, the lead track supplies the epitaph on his gravestone.

### PROTEX

**Don't Ring Me Up** (GOT6, 1978)

Formed after the cancelled Clash gig at Belfast's Ulster Hall, Protex's debut was praised by Tony Parsons in *NME*. But their major-label career failed to match The Undertones' success.

### RUEFLEX

**One By One** (GOT8, 1979)

Invigorating and apocalyptic artpunk from Belfast cross-community activists. A major influence on an emerging Dublin outfit called U2.





FIRST LISTEN

Earth (Carlson, left), and below, Walton-le-Dale churchyard where Renaissance scribe Edward Kelley was apprehended for necromancy—his apparition may have graced Waterloo station recently (see Carlson's blog; address at end of article)

# Smells Like Teeny Spirits

In which DYLAN CARLSON, the grunge legend and leader of Earth, goes fairy-hunting in deepest Suffolk...

**W**ALK OUT FROM THE Suffolk village of Bentley, hop a stile, wander through woodland and you'll find a meadow known as "the ward". In the 12th Century, this was the site of Dodnash Priory, although today nothing remains but a single stone – and, if you believe local legend, the spirits of the monks that lived here. Our guide Mark, a Bentley local and occasional musician in English folk troupe The Owl Service, points out "the rook gate". In his youth, he would sometimes come to this gate in springtime to find it decorated with dead birds – a warning not to enter, although no-one in

the village seems to recall who put them there, or why.

*Uncut* finds ourselves out in the English countryside because of Dylan Carlson, who is some way from home. In the '90s, Carlson was notorious on the Seattle grunge scene, a friend of Kurt Cobain who recorded a string of experimental drone-rock albums for Sub Pop before drug addiction caused his premature retirement. A newly clean Carlson returned to music in 2005, fronting a brand new Earth lineup, and recent records like the two-part *Angels Of Darkness*, *Demons Of Light* have explored his growing interest in the folklore of the



British Isles. "I've always been interested in... I hate to use the word occult, but I guess the beliefs that people hold," says Carlson, today a spry fortysomething. "In recent years, I developed a fascination for English folk music. But after the sightings, my reading went into overdrive, specifically regarding the English cunning folk and fairies."

On a press trip to London in late 2010, Carlson had two supernatural encounters with what he believes to be "faire folk", experiences documented on his blog. Now, following a funding drive on Kickstarter that yielded over \$35,000, he has returned to the British Isles to visit sites of human-fairy meetings and make a number of field recordings, intended for a forthcoming solo release. Titled *Coleman Grey Presents 'Falling With A Thousand Stars And Other Wonders From The House Of Albion'*, it

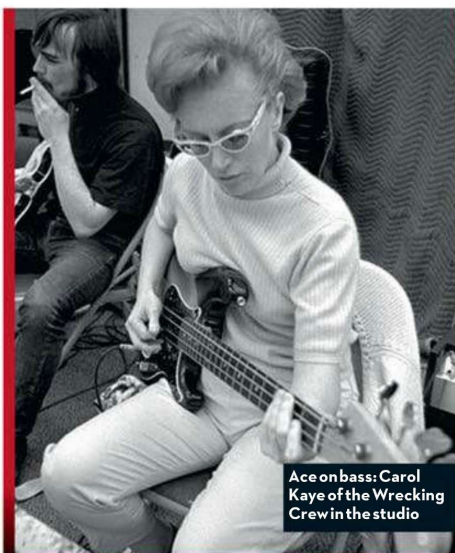
will include a book, a DVD of his expeditions, plus a number of interpretations of English and Scottish folk songs about the "cunning folk", magical practitioners with the ability to commune with otherworldly spirits.

Collaborating on the project will be a number of guest vocalists including Jessica Kenney and Genevieve Castrée, and Carlson intends to weave in moments from his field recordings: "Some sights are known for people hearing fairy music... I'll listen back and look for what sounds interesting – sometimes there'll be a weird melody, or just an atmosphere."

Carlson seems disappointed that the trip has yielded no more encounters, but today's expedition culminates at an ancient "fairy-path", a slim passage of trees thought to have been plotted with some astrological significance. "At first I thought today's location was something tangential to the project, but it turns out there's this weird feeling here, something that resonates," says Carlson. He's returning here at a later date, he decides – but next time, after sunset.

LOUIS PATTISON

...*Wonders From The House Of Albion* will be released in May 2013. Follow his travels at [drcarlsonalbion.wordpress.com](http://drcarlsonalbion.wordpress.com)



Ace on bass: Carol Kaye of the Wrecking Crew in the studio

## AND ON BASS... CAROL KAYE

### UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ Carol Kaye is perhaps America's most famous session bassist, featuring on an estimated 10,000 recording sessions in a 55-year career. She played on many Beach Boys recordings including "California Girls", "Sloop John B", "Help Me Rhonda" and "Good Vibrations", worked on *Smile* and was at the infamous "Fire" session when Brian Wilson asked the musicians to wear toy fire helmets. She also performed on various TV theme tunes ("The Streets Of San Francisco", "Mission Impossible",



"M\*A\*S\*H", "Peyton Place") and contributed 12-string guitar to Frank Zappa's *Freak Out!* album. She declined to appear on Zappa's next album, however, as she found some of the lyrics offensive.

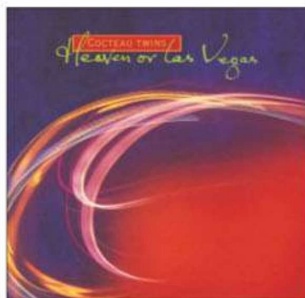
**KEY SESSIONS:** Love's "And more again", The Monkees' "I'm A Believer", Glenn Campbell's "Wichita Lineman" and "Rhinestone Cowboy", Ike & Tina Turner's "River Deep Mountain High", Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made For Walking" and Simon & Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair/Canticle". PHIL KING



# COCTEAU TWINS



Heaven or Las Vegas  
CAD 0012



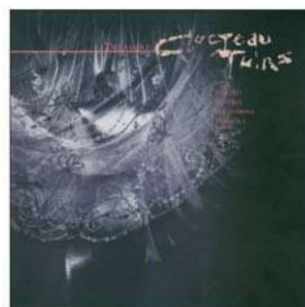
Garlands  
CAD 211



Head over Heels  
CAD 313



Treasure  
CAD 412



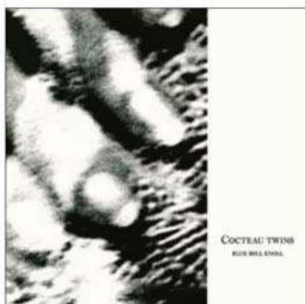
Lullabies To Violaine  
Vol 1  
DAD 2513



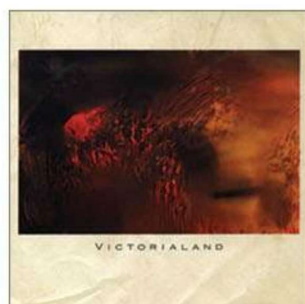
Stars & Topsoil  
(a collection 1982-1990)  
CAD 2K19



Blue Bell Knoll  
CAD 807



Victorialand  
CAD 602



## KIM DEAL ( Pixies, Breeders )

*"I remember who I was with and what city I was in when I first heard them on the radio. Nothing sounds like them."*

## ANTONY HEGARTY ( Antony & the Johnsons )

*"Elizabeth Fraser invites us to follow her into uncharted terrain as a singer and lyricist, into a wilderness of rapture and unfurling joy."*

## DAVID SITEK ( TV On The Radio )

*"Songs I will forever summon to defend against the 'this and that' of modern living."*

## IVO WATTS-RUSSELL ( This Mortal Coil )

*"Heaven Or Las Vegas is in my top 10 albums from any label."*





# COMPLETE CONTROL

FREE CD!

A track-by-track guide to your free CD of the month's best music

## 1 RY COODER

### Guantanamo

A song about Cuba – but Buena Vista Social Club this ain't, as the forthcoming presidential election fires up a reanimated Ry on an angry political diatribe that might've been sung by Woody or Lead Belly if they'd still been around.

## 2 JOHN MURRY

### Southern Sky

A dark, festering masterpiece from the Tupelo-born descendant of William Faulkner, whom *Uncut* readers may remember from 2006's bleakly brilliant *World Without End*. His new album was co-produced by former AMC drummer Tim Mooney, whose sad death we report on in our obituary section (p127).

## 3 JESCA HOOP

### When I'm Asleep

An intriguing backstory of a Mormon upbringing and a job nannying Tom Waits' kids – and a compelling song from the now Manchester-based singer's third album, improbably combining a rustic touch of Gillian Welch authenticity and subtle layers of electro-pop.

## 4 FAMILY OF THE YEAR

### The Stairs

Surging West Coast pop and five-part (count 'em) harmonies from the communal LA band, aptly described by close friend/collaborator Willy Mason as sounding like "The Mamas & The Papas on acid".

## 5 DIRTY PROJECTORS

### Gun Has No Trigger

A serpentine melody, cooing harmonies, moodily affecting David Byrne-ish vocal and a cautionary tale of comeuppance from the sixth and most accessible album yet from David Longstreth and his Brooklyn conceptualists.

## 6 CONOR OBERST AND THE MYSTIC VALLEY BAND

### One Of My Kind

A vicarious hint of ...*Ziggy Stardust* *And The Spiders From Mars*-era Bowie on the title track from a collection of B-sides and outtakes to accompany the DVD release of a doc about Oberst and his Mystic Valley Band on tour and recording their second offering, 2009's *Outer South*.



## 7 OPOSSOM

### Girl

Now back home in Auckland after a sojourn in Oregon, ex-Mint Chicks singer Kody Nielson rides an endless summer vibe as he hymns the ecstasies of young love on this joyous opener from the debut release under his new alias.

## 8 RACE HORSES

### Nobody's Son

From the same Welsh pop stable that sired such thoroughbreds as SFA and Gorky's, the Aberystwyth quintet hark for the winning post on a swooning showcase for singer Meilyr Jones' rich baritone, from their forthcoming second album, *Furniture*.

## 9 BAITERSPACE

### Things That We Found

Once dubbed the 'Sonic Youth of the Southern Hemisphere', our second track from Down Under on this month's CD finds the Kiwi noiseniks making a welcome return with an intense, distorted taster from their first album since 1999's *Solar 3*.

## 10 HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF

### Go Out On The Road

Alynda Lee Segarra and her New Orleans tumbleweeds cut a mellow two-step on a deliciously plaintive

old-time country waltz, under the direction of Nashville producer Andrija Tokic, fresh from his Alabama Shakes triumphs.

## 11 SIR RICHARD BISHOP

### Dust & Spurs

Exquisite six-stringed magic from the ex-Sun City Girls guitarist, evoking John Fahey/Robbie Basho, but transcending any 'school' as a uniquely idiosyncratic master of his instrument.

## 12 DAN DEACON

### Lots

Exuberant electro-punk dance-pop from the Baltimore auteur, all pummelling beats, distorted screech and a lyric said to be inspired by Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and "current movements that aim to change a broken system".

## 13 SAM LEE (see page 11)

### On Yonder Hill

Brave and original folk-jazz from the new poster boy of the English trad revival, on a bittersweet tale accompanied by ghostly trumpet and "tuned tank drum" from a guitar-free debut, widely fancied as folk album of the year.

## 14 ANTIBALAS

### Dirty Money

Afrobeat grooves from Brooklyn out of Lagos, modelled on Fela Kuti's Africa 70 but given a 21st-Century refit by the outfit from the off-Broadway production of *Fela!*.

## 15 BILL FAY

### Be At Peace With Yourself

A lovely, elegiac way to end with a gentle, gospel-tinged lullaby from one of the great lost English voices of the early '70s, now back and making up for lost time after an absence of almost 40 years.





# DRINK ICE COLD



See our websites: [www.jagermeister.co.uk](http://www.jagermeister.co.uk) and [www.jagermusic.co.uk](http://www.jagermusic.co.uk)

For all UK enquiries [www.cellartrends.co.uk](http://www.cellartrends.co.uk)

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100ml of Jägermeister contains 3.5 units of alcohol and 251 calories







Hat's off to folk explorer Sam Lee

I'M NEW HERE

# Sam Lee

**Recommended this month: a gifted new protégé of the English folk establishment – and of Ray Mears!**

**"I** WAS TAUGHT wilderness skills by Ray Mears," says Sam Lee, a singer at the centre of a folk scene he describes as "blossoming". "My first love is nature – and for me there's no division between that and folk. It offers a non-commercial alternative and ties in with the green movement."

Lee first came to prominence in a rather more urban environment, promoting new folk talent at his Magpie's Nest club nights in Islington, North London. In the last couple of years, however, he has emerged as an artist at the hub of that scene.

Lee's debut, *Ground Of Its Own*, is a collection of antique songs engagingly sung and given radical treatments packed with drones, drifting trumpet and ghostly piano alongside fiddles and cellos.

The album has won friends in places where folk is more often an 'F' word – *Vogue*, the Arts Foundation, Radio 3 – while Lee's assiduous sourcing of ballads from travellers' families has impressed even folk diehards. "Songs like 'Northlands' and 'The Tan Yard Side' speak with the voices of human history," he says, "whether they deal with the suffering of the British people, or love, which they handle in an open-hearted, sentimental way. As these are not my songs, I don't feel embarrassed by that sentimentality."

Lee's taste for tradition was kindled around the campfires of Forest School Camps (a proto-green youth organisation), bellowing Woody Guthrie tunes. But it was meeting Scots traveller

Stanley Robertson, when Lee was 25, that opened up the ancestral canon to him. "I'd assumed Robertson was long dead, like the rest of the singers on Topic's *Voice Of The People* albums, then I met him at Whitby Festival."

The late singer became Lee's mentor, the North Londoner travelling to his Aberdeen council estate to be initiated (he now wears Robertson's ring).

Other notable allies include Shirley Collins and Joe Boyd, while *Ground Of Its Own* was realised with the help of engineer John Wood (once Nick

Drake's cohort) and producer Gerry Diver. "I wanted a soundscape of textures," says Lee, "so 'My Ausheen (My Old Shoes)' has a sample from a 1910 music hall record. I wanted to compress time."

Lee's interests include dance, anthropology, teaching traditional song at Newcastle and Goldsmiths universities, and performing with the Yiddish Twist Orchestra, which is "me in a tuxedo singing mambo rhythms". It seems an incongruous role but, when he performs, Lee delivers a song like "Wild Wood Amber" (from Sussex gypsy Mary Ann Haynes) with the intimacy and showmanship of Tony Bennett.

"It's like Bob Copper said," he concludes, "To hear a song that comes from the land sung by a person sprung from the land, that'll do nicely."

NEIL SPENCER

*Ground Of Its Own* is out now on Nest Collective

## I'M YOUR FAN

**"He's an adventurer, able to knock on strangers' doors and full of generosity towards fellow musicians. His playfulness and joy come across in his singing."**

**Geoff Travis, founder, Rough Trade**



## THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

### TY SEGALL

Twins

DRAG CITY

It's that man again! The garage maven's third classic of 2012: Beatles and Nirvana vibes proliferate.

### THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

Meat & Bone

SHOVE!/BRONZERAT

A righteous comeback, recapturing the trio's stylishly unhinged early-'90s form.

### DAVID BYRNE & ST VINCENT

Love This Giant

4AD

"Try not to laugh, just take a chance..." An inter-generational summit of New York art-quirk titans, heavy on the brass.

### FRANK OCEAN

Channel Orange

DEF JAM

This is something of an R&B landmark. Imaginative, transporting and uncommonly moving.

### SIC ALPS

Sic Alps

DRAG CITY

Fifth, mellowest and best album from the once-abrasive Bay Area act. A strong debt to Alex Chilton is apparent.



### LEE RANALDO BAND & J MASCIS

Albatross

DECCA

An unexpectedly restrained cover of the Mac chestnut, from star-studded tribute *Just Tell Me That You Want Me*.

### THE XX

Coexist

XL

Further covert operations from the South London minimalists. If anything, even more insidious than their debut.

### ZZ TOP

Original Album Series

WARNERBROS

Five mighty Top albums of border country boogie, bundled in an ultra-cheap box.

### GENIUS/GZA

Liquid Swords

GET ON DOWN

One of hip-hop's greatest albums is reissued in a deluxe edition – with a chess set!

### LAURIE SPIEGEL

The Expanding Universe

UNSEEN WORLDS

Vast and revelatory survey of the electronic composer. Includes music blasted into space on the Voyager probe in 1977.

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Happily/sadly reunited on record: Lisa Gerrard and Brendan Perry

# Back From The Grave!

Resurrected after 16 years – the high priest and priestess of global goth-ambience, DEAD CAN DANCE

CERTAIN ARTISTS, of various genres, might one day aspire to play the Royal Albert Hall, Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, a hockey arena in St Petersburg or a Roman amphitheatre in Lebanon. Dead Can Dance may be unique in being able to play all of them, among many others, on one tour.

The release of the band's first album since 1996, *Anastasis*, will be accompanied by the biggest tour in their intermittent three decades of existence (the Albert Hall date sold out in 48 hours). "Anastasis," explains Brendan Perry, "is a Greek word meaning resurrection."

It's also, he's quick to note, a hint of the influences on the new album. *Anastasis*, like all of Dead Can Dance's eight previous albums (though the first not to appear on 4AD, whose aesthetic they helped form), is a sumptuous stew combining the dramatic atmospherics conjured by Perry and his creative partner Lisa Gerrard, his big-hearted balladry and her ethereal ululations, with whatever else happened to be catching their ear.

"A lot of Greek, Turkish and North African ideas have found their way in this time," says Perry. "The Middle Eastern influence has been with us since day one, but the Greek stuff is more recent. I just love it. I'm totally into the ancient history of that part of the world, not just the music."

*Anastasis* was recorded at Quivvy, the studio Perry installed in a church near his farm in County Cavan, Ireland – a place, it turns out, that he's packing up to leave for longer than the upcoming tour. He and his family are moving to France. The lack of sunshine, he explains, is

beginning to get to him, and at any rate it won't make any difference to the logistical struggle they have long waged: Lisa Gerrard still lives in DCD's native Australia. "Lisa and I had been talking about another album," he says, "ever since the reunion tour in 2005, but we never went into the studio after that tour, which was the intention. When we did, it was all pretty condensed. We started last October, and worked for five months. It's all new music, but we wanted it to be a continuation of our heritage, carrying on where

we'd signed off with *Spiritchaser* [from 1996]." DCD will tour as a six-piece, Perry and Gerrard accompanied by Northern Irish composer Jules Maxwell and Shetlandic chanteuse Astrid Williamson on keyboards and vocals, and percussionists David Kuckhermann and Dan Gresson. "We're going to be doing some things we've never played live before," he says, "like 'The Host Of Seraphim' [from *The Serpent's Egg*, 1988] and 'Enigma Of The Absolute' [from 1985's *Spleen And Ideal*]. And we're going to play all of *Anastasis*."

It seems fair to ask if, surveying DCD's tour schedule, Perry has ever felt awkward at the prospect of performing in the places whose musical cultures his band have borrowed from.

"Not at all," he says. "It's an honour to be able to present music back to the people whose ancestors created this wonderful legacy. In fact, I'm going to sing a song each in Greek and Arabic."

ANDREW MUELLER

*Anastasis* is released on PIAS on August 13. DCD play the Royal Albert Hall on October 26

"I'm totally into the ancient history of Greece, not just the music"

DAVID QUANTICK



## Stop me, if you think you've heard this one before

THEY WERE ONE of the great Manchester bands, a charismatic singer and a great guitarist, and they left an enormous gap between their two equally extraordinary albums. Now they're back, and the fans are delighted. I am, of course, referring to The Distractions, whose 1979 Factory single "Time Goes By So Slow" is a sad song with a happy tune that even Pete Shelley would kill to write, and whose Island album *Nobody's Perfect* is so wonderful that it may have failed to be a worldwide hit only because Island signed U2 on the same day and saw which way the wallet was falling.

Now they're back, with vocalist Mike Finney – post-punk's greatest soul singer – and guitarist Steve Perrin, the missing link between David Byrne and Johnny Marr, and some live dates (not quite Heaton Park; King's Arms, Salford, August 31 and September 1). I'll be there, shouting and weeping with many other middle-aged fans of romance and melancholy. It's not just nostalgia to go and see The Distractions because they've got a new album out, *The End Of The Pier*, only 32 years after the last one.

But what if they hadn't? What if The Distractions were just another old-man new-wave band, touring minor hit singles from 1978 while the hacks at the bar say, "Of course, they lost it when the drummer joined Hambi & The Dance"? I've spent a lot of time mocking people for going to reunion shows lately, keeping quiet about the Buzzcocks and Magazine gigs I've recently seen, and I'm aware I'm guilty of being ever so slightly massively two-faced.

I don't know. I still play records I loved in 1979, and 1986, and I'd still like to see the groups who made them because gigs are different to records. I'd rather see bands with new records out, but I've loved the Paul McCartney and Sex Pistols shows I've seen (not alas together. Come on! It's not too late!).

"Nostalgia for an age yet to come," Pete Shelley sang, in 1978. He wasn't to know that the age yet to come would itself be made of nostalgia. These days we live in a world that's not so much back to the future as forward to the past. Punk is to us what World War II was to our parents. Which makes me, I suppose, Corporal Jones. And they still don't like it up 'em.





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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

# Wayne Coyne

Interview: John Lewis  
Photo: Steven Dewall

The Flaming Lips' frontman takes off his giant hands to answer your questions, taking in David Bowie, William Burroughs, singing locusts and blood-filled vinyl

T

HREE DAYS BEFORE speaking to *Uncut*, Wayne Coyne and The Flaming Lips played eight shows in 24 hours, earning themselves a place in *The Guinness Book Of World Records*.

"It's cooler than winning a Grammy," laughs Coyne. "I remember being obsessed with that book as a kid, reading about Evel

Knievel having all his bones broken, or seeing pictures of 650lb twins. It's all a bit silly, but there are specific rules. We had to play venues that had to be a certain distance apart, we had to sell tickets for each gig, they had to take place in proper theatres that regularly host music. And so on. You gotta go through the Guinness guys. You can't just swallow 10lbs of worms and hope to get in the book. They've got to authorise it!"

Coyne is speaking to us from the Oklahoma home he shares with his wife, Michelle. "My house is full of junk," he tells us. "We've collected things going way back to the late '80s. I have things like a Pachinko slot machine. You put the money in and then play with these marbles, or something. I'm sure people probably think I invite them over for Pachinko tournaments, but it doesn't actually work! It mostly just hangs on the wall, like some strange piece of art."

And with that, he's ready to answer your questions from the *Uncut* mailbag...

## STAR QUESTION



**You gave us one of the best pieces of advice – not to let the petty stuff get in the way and make good music. Was there ever**

**any valuable advice you got early in your career?**

*Eric Pulido, Midlake*

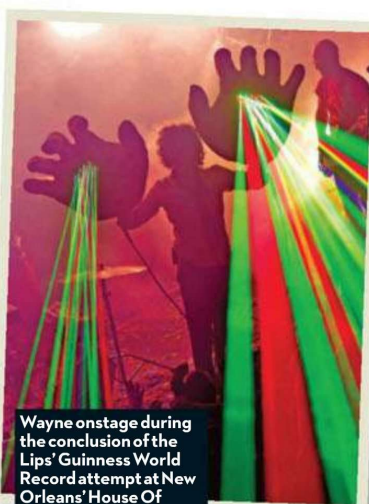
It wasn't so much what bands said, it was their way of being. When we first saw Black Flag, they showed up two or three hours late, the band unloaded their own gear, set up their amps and tuned their guitars. One minute they were roadies, the next the music kicked in and they were superheroes. That changed us. We thought, we can unload our own gear and drive our own van, it

doesn't mean we're idiots! It's the same with the Butthole Surfers. They'd project films, and needed darkness on stage. At one gig, there was a light on and no-one knew how to turn it off. So Gibby [Haynes] got up and unscrewed the lightbulb himself. He didn't expect anyone to do it for him. So yeah, Black Flag and the Butthole Surfers taught me that DIY ethic by example!

**What was the first moment where you remember thinking: "Wait, things are definitely not OK"? For me, it was falling down a set of stairs when I was three and the grown-ups in the house not believing me when I told them...**

*Amanda Palmer*

My childhood was pretty OK. I was very close to my older brothers, and



we used to draw a lot together. One day I kept asking my eldest brother to help me draw some cartoon football player, to get the shadings and dimensions right, and he said: "Dude, you can do it yourself." It took me ages to figure out these little codes on my own, without him, and I suddenly realised that I could draw better than him. That's always stuck with me. It was difficult, because I adored him, but everything tumbled down at that point, and I realised I could be an artist. Even when I see him today it's at the back of my mind. I began to love him even more after that.

**After covering the whole of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, is there another album you might consider covering?**

*Harrie Bosma, Emmen, The Netherlands*

It just so happens we've recorded some songs from King Crimson's *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. One band stopped by my studio and we

did a phenomenal version of "21st Century Schizoid Man". And another group stopped by and we did the title track. So I thought, there's only five songs on the album, maybe we'll just fill in the gaps and release it. But there's a lot of great records. The thing with *The Dark Side Of The Moon* was that we did it in a couple of days, at the request of the iTunes people, so it was like an unrehearsed punk rock band doing Pink Floyd songs, which is quite the opposite of how Pink Floyd made their music.

## STAR QUESTION



**I'm amazed by the amount of great things you make happen. How many hours of sleep do you get on an average**

**night? What is the secret to your unending energy?**

*Mark Everett, Eels*

Ha ha! I think part of it is my age. I'm 51. Most of the people I work with are a lot younger than me. There is definitely a chemical change that happens with quite a few men where they don't sleep as well as they did. My older brothers confirm this. Even by the time I was 44, 45, I had problems sleeping. Initially, it drove me crazy. Then I realised I didn't need to sleep so much. That gives you more time to do things. Also, I do yoga almost every day. I'm very aware of my toes and my legs and everything being connected. It's not just the quality of the mind: you have to be able to do things with your body as much as you can do them with your mind, or nothing can happen. ➔



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*“Last week,  
I wore the same  
suit for six days  
straight. I sweat  
a lot, but my sweat  
doesn’t stink that  
bad – it’s one of my  
superpowers”*

---







Pity the cleaner: Steven Drozd and Wayne Coyne at the San Francisco Noise Pop Festival, February 21, 2012

➔ **Noticed you wearing what looked like the same linen suit for three successive gigs. Are you saving on dry cleaning bills?**

*Helene, Berlin*

I do have three suits that are the same, and lots of nice shirts that are very similar. But often I don't need to change them. Last week, I wore the same suit for six days straight, even playing several gigs in it. The thing is, I sweat a lot, but my sweat doesn't stink that bad. You might see me in Portugal on Monday and at another gig in Oslo on Thursday, and yes, I could be wearing the same suit, because I smell good. It's one of my superpowers. People sometimes sit next to me and say, "You smell so good, like baby powder." Something happens to my sweat after it dries up. It smells like a baby's butt. Only without the shit on it.

**Why in the hell do you still live in Oklahoma City? Isn't it a place to escape from?**

*Sean V Kemether, Media, Pennsylvania, USA*

When we started as The Flaming Lips, we never thought to move. We were very much part of that world of Black Flag and Hüsker Dü, where not coming from LA or New York was a bonus. I grew up around my brothers and their druggy friends in the '60s and '70s and it didn't occur to me that we weren't living just as extraordinary life as anybody else. It's only when you visit London or Paris or Korea, you're like, wow, what a desperate, conservative, Bible-thumping bunch of Republicans I live around! I guess it keeps me grounded, but I've also created my little bubble of a world, with my own studio and art gallery. I'm surrounded every day by great, curious, freaky, artistic people!

**In the words of the song on *Heady Fwends*: "Is David Bowie dying?"**

*Chris Benning, Leicestershire*

We did a show at New York's Carnegie Hall with Philip Glass a few years ago, and we wanted to invite lots of cool people. David Bowie lives in Manhattan, so we thought there'd be no harm in asking. Even a rejection from Bowie would be cool! The guy we asked said David wasn't very well. It got me thinking: shit – David Bowie will, one day, get ill and die. That blew my mind. So that song "Is David Bowie Dying?", it's not a snarky title. It's the saddest, most

both insecure about being creators. We work well together because I'm very focused and disciplined and ambitious, whereas he has that kinda sleepwalker's mentality. That balance is essential. It helps that Steven's an exceptional musician.



Amazing. We kept in touch until he died. He's a true hero – not just his struggle with drugs, and his bizarre imagination, but the fact that he was gay! He just got cooler as he got older, which is sometimes the opposite of dopey rock'n'roll dudes.

**What is your favourite bug?**

*Alan Whithington, Matlock, Derbyshire*

I love the giant moths that hang around moonflowers in Oklahoma during summer. But my favourite bugs are the singing locusts we get, hundreds of them in our trees. I have tinnitus in both my ears, and it doesn't bother me because I'm so used to hearing these locusts. They play into my genetic triggering, because when we were young, my brothers and I would climb into these trees and we'd be so stealthlike that we were able to catch dozens of them. We'd hold them and they'd crawl on your face. And they're really gentle, they don't bite you or pee on you. I still try to catch them now, only there's not as many of them as when we were younger, and I can't climb trees as well as I could then!

***Heady Fwends* is now a sought-after vinyl release.**

**Do you have an emotional attachment to vinyl?**

*Aki Paniotis, Birmingham*

Of course. One thing I like about vinyl is it forces you to listen to songs in a certain order, for a duration of time. There's also the look and feel of it. We found this guy in Dallas who cuts vinyl records using machines from the 1940s, which literally have rubber bands and rags tied to them. Myself and an artist friend spent a year experimenting with various colours and textures of vinyl; by the time *Heady Fwends* was ready, we'd developed some amazing-looking pieces of vinyl. The blood-filled ones are different. I ran into the guy who was doing Jack White's liquid-filled record for Record Store Day. I asked him if I could use Jack's design and fill it full of blood. We used vials of blood collected from me and all the guests on the album – everyone except Nick Cave and Yoko. We only had enough blood for about 17 copies. Thing is, there are lots of laws about what you can do with blood, so everything we've done is technically illegal! ☹

***The Flaming Lips And Heady Fwends* is out now on Bella Union**

## "We ended up spending this extraordinary day with William Burroughs, shooting pistols..."

defeated song we've made. I can't imagine any musical world without it having a David Bowie shape in it.

### STAR QUESTION



**Do you think I'd be the same musician/artist/whatever without my years of drug addiction?**

*Steven Drozd,*

*The Flaming Lips*

Well, no, he wouldn't. These experiences change you, if you're lucky. Steven and I are like brothers and we're really lucky that we have each other. If I was a drug addict alongside Steven, we both would have collapsed into nothingness. Without him, I wouldn't have made important music. Steven and I are

His abilities are made all the better sometimes when he's not trying to think about it. Drugs can unlock that creativity.

**How did you get to meet William Burroughs?**

*Jason Burston, Port Talbot*

One of the reasons why we never considered living in Oklahoma to be so weird was that William Burroughs – of all the places he travelled, of all the places he could have lived – towards the end of his life lived in Lawrence, Kansas. A small college town, a few hours up the road from me, where our drummer's from. We ended up spending this extraordinary day with William and his friends, shooting pistols. For me it's a big deal just to shoot guns at all, but to shoot guns with Burroughs?



**UNCUT.CO.UK**

Log on to see who's in the hot-seat next month and to post your questions!





# BEAUTIFULLY SWEDISH



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His Captain's Voice - the Magic Band circa '65: (l-r) Doug Moon, Paul Blakely, Don Van Vliet, Alex Snouffer, Jerry Handley



CAPTAIN BEEFHEART's remarkable musical career encompassed brutal experiments, equally bizarre stabs at success, and a revolving cast of gifted, often harassed musicians. Forty-five years on from Beefheart's debut, *Safe As Milk*, *Uncut* rounds up the Magic Band survivors to remember a man who "used human beings like machines, without much conscience"...

# DROPOUTS

**T**HE CAREER OF CAPTAIN BEEFHEART and the Magic Band was piloted by an artistically gifted young man from Lancaster, California, a blue-collar desert town. There, plain Don Van Vliet transformed himself into the immensely charismatic bandleader Captain Beefheart – and then 15 years later, back again, as he drew a line under his music career and dedicated his life to visual art.

Beefheart's career walked a strange path between complete artistic freedom and appeals for commercial acceptance, which were in their way no less bizarre. After what we might see as his initial "voyage out" with his stellar debut *Safe As Milk* in 1967, through to the extremity of *Trout Mask Replica* (1969) and *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* (1970), Beefheart and his band had to face the impoverishment that this route had brought them to.

The next four years of more commercially intentioned records brought them significant highpoints (*Clear Spot* from 1972 is a superb introduction to the artist and the band) but also brought the disastrous *Unconditionally Guaranteed* (1974) that essentially broke up the original Magic Band. After making the *Bluejeans And Moonbeams* album with a makeweight "Tragic Band", Beefheart's career finally recommenced, free from legal and personnel entanglements in around 1978. The last three Beefheart albums, especially *Doc At The Radar Station* (1980), represent a return to his uniquely angular style of music.

What Beefheart left was a treasury of challenging, poetic and abstract music that could still offer up great swing and beauty. To get it made, Beefheart's methods ranged from unorthodox to plain abusive. But at the end of the day, as a valued lieutenant, Elliot Ingber, puts it: "You've got to be able to cut that thing as sharp as he wants it..."

Here, members of Beefheart's bands, from the beginning of his career to the end, recall their time spent under Don's direction.

## THE DUST BLOWS FORWARD...

**1964-1970.** After starting out as a local blues covers outfit, Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band begins its first major evolution – a period that opens with a tremendous, psychedelic pop record called *Safe As Milk* (1967) and concludes with a dense and avant-garde album called *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* (1970). In late 1968, the band embark on the faintly terrifying, nine-month musical/residential/psychological journey that culminates in the Frank Zappa-produced double album, *Trout Mask Replica*, much of which was recorded in a single afternoon.

**DENNY WALLEY** (*Guitar, 1975-1977*): They were a blues band. I loved it because I was into the blues. It was very anti-establishment at that time, because as you can imagine, in Lancaster (*California*), in the middle of the desert in the 1950s it was rockabilly and country and you never got to hear any of that sort of stuff on the radio. There was no hip stuff going on, really.

**JERRY HANDLEY** (*Bass, 1964-1968*): We were playing a lot of old blues, and some early Stones songs. We tried to cover stuff that people hadn't heard before. We bonded a lot on Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters, and John Lee Hooker. (*Original Magic Band guitarist*) Doug Moon was a big Lightnin' Hopkins fan, so he learned all his licks on the guitar.

**DENNY WALLEY:** Don seemed to know more than the other kids in school. He was on the fringe in Lancaster because he didn't really attend classes that much. He would cruise in this '51 Oldsmobile up and down Lancaster Boulevard, which is where the school was, thumbing his nose. He was like the bad boy in my eyes.

**JERRY HANDLEY:** Don kind of ruled the roost at his house. His mother was very nice. He was an only child, and he pretty much got his own way.

# BOOGIE

Story: John Robinson Photo: Getty Images





## VETERANS' DAY COPY

This story brought to you in the words of:

**MARK BOSTON** ("Rockette Morton"; bass, guitar) A flamboyant presence 'til the walkout of '74, Mark now plays in the French-fronted, reformed Magic Band.

**ERIC DREW FELDMAN** ("Black Jewel Kitabu"; keys, bass) Eric has worked with Frank Black, PJ Harvey and The Residents and plays with Laurie Hall in KNIFE & FORK. [www.knifeandforkmusic.com](http://www.knifeandforkmusic.com)

**JOHN FRENCH** ("Drumbo"; drums) Author of the very good, heavyweight tome *Beefheart: Through The Eyes Of Magic*, John fronts the reformed Magic Band.

**JERRY HANDLEY** (bass) Set to be the original Rockette Morton 'til he left the band, Jerry's mighty fuzz bass was the signature sound of the Magic Band's debut single, "Diddy Wah Diddy".

**IRA INGBER** (bass) "I've played on most people's least favourite Beefheart album." The self-deprecating, utterly personable Ira runs his own studio. Learn more at [www.iraingber.com](http://www.iraingber.com).

**ELLIOT INGBER** ("Winged Eel Fingerling"; guitar) The hairiest member of the Magic Band, Elliot was a beacon of hope in tough times for both Beefheart fans and Beefheart himself. His LP *The The The* is available on iTunes and CD Baby.

**BILL HARKLEROAD** ("Zoot Horn Rollo"; guitar) Author of the enjoyable book *Lunar Notes*, Bill is a guitar teacher in Oregon.

**GARY LUCAS** (guitar) Gary went on to form Gods And Monsters, which featured Jeff Buckley, and make many well-regarded solo albums. [www.garylucas.com](http://www.garylucas.com).

**CLIFF MARTINEZ** (drums) After leaving Beefheart, Cliff played on the first two Red Hot Chili Peppers albums, and since 1988 has composed for film. [www.cliff-martinez.com](http://www.cliff-martinez.com).

**DEAN SMITH** (guitar) One of the "Tragic Band", Dean toured with Beefheart in 1974 and provided slick guitar on *Bluejeans....* He teaches guitar in California.

**MICHAEL SMOTHERMAN** (keyboards) A lively and opinionated Nashville resident, Micheal was also one of the so-called "Tragic Band", appearing on *Bluejeans...* and the 1974 tour.

**JOHN THOMAS** (keyboards) John played synth bass on *Bat Chain Puller* and later joined Mallard (the band formed by ex-Magic Band members in 1974). Now plays with Bruce Hornsby.

**ART TRIPP** ("Ed Marimba", "Ted Cactus"; marimba, drums) A Juilliard-educated former member of the Mothers Of Invention, Art brought stellar chops to the Beefheart band. He left in 1974 and is now a chiropractor in Mississippi.

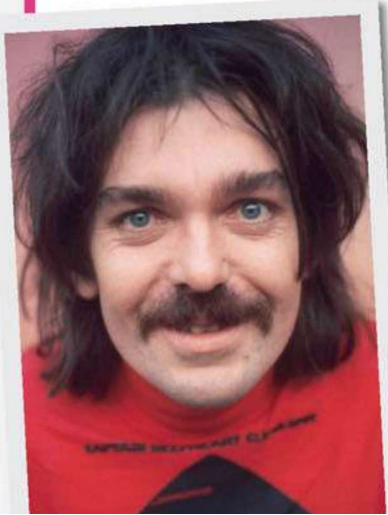
**DENNY WALLEY** ("Feelers Rebo"; guitar) Denny played with Zappa/Beefheart on *Bongo Fury* and *Bat Chain Puller*, composing "Hoboism" with Don. He plays in the current Magic Band.



Trout Mask Replica-era Magic Band, 1969 (l-r): Bill Harkleroad, Don Van Vliet, John French, Jeff Cotton, Mark Boston



The good Captain: on an voyage all his own



**JOHN FRENCH** (Drums, 1967-1969; 1970-1971; 1975-6; Guitar, 1980): They were guys who grew up together, jamming and doing the blues, and it suddenly went in a different direction. Don was trying to throw curves at Doug Moon so Doug would get confused and Don would have a reason to fire him. The other thing was Don had a strong competition with (childhood friend) Frank Zappa, and I think he was trying to out-weird Frank. Which he did.

**JERRY HANDLEY:** *Safe As Milk* started with Don's collaboration with (actor/screenwriter/poet) Herb Bermann. He was a hippy writer living in Topanga here, and he helped Don organise himself. And Don certainly needed to be organised.

**JOHN FRENCH:** Don was intent on getting his name in lights. But he was stoned most of the time, so he had a very distorted viewpoint of what it took to achieve that success. He was not disciplined at all, which was his major failure.

**JERRY HANDLEY:** Frank admired Don's creativity, we all did. But Don was so disorganised it created a problem for everyone. He was just more and more out of touch with the world, and that wasn't a healthy situation. It was turning into more of a cult than a band and I wasn't ready for that.

**A**fter Handley's departure, the band record several Frank Zappa-produced songs in the studio with bassist Gary Marker, then begin working on what becomes *Trout Mask Replica*.

**MARK BOSTON** (Bass, 1968-1974): Don called me up and asked, "You got a white shirt?" That was like the band uniform back in the day. And I said, "Yeah!" And he said, "Do you wanna try out with us?" When I walked in it was all the guys I knew, but it was kind of intense. They said, "Just jam along with this song." They were all smirking. John yelled "And!" and everyone jumped in. I was just hanging in there; it sounded like a bunch of noise. The song ended and Don said, "You're the first person to make it through the song. You're hired!" Then I had to start learning the songs, that was like going to college.

**BILL HARKLEROAD** (Guitar, 1968-1974): Don had a great overview of what was happening, but the reality was us working our asses off sticking it together. His talent was the bigger picture, and he used human beings like machines without much conscience.

**MARK BOSTON:** Don would sit there and ramble on the piano and the guitar. He came up with some awesome rhythms but he could never play the same thing twice, so he'd say to John, "Write this down..."





Beefheart on the soprano sax during a 1972 gig

**JOHN FRENCH:** I don't think *Trout Mask* would have gotten done if I hadn't done that. Eight out of the nine months was spent working on the compositions at the piano. The guys would get their parts and rehearse them acoustically.

**BILL HARKLEROAD:** Don would make his presence felt whenever his whim took him, from coming out of the bedroom saying "You're playing that wrong" or saying, "That's right, man." He was just whipping up negative shit a lot of the time. I think that was his idea of what was going to make it work, in some way.

**MARK BOSTON:** There were times when his shenanigans were detrimental to what we were trying to do. You'd be trying to learn one song that was really complicated and all of a sudden he'd say "Stop everything. I've got a new song." Or he'd want to "talk", and that's where the browbeating would come in. A couple of times that would turn physical.

**JOHN FRENCH:** His relationship with the band was exactly the same as his relationship with his parents. His parents spoiled him rotten. He was very disrespectful. He just expected everybody to do what he wanted – it was sort of bred into him by his young environment.

**MARK BOSTON:** At one point I did leave, because of all the bullshit, but they caught up with me. I said, "I don't really

"I was  
brainwashed  
to think *Trout  
Mask Replica*  
was the most  
awesome  
thing on  
the planet..."

BILL HARKLEROAD

want to leave, but I just can't handle all these stupid meetings where we're getting in each other's shit. We're not playing any music." And Don said it was going to change – and it did somewhat. He didn't direct so much of it at me.

**BILL HARKLEROAD:** At the time I was brainwashed to think *Trout Mask* was the most awesome thing on planet Earth. You can sleep on nails, after a time, you get comfortable. After I got away from it, I needed to hate it for a little while: like, 'Oh God, why did we do it end-on-end? That's so stupid.' And then I come back and listen to it and I think, 'Yeah, that makes sense.'

**JOHN FRENCH:** Don came back one day and said, "Frank's giving us six hours" (of studio time at Whitney Sound in Glendale, Ca). Can you imagine trying to do a double album in six hours? We had, like, 20 songs to do. We did it in four and a half hours – that's how well rehearsed the band was. Frank was just sitting there with his mouth hanging open. So that's sometimes why the guitar is a little out of tune or the endings might be off – we only had one shot at it.

**ELLIOT INGBER** (Guitar, 1971; 1974; 1975): *Trout Mask* was great in social environments, it'd clear the room of people you didn't want there. The performance was stunning.

**ART TRIPP** (Marimba, drums 1970-1974): I think the single most telling thing about the *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* period was that Don and I actually believed that the music would be commercial! Shows you how far out we were at the time.

## SANITIZED FOR YOUR PROTECTION

**1971-1974.** The Magic Band collectively realise that making uncompromising experimental music is not a fast-track to having their records played on the radio. They begin a period of streamlining their sound, which yields collections of strong work (like *Clear Spot*, from 1972). But it's not all good news. The failure on every level of *Unconditionally Guaranteed* (1974) results in the original Magic Band quitting, and the hiring of session musicians (the so-called "Tragic Band") to fulfil tour dates and play on *Bluejeans And Moonbeams* (also 1974).

**MARK BOSTON:** We were fed up with being broke. We'd do these extensive tours and they'd say, "We have no money."

**ART TRIPP:** I was one of the promoters of attempting to be more commercial. The "starving artist" label is captivating only in hindsight. I believed that we'd

## HOW TO BUY

# CAPTAIN BEEFHEART & THE MAGIC BAND

Your guide to Don Van Vliet on CD

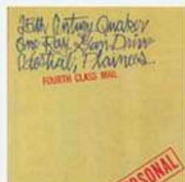


### Safe As Milk

(BUDDHA, 1967)

In the context of the abstract material to come, hindsight makes *Safe...* almost comfortably pop. Ry Cooder's slide and arrangements nourish the blues roots of this exotically flowering plant.

9/10



### Strictly Personal

(BUDDHA, 1968)

Loathed by Beefheart for its period "phased" effects, time has been kind to *Strictly Personal* tracks like "Trust Us". The fantastic "Safe As Milk" contains what amounts to a Magic Band motto: "I may be hungry/But I sure ain't weird..."

8/10



### Trout Mask Replica

(STRAIGHT, 1969)

An album which overshadows even the story of its making. Inside are codes to be cracked, the effort revealing strong protest, fractured blues, and moments of surprising swing and beauty. An album conceived of to wake a generation's sleepers.

9/10



### Clear Spot

(REPRISE, 1972)

Producer Ted Templeman proves to be a match for the Captain as the album harnesses deep blues and great strangeness in a powerful, accessible package. "Big Eyed Beans From Venus" – say no more.

8/10



### Doc At The Radar Station

(VIRGIN, 1980)

A completely reconfigured Magic Band honour the strangeness of the earlier band, while charging onward with a polished, knotty music of their own. Like *The Birthday Party*? Here's a good way in.

8/10



→ skyrocket right into obscurity with the art material. But looking back, it was a mistake on a lot of levels to try to make such radical changes (ie: *concessions to more conventional rock music*) with *The Spotlight Kid*.

**JOHN FRENCH:** I went to see Don one day, and he was listening to Creedence Clearwater. I went, “Yee-ha! Yippee kay-ay!”, making fun of it. And he said to me, “How dare you do that, man? I’m listening to this as a study into what people are liking out there.”

**BILL HARKLEROD:** He was aware that making a change would help him financially and he wouldn’t have to live with the little runs in the band. And I think that was a fine idea, but that was a bad version. His comment would be, “I’m tired of playing to all guys.”

**JOHN FRENCH:** Don’s voice on that album, it’s incredibly strong. But I hate “The Spotlight Kid” itself. It represents Don thinking about himself as this eccentric who was going to come out and be a big star.

**BILL HARKLEROD:** If there’s one album where I can’t separate the drudgery from the project, that’s it. He never rehearsed with us, then in the studio he found he couldn’t fit all his lyrics in. So this one was all about him singing, returning to his blues roots. You listen to that thing, it’s like *Night Of The Living Dead*, the tempos are just too slow.

**ART TRIPP:** There was a concerted effort to head in a more commercial vein with *Clear Spot*. In hindsight, that new direction confused and disappointed many of our art fans; and it may have perplexed record labels over what type of act they were being asked to promote. Our existing fans were not ready to accept us as a mainstream rock band.

**MARK BOSTON:** *Unconditionally Guaranteed* was our attempt to do a more commercial record, but it was overshadowed by the managers Don hired, Andy DiMartino and his brother. We’re all seasoned musicians, and Andy would say, “This is how you play rhythm guitar...” We’d look at this guy like, “Where the hell did you come from?”

**MICHEAL SMOTHERMAN** (Keyboards 1974-5): Have you ever seen the American television show *Seinfeld*? Well, imagine two Kramers about three and a half feet tall wearing leather suit jackets. That was the DiMartinos.

**BILL HARKLEROD:** Andy’s comments in our rehearsals led me to believe this guy was nuts. Like: “We need another ‘Stairway To Heaven.’” Don would make reference to Rod Stewart songs. Rod Stewart? Are you sure? You don’t mean Ornette Coleman? This is when he buys his new car, starts cheating the shit out of us and keeping our money.

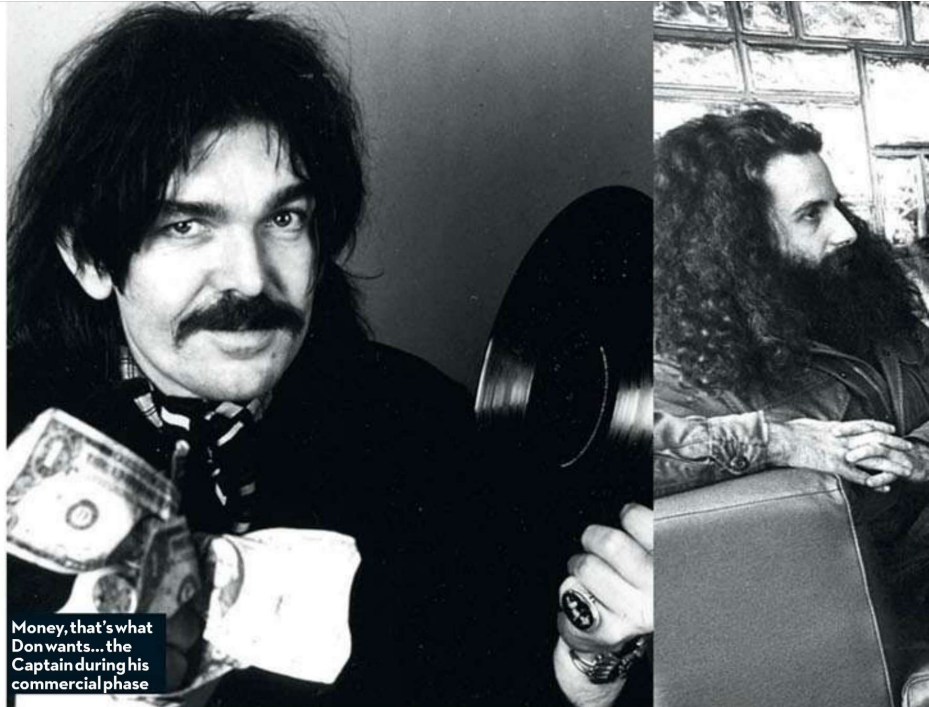
**ART TRIPP:** On the day that we received our copies of *Unconditionally Guaranteed*, the band all went over to the local record store to play it on their good audio system. Nearly every cut sounded awful. When the album finished there was a stunned silence. Don’s voice, which was mostly mediocre, was pumped up in volume so loud that the tracks were barely audible. There was no feel.

**BILL HARKLEROD:** I didn’t care any more. When I found out they were going to pay the hotel bill, but I wasn’t getting paid, I thought, ‘I’m out of here...’

**ART TRIPP:** We had a long discussion over at my house about what to do. In the end I called Andy and told him we’d need \$500 per week per man for the (US, Canada and European) tour, plus round trip airline tickets so that they couldn’t strand us over there. We had a meeting with Don present. Neither side would budge. That was the end of Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band.

**MICHEAL SMOTHERMAN:** I’m sure you know, all the European Captain Beefheart fanatics called us the Tragic Band. The legend is that the other guys quit, but that’s not true – he fired them.

**IRA INGBER** (Bass, 1974): In 1974 Don couldn’t get arrested. *Bluejeans And*



Money, that’s what Don wants... the Captain during his commercial phase

“I once asked Don what sound he wanted, and he said, ‘The sound of inside of a tooth’”

JOHN THOMAS

Condition Unguaranteed: the “Tragic Band” hit the *Old Grey Whistle Test*, 1974



*Moonbeams* was an opportunity for the DiMartinos to have a payday. In those days you got a budget, made a record and what you didn’t spend, you kept.

**DEAN SMITH** (Guitar, 1974): There was a big rush to get a new album turned in. It was quite a surprise. Like, where’s the material? It was basically an album made by session guys. Don had some basic scratch ideas of some tunes.

**IRA INGBER:** I never got the sense Don was thrilled to be making it but he worked hard on that record. There were times when he’d get really inspired. “Party Of Special Things To Do” encapsulated some of the old magic.

**DEAN SMITH:** It wasn’t the band like I would have wanted, us spending a lot of time with Don. It was a recovery job kind of thing. It was a chaotic time and not cohesive.

**ELLIOT INGBER:** It was groove and swing – the “Businessman’s Bounce”, as they say in the industry. That’s not cool. To play with musicians who have played on disco records, it just doesn’t make it, does it? With the next records he was able to reintroduce the angularity into his music.

## BAT TOOTH PULLER

**1976-1982.** Freed from contractual wrangles with his former managers, Don is able to assemble a new Magic Band for the great *Bat Chain Puller* (recorded 1976; released 2012). Personnel still come and go, but with a core lineup based around guitarist Morris Tepper, who plays on *Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller)* (1978), *Doc At The Radar Station* (1980) and 1982’s swansong, *Ice Cream For Crow*. Beefheart is able to resume work that recalls his past extremity, but which also breaks new ground. Feeling increasingly drawn to visual art, in ’82 he retires.

**DENNY WALLEY:** At the end of the Bongo Fury tour Frank gave me *Trout Mask Replica* and said, “You should play with him.” I took it home and said, “What am I going to play? I can’t even figure out the fucking parts...”

**JOHN FRENCH:** When I did Knebworth with him in 1975, he said, “You’ve saved my life...” He was very humble for quite a while there.

**JOHN THOMAS** (Keyboards, synth-bass, 1976): I think he felt more secure with people from Lancaster. It’s a small country town – everybody knew everybody. Don’s thing was he retrained you to play his music because there was no real precedent for it. You couldn’t go in with your blues or jazz chops and say, “Look at me go.”

**DENNY WALLEY:** It was probably the hardest I had ever worked. Don gave me genuine freedom – he would whistle some sketchy thing, and I





Clear Spot, clear bricks (l-r) Elliot Ingber, Art Tripp, Mark Boston, Don Van Vliet, Bill Harkleroad, Roy Estrada



Sand in the Ice Cream – the Captain's final Magic Band: (l-r) Richard Snyder, Gary Lucas, Cliff Martinez, Don Van Vliet, Morris Tepper

would play what I thought he was trying to say and he'd say, "Yeah – you know what to do."

**JOHN THOMAS:** One rehearsal Don said, "Come on guys, get in my car." We sat in there in silence. The only sound was the windshield wipers. And then he said, "That's the beat for 'Bat Chain Puller.'" I once asked him what sound he wanted and he said, "The sound of inside of a tooth."

**JOHN FRENCH:** Almost all of that stuff was pulled from the past, written around *Decals* time. The new stuff was created right there in the studio, like "Owed T'Alex" and "Floppy Boot Stomp". That's the original riff for "Electricity"; the chorus is the "Electricity" chorus backwards.

**JOHN THOMAS:** There was a sort of John Cage random element to how it went together – how many times we needed to play our parts so we would end together and move on. It took the clothes off the emperor for me a little as Don didn't really have any control over it, other than the way he controlled it with his dominating personality.

**ERIC DREW FELDMAN** (Keyboards, bass, 1976-1981): I'd say he would emotionally manipulate only in regard to the music. He would want us to get it right on his terms, not ours. He'd keep us from being too comfortable, change a part to something impossible, then the night before recording say, "Now go back to how you were doing it."

**JOHN FRENCH:** *Doc At The Radar Station* we rehearsed at Robert Williams the drummer's house. Eric Feldman was just a wonderful person to be around. There was a pretty good rapport in the studio.

**ERIC DREW FELDMAN:** The most fun memories would be when we were driving around or talking in someone's house with instruments and he would just think of something out of the blue, and it felt like it was being made up by him for you, and you were being utilised the best you could be.

**GARY LUCAS** (Guitar, 1980-1982): We all carried around little tape recorders. He would whistle something, do the scat thing or get on the instrument and play it. The whistle he'd sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and say "Learn this..." and it would sometimes be pretty tuneless, sometimes it would be more melodic.


**CLIFF MARTINEZ** (Drums, 1982): The first rehearsal he gave me a tape and said, "I'd like you to listen to this, for a beat for tomorrow." I took it home, and it sounded like he and his wife doing the dishes. I thought, 'OK. He must want my creative interpretation of this.' The next day I played it and he said, "Man, you nailed it."

**GARY LUCAS:** Don was lionised, he had more press than ever. He was looked on as a progenitor of punk – if not musically, then at least with its oppositional stance. But it wasn't enough for him. He hated to tour. I remember we were on *Saturday Night Live* and 75 million people saw it.

Then we did a gig in Albany, upstate New York, and maybe 25 people were there.

**CLIFF MARTINEZ:** He wanted to do a commercial for the album. It was going to be him driving down the freeway and he gets paced by a crow who starts trying to get his attention. So Don winds down the window and the crow says, "You can't buy *Ice Cream For Crow*" and flies off. He says to me. "That's reverse psychology..."

**GARY LUCAS:** The title of the record is *Ice Cream For Crow* – like, this is spectacular ice cream, but it's going to be unappreciated by crows. It'll come out, get great reviews and it won't sell any more records. And then what? He just wanted to paint at that point. He had to quit and become Don Van Vliet the painter, thinking that no-one would take him seriously as a painter if he was Captain Beefheart.

**ERIC DREW FELDMAN:** The problem with music was that it involved him being involved with other people – people that needed things from him. In the context of painting, he wasn't so much of a pig's ear. People would see his stuff in a gallery and respond positively. It was more comfortable. 

## EYEWITNESS!

# MONDO BONGO!

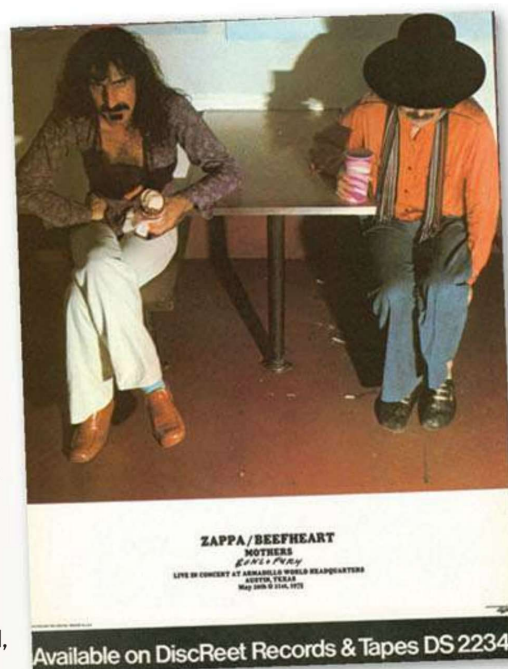
## The 1975 Beefheart/ Mothers adventure

In 1975, after breaking from the management behind his two worst albums, Beefheart was in a legal jam: essentially unable to work under his own name. His old friend/sparring partner Frank Zappa had a solution: employ Don as a featured vocalist on his tour. A certain tension reigns.

### DENNY WALLEY (guitar):

Basically, Don was in horrible financial shape, so Frank did this to help him out. But Don, being proud, didn't want people to think he was a charity case, so there was a very strange tension between them: Don was grateful, but possibly resented it. Don has an image: the man who is invisible, who can teleport. So he wanted to give the impression that he was doing this because he wanted to, or that he was helping Frank.

"He was the loose cannon. Frank had to have (road manager) Dick Barber corral Don at all times, to get him out of the hotel. It could take Don half an hour to go 20 feet from his hotel room. Dick Barber's job was to get him in motion.



He had shopping bags filled with god knows what, all his art supplies. I remember he did a sketch of Frank as the devil in the middle of the show.

"They'd never admit it, but they loved each other. Don's way of doing things was opposite to Frank's: Frank was organised, but Don was like a free-range chicken, he was everywhere, all of the time. He was creating constantly, he was writing, drawing, doing poetry, making observations constantly. He did 10 brilliant things every day, at least."



## ALBUM BY ALBUM

# Animal Collective

**“We got terrible reviews...”**  
The Baltimore band examine each fascinating tangent of their psychedelic journey

**F**ROM HIGH-SCHOOL friendship in mid-'90s Maryland through to the global acclaim of 2009's *Merriwether Post Pavilion*, Animal Collective have charted an idiosyncratic, compelling course through modern American music: from psych-rock to avant-pop, via horror soundtracks, New York noise, the fringe of freak folk, Terry Riley minimalism and Brian Wilson harmonies. On the eve of their 10th album, *Centipede Hz*, they've somehow retained the enthusiasm of their teens, reminiscing about their work to *Uncut* with tenderness, and a certain pride. “Our friendship has always been more important than the music,” says Brian Weitz, aka Geologist, “I don’t know if we ever imagined we’d still be making music together after all these years. But I think we always knew our friendship would last.”



Animal magic: the band in 2012—(l-r) Avey Tare, Panda Bear, Deakin and Geologist

## SPIRIT THEY'RE GONE, SPIRIT THEY'VE VANISHED

ANIMAL, 2000



Though credited to Avey Tare (Dave Portner) and Panda Bear (Noah Lennox), the first release of the Animal Collective era is a surreal psych-rock suite harking back

to *Forever Changes* and *Ocean Rain*.

**DAVE PORTNER:** I wrote all the songs apart from one in my first year at college. I had been having a bad time but that summer really changed my perspective on things. I worked at an outdoor nature camp for kids. And the season ended in August and I was like, we should record something. The songs weren't about college, they were fantasy songs, really, coming out of reading a lot of dark short stories by Guy de Maupassant, a lot of horror. I feel like the emotion is sad, moving on from childhood. Leaving Maryland behind in a way.

**NOAH LENNOX:** Josh (Dibb, aka Deakin), Dave and I had played quite a lot, just sort of jamming together in a room for a year or so before that. But we didn't really talk to each other much.

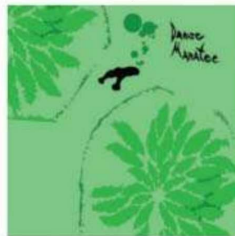
**DAVE:** So this was the first time of hanging one-on-one with Noah. I'd always really liked Noah's drumming. I'd beatbox little parts for him to explain what I wanted. I got him to use brushes to get some of that *Ocean Rain* vibe, yeah. Also *Forever Changes*. Those two records were very cohesive statements to me.

**NOAH:** But rhythmically, too, we were also into this Destiny's Child track, “Bills, Bills, Bills”. And Aaliyah's “Are You That Somebody?”.

**DAVE:** I just wanted to take it to a new level: an album. I think high school represented the band we were in, Automine, playing indie rock, really. And then Brian and I did stuff on the side that was more experimental. And I wanted to find a way to fuse it all together, into psychedelic music. Not that I thought I was going to make a classic, but I wanted to make a record like *Forever Changes*, that had a full flow. I'm definitely impressed we pulled it off, in that we really made an album. But we were learning about recording and mixing. It was a nightmare to mix. It was all a learning experience.

## DANSE MANATEE

CATSUP PLATE, 2001



Setting the pattern for the years to come, the second AC album was a radical departure: an esoteric adventure in noise and loops.

**BRIAN WEITZ:**

*Danse Manatee*

was the first record I had an input into. My contribution was loops really, things I'd recorded on minidisc. Electronics. The summer that *Spirit* came out, Dave and I lived in a small apartment in SoHo and then Noah moved to New York to be with his girlfriend of the time. And the three of us would get together and improvise a lot. I think that's the genesis of *Danse Manatee*, these long improv sessions we would do. We recorded hundreds of hours of material but it was all stolen when I moved apartment. But I think everything that came after came from that material. At the time New York was quite exciting: The Strokes were happening and ARE Weapons. But I think

we wanted to bring some of the excitement of the noise bands into more melodic music.

**DAVE:** We played with Black Dice a lot. But *The Rapture* was probably also on the bill at our first gig at The Cooler.

**DAVE:** Did we alienate fans of the first record? Definitely! We got terrible reviews. We weren't trying to. We thought we were next level!

## HOLLINNDAGAIN

STIVES, 2002



A sprawling document of the Collective's early improv-based live show.

**BRIAN:** The title isn't Icelandic, it's Dave-ish! It's a live album but I think we

do consider it part of the Animal Collective canon because most of the songs weren't available elsewhere. It really documents the time when we were first beginning to go on the road, playing with bands with Black Dice.

**NOAH:** They were a huge early inspiration for us. **DAVE:** We'd go on the road with this van that we borrowed from Noah's family. We bought a roof case to hold all the gear, but then we discovered that the van didn't have a rack to fit it. We had to kind of tie it on there with rope. We were beginning to get a following in New York, but some of the shows in places like Nashville there'd be like a handful of people showing up.

**NOAH:** One time there was just one guy in the audience. And he left. Though he said he just wanted to check out the sound from outside the venue.





A few hooded men: the Collective in Berlin, August 2005

## CAMPFIRE SONGS

CATSUP PLATE, 2003



**Josh Dibb aka Deakin rejoins his comrades for this wintry, impressionistic suite of songs for frazzled Cub Scouts.**

**NOAH:** Doing an album of just acoustic songs, that had that

kind of warmth, was an idea we had for a while.

**DAVE:** We'd tried it out a couple of times. The album that was released was maybe the third or fourth attempt. We recorded it in November 2001 on my aunt's porch in North Maryland. It was freezing! We just had three microphones and we played the songs through in one take.

**NOAH:** We played one gig, just sitting on the floor with the audience around us, in New York. I think it might be the best show we've ever done.

**BRIAN:** Was it a post-9/11 epitaph to the early noughties New York scene? Maybe. Certainly a lot of the energy went out of Manhattan. People started to play in Brooklyn more.

## HERE COMES THE INDIAN

PAW TRACKS, 2003



**The first release to feature the full Collective complement ironically seems to capture the sound of the band falling chaotically apart.**

**DAVE:** It's the first record to be credited to Animal Collective because all four of us played on it, and Avey Tare,

Panda Bear, Geologist and Deakin was going to look kinda long-winded on the cover. If it were up to us we would still use different names for each release. But it was becoming clear we'd have to settle on a single name if we wanted to continue to make records.

**BRIAN:** We'd always been into horror movie music, like the soundtrack to *The Shining*. And I guess you can hear that on tracks like "Infant Dressing Table". But I think that the album sounds so hectic and scary because we were just so burnt out.

**DAVE:** We'd been touring through the South with Black Dice, sleeping on people's floors, scraping by with no money, dealing with broken-down vans...

*"We were asked if we'd support the Red Hot Chili Peppers. We didn't really think that'd work"*

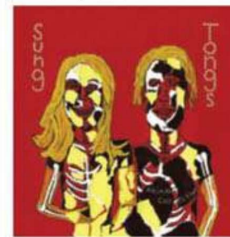
JOSH DIBB

**BRIAN:** I don't know if we ever thought of giving up, but it was getting so hard. And when we were recording the album we couldn't afford to finish it. We played it to labels and nobody was interested. I don't know if it was a make or break album, but I think if we hadn't finished it we might have gone our separate ways... I actually headed out to Arizona to go to grad school at this point. In the end, Todd Hyman at Carpark

Records, who was a really big fan and supporter, offered to set up the Paw Tracks label so we could release it via them. I remember Dave playing the finished album to me back near our high school and being amazed – I did not think the finished album was going to end up sounding like this.

## SUNG TONGS

FAT CAT, 2004



**Back to basics for the album that suggested AC might be fellow travellers on the freak folk trail.**

**DAVE:** After *Here Comes The Indian* we were really burnt out.

Noah and I were

barely speaking to each other. So *Sung Tongs* was really an attempt to go back to basics with just the two of us. We started opening for acts like múm and Four Tet and that was a real change from the days of touring with Black Dice. Although the people hadn't necessarily come to hear us, it was an eye-opener to play venues with decent sound and crowds. I remember doing an interview and getting stoned with some journalist in Europe, and then playing the gig and kind of freaking out at how many people were in the audience now...

**NOAH:** There was an ambient element to *Sung Tongs* but it didn't really come from múm or Four Tet – we were already fans of Kompakt's Pop Ambient series. I guess we were kind of trying to do something similar just using acoustic guitars.

**DAVE:** To record the album we went out to Colorado, where my parents lived, with Rusty Santos. Working with Rusty was great – getting that kind of input on mixing and mastering was something we'd never really had before.



# ANIMAL COLLECTIVE

## FEELS

FAT CAT, 2005



The record that made the band's name, an album of indie rock romanticism, suggesting that AC were lysergic heirs to the likes of Mercury Rev.

**DAVE:** I think *Sung Tongs* was the record that introduced us to a lot of people but with *Feels* it really felt like a step up. If you'd got into us with *Here Comes The Indian* it might have seemed like a much more conventional record, but if you'd heard *Spirit They're Gone* it might seem like we just took a detour for a few records.

**BRIAN:** A very long detour!

**NOAH:** I remember a band we were touring with said, "Wow, that was like an indie rock show", and a few reviews said something similar. We certainly noticed the crowds getting bigger.

**JOSH:** I suppose in many ways it was our most accessible album. There were a lot of love songs on it. Dave was getting engaged [to *mum* member Kristín Anna Valtýsdóttir] and Noah had got married [to fashion designer Fernanda Pereira], had a daughter and moved to Portugal.

**NOAH:** We started referring to it as our "love album" but it was really just the joy coming out in our music. A lot of our friends thought it was maybe too happy...

**JOSH:** The success was great but a little scary. It felt important to try and stay in control. We had to start turning down more stuff. Who did we turn down? Well, we were asked if we'd support the Red Hot Chili Peppers. We didn't really think that'd work.



The Collective at All Points West Music & Arts Festival, August 2008

## STRAWBERRY JAM

DOMINO, 2007



Once again evading the obvious career path, with *Strawberry Jam* the Collective delivered an album of fruity but defiantly obtuse psych-pop jams.

**DAVE:** I suppose after *Feels* and then Noah's album [*Panda Bear's* 2007 *Person Pitch*], there was a certain momentum building behind the band, but I don't know if we consciously set out to wrongfoot people with *Strawberry Jam*. We're not really a linear band. The growth of the band is more like a tree: we naturally branch off in different directions all the

time. In the past we'd have a particular feel or a theme for an album, but here it felt like we were all doing our own thing. It was kind of a jagged process putting the record together.

**NOAH:** We recorded in the desert in Arizona. We were after something kind of gnarled and spikey.

**BRIAN:** It's difficult to tell what people think of as your "pop" album. For a lot of people *Strawberry Jam* is our pop record. I remember playing a gig at the time and a girl came up to us afterwards and complained, "I came all this way on crutches to see you and you never played 'Winter Wonder Land'!" I suppose by the tour we were already playing material that would end up on *Merriweather*...

## CENTIPEDE HZ

DOMINO, 2012



For their 10th album Animal Collective reconvene as a four-piece and return to their roots as a teenage jam band, albeit with results redolent of stadium Pink Floyd.

**DAVE:** We're all based in different cities now, so it's great to get back together and play as a band again. I think that space away from each other has definitely helped us stick together as friends.

**NOAH:** I guess it does sound like a stadium rock album in some ways. I think this was the first time I've played sit-down drums since *Here Comes The Indian*. I guess the big drum sound is pretty distinctive – we wanted that contact mic drum sound you hear on old Brazilian records.

**DAVE:** We have been getting a few people saying it sounds like a prog record: someone in Japan mentioned Rush! A lot of the samples come from a CD of these weird pirate radio IDs – we never knew who Johnnie Walker was. People have been asking if it's a reference to the whisky!

**BRIAN:** I suppose it is unusual for us to still be good friends, to still be working together. I don't know if we ever imagined that we'd still be making music together after all these years. But I think we always knew our friendship would last. 🐛

## THE UNCUT CLASSIC



## MERRIWEATHER POST PAVILION

DOMINO, 2009

*Uncut's* album of the year for 2009 was the fulfilment of everything Animal Collective had ever promised: ecstatic anthems, psychedelic reels, natural rapture and hymns to the everyday.

**BRIAN:** Josh had told us he wasn't going to take part in the next tour so we had to decide how we were going to make an album that wasn't so much focused on guitar. So working on *Merriweather* did feel like starting something new, experimenting with new ways of putting

songs together. Noah's album [*Person Pitch*] had blown us away, so it seemed natural to start working with samplers.

**DAVE:** In a funny way it did feel like a sequel to *Danse Manatee*. Just the three of us experimenting again. We recorded with Ben Allen down at the Sweet Tea Studio in Mississippi. That place was awesome.

**BRIAN:** We wanted to work with Ben because of his hip-hop experience – he'd worked with Gnarls Barkley and helped produce all those Bad Boy records, and we wanted to develop the low end of our music. But he grew up in Athens, Georgia on all those '80s indie rock bands, too. He has a pop sensibility, as well: he was always trying to make the vocals a bit brighter, but we'd always be mixing them back down...

**NOAH:** We'd always been into dance music, but this was the probably the first record where you could really hear that influence. A lot of people have mentioned that it sounded like an ecstasy record, but I don't think we were ever into the full-blown rave thing.

**DAVE:** We were a little surprised by the intensity of the reaction to *Merriweather*, but I don't think we ever felt overwhelmed by it. It did feel like climbing a mountain, you know? It was a great trip, a really long trip, but by the end of the tour it was good to come back down to earth.



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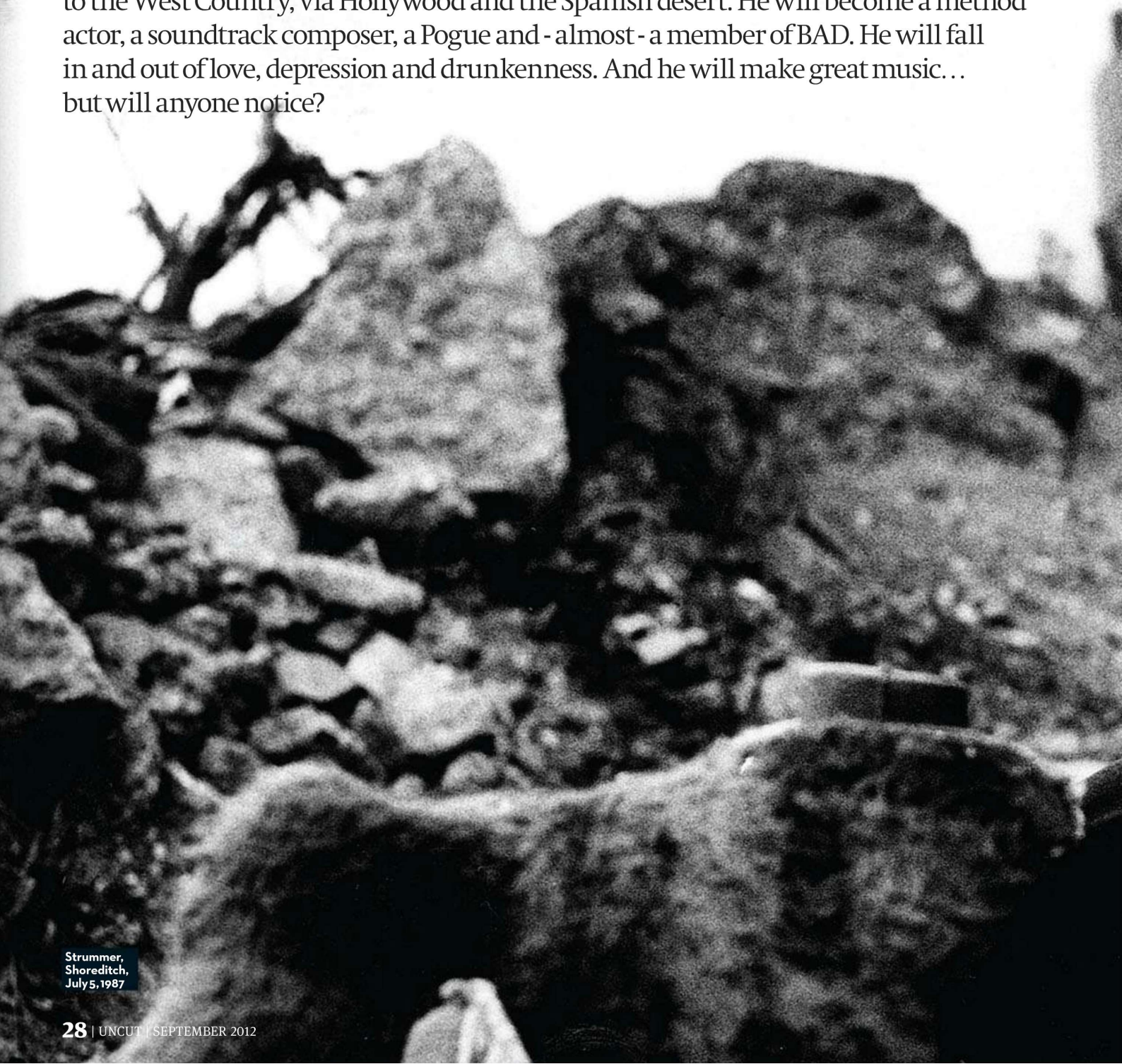
# BIG CHIEF

60<sup>TH</sup>  
BIRTHDAY  
SPECIAL

Story: Chris Salewicz  
Photo: Peter Anderson

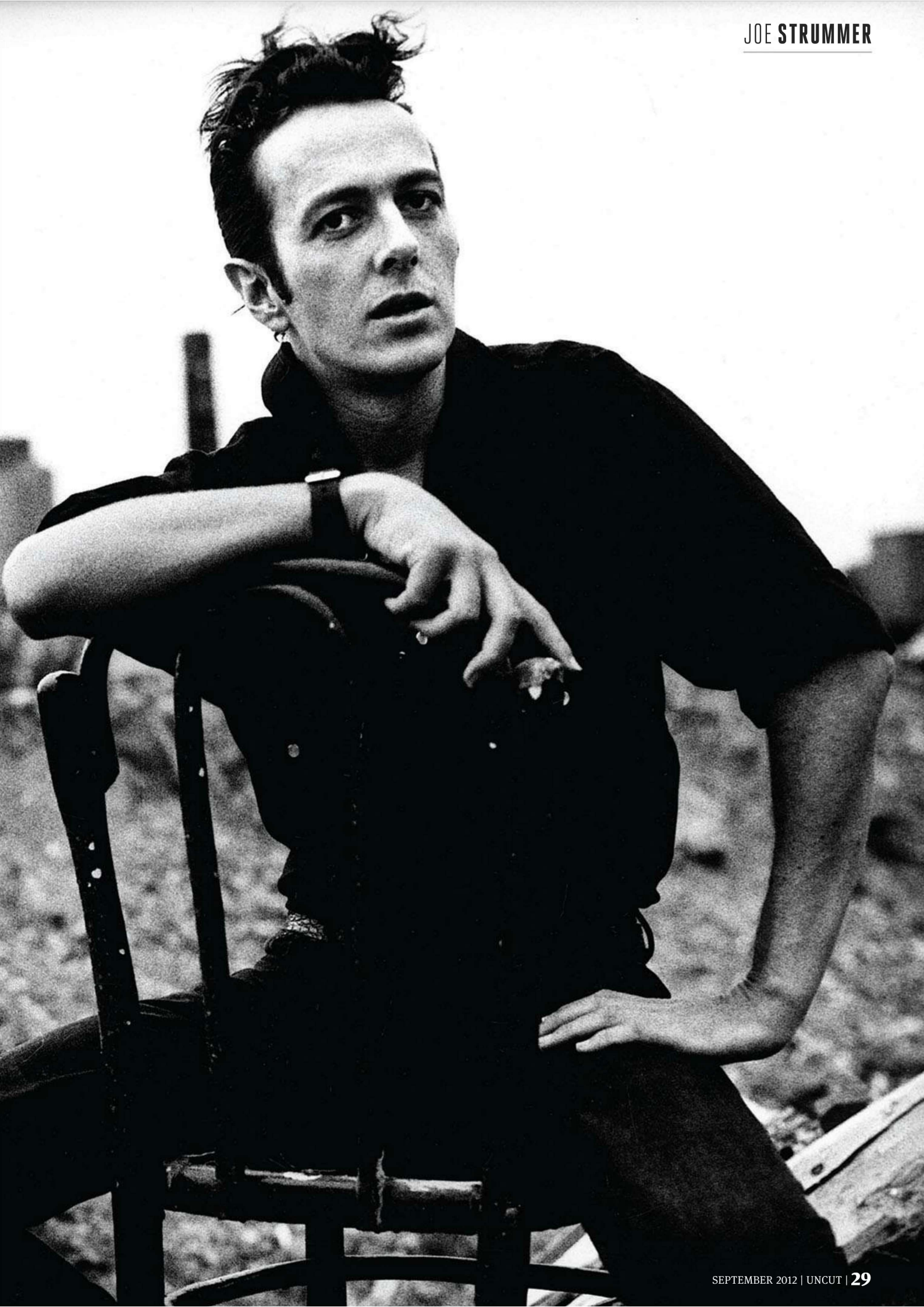
# THUNDER CLOUD

1985. The Clash are dissolving, his personal life is in chaos, and JOE STRUMMER is about to enter the wilderness. For the next 15 years, he will travel from West London to the West Country, via Hollywood and the Spanish desert. He will become a method actor, a soundtrack composer, a Pogue and - almost - a member of BAD. He will fall in and out of love, depression and drunkenness. And he will make great music... but will anyone notice?

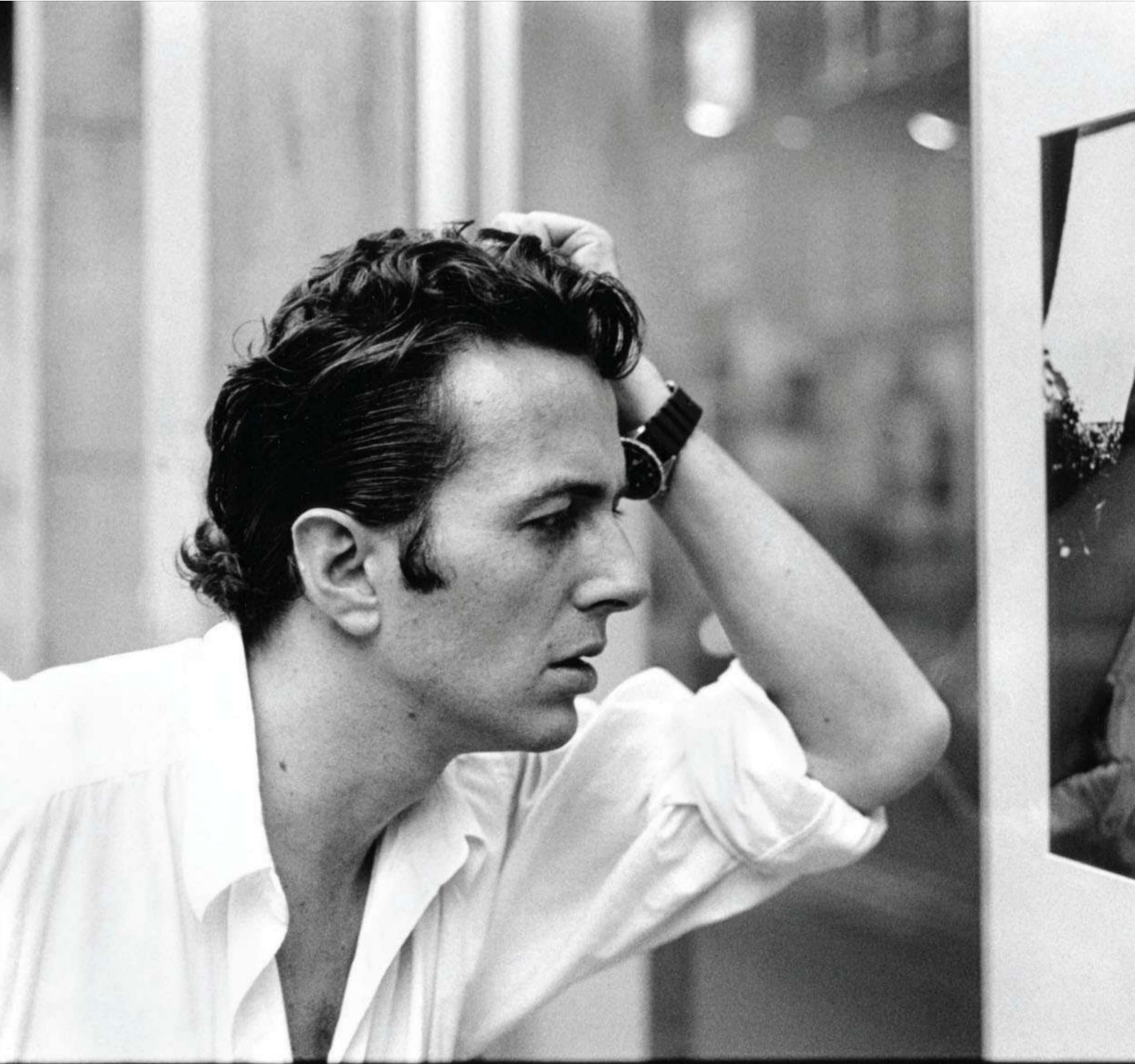


Strummer,  
Shoreditch,  
July 5, 1987









**J**OE STRUMMER barrelling, head down, along Edgware Road in a leather jacket on a hot summer afternoon almost walked straight into me. It was August 1985 and Strummer at the time was fronting The Clash Mk II, last heard of that spring on an ill-advised busking tour of the UK. It was an awkward moment. I was close to Mick Jones, scandalously fired by Joe from The Clash two years earlier and just then finishing Big Audio Dynamite's first album.

Joe said he'd been to his accountant and was heading home on foot to "walk off a hangover". He suggested we meet later at 192, a bohemian bar in Notting Hill, where, when he turned up, he ordered champagne – "shampoo" as he called it, sounding more like a city high-flyer than a former squatter.

He clearly needed to talk. In the mid-'80s, death was all around Joe Strummer. In February 1984, while Joe was on tour with The Clash Mark II, his father Ron Mellor unexpectedly died from cardiac arrest on a hospital operating table. Now his mother Anna had terminal cancer: she would pass away in December 1986, shortly after the suicide of the brother of Gaby, Joe's long-term partner. And Joe was also painfully coming to terms with the death of The Clash, for which he belatedly realised he was responsible. On July 27, 11 days previously, Joe had played his final show with any form of Clash lineup, at a one-day festival in the Olympic Stadium in Athens, where, according to guitarist Nick Sheppard, Joe had argued furiously with manager Bernie Rhodes.

That night in 192 Joe seemed very hurt. He talked about his mother, almost as though he was already mourning her. Was Anna Mellor's terminal condition reviving her son's resentments at being dumped as a nine-year-old into an Epsom boarding school? When Anna Mellor was lying on her death-bed, Joe would still rail at her about why she had made him and David, his late brother, go to that school. Joe partially blamed that decision by his parents for David's



## HOW TO BUY...

## STRUMMER SOUNDS

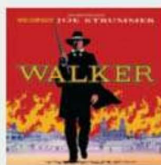
Your guide to Joe's post-Clash albums


**BIG AUDIO  
DYNAMITE  
NO. 10.,  
UPPING ST.**

(CBS, 1986)

**8/10** Strummer and Mick Jones patched up

their differences sooner than many realise: Jones actually played guitar on Strummer's first post-Clash recording, "Love Kills", from 1986's *Sid And Nancy* soundtrack. But the true reconciliation came when Don Letts met Strummer in the street while making BAD's second album; Strummer followed him back to the studio, then never left, becoming the record's co-producer and co-author. Of nine tracks, five bear the Strummer/Jones credit. It builds on the beatbox blueprint of BAD's debut, but with Strummer's troubled-romantic worldview added to the mix, it's tougher, rougher, more expansive and more ambitious. The ghost of the *Combat Rock* follow-up that never was.


**WALKER  
SOUNDTRACK**

(VIRGIN, 1987)

**9/10** Strummer contributed tracks to Alex Cox's *Sid And Nancy* and

*Straight To Hell*, but nothing prepared listeners for his soundtrack to Cox's delirious satire about William Walker, the crazed American adventurer who ruled Nicaragua in the mid-1850s. Composed in Nicaragua and taking Dylan's *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid* as a touchstone, it blends Latin and American folk influences in a lush, warm, acoustic drama unlike anything that Strummer had produced before.


**PERMANENT  
RECORD  
SOUNDTRACK**

(EPIC, 1988)

**9/10** Approached to compose music for a Keanu Reeves

movie, Strummer assembled the glorious Latino Rockabilly War, a band whose name summed up their sound. Exemplified by the fantastic rock'n'roll garbage of "Trash City," Strummer's songs hewed closer to The Clash than anything on *Cut The Crap*. Sadly, it was too raw for the studio, who limited his contribution to Side One of the soundtrack LP, releasing only five of the 13 tracks he recorded.


**EARTHQUAKE  
WEATHER**

(EPIC, 1989)

**8/10** It took Strummer a long time to release an LP under his own solo flag, and *Earthquake*

*Weather* sometimes sounds hesitant. However, it's a far stronger, stranger album than suggested by the reviews it attracted. Consolidating Walker's drama and The Latino Rockabilly War's rawbones rattle, it roams genres like a one-man *Sandinista!*. Not everything works, but the hypnotic "Leopardskin Limousines" and "Sleepwalk" rank among Joe's finest moments, his Beat-inspired writing at its inner-vision best.


**ROCK ART AND  
THE X-RAY STYLE**

(HELLCAT, 1999)

**7/10** After a decade in the wilderness, Strummer returned triumphantly with an album that

embraced his legacy and his maturity. The global jukebox concerns continue the through line from late-era Clash (valedictory dub epic "Yalla Yalla"), but the most sublime moment is the most unexpected: "From Willesden To Cricklewood", a gorgeous, waltzing paean to London that's more Ealing than Westway.


**GLOBAL A GO-GO**

(HELLCAT, 2001)

**8/10** By this second album, The Mescaleros had evolved from Strummer's studio

session men into a bona fide band, and it shows. *Global A Go-Go* is at once looser and more together, stronger, denser, earthier. Inspired by his stint as BBC World Service DJ, it's Strummer's vision of a mongrel 21st-Century folk music.


**STREETCORE**

(HELLCAT, 2003)

**8/10** Completed after Strummer's death, the final album melds The Mescaleros' folk/

world leanings with a classic Clash sound, typified by "Coma Girl", Strummer's most immediate 45 in years. Amid reggae rumbles and rebelrousers, the most poignant moments are two covers: a spare "Redemption Song" and the closing "Silver And Gold", Strummer leaving us with a wink and these words: "I've got to hurry up, before I grow too old..." DAMIEN LOVE



Artrocks: Joe Strummer in London July 4, 1986

suicide, in 1970 – the source of Joe's sometimes frightening rage. "Joe said his brother had been bullied there," said family friend Josie Ohene-Djan. "That seemed to be part of what led to his death."

But this preamble was a set-up. At around midnight, a couple more bottles of champagne later, he finally got to the point. "I've got a big problem," he said. "Mick was right about Bernie."

Joe explained that Bernie Rhodes had hijacked the record he'd just made with the new lineup of The Clash, even claiming songwriting credits on the tunes. "I should never have fired Topper. I should never have fired Mick," Strummer confessed, distressed. "I've got to get The Clash back together again. What should I do?" he asked. Call Mick Jones, I said, giving him Mick's phone number, although he never used it, however desperate he was to reform the band that clearly still meant so much to him.

THE EVERYDAY FRENZY of life in The Clash had been since 1976 an outlet for Joe's perpetual fury, one of his driving mechanisms in the group. Without The Clash, there was no outlet for his inner turmoil. Instead



The Clash Mark II on their 'busking tour', May 1985



## WHO'S WHO

# THEY CUT THE CRAP!

Introducing The Clash Mark II...



### PETE HOWARD

**Instrument:** Drums

**Previous form:**

London rockers

Cold Fish

**Post-Clash:** Joined Eat

in 1986 and set about making Louisiana-styled swamp blues. In the early '90s, Howard hooked up with The Wonder Stuff's Miles Hunt, Cult guitarist Billy Duffy and Senseless Things bassist Morgan Nicholls as Vent 414. Most recently, he's been a member of indie-rockers Queenadreena.

**Did You Know?** Howard's first gig with The Clash, before 140,000 people at a Californian festival in May 1983, was also Mick Jones' last.

member Gareth Sager in 1986. The union produced three albums in as many years, with the guitarist eventually relocating to Australia. His latest venture is rock'n'soul quartet The DomNicks.

**Did You Know?:** Both Sheppard and The Pop Group's Mark Stewart were in the same year at Bristol Grammar School.



### NICK SHEPPARD

**Instrument:** Guitar

**Previous form:** Unruly

Bristol punks The

Cortinas, providing the

riffs for early singles

"Fascist Dictator"

and "Defiant Pose", before the band split in 1978.

**Post-Clash:** Forerunners of what later became trip-hop, Head were formed by Sheppard and ex-Pop Group



### VINCE WHITE

**Instrument:** Guitar

**Previous form:** A

Fine Art graduate from

Middlesex University,

White also studied

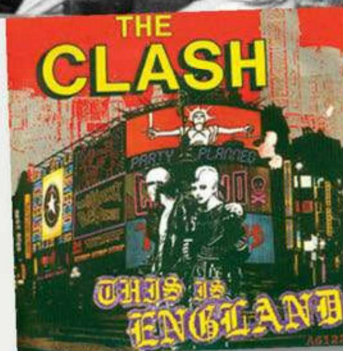
for a degree in

astronomy and physics.

**Post-Clash:** Returned to his first love - painting. White is now an artist based in Notting Hill. In 2007 he published his own version of his time with the band in *Out Of Control: The Last Days Of The Clash*.

**Did You Know?:** Paul Simonon, so the story goes, only allowed White into The Clash on the proviso that he change his first name from Greg to Vince.

ROB HUGHES



→ not for the first time – Joe experienced profound depression: rage that cannot be released through action soaks back into the mind as deep, self-destructive gloom.

Joe Strummer's life was like a Shakespearian tragedy, a rise, a fall, and a final further rise: an archetypal piece of mythology, which is why, 10 years after his death, his

legend is far greater than ever. From the ocean floor of life as a squatter, he strove upwards and re-entered society as a kind of guerrilla fighter who rose to become a king, losing his monarchy through hubris.

To his fans, Strummer was a punk-rock warlord, a warrior magician, a wise, kind, considerate philosopher. The truth was more complex. Joe Strummer was a construct, a character valiantly devised by John Graham Mellor, his birth-name. When Joe worked with The Pogues later in the decade, Jem Finer regularly observed the metamorphosis that took place: "As the frontman, Joe had to psyche himself up into the character of Joe Strummer to do the gig. After the gig he'd slowly become John Mellor again... With eight people in The Pogues there would be more politics than there were group members. To deal with this, Joe'd become quite psychotic, destructive and obsessive."

For Joe personally, life often seemed burdened with his perceived significance which fans projected onto him as though he was a blank canvas. He could barely step out of the house without being told by someone he'd changed their life. "Drove me nuts sometimes," he admitted to me that night in 1992. But for his own sense of worth Joe needed to maintain that façade to his fans. This was especially difficult in the immediate post-Clash time, his "wilderness years", as he came to define them, when he often seemed a





"Joe was fond of drinking": with Mick Jones (and a fake-beer-belly cushion!) at the video shoot for "Medicine Show", 1986



Strummer, Letts and Jones recording the No 10, Upping St. album in 1986

JOE STRUMMER

## EYEWITNESS!

# "IT WAS BEAUTIFUL SEEING THEM COME TOGETHER AGAIN..."

Don Letts on Joe Strummer and Mick Jones



ON JUNE 26, 1986, Mick Jones' 31st birthday, Joe ran into Don Letts in Soho. BAD were recording their second album at

Trident, and Strummer followed him there. There - extraordinarily, all things considered - he took on co-production duties and co-wrote five songs with Mick Jones.

"It was almost like watching two lovers re-acquaint. Because they were

lovers in a creative way, and it was beautiful seeing them come together again in that way - it was the vehicle by which they could re-acquaint. There were lyrics I'd written and Joe came in and changed them all: I felt privileged to see that going on. Joe came down there and changed the whole studio into his bunker. It made me realise what always had gone on between them. Mick sweetened the pill because he was the melody man, the music man: he contemporised Joe's eternal message."

CHRIS SALEWICZ

definitive lost soul, uncertain and insecure. For years he wandered inside his own head, sporadically beating himself up psychologically, sometimes frighteningly exploding at others.

"He didn't really discuss problems as such," said Josie Ohene-Djan. "He was hugely sensitive, but he had a bit of a nasty temper, that Joe."

The independent film director Jim Jarmusch, with whom Joe would work on *Mystery Train*, had a name for this moody sometimes disconsolate Joe: Big Chief Thunder Cloud. "I became close with him during a period when a lot of the time he was really down," Jarmusch recalled. "It was a dark period for him. He had a dark cloud over him. He was still generous and uplifting to be with. He could be funny, but it was also a depressed period."

**T**HE FINAL DAY of September 1985 saw the release of "the last great Clash song", as Joe described "This Is England", an impassioned semi-epic protest song, released as a single from the final Clash album, the disastrous *Cut The Crap*. The album went to 16 in the UK charts, but received a critical mauling that worsened Strummer's outlook and sense of creative atrophy.

Everyone loved Joe, but for some time he didn't necessarily love himself. You'd bump into him walking in the streets of Notting Hill, generally pensive and enclosed, hurt visible in his eyes; but also often he looked angry, sparks almost visibly flying off him. Joe's response was to dig himself into his neighbourhood: the king of punk rock became the rebel chieftain of Notting Hill, a slightly studiedly bohemian 'character', eating breakfast every day in Bites on Westbourne Park Road - a toasted sardine sandwich and a coffee with a slug of brandy in it - and drinking most days at the suitably down-at-heel, and thereby 'street', Warwick Castle on Portobello Road.

Home was at 37 Lancaster Road, a couple of blocks from the Warwick, a four-storey terraced house off the 'front line' of All Saints Road - "I only got it because it reminded me of the places I used to squat in," he justified it to me. He had briefly and misguidedly put it on the market that year (he shagged an estate agent girl who came round to value it - as a former follower of Guru Maharaji, Joe was a firm believer in the hippy ideal of 'free



love'), intending to substitute it for a flat above a nearby Tesco, a clear sign of misplaced guilt over his earnings.

"Joe was great, but he was egocentric, blinkered, and terrified of success," said Tricia Ronane, later to marry and then divorce Paul Simonon, who was working for BAD.

That December, stumbling half-cut out of the Warwick one night, Joe gatecrashed the nearby wrap party for a film then entitled *Love Kills*, the story of Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen, directed by Alex Cox. For admitting Joe to the party, Cox demanded tax from him: that he would write the movie's title song. This would be Joe Strummer's first post-Clash musical commission.

Ever the pragmatist, always living on several levels at the same time, Joe enlisted Mick Jones, pulling in the man he had fired from The Clash to play guitar parts on the tune - generously, Jones co-operated. Unfortunately, the title of the film was then changed, to *Sid And Nancy*. The



→ slightly hesitant “Love Kills” only made 69 in the charts. Working with Jones had rekindled their relationship, however (Joe would end up co-producing and co-writing BAD’s second album, *No 10, Upping St.*). At a shoot in April 1986 for Big Audio Dynamite’s “Medicine Show” video, Strummer and Paul Simonon appeared as extras, costumed as American cops. This was the first creative work between the three since Mick had left The Clash. But at the final edit, I found Joe shuffling around, swallowing the dregs from abandoned cans of beer, like a park bench wino. Was he so knocked sideways by his internal tensions that he was desperately trying to anaesthetise himself?

“Joe was fond of drinking anything,” said Josie Ohene-Djan. “He liked to do it and fall over.”

**A**LEX COX, MEANWHILE, had provisionally set up a tour of Nicaragua for late summer 1986 in which Strummer, The Pogues and Elvis Costello would play dates in the war-torn Central American nation; Cox would film it for a documentary.

When this project fell apart, the various artists had empty schedules. Producer Eric Fellner persuaded Chris Blackwell to give £900,000 to fund *Straight To Hell*, a spaghetti western spoof that Cox, Strummer and Dick Rude, Cox’s friend from Los Angeles, had devised while hungover at that year’s Cannes Film Festival. It would be filmed outside Almería in southern Spain, on one of the desert sets used for spaghetti westerns. “Joe was like one of those guys in one of those films, just edging in from the corner of the screen – a man of mystery,” said Cox. “A man of mystery isn’t such a good job for an actor. You have to lay out something about yourself, if you’re acting. You have to be a bit kind of exposed. And I don’t think Joe really wanted to do that.”

Joe called me one night from Almería, just before I visited the set, denying rumours he had joined BAD. “Are you kidding? The BAD album’s brilliant, because me and Mick were involved. But I’m going to make a record of my own when I’ve got something really good.”

“I’m just about ready, and I’m looking forward to working with Mick again, because we’re going to do it together. It’ll be called *Throwdown* and it’ll be completely the opposite of everything else that’s being made now: just three instruments and the cheapest studio. Everyone’ll hate it except the hipsters and flipsters. I just promise to make a good record when I can, and not to tour, and not to foist any shit on the public... Now is the time when you’ve got to look for things, as it was in the days of beatniks existing in straight society, when the good stuff was hard to find, but was even more valuable when you discovered it.”

Also appearing in *Straight To Hell* was Zander Schloss, a Los Angeles jazz musician-turned-punk: “When I arrived in Spain I got drunk with Joe, drinking port. I said, ‘Joe man, I want to play music with you.’ I was 25, and he says, ‘Zander, I don’t want to play music. I’m an old man.’ I laughed at him. He was 34 years old.”

In Almería, Joe talked with Pogues manager Frank Murray about tentative plans for a semi-acoustic group in the manner of The Pogues. Earlier in the year, Joe had been thinking of starting a three-piece electric blues band.

Joe spent some nights on the set, hunkered around a campfire, drinking rum, smoking hash, and in the clear desert sky studying the stars, all of which – Frank Murray discovered – he knew: whether in the desert or partying at the fiesta, Joe didn’t take off his character’s black suit. “We would go around with our costumes on,” said Schloss. “Joe never changed his clothes.”

The Pogues’ Phil Chevron also recalled Strummer on set: “That was the first time I got to talk to him – although I was never really speaking to Joe, I was speaking to his character, Simms. Joe was doing a real



Close friends: Strummer and Simonon, 1984

## EYEWITNESS!

# “HE ALWAYS TREATED ME AS A YOUNGER BROTHER...”

Paul Simonon remembers Joe



“ME AND JOE were always at ease. Right after The Clash finished, I went to live in El Paso, and didn’t see Joe for a long

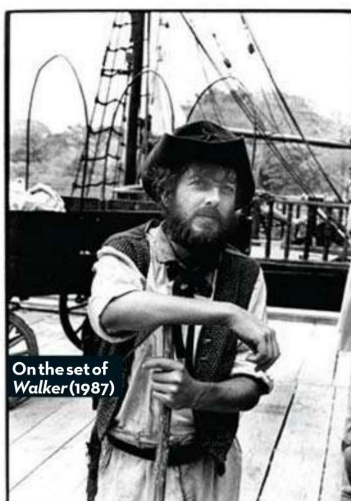
time. But when we did meet up again, it was like nothing had happened, no changes. We were still close, very much as we were in the early days. I’d go down to his house and paint. He always treated me as his younger brother.

“We never went for the carrot of reforming. And it got over the top. We were offered millions, and then, like, a million million million. I mean, I wouldn’t mind a million now, but if The Clash had continued and been mega-successful, but not on our terms, we’d maybe have turned into arseholes, lost the plot completely. Maybe it’s a good thing we called it a day when we did. The nature of The Clash, really, was always to strive forward. The same afterwards: everybody went in their different

directions, and worked and got on with what they had to do.

“Joe phoned me the night before he died. The Clash had been asked to get back together to play The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. The discussion was: ‘Well, are we gunna play or are we not?’ My attitude was, ‘No. If we are going to play, then let’s do it in an environment where anybody who wants to come doesn’t have to pay a couple of grand.’ But that was my attitude. Joe was going, ‘Well, y’know, Topper and Mick, they’re really up for it...’ But that’s the thing with Joe, we could have a conversation, pick it to pieces, find a middle ground. A couple of hours later, it was never to be.

“If I had to sum Joe up, it would be passion, really. Passion for music, passion for life, for having a good drink, or a good smoke. Just passion for being a human being. Either you’re Robin Hood or you’re Stalin, and the choice is really quite clear. But get on with the job. Put the time in.” DAMIEN LOVE



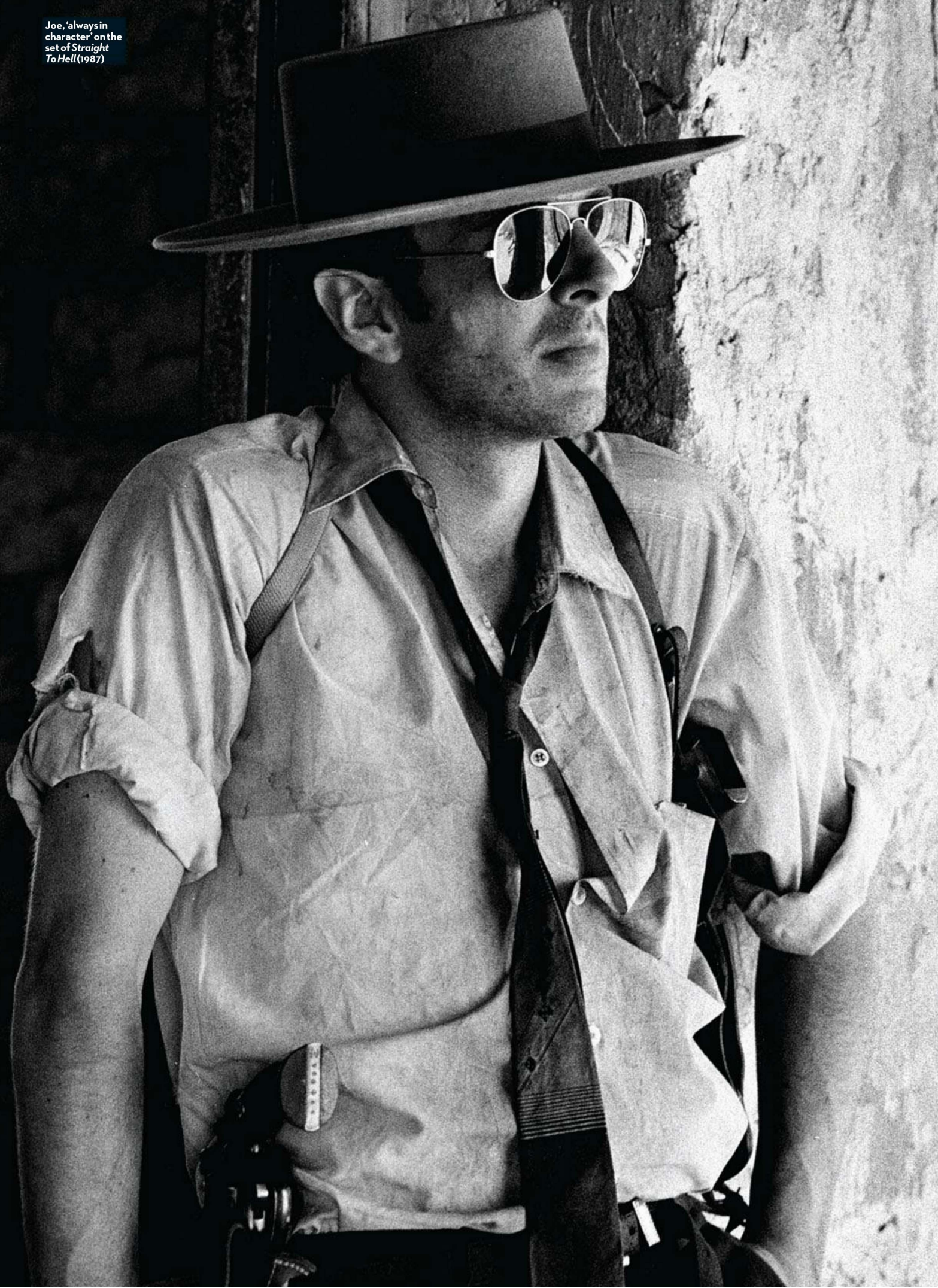
On the set of Walker (1987)

Marlon Brando ‘method’ job and stayed in character when the cameras weren’t rolling. He even lived out on location; while the rest of us got driven back and forth to a hotel in Almería 25 miles away, he would stay there and sleep in a car on the set. I would learn later that it was typical Joe behaviour, there was a single-mindedness to everything he did.”

**I**N FEBRUARY 1987, Joe Strummer flew to Nicaragua for a part in Cox’s next feature, *Walker*, the story of the American William Walker’s brief conquest of the Central American country in 1856. In a cantina in the town of Granada one day he suddenly announced, slightly oddly: “They released *Sandinista!* here. I



Joe, 'always in character' on the set of *Straight To Hell* (1987)







The Pogues in L.A., where they were playing from December 10-12, 1987: Strummer, second left, and Shane MacGowan, far right

## EYEWITNESS!

# "WHENEVER WE WERE STUCK, WE'D PHONE JOE..."

Phil Chevron on Strummer's place in The Pogues' "family"



"THE FIRST TIME he played with us was a show we did for Irish TV, he joined us onstage for 'London Calling' and 'I

Fought The Law'. Then, at the end of 1987, I had to take time out for medical reasons, but we were already booked to do a tour of America and make the video for 'Fairytale Of New York'. We needed a replacement quickly. Joe was an obvious choice, 'cos he was familiar with our set. I spent two afternoons at his home teaching him the songs. He seemed a bit intimidated at first as he hadn't realised playing the numbers wasn't that simple. But I encouraged him to find his own way through them.

"Whenever we were stuck, we would always phone Joe and that's how he came to produce *Hell's Ditch*. We'd become so difficult to work with, mainly because of Shane's behaviour in the studio, that nobody else wanted the job. Although he hadn't produced much before, he did a very producer-like thing in that he gave us a safe harbour that protected us from the everyday madness of the band that had caused

the aggravation in the first place. He perfectly understood Shane's psyche and would only have him in the studio when it was absolutely necessary.

"Joe settled in to the chemistry of The Pogues naturally, which not many people did. Kirsty MacColl is the only other one who immediately became part of the family. Joe found a space for himself where he could be happy.

"We were a different group when he was filling in for Shane, which he did for about a year. It gave him the chance to lead a band in a way he hadn't done with The Clash, 'cos both he and Mick Jones would bow to the requirements of the other. Being on stage with him was like being a sideman to a great jazz musician. He had a lot more energy than Shane, and wasn't afraid to take songs in new directions. It unleashed parts of us we never knew existed. I loved playing 'Straight To Hell' with him, it would be different every night.

"All of this was just a few short years after The Clash, but I never got the sense he was carrying any baggage. He came across as this young, hungry, enthusiastic guy who thought the potential of the future was endless."

TERRY STAUNTON

→ don't think it sold any copies, though."

In Nicaragua, where he would be for the next four months, Joe – playing a dishwasher with long hair and a shaggy beard – was unhappy and withdrawn: on December 28, 1986 his mother Anna had finally passed away, plunging him into introspection. His mind was also on actor Danielle Von Zerneck, who had played Donna, Ritchie Valens' girlfriend in the Valens' biopic *La Bamba*. They had met in October at a New York Film Festival screening of *Straight To Hell* and become romantically involved, even though back in London, Joe was still living with Gaby Salter and their two daughters.

Joe, meanwhile, had persuaded Cox he should write the music for the film. His vision was that the soundtrack would incorporate native Nicaraguan sounds with American hillbilly music of the 1850s. Having hustled to write the soundtrack, Joe, as he later admitted, was now feeling under great pressure. A five-week booking was made at San Francisco's Russian Hill Recording.

Joe had sketches on four-track cassettes of songs he and Zander Schloss had strummed out playing guitars and a plastic synthesiser in Granada. Arriving on day one at 3pm, with a hangover from a night out with Alex Cox, Joe handed house engineer Sam Lehmer one of them: "You guys try and work something up."

At Lehmer's suggestion, Joe employed Dick Bright, who led the house band at San Francisco's Vermont Hotel. Bright knew seasoned orchestral musicians; 15 of them were hired. Zander Schloss was summoned from L.A. "Bring your Spanish guitar," Joe told him. Zander added overdubs and textures, employing guitar, charanga, vuhela, banjo, guitar and tambour; he also arranged the guitars.

The mainly instrumental – 14 tunes, only three vocals – music's hypnotic widescreen lyricism was beautifully magical. With Latin rhythms drawn from Central and South America, drifting up and over the Appalachian hills into New York jazz clubs, it can seem like the missing fourth LP from *Sandinista!*. In this very sensitive set of music, Joe exposed himself with an openness he had not shown as an



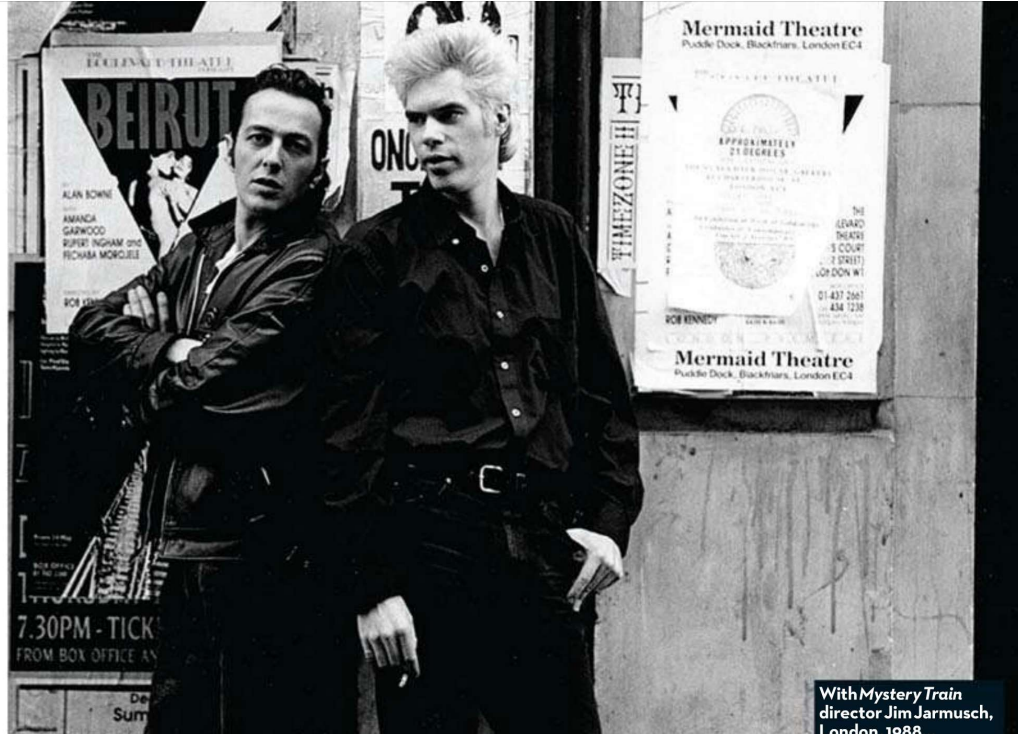
actor. A stunning song called “Unknown Immortal” features Joe at his most delicate and plaintive: on the line “*I was once an immortal*,” you can sense the resonance those words held for a fallen god.

“I instinctively knew there’d be a long period where I’d have to go into the wilderness,” Joe told me later. “After The Clash broke up, I never had the will to form a supergroup with God knows who. I realised we’d had a great crack at it. So I’ve always tried to do little interesting things down the years. I knew they’d never reach any audience. When *Walker* came out, 15,000 people bought it. And rather than say, ‘What a downer,’ my attitude was: ‘This is great. There are 15,000 hipsters out there tuning in and they are the people who’ll always be with you.’”

**A**PRIL 1988 FOUND Joe in LA, where there was a ready-made scene to move into: both Paul Simonon and the Pistols’ Steve Jones were living there, the kings of a pack of Harley-Davidson owners who would prowl the city. Joe checked into the Sunset Marquis, looking for movie work. He took on the music for a small film, Marisa Silver’s *Permanent Record*, starring Keanu Reeves, a study of teenage suicide. “We went to Paramount to see a rough cut,” remembered Danielle Von Zerneck. “During the film, Joe was crying, tears pouring down. He said, ‘I’ll do it.’ What was so memorable was the level of emotion he showed. But when I tried to talk to Joe about his brother, the tension was like a nuclear bomb.”

His brother David’s suicide was again painfully recalled for Joe when he was cast in Jim Jarmusch’s *Mystery Train*, filmed later that year. The script divided into three parallel, simultaneous stories, set in Memphis, Tennessee over 24 hours. The final tale, ‘Lost In Space’, featured ‘Johnny’ (aka ‘Elvis’), an English rocker, who’s lost his job and his girl. The part was written by Jarmusch specifically for Joe. Contemplating suicide, near the end of the movie, ‘Johnny’ puts a gun to his head: when it goes off, it wounds his brother-in-law, played by Steve Buscemi. “I had no idea that suicide had such a personal meaning for him,” said the actor.

Buscemi was a Clash fan; he’d seen the group at Manhattan’s Bonds nightclub in 1981. Arriving in Memphis, he immediately was given an introduction to a Joe Strummer night out: “Joe was like open arms. That night



With *Mystery Train* director Jim Jarmusch, London, 1988...



...and a still from *Mystery Train*, with Steve Buscemi, 1988

“Joe talked a lot about the bad times that ended The Clash. He seemed to feel guilty”

JIM JARMUSCH

just formed a friendship: we were out all night, bar-hopping, and he was very open and approachable: we’re just talking, about music, about politics, talking about the work on the film. He really cared about his performance and what we were doing in it. Joe really was a cool guy, and I mean that in the best sense of the word: just cool to hang out with.”

Jarmusch would also find himself on nights out with Joe: “He talked a lot about the bad times that ended The Clash. He seemed to feel guilty. He felt really bad about *Cut The Crap*. I said, ‘You only learn

from your mistakes. You can’t learn things without fucking up.’ I was throwing back his own attitude, because he was very good when people were down – just give them a few little words. He was very good at picking you up again.”

While he was making the film, Danielle Von Zerneck ended their relationship. When Sara Driver, Jim Jarmusch’s partner, consoled Joe, telling him such an outcome had always been inevitable, Joe wandered around, speaking to himself: “Inevitable. Inevitable.” Trying to rebuild himself, Joe was thrown into turmoil by this romantic shock.

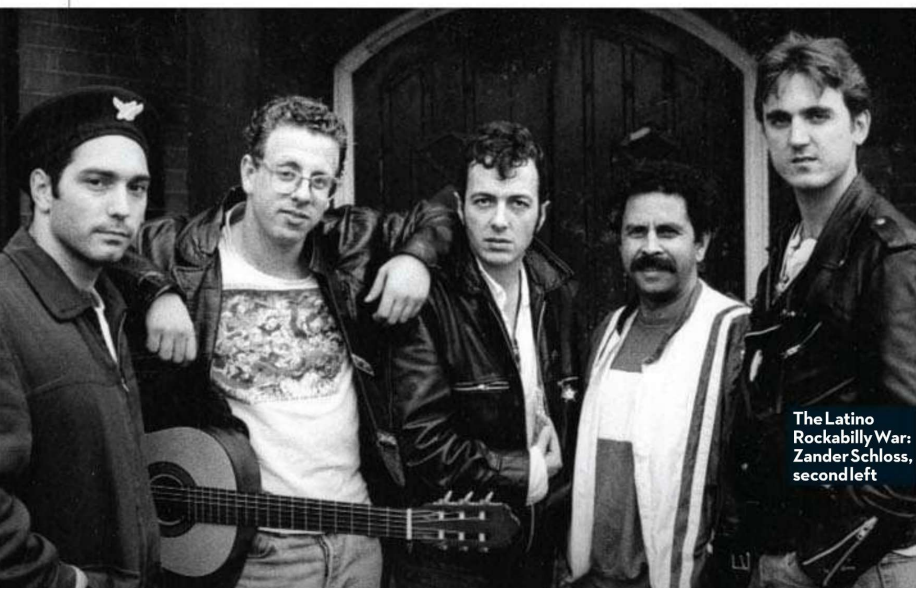
All the same, he managed not to lose his sense of humour. Hearing that INXS were in a neighbouring hotel, Joe and Jim Jarmusch went over to greet them. Michael Hutchence, in full leather-trousered glory, had teenage girls dripping off him.

“Wow, it must be really strange to be a sex symbol,” said Joe to him.

“Well, you’re Joe Strummer: you should know,” countered Michael Hutchence.

“No, I was never a sex symbol. I was just a spokesman-for-a-generation,” came Joe’s perfect response.

**J**OE HAD FORMED a band to play the songs he wrote for *Permanent Record*, featuring guitarist Zander Schloss, drummer Willie MacNeill, and Joey Altruda, on stand-up bass – The Latino Rockabilly War, with whom he controversially toured the UK on the Rock Against The Rich tour organised by *Class War*, an anarchist magazine. Joe also had a single to push: “Trash City”, written for the *Permanent Record* soundtrack, came out in June to strong reviews, but failed to sell. “It didn’t feel like there was anyone pushing it,” said his new agent Gerry Harrington, “because it was on Epic Soundtracks. Then it became a self-fulfilling prophecy of ‘No-one wants to hear my music any more.’”



The Latino Rockabilly War: Zander Schloss, second left



Nevertheless, in November 1988, Strummer block-booked Baby 'O Recorders in Hollywood for three months to make a new album. Renting a house in Laurel Canyon, he moved in with Gaby and their two daughters. The turquoise Cadillac he'd bought during the recording of the *Walker* soundtrack was brought down from San Francisco; always liable to break down, it largely remained in the Baby 'O parking lot where Joe would hide out in it with his guitar. The area was tricky; one night after he'd left there was a shoot-out in a drugs heist in the lot: after, there was a visible bullet hole in the Caddy's door. This delighted Joe.

"He was really into his past and how The 101ers got started," said Dick Rude, a frequent visitor to Baby 'O. "Where his roots of music came from: the roots of rock'n'roll – Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent.

"In LA, I'd go out and see him. Everyone else would be having a good time. But Joe would be hunched over the bar with his eyes in his beer. I'd look at him: 'What is he thinking? Fuck man, I wish I could take away some of his pain.' Suddenly I'd look around and he'd be gone. I'd say, 'Where'd Joe go?' and nobody would know. He would just go for a walk, man. He was like that even when he wasn't in that dark period.

"He came from a place of rage inside himself. I could understand why he felt that way. There was this stuff about his mum, and the result of that was the way he treated Gaby, and the way she responded to the way he treated her."

For some years, Joe had closed the door on himself. Now with the three months booked at Baby 'O, he was kicking it open again. For much of the second half of the 1980s, Joe's favourite record was Paul Simon's *Graceland*. "I spoke to Paul Simon about this," he told me in 1991, "and he said, 'Hey man, before *Graceland* I was dead in the water. Nobody was checking my stuff.' So he's a realist. He had some barren years after stuff like *One-Trick Pony*, and out of the hat he pulled *Graceland*. So life is interesting: anything can happen. But you've got to be tough enough to take a spell in the wilderness, instead of hoping to be in the spotlight the whole fucking time. People get sick of you."

There were other visitors to the studio: the Red Hot Chili Peppers came by and Flea played trumpet on a track. Jesse Dylan called over with Sean Penn. Jesse's dad Bob dropped by, once leaving a tape of a song he thought Joe might like to try out. Joe never listened to it. "I think it was Joe not wanting to deal with it," said Zander. "It stayed in the drawer."

As with the *Walker* soundtrack, Joe left the album arrangements to Zander Schloss, while he cruised the streets of Los Angeles with a favourite cab driver, writing lyrics for whichever song was being recorded. "Joe kept a mild state of mellowness going on, smoking English joints, which weren't heavily laced with pot," said Mark Stebbeds, the engineer. "He didn't drink much. He was very into the whole Latino thing, so he would sometimes get Mexican brandy, horrible stuff, but he would drink it because the owner of the studio was Mexican."

On the finished record, Joe's voice was mixed surprisingly low. Interpreted initially as proof of Joe's inner doubt, there was a more simple explanation. "Joe was not in good voice when we recorded," recalled Mark Stebbeds. "He wasn't physically ill but he hadn't been singing a lot. His voice had largely been sitting idle for several years, so it wasn't that powerful."

When Muff Winwood, Joe's Sony A&R man, flew out from London to check on progress, Joe ran away to the desert. A former musician, Winwood was understanding: "Joe was sensitive about his music. He has no idea what the world is going to think and it's a frightening experience."



With Matt Dillon and photographer Josh Cheuse (who shot the cover for *Earthquake Weather*), Bleecker St subway stop, NYC, September 1999

## EYEWITNESS!

# "HE WAS LIKE A SOLDIER WITHOUT AN ARMY..."

Actor Matt Dillon on his friendship with Joe



AT JOE'S suggestion, BAD's *No 10*, *Upping St.* was mixed in New York. "I thought it

was Joe's revenge for me insisting we did *Combat Rock* in New York – it was the most expensive record I've made," said Mick Jones. One track featured Laurence Fishburne and Matt Dillon – Dillon had met The Clash when they had played *Saturday Night Live* in 1982, the start of a lasting friendship.

"I ran into them in New York in '86," says Dillon. "They, we wanted to get in touch with you," Joe said. 'We want to get you and Fishburne to do a skit for us.' Larry Fishburne and I were friends: we'd done *Rumble Fish* together – we were Clash fans. So we did this little skit for the song 'Dial A Hitman'. We'd drink beer and smoke weed. It was a lot of fun. That's when I really felt I bonded with those guys: we became friends. We might not see each other

for a long time, but it was always easy to fall right back in.

"Joe was a hero of mine. I loved the guy. The coolest thing about him and all those guys was that you never got the feeling they were for sale, ever, under any circumstances. As you get older, you realise what a rare quality that is, to be really principled. They really were, and Joe especially.

"Like I said, he stood for the right thing. He was smart and interesting. But he was not an easy read all the time. What was really going on underneath, you could not always tap into.

"I thought when he joined up with The Pogues that was a great move. Because certainly there was a part of him – I understood it creatively – that was having a little trouble finding his niche. He did that great score for *Walker*, which was beautiful, but musically he was like a soldier without an army. He didn't have his cannon. But he seemed more at ease with The Pogues." CHRIS SALEWICZ



In November 1989, *Rolling Stone* voted *London Calling* 'Album Of The Decade'. Yet the same edition of the magazine carried a postage-stamp-sized, lukewarm review of *Earthquake Weather*, which had been released on September 20, 1989. "*Earthquake Weather* didn't do a thing," remembered Muff Winwood. Worldwide, Joe's comeback album sold only 7,000 copies, less than half the sales of *Walker*. *Rolling Stone*'s acclaim for The Clash notwithstanding, Joe Strummer's personal tide was still far out. Eventually this would improve markedly. But it would take another 10 years, during which Joe Strummer would need to confront himself to the fullest extent of his being.



Strummer with wife-to-be  
Lucinda Henderson  
[née Tait], NYC, April 1994



**T**HE 1990S DID not begin well for Joe. Briefly he worked with the Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki, taking a small part in his film, *I Hired A Contract Killer*, for which Joe recorded a pair of tunes for the film's soundtrack, "Burning Lights" and "Afro Cuban BeBop", the latter a reflection of Joe's recent musical interest, which also included cumbia, from Colombia's Caribbean region. Joe recorded the songs at Rockfield, in downtime from working on the production of The Pogues' album, *Hell's Ditch*.

By now, Joe, Gaby and their children had moved out of Notting Hill, to a friend's property in the village of Newton Stacey, near Andover in Hampshire, where his daughters were enrolled in a private day school. "He said he wanted the best for his kids, and I said maybe he should have been a bit more sympathetic towards his mother [for sending Joe and his brother to boarding school]," said Marcia, Jem Finer's wife. To Paul and Tricia Simonon, Joe complained about living in what he said was spelt the 'c-u-n-t-r-y'. Joe was also astonished about the amount of cocaine consumed by posh country-dwellers. He would take long, solitary walks in the fields. "He told me his creativity utterly dried up when he moved to the country," said Josie Ohene-Djan. "He needed London's energy." After a frightful row on a mini-holiday in Italy, Joe and Gaby began sleeping in separate rooms.

When Sara Driver commissioned him to write the music for her second film, *When Pigs Fly*, Strummer managed to rouse his music-writing abilities. Again, Rockfield was the recording studio. Sara loved what Joe came up with, but couldn't ignore his palpable moodiness: "Joe had an enormous ego, but he was also very sensitive. Insecurity often goes with big egos. Joe was more and more internalised. Big Chief Thunder Cloud was eating him up. He really did have a cloud over his head, a dark cloud."

In September 1993, Joe returned to Rockfield, a plan hatched by Clash consigliere Kosmo Vinyl. "When Pigs



Festival regular Strummer  
plays Glastonbury in 1999

"Joe had a huge ego, but he was very sensitive. He had a dark cloud over his head..."

**SARA DRIVER**

## FESTIVAL EXCESS

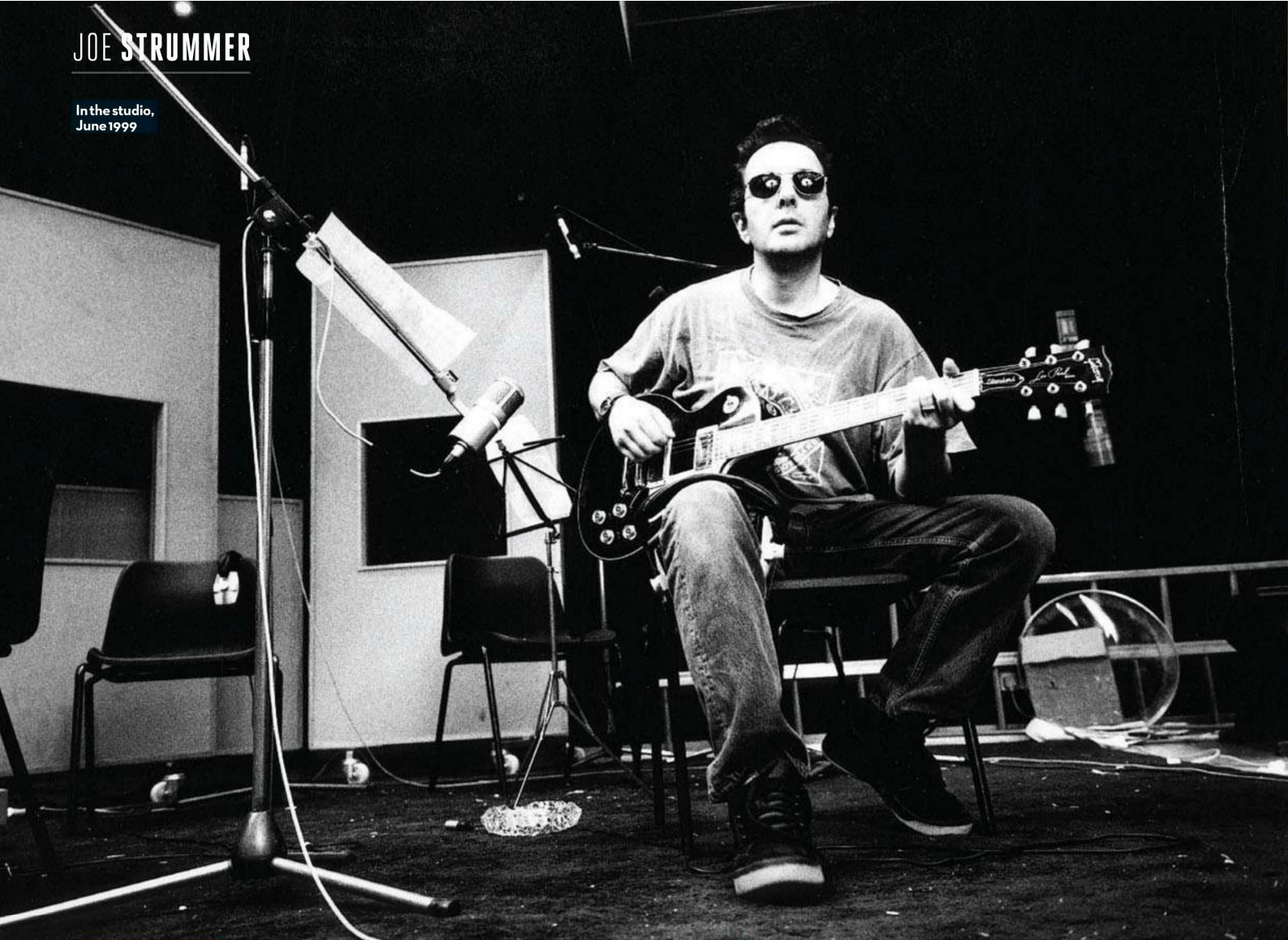
### "SMASH IT ALL!"

It's 1999. Strummer and The Mescaleros play Glastonbury. Trouble ensues...

**J**OE STRUMMER ENJOYED a long and often colourful relationship with Glastonbury. A festival regular since the early '70s, his informal campfire hootenannies, dubbed Strummerville, became a Glastonbury institution – and later gave their name to a posthumous charity set up to help young musicians. Joe's more formal appearances at the festival, however, could be less auspicious. On June 26, 1999, Strummer and The Mescaleros appeared on the Pyramid Stage. The set was not without controversy. During the middle of "Straight To Hell", there was an eruption onstage: Joe swung his heavy mic-stand at a BBC cameraman as he came too close to him. Luckily Joe missed him, but did catch an extremely expensive camera lens, all of which was shown later in the evening on national television, with remarks from the presenter about Joe not being in the Glastonbury spirit. "The crowd were screaming, 'Go for it! Smash it all!'" Joe remembered. "That incident onstage was so typically Joe," said Mark Cooper, a former journalist who was now in charge of the BBC's Glastonbury broadcasts. "Because you got the two sides of him: the onstage lout who then goes through some apparently magical transformation and writes this extremely humble and very long letter of apology to the cameraman."

CHRIS SALEWICZ



In the studio,  
June 1999

## EYEWITNESS!

'WHAT THE FUCK ARE  
YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE?'

Antony Genn on coaxing Strummer back into the studio...



"I FIRST WENT up to Joe in the Pharmacy Restaurant & Bar in Notting Hill. We just talked about music and after

about five minutes, I said: 'What the fuck are you doing with your life anyway? You're Joe Strummer! Why don't you get that fuckin' guitar out of its box, get it round your neck and get back on stage? That's what you were born to do.' As Joe says at the beginning of Don Letts' film *Westway To The World* [2000]: 'It seems to me that origination is about instinct, not intellect.' And Joe was all about instinct. He obviously instinctively knew that this idiot in front of him was the geezer who might be able to rustle something up and make it happen for him. We sat there, got very drunk for three hours and at the end of the night he said: 'Give me your number, man. I wanna go into the studio with you.'

"I think we wrote one or two very good songs together, particularly 'Willesden To Cricklewood' [from 1999's *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*], which we wrote and recorded in one night. Joe walked from Willesden to Cricklewood to see Cricklewood John and score. He was gone for three or four hours and I'd just written a little tune while I was messing around. When Joe came back he loved it, so I added a guitar and a drumbeat, some strings and piano, then he got up and sang this beautiful song about him walking from Willesden to Cricklewood and seeing the world. People often think of his observations in song verging on the political and sociological, but that night he just wrote about what he saw. He even talked about his own children in it. That night I wrote a song with John Graham Mellor, not Joe Strummer, which is a very different thing. They played it at his funeral. I didn't realise it meant as much to him as any other song he'd written." ROB HUGHES

➤ *Fly* had gone fairly smoothly, so I was thinking we could exploit that. I thought the film-jazz and beat thing might be a way to go."

Yet Joe seemed unable to settle in a creative zone. "It was obvious Joe wasn't really there," said Kosmo. "There was a lot going on on the home front. The sessions didn't really work out." Only one, never released tune emerged satisfactorily from the sessions. "The Cool Impossible" was a song Joe worked up at Rockfield, a meandering, moody, piano-based tune, a song with lyrics about a past success.

**J**OE'S 15-YEAR RELATIONSHIP with Gaby Salter ended when he fell in love with Lucinda Henderson, who he'd met in Andover in May 1993. Joe and Gaby worked out the terms of the split between them: Gaby would keep the London house, Joe would keep his plastic bags of 'stuff'.

Meanwhile, in early 1994, rumours spread that The Clash would reform for America's touring Lollapalooza festival, inspired by Perry Farrell from Jane's Addiction, a William Morris client. "Perry really wanted The Clash to get back together," said Peter Kinnaird, who worked at William Morris on the projected reunion. "Mick was calling him, and then Joe was calling him separately. The story I heard about why they didn't ultimately do it was that Joe went to an Elastica show at The Roxy on Sunset and some kid came up to him and said, 'Are you going to rock the casbah?' and I heard that really put him off the idea."

That may have been the case with Lollapalooza. Yet ever since Joe had become involved with Lucinda, he had been almost obsessively determined to get The Clash back together. He needed a job and a source of income and inspiration. "Paul was extremely cautious about these endless conversations," said Tricia Ronane. "Suddenly it's apparent that no-one has spoken to Mick yet."





The Mescaleros, St Ann's Warehouse, Brooklyn, NYC, April 5, 2002



Mick Jones joins in with The Mescaleros, Acton Old Town Hall, 2002

## EYEWITNESS!

# "HOLD MY COAT, I'M GOING UP!"

Acton, London, November 2002: the closest we ever got to a Clash reunion...

ON NOVEMBER 15, 2002, Joe Strummer And The Mescaleros played a benefit show in support of striking firefighters at Acton Old Town Hall. Among the 200 audience members was Mick Jones – early in The Mescaleros' set, Strummer had announced his former bandmate was in the crowd before offering congratulations to him and his partner, Miranda, on the arrival of their baby, Stella, five days earlier. A few bars into the first song of the evening's encore, Clash favourite "Bankrobber", Jones turned to a fellow audience member, said, "Hold my coat, I'm going up," and

walked on stage, strapping on a guitar and joining in. It was the first time Strummer and Jones had shared a stage since Jones' departure from The Clash in 1983.

Jones, who also played "White Riot" and "London's Burning" that night, later confessed it was totally unplanned. "I didn't even take a guitar," he told *The Telegraph*. "I just took one of the ones at the side of the stage when that 'Hold my coat' moment came. I heard 'Bankrobber' strike up from the stage and I just felt compelled."

ROB HUGHES

When Mick Jones, now leader of BAD II, was contacted, he wasn't against Joe's scheme. At a meeting at Paul Simonon's home, Joe's first action was to apologise to Mick for having kicked him out of The Clash. At this moment Paul Simonon put his hand over Joe's mouth. "I'm not apologising," Paul said to Mick. "We were right to get rid of you." "I feel like I've been taken down an alley and beaten up," said Mick.

"Joe had said, 'Come on, let's get The Clash back together' on several occasions," said Mick Jones. "When we were talking about getting back together in the first half of the '90s, he was sitting with me in the Union Chapel in Islington. There was a rave going on: he'd just discovered raves, a bit late. We were sitting in the pews next to each other and we'd been talking about it. He just came out with it suddenly: 'Perhaps we shouldn't bother.' I said, 'OK.' And that was the end of that. That was probably the last time we were about to get back together again."

On May 31, 1995, Joe and Lucinda were married, eventually buying a home, tucked away in a red-soiled valley in the picturesque Quantock Hills to the north-west of Taunton. A new location can provide new opportunities; within 12 months, Joe had been offered a \$250,000 deal by Hellcat, the pet label project of Rancid's Tim Armstrong, with whom Joe had become friendly in LA when working on the soundtrack of John Cusack's *Grosse Pointe Blank*. By January 1999, Joe was in Battery Studios in Willesden for sessions that would result in *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, the album that brought Strummer back into the world.

AT THE AGE of 47, Strummer finally came back to regular public performance, touring the UK and US with his new group, The Mescaleros. His star was in the ascendant again – finally, that autumn, a Clash live LP was released, *From Here To Eternity*, boosted by Don Letts' 'authorised' doc, *Westway To The World*. More importantly, *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, Joe's first solo album since *Earthquake Weather*, hit the stores, much of the new material co-written with former Elastica member Antony Genn.

In October 1999, Strummer and The Mescaleros played two nights at London's Astoria, packed with men of a certain age in black leather jackets, a triumphant return heralded by both *The Guardian* and Radio London as 'the gig of the year'. A month later, they were at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. Standing at the casino's bar at four in the morning after many post-show drinks, I told Joe that for years he had seemed to be going through an ongoing minor nervous breakdown. He baulked at this, but admitted to having been locked into a state of long-term depression.

"When people have nervous breakdowns, they really flip out. We shouldn't treat them flippantly. It was more like depression, miserable-old-gitness."

How long were you depressed for?

"About five minutes. Until I had a spliff."

A moment later he tried to wriggle out of even this admission: "I'm not claiming to have been depressed. All I'll allow is that I didn't have any confidence and I thought the whole show was over: you can wear your brain out – like

"Joe Strummer and Graham Mellor are two very different things..."

ANTONY GENN



At the premiere for *Westway To The World*, with Jones and Simonon, 1999

on a knife-sharpening stone, run it until it shatters – and I just wanted to have some of it left. Smoking spliff saved me from that. But all that's happening for me now is just a chancer's bluff, you know. This is my Indian summer.

"If you read the biographies of greats like Sinatra or Dean Martin," Joe Strummer told me in Vegas that November, "there are always many years in the wilderness, when they hang on in there. I read a lot of lives of people in similar circumstances, and I began to see that in the long run everyone seemed to have the same thing going on: you either disappear, or you come back."

Things for Strummer were going better than they had for years, but there was a sense he remained unfulfilled, that however his life had turned out, it could have been better. Even now the spectre of The Clash and what they could have gone on to do if he hadn't destroyed them still haunted Joe.

Among Joe's entourage in Vegas was artist Damien Hirst. They had met at Peter Gabriel's Real World festival and Hirst recalled asking Joe then, for reasons you can't easily imagine: "What's the biggest thing you ever killed?"

Joe didn't even have to think about it.

"My career," he had replied. ☺

Chris Salewicz is the author of *Redemption Song: The Definitive Biography Of Joe Strummer* (HarperCollins), the new print version of which is out in September. A new e-book edition will be published on August 21





# CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

## Lynyrd Skynyrd

GARY ROSSINGTON – truly the last of a dying breed – recalls the high times and awful lows as the original Skynyrd's sole survivor...



### JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, 1971

That's the original Lynyrd Skynyrd band. Actually we were brought up on old blues and country music here in America, but the British Invasion, The Beatles and the Stones and The Yardbirds, were where we got our inspiration from at first. Allen [Collins, right] and Ronnie [Van Zant, third right] and myself [second right] were the three musketeers who stayed together through different bands in the '60s. We changed members, but we just wanted to have a good rock'n'roll band, you know.



### ATLANTA, GEORGIA, 1973

That's Al Kooper, producing our first album. Al sort of discovered us. He was a big influence and a good friend, we were asking him all the stories about Hendrix and the good old days. We were just young guys. I turned 22 when we toured with The Who that year, and we were so star-struck. We had just played little clubs and church dances around town. With The Who, we started with 20,000 people. It freaked us out, and we started drinking that day.



### SAN FRANCISCO, 1974

We went out to a club to see Sly Stone, and this gang of Chicanos followed us out, and just came on our tour bus and started looking around. We asked them to leave, and they beat the hell out of us. Ronnie got beat up pretty bad. The guy he was fighting was an ex-Golden Gloves champion. About 50 of them came by the hotel the next day and made us pay \$35 for a shirt that one of 'em ripped. It was a cool experience, though.



### CANADA, 1976

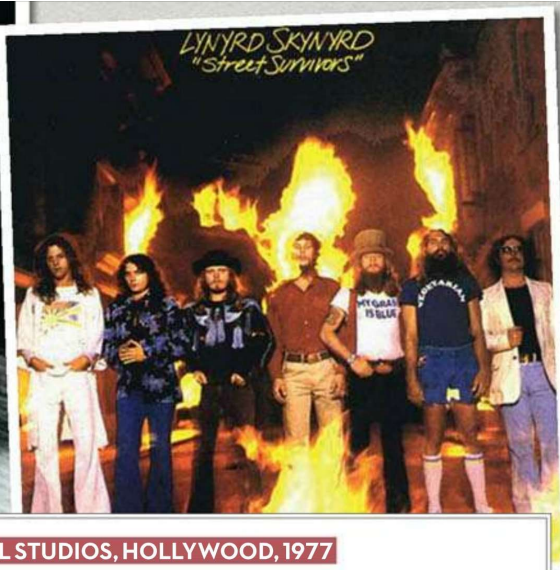
Our manager, Peter Rudge, was The Who's manager, too. So we were real close, and when we heard Keith Moon had died, it was a big shock – he was just so young and vibrant. I remember we were in New York once when Keith was in town, and he saw this beautiful, expensive old table in an antiques shop, and he loved it so much, he sat at the store window, pulled out a paper bag and ate his lunch on that table. They called the cops.





#### JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, 1976

We decided to get some backing singers on the road, The Honkettes, because "Sweet Home Alabama" and a few other recordings had girl backing vocals. That was when I got into an automobile accident, doing Quaaludes. Everyone was doing what I was doing, I just got in a wreck one night. It could've been all of them, too. Back in those days, it seemed every band got ripped off, and got into drugs and it ruined 'em.



#### UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, HOLLYWOOD, 1977

The original *Street Survivors* sleeve. We did the photos on the set where *The Sting* had been filmed, and went in the middle of these flames. Then the plane crash [on October 20, 1977, three days after the album's release, which killed Van Zant, Steve and Cassie Gaines, and roadie Dean Kilpatrick], oh, it was horrible. Something about it comes up most every day. We were family and had the world by the tail, and then boom.

#### MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, NASHVILLE, 1979

Charlie Daniels [left] asked us to play, because we hadn't got together for two years, because it was such a devastating thing. We jammed with Charlie, and then we all did "Free Bird". It was the first time we'd played it in two years, and it was a heavy thing. Everybody was crying and hugging each other. Charlie wanted to be a healing source for us, because we weren't going to get back together, ever.



#### ON TOUR, 1980

The Rossington Collins Band. Allen [Collins] and I started it to get away from Skynyrd. We put the female lead singer Dale Krantz in, so it wouldn't be compared to that. We had a good little career for a couple of years, and then we fell apart with emotions, and all the drugs and drinking. We were still getting over the plane crash. It was a lot of hard times, and weird feelings playing again, so we went our separate ways.

#### WALDORF ASTORIA HOTEL, NEW YORK, 2006

Being inducted in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Of course that was a great honour. I was happy that the guys who aren't with us any more, Ronnie and Allen and Steve and Leon [Wilkeson], were put in. Every time I see pictures of the old guys, and the guys that I was raised with in the first original band, it hurts. Especially the recent guys, like Billy Powell [second left, who died in 2009]. It's hard to see 'em.



#### ON TOUR WITH ZZ TOP, 2011

Not the original band, but everyone seems to like it, and we love spreading the word about the guys that aren't here now. I'm sure I won't last too much longer, I'm getting up there in age. But I'd rather keep the others' memories alive. I've seen a lot of great bands, once they quit playing, fade away. So I thought I'd keep the name going, while I'm still alive.

*Last Of A Dying Breed* by Lynyrd Skynyrd is out on Roadrunner Records on September 17



Kick up the jams — CRB onstage at the Beachland Ballroom, Cleveland, June 23, 2012: (l-r) Adam MacDougall, Neal Casal, Chris Robinson, George Sluppick, Mark Dutton



# WHAT A LONG, STRANGE

Far from the arenas he played with The Black Crowes, CHRIS ROBINSON is chasing a dream of Cosmic American Music around the backroads of the States. Uncut joins up with his Grateful Dead-like Brotherhood in Cleveland: “Hippies, beatniks, demure anarchists — there’s lots of us out there!”

Story: Andy Gill Photo: Guy Eppel





# TRIP IT'S BEEN...

(SLIGHT RETURN)

**"W**ELCOME ON BOARD!"

Chris Robinson flings wide the door to the tourbus and, beaming, waves *Uncut* into his domain. The last time I met Chris was 1994 in Memphis, when he was perched atop the pinnacle of rock stardom with The Black Crowes, and starting to show the strain. Since then, he's been married a few times, shifted his home to Los Angeles, partaken deeply of nature's psychedelic bounty, and significantly altered his musical outlook. He looks better for it: calm, brimful of bonhomie and brown-rice energy, perfectly at ease with his place in the

world. Wherever that is. "Whatever name you wanna put on me," he says. "Hippy, beatnik, counter-culture, bohemian, demure anarchist – I don't know what to call it, but I know there's lots of us out there."

Outside, Cleveland is hot and humid. But all is cool aboard the bus, a waft of incense hanging in the air as one of Miles' spacier sets pipes quietly from the sound system, its exploratory mood an analogue of sorts for Chris' own manner. Bric-a-brac litters the interior – a cupboard door features a photo of Rahsaan Roland Kirk playing three saxophones simultaneously; a pinboard houses old Dr John and Staple

I'M YOUR FAN



➤ "Chris is a rare breed of musician: an adventurous spirit, an astute band-leader, a soulful singer and guitarist, and an artist who is always expanding his musical boundaries. I love his questing mind, not to mention his encyclopaedic knowledge of American music, and I look forward to our making music together whenever we can."

**Phil Lesh**



→ Singers singles; and by the sink a large ceramic owl perches quizzically. This bus has been home to the Chris Robinson Brotherhood while they have been on the sort of adventures that rock bands rarely get the chance to embark upon nowadays.

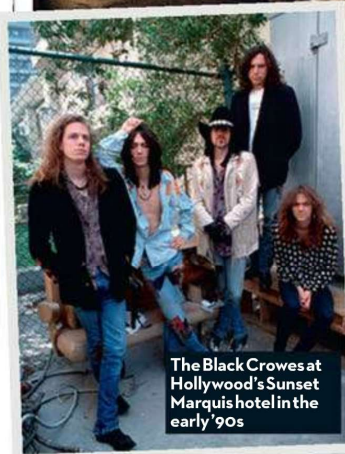
The CRB have been touring now for well over a year, building a fanbase by word of mouth, posting performances online and only recently recording in a studio. The result, *Big Moon Ritual*, is an album of seven serpentine tracks that take their own sweet time uncoiling, in the style of their closest obvious forebears, the Grateful Dead. Once it's wormed its benign way into your head, it just won't go away.

"To be honest, I thought people would be taking the piss more," Chris admits. "Here we are, meandering along in our little dreamscapes, with these weird lyrics. But we're not begging for attention. There's no pandering! And there's no attitude. I think it's pretty obvious we couldn't care less."

**T**HERE ARE LIMITS to Robinson's nonchalance, though: it's equally obvious that this trip couldn't be undertaken without a certain steely determination on his part. Year-long tours don't organise themselves, songs don't get written without someone bothering to have an idea. And the band's regard for their audience is clear. As Chris acknowledges, "there's never a moment in the day when I don't know that I'm blessed that anyone ever came to see me in anything I did, starting with Mr Crowe's Garden in Atlanta in 1985, through to tonight. 'Cos I'm a weird dude, y'know?!"

He's certainly that. While his shaggy mane and beard, and T-shirt and jeans, might suggest an unkempt metal fan with no deeper interest than the possibility of a Guns N'Roses reunion, Robinson is a well-read fellow who can discourse at length on anything from British comedy to Russian science-fiction, from avant-garde jazz to musique concrète. And the music he plays on the bus is weirder than any other musician I've met, ranging from the classical electronic compositions of Morton Subotnick to the garage psychedelia of his current favourite band, White Fence. He's always alert to contemporary developments, whatever the impression given by his band's affection for the Dead.

These days, Chris plays regularly with Phil Lesh and Bob Weir; but for a long time he used to hate the Dead, largely



because he disliked Deadheads who refused to listen to anything else.

"I had already sold four or five million albums by the time I first went to see the Grateful Dead," he admits. "I was the biggest proponent of psychedelia – anything out there drug-related, I was interested in; but not the Grateful Dead. Then on the *Shake Your Money Maker* tour, we had this security guy called Don, and he said to me, 'You're a weird kid – you listen to every '60s and '70s band except the Grateful Dead,' and he gave me a CD of *Workingman's Dead*. I put it on, 'Uncle John's Band' came on, and the room was

## HOW TO BUY

## HARD TO HANDLE! The lowdown on Chris Robinson's records



### THE BLACK CROWES *Shake Your Money Maker*

DEF AMERICAN, 1990

Raw blues-rock raunch built around the classic Stones/Faces template, the Crowes' five-million-selling debut included their interpretation of Otis Redding's "Hard To Handle", and the spunky "Jealous Again".

8/10



### THE BLACK CROWES *The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion*

DEF AMERICAN, 1992

The most potent realisation of the Crowes' 1972 sound, *TSHAMC* catches Robinson in all his snake-hipped, velvet-flared glory, on gospelly rockers like "Sting Me" and "Remedy".

9/10



### CHRIS ROBINSON *New Earth Mud*

REDLINE, 2002

Though meandering and uncertain of direction, Robinson's solo debut does lay down some pointers to his future; and in "Ride" and "Sunday Sound", includes songs subsequently developed into CRB standards.

7/10

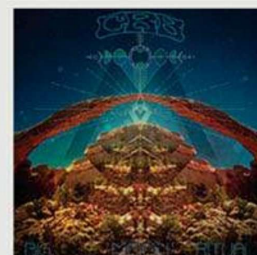


### THE BLACK CROWES *Before The Frost... Until The Freeze*

SILVER ARROW, 2009

Recorded in front of a live audience at Levon Helm's studio, this sees the reformed Crowes on fine form. In "I Ain't Hiding" and "Appaloosa", it features some highlights of the CRB's set.

8/10



### CHRIS ROBINSON **BROTHERHOOD** *Big Moon Ritual*

SILVER ARROW, 2012

The year on the road has paid off, with a slim portfolio of long songs which morph between country, rock, soul and the avant-garde, with guitar work redolent of the Dead and Allmans.

9/10





Band of brothers: (c/wise from top left) Adam MacDougall onstage, the group outside their bus, Chris and Possible Dust Clouds, some more bus time, Mark Dutton and Neal Casal fit in some practice...



## SPIRITUAL HOME

## WELCOME TO FELTON (POP.: 4057)

**Check out the tiny town where CRB's sound was forged**

► Situated north of Santa Cruz, the town of Felton is one of the tiny, out-of-the-way places in which the Chris Robinson Brotherhood established their reputation through repeated visits to a local Mexican restaurant, Don Quixote's (below).

"It holds about 300 people, and we started playing there on Tuesday nights," says Chris. "It was kind of a galvanising thing for us, because it was a cathartic, quasi-religious, tripping, dancing scene: we could build up this energy. All these old outlaw rural hippies live up there, and we would really get down there. It's funny 'cos Felton's such a small place, about 50 metres long, but they have a healthfood store, a place selling crystals, a marijuana dispensary..."

"And there's a ukulele shop next door, too," adds Neal Casal. "It has everything we need!"

"Our joke used to be that we were easily one of the four or five most popular bands in Felton! People would give us T-shirts that they had made, saying, 'Where the fuck is Felton, California?' It's fun when you're still hands-on with your scene like that. You have to build your culture on the run."

different. Then I went to see them at the Omni in Atlanta, with 14,000 people tripping off their faces, and I had never felt anything like that: the overwhelming sense of joy, and the sense of what is possible, just blew me away."

It was the first step on a personal odyssey that led him to form the Brotherhood, and embark upon the long, strange trip that, tonight, leads to the shoreline of Lake Erie and the Beachland Ballroom.

**T**HE BEACHLAND BALLROOM is in what was presumably the former Yugoslavian district of Cleveland: down the road is the Slovenian Cultural Center, and Beachland itself was once a Croatian club, its walls decorated with murals of villagers in traditional folk costumes. "It's a funky little place," reckons Chris. "It reminds me of early rock'n'roll shows, sock hops down at the union hall, that kind of thing."

Nearby are several secondhand record stores. Chris, guitarist Neal Casal and myself go crate-digging, emerging poorer but indisputably richer for it. Casal is made up about acquiring Graham Bond's *We Put Our Magick On You* and Gabor Szabo's *Dreams*, which he's been hunting for a year, while Chris buys so much vinyl, from folk legend Elizabeth Cotten to Stockhausen, that he needs a box to carry it in. "I'll have to smuggle this in past my wife," he smirks. His den back home contains a large stack of weird, ancient vinyl that his wife refuses to let him play in the rest of the house. On top of that stack, he confides, rests Third Ear Band's *Alchemy*.

The band play two nights at Beachland, of two sets apiece – around three hours each night. The sets comprise album tracks like "Tulsa Yesterday" and "Star Or Stone", a few choice morsels from Robinson's earlier career, and covers including Hank Ballard & The Midnighters' "Let's Go, Let's Go, Let's Go" and The Beach Boys' "Sail On, Sailor". Friday's show has that tight-but-loose feel that comes from seasoned musicians at ease in each other's presence: drummer George Sluppick anchors proceedings with relaxed Memphis fatback grooves, around which bassist Mark Dutton dances with the instinctive spirit of Rick Danko; Black Crowe Adam

"The idea was an experiment, it was only supposed to last two months..."

NEAL CASAL

MacDougall brings diverse wizardry to his keyboards, laying down choogling Clavinet funk lines, R'n'B piano licks, or bursts of abstract electronics. Atop it all, the guitars of Robinson and Casal interweave with graceful ease.

Chris, meanwhile, is singing as well as ever, strong but not strident, his melodic lines fattened by the country-rock harmonies crucial to his conception of "cosmic American music". The CRB really are like the Dead when they get in full flow – there's the same blend of cosmic peregrination, guitars, electronics and harmonies – and there's a congenial

groove to their playing that's persuasively danceable.

"We swing hard in this band," confirms Chris. "I've been in a band that rocks, that's pretty much all they do, and God love 'em! But any band is a collaboration, and the one thing I knew was gonna be a big part of our language was we were gonna swing. When you go out to see a band and dance, usually you're dealing with pretty shallow music; but why can't we inject emotion, and poetry, and life into that?"

**T**HE IDEA BEHIND the band originated around a decade ago in Robinson's *New Earth Mud* solo album, and gained momentum in the jams he and Jonathan Wilson established at the latter's Laurel Canyon studio, involving MacDougall, members of The Jayhawks, Wilco, Vetiver and Dawes, alongside veterans like Barry Goldberg and Steve Miller sidemen Gerald Johnson and Gary Mallaber.

"When I did the *New Earth Mud* stuff, my perspective hadn't changed enough," Chris admits. "My only idea was I had to somehow, under cover of darkness on a raft, get down the river away from The Black Crowes! This time, we had the remnants of something happening at the jams with Jonathan. They were a real galvanising moment for a lot of people from different generations, who were into something freeform and loose and spacey and fun."

"So I had all these songs which I felt were nuanced and dynamic, and I wanted to stretch





→ out. That's what we were setting out to do, me and Adam, but when Neal came in, that's when it changed."

Chris first met Neal Casal when he was playing with Beachwood Sparks, who supported the Crowes in 2001. Both went on to other things – Chris began his solo odyssey, Neal spent several years with Ryan Adams & The Cardinals – but when Chris called, Neal had no hesitation signing up.

"My connection to Chris and his music and where he's coming from goes back a long way," says Neal. "Now we're together, it flows so easily. When I sing harmonies with him, it drops in so naturally, it's just a perfect fit.

"The original idea was an experiment, it was only supposed to last two months, now it's going on two years," he continues. "Chris had those California shows booked before he had a band, that's how much faith he had in himself and his idea. We rehearsed just eight times and then played to a packed house in Los Angeles, jumped straight into the Hollywood fire and did a three-hour, two-set show. It was an amazing leap of faith. By the middle of December we had done 120 shows, on eight rehearsals!"

"I have a certain energy, a vibe," says Chris. "I'm not the most technically gifted, but I always have an idea, and a vibe, and if everyone can pick up on the vibe and bring their thing, we've got something that has movement, that's ethereal but is tangible at the same time. All we expect from this is to be able to make a joyful noise! Sometimes it's magic, sometimes it flops."

**B**OTH FRIDAY AND Saturday nights at Beachland, the magic is happening. Saturday's sets are utterly beguiling, with a warm, welcoming sound that's well received by the 500 or so punters. The first set opens with "Tomorrow Blues", its languid lope setting the tone for the evening. There are covers of "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues", "Do Right Woman", and others from Hoyt Axton and Tony Joe White. Around me, people are swaying from side to side, their bodies responding to the insinuating rhythms of the music. It occurs to me that this must have been what it was like at the original ballrooms in the early days of the San Francisco freak scene, when the Dead were, by Jerry Garcia's admission, first and foremost a dance band: it seems entirely appropriate when the CRB close with a gentle version of "Sugaree", once a cornerstone of the Dead's set.

"I was never afraid to reference the things that inspired me," admits Robinson. "There is still a mystique about California, the mythology of the place is still very much intact in people's psyches. There's definitely something about Cali that's unique, and how that uniqueness manifests itself, for me, for us, is musical."

There's also a certain kind of anonymity, for a well-known face like his, in living in a place as packed with famous people as L.A. For a while, Chris was married to actress Kate Hudson, which brought a different degree of media attention to his rock'n'roll fame.

"In that culture, everyone needs to be famous," he says. "You meet all the big actors in Hollywood, and they have a mystique. It was an affirmation to me of who I was – I never needed to succumb to other people's shallowness. I'm happy to live my clandestine little life, and I never needed the sycophantic part of that."

The city also serves as a convenient hub to some of the most beautiful country in the world, from the Santa Ynez Valley to the High Sierras and the Pacific Coast.

"It's a beautiful feeling to know that not one dude here is on a money trip – 'cos there isn't any!"

CHRIS ROBINSON



The magic bus: Chris relaxes on the Brotherhood's couch

"Within two hours you can be skiing, and at the beach," says Chris. "That stuff's important, for what I feel in terms of inner adventure – though I'm not mountain-biking or weird stuff like that."

So when he decided to form his new band, he knew it had to be based in California, which still has an abundance of roadhouses with good sound systems and knowledgeable audiences. "We have people come to see us who were at the Acid Tests, and saw the New Riders, Miles Davis and Sandy Bull," he marvels.

He's also aware of the need for hands-on involvement in establishing band mythology, overseeing the design of the CRB's merchandise involving hirsute god-figure, Captain Nebula, and Possible Dust Clouds – the ceramic owl I noticed earlier on the bus. The name, it transpires, came first, from a road sign observed by Chris and Neal during a drive on which they listened to *Live/Dead* eight times through. The owl itself was picked up later, and duly christened. An ever-present onstage accompaniment at every show they play, Possible Dust Clouds now has his own Facebook page, with nearly a thousand friends. "He's not a totem," says Chris, "he's more like a magician's familiar."

Whatever he is, Possible Dust Clouds seems to have good vibes. The sessions for *Big Moon Ritual* went with unprecedented ease: in six days, they had done 96 takes of 27 different songs, enough for a second album, *The Magic Door*.

"If everyone does A+B=C, I wanna see what C+F equals, y'know?" says Chris. "My name's on the marquee for pragmatic purposes; but everyone here has everyone's back. It's a beautiful feeling to know that not one dude here is on a money trip – 'cos there's no fuckin' money! Haha! We laugh about if we went from playing 500-seaters to 5,000-seaters, and there was some money around, we'd all start resenting one another! We're looking forward to our demise!"

"There's no amount of money or fame I need. I've had tons of money, and I've been more famous than anyone with ideas like me should ever be. So what's the big deal? You need to find your trip and get into it, if you'll pardon me speaking Californian, and there's no reason we shouldn't have our own little adventure with this. This is our cult, man, and it's fun!"

*The Magic Door* is released on September 11 by Silver Arrow Recordings

## HIGH TIMES

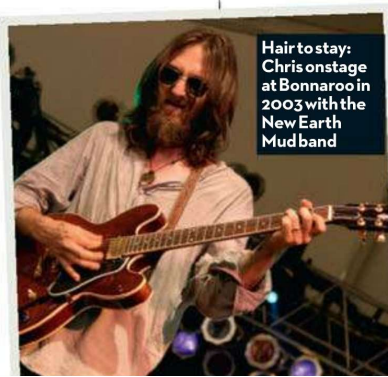
### "SILVER CLOUDS OF BLISS..."

The Chris Robinson guide to drug use...

**1. BE OPEN:** "I don't think there's any utopian answer in obliterating yourself on silver clouds of bliss. But I do think, in tandem with active progressive attitudes, that you can incorporate psychedelics into something positive in your life."

**2. BE COOL:** "I took an ayahuasca trip seven or eight years ago, and my life has never been the same. I was on a beach in central California, with the universe gently stroking my head and telling me, 'You're totally fine, don't worry about anything – you made the right decision in the life you've chosen. You never have to deviate, follow your heart and soul and mind, where those come together.' Ever since, it's reaffirmed my course."

**3. BE DISCERNING:** "I knew that if ecstasy could make you enjoy that boom-tss-boom-tss, then that drug was not for me. If Keith Richards and William Burroughs didn't get high on it, leave it alone! By the time your life has led you to snorting bath salts, you're already susceptible to vampirism, faecal play or whatever."



Hair to stay: Chris onstage at Bonnaroo in 2003 with the New Earth Mudband



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THE MAKING OF...

# Pump Up The Volume

M|A|R|R|S

Colourbox and AR Kane co-create a one-off dance hit that almost destroys their label: "It introduced me to the uglier side of the music biz," says 4AD founder Ivo Watts-Russell

**"O**NCE A YEAR," says 4AD's founder Ivo Watts-Russell, "our accountant Nigel Bolt would ask for a total 4AD sales projection for that year. I'd often shrug and estimate about 10- to 20,000.

That's the kind of units we were shifting then. It's astonishing to think now that one of our singles ended up selling more than a million copies."

It is extraordinary that this austere indie label, best known for erecting the sonic cathedrals of Dead Can Dance and the Cocteau Twins, was responsible for one of the biggest and most transformative dance releases of the 1980s. But everything about "Pump Up The Volume" seemed extraordinary. One of the earliest examples of indie music crossing over with dance culture, it gave Rough Trade Distribution its first No 1 hit, and became the biggest selling 12-inch in America for 1988. Its innovative use of sampling, meanwhile, helped pave the way for records both good ("Doctorin' The House", "Beat Dis", "Theme From S-Express") and bad ("Loadsamoney", "Pump Up The Bitter").

M|A|R|R|S was Watts-Russell's attempt to team new 4AD signings AR Kane with the label's old boys, Colourbox. The acronym took the initials of the musicians – the M and S being Colourbox's Martyn and Steve Young, the A and the R being AR Kane's Rudy and Alex (the other R was AR Kane's bassist and unofficial third member, Russell Simons). For all its success, the story ended in legal recriminations and royalty disputes. AR Kane left the label. Colourbox, who masterminded the single, never recorded again. "It was a terrific single," says Watts-Russell. "But it was one that introduced me to the uglier side of the music industry. And it very nearly wrecked the label." **JOHN LEWIS**

**IVO WATTS-RUSSELL:** AR Kane had recorded a single with One Little Indian, but were frustrated because they couldn't get [label boss] Derek Birkett to commit to another record. So they signed with us.

**RUDY TAMBALA:** I can't say we were that comfortable at 4AD. Everyone there wore black and had shaved heads, like in a Zen monastery, while we were two black cockneys with dreads! We told Ivo we wanted to do a Sugarhill Gang-type dance track with Adrian Sherwood.

**WATTS-RUSSELL:** Adrian Sherwood seemed a little obvious, so I suggested they work with Martyn [Young], to keep things in-house. It was also a conscious attempt to get Martyn back in the studio. Martyn had made some amazing singles in 1986, but we were concerned he had writer's block...

**TAMBALA:** Ivo gave us a load of Colourbox records. We weren't fans, but they had some great drum sounds. We wanted to take our weedy, tin-pot drum machines and make them sound massive and echoey, like on Janet Jackson's "Control". Initially, Martyn had an idea for an ambient track, based on a piano riff by Cocteau Twins collaborator Harold Budd. We put lots of feedback and noise over the top, but it didn't really work.

## KEY PLAYERS



**Martyn Young**  
Co-writer,  
programming,  
production, keys



**Rudy Tambala**  
Guitars,  
co-writer



**Ivo Watts-Russell**  
4AD founder



**CJ Mackintosh**  
DJ, samples



**Ray Conroy**  
Colourbox  
manager



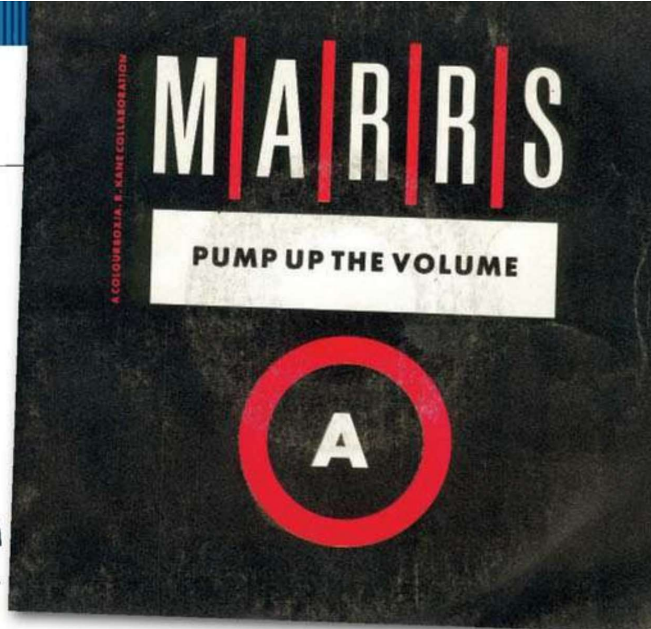
**Rik Lander**  
Video director

Steve [Young] and the engineer John Fryer, working on something we'd been doing at home, with a bassline and a basic drumbeat. I was fascinated by the timing issues of rare groove, and calculated that certain funk breakbeats had fractional delays on certain beats, so I tried to

**MARTYN YOUNG:** We ditched the piano track to work on their track, "Anitina (The First Time I See She Dance)", which ended up on the flipside of "Pump Up The Volume". We didn't get on badly, we just didn't have a lot in common.

**WATTS-RUSSELL:** The collaboration didn't work. "Pump Up The Volume" was a Colourbox track, a continuation of what they'd been doing for years. They used about three seconds of AR Kane's guitar.

**YOUNG:** There were at least six sessions for that song. The first was just me,







MJAJRIS, minus AR Kane, in 1987: "It was a Colourbox track...they used about three seconds of AR Kane's guitar"

replicate these delays using our drum machines and sequencers. The bottle sounds that run through the track were a nod to Prince's "Sign O' The Times". There was also an amazing piano sample that crossfades into a backwards snare. Once we had that, we knew we had a track.

**RAY CONROY:** As well as managing Colourbox, I tour managed all the 4AD bands. Every time we went to the States me and Ivo would take a tape recorder and record hip-hop stations, where DJs would do these fantastic megamixes. "Pump Up The Volume" is basically a three-minute version of those shows.

**YOUNG:** We loved those hip-hop mixes, but they lacked form. We wanted to do a sample-based record with a kind of narrative. I was also subliminally influenced by certain tracks from Pink Floyd's *Obscured By Clouds* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. We got AR Kane in to put down some guitar feedback, more

to keep Ivo happy. The sounds they got with a Roland space echo were unique and unusual, and worked as part of the call-and-response section, with The JB's.

**TAMBALA:** That's not how I remember it. I was around Blackwing Studios [Southwark, London] for several sessions while the initial track was made. Steve wasn't there, he was on holiday. It was only when the DJs Dave Dorrell and CJ

Mackintosh came along that we were sidelined.

**YOUNG:** I played the initial demo to Ivo, who liked it enough to suggest another mix at Blackwing. That was when Dave and CJ got involved. Earlier that year Dave had asked me, as a favour, to help him on some MTV adverts he was working on. As a return

favour, I asked Dave to come in with some of his records to sample. It was Dave's idea to get CJ involved, as a scratching expert.

**CJ MACKINTOSH:** I'd just won the UK DMC

championship earlier that year, and was DJing with a ZTT band called Nasty Rox Inc. Dave Dorrell managed me. One day he asked if I wanted to do scratching on a track for £200. He went to buy some vinyl from Groove Records, and I met him down at Blackwing later that day. He and Martyn had already laid down Eric B & Rakim's "pump up the volume" sample.

**YOUNG:** Dave is a good club DJ, but his timing wasn't great in the studio. But CJ was brilliant. It was a happy and exciting time with everyone pitching in ideas and bouncing off each other.

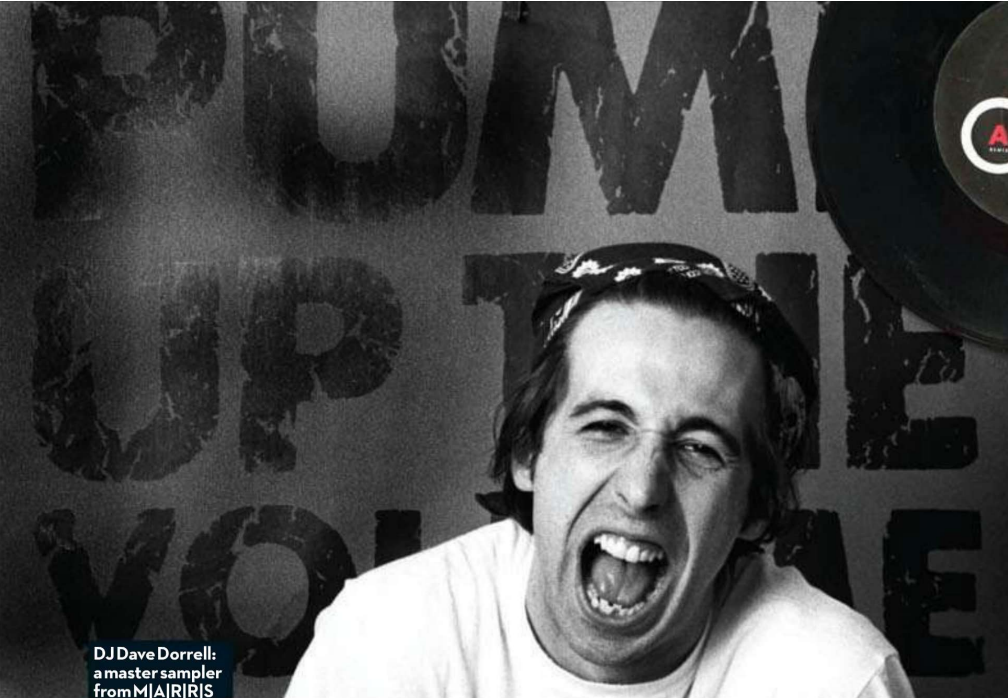
**MACKINTOSH:** The idea was to make a song from samples. We did it in eight-bar sections. I spun most of the samples on a Technics turntable, straight onto tape. We got some white labels of that first mix printed up and I played it in clubs. It was 113bpm – faster than a hip-hop track, slower than a house track – and it blew up fast. Coldcut wanted to remix it, but Dave and I suggested we do it instead. So, we went back in Blackwing with Martyn and two huge crates of our records. The more obvious hip-hop samples were my ideas. The stranger, more exotic ones were Dave's.

**CONROY:** That was the main mix, with

*"It seemed like  
we were in our  
lawyer's office nearly  
every day!"*

MARTYN YOUNG





DJ Dave Dorrell: a mastersampler from M|A|R|R|S

→ all the samples on it. We printed up a few dozen white labels and distributed it around DJs and journalists. There was a bit of a buzz about it.

**YOUNG:** We needed a video, and it was a no-brainer that we'd choose The Duvet Brothers, a "scratch video" partnership who did the video for Colourbox's "Shotgun".

**RIK LANDER:** In a lot of ways, what we did in the Duvet Brothers with images was very similar to what Colourbox did with sound, and we got on well. We'd made these astronaut-themed idents for a channel called Music Box, using footage of NASA astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts. The NASA stuff was in the public domain, and the old Soviet Union weren't going to sue us for copyright infringement. The only original shot we filmed was of a dancer called Cath Coffey [from the *Stereo MCs*], who appears briefly in the promo.

**MACKINTOSH:** When 4th & Broadway signed the single for America, we had to do another mix in Trident Studios. We just took off the samples we might get into trouble for! We were allowed to use any samples from 4th & Broadway or Island, and got an MC to re-record some of the vocal chants and James Brown grunts, as he was getting litigious.

**LANDER:** The video for the US mix is better. We had a couple more days to work on that. I edited it at Diverse Productions in Olympia, which is where I worked at the time. The footage fitted perfectly with the music. That was the point of scratch video: finding connections and meanings that were hidden in footage.

**CONROY:** I initially wanted Champion Records to do a remix. They'd just released a really good single with Sybil called "My Love Is Guaranteed", produced by Phil Harding, who worked with Stock Aitken Waterman. Then, about a week later, we get this 12-inch – the so-called "Red Ink Mix" – which was basically the backing track to "Pump Up The Volume" with Sybil's vocal on top of it! That set up the ill-feeling for SAW, and the first single used a very short sample from SAW's "Roadblock". Then Martyn did a little interview in *Record Mirror*...

**YOUNG:** I said something about "bunging 'Roadblock' all over the remix", because they'd used our track on one of their artist's records.

**WATTS-RUSSELL:** SAW crucified us for that. They had Rick Astley at No 1 while we were at No 2, and they slapped an injunction on us. We got it overturned in 24 hours, but it involved going to cloisters in the City, to meet with barristers and so-called "musical experts". In the end, we agreed to pay SAW £25,000 to some tabloid-friendly charity of their choice [*Great Ormond Street Hospital*]. They knew what they were up to. They were chancers.

**YOUNG:** The legal position concerning sampling was unclear in those days. Dave made sure that most of the records we sampled had *already* been sampled, to minimise the risks. Legally, we eventually had problems with 4AD, AR Kane and SAW, and problems with the use of some samples in America. It seemed like we were in our lawyer's office nearly every day!

**MACKINTOSH:** Me and Dave ended up doing most of the promotion. We did *The Roxy*, ITV's short-lived answer to *Top Of The Pops*. We pretended to scratch with two dodgy dancers in front of us. It's hilariously bad!

**CONROY:** Maybe I shouldn't mention this, but I had a little touring operation – a couple of dancers, a DJ and an MC – doing a 25-minute "Pump Up The Volume" megamix around Italy and Israel! We were coining it in while we could.

**MACKINTOSH:** There was a verbal agreement that Dave and I would get some royalties, but there was no contract. We were both pretty naïve. I got a few decent-sized cheques over the next year, and Dave and I got a lot of remixing work on

the back of it. But I'm sure I'd have done better if I was more clued up!

**WATTS-RUSSELL:**

Martyn wanted to release it as a Colourbox record. I said no: for better or for worse, AR

Kane had been the catalyst for this happening. I fought AR Kane's corner, but I don't think they were very gentlemanly. If anyone should have recognised it as a windfall, it should have been them.

**TAMBALA:** As our lawyer, John Kennedy, told us: "Where there's a hit, there's a writ." Wise words. He fought our corner, and Ivo did, too.

**YOUNG:** It's a shame we didn't all get it together to do another record. There are a lot of interesting areas we could have explored.

**WATTS-RUSSELL:** It's astonishing to think that "Pump Up The Volume" sold over a million. I'd never had that experience of something exploding. We could not keep it in stock. Every few hours we'd order another 10,000 copies from some pressing plant. I spoke on the phone 20 times a day to Simon Harper, who dealt with marketing at Rough Trade. It was mad.

**CONROY:** It all went a bit odd afterwards. Everyone fell out. AR Kane left 4AD, so did I. I got Colourbox a massive deal with Phonogram and EMI. But it never happened. Martyn virtually retired and became a recluse.

**YOUNG:** Recently I've had twin boys, who take up most of my time. I'm too knackered to do anything else! What do I think of "Pump Up The Volume" now? I think it has a rough '80s charm.

**TAMBALA:** To be honest, I never much liked the original mix. It was the bare bones of a potentially magnificent track. The later mixes, which we had nothing to do with at all, were amazing and epic. I think that's CJ Mackintosh's genius. It was nothing to do with us or Colourbox – it was a product of the hip-hop and sampling community.

**WATTS-RUSSELL:** In all the huffing and puffing about royalties, I never heard Ray or

AR Kane suggest that CJ Mackintosh should get more money. There's one guy who should have made some money out of it. Still, I'm incredibly proud that we put out the first ever No 1 single to be distributed by Rough Trade, even nixing an injunction and so on. And it still sounds remarkable, 25 years on. ☺

## FACT FILE

• **Written by** Martyn Young, Steve Young, Rudy Tambala, Alex Ayuli

• **Performers:** Martyn Young (programming, keys), Steve Young (drum programming, keys), Rudy Tambala (guitars), Alex Ayuli (guitars), Russell Smith (bass), Dave Dorrell, CJ Mackintosh (samples)

• **Producer:** Martyn Young

• **Engineers:** John Fryer, Lincoln Fong

• **Recorded at:** Blackwing Studios, Trident Studios, The Townhouse Studio, London, May – October 1987

• **Released** August 3, 1987

• **UK chart position:** 1

• **US chart position:** 11

**ONRECORD** Colourbox's self-titled 4CD retrospective boxset is available from 4AD.

AR Kane's Complete Singles Collection is out on *One Little Indian* on October 1

## TIMELINE

**May 1987**  
M|A|R|R|S start their first recording sessions  
**July 1987**  
Original white label copies of "Pump Up


The Volume" released  
**August 24**  
First official mix of "Pump Up The Volume" released. Enters chart at No 34

**September 5, 1987**  
"Pump Up The Volume" remix released. Reaches No 2 in the UK chart.  
**November 1987**  
PWL serve an injunction

**October 3, 1987**  
Reaches No 1 in the UK chart  
**November 1987**  
The single enters the US chart, eventually

reaching No 11 on Billboard chart  
**December 12, 1987**  
"Pump Up The Volume" tops the US Billboard dance chart

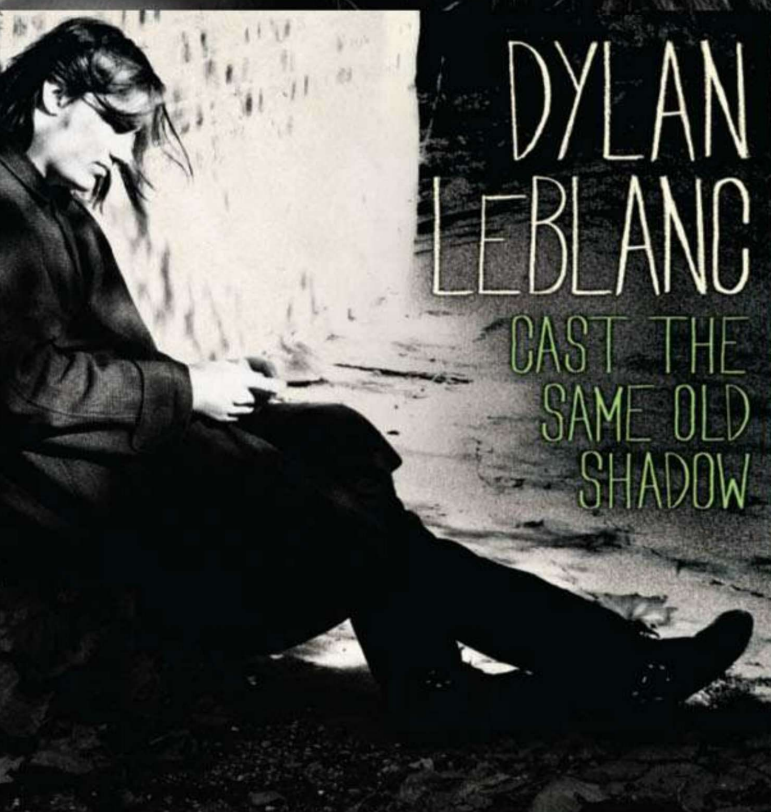




# Antony and the Johnsons CUT THE WORLD

THE NEW ALBUM OUT 6TH AUGUST

ROUGH  
TRADE



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SHADOW

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album of pained country soul"  
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## ALABAMA SHAKES

### BOYS & GIRLS

"Biggest breakthrough band of the decade"

NME

"A storming debut"

The Independent ★★★★★

"Alabama Shakes deliver a thundering update of golden-era soul  
and r&b filtered through a modern consciousness  
much as the *White Stripes* did with blues"

The Telegraph

THE DEBUT ALBUM OUT NOW

ROUGH  
TRADE



Story: David Cavanagh Photo: Fabio Lovino

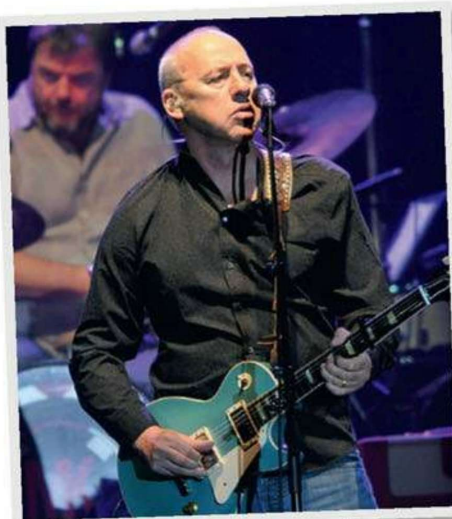
# 'Heaven is a place where the Delta meets the Tyne'

An unassuming bluesman from the North-East country, MARK KNOPFLER found his way into Bob Dylan's inner circle and then, as frontman of Dire Straits, into millions of record collections across the world. In a rare interview, he reflects on accidental superstardom and how to survive it — with grit, determination and a "glass half-full" worldview...

**M**ARK KNOPFLER'S NEW album, *Privateering*, is full of characters who probably never bought a Dire Straits album in their lives. One song is about the economic pressures facing sheep farmers. Another, "Corned Beef City", is about truck drivers getting up to something dodgy in Dagenham. Knopfler's ear for the vernacular of the underdog seems a far cry from the yuppie anthems that many still associate with Dire Straits. But it's worth remembering that "Money For Nothing", prior to its world domination, was a song about a man who worked in an appliance store.

"I've done a lot of manual jobs in my life," Knopfler reflects over mid-morning coffees in a Chelsea restaurant. "I never feel superior to anybody who's doing stuff like the guys in 'Corned Beef City'. There's a bit of a black market thing going on in that song. But... there but for the grace, you know? If I'd been broke and I'd had a family, who knows what I might have done to put money on the table?"

The stadia were big, and the fanbase included Princess Diana, but Knopfler's canvases were always on a more intimate, realistic scale than Dire Straits' monumental album sales (estimated at 120 million) would suggest. The real-life Sultans Of Swing — the south London jazz band who inspired the 1979 hit — play unnoticed on a tiny stage in a dingy pub. The hard-drinking motorcyclist in "News" (*Communique*) regards life as the quintessential game of chance, only to be reduced to a one-line item in the papers



Supporting Bob Dylan at the Manchester Arena, October 2011

when his luck runs out. Even "Telegraph Road" (*Love Over Gold*), a 14-minute frontier epic, begins with a solitary man building a cabin in the woods.

Knopfler, whatever his own successes in life, still writes the workingman's blues. *Privateering* is his seventh solo album since 1996. They tend to be certified silver rather than octuple platinum, but that's fine by him. He fronts a rootsy band of versatile players (folk, blues, country) who don't wear headbands and don't perform any more Dire Straits songs than they have to. "Play something we know," shouted a punter when Knopfler supported Bob Dylan at the Manchester Arena last October. Knopfler ignored the advice.

"The main thing for me now is the writing," he explains. "I like the travelling life and touring has always been an integral part of

who I am. But the thing about touring is that it's very seductive. If you're using it to run away from your problems — as I've done in the past — you can't, because at the end of the tour your problems will still be there. You learn to get your life in shape. You balance things out more sensibly."

The low-key Knopfler has arrived wearing a peaked cap and sunglasses. It's unlikely, though, that this is a disguise to avoid paparazzi. A frowning 62-year-old, he resembles a cross between Brian Eno and a pub landlord. Keeping both feet on the ground is a major theme in his conversation. Even when a famous person appears on *Privateering*





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“You have to be a certain  
kind of person to survive  
success. You need grit.  
Get up and go”

---



➔ (“Today Is Okay” is about the boxer Sonny Liston), the song recounts a normal, relaxing day at home. Friends round for lunch. Steak and potatoes. Mid-afternoon nap. Drive downtown and win the world heavyweight title with a knockout. Knopfler finds Liston’s matter-of-factness hilarious. But ask him if Dire Straits knowingly aligned themselves with the emerging compact disc format in order to shift 30 million copies of *Brothers In Arms*, and he’s every bit as disarming as Liston.

“No, it was just another record to me,” he says. “Phonogram was owned by Philips, who were pioneering CDs, so a sort of synchronisation went on. But it wasn’t a calculated business thing. This makes me laugh: what I was trying to do with *Brothers In Arms* was make an album without a snare drum. I was fed up with all that crap about getting good snare sounds in studios. So I wrote a load of songs that didn’t need a backbeat. Only three songs on the album had backbeats, and the irony was they all became huge hits. It was a complete accident. Everything critical-massed and *Brothers In Arms* went atomic.”

He shrugs. Going atomic. Just an ordinary day.

**K**NOPFLER WAS born in Glasgow but moved to Northumberland when he was eight. A Hank Marvin fan, he talked his parents into buying him an electric guitar – but, as he’s fond of recalling, he was so naïve about the instrument that he didn’t realise it needed an amplifier. One day in 1962, his elder sister Ruth brought home a record that was to have a profound influence: the debut by a new American folk singer. “It was the *Bob Dylan* album,” he nods, “the first one. I was what, 12... 13? Bob made instant sense to me. I knew exactly what he was talking about.” Knopfler began attending folk clubs and cultivated a love of Bert Jansch and The Incredible String Band. But Dylan had a way of reappearing in his life.

ADRIAN BOOTH/LEFT: REX FEATURES



Dire Straits meeting Charles and Diana after a gig for the Prince's Trust

“When Bob came to Newcastle in 1966, I was in a shop that day and I asked about a black lambswool jacket that I liked. I didn’t have the money for it, but I asked about it and the guy said, ‘I’ve just sold one of those to Bob Dylan.’ I thought ‘Wow!’ That evening I saw him play at the Odeon. First half: acoustic. Second half: black Telecaster, electric. I was in heaven. Then the boos started. Idiots.”

Thirteen years later, Knopfler was present at another controversial episode in Dylan’s career: the *Slow Train Coming* album that announced his conversion to Christianity. But this time Knopfler wasn’t in the audience; he

was in the band. Dylan, like everyone else, had become a Dire Straits fan. In May 1978 the little band with the self-mocking name had been a support act to the Climax Blues Band in England. By February 1979 they were a word-of-mouth phenomenon. They flew to America for the first time, and Dylan, in the audience at The Roxy in LA on March 29, identified Knopfler as the guitarist he wanted. Within days they were rehearsing together. Knopfler, a late developer who’d endured years of anonymity on the pub-rock circuit, was hailed for his finger-picking virtuosity and lauded as the most original guitarist in a decade. His philosophical tales of Newcastle and London (“Sultans Of Swing”, “Water Of Love”, “Wild West End”) were compared to classics. His band’s sound was anachronistic but fresh – laidback and precise – and his wryly husky voice was the perfect narrator.

*Dire Straits* became the highest-selling British debut LP since *Led Zeppelin*. The unassuming quartet – Mark, his brother David (rhythm guitar), John Illsley (bass) and Pick Withers (drums) – found themselves on an unstoppable rollercoaster.

“I had the ball under my arm and I was running,” Knopfler reminisces. “I was almost 30. This was what I’d waited for. So you pick up the ball and you run. You’re bumping into things and you get a bit damaged – and there’s a price to pay – but

## HOW TO BUY

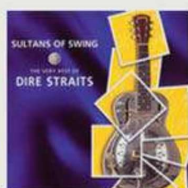
# HE'S THE SULTAN OF SWING... Your guide to the best of Mark Knopfler



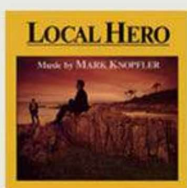
**DIRE STRAITS**  
*Dire Straits*  
(VERTIGO, 1978)  
The debut album chugged like a Tyneside JJ Cale, delighting anyone who thought such laidback grooves were obsolete. “Sultans Of Swing”, initially rejected by Radio 1 for “having too many lyrics”, was the band’s breakthrough hit.  
**9/10**



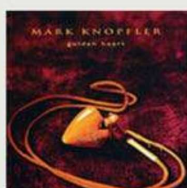
**DIRE STRAITS**  
*Making Movies*  
(VERTIGO, 1980)  
First sign of schisms in the band, but the music moved forward with a keyboard-embellished sound and a Springsteen-like songbook of rollerskating girls, lovesick Romeos, “neon-burning” funfairs and (gasp) S&M leather boys.  
**8/10**



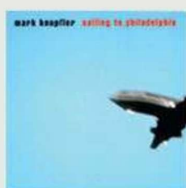
**DIRE STRAITS**  
*Sultans Of Swing: The Very Best Of Dire Straits*  
(MERCURY, 1998)  
The best compilation if you just want the hits. An ideal way to acquire “So Far Away” and “Money For Nothing” if you’re embarrassed about owning *Brothers In Arms*.  
**7/10**



**MARK KNOPFLER**  
*Local Hero*  
(VERTIGO, 1983)  
Bill Forsyth’s film highlighted the eerie beauty of Scotland’s landscapes. Knopfler’s soundtrack subtly combines Celtic flavours and haunting synths. The final theme is Newcastle United’s weekly run-out music.  
**7/10**



**MARK KNOPFLER**  
*Golden Heart*  
(MERCURY, 1996)  
First solo album, drawing musical influences from Ireland, Nashville and New Orleans’ French Quarter. Wide range of topics addressed, too, from Imelda Marcos’ shoe-buying addiction to the obsessive behaviour of autograph hunters.  
**7/10**



**MARK KNOPFLER**  
*Sailing To Philadelphia*  
(MERCURY, 2000)  
Classy hybrid of country, folk and blues with strong melodies but an understated feel. Van Morrison, whose music Knopfler’s now resembles, guests on one track. James Taylor and Gillian Welch also make appearances.  
**7/10**



**MARK KNOPFLER & EMMYLOU HARRIS**  
*All The Roadrunning*  
(MERCURY, 2006)  
Before Plant and Krauss there was Knopfler and Emmylou. Their voices harmonise courteously on this country-rock collaboration that took seven years to make. No *Grievous Angel*, but a pleasant listen.  
**6/10**







LIVE  
AID

generalisations," he replies when I ask if music went a bit too bland in the '80s. When I inquire what it was like to tour with Dylan, his answer is even shorter. "Like?"

"I just love music," he says later. "I suppose I like a synthesis of folk and blues. I think I once said that my idea of heaven was a place where the Delta meets the Tyne. I was exposed to a lot of English, Irish and Scottish folk music when I was younger. Celtic melodies are like home to me. I was once playing with some Irish musicians and I asked them, 'Are my melodies Irish or Scottish?' They said, 'Scottish. You can tell by the intervals.' I said, 'What's an interval?' I didn't know what they were talking about. But they knew, because they were proper folk musicians. These guys can place you to the West Highlands just from a little phrase that you've written."

The son of a Hungarian émigré whom he once described as a "socialist firebrand", Knopfler believes that his father's politics have informed the way he writes about the world. "It stays with you," he nods. "You have a conscience. You see things that move you. Things that break your heart." However, Knopfler is cagey about declaring his allegiances. Only once in the lifetime of Dire Straits did he write a song critical of the Government – "Iron Hand", about The Battle Of Orgreave, the most notorious confrontation of the Miners' Strike – and, tellingly, he waited seven years before he released it (*On Every Street*, 1991). He also waited until the fourth verse of the song before he finally came down on the side of the miners. "Funnily enough, I've been thinking of putting that one back in the setlist," he says. "That was a day when the politicians overstepped the mark. It was a cavalry charge by the police with those bloody big sticks. It was fearsome to watch. So graphic. So violent."

Did Dire Straits support the miners at the time?

"I'd only reform  
Dire Straits  
for musical,  
artistic reasons,  
certainly not for  
financial ones"

older. He revised a lot of his views. You have to get real."

And get more right-wing?

"Well..." he laughs, "not exactly. But you become more realistic. I was always cautious of any dogma in any shape or form. You know: 'This is the way.' I've always been the first person to be suspicious of stuff like that."

When the interview is over, Knopfler and his manager swap stories about Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis' manager, and the boxing promoter Don King. King once stepped over the unconscious body of his own fighter in order to be photographed congratulating the winner. Not even Dire Straits at their commercial height ever went that far. "You need toughness," Knopfler accepts. "But I don't like toughness when it becomes thuggishness. You should never confuse toughness with insensitivity." 📢

*Privateering* is released by Mercury on September 3

Illsley and  
Knopfler at Live  
Aid, Wembley  
Stadium, London,  
July 13, 1985

Country-rock  
collaborators  
Knopfler and  
Emmylou Harris

THAT  
AIN'T  
WORKIN'...

How "Money For  
Nothing" was banned  
by Canadian radio 26  
years after its release

➤ Knopfler based the song on a loudmouthed delivery man who he overheard in an American electronics store, commenting on pop videos he was watching on a bank of TVs. The man was opinionated, vulgar and didn't care who he offended. "It was about boneheadedness," Knopfler says.

The lyrics include three uses of the word "faggot". This drew a protest in 1985 from *Gay News* – though Knopfler argued that the derogatory word did not reflect his own views. In January 2011, a Canadian radio station, CHOZ-FM, received a complaint after playing the unedited version of the song. The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council then banned "Money For Nothing" from being played in its unedited form on radio, ruling that the word "faggot" was now inadmissible as a result of changes in social attitudes, and that it breached a human rights clause in Canada's broadcasting code.

After public outrage, the ban was overturned seven months later. A CBSC statement said it accepted that "faggot" was used satirically and that the lyrics "provided enough context to justify" the use of the word. "It made us look silly," one Canadian broadcaster remarked. "I spoke to people from the US and UK and they were like, 'What's wrong with you people? It's a joke!'"





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# SEX, DRUGS AND BAD HYGIENE! INEPT MUSICIANSHIP! PENTAGON EXORCISMS! DEATH BY SPAGHETTI! THE FUGS!

How three beatniks produced pandemonium, a “total assault on the culture” and, somehow, enduringly great music...

Story: Peter Watts Photo: Alice Ochs

**G**UITARIST KEN PINE remembers a typically confrontational Fugs show in Chicago at the end of 1968. Four months previously, the city had been engulfed in riots during the Democratic National Convention in August, and the wounds are still raw. The Fugs, flag-wavers for the anti-war pot-smoking counterculture with songs like “Kill For Peace” and “I Couldn’t Get High”, are supporting soul legend Wilson Pickett at the Aragon Ballroom, and the provocative patter of the band’s singer Ed Sanders, who marched with the Yippies in August, is not going down well.

“This is not a hippy crowd,” recalls Pine today. “The audience is full of guys in black leather jackets with slicked back hair. Ed is on stage, drunk as shit, insulting [*Chicago’s mayor*] Daley with the most foul language. These guys are giving us that squinty moron look, like they don’t understand anything you say but want to kill you anyway. I could hear [*drummer*] Bob Mason saying, ‘I don’t know about this, Ed, I don’t know about this...’ They start throwing hot quarters on the stage, heating coins with lighters and throwing them at us.”

Suddenly, an announcement comes that Wilson Pickett will not be performing. There will be no refunds. The mood of the 5,000-strong audience turns apocalyptic. Sanders remembers taking “a can of Coca-Cola full in the face”. Pine continues, “All I know is, I see Ed backing up, and if Ed is backing up, I’m running. They destroyed the place while we hid in the dressing room. I can still see these guys standing there, drooling as they thought about how they were going to kill these fucking hippies.”

“The Fugs  
were breaking  
boundaries,  
they were the  
underground  
Stones”

JOHN SINCLAIR  
MC5 MANAGER, CO-CONSPIRATOR

Just another day at the office for The Fugs, pioneering beatniks who combined poetry and revolutionary politics with rock, threw a saucepan of spaghetti at Andy Warhol and tried to levitate the Pentagon. As sharp as Lenny Bruce and bold as the MC5, The Fugs were, according to Patti Smith Group guitarist Lenny Kaye, as “important as the Velvets in pushing the taboo boundaries of pop music”.

“Well, I don’t know about that,” drawls Ed Sanders, Fugs founder and provocateur extraordinaire. There’s false modesty here. Sanders has written a book called *Fug You*, rooting through 300 boxes of memorabilia to illustrate the colourful adventures of The Fugs, famous friends (Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs), epochal events (Civil Rights marches, Summer Of Love) and sacred causes (pro-pot, anti-war). “Sanders, what a genius, what a great American,” enthuses John Sinclair, MC5 manager and co-conspirator. “The Fugs were breaking boundaries, they were the underground Rolling Stones, and the Stones were the underbelly of the entire music world.”

**T**HE BAND SPRANG out of New York’s vibrant Lower East Side in Greenwich Village in late 1964 when Sanders – poet, political activist, owner of Peace Eye Bookstore and publisher of *Fuck You* poetry magazine – met fellow poet Tuli Kupferberg “in a bar in St Mark’s Place. We decided we’d combine poetry and literature with music,” says Sanders. A third recruit was found: Ken Weaver, a Texan who worked at the Peace Eye Bookstore. Weaver, who had played drums in his high-school marching band, kept above his bed a framed copy of his dishonourable discharge from the



# FUGS

"Originality, Courage, and Wit... The Fugs are Clever, Biting and Effective Satirists."  
*New York Times*

**AIR**  
Conditioned

"The Fugs... An Amalgam of the earthy individuality of the American Frontier, The Bawdy Excitement of Elizabethan England, and the creative fecundity of the Renaissance."  
*Status Magazine*

*Juli Kupferberg*

*Ed Sanders*

*Ken Weaver*





→ air force for smoking weed. That was enough to ensure him a place in the band. Sanders remembers considering The Freaks or The Yodeling Socialists as potential names before Kupferberg suggested "The Fugs" – after the word Norman Mailer substituted for "fuck" in *The Naked And The Dead*.

The trio of Sanders, Kupferberg and Weaver formed the band's core for the rest of the decade. Future Carole King guitarist Danny Kortchmar, who joined The Fugs in 1967, remembers them fondly: "These guys were radicals! Tuli was sweet but never bathed. He was such a pacifist he didn't want to kill any germs. When you were on stage he smelled so bad you had to back away. Ed was a star. I looked up to him. He had big balls, completely unafraid. I'd never met anybody that funny and smart. Ken was the least hippy-like, with a very dry sense of humour. He was a terrible drummer, but did the best Lenny Bruce impression I ever heard."

They began writing songs like Kupferberg's Yiddish-Dadaist mantra "Nothing", Weaver's garage-rock drug confessional "I Couldn't Get High" and Sanders' jazz-folk freakout, "Swinburne Stomp". Musically and lyrically, anything went. "I grew up near Kansas City and was exposed to jazz and county," says Sanders. "I also listened to rock'n'roll and classical music. Tuli was steeped in Eastern music and he brought some of those Yiddish folk tunes to the early Fugs."

Another influence, inevitably, was poetry. Sanders and Kupferberg were friends of Allen Ginsberg – Kupferberg is referenced in Ginsberg's "Howl". After learning that Ginsberg once had a vision of William Blake reciting "Ah, Sunflower Weary Of Time", Sanders set that and "How Sweet I Roamed From Field To Field" to music. "They had literary aspirations," says Lenny Kaye, who reviewed the band for his college paper in 1966. "Sanders used rock to illustrate radical ideas and understood that psychedelic was not just a light show but

## FOOD FOR FUGS

### THE SPAGHETTI DEATH INCIDENT

**How an anti-war concert ended with Andy Warhol covered in pasta sauce**

➤ In August 1965, The Fugs staged an anti-war concert at the Bridge Theater, NY, where they'd enjoyed a midnight residency all summer. The event was called The Night Of Napalm and flyers said the crowd, which included Andy Warhol (right), could "watch The Fugs die in a napalm raid". Sanders continues, "We boiled up a heap of spaghetti and marinara sauce for what we called The Fugs Spaghetti Death. Then during the last song we threw these big globs of spaghetti into the audience, mimicking being killed by napalm. In the front I saw Warhol, so I hefted a big oozy fistful of spaghetti and plopped him right in his face."



could expand intellectual parameters. Essentially, they were beatnik poets who enjoyed the scatological and the theatre of the absurd."

Thus armed, they played a warm-up gig at Israel Young's Folklore Center in February 1965 before their big unveiling on February 24 in front of the New York avant-garde at the grand opening of the Peace Eye Bookstore, located in a former kosher butcher's shop on East 10th Street. A flyer screamed "There has never been anything like The Fugs in the history of western civilisation!" Burroughs

and Ginsberg attended. Andy Warhol provided three silkscreen banners in red, yellow and blue of poppies to decorate the walls (one was destroyed by Sanders during the show and another was later left in a deli; Sanders sold the third. It's now worth £250,000).

Emboldened, The Fugs hit the Village. Guitarist Steve Weber and violinist Peter Stempel of The Holy Modal Rounders joined to give the band musical weight – setting a trend, or divide, that was maintained thereafter, with professional musicians bringing order to the anarchic vision of Sanders, Kupferberg and Weaver. Concerts were unpredictable. "We wanted spontaneity," explains Sanders. "We played hundreds of shows and for us to stay fresh we had to add new material and routines all the time." The band

The Fugs freak out!  
"We had to keep a civil liberties lawyer on a retainer!"

"Tuli never bathed. He was such a pacifist he didn't want to kill any germs"

DANNY KORTCHMAR

## HOW TO BUY

### FUG ME!

Your guide to The Fugs' albums



#### THE FUGS' FIRST ALBUM

(FOLKWAYS, 1965)  
Reissue of pioneering debut album, including live recordings like the self-explanatory "A Glop Of Spaghetti For Andy Warhol".

8/10



#### THE FUGS' SECOND ALBUM

(ESP, 1966)  
Perhaps their finest record, features Eastern European folk song "Morning, Morning", experimental oddity "Virgin Forest" and the anti-war "Kill For Peace".

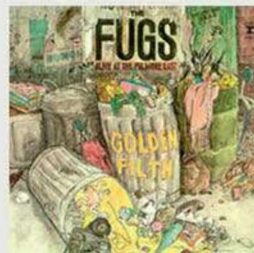
9/10



#### TENDERNESS JUNCTION/IT CRAWLED INTO MY HAND, HONEST

(REPRISE, 1968)  
Now issued as a twofer, these albums saw The Fugs join the psychedelic revolution.

6/10 & 7/10



#### GOLDEN FILTH

(REPRISE, 1970)  
Live album, capturing a kickass show at the Fillmore East in mid-1968. Includes "Slum Goddess", "Nothing", "I Couldn't Get High" and "How Sweet I Roamed".

7/10



#### THE FUGS' FINAL CD (PART 1)

(SHERIDAN SQUARE, 2003)  
The band's best reunion album, wildly eclectic with titles such as "Government Surveillance Yodel" and "Septuagenarian In Love".

7/10

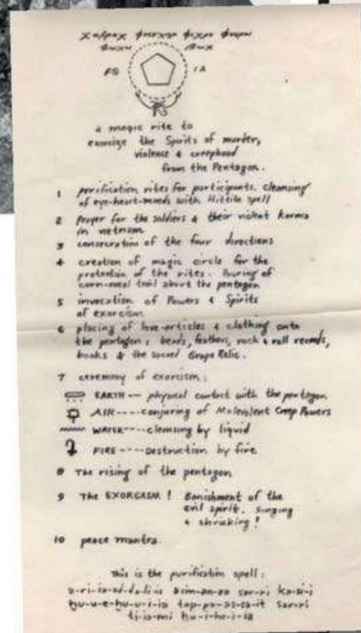


# "OUT, DEMONS! OUT!"

## How The Fugs exorcised the Pentagon

► Friday, Oct 13, 1967, and as demonstrators converge on Washington for a massive anti-war rally, The Fugs set up on a flatbed truck in the shadow of the Pentagon. Norman Mailer described the scene in his *Armies Of The Night*: "The Fugs were dressed in orange and yellow and rose-coloured capes and looked at once like Hindu gurus, French musketeers and Southern cavalry captains... the music, no rather the play, had begun, almost Shakespear-ean in its sinister announcement of great pleasures to come."

The play, as conceived by Sanders and Harry Smith, involved the crowd encircling the Pentagon while The Fugs chanted a magical invocation (left), climaxing in a shout of 'Out, demons! Out!' at which point the building would levitate 300ft, turn orange, rotate and the Vietnam War would end. Danny Kortchmar recalls being closely watched by the sinister ranks of the American Nazi Party, while Ken Pine says: "We're on the truck, the National Guard are watching, Kenneth Anger is beneath us convulsing doing his own ritual, 20,000 people are chanting and Abbie Hoffman is in the corner pissing off the side of the car." The Pentagon failed to levitate, but that didn't stop The Fugs trying the same trick later at the grave of Senator McCarthy.



were theatrical and provocative, singing about sex, politics and drugs without rock's usual veil of euphemism. Sanders and Weaver would rant and brandish props while Kupferberg thumped an old pole with bottlecaps nailed to it that he called his Erectorine. "Ed was a great singer, and Tuli and Ken did crazy shit, singing their immortal compositions and dancing around," says John Sinclair. "It was barely controlled pandemonium. But it wasn't just music, it was the craziness, their stance way outside regular American life. It was Sanders' concept of total assault on the culture."

**E**D SANDERS FIRST met Harry Smith, compiler of the *Anthology Of American Folk Music*, in a bar in 1962; the two bonded over esoteric books and Smith became a regular customer at Peace Eye. In April 1965, Smith produced The Fugs' first recording session for Folkways, claiming they were a contemporary folk jug act, The Fugs Jugs Band. The sessions formed the basis of The Fugs' album, *The Village Fugs Sing Ballads Of Contemporary Protest, Point Of Views, And General Dissatisfaction*. Released in October 1965, it was a rough but lovable blend of folk, drone, rock and poetry, featuring songs like Weber's breast-worshipping novelty "Boobs-a-Lot", Weaver's Bo Diddley blues "Slum Goddess" and the eerie "Carpe Diem". Immediately, The Fugs established themselves as a band that could speak directly about sex and drugs while channelling the highest literary references. In early 1966 came *The Fugs Second Album*, for the ESP label, recorded with John Anderson on bass, Lee Crabtree on keys and Pete Kearney on guitar, and including scabrous anti-war anthem "Kill For Peace", throbbing rockabilly "Group Grope" and "Virgin Forest". Ginsberg wrote the sleeve notes.

"That long track 'Virgin Forest', combining poetry and found music, was hugely influential in expanding the parameters of rock," says Kaye, a devotee of both albums. "There are beautiful songs scattered throughout their oeuvre, but their sense of raunchiness can cause them to be misunderstood. For those that heard them in their early years, the sense of possibility was really profound. They opened up a wider world of avant-art: pop didn't have to

mirror teenage concerns."

Kortchmar adds, "Ed was heavily into Egyptian poetry. A lot of the time, to be frank, I had no idea what the fuck they were talking about. I was a musician, not an intellectual. I didn't get all their references, but they were revolutionary and having a lot of fun."

By 1966, The Fugs were a Village institution. They played residences at local theatres, drawing big audiences, while simultaneously haemorrhaging musicians. "They were always looking for good musicians and paid steady money, mainly through Ed's acumen but also because they were already legendary," explains Kortchmar. "A lot of tourists came and were shocked and amazed." Attendees at their shows included Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole, Tennessee Williams and Leonard Bernstein.

Stefan Grossman's induction into the band was typical. The guitarist had come to New York to form a band with Janis Joplin and Taj Mahal, but that fell through. "I was walking through the Village and across the street was Ed, and I yelled 'Hey, I hear you need a guitar player,' and he yelled back 'Are you crazy?'" and I said 'Yeah, I'm crazy.' That was my audition," he laughs. Grossman, who joined the band for four months in 1966, recalls playing live: "There was one song where the lights would go off and we'd just play sound effects for 10 minutes at full blast, like a trip. It was very impromptu."

It was also hugely political, and as the anti-war movement strengthened through 1967, The Fugs played benefits all over America. "We were always under threat," confirms Sanders. "We had to keep a civil liberties lawyer on a retainer." Kortchmar agrees: "All of us were targeted. If you had long hair, the police would harass you." After one show in Boston, Kortchmar recalls getting attacked by a bunch



➔ of “redneck yahoos” and fighting back with a stage sword. “Ed was proud of us,” says Kortchmar. “He was especially proud that we got arrested.”

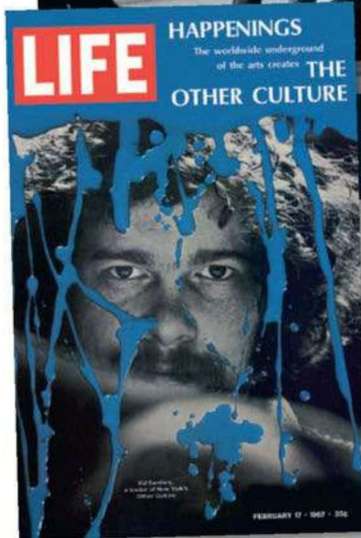
AS THE NATIONAL vocabulary began to change, Sanders met activist Abbie Hoffman, who wanted to combine stunts and humour with radical politics. Together, they formed the Yippies. “In 1962, the police would call us dirty beatniks, but by 1967 we were dirty hippies,” explains Sanders. “That beatnik/hippyline was crossed probably at the Great Human Be-In in San Francisco in early 1967. We did a lot of benefits and were also responsible for the exorcism of the Pentagon in 1967.”

For The Fugs, the hippy *annus mirabilis* of 1967 contained as many lows as it did highs. In February, Sanders was on the cover of *Life* magazine (right) and The Fugs were invited on *The Johnny Carson Show* until Sanders insisted on playing “Kill For Peace”, denying them an audience of millions. A film was proposed, starring The Fugs, Burroughs and Ginsberg, but never happened. They signed to Atlantic, who immediately dropped them. By the time they had joined Reprise, the mood had passed. “We lost a year, the year of *Sgt Pepper* and so many historic albums,” reflects Sanders.

Making up for lost time, they released two albums in 1968, steeped in ambitious, West Coast psychedelia. First was *Tenderness Junction*, with its Leary-quoting freak-rock “Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out”, “Hare Krishna” with Ginsberg on vocals, a live recording of their Pentagon performance and five-part opus “Aphrodite Mass”; the band’s early anti-folk humour was rarely in evidence. Next came the epic \$25,000 *It Crawled Into My Hand, Honest*, with Gregorian chants (“Marijuana”), country (“Johnny Pissoff Meets The Red Angel”) and a bizarre second side of 14 tracks, some no more than 11 seconds long. Reprise fully embraced the spirit of The Fugs, running a competition to win a date with The Fugs for their 1969 album *The Belle Of Avenue A* and allowing the band to attend press briefings with Pigasus, the pig the Yippies were running for President in 1968.

“Ed was ambitious and it was mostly about what Ed wanted to do,” admits guitarist Ken Pine, who played on both 1968 albums before hooking up with Jimi Hendrix. “Weaver was drunk and Tuli was up for anything. If you told Tuli you were going to paint the Empire State Building with vomit he would have agreed. *It Crawled Into My Hand, Honest* was a big deal. There was lots of studio time, session musicians, promo shots, a jazz band and a choral director [Bob Dorough]. Ed wanted to be commercially successful and maybe the idea of what The Fugs were got a little lost.”

“I wanted to do a breakout, staggeringly good album,” explains Sanders. An influence was The Mothers Of Invention, who also shocked New York theatres. “Zappa wrote crazy lyrics but the music was very complicated and they could all play,” says Stefan Grossman, who eventually fell out with the band over money. “The Fugs were more of a three-chord band. They weren’t even a garage band, because



Allen Ginsberg (in the Stars'n'Stripes hat) joins The Fugs on an anti-Vietnam War march, New York City, March 26, 1966

HELTHER SKELTER

“The Fugs put every fibre of their energy and talent into every performance”

ED SANDERS  
FUGS SINGER, WRITER AND ACTIVIST

in the Village there are no garages.”

Danny Kortchmar takes the criticism further. “If Ed wanted to make a great LP he had to study music, but Ed was more interested in making history. He would not learn how to do it himself, nor would he turn it over to us, the musicians, and pay us to do it. The Fugs thought politics and music were the same. They interact, but they are not the same.”

AS THE POLITICAL heat of '68 intensified, Sanders found himself “running through tear gas with Allen Ginsberg” during the riot in Chicago. In 1969, he called it a day, exhausted by the strain of running a band alongside his political and poetic activities. He stayed in music, cutting a country album, *Sanders' Truckstop*, which he described shortly before its release in spring 1970 as “punk rock” – said to be the first known use of the term. He also testified at the Chicago Seven trial, but mainly he was writing, first producing a novel in 1970 about the Yippies called *Shards Of God* and then beginning his journalistic investigation of Charles Manson.

Reflecting on the end of the Fugs, Sanders says, “It became too much for me personally to endure. The Fugs put every fibre of their energy and talent into every performance, every recording session and every minute at the mixing console. We were trying to provide as much brilliance as we could, but it got to be a little overwhelming. I thought I could retire, be an old man and nobody would ever ask me about The Fugs.”

But that isn't quite what happened. The Fugs became celebrated as one of the most innovative bands of the 1960s; they reformed in 1984. “That seemed like a symbolic year to revive the band,” he admits. “We played every year since then until the death of Tuli Kupferberg in 2010. We'll probably do a set of final concerts in New York next year. Will that be it?” Sanders chuckles before finishing with the motto by which he's lived his life: “Never say never.”

*Fug You* by Ed Sanders is out now, published by Da Capo Press

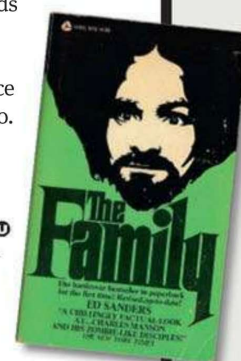
## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Ed Sanders' investigation into Charles Manson

➤ After breaking up The Fugs, Sanders heard rumours swirling round Hollywood about the Cielo Drive murders of Sharon Tate and four others in 1969. He began to investigate and in 1971 published *The Family*, the first serious look at how the hippy dream ended with Charles Manson's death cult. Brilliantly written in hip argot that surely inspired James Ellroy, it remains a fascinating look at late-'60s California.

Sanders confirms that the next volume of his memoirs “will deal with my experiences investigating the Manson group and also my time out there in Los Angeles, hanging on the edge and trying to learn what was going on. I have a lot of unpublished material,

including letters from Manson, pictures, interview transcripts, and also my personal history of what was happening during the time that I was investigating them.”





9/10

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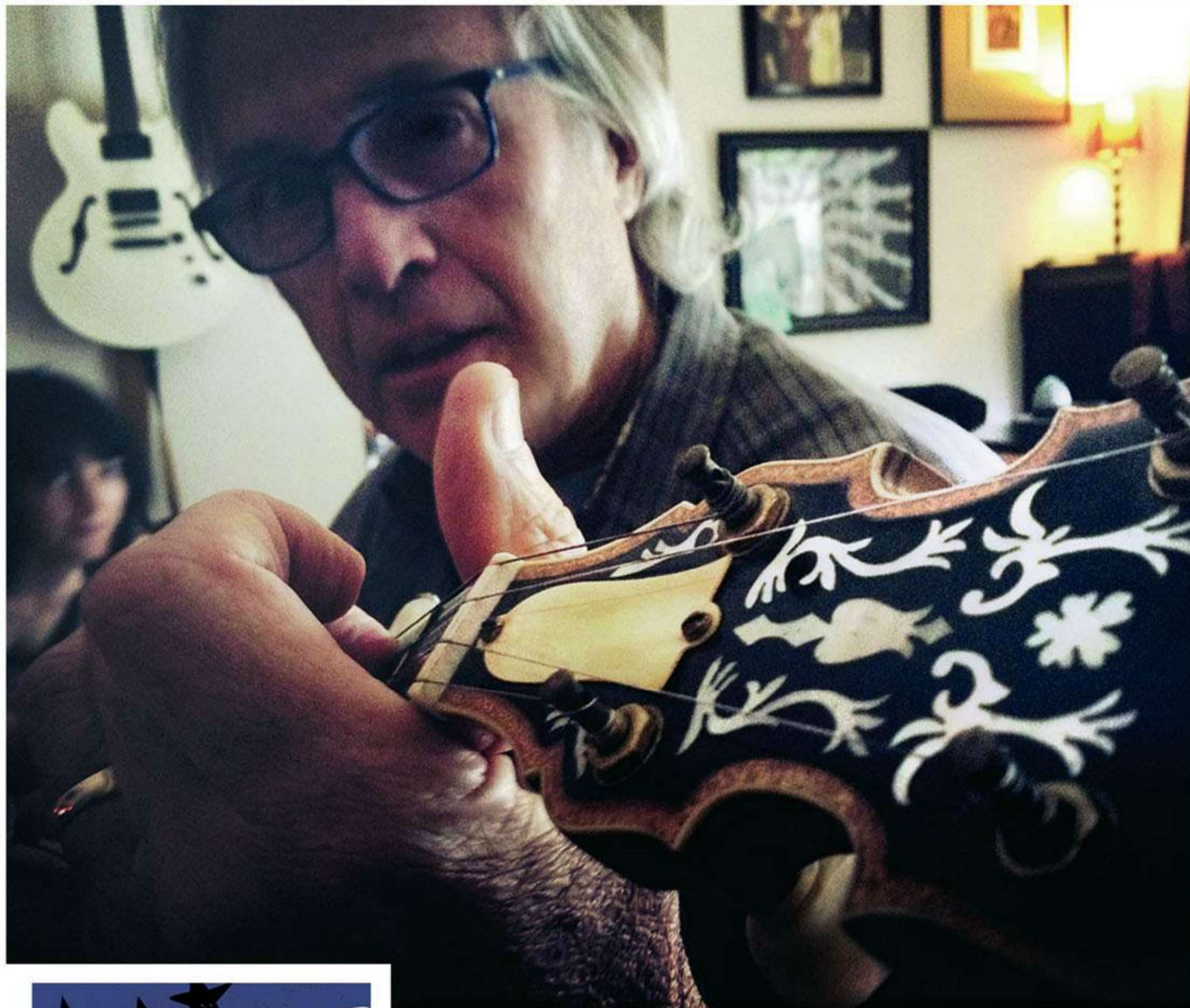


## OUR NEW SCORING SYSTEM:

10 Masterpiece 9 Essential 8 Excellent  
7 Very good 6 Good but uneven  
4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

# New albums

THIS MONTH: JOHN MURRY | ARIEL PINK | BILL FAY | CONOR OBERST



JOACHIM COODER



## TRACKLIST

- 1 Mutt Romney Blues
- 2 Brother Is Gone
- 3 The Wall Street Part Of Town
- 4 Guantanamo
- 5 Cold Cold Feeling
- 6 Going To Tampa
- 7 Kool-Aid
- 8 The 90 And The 9
- 9 Take Your Hands Off It

## RY COODER

### Election Special

PERRO VERDE/NONESUCH

Ryland points a righteous finger at the “deacons in the High Church of the Next Dollar”. *By Bud Scoppa*

**9/10**

IN A RECORDING career that stretches back more than four decades, Ry Cooder has never before made an album as immediate as *Election Special*. And yet, in numerous ways, this politically charged song cycle is right in the sweet spot of the L.A.-based master guitarist, musical archaeologist, late-blooming songwriter and lifelong iconoclast. Following an 18-year hiatus from solo projects, during which time he focused on film music, the Buena Vista Social Club and one-off collaborations, Cooder reemerged as inspired as ever with his

“Southern California trilogy”: 2005’s *Chávez Ravine*, 2007’s *My Name Is Buddy* and 2008’s *I, Flathead*.

In their scholarly but humour-laced examinations of various disenfranchised individuals and communities delivered via arcane musical modes, and embedded with implicit sociopolitical messages, these LPs foreshadowed an impulse that came front and centre on last year’s *Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down* and kicks into high gear with this new record. Cranked out in a series of unrehearsed, live, single-take performances in the living room of engineer Martin Pradler’s house in the Valley, ➔



# New Albums

➔ *Election Special* is an impassioned screed against the dumbing down of America. But this is an uncommonly persuasive screed, because it's set up not as polemic but rather as a series of vignettes, its harsh judgments lurking within sharply drawn narratives in which not a word is wasted. Cooder avoids preaching to the converted by opting not to preach at all – not in any conventional way, at least. Instead, he creates and inhabits three-dimensional characters whose beliefs and opinions span the political spectrum of America in 2012.

Set for release a week before the Republican Convention, *Election Special* comes out of the blocks with a kick and a snarl. Accompanying himself on a pre-war Regal Domino guitar, which rattles when it's played, with son Joachim clattering away on his drum kit, Cooder gets right in character, croaking anxiously, “Boss Mitt Romney went for a ride/Pulled up on the highway side/Tied me down up on the roof/Boss I hollered woof woof woof”. Based on a story that hit earlier this year revealing that the Republican candidate had once taken a family trip with his dog lashed to the roof of the car, “Mutt Romney Blues” is the musical equivalent of a political cartoon, a barbed but light-hearted way to get into some extremely heavy subject matter.

If the brilliantly conceived and executed “Brother Is Gone”, which follows, has an antecedent, it lies in the Randy Newman songbook somewhere between *Sail Away* and *Good Ole’ Boys*, character-driven song cycles that employ irony and empathy in equal measure. Here, Cooder puts himself in character as oil tycoon Charles Koch, who, with his brother David, has poured tens of millions into poisoning the minds of the citizenry in an obsessive effort to run Obama out of office on a rail. In this fable, Cooder relocates Robert Johnson’s crossroads to Wichita, where young Charlie and Davy eagerly make a deal with Satan. “You will be exalted in the evil works of men/High power rollin’ over land and sea”, Evil Incarnate promises. “But some dark night I’ll be coming ’round again/And take one of you down back to hell with me”. The song follows the brothers as they proceed to lay waste to the land and populace while fattening their wallets, but Cooder sings it in a wounded voice accompanied by the poignant plucking of his mandolin, its rueful tone representing the brothers’ legions of victims even as the point of view in the lyric remains that of Charlie.

Cooder: still the vigilante man in 2012



## SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:** Ry Cooder  
**Recorded, mixed and mastered by:** Martin Pradler at Wireland Studios, Chatsworth, CA, and Drive-By Studios, North Hollywood  
**Personnel include:** Ry Cooder (vocals, guitars, mandolin, bass), Joachim Cooder (drums), Arnold McCuller (harmony vocals on “Take Your Hands Off It”)

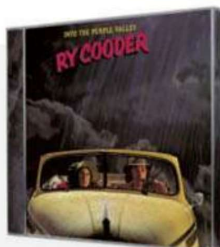
It’s a brilliant move, as Cooder, whose early albums were frequently described by reviewers as collections of Depression-era songs, comes up with a great song for this Depression.

Cooder wrote and recorded “The Wall Street Part Of Town” during the *Pull Up Some Dust...* sessions but decided it was “too boisterous” for that album of country- and folk-styled original songs – which tells you that *Election Special*, though it grew out of its

immediate predecessor, is a very different animal. The ironically carefree “Guantanamo” (unintentionally, I’m sure) recalls Jackson Browne’s “Boulevard”, if only because Cooder’s cascading guitar bears certain similarities to his pal David Lindley’s riff on the earlier track. “Cold Cold Feeling”, presented in the manner of a T-Bone Walker-style slow-blues lament, puts the listener in Obama’s shoes as he paces the halls of the White House in the dead of night. “If you never been President then you

## HOW TO BUY... RY COODER ON CD

Four of the best Cooder albums...

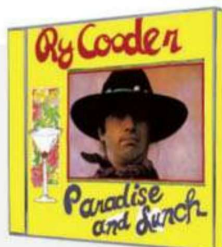


### Into The Purple Valley

REPRISE, 1972

Cooder’s sophomore outing picks up where *The Band* left off on a hitchhike along America’s blue highways, taking him deep into the past, where he inhabits fertile mythic terrain. Highlights include: Lead Belly’s “On A Monday”, Johnny Cash’s “Hey Porter” and Wilson Pickett’s “Teardrops Will Fall”.

8/10



### Paradise And Lunch

REPRISE, 1974

On album No 4, Cooder’s skills and preoccupations lock together in a soulful embrace, his uncanny evocations of old weird America doubling as riveting personal testimony. The rich arrangements, frequently burnished by a black gospel group, make this Cooder’s most accessible LP.

8/10

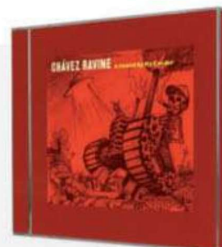


### Paris, Texas

WARNER BROS, 1984

Cooder credits director Walter Hill for opening him up to ambient expression on the OSTs to *The Long Riders* and *Southern Comfort*, but his score to this Wim Wenders film is as enveloping as a summer storm rolling across the plains. The 1995 double, *Music By Ry Cooder*, handily compiles his film work.

8/10



### Chavez Ravine

NONESUCH, 2005

Ryland the songwriter! His first solo album in 18 years is also his first to focus on his hometown, as he recounts the 1950 razing of Chicano enclave Chavez Ravine to make way for Dodger Stadium in an LP bursting with sensuality, anger and humour. A love letter to an LA that no longer exists.

8/10





## Q&A

Ry Cooder discusses his lifelong arcane pursuit...

**I**T'S TRICKY MAKING an overtly political album without getting dogmatic, but something about these songs and sounds pulls you in.

I have to find little storylines. I have to have something I can play and sing, in some style or some instrumental point of view – a country tune or a blues tune – updating these things that I grew up listening to, these Depression-era songs and whatnot. The way I think these songs can work is if you don't ponder over it too hard, because the tunes wanna have a spontaneous-combustion effect. What I want to do is get a certain attitude in the voice, and I can only do that once. By take two, I'm startin' to think about it. By take three, I'm startin' to map it out – it's gone. It's spoiled, y'see? So I need to get through this fast.

**When did it hit you that you wanted to make this record?**

I finished *Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down* and just kept going, and it seemed the more I did it, the better I got at it, like anything. It's an acting job. You put yourself into the spirit of the thing, the character of the thing, such as Obama being scared or the guy going to Tampa to get laid [laughs]. Like, who am I today? I think I wanna be Ira Louvin when I sing this. If I can do that and channel those people, it's as though all these singers and musicians and different kinds of cats are right behind your head urging you on. It's a useful notion. I'm 65; I've been listening to this shit all my life, and playing it, since I was a little tiny kid, startin' with Woody at age five. It's like your hand is being guided. I'm not trying to say, "Here goes Ry Cooder again." That's awful claustrophobic – we don't want that. We wanna get way beyond that, off into other sounds. It's channeling, I

guess, and it's very handy, 'cause then you feel it.

**The release is well timed. I hope people discover it.**

I hope so. Although who can say, any more? We're talking about an arcane pursuit. I mean, making records, are you kidding me? Some people would say, "Why are you doing this?" I would say that it's the only thing I like to do. I'm finally where I'd like to be in my ability. It only took fucking forever, 60-odd years of trying to get good at this, for God's sakes. So what else would I do, whether or not people ever hear it or buy it? When I get 'em, I give 'em away to people. I know they're not gonna buy the damn things. But we'll see.

**Where do you stand on Obama?**

We all worked hard for him and voted for him the first time, and he did put the face of change there, and he's a great orator, and he seemed to offer the thing that people needed the most, which was hope. People felt encouraged, everybody I knew. So what's gonna happen now? If he loses and Mutt takes over, then that's it. With the Koch brothers running things and these right-wing think tanks and the churches behind them, you've got it coming from all sides. I just don't know what kind of shot we have. But if anybody asks me, I quote Pete Seeger, who was overheard to say, "I have no hope, I could be wrong." I put that in two of these songs, because that was startling coming from Pete, who was the most optimistic person you'd ever wanna meet – until recently. He always felt that the people would make a difference, and that justice would win. So I put my money on Pete, 'cause he knows. Put it in your pipe and smoke it.

INTERVIEW: BUD SCOPPA

*"I'm finally where I'd like to be in my ability... it only took fucking 60-odd years of trying"*

don't know how it feels", the Commander in Chief muses in the voice of a weary old bluesman, "These stray dog Republicans always snappin' at my heels". It's followed by "Going To Tampa", a sprightly old-time country tune in which a Republican conventioneer salivates with anticipation as he gets ready to "shout hallelujah in the evening" and to "get my ashes hauled".

On "Kool-Aid", the album's second instant classic, Cooder employs the eerily atmospheric feel of his film work to create something unprecedented. In this noir setting, he gets inside the head of a young man who unthinkingly accepts the Bush administration's propaganda manifesto that war is "a righteous thing", so he dutifully heads off the other side of the world, locked and loaded, ready to take "a stand against black, brown, yellow and tan". He returns home to find his job gone, along with his hope. "All I got is just about gone", he laments in a defeated voice. "Kool-Aid, I drank your Kool-Aid".

The son of liberal folkies who owned plenty of Woody Guthrie records, Cooder appropriates the vanished form of the Joe Hill-style traditional workers' song for "The 90 And The 9", finding it a relevant way to depict the 99 per cent of today, including America's embattled union workers. He goes from dread to defiance on the closing "Take Your Hands Off It", brandishing his trusty old Strat like a weapon and snarling, "Get your bloody hands off the peoples of the world/And your war machine and your corporation thieves/That lets you keep your job and pays your dirty salary/Take your hands off us, you know we don't belong to you".

What Cooder told me about *Chávez Ravine* in 2005 could stand as well for his urgent and inventive new album. "It's a goddamn good accomplishment," he said with pride. "This gets there, as far as I'm concerned."





## JOHN MURRY

### The Graceless Age

BUCKETFULL OF BRAINS

Loss and addiction underpin this brutal, textured depiction of one man's misery. *By Allan Jones*

**9/10**

IN THE PICTURE of them on the back cover of *World Without End*, their brilliant

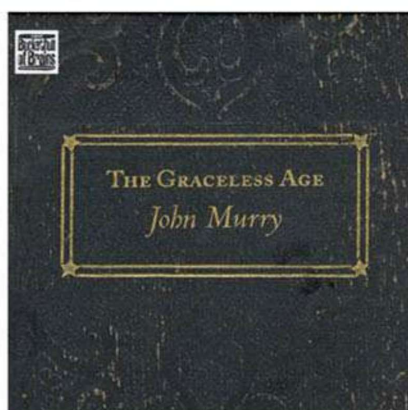
2006 album of blasted country death songs, Bob Frank and John Murry are standing in what looks like a woody glade where they have come to bury someone.

Bob Frank leans in the mid-distance on a shovel, a hole at his feet. John Murry's the closer of the two, burly and unkempt with more than a hint about him of greasy junkie bloat. He's holding a large double-headed axe, the kind you might associate with the severing of sundry body parts for unholy pleasure. They look like men of turbulent inclination who have entered the world entirely to cause mayhem and harm, such people

as you might find in the pages of novels by Daniel Woodrell, author of *Winter's Bone* and other unsettling fictions set in remote Appalachia.

It had been the pair's intention with *World Without End* to record an album of traditional murder ballads, but the old songs turned out to be not blood-soaked enough for them. So they wrote their own, new songs that sounded like ancient texts, based often on actual events, appalling incidents involving lynch mobs, racist hangings, murders, terrible barbarities, death in many forms, moments of terror in the lives of others, imagined and otherwise.

Six years on, *The Graceless Age* is more clearly inspired by the life of its author, whose own calamities are more often than not at its dark and



#### TRACKLIST

- 1 The Ballad Of The Pajama Kid
- 2 California
- 3 Little Colored Balloons
- 4 Photograph
- 5 Things We Lost In The Fire
- 6 ¿No te da ganas de reir, Señor Malverde?
- 7 Southern Sky
- 8 If I'm To Blame
- 9 Penny Nails
- 10 Thorn Tree In The Garden





## Q&A

John Murry



**What was the starting point for *The Graceless Age*?**  
I wanted to exorcise everything I couldn't tolerate within. Essentially, the impetus for beginning it came from losing my wife to my own fucked-up choices and desperately wanting to create something, anything, to exorcise it all. Not out of some desire to use loss to justify creating a record, but out of a fool's need to create something to avoid complete madness and lunacy.

**The album took four years to complete. Why so long?**  
I wanted it to be right, to be real. Not in some "look how fucking dark my sad, stupid life is" way, but in a way that allowed me and, I suppose, others the ability to hear pain as a tolerable and even essential element of all that's decent and real and alive. I wanted to create something that perhaps at least one other person could relate to so I could find solace in the knowledge that we're all fucked up. Ultimately, though, it was my own self-doubt and addiction that kept me from allowing it to be finished.

INTERVIEW: ALLAN JONES

things, sonic squalls and ruptures. The final effect is often almost symphonic. The sagging regret of tracks like "Southern Sky", "California" and "Things We Lost In The Fire" are given to a kind of ruined grandeur, the latter building from sparse acoustic beginnings to a point four minutes in where the listener is confronted by electric guitars rising up like a wall of flames, a cleansing conflagration. The overall mood is one of requiem, reminiscent occasionally of American Music Club's *Everclear*.

The album's centrepiece is the 10-minute "Little Colored Balloons", which is a sweetly innocuous title that in fact refers to the receptacles in which black tar heroin was sold in the Mission area of San Francisco, where Murry overdosed and was clinically

dead for several minutes before being revived by paramedics, which is what the song is about. A gorgeous piano-led ballad underpinned by a solo cello's melancholic purr, it recalls at first the handsome rugged sweep of similar songs by Warren Zevon – "Accidentally Like A Martyr", say, or "Desperados Under The Eaves" – and also by the end the fetid atmosphere of Van Morrison's "TB Sheets".

"To tell the truth and to tell it well," is one of Murry's declared intentions on a song called "If I'm To Blame", echoing lines from Dylan's "Buckets Of Rain". And this is what *The Graceless Age* as a whole does so unforgettably, bearing honest witness to a burning world.

## SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Closer Recording, San Francisco  
**Produced by:** John Murry and Tim Mooney  
**Personnel:** John Murry, Tim Mooney, Nate Cavalieri, Chuck Prophet, Quinn Miller, Andrew Gerhan, Bob Frank, Joe Goldring, Mike Carnahan, Tom Heyman, Michael Mullen, Sean Coleman, Kevin Cubbins, Jana Misener, Holly Cole, Ryan Auffenberg

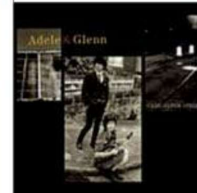
sometimes harrowing core. The songs deal uncompromisingly with love, betrayal, loss, grief, guilt, addiction, a drift towards self-destruction, yearnings for better times uncorrupted by wretched current circumstance, memories of people and places now all gone, haunting absences. The songs speak of a life in ruptured tenses, the disastrous present where things have not worked out well – the bits that matter least of all – shaped by a past the singer can't shake off.

"They told me to forget you, they never told me how," Murry sings on "The Ballad Of The Pajama Kid", which appropriately for an album so much about death borrows its melody from "Knockin' On Heaven's Door". The track maps out the territory the rest of the album occupies; and so too, its sound. *The Graceless Age*, co-produced by Murry and the late Tim Mooney, is deeply textured, dense with layers of keyboards, synthesizers, strings, backing vocals, percussion, electronic distortions. 'Found' voices from radio broadcasts, police bulletins, emergency calls and private tapes all part of the seething mix. Guitars crackle throughout like static, dissonant transmissions from the rim of

# A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

- p72 ARIEL PINK
- p73 CORY BRANAN
- p75 NATHAN FAKE
- p77 BILL FAY
- p78 SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE
- p80 LITTLE FEAT
- p82 CONOR OBERST
- p84 JAMES YORKSTON
- p86 SMASHING PUMPKINS



## ADELE & GLENN Carrington Street

GLITTERHOUSE RECORDS

**Spry, wry debut from Aus-pop veterans**

If you didn't know that Adele Pickvance and Glenn Thompson had played in the latterday incarnation of The Go-Betweens you would still be able to detect the influence of Forster and McLennan all over their debut LP. Tracks like opener "I Dreamt I Was A Sparrow" ("You bought your cake from the lady with no bra") and "Auntie Nelly" ("...smoked marijuana in the cupboard at dark") are quirky with quotidian detail, the guitars on "Tunnels" sparkle just like spring rain and "Rescue" rattles along with a headful of steam. It's more heartfelt homage than pastiche, though, and with "Earthly Air" they have a song that's a worthy sequel to the much-missed Grant McLennan's "Dusty In Here".

STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

6/10



## ALBERTA CROSS Songs Of Patience

ARK

**Brooklyn-based duo go super-sized**

Aside from the Ryan Adams-esque "Bonfires", on their second album the more scruffy, downhome elements of Alberta Cross' 2009 debut have been buffed to a stadium sheen. It's a patchy transformation. The loping "Money For The Weekend" recalls U2's rousing rhythmic rock, "Wasteland" is crisp as fresh laundry and "Life Without Warning" is genuinely soulful, adorned by a lovely liquid guitar riff. Despite Petter Ericson Stakee's committed vocals, however, much of the rest employs polished professionalism to paper over a dearth of inspiration. "Come On Maker", particularly, is the kind of stubbly post-Britpop anthem which recalls Embrace in their doldrums.

GRAEME THOMSON

6/10





# ARIEL PINK'S HAUNTED GRAFFITI

## Mature Themes

4AD

Now available in stereo: LA minstrel's junkshop hi-fi comes to life. *By Piers Martin*



7/10

THE LAST TIME Ariel Pink attracted any kind of notable attention was when he had an onstage meltdown at Coachella in April 2011. As his band played, Pink – real surname Rosenberg – refused to sing and spent part of the set inspecting the drum

riser and biting his fingernails. Later he shrugged it off, as well he might: it's not the first time Pink has flaked out – *Uncut* saw a Brighton show in 2006 that lasted five minutes before he flounced off – and it won't be the last. In his established role as indie-rock's court jester, a merry prankster prone to tantrums but equally capable of delighting, he can get away with almost anything.

Possibly he feels that way, too. No-one was more surprised than Pink by the success of 2010's *Before Today*, his first properly recorded album for 4AD, who'd signed him on the back of a string of enchanting, wildly lo-fi psychedelic bedroom recordings released through Animal Collective's Paw Tracks label – a catalogue that came, incidentally, with a committed fanbase who long ago had cast Pink as an outsider icon. Given a push to a wider audience, the combination of *Before Today*'s exotic soft-rock nuggets – “Round And Round” in particular – and this loveable LA gutter-punk proved bizarrely appealing, like hipster catnip.

Yet for all the acclaim, Pink felt uninspired, because *Before Today* featured tired old songs from his past, reworked with moderate enthusiasm by his band. *Mature Themes* represents a fresh start: a new batch of material thoroughly worked through by Pink and the

Haunted Graffiti guys in their own time, in a studio they built themselves in downtown LA. Produced and mixed by his friend and former bandmate Cole M Greif-Neill, who even transcribed Pink's ‘mouth drums’ using a sampler, *Mature Themes* is Ariel Pink in glorious hi-fi for the first time. Finally, he sounds sharp, shiny and alive – in focus, if you like – excited by the possibilities of his own music.

That's not to say Pink's eighth album is a pushover like *Before Today* – it isn't. Rather, like the eccentric mish-mash of *House Arrest*, it's diverse and perverse, even a little juvenile in places: calling it *Mature Themes* is something of a red herring. Sure, he tackles sex, food and death, but in Pink's grubby hands that means a woozy waltz called “Symphony Of The Nymph” (“My name is Ariel and I'm a nympho”, he coos), the Zappa fuzz of “Schnitzel Boogie” (“I'm eating schnitzel/I'm eating schnitzel”), and a line in

“Kinski Assassin” that runs “*Mother-twin Genesis went down with the plane*” which refers to the time Pink travelled to Australia on the same flight as the surgically altered Throbbing Gristle frontman, who he thought looked like his mother.

Part of the absurdity of Pink's ascent into acceptable society lies in the notion that he's now almost expected to produce hits, when in fact he's always been an intrepid experimental artist whose preferred form of expression resides somewhere between '70s psych and '80s gothic rock. Such freedom means that one moment, he can record a tender cover of Donnie & Joe Emerson's soul number “Baby” with D&M-FunK, the next he slyly tapes visiting 4AD boss Simon Halliday talking into a mic and turns this into a medieval jig doused in feedback called “Is This The Best Spot?”. On the apple-pie pop of “Mature Themes”, Pink is a dead-ringer for Elvis Costello as he sippers “*For I solemnly devote myself to thee*” to some college sweetheart.

It was Halliday who suggested Pink call the record *Mature Themes*. He'd wanted to name it *Farewell American Primitive* after one of its songs, but realised new albums by Neil Young and Dan Deacon also featured America in their titles, and the idea that Pink might be perceived as a flag-waving patriot or as a spokesperson for *anything* appalled him.

The irony is that *Mature Themes*, full of nonsense and wonderful ideas, further cements his reputation as one of the more vital voices of his generation. He's a loose cannon, but he sure brightens the place up.

## Q&A

Ariel Pink



**Sounds like you're pleased with *Mature Themes*.**

Yeah, I wanted an opportunity to write songs like I used to and not worry about being charged for studio time. The first thing we did when we got our advance was lease a space and build our own studio in it. We made it cosy and lived there. It was a delightful experience.

**Anything on here you're particularly proud of?**  
Well, I'm proud of myself for having the guts to

write words to these songs, which was a very trying experience for me because I've been suffering from artist's block. The music is easier: everything comes to me as music and then you have to slap a face on top of it if you want it to come across as pop music and not muzak.

**Does your global fame amuse you?**

I was thinking about this the other day and I guesstimated the best-case scenario is I probably have about 200,000 fans or 500,000 at the most. There are 7 billion people on the planet and so it's something like 2 or 3 per cent of the population has heard me and 97 per cent of the population has not heard me. So there is still work to be done.

INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN





## GEVA ALON *In The Morning Light*

VIBES MUSIC

Psych, folk and Americana – Tel Aviv-style

**7/10**

Israeli singer-songwriter Alon has been mixing up

a heady brew of folk, psychedelia and Americana since his 2006 debut *Days Of Hunger*, and has pretty much perfected the recipe on his fourth album. Produced by Devendra Banhart cohort Thom Monahan, *In The Morning Light* charts a path through introspective soul-searching set to Byrdsian harmonies and catchy hooks, like Fleet Foxes with McCartney-lite sensibilities, although the floaty “I Wonder If She’s Fine” and the sombre “Come Here Anytime” veer towards Nick Drake territory. “She Calls My Name” recalls *Fables*-era REM, but that’s not to suggest Alon fails to stamp his own identity on every track.

TERRY STAUNTON



## JOAN ARMATRADING *Starlight*

HYPERTENSION

Joanie doesn’t hate jazz

**6/10**

On her previous two albums, Armatrading indulged her passion for

the blues, showcasing her often overlooked guitar skills while her voice and lyrical prowess arguably took a back seat. Here she breaks out the jazz hipster grooves, from the semi-scat styles of “Single Life” to the late-night torch of “The Way I Think Of You”. The subject matter largely sees her return to the lovelorn world of her folk-led confessional ’70s records, and while the jazz flourishes occasionally sound stilted (a by-product of an overdubbed Armatrading playing every instrument herself, thereby lacking the flow of a full band), the whole adds up to a palatable addition to her busy catalogue.

TERRY STAUNTON



## BEAK>

>>

INVADA

Music as paint-drying endurance test

The Krautrock side-project of Portishead’s Geoff Barrow (aka The

**2/10**

Crotchtiest Man On Twitter) reaches album number two, and the trio are boldly sketching new parameters for the word ‘turgid’. Where Neu!’s motorik beat was the sound of Germany driving towards a noble and spiritually fulfilling future, Beak>’s version is the sound of someone driving towards a car boot sale with a Ginsters. The riffs are polite, the vocals maddeningly limp, and more than half the tracks are mere sketches they couldn’t be bothered to colour in. As early woodshedding it might be understandable; as a finished album it’s breathtaking in its laziness.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



## ANTIBALAS

Antibalas

DAPTONE

Brooklyn’s Afrobeat kings pay explicit tribute to the legendary Fela Kuti

**7/10**

The best of the many Afrobeat revivalists to

have emerged in the last decade, Antibalas’ past few LPs have seen them flirting with ultra-slick machine-like funk and Afro-Latin beats. However, after serving as houseband for the first run of the *Fela!* musical, they appear to have moved back into full-on Afrika 70 revivalism. Produced by founder member Gabriel Roth – the man behind Amy Winehouse and Sharon Jones’ backing bands – it sounds like it was recorded entirely live, with frontman Amayo going into ever more Fela-ish vocal ramblings. “Him Belly Go No Sweet” is a particularly deep funk gem.

JOHN LEWIS

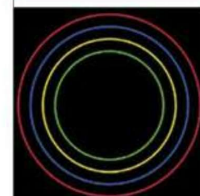
WE’RE  
NEW  
HERE

## Cory Branan



It’s not unusual to rebel against your parents’ music. But in the case of songwriter Cory Branan, raised in Mississippi and Memphis, it’s been a circuitous route home. “My father was into country and gospel quartets,” he explains. “So I went as far away from it as you can – into metal, punk and rap. But I found my way back to roots music, probably through punk. There’s a direct line between the two. Real country and real punk are trying to say something, with the least amount of bullshit.” It’s an ethos he uses to persuasive effect on third LP *Mutt* (named after his self-styled mash of wiry Americana), which taps into the same vein of sidelong narrative as his heroes Leonard Cohen, John Prine and Tom Waits. He even ropes in Waits’ horn player Ralph Carney. The songs themselves reflect 37-year-old Branan’s own wanderlust, a peripatetic lifestyle that’s seen him settle in LA, Brooklyn, Austin and now Nashville. And he’s keen to flag up the input of recently deceased engineer and AMC member Tim Mooney: “He’d be sitting at this amazing old analogue equipment, cigarette ash falling into the faders. A real punk rock approach. We recorded it like they used to in the ’70s. Very fresh!”

ROB HUGHES



## BLOC PARTY

Four

FRENCHKISS

Eternal teenagers regroup

After almost calling it a day during their recent hiatus, a beefed-up and somewhat

**5/10**

Americanised Bloc Party have returned, determined to blast their way out of the indie ghetto. Here be passages of speedy heads-down riffage, brash processed guitars, an abundance of woh-oh-ohs and the occasional threat of turning into Muse. Yet the band’s outlook remains too earnest and emo-ish for them to convince as rockers. The songs are assured, strident and catchy, but often fairly cringeworthy too (Kele duetting theatrically with himself on “3X3”, the whole of “Kettling”). Despite the high production values, this is a Party you’re no longer so keen to attend.

SAM RICHARDS



## ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS

Cut The World

ROUGH TRADE

This year’s Meltdown curator, live and symphonic in Copenhagen

**8/10**

Antony Hegarty’s studio

albums to date have tended towards the under-adorned, all the better to foreground his remarkable falsetto. *Cut The World*, a live LP recorded last year with the Danish National Chamber Orchestra and new arrangements from Nico Muhly and violinist Maxim Moston, blow Hegarty’s songs to grander scale. Amid sumptuous readings of “Swanlights” and “Epilepsy Is Dancing”, a new title track explores Hegarty’s preoccupation with feminine thinking; his philosophy is expanded further on “Future Feminism”, a spoken-word segment that is lofty, but not humourless: “I’m a witch... I actually debaptised myself”.

LOUIS PATTISON



## CORY BRANAN

Mutt

BLOODSHOT

Majestic third album from US rootster

The journey to his adopted home in Nashville, via smalltown Mississippi

**8/10**

and the underground Memphis scene, is reflected in the wanderlust of Branan’s own music. Mixed and engineered by late American Music Club drummer Tim Mooney, *Mutt* offers a terrific spread of styles, from the galloping folk-punk of “Karen’s Song” to “Survivor Blues”’s inflamed roots and the more redemptive country of “Darken My Door”. There are ready echoes of Ryan Adams, Paul Westerberg and Springsteen (especially the rousing “Bad Man”), with a lived-in voice and keen ear for a dusty narrative that suggest he’s not overly flattered by such lofty comparisons.

ROB HUGHES





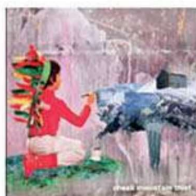
**MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER**  
**Ashes And Roses**  
ROUNDER

11th album from the one-time country queen

**7/10**

Despite receiving nearly half a dozen Grammys in the genre, the country label ill-fits Carpenter – and *Ashes And Roses* takes her about as far as it's possible to venture from mainstream Nashville banality. Inspired by personal tragedy – namely illness, divorce and her father's death – songs such as “Another Home” and “Soul Companion” belong firmly in best Joni Mitchell troubadour territory and, right on cue, James Taylor turns up to duet on the latter. The uncluttered folk-rock arrangements and a voice that has acquired a richer patina since her '90s country hits contribute to the loveliest and most profound album of her career.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



**CHEEK MOUNTAIN THIEF**  
**Cheek Mountain Thief**  
FULL TIME HOBBY

Tunng singer loses his heart in Iceland

**7/10**

Tunng's Mike Lindsay visited Húsavík in Iceland, a remote fishing town overlooked by Kinnarfjöll, otherwise known as Cheek Mountain. So bewitched was the singer by this “mythical wonderland”, and a girl he met there, that he decided to leave London and make it his home. *Cheek Mountain Thief* is an engaging and occasionally wistful love letter to Iceland in which he gasps at the alien landscape, loses his head under the Northern Lights, and gets naked in hot springs, to a soundtrack of lolling drums and woody percussion. A fine advert both for Lindsay and his adopted home.

FIONA STURGES



**CORREATOWN**  
**Pleiades**  
HIGHLINE

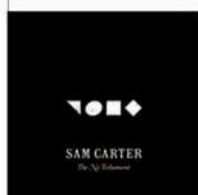
Fifth album from Los Angeles filmmakers' fave

No wonder Andrea Correa's songs have found their way onto

**6/10**

US shows like *Grey's Anatomy*, *Ugly Betty* and *How I Met Your Mother*, or that she's recently scored quirky indie movie *Sassy Pants*. She makes the kind of melancholy AOR that twins traditional pop melodies with glossy modern production, and scrupulously avoids scaring the horses. So *Pleiades* may not live up to the celestial promise of its title, but boasts songs, in the likes of “Play”, “Sunset & Echo” and single “Further”, that insinuate themselves into your head via pretty melodies and a sighing sensuality reminiscent of Mazzy Star and She & Him.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



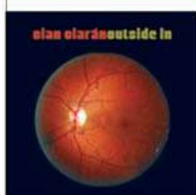
**SAM CARTER**  
**The No Testament**  
CAPTAIN RECORDS

Brit guitar-picker's songs from the heart

**9/10**

Sam Carter's debut, *Keepsakes*, announced an emerging talent with a fingerpicking style that recalled Nic Jones and a voice as cleanly articulated as Martin Carthy. Three years on, the exemplary musicianship is bolder, the vocal arrangements more striking, especially the defiant, a cappella title track, while Carter's writing now stretches to spirituals and gutsy blues. Whether on the heartrending “The One” – a touching conversation between divorced father and son – or the R'n'B of “Waves & Tremors”, addressing the aftermath of the Japanese earthquake, Carter's compassionate perspective is as penetrating as Richard Thompson's best work.

MICK HOUGHTON



**CIAN CIARÁN**  
**Outside In**  
DELL'ORSO

Latest Super Furry to fly solo

**6/10**

In a spate of Super Furry Animal offshoot activity following a nifty 7” by Guto Pryce's new band Gulp, this is an assured solo debut from the band's “quiet one”, keyboardist Cian Ciarán. Buoyed by those instantly recognisable harmonies, *Outside In* is a logical progression from Ciarán's mellow contributions to SFA's *Love Kraft*, although the headlong dive into full-on Harry Nilsson territory is still something of a (largely pleasant) surprise. These are tastefully plush love songs with just a hint of subversion – “Whatever happened to all the people who give a fuck?” runs the album's first line – although ultimately this ballads-only affair could do with a little more bite.

SAM RICHARDS



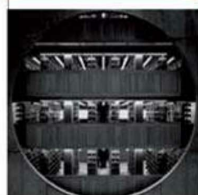
**ROBERT CRAY**  
**Nothin' But Love**  
PROVOGUE

Finding his forlorn voice again

**8/10**

Cray has long since cornered the market in soulfully bluesy sob stories about wronged men and wayward women, but recent albums have been too clinical for their own good, lacking the spark and warmth of his first few records. Thankfully, his 16th release reconnects with the energy of bygone high-water marks, mainly due to it being recorded live in the studio over a brisk fortnight. “(Won't Be) Coming Home” cuts a sprightly groove in its familiar tale of romantic disillusionment, while “A Memo” pops and fizzles like vintage Wilson Pickett. There's a purer blues feel to “I'm Done Cryin'”, Cray's sweet guitar at its most lyrical, embellished by lush strings.

TERRY STAUNTON



**CFCF**  
**Exercises**  
DUMMY

Chillwave veteran's meditative song-cycle

**7/10**

While his peers Washed Out and Memory Tapes recycled Hall & Oates B-sides, Canadian composer Mike ‘CFCF’ Silver rode the chillwave of 2009 in a manner befitting any serious musician: he ignored it completely. In the time since his debut *Continent*, Silver has gradually refined an elegant if frictionless style of cosmic electronica to reach a state of grace explored on *Exercises*, an eight-track song cycle of rippling piano phrases and widescreen romance that conveys in two- or three-minute pieces the poise and simplicity of Philip Glass or Aphex Twin's ambient works. Certainly, *Exercises* proves Silver is in good shape.

PIERS MARTIN



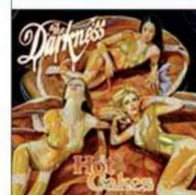
**COOLY G**  
**Playin' Me**  
HYPERDUB

Synth-soul and feminine pressure from London producer

**6/10**

South London's Merrisa Campbell emerged as part of the so-called “UK funky” movement that grew out of grime around the turn of the decade, but her music has grown into a place more languid and unhurried than that music's roughshod soca bounce. Rhythms are still uptempo, but jittery percussion rattles over luxurious curls of synth in a way reminiscent of LTJ Bukem's mid-'90s liquid funk productions. Campbell's vocals have a cold soul to them, too, elegantly demonstrated on a surprising cover of Coldplay's “Trouble” that makes over the original with echo-soaked snare and soft shudders of sub-bass.

LOUIS PATTISON



**THE DARKNESS**  
**Hot Cakes**  
PIAS

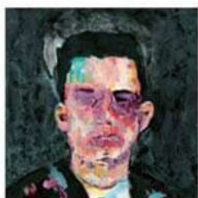
Third from Lowestoft's Gaga-approved rockers

**7/10**

Viewed by many as an elaborate joke when they first swaggered into earshot, The Darkness have proved their staying power. Their 2003 debut sold 1.5 million copies, but their second foundered amid infighting and, in 2006, frontman Justin Hawkins quit to enter rehab. Since both his and his brother Dan's solo careers failed to ignite, last year's reunion came as no great surprise. *Hot Cakes* adds little to their hybrid of Queen, AC/DC, Van Halen and Guns N'Roses, but the air-punching thrills of “Forbidden Love” and “Concrete” are undeniable, while what Thom Yorke might make of their Iron Maiden-styled reinvention of “Street Spirit” is a joy to imagine.

SHARON O'CONNELL





## MATTHEW DEAR *Beams* GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

Intermittently impressive art-rock from techno auteur  
Despite starting from the opposite background – he's an esteemed minimal

6/10

techno artist rather than indie rock veteran – Matthew Dear has ended up in a similar territory to LCD Soundsystem. His third song-based album, *Beams*, haunts a familiar Enoish dancefloor midway between Talking Heads' *Remain In Light* and Bowie's *Lodger*. But while James Murphy's homages are leavened with irony and discrete heartache, Dear is more po-faced than pomo. "Her Fantasy" is an epic opening track, but as the album goes on, the unremitting gloom and Dear's baritone grow wearisome, and the closer, "Temptation", could almost be a Stephin Merritt pastiche, without the redeeming couplets.

STEPHEN TROUSSE



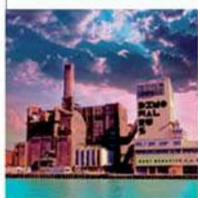
## DIESEL PARK WEST *Do Come In, Excuse The Mess* DANVILLE

Leicester quartet confirm their stamina  
Labelmates to Blur in the early 1990s, Diesel

7/10

Park West were so 'nearly ran' it's amazing to discover them still going. Little's changed, however: their ongoing love of West Coast psychedelia is evident in rousing opener "Charlotte It's All Over" and "Arthur's Song", a signposted tribute to Arthur Lee. But the New Jersey coast is equally prominent, with much of their eighth album recalling the bombastic heights of Springsteen's work. John Butler's vocals are partially responsible, as are "Something Sad In The City" and "Last Show In Town", but while DPW may not be especially relevant today, their anthems remain consistently well-crafted.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



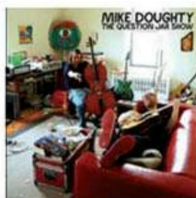
## DINOWALRUS *Best Behavior* HEIST OR HIT

Hairy Brooklyn hipsters go for the pop jugular  
The name suggests some fantastical hybrid – one part brontosaurus, one

6/10

part goofy marine mammal – and Dinowalrus' second album is, fittingly, a waystation between arcane Brooklyn hipsterdom and shiny synth-pop. Sometimes, it's difficult to see a thread linking the Psychedelic Furs-style guitar drones of "Beth Steel" with the strident electro of "Radical Man", but the best tracks put a unique stamp on these improbable hybrids. The shouty punk-funk of "RICO" and the digitised Sonic Youthisms of "Burners" both share the same juddering tension between kick drum and synth that lends a thrilling nervous energy to proceedings.

JOHN LEWIS



## MIKE DOUGHTY *The Question Jar Show* HORN BLOW

2CD live album from former Soul Coughing man  
On Doughty's 2009/'10 solo American tour, he

6/10

placed a jar front of stage and asked the audience to place written questions in it, which he then answered between songs. The album of the tour reveals a natural storyteller with a spontaneous stand-up ability, interspersed between stripped-down acoustic-guitar-and-bass versions of 28 of his cultish songs from "Busting Up A Starbucks" to "27 Jennifers". With influences ranging from Jonathan Richman to Bill Hicks, Doughty's mix of politics, intelligence and humour allied to classic songwriting is reminiscent of a less savage version of former *Uncut* columnist Ed Hamell.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

WE'RE  
NEW  
HERE

## Nathan Fake



Get most musicians talking about birds and mushrooms and they're doubtless recounting some tawdry tour tale. Norfolk's electro buccaneer Nathan Fake, however, fancies himself as a kind of techno-friendly Bill Oddie. "I was playing a festival in Lancashire last week and my friend was dead impressed I could identify these mushrooms in the forest," says the London-based Fake (real name), 28, whose third album, *Steam Days*, shackles the wistful allure of Boards Of Canada to clattering rhythms. "I grew up in the countryside and that ties into my music subconsciously."

Taken under the wing of producers Four Tet and James Holden in his teens, Fake enjoyed early acclaim when Holden's mix of "The Sky Was Pink" became 2004's essential post-rave tune. Since then, two albums and countless live shows have given shape to *Steam Days'* mix of Krautrock and "I Feel Love". Only recently Radiohead succumbed to Fake's charm, commissioning a remix from *The King Of Limbs*. Naturally, the amateur ornithologist chose "Morning Mr Magpie". "I saw a couple of jays in my garden the other day," he says. "You don't often see them in the city."

PIERS MARTIN



## SIDSEL ENDRESEN & STIAN WESTERHUS *Didymoi Dreams* RUNE GRAMMOFON

Far-out nightmares from Norway  
A recording of a live

8/10

performance at Bergen's Nattjazz festival, this is a challenging but stunning display of vocal prowess and dread-inducing sonics. Westerhus lays down electric guitar lines that loom blackly in cello-like tones, or fold in under their own pressure to leave percussive mechanic bursts. Endresen, meanwhile, is terrifying, dissolving her voice into staccato ticks, snarls and demonic chatter. Like fellow Scandinavian oesophagus-botherers Maja Ratkje and Åke Hodell, she seems to draw on every part of herself between lips and lungs, as moments of soaring lucidity become enveloped in dementia and horror.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



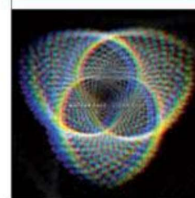
## ESPEN ERIKSEN TRIO *What Took You So Long* RUNE GRAMMOFON

EST-esque cool jazz, with extra cheese  
With very little in the way of improvisation,

7/10

and pieces staying around the four-minute mark, this is dinner jazz for the 21st Century – a piano/bass/drums setup playing in a classy Scandinavian style. Some of the melodies are incredibly strong, such as "Dusk Of Dawn", which seems to wander around mulling over a problem before returning to its troubled starting point; Lars Tormod Jensen on bass draws intelligently tuneful counterpoints to Eriksen. Its Sheraton-Lounge smoothness will put off some listeners, particularly on a heartfelt cover of "Could It Be Magic", but if you like this sort of thing, Eriksen and company are very satisfying performers of it.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



## NATHAN FAKE *Steam Days* BORDER COMMUNITY

Swashbuckling third album from Norfolk raver  
Much was expected of shaggy synth upstart Nathan Fake when he

7/10

made his mark in 2004 with "The Sky Was Pink", a bucolic odyssey that straddled genres with an effortlessness somehow absent in later records. Now 28 and more sure of his skills, Fake handles *Steam Days* with a cocksure swagger. There's still an engaging naivety to his woolly-jumped electronics, which here broadly alternate between Boards Of Canada bliss ("Paeon") and gnarly analogue prowlers dusted with icing sugar ("Harnser", "Iceni Strings"), and it's clear that if he wants to, he could easily command proceedings alongside his pals Walls and Four Tet.

PIERS MARTIN





## FIELD REPORT Field Report PARTISAN

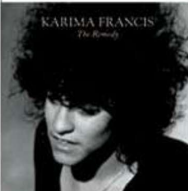
**Haunting debut from ex-Justin Vernon bandmate**

Chris Porterfield is the member of DeYarmond Edison who wasn't Justin

**9/10**

Vernon and didn't join Megafaun. While Bon Iver went global, Porterfield repaired to Wisconsin to write, initially performing as Conrad Plymouth. Some of those songs make it onto this set, notably the beautiful, anthemic "Fergus Falls", but – recording at Vernon's studio with engineer Beau Sorenson – CP's folksy aesthetic has been augmented by gentle synth washes and a faintly experimental edge. The influence of Paul Simon is obvious on "Taking Alcatraz", but Porterfield has a way of entwining lyrical detail and broad sentiment that is compelling and original.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## KARIMA FRANCIS The Remedy MERCURY

**Flood-produced second from UK singer-songwriter**  
Karima Francis made quite a splash in 2009

**6/10**

with her debut album, *The Author*, which fed the industry's appetite for belting female confessionals. Since then, recovery from an eating disorder has stalled her progress. Now she dispenses *The Remedy*, an oddly one-note follow-up. Francis' US-radio-friendly, soul-rock expression sees her rhyming "chains" with "pains" and the hiccup in her muscular voice – equal parts Skin and Tracy Chapman – is as much irritating trope as hallmark. The Carole King-like "Forgiven" seduces, but a blatant tilt at Duffy's demographic with "Glory Days" shows just how determined Francis is not to blow her second chance.

SHARON O'CONNELL



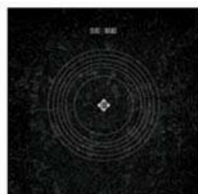
## FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST Candy In Weightlessness SCRATCHY

**Witty alt. pop collage from Aberdeen maverick**

**7/10**

Alvine Spetz is named after IKEA net curtains and makes big music entirely alone. This talented one-man band's second LP sees Spetz moving away from the Fall and Orange Juice references of his 2009 debut to create a lush, largely instrumental, cut-up music that tweaks memories of everyone from Yello and Stereolab to Denim. While opener "Bubbleworks" and "Second Hand Poet" suggest a slick move towards ironic electro-disco, the rest of the nine tracks bathe in a languid ambience, full of melodic surprises and accomplished harmonies. The quirkiness occasionally grates, but Spetz's restless imagination wins the day.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



## DUKE GARWOOD AND WOODEN WAND Duke/Wand FIRE RECORDS

**A side of blues, a side of country**

**8/10**

This is a split LP rather than a collaboration,

with British bluesman Garwood and the frighteningly prolific US troubadour Wooden Wand (aka James Jackson Toth) getting a side each to strut their stuff. Garwood is on a strange, sacred trip, kicking off with a pair of hypnotic avant-blues instrumentals and ending with the beguiling dirges "Fortune (Grace The Days)" and "The Sand, The Return". Wooden Wand's gospel-country offers an intriguing counterpoint, especially the three rockier tracks he recorded with a band, the pick of which are the uplifting, psych-Americana "Navy Blue" and the heavy Drive-By Truckers-like "Sediment Traps".

PETER WATTS

## REVELATIONS

**The mates of Bon Iver: Justin Vernon's disparate collaborations**



➤ The success of Bon Iver has thrown a spotlight on the many musicians who have collaborated with Justin Vernon over the years. Central to the story is DeYarmond Edison, Vernon's pre-Bon Iver band, who applied academic rigour to reinterpreting roots music. Field Report's Chris Porterfield is the latest DeYarmond graduate, while the remainder of the band (Brad and Phil Cook, Joe Westerlund) continue to hone their psych-folk experiments in Megafaun. Megafaun and Vernon were reunited in Ryan Olson's soft-rock project Gayngs, and Vernon's label Chigliak recently released an LP by Amateur Love (the Cooks' previous outfit). Chigliak aims to promote overlooked local artists from Eau Claire and beyond (Nashville-based songwriter Sarah Siskind, who toured with Bon Iver; and Minnesota's 12 Rods are next). Vernon's artistic promiscuity has also seen him lend his talents to a variety of disparate projects. Kanye West aside, he indulged his experimental urges with Volcano Choir, a collaboration with post-rockers Collections Of Colonies Of Bees, while the Bees' Thomas Wincek did some sonic twiddling on Bon Iver's second album. Vernon also appeared on Anaïs Mitchell's folk opera *Hadestown*, and brought a bit of Bon Iver to the production of *Voyageur*, the fourth LP by his girlfriend, Kathleen Edwards. JOHN ROBINSON



## GONZALES Solo Piano II GENTLE THREAT

**Jokes-free solo turn from piano-rap prankster**

Under the guise of "Chilly Gonzales", Canadian musician

**8/10**

Jason Beck has explored many musical areas, ricocheting from electronica to rap to kitsch '70s soft rock with the sole constants being sharp wit and a hungry sense of ambition. Like its predecessor, 2004's celebrated *Solo Piano*, this is a rare case of Gonzo playing it straight. Fourteen vocals-free piano suites called things like "Escher" and "Nero's Nocturne" explore and expand on simple, Erik Satie-like melodic motifs, but Beck plays with a showman's flourish, and while there is none of the Les Dawson buffoonery he displays live, his comic sense manifests in the occasional mischievous twist.

LOUIS PATTISON



## GRAHAM GOULDMAN Love And Work ROSALA

**Songwriting skill and melodic charm shine on 10cc ace's first solo album in 12 years**

**7/10**

Dedicated to the late

Andrew Gold, his partner in '80s/'90s duo Wax, *Love And Work* blends seamlessly with Gouldman's best work. His classic 1960s compositions for The Hollies and The Yardbirds suggested that what Gouldman brought to 10cc (otherwise a venue for delicious ironies) was sincerity and directness. He retains freshness and clarity on the layered harmonies of "Ariella", stays the right side of the sentimental line on "The Halls Of Rock'n'Roll" while "Black Gold" delivers an affectionately tailored instrumental tribute to The Shadows. Well mannered, high-quality, mature pop.

GAVIN MARTIN



## GUARDIAN ALIEN See The World Given To A One Love Entity THRILL JOCKEY

**American prog-psych tricksiness fails to ignite**

**4/10**

The latest concept of drummer Greg Fox, member of metal-not-metal act Liturgy and collaborator with Dan Deacon, five-piece Guardian Alien's debut album is a 40-minute prog-psych epic crammed with ideas, none of them particularly engaging. You can hear the constituent parts of Fox's vibe in there – pounding double-kick metal action, the drone used as energy accumulator, and some gnarly free-form wailing on the shahi baaja zither. But nothing here is any more or less (un)inspired than other third-tier psych acts from the American underground. Of which, you gotta admit, there's rather a lot.

JON DALE

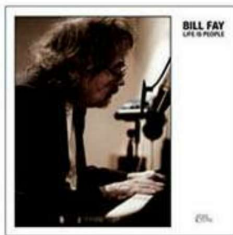


# BILL FAY

## Life Is People

DEAD OCEANS

Beautifully measured return to the studio from this humble master of English song. *By Jon Dale*



9/10

IT'S BEEN AROUND 40 years since English singer-songwriter Bill Fay last saw a studio album from conception to completion. This has little to do with Fay's vision and almost everything to do with the

vagaries of an industry that tends to work at cross purposes to the artists that populate it. Fay's legend rests on two albums released just as the benign visions of the '60s turned inward and self-destructive in the early '70s. It's a narrative arc that's reflected in the shift from the Edenic and redemptive song poems of Fay's debut, self-titled album from 1970, garlanded as they were with orchestra and captured in autumnal colours, to the explosive force of 1971's *Time Of The Last Persecution*. There Fay, alongside guitarist Ray Russell and their group, drilled free improvisation into songs sung from what sounded like the end of the world.

Both records subsequently all but disappeared from view, and Fay's attempted third album sat on the shelf until his eventual rediscovery in the noughties, where the patronage of artists like Jim O'Rourke, Current 93's David Tibet and especially Jeff Tweedy and Wilco brought Fay's songs back into the half-light. Tweedy picked up on the beatific bucolics of the first album, covering "Be Not So Fearful" live; Tibet, whose label has released two albums by Fay, delved deep into the dark heart of *Last Persecution*. But with *Life Is People*, Fay's songs rest in the hands of American producer Joshua Henry, who gathered musicians such as Matt Deighton, Tim Weller, Mikey Rowe, with varying histories (Oasis, Paul Weller, Stevie Nicks), to bring some of Fay's home-recorded demos off the ferric oxide and into plain view.

It could have been a mess – the hip young producer refashioning his songwriter hero in his own vision. But, fair play to Henry, he's found a perfect balance here, wrapping Fay's heartbreaking songs up in production and arrangements that respect the material's weight, whether with strings and organ on "The Healing Day", or a gospel choir to support the humanitarian vision of "Be At Peace With Yourself". The latter already appeared on 2010's *Still Some Light* as a home-recorded demo, and it's wild to hear it transformed from a song from a dusty shelf into a modern hymn, the choir swathing Fay's vulnerable voice in beams of light.

There's a case to be made for *Life Is People* as Fay's most diverse, divergent album, thanks to

### SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**

Joshua Henry  
**Recorded at:** Snap Studios, London

**Personnel includes:**

Matt Armstrong, Ian Burge, Matt Deighton, Richard Green, London Community Gospel Choir, Mikey Rowe, Alan Rushton, Ray Russell, Jeff Tweedy, Vulcan String Quartet, Tim Weller



most devastating performances come from Fay on his lonesome. There's something in the intimate consort between his piano-playing and his vocals that is simply unparalleled, and even when he's taking on another's material, like his masterful reading of Wilco's "Jesus Etc.", he's able to imbue the performance with both the

Henry's approach to the material: "This World" essays joy through an easy, unassuming pop song; "Cosmic Concerto (Life Is People)" builds from church-organ soul to a beautiful, forlorn two-chord rock Passion, a classic Fay song that's more than fit to sit alongside past gems like "Be Not So Fearful" or "Pictures Of Adolf Again". But as great as the arrangements are, the

necessary gravitas and an unassuming grace.

Indeed, it's grace that's writ most strongly through *Life Is People*. These songs are far removed from the eschatological visions that mark out *Time Of The Last Persecution*, and the broad sweep of the arrangements underwrite the songs with a classicist art that's fundamentally different to the small-group playing that fleshed out the late '70s sessions on *Tomorrow, Tomorrow And Tomorrow*. Henry has shepherded a clutch of graceful songs from demo tapes into a song suite that's richly arranged without being over-egged, the better to capture the compassion and humanitarian spirit of Fay's writing. And ultimately, it's that compassionate vision of song that resonates through *Life Is People*, as Fay observes the passing of the days with redemption in mind.

## Q&A

*Bill Fay*

**How did it feel to be entering the studio again after such a long time?**

It's a good place to be, a studio. It's like everybody's there to do their best by the music. I was walking into the unknown, but we started with "Be At Peace With Yourself", and everything kind of fell into place. We did a run through, and I could feel the rapport between Matt Deighton, Mike Rowe and Matt Armstrong, who knew each other and had played together. Alan Rushton was there, and Joshua was

saying where he'd like drums to come in.

**These songs have a kind of grace that wasn't there on *Time Of The Last Persecution*. How have the times impacted on your songs?**

I'd only just come to believe in the things I sang about on *Time Of The Last Persecution*, and so they had an urgency that was totally met by the way Ray Russell, Alan Rushton and Daryl Runswick played together at the time. It was Ray's and their album as much as mine... I think I'm fundamentally a plaintive songwriter, with other things thrown in, and anything I've ever written since back then is really a variation of the same themes that were in those early albums.

INTERVIEW: JON DALE





## SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE

Ascent

DRAG CITY

Lift-off! Ben Chasny convenes a significant psych reunion. *By John Mulvey*



8/10

IT ISN'T, IN all honesty, the most canonical and secure of musical judgments. Nevertheless, there is a small cabal of rock fans who will argue all day that a Santa Cruz five-piece called Comets On Fire were one of

the great bands of the early 21st Century. Between 2001 and 2006, and over four albums of incrementally rising fidelity, the Comets mastered a hybrid of West Coast psychedelia, hardcore, white noise, classic rock and fever dream sci-fi. "Forward-thinking motherfuckers," noted an admiring Julian Cope, transfixed by their savagery around the time of 2002's second album, *Field Recordings From The Sun*.

Around that time, too, Comets On Fire fell in with a guitarist called Ben Chasny, who was making brackish, witchy psych-folk on his own as Six Organs of Admittance. Initially, Comets were engaged as the backing band for a putative Six Organs release. Soon enough, though, the sessions were aborted. Chasny would continue to release Six Organs records, but his relationship with Comets On Fire had changed: he had also become one of them.

Perpetually distracted by their other projects,

Comets dissolved sometime after 2006's *Avatar*, with frontman Ethan Miller focusing on the brawny orthodoxies of his other band, Howlin Rain. Since then, Chasny has persisted with an adventurous career on the margins, as both an inveterate collaborator (notably with a fractious leftfield power trio, Rangda) and as the meditative Six Organs. It now seems he has decided to tie up some loose ends, too. The supporting players on *Ascent*, the 13th album released by Chasny under the Six Organs brand, are his old comrades from Comets On Fire: more experienced, steered by Chasny's vision rather than their collective mania, but no less potent and exciting.

Chasny is predominantly known as an acoustic player, with a style that is rooted in the folk ragas of Robbie Basho and Peter Walker, but privileges fervour and caprice, an unruly imagination, over doughty virtuosity. When he switches to electric, his songs often lock into swirling patterns and spiritual drones, orbiting around songforms that take the form of distant muttered incantations. Those frail melodies remain, but *Ascent* plays down the cyclical scrabbling. "A Thousand Birds" and "Close To The Sky" were both essayed during the doomed 2002 sessions (which Ethan Miller has made available at his blog,

## Q&A

Ben Chasny



**How did the reunion with Comets On Fire come about?**

I've never really considered Comets to have broken up.

We truly are just on a hiatus.

In Comets there was a thrust toward excess in all parts. In Six Organs there's an attempt to make a solid foundation on top of which to build that excess.

**Ethan Miller tells a story about you burying the master tapes of a session in the ground to dig up and release at a much later date.**

I did that with one song, "Cover Your Wounds With The Sky" on *Luminous Night*. I learned some things during the process, such as to not wind the tape up on the spools so tight so I can get mould growing on the play-side.

**What's next?** Rangda's second record, *Formerly Extinct*, is out in September. Six Organs and Rangda will be touring separately in Europe in October. The Six Organs shows will be with a small band made up of some of the Comets guys. As for Comets itself, that is up in the air. I wouldn't rule anything out.

INTERVIEW: JOHN MULVEY

silvercurrent.blogspot.co.uk) before turning up in acoustic form on Six Organs' *Dark Noontide* (2002) and *Compathia* (2003). Here, though, Utrillo Kushner (drums) and Ben Flashman (bass) wander into dogged Crazy Horse grooves, leaving Miller (a reverend constant in the right channel) and Noel Von Harmonson to provide simmering guitar backup, and Chasny to fly untethered over the top.

His solos may spit, writhe and yank the songs into new shapes, but Chasny is an unusually egoless player. For all the extensive fireworks, his style feels more punkish and exploratory than mere showboating: witness the doubled-up shredding that cuts a swathe through "Even If You Knew" (another tune retrieved from the 2002 batch), its fuzzy pulse related to The Doors' "Five To One".

The strongest echo of Comets On Fire's old work comes on the opening "Waswasa", an overdriven

belt-buckle boogie (in which Kushner, as Cope once put it, "is sometimes two drummers [who] both think they are Keith Moon") that recalls one of their more streamlined tracks, "Sour Smoke" (2006). Mostly, though, *Ascent* sounds like Chasny channelling a great band's alchemical powers to his own ends, in the process making what may turn out to be a highpoint in his already rich and complex career.

It adds, too, a pleasing new chapter to one of rock's less celebrated cult stories, even if we should be wary of overplaying the sentimentality. In "Close To The Sky", Chasny's mammoth and elaborate solo is eventually tamed by a beautifully

jangling acoustic line, which you'd initially assume to be an intuitive contribution by Miller. The idea of a mythical jam is a romantic one but, ultimately, *Ascent* is a Six Organs record. The acoustic guitar, it transpires, is an overbub added by Chasny himself, finessing his masterpiece long after the reunion sessions are over.

### SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at:

Louder Studios, Grass Valley, California

Produced by: Ben

Chasny and Tim Green

Personnel include: Ben

Chasny (lead guitar/

vocals), Ben Flashman

(bass guitar, guitar),

Noel Von Harmonson

(rhythm and vortex

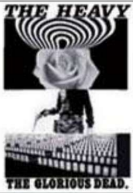
guitar), Utrillo Kushner

(drums, piano, bells),

Ethan Miller (rhythm

and slide guitar, organ)





## THE HEAVY The Glorious Dead

NINJA TUNE

**Bath-based neo-soul outfit, should be massive...**

**7/10**

West Country funk-rockers The Heavy

have developed a cult following on both sides of the Atlantic, their songs being used on ads and TV dramas, but have yet to hit the mainstream. Album number three might just change that. There are proficient pastiches: the junkyard jazz of "Lonesome Road" doffs its hat to Tom Waits, "Don't Say Nothing" recalls early Red Hot Chili Peppers, while there are plenty of chugging, 6/8 neo-soul ballads. But the stand-out tracks ("Curse Me Good" and "Big Bad Wolf") are delivered with an idiot-friendly Kasabian swagger that's endearingly dumb.

JOHN LEWIS



## JOHNNY HICKMAN Tilting

CAMPSTOVE RECORDS

**Darkhorse: solid second solo trip from longtime Cracker man**  
Of the ensemble player, rarely out front,

**7/10**

Californian Hickman is a fine if unheralded singer/writer, with a mile-wide working-class streak. *Tilting*, his second solo album amid 20-odd years of Cracker and assorted side projects, is a thoughtful roots/rock blend of the poetic and the philosophical, the funny and the forthright. The ambitious, six-minute acoustic "Destiny Misspent", a perceptive meditation on life's mysteries, is the LP's spiritual centerpiece, though the chiming "Sick Cynthia Thing", sporting a wicked powerpop hook and the stately, righteous "Measure Of A Man" (one might call it "The Ballad Of Mitt Romney") also shine.

LUKE TORN



## THE HILLBILLY MOON EXPLOSION Raw Deal

JUNGLE

**Polite rockers' career retrospective**

**6/10**

The fact that this Anglo-Swiss-Italian rockabilly

outfit boast a drummer called Luke The Puke and include a song called "Johnny Are You Gay?" in their set suggests they might not be taking themselves too seriously. Yet, behind the wackiness and whimsy is a solid little group with a firm grip on the nuts and bolts of the genre, this compilation bringing together the highlights of their first three albums. There's a nervous energy to "Clarksdale Boogie" and "Brown Eyed Boy", singer Emanuela Hutter giving the impression of a sweet-voiced saloon gal with a switchblade in her boot, but a few more rough edges would be welcome.

TERRY STAUNTON



## HOLY OTHER Held

TRIANGLE

**Debut full-length by mysterious monkish Manc**

Performing live in an obscuring pointy black hood, Holy Other looks

**7/10**

like some kind of gothic shaman, a feeling enhanced by this collection of dark and atmospheric productions. Caught somewhere between the crumbling 2-step of Mount Kimbie, the gunmetal urban vistas of Burial and the 'cloud rap' productions of Clams Casino and Noah Shebib, beats skip and head-nod as synthetic choral samples burst in and out. It's very earnest – you can practically see the doves emerging through dry ice during the title track – and would be suited to Drake's sadface moments, but its emotional honesty is bracing rather than awkward.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

## HOW TO BUY... ROCK GOES JAZZ

Featuring Joni, Van and Elvis Costello



## JONI MITCHELL Mingus

ASYLUM, 1979

Named in tribute to Mitchell's legendary bassist/collaborator Charles Mingus, who died a few months before its release. His

influence is evident on the co-authored "The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines" and "Coin In The Pocket", while Mitchell's own eloquent personality nourishes Mingus originals "A Chair In The Sky" and "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat".

**8/10**



## VAN MORRISON How Long Has This Been Going On?

VERVE, 1995

Recorded live without an audience at Ronnie Scott's, Van alternates between jazzed-

up reinterpretations of original material ("Moondance", "All Saint's Day") and fanciful renditions of standards like the Gershwin title track, Lester Young's "Symphony Sid" and Cannonball Adderley's "Sack O' Woe".

**7/10**



## ELVIS COSTELLO LIVE WITH THE METROPOLE ORKEST

My Flame Burns Blue

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON, 2006

Backed by a

Netherlands-based orchestra, Costello and Imposters pianist Steve Nieve reupholster back catalogue favourites in a jazz setting, including "Clubland", "Almost Blue" and "Watching The Detectives", the latter as a noir opus that owes much to Henry Mancini. Delving into jazz history, EC adds fresh lyrics to Charles Mingus' "Hora Decubitus".

**7/10**

TERRY STAUNTON



## HOT PANDA Go Outside

MINT RECORDS

**Fine third from smart Canadian four-piece**  
Straddling an interesting line between art-rock and punk-pop, Edmonton's Hot Panda

**7/10**

have produced a terrific album, one which combines intellectual and lyrical heft with a sure ear for a catchy riff. It opens with the brilliant visceral "One In The Head, One In The Chest", a Mission Of Burma-style rage about political extremism, before moving on to the jaunty "Language", although still with a discernible sinister underbelly. The funky "Future Markets" is about economic apocalypse, the lush brassy swing of "Holidays" is a sardonic sneer at bad relationships, while the crunching "Boats" ends the album with a wicked metallic flourish.

PETER WATTS



## HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF Look Out Mama

LOOSE

**Bracing country-folk outing from N'awlins refugee**

**8/10**

Alynda Lee Segarra's

story often reads like something ripped from an old Beat novel: a teenager hopping the boxcars from the Bronx all the way to New Orleans, busking with the locals and cutting tunes in a clapboard shack. Last year's UK debut as Hurray For The Riff Raff was a pleasing enough ragbag of styles, but *Look Out Mama* is a definite step up. There's certainly more of an overt country imprint to these songs, Segarra backed by local honky-tonkers The Tumbleweeds, whose mountain strings and acoustics bathe her wonderfully compelling voice in an authentic wash of hobo folk.

ROB HUGHES



## JOE JACKSON The Duke

EARMUSIC

**A tribute album with eloquent detours**

Jackson's first full-blooded foray into jazz, 1981's *Jumpin' Jive*, celebrated the loose

**7/10**

barrelhouse vibes of Louis Jordan and others, but this elaborate, sophisticated collection channels the music of just one bygone giant, Duke Ellington, through more modern-sounding filters. "Beginning To See The Light" and "Do Nothin' 'Til You Hear From Me" are given slick makeovers à la Steely Dan, while instrumentals "Caravan" and "Mood Indigo" are reupholstered as atmospheric film soundtrack pieces. It's an intriguing fusion of styles and rhythms, although Jackson stays faithful to the original Ellington arrangement of "It Don't Mean A Thing", jollied along by a cartoon-like duet vocal from Iggy Pop.

TERRY STAUNTON





**THOMAS KÖNER**  
**Novaya Zemlya**  
TOUCH

**Great Arctic waste-lands of ambience, masterfully designed**  
For the past two decades, German ambient/techno

**8/10**

producer Thomas Köner has hymned spaces of quiet desolation, whether dropping churchy beats on top of greyscale textures in his '90s dub-tech duo Porter Ricks, or composing great, immobile blocks of isolationist ambience in solo mode. *Novaya Zemlya*, named after an Arctic archipelago north of Russia, is typically beautiful – cold and imposing, but with a fluid grace and an incomparable sense of space. Throughout, Köner stills time with the simplest of compositional gambits, winding spooked field recordings through static walls of drone. It's no surprise Brian Eno is a huge fan.

JON DALE



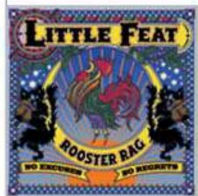
**LAST HARBOUR**  
**Your Heart, It Carries The Sound**  
LITTLE RED RABBIT

**Prettily doomy Mancunian collective's third**  
Over three albums, a kind of shorthand has

**6/10**

grown around Kevin Craig's Manchester collective. On their third album – written in a Northumbrian cottage, recorded in a church – the old rules still apply. They are gloomy, melancholic, and cinematic, as long as your idea of a popcorn matinee is a Béla Tarr retrospective. Vocally, Craig exudes the introspective dread of Mark Lanegan, but the songs are more accessible when he relaxes into a steely croon. The piano ballad, "Never", is like Scott Walker re-ordering Bowie's "Heroes", while the closing "This Is How We Disappeared" takes brooding emotionalism to gothic extremes.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



**LITTLE FEAT**  
**Rooster Rag**  
DECCA/ROUNDER

**Feats don't fail us now**  
Little Feat's 16th studio album is the first since the death of drummer Richie Hayward, leaving

**8/10**

only pianist Bill Payne from the original group. Payne has co-written four songs with Robert Hunter, whose modern folk tales are tailor-made for a group whose long and celebrated history rivals that of Hunter's old cohorts, The Grateful Dead. Arguably Little Feat's best since Lowell George checked out, everyone is working zealously together to forge that ingenious blend of American music that is Little Feat's hallmark. With an accent on the blues from the start, percussionist Sam Clayton brings down the curtain with a crunching version of Little Walter's "Mellow Down Easy".

MICK HOUGHTON



**DYLAN LEBLANC**  
**Cast The Same Old Shadow**  
ROUGH TRADE

**Languid return for Shreveport songsmith**  
On his 2010 debut, *Paupers Field*, LeBlanc sounded like Ryan

**7/10**

Adams reworking *On The Beach*. A dark mood for a young man, but it made sense, given that LeBlanc had grown up around Muscle Shoals, where his songwriter father, James, was a session man. Two years later, with Daniel Lanois-alumna Trina Shoemaker co-producing, the country shadings are less obvious, but the mood has darkened, with cinematic strings wrapping themselves around the pedal steel. The opener, "Part One: The End", is weary but dreamy, though the real treat is "Where Are You Now", a country shuffle in waltz-time, on which romance punctures the languorous mood.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

**HOW TO BUY... LITTLE FEAT**  
The rock'n'roll doctors on prescription



**Sailin' Shoes**  
WARNER BROS, 1972  
Last album featuring the original lineup; proficiently played tightly crafted songs that pitched them as LA's answer to The

Band's roots rock. Lowell George announced himself in style with literate, good-humoured songs like "Trouble", "Easy To Slip" and dooper's singalong "Willin'". The first Feat album to feature Neon Park's striking artwork.

**8/10**



**Dixie Chicken**  
WARNER BROS, 1973  
An expanded more rhythmic lineup and a supple, funkier approach indebted to Allen Toussaint whose simmering "On

Your Way Down" they make their own. Lowell George upped his ratio of distinctive songs – "Fat Man In The Bathtub", "Roll Um Easy", "Two Trains" – but it's the ensemble's near-nunchalant, soulful playing that lifts them onto a higher plain.

**9/10**



**The Last Record Album**  
WARNER BROS, 1975  
After five unparalleled albums, the balance of power swung towards guitarist Paul Barrere and keyboardist Bill

Payne. They injected a jazzier fluency and stepped up as songwriters ("All That You Dream", "Day Or Night"), to compensate for the increasingly strung-out George. He still contributes the incendiary "Down Below The Borderline" and "Long Distance Love", by far his most touching song.

**8/10**

MICK HOUGHTON



**SAM LEE**  
**Ground Of Its Own**  
THE NEST COLLECTIVE

**Stark, evocative debut from London-born folk singer**  
The thinking folkie's challenge is how to honour tradition

**8/10**

while bringing it into the here-and-now. A seasoned veteran of the Brit folk scene, Sam Lee's response is to unearth forgotten songs and present them with minimalist modern arrangements. Lee's baritone voice is of limited range but its timbre is engaging and his tales of betrayed lovers and tricky water sprites unfurl easily amid atmospheres that verge on the spectral. "The Tan Yard Slide", with its thrumming strings, "Wild Wood Amber", with woodwind background, and "On Yonder Hill", with steel drum and muted trumpet, are among the standouts of a quietly startling album.

NEIL SPENCER



**CORB LUND**  
**Cabin Fever**  
NEW WEST

**Splendid sixth album by the Hurtin' Albertan**  
Lund is, in some respects, a victim of his own virtues. Had he

**9/10**

been keener to conform to the expectations that enshroud a singer in a cowboy hat, he could be a Canadian Brad Paisley. As it is, though, *Cabin Fever* includes Marty Robbins-ish hoedowning ("Cows Around"), Bakersfield-fuelled barstool anthems ("Drink It Like You Mean It") and brilliantly wrought dispatches from an endless tour ("Bible On The Dash", a duet with Lund's kindred spirit Hayes Carll). This is another terrific chapter in what's become a rich catalogue of orthodox country, gently subverted by the irrepressible idiosyncrasies of its author.

ANDREW MUELLER



**BEX MARSHALL**  
**The House Of Mercy**  
HOUSE OF MERCY

**Accomplished third outing from Brit blueser**

**7/10**

She sings with a North American drawl, writes songs called "Rattlesnake" and "Bourbon Street" and sounds comfortable with a gospel chorus behind and a resonator guitar on her hip – it's hard to remember Bex Marshall is Devon-raised. *The House Of Mercy* is a showcase of her talents. She does down'n'dirty blues on "Gone Fishin'", evokes Janis Joplin on the sparse "Bite Me", goes acoustic for the tender "Barry's Song", and contributes tasty slide and Knopfleresque runs throughout. Her accompanists, a mix of US and local talent, get a run-out on the instrumental "Big Man", but Marshall's powerhouse persona dominates, winningly.

NEIL SPENCER





**DOGAN MEHMET**  
**Outlandish**  
HOBGOBLIN

**Second album from inventive Anglo-Turk folkie**  
Not sure where Mehmet fits in the various nu/psych/indie sub-genres

**6/10**

of Brit folk, but his thrilling Turkish take on English traditional song deserves recognition as more than mere novelty. The UK-born second-generation Turkish-Cypriot reinvents centuries-old English folk standards such as "Lord Bateman" and "Rakish Young Fellow" as rollicking gypsy-punk celebrations with clattering Balkan beats in a style he dubs 'Anglo-Ottoman funk'. The collision is irresistible – he thinks nothing of breaking into a Cypriot fiddle-dance tune in the middle of an ancient English ballad, like Fairport Convention crossed with Gogol Bordello.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



**THE MELVINS**  
**LITE**  
**Freak Puke**  
IPECAC

**Another strange mutation for the proto-grungers**  
Following three excellent albums

**5/10**

recorded with the powerhouse rhythm section of Jared Warren and Coady Willis of Big Business (notably 2008's *Nude With Boots*) The Melvins have shifted shape again. On *Freak Puke*, the core duo of frontman Buzz Osborne and drummer Dale Crover are joined by Trevor Dunn, of Mike Patton's Fantômas. This serves to drag *Freak Puke* into more avant-garde areas. Cacophonous rocking rubs about against bowed drones and curdled lounge-jazz turns prominently featuring Dunn's stand-up bass. Intrepid, but rarely satisfying. Still, a lumbering cover of Wings' "Let Me Roll It" is a perverse success.

LOUIS PATTISON



**MEURSAULT**  
**Something For The Weakened**  
SONG BY TOAD

**Neil Pennycook's folktronica outfit move folkwards**  
This Edinburgh collective came to our

**7/10**

attention a few years' back as one of the more interesting exponents of folktronica, combining banjos and ukes with breakbeats and squelchy synths. Album number three sees them subtract the "tronica" side and mutate into a skeletal acoustic outfit. Drowsy dirges like "Thumb" and "Hole" retain the hypnotic, metrical pulse of their previous incarnation, as do pensive piano ballads such as "Lightning Bolt". However, more uptempo tracks like the Phil Spector-ish "Flittin'" and the anthemic "Dull Spark" present us with rambunctious folk-punk urchins, assisted by Neil Pennycook's Scots accent.

JOHN LEWIS



**INGRID MICHAELSON**  
**Human Again**  
CABIN 24/MOM + POP

**More of the same from mega-selling folk-pop songstress**  
Ingrid Michaelson's cutesy confessional

**5/10**

style has made her the go-to girl to soundtrack weepy montages on American series such as *Grey's Anatomy*. *Human Again*, already a hit in the US, has been flagged as her dark night of the soul, detailing the aftermath of a bad relationship. But despite its subject matter, the glossy production and soaring choruses make it as resolutely user-friendly as her previous albums. Pared-back acoustic numbers such as "I'm Through" and "How We Love" are more pleasing in their simplicity, though there's no shaking the sense that Michaelson found her formula long ago and is sticking to it.

FIONA STURGES



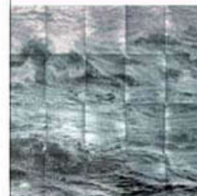
**THE MILK**  
**Tales From The Thames Delta**  
SONY

**Peppy retro soul stylings. From Chelmsford**  
These four young Chelmsford chaps

**6/10**

spin a familiar enough northern soul/R'n'B-influenced yarn, woven in with dance-influenced indie rock that recalls The Twang, Hard-Fi and the grit-croon of Plan B's *...Strickland Banks*. Born to be critical whipping boys, then, but the hollering energy of the likes of "Everytime We Fight" and the breezy breakfast radio brightness of "Hometown" are hard to resist. The only real false step is the attempt to mask their solid, obvious commerciality with fig-leaves of edge – like dubstep *pooms* on "Nothing But Matter". Stirring hearts, not bending minds, is what this lot do, and they do it rather well.

EMILY MACKAY



**MINOTAUR SHOCK**  
**Orchard**  
MELODIC

**Amiable folktronica from Bristol**  
For the last decade David Edwards aka Minotaur Shock has

**6/10**

cruised the winding B-road that traverses the neighbouring counties of folktronica (2001's *Chiff Chaffs And Willow Warblers*), hauntology (2003's *Rinse*) and English yacht rock (2005's *Maritime* arguably conceived the genre Metronomy perfected on last year's *English Riviera*). *Orchard* reprises something from all these phases: the synthstrings of "Janet" suggest a Radiophonic Vaughan Williams, "Lending Library" is glitchy soft pop, and "Quint" imagines medieval funk. Best of all, though, is "Too Big To Quit", which samples what sounds like Anne Briggs for a charming acoustic Maypole jig.

STEPHEN TROUSSE



**NABORANAI**  
**Naboranai**  
IDEOLOGIC ORGAN

**Freeform psych, shaped from Sunn O))) magma**  
Japanese free-rock pioneer Keiji Haino has been on ridiculously

**7/10**

good form of late, with the recent reformation of his sainted Fushitsusha power trio, and three sets of wild noise destruction in collaboration with Jim O'Rourke and Oren Ambarchi. Naboranai replaces O'Rourke with Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley for a series of unraveled rock improvisations, O'Malley letting off depth-charge bass movement, veiled in reverb, while Haino's guitar leaps between flint-like guitar chords, spindly one-note lines and cold masses of noise. Throughout, Ambarchi's drums piledrive things forward, splashes of cymbal searing through the Arctic glacier of guitar overload.

JONDALE



**OMBRE**  
**Believe You Me**  
ASTHMATIC KITTYY

**Summertime daydreaming from inspired pairing**  
OMBRE are Brooklyn musicians Julianna Barwick and Helado

**7/10**

Negro, who formed after a joint tour – his Latin shuffle and her angelic vocals complement each other unusually but perfectly. They open with deconstructed modern bossa nova, like Céu or Bebel Gilberto made sluggish with heat, before moving into sweeping psychedelic pop in the vein of Grizzly Bear. Their instrumentation is equally idiosyncratic, cheap scratchy drums blending with warm ambient tones on "Cara Falsa" to create a ramshackle anthem; Barwick's reliably beautiful voice sits at the back of the mix, observing the shimmering sonic haze below her.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



**OF MONSTERS AND MEN**  
**My Head Is An Animal**  
UNIVERSAL

**Epic emoting from Iceland**  
It's easy to see what's propelled this young

**5/10**

Icelandic six-piece to success in the US (No 6 in the Billboard chart) and beyond. Their sweet, urgent mix of boy-girl vocals, brass, glockenspiels and endless heart-in-mouth crescendos has earned them "new Arcade Fire" status without anyone involved having to reach into the dark shadows that the Fire often cast. On the cutesy likes of "King And Lionheart", though, they're closer in spirit to the plague of emoters loosed upon the world by the success of Mumford & Sons, bang on their oompah drums and wheeze their accordions as they might.

EMILY MACKAY



## AMERICANA



BEST  
OF THE  
MONTH



### CONOR OBERST AND THE MYSTIC VALLEY BAND

#### One Of My Kind

TEAM LOVE

6/10

shots of roadside scenery go. The music is a sweeping up of outtakes from the MVB's two previous LPs, 2008's *Conor Oberst*, and 2009's *Outer South*; four cuts previously appeared as the limited edition "Gentleman's Pact" EP. An album which is clearly not intended as a coherent artistic statement shouldn't be heard as one – but, that concession made, it becomes occasionally difficult not to wonder why much of "One Of My Kind" is being heard at all. Oberst, as nobody needs reminding, is an exceptionally gifted songwriter. However, in the Mystic Valley Band, he seems to prefer being perhaps a first among equals, but not by much. Six of these eleven tracks are written by persons other than Oberst – Paul Simon's "Kodachrome", the traditional "Corina, Corina", one each by MVB members Taylor Hollingsworth, Jason Boesel and Nik Freitas, and one by Philip Schaffart, who directed the film. With all due respect to the musicianly chops of the MVB, the other shore of the gulf between their songs and those of their nominal leader cannot be seen without binoculars. Hollingsworth's "Central City" is an amusing rehearsal-room tear-up, and Freitas' "Normal" a heartfelt declaration of desolation, but they can't keep up with Oberst's best efforts: the fantastic Gaslight Anthem-y title track, the beautiful "Breezy", evocative of Alex Chilton's rare forays into balladry. Oberst may well love making music with friends and good luck to him, but he could be more discriminating about how much of it he broadcasts. **ANDREW MUELLER**



## THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Plenty to whoop over with the recently announced nominees for the annual Americana Awards, scheduled for Nashville in September. **Gillian Welch, Justin Townes Earle, Hayes**

**Carll** and **Jason Isbell** will slug it out in the Artist Of The Year category, while *Uncut* favourites **Alabama Shakes** and **Dawes** are among those in the Emerging Artist slot. Album Of The Year, meanwhile, is a four-way scrap between Welch, Isbell, **Steve Earle** and the all-star tribute record to Guy Clark.

Closer to home, September's SXSC Americana/nu-folk mini-festival at the Railway Inn, Winchester, promises a fine lineup of **Mark Eitzel** (AMC), **Dan Stuart**

(Green On Red), **Boo Hewerdine** and N'Awlinz countryphiles **Hurray For The Riff Raff**. See [www.sxsc.org](http://www.sxsc.org) for more. On the back of fine new LP *Look Out Mama*, **Hurray For The Riff Raff** (left) also undertake their own UK tour in late Aug/early Sept. As do Loose labelmates **Deer Tick**, who bring their mesmeric folk-punk to a string of venues. The new release front includes an EP from folk siren **Dawn Landes**. *Mal Habillée* (Badly Dressed), is an eight-song collection sung entirely in French. See [www.dawnlandes.com](http://www.dawnlandes.com). And **The Walkabouts** issue their first ever DVD in September. *Life: The Movie - Collected Films And Clips*, due on Glitterhouse, features the Seattle cult heroes live in Prague, plus interview footage, vid promos and a road doc that promises "an intimate, insider's view of the band". Pretty much essential, we reckon. **ROB HUGHES**



### OH MY DARLING

#### Sweet Nostalgia

OUTSIDE MUSIC

#### Splendid bluegrass from Canadian all-women four-piece

The fact it was recorded in a straw barn and features cover art of a youngster dressed as a cowgirl brandishing a harmonica should tell you what to expect here – downhome, backporch, banjo-soaked Appalachian country with an oestrogen bias. Starting with "Anna K", tragedy inspired by Tolstoy, the all-female Canadian quartet harmonise beautifully throughout, whether on witty throwaways ("Roustabout"), frantic covers of traditional tunes (the French-sung "Ma Belle") or plangent songs of love gone wrong ("Love Me, Love Me Not"). Their best, though, could be the instrumental medley "Mister Guy", a glorious exhibition of coruscating musicianship.

PETER WATTS



### OPOSSOM

#### Electric Hawaii

FIRE

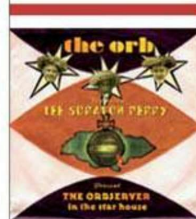
#### Experimental retro-pop with a warm sunshine smile

Kody Nielson is the former vocalist in New Zealand's The Mint

7/10

Chicks, who coined the term "troublegum" for their sunny, wonky, retro-futuristic sound. Oposom is essentially Nielson's solo laptop project, although it also features friends including Kiwi alt.pop star Bic Runga. Plundering the same vintage psychedelia and powerpop toybox as the Chicks, with an extra dash of Polynesian tropicália, this compact debut has an agreeably deranged feel. "Fly" and "Watchful Eye" are lovely, all helium-light harmonies and robo-glitchy percussion, while the ambi-jazz finale, "Inhaler Song", moves beyond art-pop into the depths of Flaming Lips-level weirdness.

STEPHEN DALTON



### THE ORB

#### Featuring Lee Scratch Perry

COOKING VINYL

6/10

#### SuperApe teams up with chill-out kings

for his finest LP in ages

Perry's most recent releases have seen him backed by a slightly dodgy European pub-reggae outfit, which instantly makes this collaboration more promising than anything he's put his name to in decades. He rambles – incomprehensibly, as ever – over various trippy soundscapes from Alex Paterson and Thomas Fehlmann, including "Golden Clouds" (Perry's woozy take on "Little Fluffy Clouds"), and a clutch of tracks based on old Scratch productions (including "Congo"). Best of all is the Afro-tinged dub of "Ashes" – gibberish taken into astral spheres.

JOHN LEWIS





## OUTER SPACE Akashic Record (Events: 1986-1990) SPECTRUM SPOOLS

**Emeralds man's  
thrilling intergalactic  
expedition**  
Cleveland, Ohio  
cosmonaut John Elliott

**8/10**

has been piloting Outer Space for as long as he's been a member of shoegaze titans Emeralds, but this year he's prioritising his experimental electronics project with a series of vivid kosmische albums. Pitched between Julian Cope's runic drones and the playful surge of Oneohtrix Point Never, *Akashic Record* precedes *II* for Blast First Petite and finds Elliott joined by various Midwest drifters, including Coil's Drew McDowall, for a suite of undulating synthesiser pieces, one of which is called, naturally, "Ellipse". This music is as old as the ley lines. Outer Space make it sound absolutely vital.

PIERS MARTIN



## PARALLEL 41 Parallel 41 BASKARU

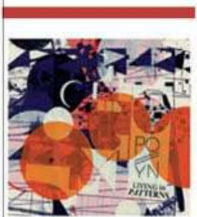
**Semi-improvised  
transatlantic  
travelogue**

Parallel 41 refers to the latitude line running from New York to

**6/10**

Naples, where cellist Julia Kent and vocalist Barbara De Dominicis respectively reside. The pair here collaborate on a series of loose songs, with vocal melodies and whistling accompanied by lyrical and occasionally tortured cello lines, all connected with field recordings of rain and public transport. An accompanying documentary (featuring lightweight conversations between the two) explores the natural settings they recorded in, and they blend compellingly with Kent's confident playing and De Dominicis' childlike (but far from innocent) voice, as on the slow-burning "The Naked City".

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



## POLLYN Living In Patterns REPUBLIC OF MUSIC

**California trio get the  
arty party started**  
Formerly an aloof trip-hop outfit, Los Angeles trio Pollyyn warm up considerably on this

**7/10**

disco-friendly sophomore album, with a jittery goodtime sound that nods to everything from vintage NYC new wave to more contemporary acts like Vampire Weekend, Hot Chip and Metronomy. Vocalist Genevieve Artadi has a great fresh voice, shiny and supple enough to handle the infectious staccato philosophy lesson of "How Small We Are", the happy-sad wistfulness of "Our Home Became A House" and the hot-blooded electro-latin shimmy "Ay Ya Ya Ya (Forever In My Hands)". Like all the best arty-party pop, Pollyyn sound brainy, sexy and mildly neurotic.

STEPHEN DALTON



## POOR MOON Poor Moon BELLA UNION

**Winning Fleet Foxes  
side project**

A vehicle for the songs of Fleet Foxes bassist Christian Wargo, aided and abetted by a fellow

**7/10**

Fox, keyboardist Casey Wescott, the fact that Poor Moon's subtle, gently intricate music recalls the pair's mother band is hardly surprising. The connection is made even more explicit via the stacked pastoral harmonies of "Same Way", the elegantly complex "Phantom Light" and the hymnal "Bucky Pony", but there are several points of departure, not least "Holiday", a swoon in the South Pacific sun, and "Pulling Me Down", a pounding piece of West Coast harmony pop. The result is a record that's primarily dedicated to beauty but with an engagingly playful spirit.

GRAEME THOMSON

WE'RE  
NEW  
HERE

Poor  
Moon



In the considerable "down time" that punctuated the recording of *Helplessness Blues*, Fleet Foxes bassist Christian Wargo resolved finally to do something with the backlog of his own material. "I'd amassed quite a collection, and this break was the first chance to do something with them," says Wargo. Teaming up with bandmate Casey Wescott and like-minded brothers Ian and Peter Murray, the four friends "developed a musical language before we even talked about a band. It was a very natural situation." The fruits of their sessions, first at the Murrys' house and later in various Seattle studios, recall both Wargo and Wescott's other band, Crystal Skulls, as well as Fleet Foxes, for whom some of the songs were originally intended. "I guess you can hear similarities," says Wargo. "But there's a bit of my own flavour in there, too." With the Foxes still resting - "We talk often, we're all just living lives" - Poor Moon is an ongoing project. The band will be coming over for some UK shows in September. "It's fun hearing it come to life onstage," says Wargo. "I like to stay busy and there's already a lot more new material."

GRAEME THOMSON



## TARAGANA PYJARAMA Tipped Bowls KOMPAKT

**Woozy, light-headed  
electronica, straight  
from Denmark**

Another Danish signing to Germany's

**7/10**

redoubtable techno imprint Kompakt, Taragana Pyjarama is the handle of Nick Eriksen, an electronica artist who's caught both the maximalist dimensions of modern laptop composition and the blissed-out ambient-techno rush of The Field, and crossed them with pop smarts not far from compatriots Jatoma. The best cuts spray loose-limbed rhythms with bubbling electronics, as on the beautifully over-amped single "Lo Ng", or the compellingly clumsy "Pinned (Part 2)", which stumbles over its shoelaces like a 3am drunk. Beautifully done, with great attention to textural detail.

JONDALE



## RACE HORSES Furniture STOLEN RECORDINGS

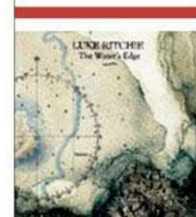
**Quirky outsider pop  
from Aberystwyth**

Given that *Furniture* is replete with school disco angst and smalltown growing pains, it's little

**7/10**

wonder that singer Meilyr Jones frequently sounds like a Morrissey-Jarvis Cocker hybrid, most obviously on "What Am I To Do" and the crunchy title track. Throughout, influences are worn firmly on double-cuffed sleeves. "Nobody's Son" is "Radio Ga Ga" covered by Wild Beasts, "Bad Blood" has the dramatic crackle of ABC meeting early Kate Bush, and elsewhere there are echoes of Edwyn Collins, Roxy Music and Richard Hawley. Though lacking a truly distinct character of its own, there's much to enjoy in this smart, literate, rhythmic pop record.

GRAEME THOMSON



## LUKE RITCHIE The Water's Edge ANGEL FALLS

**Well-written but  
anonymous songcraft,  
produced by Franz  
Ferdinand's producer  
Paul Savage**

English troubadour

**4/10**

Luke Ritchie arrives on a music scene somewhat crowded with earnest singer-songwriters touting an acoustic guitar, and it's hard to see him making much of a mark. His debut is well-produced (by the Fence Collective's Paul Savage) and beautifully arranged (by Björk sidekick Nico Muhly) but the songs are largely anonymous. After three listens not one earworm stays with you, despite the heartstring-tugging attempts of fingerpicking ballads such as "Northern Lights" and "Looking Glass"; while the uptempo attempts like "Shanty" or the funkier "Cover It Up" don't rock hard enough.

JON LEWIS





"Sometimes The Act Of Giving Love" come close – within Yorkston's established parameters *I Was A Cat From A Book* roams further than perhaps any of his previous records.

It's an album of gentle extremes, in both mood and style. On "The Fire And The Flames", Jon

Thorne's double bass rumbles and saws but everything else is encased in whispers, Yorkston's voice recalling Thom Yorke in its quavering intensity. It's both unsettling and immensely powerful. "This Line Says" is another slow crawl, sinister and vaguely malevolent, stitched together with violas and violins. Only rarely in the past has Yorkston summoned up such dark drama. In contrast, elsewhere he's at his most playful and happily abandoned. "Border Song" is positively frantic, a headlong rush into adventure set to drunken woodwind, skipping piano and skittish drums. "Just As Scared", a nimble little duet with Jill O'Sullivan, is wonderfully light on its toes, with a hint of The Lovin' Spoonful at their most carefree in the breezy clarinet and bobbing rhythm. "Spanish Ants", meanwhile, is as entertaining as it is impenetrable.

Never the most versatile singer, Yorkston frames his voice with great ingenuity throughout, skilfully

weaving together contrasting textures. On "Kath With Rhodes" (one of those bluntly literal titles: it features Kathryn Williams and a Fender Rhodes), violin, clarinet and harmonium mingle with soft-pedalling electronica to create a shuffling, insistent soundscape for his typically engaging words. Yorkston has become a truly masterful lyricist, forever suggesting intimacy and revelation through forensic detail while leaving the wider picture nicely fuzzy. When he does finally opt for directness, it's to address the fearful spectre of illness striking far too close to home on "A Short Blues", a devastatingly simple lament at unflinching circumstances. "*I hear that a dear old friend has passed/Taken by the same thing that has its claws in you/But I remember times when we felt nothing but the sun upon us*".

On the closing "I Can Take All This", a kind of folk-punk valediction which is both defiant and defeated, Yorkston sings of "*feeling very mortal right now*". He sounds it, too – but thrillingly so. Although *I Was A Cat From A Book* may find him loosening his belt ever so slightly, when it comes to weaving frailty and truth into a warmly affirming musical tapestry, Britain's premier Peat poet is sticking firmly to his guns.

## SLEEVE NOTES

**Recorded at:** Bryn Derwen Studios and Yorkston's house

**Produced by:**

James Yorkston (lead vocals, guitar, Fender Rhodes, programming, autoharp, banjo, vibraphone, clarinet, harmonium), Luke Flowers (drums), Jon Thorne (double bass), John Ellis (piano).

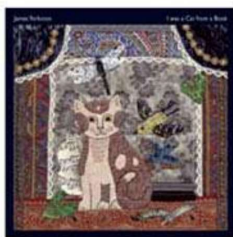
**Additional players:** Sarah Schutt, Emma Smith, Rachael Gladwin, Kathryn Williams, Esme & Theo Wright, Vincent Sipprell, Jill O'Sullivan

# JAMES YORKSTON

## *I Was A Cat From A Book*

DOMINO

Alt.folkie calms down, but still delivers some classics. *By Graeme Thomson*



8/10

SINCE THE RELEASE of his debut album, *Moving Up Country*, 10 years ago, each new release from James Yorkston has featured only the most finely nuanced stylistic variations.

The Fifer and erstwhile member

of the Fence Collective has cornered the (small, organic) market in rueful, ale-stained poetry, lovingly muttered over folkish tunes that roll and creak like some old galleon.

At first hearing, his first album of new material since *When The Haar Rolls In* (2008) seems reluctant to wander far from familiar terrain. Opener "Catch" is archetypal: the overlapping tumble of words, the gently unravelling melody, the warm, mossy mix of vibraphone, bass and strings, the rippling piano, redolent of Van Morrison's Avalonian '80s recordings. All are quintessentially Yorkston.

Yet delve deeper and there is change, and perhaps progress. For a start his semi-regular band The Athletes have scattered (it's Olympic year, after all), replaced by a new cast of

collaborators. The change in personnel has encouraged a shift in musical priorities. Where Yorkston's last album was precisely drawn, the follow-up is looser and less beholden to strict arrangements, and more willing to let the musicians dictate the pace. It's a fair exchange. If there's nothing here as epic and truly breath-snaring as the title track on *When The Haar Rolls In* – though "Catch" and the beautifully poised

## Q&A

James Yorkston



**Why go for a looser approach this time?**

In the past I've spent a long, long time on arrangements, but I've learned that more relaxed sounds can be as rewarding.

I relied a lot on the ingenuity of the musicians.

**How did you pick the musicians?**

Some of The Athletes were too ill to play. I'd fallen out with some of the others, so I needed

another band. I'd done some sessions with Jon Thorne, the bass player, and he recommended Luke Flowers and John Ellis. I hadn't even met them before we arrived at the studio! It was a roll of the die, but I knew the songs were strong.

**Where did the album title spring from?**

From my little girl. She comes through in the morning and says, "What did you dream about?" So I make something up: "I dreamt I was hungry. I had to go downstairs, and when I got there the room was full of satsumas." Then I ask what she dreamed about. She says, "I was a cat in a book", and I have to guess what cat she was. I like it. It has meaning.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON





**RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS**  
**The Wolf You Feed**  
VOLCOM ENTERTAINMENT

**Rip-roaring return to form by deranged Texan punk rockers**  
With their shrapnel guitars, crunchy rhythms

and sneering vocals, the Gamblers make a fine case for the vitality of caustic, turbocharged punk circa 2012. From opener "Good Veins", a menacing, careening rollercoaster of vitriol, *The Wolf You Feed* slithers through its dark business with reckless abandon and brute force. Frontman Mike Wiebe's withering vocals are a perfect match for the band's savage assault, though some poppy melodrama seeps through (ie, "Loser Neck", Wiebe channeling fellow statesman Roky Erickson). Still, it's the cranium-rattling rockers – "Blue Ghosts", the creepy "Comedians", "Bite My Tongue" (shades of Scratch Acid) – that make *Wolf* remarkable.

LUKE TORN

**8/10**



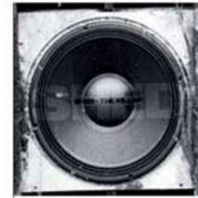
**PEGGY SEEGER**  
**Live**  
APPLESEED

**2010 New Zealand concert by legendary Anglo-American folk veteran**

Being the inspiration for "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" by late husband Ewan MacColl is one part of Seeger's legend, but she is also folk aristocracy through her family (Pete is her half-brother) and her own output. "I'm Gonna Be An Engineer", her noted feminist anthem, shows up here ("my albatross," she shucks), mixed in with spoken anecdotes and traditional fayre like "Mountaineer's Courtship" and "Sally Goodin". At 75, Seeger still has her voice, banjo licks and acerbic charm, though the mix of wholesome hootenanny and vinagery asides becomes testing.

NEIL SPENCER

**6/10**



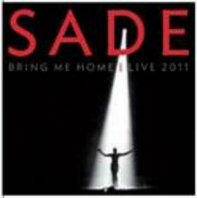
**SHED**  
**The Killer**  
50 WEAPONS

**Brooding beats built for Berlin bunkers**  
One of several aliases used by techno producer René Pawlowitz, Shed make a kind of moody,

grimy dubtronica tailored to Berlin's fabled post-industrial clubland dungeon Berghain. His first LP for the label run by fellow Berliners Modeselektor conjurs up a nocturnal soundworld of ghostly vocal loops, drones and squelchy trip-hop shudders. Sandwiched between heavy-techno chuggers, "Phototype" is desiccated dubstep layered with ersatz Gregorian-chant vocals, "Gas Up" a brief flare of shimmering dreamtronica, and "The Filler" a beefy analogue electro-synth gallop. Evoking everyone from Steve Reich to Orbital to Burial, *The Killer* is a rich and immersive experience.

STEPHEN DALTON

**7/10**



**SADE**  
**Bring Me Home - Live 2011**  
SONY

**Unblemished document of recent stage return**

It starts with sirens, but *Bring Me Home* –

*Live 2011* is about as far from Public Enemy as music can travel. These 13 super-smooth tracks, recorded live in Ontario, might flirt with blandness, but they avoid becoming antiseptic thanks to the aching conviction of Sade's voice and a surprisingly meaty band. The power of "Soldier Of Love" and "Love Is Found", a dark Iberian lament with a crunching metal riff, is undeniable, while catalogue classics "No Ordinary Love" and "Cherish The Day" are immaculately executed; the dread "Smooth Operator" isn't included, although it crops up on the accompanying DVD.

GRAEME THOMSON

**6/10**

## REVELATIONS

**The storied life of folk hero Peggy Seeger**



➤ You can't keep a middle-class revolutionary down. Hated and blackballed by the US government in the 1950s for her left-wing politics and insistence on visiting Communist Russia and China, Seeger started life as the daughter of an esteemed American family; mother Ruth Porter Crawford was a composer, father Charles Seeger a university musicologist.

When she arrived in Britain in 1956, Seeger found her politics and banjo-playing were a badge of honour. Once she and singer Ewan MacColl (another blackballed lefty) clapped eyes on each other (she 20, he 40) they became an instant item. MacColl abandoned his marriage, while Seeger took a marriage of convenience to ensure she stayed in the UK. Three kids, innumerable gigs and a raft of albums followed, until MacColl's death in 1989. Seeger, like her mother a committed feminist, then came out as bisexual.

She's remained a radical spirit into her seventies. *Live* shows her exultantly sky-diving, while her forthcoming collaboration with remixer Broadcaster, *Folksploitation*, sets larkish vocals from her early years to beats and synths. It's a sometimes incongruous mix, but the version of MacColl's tender, much-covered "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" is already getting airplay, and may propel Peggy chartwards.

NEIL SPENCER



**SHOVELS AND ROPE**  
**O' Be Joyful**  
DUALTONE

**South Carolina-based duo cook up 140-proof homemade intoxicant**  
S&R's Cary Ann Hearst and Michael Trent come

across like Gillian Welch and David Rawlings with bellies full of moonshine, whooping their way through a series of Appalachian-rooted original tunes with shit-kicking exuberance. Trent is as solid as an anvil in his straightman's role, while Hearst is a real firecracker, hogging the foreground and powering through the spring-loaded "Keeper" and the brass-fuelled "Tickin' Bob". There's also delight in the details, from the raucous thudding of the title-track's garbageman drums to the "Moon River" harmonica that ramps up the poignancy of the change-of-pace ballad, "Carnival".

BUD SCOPPA

**8/10**



**TAMARA SCHLESINGER**  
**The Procession**  
TANTRUM RECORDS

**Solo first from talented 6 Day Riot frontwoman**

Her home may be in London's gritty Dalston,

but Tamara Schlesienger sounds for all the world like she's living in some bucolic idyll. Ukulele, cello, violin and toy piano shape thoughtful, indie-folk songs that aren't a million miles removed from her parent band, 6 Day Riot, but edge out their breezy uplift in favour of a more introspective air and focus on her fine voice – sweetly grazed and multi-tracked into complex harmonies. Bat For Lashes and Hanne Hukkelberg are kindred spirits, but Schlesienger's approach to pop (as on "Again") is to pare back, while the darkly beautiful "Can You See Me" displays a surprising muscularity.

SHARON O'CONNELL

**7/10**



**ADRIAN SHERWOOD**  
**Survival & Resistance**  
ON U SOUND

**Third solo album from pioneering, politically enraged dub maestro**  
Having celebrated the

30th anniversary of his On U Sound empire, Sherwood's third solo LP is a bold advance built on past innovations. Subtly taking modern glitchscapes into its orbit, S&R highlights the technician's advancing drop out and reverb technique. From the trippy, eco-doom of "Green Leaves" to the jazzy piano and conga drum breakdown of "Starship Bahia", tension and exhilarating liberation are conjured. Wreaking dancefloor havoc on the crazed "Two Semitones And A Raver" or shaping the backdrop to the barbed earthquaking soul of "We Flick A Switch", Sherwood is on murderous, devastating form.

GAVIN MARTIN

**7/10**





## SHRAG

**Canines**

FORTUNA POP!

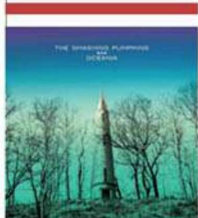
**Brighton quintet's sharp-edged third**

Down the decades, it's become a byword for all things self-consciously lo-fi, under-achieving

**7/10**

and determinedly indie, but Shrag use NME's era-defining C86 as the loosest of springboards, their punky, vigorous primitivism having far more in common with the second-generation likes of Prolapse and Th' Faith Healers than The Pastels. Shrag's latest sets their wiry intelligence to work on familiar pop subjects such as desire, desolation and dependency, but sees them slightly altering their barbed and organ-blasted template, underlining an interest in kosmische, post-rock and – with "On The Spines Of Old Cathedrals" – peak-period New Order. Sharp-toothed attack, though, is the constant.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## SMASHING PUMPKINS

**Oceania**

MARTHA'S MUSIC

**Return to form from Corgan and co**

That *Oceania* forms part of a 44-song concept album *Teargarden By*

**7/10**

*Kaleidyscope* is probably enough to put the fear up most right-thinking individuals. Billy Corgan's unchecked ambitions have long been an impediment to enjoying Smashing Pumpkins, and while he doesn't sound humbled here, exactly – by the opening couplet he's already invoked God and Krishna – there is a shortage of progressive whimsy, and the implicit admission that the Pumpkins work best as a vaguely psychedelic hard-rock band. The loss of drummer Jimmy Chamberlain smarts, but "Quasar" and the "The Celestials" recall the Pumpkins' '90s heyday without coming over as retread.

LOUIS PATTISON



## SNAILHOUSE

**Sentimental Gentleman**

WHITE WHALE

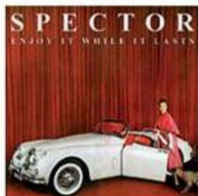
**Sixth solo album by Wooden Stars founder**

The controlled clanging of the opening bars suggests Montreal-based

**7/10**

artist Michael Feuerstack is channelling Low. And it's true that on "Apple" he evokes a mood of solemn majesty to match lyrics about "the dashboard hum" and "oscillating tones". But elsewhere the tone is friskier. "Great Storyteller" is a plaintive musing on the creative process; "Airwaves" mischievously suggests that "Tchaikovsky and Mozart, Debussy and Brahms, if born at the right time, would have driven Trans Ams". Arcade Fire's Jeremy Gara co-produces, keeping the arrangements slightly off-balance, notably on the closing "Valley Of Tears", which hovers beautifully between rage and acceptance.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## SPECTOR

**Enjoy It While It Lasts**

LUV LUV LUV/FICTION

**Indie-rock razzmatazz from London quintet**

The title of Spector's debut encapsulates the self-awareness that's

**7/10**

seen frontman Fred Macpherson (formerly of Ox.Eagle.Lion.Man and Les Incompetents) accused of irony and insincerity. Though his band's songs may have a wry lyrical touch in places, they're seriously good, wrapping Roxy razzmatazz in rock-solid Killers-esque indie rock'n'roll to end up near the dandy end of late Britpop. Former singles like the racing, growly riffed and organ-flaunting "Chevy Thunder" or the grandiose singalong of "Never Fade Away" are matched by the likes of the glittering and gutsy "Upset Boulevard" to make a whole to enjoy for much more than a passing spin.

EMILY MACKAY



## REVELATIONS

**Who's who in the Smashing Pumpkins these days?**



## NICOLE FIORENTINO

Formerly of Veruca Salt and a sometime member of Brody Dalle's Spinnerette project, Fiorentino joined the Pumpkins as a touring member, making her the fifth person to fill the group's 'good-looking female bassist' spot. In 2010, Billy Corgan tweeted he'd just discovered Fiorentino was one of the girls pictured on the cover of the Pumpkins' 1993 LP *Siamese Dream*: "She said she didn't want us to know as she thought we wouldn't let her in the band." It was later revealed to be a prank.

## MIKE BYRNE

Replacing Corgan's longest-term collaborator Jimmy Chamberlain on the Pumpkins drum stool is this 22-year-old from Portland. After a successful audition in 2009 at the age of just 19, Byrne – whose previous assignments include local group Moses, Smell The Roses and his high school marching band – quit his job at McDonald's and signed up to the Pumpkins in the August of that year. His recording debut with the band marked the start of the Pumpkins' ambitious, Tarot-inspired 44-song collection, *Teargarden By Kaleidyscope*.

## JEFF SCHROEDER

A Korean-American guitarist and veteran of LA shoegazers The Violet Burning and The Lassie Foundation, Schroeder was recruited to replace James Iha in 2007. A PhD student and professor, in between band activity he hopes to complete his dissertation on avant-garde Asian American literature. LOUIS PATTISON



## STILL LEVEN

**Cases Of Bluntness**

PRONOIA RECORDS

**Electronica and post-punk collide in Genoa**

This appealing debut by Italian five-piece Still Leven may be

**7/10**

rooted in the jerky beats of post-punk but demonstrates repeated attempts to break from the form, playing up the Europop elements and flirting with a darker, dance-goth side. That curious mix is nailed on opener "Soul Searching", with its rumbling bassline, dense beat and quasi metal-vocal, the keyboard thrash "No Moleskin" and the excellent "Forever Is Just For A While", which sounds like 1980s Pulp covering "Warm Leatherette". While some tracks – including, sadly, the brilliantly titled "Sex! We Can" – lapse into incoherence, there's generally much to admire.

PETER WATTS



## JOSS STONE

**The Soul Sessions Vol II**

STONE'D/S-CURVE

**Long-awaited follow-up to her 2003 soul covers debut**

**6/10**

Before a slow fall from critical and commercial grace, Stone's 2003 debut – *The Soul Sessions Vol I* – was a well-received collection of covers, and *Vol II* features another remarkable cast, including Muscle Shoals pianist Clayton Ivey and guitarist Ernie Isley. The Chi-Lites' "Stoned Out Of My Mind" is ruined by needless melismatics, and the Broken Bells cover is no match for the White Stripes track on *Vol I*. But the gems include a half-tempo version of the Womacks' "Teardrops" and a stately reading of Eddie Floyd's "Nobody But You", while Stone's take on the disco classic "Pillow Talk" is the best yet.

JOHN LEWIS



## SWANS

**The Seer**

YOUNG GOD

**Epic darkness from resurgent New York noise-rockers**

When Michael Gira reactivated Swans, he spoke of his desire to

**7/10**

create a sound so huge that one could "completely disappear into it". 2010's *My Father Will Guide Me Up A Rope To The Sky* still recalled the gothic country of Gira's Angels Of Light project. *The Seer*, not so much. Registering around two hours with a 32-minute title track that feels like an album within an album, it revolves around bleak, squalling repetitions and a mood of wretched abjection. But Gira's voice has weathered grandly, as black and musty as the stub of a Cuban cigar, and "Song For A Warrior", sung by Karen O, gleams wonderfully in the gloom.

LOUIS PATTISON





## TEENGIRL FANTASY

### Tracer

R&S

**American duo's queasy electronics... Panda Bear guests**

**5/10**

Teengirl Fantasy is such a good name that almost

any music released under it is going to be found wanting. So it is with Williamsburg pair Nick Weiss and Logan Takahashi's ambitious dream-pop outfit, whose second album saunters the no man's land between house and R&B, presumably on the look-out for a tune. As intriguingly abstract as its predecessor *7AM*, *Tracer* blends curdled synths and irregular rhythms with airbrushed vocals by Laurel Halo ("Mist Of Time"), Panda Bear ("Pyjama") and dancefloor colonel Romanthony ("Do It") to create a glossy but incoherent neo-rave pastiche. An enticing fantasy, but the reality leaves you cold.

PIERS MARTIN



## TURBO FRUITS

### Butter

SERPENTS AND SNAKES RECORDS

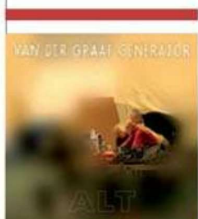
**Growling garage rock from the Nashville underground**

**8/10**

Spinning off from supercharged indie-

rockers Be Your Own Pet, Dixie punks Turbo Fruits are led by singer/writer Jonas Stein, who here leads his charges through a buzzy, beer-and-adrenalin set of (mostly) unabashed rock'n'roll (think Black Lips/Reigning Sound neighbourhood). Given a fuzzed-out, subterranean production glaze, *Butter* filters everything from surf and lounge touches to Spaghetti Western flourishes, but is best when spinning cool pop hooks up out of the muck, as on the glorious harmony-drunk chorus of "Harley Dollar Bill\$" or just going lowdown, as on the wicked biker-rock bite of "Don't Like To Fight".

LUKE TORN



## VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

### Alt

ESOTERIC ANTENNA

**Varied instrumental experiments from Peter Hammill's prog greats**  
VdGG remain capable of the overreaching majesty

**6/10**

that made them prog's most gripping band. But without Hammill's voice dragging them to climax, this round-up of studio and sound-check fragments is their most tentative, contrary record. A jazz debt is acknowledged in the Monk-nodding "Midnight Or So", but where in that world improvisations are the main event, these are more aimless trial runs. There's discomfiting ambient, as a guitar buzzes out of the atmospheric mist in "Here's One I Made Earlier". "Colossus" could be a Dalí dream sequence from the band's sub-conscious. Even half-awake and half-finished, they can still, sometimes, be compelling.

NICK HASTED



## MIKE VIOLA

### Acousto De Perfecto

LOJINX

**Viola by name, viola by nature**

Solo artist, record producer, ex-Candy Butcher and movie

**8/10**

songwriter (*That Thing You Do!*, *Get Him To The Greek*), Viola continues his hydra-headed career with an audio pun, teaming up with two violists to record new tracks alongside reinterpretations of older material. Finely wrought string arrangements frame his characterful voice and songs which set memorable melodies against a pleasingly sweet and sour worldview. "Closet Cutter" is as unflinching as "Date Night" is poised and poignant, while "Happy And Normal" and "Thing In C" recall the best of Elvis Costello's work with The Brodsky Quartet. A charming album, and no mere curio.

GRAEME THOMSON



## GARY WAR

### New Raytheonport

CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

**Folk-psych curio from sometime Haunted Graffiti member**

Like his erstwhile bandleader Ariel Pink, Brooklyn's

**5/10**

Gary War plays rock'n'roll of a strange, phantasmagoric nature, like the past five decades of popular music left to roam through a hall of mirrors. His debut album has a lysergic floatiness that aligns it with past outsider landmarks such as Skip Spence's *Oar*. War's voice and guitar soaked in echo and phaser effects. "Good Clues", which apparently relates a brain-melting acid trip, is a fey delight. War, though, wants for the latent poppiness of Ariel Pink, and where the hooks run short, *New Raytheonport*'s wispiqueness begins to sound more like weakness.

LOUIS PATTISON



## THE WELCOME WAGON

### Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices

ASTHMATIC KITT

**Spiritual uplift from Suffjan Stevens' Presbyterian pals**

**8/10**

The husband and wife team of Reverend Vito and Monique Aiuto were first introduced on 2008's *Welcome To The Welcome Wagon*, a beguiling rootsfest produced by parishioner friend and label boss Suffjan Stevens. His presence on this overdue follow-up is a more back-pew affair, playing banjo and piano here and there, but the overall effect is much the same. The Right Rev takes the lead on most of the songs, framed by folksy acoustic settings and gospel choruses. Though it's Monique's wounded-sparrow voice that lingers longest, best heard on the lovely "I'm Not Fine" and "My God, My God, Parts 1 & 2".

ROB HUGHES



## WET HAIR

### Spill Into Atmosphere

DE STIJL

**Below-par effort from Krautsploitation pop-psych fiends**

**5/10**

Maybe their changed lineup has temporarily derailed them, but US drone-pop duo-cum-trio Wet Hair's latest seems oddly enervated and uninspired. It could be the vocals, which are rudimentary at best, though that didn't really affect 2011's *In Vogue Spirit*; it could be that their shift from out-of-focus psychedelia to pop movement isn't fully developed. There's one great cut, "Jane You Don't Decide", which channels the spirit of Spacemen 3 and The Telescopes into a cosmic garage jam, but with *Spill Into Atmosphere*, Wet Hair come off as a thoroughly decent band whose new album just doesn't have the drive or intrigue of its predecessors.

JON DALE



## YEASAYER

### Fragrant World

MUTE

**Gauche avant-pop from Brooklyn**

Yeasayer's 2010 album *Odd Blood* capitalised on the popward turn in US indie signalled by

**4/10**

Animal Collective and Dirty Projectors, receiving plaudits for its wonky take on R&B. Emboldened by its critical success, they've described the follow-up as like "an Aaliyah album if you played it backwards and slowed it down". It's certainly impressively produced, replete with T-Pain Auto-Tune and Timbaland beats and, for a moment, "Longevity" almost approaches the grace of Timberlake's "Cry Me A River". But despite the contemporary sheen, too much here is reminiscent of a certain kind of overwrought mid-'80s synthpop: Blancmange, Red Box and even, on "Blue Paper", Nik Kershaw.

STEPHEN TROUSSÉ



## BEN ZABO

### Ben Zabo

GLITTERHOUSE

**New Malian star produced by Walkabouts frontman Chris Eckman**

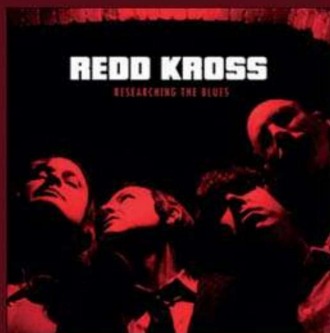
**7/10**

From Toumani Diabaté's kora meditations to the

blues guitar of Ali Farka Touré and desert rhythms of Tinariwen, Mali has blessed us with a richly varied musical tapestry in recent years. Ben Zabo is different again, a young singer/guitarist heavily influenced by the throbbing polyrhythms of Afrobeat, a sound pioneered 40 years ago and 1,000 miles away in Lagos by Fela Kuti. The wooden vibes of the balafon, mellow, jazzy sax and blues guitar lend a more loose-limbed and distinctively Malian groove to the Fela/James Brown dance motifs. But the energy remains uncompromisingly high-octane.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

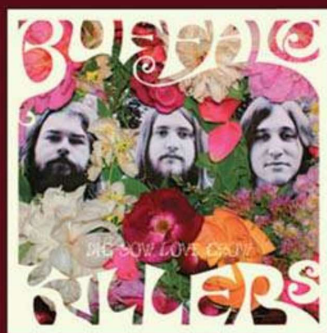




## REDD KROSS

**RESEARCHING THE BLUES**  
SWEET NOTHING VINYL & CD

Highly anticipated new album. It is their first new album in 15 years - Redd Kross is back and delivering their signature brand of genuine rock 'n roll with a vengeance.



## BUFFALO KILLERS

**DIG. SOW. LOVE. GROW**  
ALIVE RECORDS LP / CD

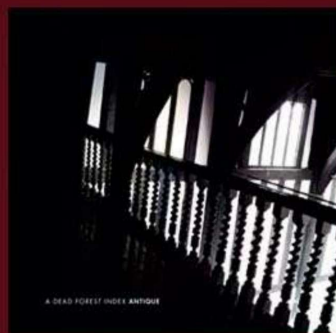
From '60s psychedelia, blues, garage & the folk-rock sounds that rolled out of Laurel Canyon, "Dig. Sow. Love. Grow" is a heady synthesis of the band's previous efforts incl the Dan Auerbach-PRODUCED "LET IT RIDE"



## GOAT

**WORLD MUSIC**  
ROCKET RECORDS

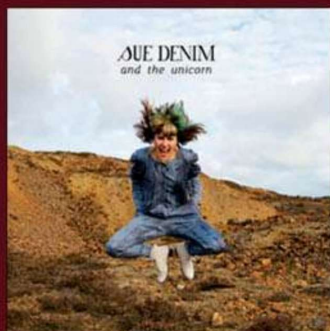
Goat's debut album is full of fuzzed out afro psych, voodoo kraut grooves, cosmic turkish folk and spacey post punk, easily one of the best and original albums of the year.



## A DEAD FOREST INDEX

**ANTIQUE**  
DENOVALI LP / CD

A fresh new sound which should please fans of a mixture of CHELSEA WALKER, EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN, BELA BARTOK or DEAD CAN DANCE.



## SUE DENIM

**AND THE UNICORN**  
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Brilliant debut solo album from Robots In Disguise's Sue Denim - a female Syd Barrett, Jonathan Richman, or Kevin Ayers - warm, dreamy, original - ..you'll love her!



## OPOSSOM

**ELECTRIC HAWAII**  
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

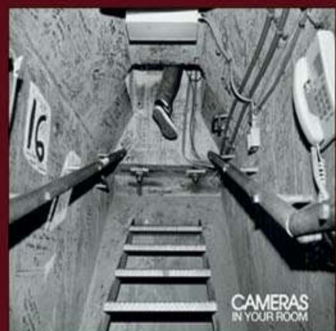
New Zealand's Opossom create an engaging world of carefully crafted sonic layers of light and dark to make their unique blend of beatnik psychedelica.



## NED COLLETTE & WIREWALKER

**2**  
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

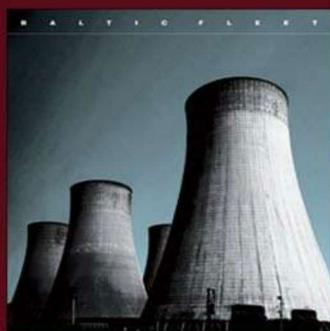
Australian Ned Collette now lives in Berlin where he wrote his new album "2", a mix of experimental pop songwriting, musique concrete and dark folky soundscapes.



## CAMERAS

**IN YOUR ROOM**  
MANIMAL CD

Australia's answer to the question if Kate Bush and Nick Cave had a baby that was raised on Interpol and Bat for Lashes it would sound like this band.



## BALTIC FLEET

**TOWERS**  
BLOW UP CD

"30th Best album of the year so far" Louder Than War 2012. Album of the week - Rough Trade Shops. A dark brooding electronic masterpiece.



## DOGTALION

**JAPAN**  
TAPE CLUB CD

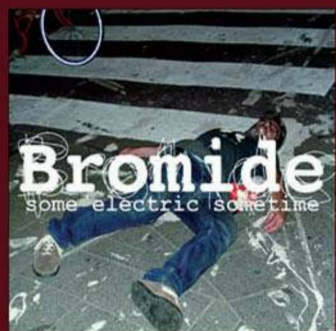
The debut album from London-based Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau. This boldly eclectic record presents 11 experimental pop tracks which combine electronic-influenced production with a unique narrative.



## MFC CHICKEN

**MUSIC FOR CHICKEN**  
DIRTY WATER CLUB LP / CD

Influenced by the early-1960s Pacific Northwest bands like the Fabulous Wailers, this high-octane, proto-garage rock'n'roll group is the hottest thing on the London scene right now!



## BROMIDE

**SOME ELECTRIC SOMETIME**  
SCRATCHY

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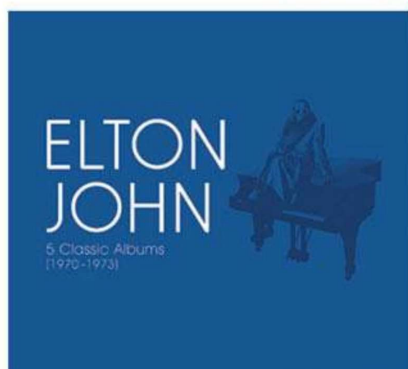
1 Barrel-scrappings

# Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



GETTY IMAGES



## TRACKLIST

### Elton John (Disc 1)

- 1 Your Song
- 2 I Need You To Turn To
- 3 Take Me To The Pilot
- 4 No Shoe Strings On Louise
- 5 First Episode At Hienton
- 6 Sixty Years On
- 7 Border Song
- 8 The Greatest Discovery
- 9 The Cage
- 10 The King Must Die

### Tumbleweed Connection (Disc 2)

- 1 Ballad Of A Well-Known Gun
- 2 Come Down In Time
- 3 Country Comfort
- 4 Son Of Your Father
- 5 My Father's Gun
- 6 Where To Now St. Peter?
- 7 Love Song
- 8 Amoreena
- 9 Talking Old Soldiers
- 10 Burn Down The Mission

## ELTON JOHN

### 5 Classic Albums (1970-73)

UNIVERSAL

From humble ivory-tickler to global sensation – the singer-songwriter's rise chronicled. *By David Cavanagh*

**7/10**

FOR PIANIST REGINALD Dwight of Pinner, the 1970s began with intermittent, uncredited session work. By the end of the decade, he'd changed his name legally to Elton Hercules John, bought a football club, rewritten glam's dress code to include full-body animal costumes, topped the American album charts seven times consecutively and signed the most lucrative recording contract the world had ever seen. As Greg Shaw wrote in 1975, "His songs are on every radio station, every hour of every day... While everyone was looking for the Next Big Thing, Elton quietly strolled in and took the throne."

'Quietly' is the interesting word there. It might seem ill-chosen for a performer whose flamboyance rivalled Liberace's. But although there's the odd melodramatic outburst on this five-album boxset – *Elton John*, *Tumbleweed Connection*, *Madman Across The Water*, *Honky Château* and *Don't Shoot*

*Me I'm Only The Piano Player* – what these songs are primarily tailored for is personal space. It's music of privacy, daydream and travel. Elton was not a self-analyst or a confess-all type like the Laurel Canyon songwriters (for one thing, he didn't write his own lyrics), so he couldn't quite touch raw nerves. But watch the "Tiny Dancer" scene in Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* to see what Elton could do. Lost in their thoughts, the people on the bus listen in silence to the US hit from *Madman*.... Then one or two start joining in. Soon there's a collective chorus: the blue-jeaned seamstress is in their emotional bloodstream. Some find the scene excruciatingly sentimental. Think of it more as historical. It's how Elton strolled in and took the throne.

*Elton John* (1970), the first album in the boxset, was actually his second. (His debut, *Empty Sky*, has evidently slipped the compilers' memories.) Straight away we're into "Your Song": rippling



## TRACKLIST (Continued)

### Madman Across The Water (Disc 3)

- 1 Tiny Dancer
- 2 Levon
- 3 Razor Face
- 4 Madman Across The Water
- 5 Indian Sunset
- 6 Holiday Inn
- 7 Rotten Peaches
- 8 All The Nasties
- 9 Goodbye

### Honky Château (Disc 4)

- 1 Honky Cat
- 2 Mellow
- 3 I Think I'm Going To Kill Myself
- 4 Susie (Dramas)
- 5 Rocket Man (I Think It's Going To Be A Long, Long Time)
- 6 Salvation
- 7 Slave
- 8 Amy
- 9 Mona Lisas And Mad Hatters
- 10 Hercules

### Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player (Disc 5)

- 1 Daniel
- 2 Teacher I Need You
- 3 Elderberry Wine
- 4 Blues For My Baby And Me
- 5 Midnight Creeper
- 6 Have Mercy On The Criminal
- 7 I'm Gonna Be A Teenage Idol
- 8 Texan Love Song
- 9 Crocodile Rock
- 10 High Flying Bird



→ piano, discreetly plucked guitar, a surge of violins. Bernie Taupin, Elton's lyricist, is intentionally tongue-tied ("but then again, no") in the role of a hung-up secret admirer who's hopeless at expressing his feelings. The song is both corny and pure, and, like the best McCartney, seems to glide effortlessly from first bar to last.

The *Elton John* album was made by young men. Elton was 22, Taupin 19, guitarist Caleb Quaye 21 and arranger Paul Buckmaster 23. The precocity is impressive. Taupin is all about American mythology and old men's regrets. Elton likes his harps and harpsichords. Together they gaze beyond England. "No Shoe Strings On Louise", an enthusiastic C&W lollipop, grasps for the language of an imagined time ("hoedown", "boss man"), as if British dramatists were turning their hand to writing an episode of *Little House On The Prairie*. Yet their narrative structures seem believable. Aretha Franklin would hardly have covered "Border Song" if she'd sensed any phoniness. Maybe their fandom shone through: on the rock gospel number "Take Me To The Pilot", Elton and Taupin clearly have their hearts in the South. Elton would even adopt a Southern accent to better suit the locations. He and Suzie hold "hay-unds" in "Crocodile Rock" (*Don't Shoot Me*), while the shackled black men in "Slave" (*Honky Château*) have a "river running sweat right through our lay-und."

Taupin was so passionate about American history that his vision of the Wild West dominated *Tumbleweed Connection* (1970). Here were 19th-Century frontiers painted in words by a movie buff from Lincolnshire. But his imagery is highly convincing – "the swallow and the sycamore" in the valley, the "fat stock" hiding in the east – and Elton, charged with setting Taupin's sepia photos to music, brings epic dimensions to the album's standout tracks ("Burn Down The Mission", "Where To Now St. Peter?"). Melody and metaphor meet irresistibly in the latter's opening and closing line ("I took myself a blue canoe") – six words of ineffable freedom. Populated with men called things like Deacon Lee and Old Clay, not to mention blind gunslingers bent on settling arguments with bullets, *Tumbleweed Connection* naturally aspired to the antique charm of The Band's brown album. But when's all said and done, the album is a testament to the power of two imaginations working dynamically in tandem.

Taupin remained committed to the idea of America as a land where a song could combine authenticity and fantasy. And of course he would overreach. There's woodsmoke over the tepees in "Indian Sunset" (*Madman Across The Water*, 1971), where Yellow Dog's tribesmen "run the gauntlet of the Sioux". It doesn't smack of personal experience somehow. "Holiday Inn", on the same album, underreaches.

Dully remarking on the facelessness of American hotels, Taupin's boredom seems contagious:

Elton's humdrum chorus could have been

composed in his sleep. Millions of songs like this were written in the '70s, but Elton and Taupin had a unique problem. Unless Elton cast them in glittering melodies, Taupin's tall tales had the taint of fakery. When they both got it right, they pulled off a heavyweight drama like *Madman Across The Water*'s title track. In this haunting piece, an inmate of an asylum, who's just received a family visit, fixates on a broken boat that he can see from his window. The distracted, paranoid lyrics have been subjected to endless interpretation. There was even a popular theory that Taupin was writing about Richard Nixon – presumably having had a 1971 premonition of Watergate (!).

Elton now had a full-time band – Davey Johnstone (guitar), Dee Murray (bass) and Nigel Olsson (drums) – who debuted as a recording unit on *Honky Château* (1972). The No 2 hit "Rocket Man" propelled Elton to the forefront of British pop – after two albums without a UK single – but his comprehensive glam makeover was still a year away. On the cover of *Honky Château* he's very much a serious artist: bearded, glowering. He excels as a pianist, driving the buoyantly syncopated music forward like Dr John on *Gumbo*. There's the taste of the South again. There's a tragicomic suicide threat. There are several cats.

*Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player* (1973), featuring the worldwide hits "Daniel" and "Crocodile Rock", immersed itself in the '50s. Something of a rock'n'roll pastiche, proceedings get a bit Brylcreemed and mindless in places. The absolute highlight is "Blues For My Baby And Me", a story about two runaways where you're never quite sure what fateful outcome Taupin has in mind. Like all the albums in this boxset, *Don't Shoot Me* is the same configuration (and master) as the 1995 Mercury editions (The Classic Years series), containing the same bonus tracks as before, including the nine-minute original version of "Madman Across The Water" (on *Tumbleweed Connection*) and the wonderful 1970 B-side "Grey Seal" (on *Elton John*). "Grey Seal" was later re-recorded for the hit-packed 1973 double album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. And at that point, in a whirl of ermine, the throne was duly ascended.





# the VAULT



Sign of the times: Elton meets his adoring fans at Noel Edmonds' record shop, Chelsea, January 20, 1973



Elton, May 1972: "I hate showbiz!"

**MARCH 1972** *Madman Across The Water* has flopped in the UK, but four months later Elton has already finished *Honky Château*...



**NME**  
11/3/1972

► **WHILE JOHN HASN'T exactly got the skin of a rhinoceros, he has now reached a stage where criticism is absorbed and then forgotten.**

"You do get hurt – but only for about five minutes. It's no good moping about it. You have to take people's opinions. I don't really think the public didn't

like it, so much as the public didn't hear it. Probably they went out and bought a Cat Stevens album or a Carole King album instead.

"There's nothing I can do except sell the album and play a bit more and hope the next one really goes into the charts. You need a hit single, and I think we've got one on the new album. It would be good to get a hit single as a trailer for the LP." [*"Rocket Man" was released a month before *Honky Château*, and became his biggest hit to date.*]

**Has he managed to counteract "sameyness" on the next album?**

"Yes. For a start there's no orchestra and there are rock'n'roll tracks, which we've never done before on albums. I guarantee the numbers on the album will get many covers because the songs are more or less pop. If I could write like Barry Mann I'd be instantly happy because they are, for me, the best kind of songs because they last for years. You've got to remember Bernie and I have only been writing together for three years, we're still really novices. We are going to cut down a bit on touring because it does slow up writing. Even the days off you just want to die, collapse into bed and never get up."

**How does Elton feel about being described as a latterday Liberace?**

"People can compare me to who they like. I just

think it's a bit of fun. I couldn't go onstage in a pair of grotty jeans and a moustache and beard and sit there and be serious. I just don't do it."

**But surely the clothes he wears are nothing but showbizzy?**

"No, I'm just sending showbusiness up. I hate showbiz."

**But doesn't he think that by glamorising it he is making it more showbizzy?**

"I don't think people take it seriously. I mean, Rod Stewart is exactly the same: he's very flamboyant and wears pink satin suits and that's showbiz, and yet it's not. You can't say I'm showbizzy... I'm so bloody clumsy and there's nothing graceful about me with a pair of flying boots on."

**If he regards that as a send-up, what does he take seriously?**

"My music. I'm very into what I'm doing, but even that you can't take too seriously. I've never regarded pop music as an artform. I think it is just entertainment and that is why pop groups are coming back, because people are fed up with nobodies and they'd rather go out and have a good time.

"I know I'd rather go and see a James Bond film than go and see a film that made me think. It's got to the point where you go out and

you're made to think about everything. I don't think people are entertained any more. That's why The Faces score, because that's what they do – entertain.

"I'm not a serious performer anyway, just somebody who is having a go on the piano. I do the best I can. I never wanted to be a performer. I just wanted to write. I can't see myself performing 'til I drop dead."

INTERVIEW: JULIE WEBB

*"I never wanted to be a performer... I can't see myself performing 'til I drop dead"*



**ELTON JOHN VS PNAU**

**Good Morning To The Night**

MERCURY

**6/10**

**Artful remix set from Sir Elton's favourite current electronic duo**

While on tour in Australia five years ago, Elton John chanced upon the music of Sydney dance duo Pnau. So impressed was he that he immediately started evangelising about them to anyone who would listen, even escorting them back to London to sign to his management company. Now, as a novel way of promoting this bumper crop of reissues, Elton has granted Pnau's Peter Mayes and Nick Littlemore (the latter is also half of the more famous Empire Of The Sun) access to his master tapes and allowed them to slice and dice his '70s catalogue. These eight mash-ups see them turn "Madman Across The Water" into a dramatic Bond theme ("Karmatron"); mutate fragments of *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* to sound like Pink Floyd ("Telegraph To The Afterlife"); and set wistful piano ballads from *Caribou* and *Empty Sky* against Thom Bell's Philly disco beats, turning them into filtered disco anthems ("Sad", the title track). Many use snatches of melody and lines of lyrics from multiple Elton songs, rendering Bernie Taupin's narratives meaningless. It's a little too polite to break new ground, but it certainly draws attention to more than a dozen fine – and largely overlooked – melodies from Elton's golden era.

JOHN LEWIS





## TRACKLIST

### Disc One

- 1-5 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1964
- 6-9 Top Gear - Playhouse Theatre, 1964
- 10-13 Saturday Club - Piccadilly Studios, 1964
- 14-17 Saturday Club - Maida Vale Studios, 1965
- 18-21 Aeolian Hall, 1965
- 22-29 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1965
- 30-33 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1967
- 34-37 Top Gear - Maida Vale Studios, 1967

### Disc Two

- 1-2 Top Gear - Maida Vale Studios, 1967
- 3-5 Top Gear - BBC Piccadilly Studios, 1968
- 6-11 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1968
- 12-13 The Riverside Studios, 1969
- 14-17 Symonds On Sunday - Aeolian Hall, 1969
- 18-20 Dave Lee Travis - Camden Theatre, 1969
- 21-25 Dave Lee Travis - Aeolian Hall, 1970
- 26-28 Peel Session - Kensington House, 1972

### Disc Three

- 1 John Peel Session - Kensington House, '72
- 2 Dave Lee Travis - Alternate Version 1973
- 3-5 John Peel Session - Langham Studios, '74
- 6-22 In Concert at The Hippodrome, 1974

### Disc Four

- 1-19 The Kinks Christmas Concert, at the Rainbow, Finsbury Park, 1977
- 20-25 Johnnie Walker Session - Maida Vale, '94

### Disc Five

- 1-5 Emma Freud Session - Maida Vale, 1994
- 6-7 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1964
- 8 Live at Aeolian Hall, 1965
- 9-10 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1965
- 11-12 Saturday Club - Playhouse Theatre, 1968
- 13-19 Late Night Line-Up: Colour Me Pop - BBC Television Centre, 1968

### DVD

- 1-2 The Beat Room, BBC Television Cntr, 1964
- 3 A Whole Scene Going On - BBC Television Centre, 1966
- 4 "Lola" - Top Of The Pops, 1970
- 5 "Ape Man" - Top Of The Pops, 1971
- 6 The Old Grey Whistle Test, 1972
- 7 "Come Dancing" - Top Of The Pops, 1983
- 8 Live on The Late Show, 1993
- 9-11 Later With Jools Holland - BBC Television Centre, 1993
- 12 Live on Top Of The Pops, 1994
- 13-23 Live at The Rainbow Theatre, 1972
- 24-32 Live In Concert - BBC Television Centre, 1973
- 33-41 The Old Grey Whistle Test, 1977
- 42-58 The Kinks Christmas Concert, Rainbow Theatre, 1977
- 59 Interview - The Alan Price Show, 1968



# THE KINKS

## The Kinks At The BBC

UNIVERSAL

Britannia rules the airwaves: Kinks radio and TV work impressively (if not completely) compiled. *By Stephen Troussé*

**7/10**

FROM THE BEGINNING, The Kinks' career was intimately entwined with the BBC. In the year following the August 1964 success of "You Really Got Me", the band were called in to record eight radio sessions, broadcast to the nation and around the world. When the BBC commissioned Ray Davies to write topical tunes for shows like *The 11th Hour* and *Where Was Spring?*, we got the first inkling of The Kinks' future direction, somewhere between Dennis Potter and Lionel Bart. And it was the BBC's banning of "Plastic Man" in 1969 (for the seditious use of the word "bum") that was a crucial nail in The Kinks' late-'60s commercial coffin. The Kinks' experience seems to exemplify the full Reithian spectrum of imperial arrogance, byzantine bureaucracy but, nevertheless, astonishing cultural benevolence.

So it's somehow fitting that the extensive, exhaustive Kinks reissue campaign of the past couple of years comes to a conclusion with this five-disc plus DVD trawl of the BBC archive. Essentially this new box is an expansion of the 2001 *Kinks BBC*

*Sessions 1964-1977*, now incorporating more thorough selections from the early mid-'60s sessions, the full live sets from Golders Green Hippodrome 1974 and Finsbury Park 1977, a handful of mid-'90s Radio 1 appearances, plus a few performances wiped from the BBC archives but now recovered from fan recordings.

In a way, tracking the five appearances of "You Really Got Me" included here adds up to one of the most succinct biographies of the band. In the context of the spindly R'n'B and North London Merseybeat of the early sessions, the first appearance of the song, recorded at the Playhouse Theatre in September 1964, is still astonishing. By 1974, for the Hippodrome show, the song has been turbocharged for the Zeppelin era. By 1977 it's the tired and emotional singalong finale to what was already in danger of becoming a nostalgia show. And, performed on the Emma Freud Radio 1 show in 1994, the final song of the collection, it's part of a set that is already primed for the band's Britpop revival.

But it's not clear that much of the new material



## Q&A

Ray Davies



**What are your abiding memories of those early BBC sessions?**

No abiding memories of the BBC other than the fact that it was like being at school.

All the engineers were like scientists, and that rigid atmosphere helped us in many respects, because it made us feel more anarchic. Working at the BBC helped us to be more rebellious.

**Did being on the BBC feel like a vindication? Did it impress your family?**

Vindication? We qualified as human beings by being accepted at the BBC. In fact we failed the BBC audition. Everybody had to take one... we are still waiting for the confirmation we

actually passed to be on the BBC, daily, by the post box. But nothing has arrived yet.

**Do the sessions give a better sense of The Kinks as a band than the studio records?**

Because these sessions were done quickly, in and out, inbetween doing concerts, we never had time to refine them. It gives a good sense of the roughness of the band. Most of these recordings are unpolished, which for people who enjoyed the band live gave it the energy you usually didn't get on the studio recordings, which tended to be more refined.

**After all the deluxe editions and this new boxset, is there much more in the Kinks archive left to release?**

Ironically this is just the tip of the iceberg, we just haven't had the time to go through the vaults. There is an amazing archive out there of cassette demos to multitrack recordings. I look forward to doing it, but it is a lifetime's work.

INTERVIEW: STEPHEN TROUSSÉ

adds a great deal to the original two-disc package. From the early sets we now have further evidence of The Kinks' not always convincing early R'n'B incarnation – including ragged takes on Chuck Berry's "Little Queenie" and JD Miller's "I'm A Lover Not A Fighter" (both available, like a lot of the material assembled here, on extra discs on last year's deluxe editions).

Elsewhere things paradoxically have been lost. "Did You See His Name?", a wry commentary on a life of petty thievery and newspaper notoriety, was one of the songs Davies wrote for the satirical revue show *The 11th Hour* (where it was sung by Jeannie Lamb). This has now inexplicably vanished from the tracklist. In its place we get "Where Did My Spring Go?", another relatively obscure slice of blackly comic exasperation, originally commissioned by Ned Sherrin for his TV revue *Where Was Spring?* (though again, previously available on the bonus disc of the deluxe *Village Green* edition from 2004).

Kinks kompletists will be intrigued to hear the handful of tracks previously thought lost, wiped from the archive before their value was realised, in particular the July '68 appearance on *Colour Me Pop*, the short-lived BBC2 spin-off from *Late*

*Night Line-Up*. Disappointingly, the audio here is dismal, and apart from a brief rave-up medley of "Dedicated Follower"/"Well Respected Man"/"Death Of A Clown", the other tracks are seemingly indistinguishable from the recorded versions. Surprisingly there is no appearance for the 1969 sessions from the *Once More With Felix* show which recently came to light on YouTube.

Nevertheless, for all its omissions and repetitions, the sheer scale of this archive still feels like an exemplary work of preservation. For the stilted interviews, from Brian Matthew through to Johnnie Walker, the fluffed introductions by Alan Freeman and Bob Harris, the electrifying early sessions, the beautifully eccentric later flowering, these discs present the sensibility of band and broadcaster chiming in charmingly wonky harmony. Indeed, these days, as one of the last beleaguered British institutions standing in the age of austerity, you would think the BBC is surely a fitting subject for a concept album, or at least a wistful protest song, in Ray Davies' ongoing Muswell Hill ring cycle.

**EXTRAS:** None.



## BURT BACHARACH

**Long Ago Last Summer 1959-61**

EL

**The germs of a genius partnership**

In tandem with lyricist Hal David, Bacharach was

**5/10**

responsible for some of the most elegant and sophisticated pop music of the 20th Century, although it wasn't always so. Within a year of teaming up in New York's songwriting "factory" the Brill Building in 1957, they'd penned two chart-toppers, "The Story Of My Life" (Marty Robbins) and "Magic Moments" (Perry Como), but this compilation focuses on what happened next, a ragbag of lesser hits and misses. Yet to hit their stride and find a signature style, the duo took on all manner of hack work, tailoring material to the specific needs of, among others, supper club crooner Steve Lawrence ("Loving Is A Way Of Living") and cheery chanteuses Gloria Lambert ("Moon Man") and Jane Morgan ("With Open Arms"). This collection of 33 tracks is more a historical artefact than a thrill-filled listening pleasure, comprising mostly unremarkable, interchangeable and instantly forgettable ditties. There is light at the end of the soporific tunnel, however, with the later grandeur of Chuck Jackson's soaring "I Wake Up Crying" and the economical beauty of The Shirelles' "Baby It's You", a hint of what was to come once they'd found their muse in Dionne Warwick.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
TERRY STAUNTON



## NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

**Dig, Lazarus Dig!!! Deluxe Collector's Edition (reissue, 2008)**

MUTE

**Cave and co's 14th studio album reupholstered**

**9/10**

It might seem a tad

premature to be giving 2008's *Dig, Lazarus Dig!!!* the deluxe treatment, though it is in fact the last in a trio of LPs (alongside *Nocturama* and *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre Of Orpheus*), comprising the fourth and final instalment of reissues spanning Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' career, each digitally remastered and remixed in 5.1 Surround Sound. And if any of their recent albums are worthy of another look, it's this, a ferociously witty and gloriously contrary work that takes typically Cavean themes – sex, religion, death etc – and fashions them into a series of vividly literate and often poetically pornographic songs, with backdrops ranging from slow, serpentine grooves to churning guitar noise. A rich cast of characters stalk the album, among them Lolita, John Berryman and Charles Bukowski ("a jerk"), though none are more memorable than the title track's "poor Larry" who, catapulted to the present day, traipses bitterly from city to city plagued by a miracle he never asked for.

**EXTRAS:** There are eloquent sleeve notes by writer Amy Hanson. Disc 2 comes with a trio of largely superfluous bonus tracks, along with an assortment of videos that are worth watching if for no other reason than to spot the Will Self cameo.  
FIONA STURGES







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## DECAMERON Mammoth Special (reissue, 1974) ESOTERIC

**A baffling but very British brew**

Originally a duo formed by songwriters Dave Bell and Johnny Coppin in 1968,

their wispy concoction of pop-folk found an unlikely home with Vertigo, who released their largely acoustic debut *Say Hello To The Band* in 1973. Decameron – now a multi-instrumental five-piece – were booted off Vertigo, *Mammoth Special* turning up on the more folk-niche Mooncrest, where they proceeded to throw away the rule book. They leapfrogged genres from the careful methodology of the Strawbs-like “Just Enough Like Home” to something more akin to Lindisfarne’s jaunty folk-pop on the title track. Nashville’s own Dennis Linde was the unlikely producer. Best known for harnessing Mickey Newbury’s atmospheric recordings and for writing the Elvis hit “Burning Love”, Linde is understandably all at sea. Despite flashes of brilliance, the results are awful at times; stranded between mainstream folk and commercial pop. In the end, *Mammoth Special* is redeemed by an ingenious near-a cappella version of Buffalo Springfield’s “Rock And Roll Woman” and its final two tracks, the self-assured “Parade” and the lofty, orchestral “The Empty Space” (arranged by Robert Kirby) which has the dubious distinction of being one of Jasper Carrott’s Desert Island Discs.

**EXTRAS:** The throwaway non-LP B-side “Twinset And Pearls”.

**5/10**  
MICK HOUGHTON



## THE ELECTRIC PRUNES The Complete Reprise Singles REAL GONE MUSIC

**On the weird, winding trail of LA’s garage/psych pioneers**

**8/10**

Best remembered for their gnarly, reverb-splashed 1966 classic “I Had Too Much To Dream (Last Night)”, a psychedelic chart smash (later immortalised on *Nuggets*), The Electric Prunes in truth had a backstory far outracing their reputation as one-hit wonders. With their way-out guitars and James Lowe’s barking vocals, early Prunes might be the archetypal ‘60s punks du jour. Lesser-known cuts, like “The Great Banana Hoax”, sporting a solo straight from outer space, “Hideaway”, with its runaway rhythms and over-amped sitar-style guitar, and the macabre “Dr Do-Good”, are all under-celebrated psych touchstones. The Prunes could be a straight-up pop band too – see “Everybody Knows You’re Not In Love”. By 1968, though, numerous chart flops led producer Dave Hassinger to dissolve the original lineup, composer David Axelrod usurping the ‘Prunes-in-name-only’ group for myriad string-drenched Latin/religious numbers and film-score work. As the ‘60s closed, the (fake) Prunes morphed again, this time into a gaggle of blues-rockers (“Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers”). Coherent it’s not, but as a peculiar Spinal Tap-type time trip, augmented by some truly inspired psych peaks, *The Complete Reprise Singles* is hard to beat.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LUKE TORN



## EPIC SOUNDTRACKS Wild Smile: An Anthology EASY ACTION

**Double set of deeply moving pop songs by English cult legend**  
When Epic Soundtracks

**10/10**

(Kevin Paul Godfrey) finally emerged as a songwriter in the early ‘90s, after almost two decades behind the drumkit for groups like Swell Maps, The Jacobites and Crime & The City Solution – the first two with his brother, Nikki Sudden – he was beyond anachronistic, a classicist up against the twin ideological fronts of shoegaze and grunge. Channeling The Beach Boys, Laura Nyro and Alex Chilton, Epic recorded three astonishing albums of dark-night-of-the-soul melancholy before passing away in 1997. *Wild Smile* compiles a best-of on the first disc, as great an entry into Epic’s world as you can ask for, full of Brill Building knock-offs, Todd Rundgren-esque piano ballads (“Wishing Well”), and breathtaking melodrama (“Big Apple Graveyard”), with another disc of outtakes, live performances and demos which often best the studio material. With a supporting cast including Evan Dando, Sonic Youth, Rowland S Howard and Robert Wyatt, *Wild Smile* offers the perfect argument for Epic as a singer-songwriter that time forgot, taking on romance, heartbreak and good times, all sung beautifully from the bottom of a well.

**EXTRAS:** None, but liners from *What A Nice Way To Turn Seventeen* editor and long-time supporter Chris Coleman seal the deal.

JON DALE

## HOW TO BUY... TAKOMA RARITIES Three fine curios from John Fahey’s label



### GEORGE WINSTON Ballads And Blues (1972)

As Mark Fosson, Leo Kottke and John Fahey himself proved, Takoma was a hip spot for the player of

intricate solo guitar. George Winston went on to build a new age empire, but here he plays fleet piano pieces, inventing a blues style you might call “minimal ragtime”.

**9/10**



### HOMEGAS Homegas (1970)

The product of a communal lifestyle, Homegas (led by one Peter Aceves) produced just this one album, worth

trying to find for “Bulldozer Blues” alone. Their shared house, “610”, was later destroyed by fire, as recounted in the LP’s liner notes.

**8/10**



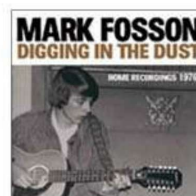
### THE FLOATING HOUSE BAND The Floating House Band (1972)

The FHB was an acoustic trio built around former Stone

Poney Bobby Kimmel, with Shep Cooke and Kit Alderson. Herein: CSN-style tunes, written by Wendy Waldman, Paul Siebel and the group.

**7/10**

JOHN ROBINSON



## MARK FOSSON Digging In The Dust: Home Recordings 1976 TOMPKINS SQUARE

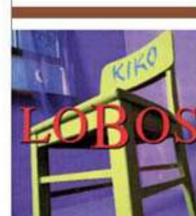
**Pristine 12-string find: long-lost home tape by John Fahey acolyte rediscovered**

**8/10**

Kentucky native and army veteran Mark Fosson got a bit of a raw deal in 1977, signing with John Fahey’s Takoma Records just as that label was sinking into oblivion. Takoma never released anything by Fosson – *The Lost Takoma Sessions* was finally issued by Drag City in 2006 – though the guitarist has gone on to a respectable career backing country luminaries from Porter Wagoner to KT Oslin. But, time reveals all, and *Digging In The Dust* presents what caught Fahey’s ear in the first place: nine inventive, solo 12-string demos (plus alternate takes), superbly executed slants on Americana – music to lose yourself in, akin to Fahey’s fine stable: Leo Kottke, Peter Lang, Max Ochs, et al. Neither as disparate nor just plain weird as Fahey, Fosson’s playing is bright and textured, revealing specks of country-blues, bluegrass, Appalachian and ragtime – but transcending easy classification – amid widescreen fingerpicking and mood-setting ambience. “Cosmic Hiccup” verges on psychedelia, but elsewhere Fosson plays it straight: “Gorilla Mountain” flashes immense talent, while “Chillicothe”, all stunning curlicue figures, and “Quarter Moon”, with its nimble counter-rhythms, are stirring, stunning works.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LUKE TORN



## LOS LOBOS Kiko 20th Anniversary Edition SHOUT! FACTORY

**Every cloud has a silver lining – East LA band’s stellar reinvention**

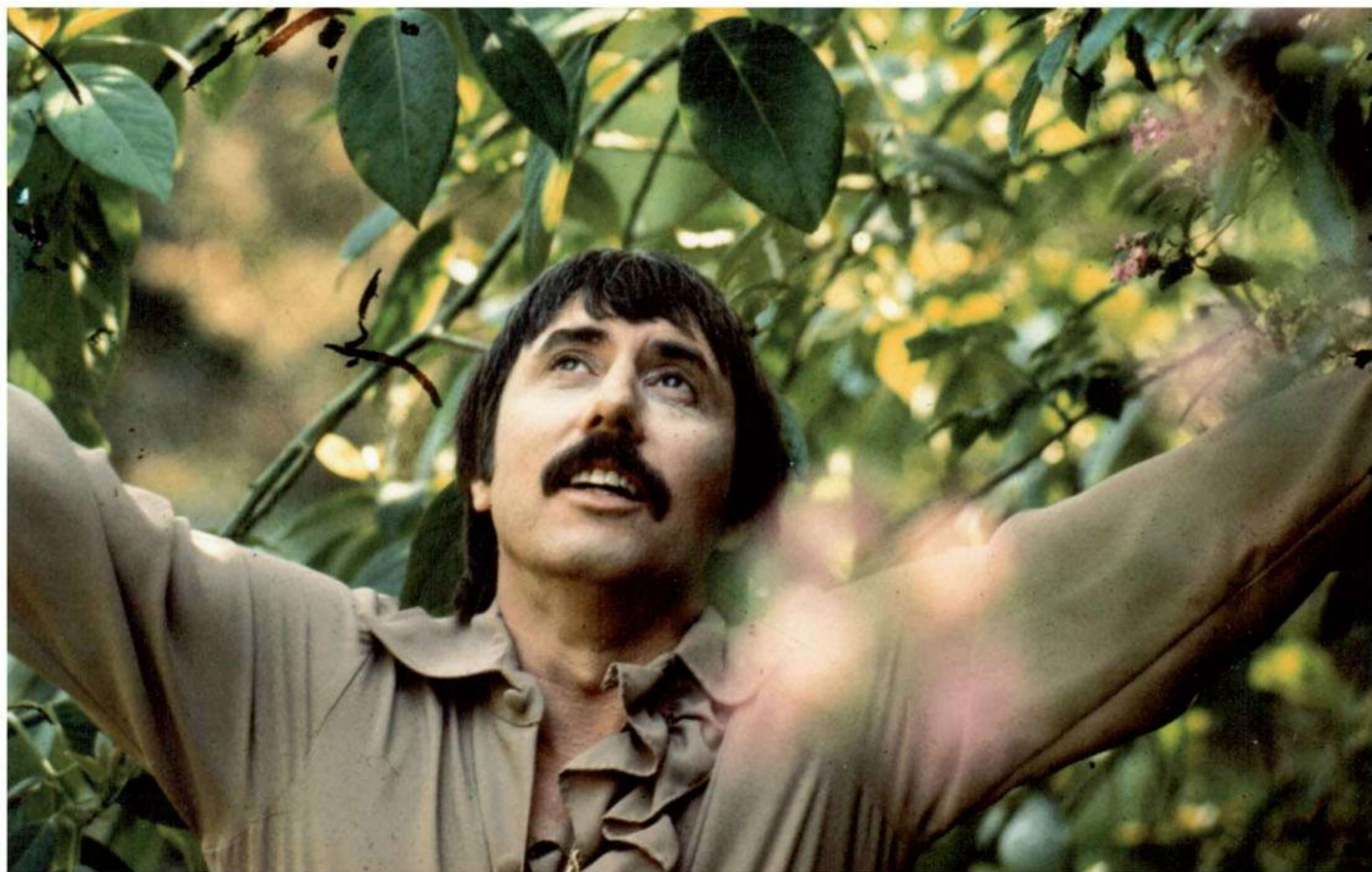
**10/10**

The circumstances weren’t promising when Los Lobos got off the road after a year of touring behind *The Neighborhood*, broke and burned out. Their chart-topping cover of Ritchie Valens’ “La Bamba” (from the 1987 movie of the same name) was now a distant memory commercially but something that foreshortened people’s expectations of the band. Figuring they had nothing to lose, the East LA band decided to forget about commercial considerations and make music for themselves. What followed was a creative explosion, as David Hidalgo and Louie Pérez let their imaginations run wild. They came up with a cornucopia of heartfelt, idiosyncratic songs, which the band, along with the simpático team of producer Mitchell Froom and engineer/mixer Tchad Blake, along with Imposters drummer Pete Thomas, conjured into a series of magical-realist soundscapes. Centered on dreamlike excursions (“Dream In Blue”, “Angels With Dirty Faces”), and hardscrabble narratives (“Short Side Of Nothing”, “Two Janes”), peppered with fiery blues-rock variants like “Whiskey Trail” (one of two César Rosas contributions), *Kiko* seems every bit as fresh and revelatory now as it did in 1992.

**EXTRAS:** Minimal, with two studio demos

**5/10** and three live takes.  
BUD SCOPPA



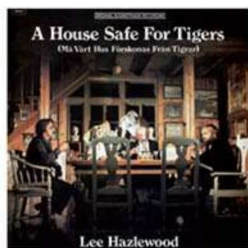


# LEE HAZLEWOOD

## A House Safe For Tigers

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

A soundtrack from Hazlewood's strange Swedish exile. *By Alastair McKay*



8/10

Nancy Sinatra in which his own baritone added a note of menace. Since Hazlewood's death in 2007, though, attention has shifted to the solo work, much of it completed during a lengthy stay in Sweden. At the centre of this sojourn, in 1975, he recorded an album that is strange, even by Hazlewood's standards, not least because of its unapologetic good-humour. You might even call it romantic. Ostensibly, *A House Safe For Tigers* is the soundtrack to a 1975 movie made with Hazlewood's frequent Swedish collaborator, director and sometime artist/poet Torbjörn Axelmann. The pair made numerous films together, with the images swimming loosely around the songs in a way that burnished Hazlewood's myth. In the 1970 film, *Cowboy In Sweden*, he was a lost horseman, a wandering star in a land of lovelies.

*A House Safe For Tigers* is the product of grander ambitions, with Axelmann styling it as a "semi-documentary", set on Gotland, his island home off

the southeast coast of Sweden. What happens? Well, the film's continuing obscurity means we must refer to Wyndham Wallace's sleeve notes, where Axelmann gnomically explains, "we let situations occur, let whatever happen happen. We showed realistic scenes from daily life and made them like a diary." More specifically, Gotland life was compared to Hazlewood's memories of oil rigs and riding the railroad. There is footage from Hazlewood's birthplace in Port Arthur, Texas, and 8mm film of his parents. There is also, it seems, a man dressed in women's clothing, a witch scattering tiger repellent, and shots of Hazlewood running the Gotland marathon. You can see why it's only a semi-documentary. But there are revealing moments. The unlikely marathon man also notes that to escape, he wrote "simple words filtered through complicated songs".

The film was barely seen, and the album sank with it. The happy news is that, strange as it is, the soundtrack works beautifully without reference to the movie. It features a funky interlude ("Las Vegas"), a reprise of The Shagbark's "Our Little Boy Blue" (a Hazlewood children's song which can be viewed as a cousin of Rolf Harris' "Two Little Boys"), and an orchestral interlude which collapses into cacophony ("Absent Friends").

Generally, the mood is playful and benign, reflecting the peace Hazlewood found in Gotland. It is dominated by the magisterial "Souls Island", a career highlight. Often, Hazlewood talks rather than sings, but here he croons prettily, invoking a sense of peace so powerful that he might also be anticipating heaven. This being Hazlewood, the shadow of death lingers, but the mood is majestic, with cinematic orchestration. Producer/arranger Mats Olsson (weirdly, a veteran of several Eurovision campaigns) was given free rein by Hazlewood, who later compared the end results to Bach or Beethoven. Certainly, in the context of a pop record they are satisfyingly grandiose, and

perfectly matched to the high emotion of Hazlewood's lyric: "Except for the dream in our mothers' eyes, you and I would still ride the wind," he sings, "a pair of seeds that no-one needs..."

"Souls Island" is later reprised with a Swedish commentary from Axelmann which seems to draw some parallels with the mythology of the American West. In particular, the words "Alcatraz" and "Wounded Knee" jump out from the monologue.

Also worth noting are "Sand Hill Anna And The Russian Mouse" – a bizarre tale of Gotland grouse

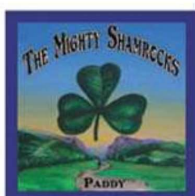
shooting, and "Lars Gunnar And Me", a Johnny Cash-like number in which drink is taken and squirrel is eaten ('Lars Gunnar' being Hazlewood's nickname for Axelmann). The American Indian theme is revisited in "The Nights", a weird little story song about hard work and sorrow, resilience and exile.

**EXTRAS:** The package includes an essay by Wyndham Wallace.

### TRACKLIST

- 1 Souls Island
- 2 A House Safe For Tigers
- 3 Our Little Boy Blue
- 4 Absent Friends - A House Safe For Tigers
- 5 Sand Hill Anna And The Russian Mouse
- 6 Lars Gunnar And Me
- 7 Souls Island
- 8 Las Vegas - A House Safe For Tigers
- 9 The Nights
- 10 A House Safe For Tigers - Choir





## THE MIGHTY SHAMROCKS

Paddy

GOOD VIBRATIONS

Lost Americana classic (from Northern Ireland, 1980) is worth the wait

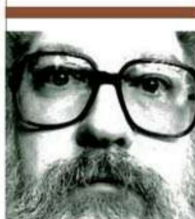
8/10

Now a college lecturer in South Carolina, Shamrocks

frontman Mickey Stephens' one shot at rock'n'roll posterity was thought lost when the Belfast label Good Vibrations (first) went bankrupt. Three decades on, this rediscovery, and release on the revived Good Vibrations, coincides with a great feature film about label owner Terri Hooley. Titled after and dedicated to drummer Paddy MacNicholl, who died last year, it reveals a band as singular as their champions have claimed. The original tapes unrecovered, a pristine fan's copy of producer Mudd Wallace's digital master allows a vital missing link in post-punk Irish rock to be heard, finally. Distinct from the more abrasive NI punk (SLF) and pop (The Undertones), The Shamrocks were a product of the country's wild northwest coast. There's a natural affinity here with the rootsy rock we now call "Americana" – while the Dylanesque barbs that sharpen Stephens' songs suggest a writer of real potency. The songs major in musical reach and droll observation, The Shams' countryfied rock embracing Steely Dan's wry wisdom and The Only Ones' craven wanderlust. Stylistic assurance, from the mariachi flavours of "Smiling Juan" to the stellar picking of "Cowgirls", abounds. Great grooves, dynamic precision and lightning firepower reign. Mighty indeed.

EXTRAS: None.

GAVIN MARTIN



## R STEVIE MOORE

Lo Fi High Fives... A Kind Of Best Of

O GENESIS

7/10

Tennessee lo-fi pioneer's 500 albums, condensed

Moore has spent 40 years

hand-crafting tapes then CD-Rs in a music-cramped apartment, gaining an increasingly star-studded cult including Tim Burgess, who here diligently filters a life's work down to a single CD. Moore's obsessive MO recalls Harry Smith or Daniel Johnston, but he is more ruefully self-aware, parodying his situation in 1984's dissection of celebrity and cultural excess, "Showbiz Is Dead": "How much music can we take?/How much longer before even you get exploited into becoming a star?" He's also ruthlessly pop-minded, if pop stopped with Todd Rundgren: 1976's "Why Should I Love You?", recently covered by The Vaccines, has shades of The Beatles circa *Abbey Road*. "I Go Into Your Mind" is an account of love as psychic penetration starts as fluffy psychedelia, but then soars on Casio keyboards, building to a Wall Of Sound. In his magpie sonic absolutism, Lawrence seems a close comparison, except that Moore has held down jobs (in record shops, of course) while stuffing his relentless bulletins on what pop should be into envelopes, to post to his hundred hardcore followers. Failure wryly haunts the lyrics, but these cramped, cheap songs sound breezily cheery.

EXTRAS: None.

NICK HASTED

# The Specialist

## Reggae



Sound System: box comes with plush book full of photos by Adrian Boot

WHAT BETTER EXCUSE to raid the vaults than the 50th anniversary of Jamaican independence? **ISLAND**, a label built on JA music, celebrates with **Sound System** (9/10), a lavish 8CD box with a plush hardback book stuffed with evocative photographs (most by Adrian Boot) and a crisp, informative text by Chris Salewicz. Refreshingly, the CDs forego chronology in favour of playlists, meaning familiar (often over familiar) hits like Althea & Donna's "Uptown Top Ranking" rub grooves with rock steady heartache like The Paragons' "Happy Go Lucky Girl" and noisy Rasta declamations such as Niney's "Blood And Fire".

Whether it's crossover smashes (Desmond Dekker's "007", Max Romeo's banned "Wet Dream", Ken Boothe's "Everything I Own") or groundbreaking JA hits (Delroy Wilson's defiant "Better Must Come", Leroy Smart's roots rocker "Ballistic Affair", the mystic wail of Burning Spear's "Marcus Garvey"), there's scarcely a track here that isn't iconic. The timeline extends from the early 1960s, when Don Drummond's drowsy instrumental "Eastern Standard Time" became the first of many alternative national anthems, to the dawn of the present century and dancehall dons like Beenie Man and Buju Banton, but the emphasis is on the golden age of the 1970s.

An alternative to Island's well-known canon is Nascente's **BASS CULTURE**, four 2CD packages arranged historically, with informed notes by

Lloyd Bradley. The first, **This Town Is Too Hot** (8/10), arrives in a blaze of ska instrumentals like Tommy McCook's "Rocket Ship" and the irresistible braggadocio of Prince Buster's title track, alongside Jamaica's stock-in-trade, romantic balladry. **Boss Sounds 1968-72** (7/10) charts rocksteady's evolution into reggae via artists like The Maytals and The Ethiopians – an inbetween era when many JA acts had their eyes on scoring UK hits not present here.

Volume Three, aptly titled **When Reggae Was King 1970-80** (9/10), unfolds the story of roots, Rasta and dub. Some of its profusion of boss tunes are drawn from Virgin's Jamaican foray – Culture's "Natty Never Get Weary", Gregory Isaac's "One More Chance", The Twinkle Brothers' "Free Africa" – but there are lesser-known offerings like "Dub Organiser" by dub genius Augustus Pablo and a rare (and scalding) acoustic version of "Get Up Stand Up" by Peter Tosh. Volume Four, **Mash You Down 1978-**

**85** (8/10), tracks the move from roots towards the harder, digitalised world of dancehall, a shift well explained in the notes. Hardcore 'slack' culture (sex, guns, homophobia) lay down the road. Here the rhythms get sharper and more minimal as a host of quirky DJs arrive, among them Yellowman, Eek A Mouse, Josey Wales and Toyan, offering fun alongside classic singers like Wayne Wade and Sugar Minott. A well-honed series for fan and newcomer alike.

NEIL SPENCER







## NIRVANA '69

**Cult**  
GRA

**Exquisite late-'60s period pieces lovingly revisited...**

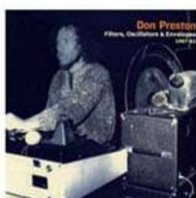
Having laid claim to the name some two decades before Kurt and company,

it seems rather unfair that reissues by the English psych-pop duo Alex Spyropoulos and Patrick Campbell-Lyons now have to carry such a clumsy moniker – especially as the date in the elongated name is hardly accurate. Nirvana's debut, *The Story Of Simon Simopath*, a quixotic fantasy about a boy who has a mental breakdown, dreams of growing wings and takes a rocket into space where he meets a centaur and the girl of his dreams, appeared on Island in early 1967, which means it was probably pop's first ever 'concept' album. Seven songs from it are included on this new compilation, the simple but melancholic pop melodies embellished by Beach Boys harmonies and baroque orchestral arrangements (courtesy of Syd Dale). The best songs here, such as "Lonely Boy" and "Pentecost Hotel", could have sat happily on The Zombies' sainted *Odessey And Oracle*. Nine tracks from 1968's *All Of Us* are cut from similar cloth but several are given a psych makeover, including the phasing-fest of their one minor hit, "Rainbow Chaser".

**EXTRAS:** Seven demos and non-album tracks including the lovely "I Believe In Magic" and the weird but wonderful B-side "Requiem To John Coltrane".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

7/10



## DON PRESTON

**Filters, Oscillators & Envelopes**  
1967-82

SUB ROSA

**History lesson in home-burnt synthesis by Zappa sidekick**

As keyboardist for the

Mothers Of Invention from 1966 to 1974, Don Preston was well positioned to take the countercultural bait and then inject it into the bloodstream of academic electronic music, while simultaneously flipping the underground's hot-wired switches. Preston's route through this terrain took in home-invented synthesisers, oscillators and filters, employed throughout this illuminating set of early electronics. Opening with 1967's "Electronic Music", where you can hear Preston testing the parameters of his kit in an extended string of giddy, playful, almost phantasmagoric noises, it's the 1975 "Analog Heaven" series that really stuns – tautly constructed but still full of brutish energy and audio-spectral overload. By the closing "Fred & Me", composed in 1982, Preston's compositions are eloquent and restrained, which doesn't necessarily work in their favour. "Fred & Me" is the closest his work gets to rote industrial/dronology behaviour, and it's nearer to 'dark ambient' cliché than Preston would likely wish for. It's enjoyable enough, but it's those '60s/'70s cuts, with their ADHD shifts, in-the-red tremolo action and overheating oscillations, that really nail the listener, drooling and overawed, to the floor.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JON DALE

7/10



## MIKE SEEGER

**Mike Seeger**  
(reissue, 1964)  
VANGUARD

**Overdue first time reissue from leading folk revivalist**

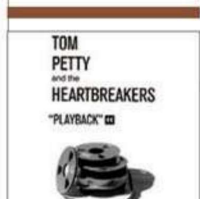
When Dylan commented that what he had to work at,

"Mike Seeger had in his genes", he never spoke a truer word. The son of composers and musicologists Charles Seeger and Ruth Porter Crawford, his half-brother Pete remains an undisputed giant of folk music while his sister Peggy (married to Ewan MacColl) was key to the British folk revival of the late 1950s. Mike Seeger made an equal contribution in America, collecting and recording traditional folk song as early as 1951 but, more significantly, as a founder of his own old-timey band The New Lost City Ramblers with John Cohen and Tom Paley. The Ramblers cut around a dozen albums for Folkways between 1958 and 1964, when Seeger recorded his self-titled Vanguard album. The Ramblers, for all their authenticity, were popularisers, an approach Seeger sustains, opening with The Carter Family's "Hello Stranger", but varying his repertoire to include Henry Thomas' jaunty "Fishing Blues", recorded more or less simultaneously by The Holy Modal Rounders and The Lovin' Spoonful, both indebted to The New Lost City Ramblers. The album closes with the bluesy "I've Been All Around This World", a favourite of Jerry Garcia's, Seeger perfectly capturing the song's fatalistic mood.

**EXTRAS:** None.

MICK HOUGHTON

8/10



## TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

**Playback**  
(reissue, 1995)

MCA

**Irreproachable Petty compilation with timely cut-off point**

Any career-spanning boxset of this heft (six discs, 92 tracks) has something of the feel of a mausoleum. It's a sensation amplified in the case of *Playback*, as its original release date – 1995 – pretty much marks the point at which Petty not only started being regarded as an elder statesman, but started sounding like one (his albums since, especially 2010's *Mojo*, have been dispiritingly decorous). When Petty & The Heartbreakers were good, though, they were astonishing. *Playback* includes all the hits, of course, but there are many treasures buried in the discs which accumulate B-sides, live tracks and offcuts. These brilliantly illuminate the Heartbreakers' amalgamation of their Southern rock and blues heritage with punky new-wave iconoclasm, as easy with Luther Dixon's "Big Boss Man" as they are with Nick Lowe's "Cracking Up". It was a bad day for rock'n'roll when Petty discovered tastefulness, and/or was introduced to Jeff Lynne. Someone should really sit him down with the loudest bits of this before he enters a studio again.

**EXTRAS:** Booklet and small poster. Also worth remembering that the 4CD *The Live Anthology* compilation, available separately, serves as an excellent companion volume.

ANDREW MUELLER

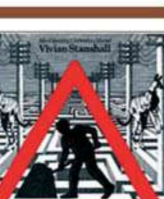
10/10



## REVELATIONS

The loyal patrons of Viv Stanshall

➤ Despite Viv Stanshall's increasingly unhinged behaviour post-Bonzos, the music industry's most high-risk eccentric had amassed such a surfeit of goodwill that he never lacked patrons. After Warners dropped him in 1975, John Peel threw him a lifeline at the BBC where he was given licence to develop the Sir Henry Rawlinson chronicles. Charisma put out the first Sir Henry album in 1978, while label boss Tony Stratton-Smith sank his own money into Charisma Films to facilitate the 1980 'sur-Ealing comedy' about the incorrigible aristocrat. It flopped, but fellow-reveller Pete Townshend published a version of *Sir Henry At Rawlinson End* and in '88 – with Stephen Fry – sponsored a theatrical run of Stanshall's comic opera *Stinkfoot*. Stanshall's collaborations with Steve Winwood were always fruitful and he provided the musician with lyrics for tracks such as "Arc Of A Diver", which Winwood sang at his funeral in March '95. Not long before Stanshall's death, Warner Music UK Chairman Rob Dickens persuaded him to record again for the label – whose boardroom he once trashed. He told his doubting staff that whatever the outcome, "it simply had to be done".



## VIVIAN STANSALL

**Men Opening Umbrellas Ahead**  
(reissue, 1974)

POPPYDISC

**Long-overdue exhumation for this onslaught on the senses**

Two years after the Bonzo's contractual reunion album, *Let's Make Up And Be Friendly*, and following his hurried exit from GRIMMS, this was Vivian Stanshall's debut album in 1974, conceived and recorded in a haze of tranquilisers and booze. Not even his most unhinged past displays of humour prepared the way for the vicious but compelling brew of self-loathing, notably the excruciating "Yelp, Bellow, Rasp Et Cetera", vitriolic attacks on the music industry in "Afoju Ti Ole Riran (Dead Eyes)" and "Redeye", and "How The Zebra Got His Spots", a disgustingly outrageous hymn to his penis. Musically, Stanshall also rang the changes, eschewing the pastiches the Bonzos favoured, and diving into Afro-rock and New Orleans funk, aided by one of his more sensible friends, Steve Winwood, and the rest of Traffic. There are no belly laughs; Stanshall's visceral, contemptuous vocals effectively leaving you sick to your stomach. It's very uneasy listening and no wonder Warner Brothers virtually buried the record. They were probably just as repulsed by its blatant lack of commerciality as when Stanshall secreted thousands of blue-bottle maggots behind the label MD's radiator.

**EXTRAS:** The more uplifting non-album single "Lakonga"/"Baba Tunda".

MICK HOUGHTON

8/10





# RIDE

## Smile/Nowhere/Going Blank Again/Carnival Of Light/Tarantula

RIDE MUSIC

Shoegaze icons' majestic catalogue reissued. *By Sam Richards*



6/10



8/10



7/10



5/10



5/10

THE TITLE OF Ride's second album, 20 years old this March, was the closest they ever came to articulating a mission statement. By calling it *Going Blank Again*, they were wryly acknowledging the oft-repeated criticism that Ride were a band with nothing to say. It was a neat way of responding: "Yeah – and so what?"

Formed in Oxford in 1988, Ride were among the first generation of British guitar bands not to have witnessed punk's storming of the cultural Bastille first-hand. Signed to an indie label for aesthetic rather than ethical reasons, they had no desire to smash or subvert the system; Ride were just four nice boys who did what they did, and if anybody else liked it, that was a bonus.

Many did like it, of course. Ride were the first Creation band to crack the Top 40 and represented a shrewd signing by Alan McGee during a period when he was busy shovelling funds the label didn't have into My Bloody Valentine's search for the perfect chord and Primal Scream's search for the

perfect high. Ride were dependable and uncontroversial, yet still capable of summoning a majestic cacophony; a clean-cut indie boyband who bolstered their innocent '60s jangle with a formidable sonic assault.

Some of the early EP tracks collected on *Smile* sound a little underfed, but 1990's debut album *Nowhere* (bolstered here, as with previous reissues, by the addition of the "Fall" and "Today Forever" EPs) remains a heady trip. If anything, its wan vocals and docile lyrics that all seem to be about flying, falling or fading – providing plenty of fuel for the "nothing to say" mob – actually serve to ease your ascent into Ride's whirling soundworld. Anything more substantial would have harshed the buzz.

Encouraged to experiment by shoegazing's chief enabler Alan Moulder, *Going Blank Again* finds the band discovering other ways to whip up a storm beyond simply stepping on their effects pedals. It's brighter and ultimately less enveloping than

## Q&A

Andy Bell



**On the Brixton footage from 1992 you look like a band at the peak of your powers. Is that how it felt?**

Yeah. I felt like we did ourselves proud that night. We were on a series of stepping stones up to that point, getting bigger and better all the time. That was the peak. After that, it was all downhill.

**When you started the band, did you ever expect to be having Top 10 records?**

The ambition was there. We always felt that good music can be in the charts – all you've got to do is write good songs that appeal to people.

**Do you have any regrets about what happened to Ride after *Going Blank Again*?**

It did go pear-shaped, but in a way, *Carnival Of Light* is a bit of a glorious failure. We thought we were making *The Dark Side Of The Moon* but it ended up just being a retro-sounding record in the background while Oasis were taking over. We took a wrong turn. But no regrets, really.

**What are the chances of Ride playing again?**

I'd hate to feel like I'd got to the end of my life and it hadn't happened. I'm certainly thinking about getting back into the studio with the Ride guys and having a bit of a play. But that's somewhere down the line, I think.

INTERVIEW: SAM RICHARDS

*Nowhere*, although "Leave Them All Behind" and "Twisterella" are shimmering examples of indie pop at its ingenuous best. The nostalgic yearning of closing track "OX4", named after the band's home postcode, is doubly poignant given that the band would never scale these heights again.

Tensions during the recording of 1994's drippy retro rock folly *Carnival Of Light* led to Andy Bell demanding that his songs be confined to side two, away from Mark Gardener's. The album is testament to the fact that Ride were better when operating as a harmonious unit than as individual songwriters. A crunchy version of The Creation's mod nugget "How Does It Feel To Feel?" is the highlight.

Posthumous swansong *Tarantula* isn't as bad as reputed – "Dead Man" is a nifty slice of freakbeat that shows why Oasis eventually came a-knocking for Bell – but it sounds like the work of an assiduous Faces/Stones covers band rather than British rock's former great white hopes. Gardener contributed just one song, and walked before its completion.

The fact that Ride's principal players failed to make any great impact as songwriters following the break-up of the band – Gardener has pursued an intermittent solo acoustic career while Bell's settled for a role as Liam Gallagher's straightman – underlines the point proved by *Carnival Of Light*. At their best, Ride were all about collective rapture rather than individual talent. It's no coincidence that the lysergic footage from their 1992 London Brixton Academy show, included with *Going Blank Again*'s 20th Anniversary Edition, resembles a beatific rave as much as a rock gig. Ride may never have had much to say, but they sure made a glorious racket.

**EXTRAS:** *Going Blank Again: 20th Anniversary Edition* is the only re-released album to come with any new extras, in the form of a sonically remastered DVD of the band's 1992 Brixton Academy show, previously released on VHS, as well as a new booklet of unseen photos.



# Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



## DONNIE & JOE EMERSON

**Dreamin' Wild** (reissue, 1979)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

8/10

**Cult debut from soft-rockin' teenage farmhands**

When two of the world's hippest acts, Ariel Pink and Dean Blunt & Inga Copeland, release covers of one of your unknown songs within months of each other, you know you must be doing something right. Trouble is, Donnie & Joe Emerson recorded "Baby", the song in question, in 1978 when the brothers were 17 and 19, respectively, releasing it themselves a year later on their privately pressed debut album, *Dreamin' Wild*, a lost classic that finally resurfaces this month after decades languishing in total obscurity. Thirty-four years on, "Baby", a soulful Smokey Robinson confection composed, like the rest of the album, by the gifted Donnie, sounds as fresh as the day it was recorded in the Emersons' home studio on their parents' isolated farm in the village of Fruitland, some 70 miles northwest of Spokane in the heart of Washington State's timber country. For Donnie and Joe, both now in their fifties, the attention has perhaps come a little too late, but still they relish it. "When I was a kid I had all this freedom to be very, very creative, and that album was just a part of that time of being not so hindered by the world," says Donnie, who later found moderate success as a country-rock artist in the late-'90s. "We always wanted something to happen. We always dreamed we were going to be – and I hate to say this – famous. But I was always about the music, I just wanted to play my music." In between milking the farm's cows, going to school, chopping wood and laying irrigation pipes, Donnie let the artists that he loved – such as The Commodores, The Bee Gees, Elton John and Fleetwood Mac – spill into his own tender songwriting, fashioning ragged Motown pop on "Good Time" and "Feels Like The Sun". "We were too busy farming to get out to record stores," says Joe, who played drums on the album. "My dad bought a farm tractor that had a radio in it and that's when we started to listen to the radio more. Everything's a little more delayed here in the country." No-one knew about this debut at the time. But this essential reissue might be one of the best you hear all year.

**EXTRAS:** Extensive liner notes and photos.

6/10 PIERS MARTIN

## I'M YOUR FAN

"'Baby' has been a staple on just about every playlist/mixtape I've assembled in the past three years. It is nothing short of sublime."

ARIEL PINK



## THE JAMES TAYLOR QUARTET

**Mission Impossible** (reissue, 1987)

ACID JAZZ

7/10

**Acid Jazz, but not "acid jazz". Debut captures a raw garage rock outfit**

On this, their debut album, TJTQ had yet to transform themselves into an ultra-slick jazz funk outfit. Hammond player James Taylor and his guitarist brother David had just split up Kentish mod revivalists The Prisoners and were plying a rough-and-ready brand of instrumental garage rock that was getting played by John Peel, attracting rave *NME* reviews and inspiring the likes of The Charlatans. These '60s film themes ("Goldfinger", "Blow-Up", "Mrs Robinson") strip away The Prisoners' vocals and R'n'B bluster, leaving us with a cleaner, rawer, more focused sound, consciously redolent of a club scene from a '60s spy film. Saxophonist Matthew Godwin guests on a dismal version of Sonny Rollins' *Alfie* theme, but elsewhere the interplay between the Taylor brothers is thoroughly compelling: James' bubbly organ constantly punctured by David's spiky guitar.

**EXTRAS:** This CD – the first in a series of lavish 25th anniversary Acid Jazz reissues – adds four tracks to the 1987 mini-LP but retains the original's curious sonic balance: there is virtually no low-end at all in the mix, making you think that your expensive stereo has turned into a Dansette. Which, presumably, is all part of the period charm.

JOHN LEWIS



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**TV Sound & Image: British Television, Film And Library Composers 1955-78**

SOUL JAZZ

8/10

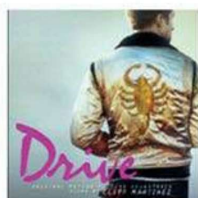
**Two discs of kitsch-in-synch hauntology**

The mid-'90s "easy listening" revival was one of the more curious micro-crazes in pop history. Britpop fans (comforted by long-forgotten British TV themes) and rare-groove crate-diggers (eager to discover funky breakbeats) alike flocked to its clubs (Indigo, Smashing) and purchased myriad "loungecore" compilations (*The Sound Gallery*, *The Easy Project*), while old KPM LPs shifted hands for three-figure sums. This excellent 36-track set, annotated by Jonny Trunk (the Tim Westwood of loungecore), acknowledges that revival but also nods towards the ongoing fascination for all things "hauntological". Some of these themes are familiar (*The Persuaders*, *The Avengers*, *Joe 90*, Roy Budd's "Get Carter"), some less so (the early 1980s music to *Tomorrow's World*, Pentangle's "Light Flight", CCS' big-band *TOTP* fanfare, Alan Parker's pimped-up theme to *Angels*). There's also plenty of library music: some, like John Gregory's "Jaguar", Sort Of Soul's "Birds n' Brass" and Syd Dale's Roland Kirk pastiches, will be familiar to mid-'90s collectors; others – like Wil Malone's "Death Line", Keith Papworth's "Hard Hitter" and the piano-funk of Keith Mansfield and Brian Bennett – will be welcome additions to your collection.

**EXTRAS:** None.

JOHN LEWIS





## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Drive OST (reissue, 2011)

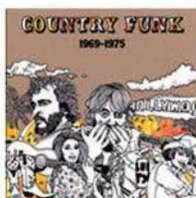
INVADA

**Late-night synth score gets a vinyl issue**  
Nicolas Winding Refn's 2011 noir tale of a getaway

8/10

driver up to his embroidered satin bomber jacket in underworld intrigue was dismissed as eye candy by some, although given the acclaim that has greeted its score, ear candy might be an equally appropriate description. In fact, it was the soundtrack, part composed and part compiled by former Chili Pepper/Captain Beefheart drummer turned Hollywood film composer Cliff Martinez, that provided much of the film's emotional weight. Martinez matches Refn's cold, glossy '80s aesthetic with a suite of originals that range from lonely, Edgar Froese-like synth pulse ("Kick Your Teeth", "Hammer") to unsettling metallic scrapes and eerie knife-edge drones played on the cristal baschet. But the real heart of this score – issued on Geoff 'Portishead' Barrow's own Invada imprint in shades including electric pink – is the fine clutch of opening songs. Kavinsky's "Nightcall", featuring vocals by Lovefoxxx of CSS, is louche electro in an Air vein, while Desire's "Under Your Spell" and College & Electric Youth's "A Real Hero" – Drive's tear-jerking end-credits number – are yearning synthesiser torch-songs illuminated not by candle, but by the electric glow of a dashboard.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
LOUIS PATTISON



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Country Funk 1969-1975

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

**Mouth-watering melange of Southern-fried country**  
Like acid folk, country

8/10

funk was a term only coined decades after the music it describes was recorded. Equal parts country, R'n'B, gospel, Cajun and New Orleans rock'n'roll but with an added poetic narrative, the first artists to define this new strain of Southern country were essentially songwriters – Tony Joe White, Mac Davis, Bobby Charles and Larry Jon Wilson, all represented here. Two pioneering volumes of *Country Got Soul* in 2003/'04 established the ground rules for the genre and re-introduced forgotten talents like Jim Ford and Eddie Hinton. *Country Funk* unearths further lesser-known practitioners of this mythical genre; Gray Fox (aka songwriter Buzz Clifford), whose boisterous, bass-grinding "Hawg Frog" is as steamy as the swamplands, or left-handed guitarist Johnny Jenkins, one-time muse to Jimi Hendrix, who deconstructs Dr John's "I Walk On Gilded Splinters" as a heavy hoe-down, duelling guitars with Duane Allman. Also enjoying the ride in iconoclastic career twists, Bobbie Gentry talks sex, Link Wray swaps reverberating rockabilly for the gospel pulpit and Bobby Darin, having turned his back on fame to live in a Big Sur trailer, offers up "Light Blue", a menacing, spooky blues from his lost 1969 album, *Commitment*.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
MICK HOUGHTON

# COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ After what even *Uncut*'s considerable number of overseas readers will have deduced to have been a spell of spectacularly poor English summer weather, it is on some

level with a heavy heart we look forward to autumn. Autumn, already? When we're having so much fun at waterlogged festivals? Musically at least, there's plenty to warm the cockles, from artists both comparatively young (magnificent new albums from both motivational yawpers **Animal Collective**, **Shields** (sleeve pictured) by intricate baroque folk-rock phenomenon **Grizzly Bear**, not to mention a new one from English minimalists **The xx**) but also more seasoned artists who have always found a warm welcome here. Not least by **Calexico** who offer a typically moving, mellow and expansive new work called **Algiers** and by **Cat Power** who brings rueful breakup disco on her new one, **Sun**. Impressive, mature work also comes from **Mark Knopfler**, whose **Privatizing** is characteristic of the man's post-Dire Straits work, being consummately assembled, faintly melancholic in character and fuelled by a respect for old traditions. Rather less rueful and considerably more high-energy work comes from the debut album occasioned

by the pairing of Talking Heads composer **David Byrne** and the mercurial Annie Clark, who trades very successfully as **St Vincent**.

JOHN.ROBINSON\_101@FREELANCE.IPCMEDIA.COM

## REVELATIONS

The incredible CV of Cliff Martinez

The *Drive* composer started in film making oddball sound collages for TV shows. Before that, he wasn't idle either.

### THE WEIRDOS 1981

"It was passionate and sincere: I went from hate to love, fell in with the punk scene, and joined The Weirdos. During my first show, three people swandived off the balcony. I thought, 'That beats applause.'"

### LYDIA LUNCH 1982

"She had a strong concept for the band – everything had two parts and would be funereal slow, and her lyrics were terrific. It was all ex-Weirdos, but it was very different to speedy punk rock. We burned brightly."

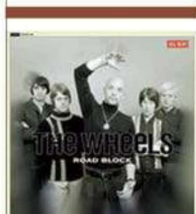


### CAPTAIN BEEFHEART 1982

"He was two hours late for my audition, but the walls were so thin, I could hear him when he entered the building. He said, 'You didn't really like playing with that little girl, did you?' Meaning Lydia Lunch..."

### RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS 1983-6

"I could see Anthony [Kiedis] was about to vomit. I was blocking the exit, so he started to hurdle the drumset. Mid-hurdle, he vomited, and this string of vomit fell on me. I spent the next day cleaning my drums, wondering if I was in the right band." JOHN ROBINSON



## THE WHEELS

### Road Block

BIG BEAT

**Belated Freakbeat favourites**

Wheels singer, the imposing Brian Rossi, was one of the prime movers on the Belfast

7/10

scene in the early '60s. Van Morrison often played sax with Rossi's Golden Eagles before he formed Them and Rossi's outfit became the more R'n'B-fixated Wheels. Cut from the same cloth as Them, The Wheels also found favour in England, securing a deal with Columbia which released three singles by the group during 1965/6. The first, a laid-back cover of Morrison's crowd-pleaser "Gloria", made little impact but, released in February 1966, its grittier follow-up "Bad Little Woman"/"Road Block" would eventually become a garage-punk classic. The moody, almost Doors-like "Bad Little Woman" was picked up by The Shadows Of Knight and became a minor US hit, but its frantic B-side, included on a Greg Shaw *Pebbles* collection 20 years later, was where The Wheels truly made their mark – a breakneck early-Kinks-style thrash, as wild as Them's "Mystic Eyes" with pummelling bass, droning organ, wailing harmonica, all capped by Rossi's demented vocal. Rossi left before the final Wheels single, a decent stab at Paul Revere's lame hit "Kicks". With the addition of six contemporaneous session tracks, *Road Block* is effectively The Wheels' debut album, 45 years on.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
MICK HOUGHTON

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UNCUT





THIS MONTH: MUDDY WATERS & THE STONES | HENDRIX | LONDON



## HOMELAND: SEASON ONE

20TH CENTURY FOX

Damian Lewis keeps us guessing in Obama's favourite post-War On Terror thriller. *By Damien Love*



8/10

JONATHAN DEMME TRIED the official movie remake in 2004, but it took American television to come up with a *Manchurian Candidate* that really fits the mood of the moment. Anointed by Barack Obama as his favourite show, *Homeland* is based loosely on an Israeli TV drama, *Prisoners Of War* (also released). But it draws its true DNA from

John Frankenheimer's paranoid classic of 1962.

Once again, we are in the company of the enemy within. We see a soldier who has made it home after enduring enemy capture, paraded as returning hero. And then we are presented with the notion that, while he was away, this hero was brainwashed by his captors, and is now a timebomb primed to go off in the heart of the USA.

And, once again, on his trail comes a solitary figure who is sure something is very wrong, but whose credibility is undermined by their own problems.

*Homeland* comes into its own with its lonely investigator, CIA analyst Carrie Mathison (a superb Claire Danes). Frank Sinatra was a troubled soul in *The Manchurian Candidate*, but compared to Carrie, he was the picture of health. As we discover, she isn't simply driven by the sharpened paranoia beneficial to anyone in her profession: she's suffering a bipolar disorder she hides from her bosses, popping anti-psychotic drugs provided by her sister, a doctor.

The object of her obsession is Nick Brody (Damian Lewis, seizing his finest role since 2004's *Keane*), a US Marine found in Iraq after being held captive, missing presumed dead, for eight years. Home again in a blaze of stars and stripes, he seems to match information Carrie received years before: "An American prisoner of war has been turned." Against orders, she secretly installs

surveillance in his house, spying on him and his family, her own private Big Brother. Nick is a stiff, silent stranger. Thinking him dead, his wife had begun an affair with his best friend. His kids barely know him. It's Brody's relationship with Carrie, however, that comes to dominate. But is she right?

Fans caught in *Homeland*'s pull and impatient for the second series may be intrigued to see the Israeli original. But *Prisoners Of War* is a different proposition: slower, more meditative, less concerned with thriller moves. It follows Nimrod and Uri, two Israel Defense Force reservists released from captivity after being held in Lebanon for 17 years, who return home bearing with them the body of another man, and some secrets. Hailed as heroes, they consider themselves traitors, struggle with guilt and post-traumatic stress as much as the changes that await in the home they barely recognise.

It's smaller, more reflective than *Homeland*, and more moving. But it's the US hit that sinks its hooks in. *Homeland* has drawn comparisons with 24, largely because its creators used to write for the Jack Bauer serial. It retains some traits – a confident pace, regular twists – but it adds shadows to the popcorn. Certainly, there's a more ambivalent attitude to torture, and the writing tries little things 24 tended to avoid: ambiguity, characterisation. Jack Bauer was always up against a ticking timebomb, and we always knew he was right. Here, the clock ticks slower, what it's counting down toward is disturbingly vague, and it's hard to tell who the bad guys are.

**EXTRAS:** *Prisoners Of War*, none. *Homeland*, none.  
DAMIEN LOVE





## THE BELLY OF AN ARCHITECT

BFI

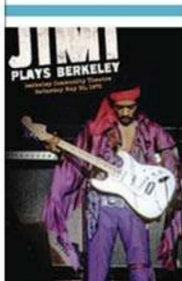
### Doomy, stately drama

In many ways, Peter Greenaway's art reached its pinnacle with this 1987 study of obsession and death, filmed among Rome's magnificent structures. More than ciphers but slightly less than rounded beings, his

characters are consistently watchable, from the sanguine but doomed architect Kracklite (Brian Dennehy) to his coquettish, adulterous wife (Chloe Webb). As you'd expect from Greenaway, the rest is an abundance of learning, dry wit and architectural magnificence, with the problematic belly mirrored among domes, statues and photocopiers. Fine score from Wim Mertens and Glenn Branca.

**EXTRAS:** Terence Conran short, DVD-ROM.

8/10 ROB YOUNG



## JIMI HENDRIX Jimi Plays Berkeley

SONY LEGACY

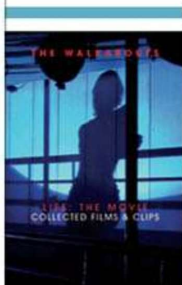
### Spotty yet exciting live set

Originally released in 1971, shortly after Hendrix's death, the years have turned a hastily conceived exploitation film into a flawed but engaging time capsule. A partial document of his two concerts with Mitch Mitchell and Billy

Cox at Berkeley Community Theatre in May, 1970, *Jimi Plays Berkeley* lasts barely an hour, the shaky live recording padded out with footage of limo rides, rehearsals, the Berkeley riots and hippy protests. Though frustratingly half-formed, epic renditions of "Purple Haze", "Voodoo Chile" and a malevolent "Machine Gun" capture the primal excitement of being in the room as genius takes flight.

**EXTRAS:** Audio of second Berkeley concert.

8/10 GRAEME THOMSON



## THE WALKABOUTS

### Life: The Movie, Collected Films & Clips

GLITTERHOUSE

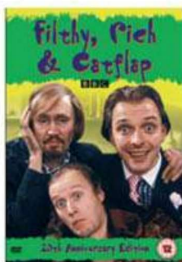
### Mixed portrait of an overlooked group

As the first non-grunge band on Sub Pop, The Walkabouts seemed out of place and time. They offered a blend of punk

urgency and poetic rock, delivered with folk purity by singer Carla Torgerson. Almost unnoticed, they had a second wind in the mid-'90s, and still perform with an amended lineup. This package doesn't quite do them justice. There's an energetic 2005 live show from Prague, videos going back to "Medicine Hat", short interviews, and an unfocused road film: the highlight is a fiery cover of the Buzzcocks' "Something's Gone Wrong Again".

**EXTRAS:** None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## FILTHY, RICH & CATFLAP

ACORN MEDIA UK

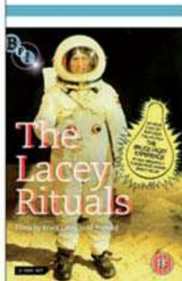
### A slice of prime '80s alternative comedy

The missing link between *The Young Ones* and *Bottom*, *Filthy, Rich & Catflap* saw Ben Elton write Rik Mayall, Ade Edmondson and Nigel Planer as showbiz scum, in love with

Anne Diamond, blackmailed by The Nolan Sisters, and talking to the camera. It ought to be dated and over-familiar, but its manic energy and sheer spleen see it through. In those days, new comedy was fuelled by an apparent hate of the mainstream, not a desire to join it. Imagine hating Jimmy Tarbuck these days; imagine *Extras* being this angry.

**EXTRAS:** Cast filmographies, picture gallery.

3/10 DAVID QUANTICK



## THE LACEY RITUALS: FILMS BY BRUCE LACEY (AND FRIENDS)

BFI

### Treasure trove of the eccentric director's work

For anyone who's followed oddbod Lacey's anti-career, this two-disc set, compiling 27 shorts and experiments he has made or been

involved in since 1951, will be a goldmine. For the uninitiated, though, it's the "friends" that provide the initial draw. A British counter-culture Zelig, Lacey provides the link between everyone from The Goons to Richard Lester and Fairport Convention to Jeremy Deller. But it's his own kinks that dominate: absurd, unsettling, in places pretentious, frequently hypnotic.

**EXTRAS:** Extensive notes, new documentary

10/10 by Jeremy Deller.

DAMIEN LOVE



## WONDERFUL LONDON

BFI

### Fascinating silent films of the capital

Harry B Parkinson and Frank Miller's series of silent shorts, made in the early 1920s, reveal a London lost to bombing and post-war renovation. These restored, retinted prints venture along

canals, into markets, and penetrate Chinatown and Limehouse. Casually racist remarks betray the films' antiquity, but *London Off The Track* anticipates the investigative lens of Humphrey Jennings and Patrick Keiller. *London's Free Shows* and *London's Sundays* document vibrant street culture and leisure activities: wonderful snapshots of a vanished city.

**EXTRAS:** Six untinted extra shorts including

7/10 *Dickens' London*; new piano accompaniment; booklet.

ROB YOUNG



Someone didn't get the dresscode memo: Mick and Muddy onstage

# MUDDY WATERS & THE ROLLING STONES

## Live At The Checkerboard Lounge

EAGLE VISION



### Momentous all-star blues jam in Chicago

Aside from sitting humbly at the feet of Howlin' Wolf on '60s TV shows like *Shindig!* and *Ready Steady Go!*, footage of the Stones with their seminal blues influences is rare. Recorded in November 1981, just a couple of years before his death, this Muddy Waters performance at Buddy Guy's Checkerboard

Lounge remains the only time the group ever shared a stage with the iconic blues master.

Muddy's band are spruced up for the occasion – waistcoats are de rigueur, while blues-harpist George 'Mojo' Buford sports a fetching leather bandolier to house his harmonicas. Muddy himself appears a few songs into the set, in a light-grey three-piece, the remnants of his pompadour swept into a matching steel-grey tonsure at the rear of his head. Even perched on a stool, he's a magisterial presence, wringing snarling lines from his battered Tele on "Country Boy", in flurries of biting slashes.

Invited on onstage during "Baby Please Don't Go", Mick Jagger has rather less stylish couture sense, his red Ellesse jogging-suit making him appear all the more like Muddy's court jester as he attempts his characteristic prancing in a space barely big enough to stand in. Keith joins him, clambering over tables to reach the stage, followed by Ronnie, both clearly on their mettle for this trip to the fount of blues truth.

Mick and Muddy swap verses through "Hoochie Coochie Man", the tiny stage getting ever more crowded as more legends join the throng, notably Junior Wells and Buddy Guy. Mick tries talking in tongues on "Mannish Boy", before Muddy and he vacate the stage awhile, leaving Keith and Ron to swap lines with Buddy Guy. The evening comes to a suitably unkempt end with "Champagne & Reefer", Mick stealing Muddy's thunder with an admonishment to stick to reefer and stay away from that cocaine. As if!

**EXTRAS:** None.

ANDY GILL



# Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

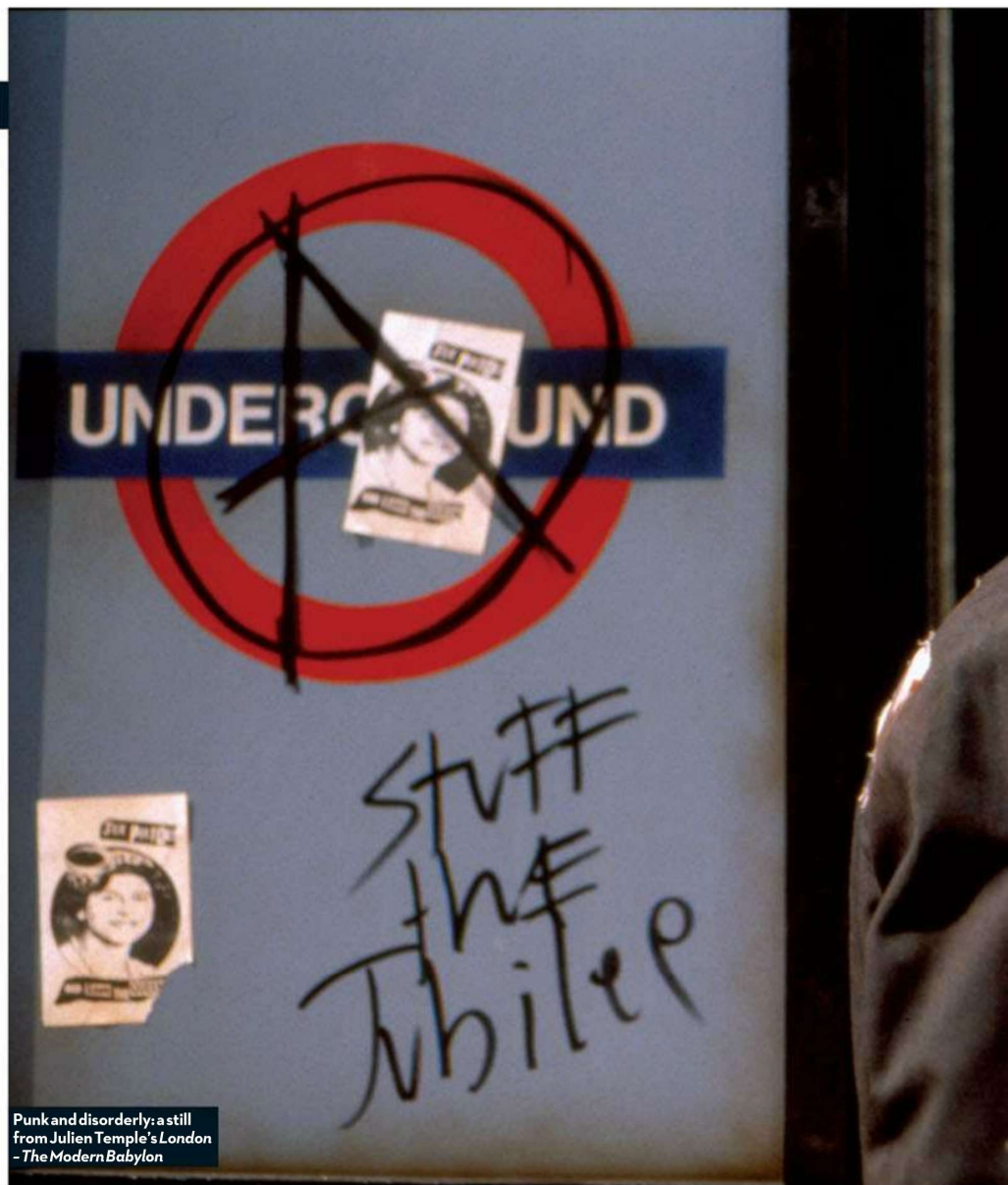
*This month: Julien Temple's London documentary, plus Luke Haines, Anthony Hopkins in non-ham shock and "a dangerously aroused Goblin"*

**Berberian Sound Studio** In the early stages of his career, British filmmaker Peter Strickland was a member of the Sonic Catering Band, a trio from Reading who made experimental music derived from the preparing and cooking of a meal. I suspect Strickland's formative explorations into the sonic potential of celery have paid off handsomely for *Berberian Sound Studio*, a film in which watermelons, radishes and cabbages are routinely abused, and the inquiry, "Is there any fresh marrow?", carries sinister connotations.

The man smashing the legumes is tweedy, timid Gilderoy (Toby Jones), a sound engineer from Dorking hired to create the effects for an Italian horror film. It is 1976, and the film in question – *The Equestrian Vortex* – is a violent, supernatural giallo, for which we only ever see the opening credits: hysterical, red-tinted images of churches, medieval woodcuts, animal skeletons, women screaming. We watch Gilderoy – and his brooding producer Francesco (Cosimo Fusco) – watching the film, the only clue to its grisly contents gleaned from scene synopses read aloud in English for Gilderoy's benefit: "Teresa and Monica venture into the poultry tunnel underneath the Academy, unaware of the witches' putrid corpses."

Following up his debut, *Katalin Varga*, Strickland plays much of the first half of this film for laughs, as Gilderoy smashes fruit and boils pans full of oil to emulate torture, death and mutilation. Actresses are brought in to scream – and, memorably, one actor provides strange, guttural utterances for a "dangerously aroused Goblin". Jones is brilliant as a kind of Donald Pleasence figure, very much out of his comfort zone in all this phantasmagoria, unable to speak Italian and frustrated by the studio's Kafkaesque bureaucracy, retreating into his room to read letters from his mother regarding the chaffinch nest in his garden shed. But the mood darkens, boosted by a creepy analogue score by Broadcast. As the violence becomes more specific and horrendous, Strickland floats the idea that Gilderoy is somehow complicit in whatever horrors are unfolding on screen. In a very Lynchian touch, a flashing neon red sign above the studio door reading "SILENZIO" suggests this might be an entry point to Hell itself.

➤ **The Imposter** In 1994, 13-year-old Nicholas Barclay went missing from his home in San Antonio, Texas. "It got to the point where you



Punk and disorderly: a still from Julien Temple's London – *The Modern Babylon*

know you're not going to find him alive," says his elder sister, Carey. "You just want to know what happened to him." Miraculously, though, three years later the Barclays learned Nicholas had been found alive in a children's shelter in Linares, Spain. Once he had been brought home, it became apparent something was deeply wrong. Firstly, the fair-haired Texas boy seen in photographs and home movies had returned sporting peroxidized hair, a swarthy five o'clock shadow and a prominent French accent. Secondly, no-one in the Barclay family seemed to notice these troubling discrepancies. Bart Layton's film – a confident mix of talking heads, re-enactments and home video – unspools as an unusual piece of American Gothic, growing beyond the immediate family themselves to involve the state's child protection agency, the

FBI and the American news media. Nicholas, we learn very early on, is in fact a 27-year-old French Algerian called Frédéric Bourdin, a serial imposter who breezily admits, "For as long as I remember, I wanted to be someone else." Layton asks, why did the Barclays accept Bourdin is their missing son? Was it because, in their grief and desperation, they simply wanted to believe Nicholas was alive? Or were there other more sinister motives at work here? The arrival of Charlie Parker, a jovial Texas Private Investigator in a white linen suit who looks like he's walked out of a Coen Brothers film, steers the film into full-blown noir. Much of the fun here is working out whether Layton is being as tricky as Bourdin as he drip-feeds information to the audience. Are we being fooled, just as the Barclays were?

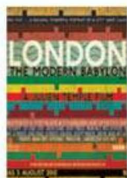
## Reviewed this month...



**BERBERIAN SOUND STUDIO**  
Director Peter Strickland  
Starring Toby Jones  
Opens August 31  
Certificate 15  
**10/10**



**THE IMPOSTER**  
Director Bart Layton  
Starring Frédéric Bourdin, Carey Gibson  
Opens August 24  
Certificate 12A  
**8/10**



**LONDON - THE MODERN BABYLON**  
Director Julien Temple  
Starring Suggs, Ray Davies  
Opens August 3  
Certificate 12A  
**10/10**



**360**  
Director Fernando Meirelles  
Starring Jude Law, Rachel Weisz  
Opens August 10  
Certificate 15  
**6/10**



**ART WILL SAVE THE WORLD**  
Director Niall McCann  
Starring Luke Haines, Jarvis Cocker  
Opens now  
Certificate 15  
**7/10**





*Black-and-white footage of horseguards riding through Edwardian smog is cut to Underworld's "Born Slippy"*

► **London - The Modern Babylon** Julien Temple's latest film is essentially a document of social transformation. From Queen Victoria "opening her doors" to Jewish immigrants in the early 1900s, through Windrush up to the Eastern European influx of today, it's part of what Suggs describes as "a process. People get taken in and become part of the city itself and change the city. And that's the whole point. The place keeps changing."

Tracing London's history chronologically through exhaustively researched newsreel footage, contemporary interviews, songs and movies, Temple's film is an impressive contribution to the already considerable body of work dedicated to mapping London. Black-and-white footage of horseguards riding through an Edwardian smog is

cut to Underworld's "Born Slippy"; scenes from Tony Hancock's *The Rebel* are elided with film of - God! - Quentin Crisp posing for a life-drawing class in his underpants. The footage from the '60s - Pink Floyd at UFO, the Grosvenor Square anti-war march, Twiggy, Terence Stamp, the Stones in their Swinging pomp - is familiar, but exhilaratingly cut by Temple so that it reminds me of the breathless editing of Beatles footage in Martin Scorsese's George Harrison documentary.

Temple, too, sees London as a palimpsest, with layers of collective memory built up over time: images of a hippy girl in the 1960s handing out flowers to bemused commuters at Bond Street tube station are cut into footage of a Victorian East End flower girl; footage of suffragettes is cut to X-Ray Spex's "Oh Bondage, Up Yours!". 1920s debutantes, hippies, punks, New Romantics have all had their moment in the sun. "The good old days?" says Suggs towards the end of Temple's film. "There were no good old days. London doesn't belong to anyone. It's whoever's on the go at any given moment."

► **360** Fernando Meirelles, the director of *City Of God* and *The Constant Gardener*, tries his hand at a roundeley - starting in Vienna, where Jude Law is cheating on his wife, Rachel Weisz, it makes stops in London, Bratislava, America and Paris. Such globe-trotting adds an undoubtedly impressive visual flourish to Meirelles' film - but, alas, it's not quite enough to save Peter Morgan's rather calculated script. Morgan made a similar bish with his screenplay for Clint Eastwood's *Hereafter* - another roundeley, but about dead people - and this fares little better. Weirdly, the best performance comes from Anthony Hopkins, as a bereaved father and recovering alcoholic, who gets to deliver A Big Speech at an AA meeting in Denver; it's tempting to see it as Oscar bait, but surprisingly for an actor so reliably hammy, Hopkins satisfyingly underplays it. Despite its global themes, international settings and impressive cast, 360 struggles to engage emotionally. It's possible to admire the structure of Morgan's screenplay, and how it all laces together. But it doesn't help that the first characters we see - Law and Weisz - are spoilt, selfish and unlikeable. By the time we've moved on elsewhere, it's hard to muster up the will to care.

► **Art Will Save The World** "I find it faintly ridiculous that anyone would want to make a film about me," says Luke Haines at the start of Niall McCann's documentary, currently touring film festivals. Haines has spent much of his career as both a musician and, latterly, an author, raging splenetically and repeatedly against Britpop and those musicians he considers of lesser creative stature - which is most of them. Dressed here in what looks like the kind of Edwardian cricketer's outfit sported by Peter Davison's Doctor Who, Haines essentially regurgitates his anti-Britpop spiel familiar from his first book, *Bad Vibes*, and revisits his glorious failures with The Auteurs, Baader Meinhof and Black Box Recorder. His comment on *The Oliver Twist Manifesto* is bracingly honest: "No fucker bought that record." Of the talking heads - mostly authors like David Peace and Stewart Home - Jarvis Cocker remains the most "mystified" by Haines' "spectacular moment of sabotage", when he used the word 'cunt' in "The Upper Classes". Author John Niven describes Haines as the "Travis Bickle of Britpop; a man who just won't take anymore." McCann seems to play around with the idea of Haines as a curmudgeon; but it's only about two thirds of the way in to his sympathetic film that Haines relaxes enough to let his guard down; accordingly, the man who emerges is witty, erudite and charming. It would have been good to have spent more time in his company.

## Also out...

### TED

OPENS AUGUST 1

Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane's live action debut: Mark Wahlberg's childhood teddy bear comes alive, gets stoned and cracks scatological laffs.

### THE FLOWERS OF WAR

OPENS AUGUST 3

Gloowering Christian Bale poses as a priest to save Japanese refugees in WWII. *House Of Flagging Daggers* man Zhang Yimou directs.

### THE LODGER: A STORY OF THE LONDON FOG

OPENS AUGUST 10

Hitchcock's 1927 silent film - starring Ivor Novello! - is dusted down and given a new soundtrack by Nitin Sawhney.

### THE BOURNE LEGACY

OPENS AUGUST 13

Jeremy Renner replaces Matt Damon as the super-soldier trained for no good in franchise reboot.

### BRAVE

OPENS AUGUST 13

Disney Pixar's Highlands-set animation, with Kelly Macdonald and Billy Connolly. According to notes, it is the first film to use the Dolby Atmos sound format. Whoop.

### THE EXPENDABLES 2

OPENS AUGUST 16

More creaky old men shouting and blowing things up. Now with added Chuck Norris.

### TAKE THIS WALTZ

OPENS AUGUST 17

Grown up, chatty drama, with Michelle Williams, Seth Rogen and Sarah Silverman exploring their, y'know, feelings.

### THE THREE STOOGES

OPENS AUGUST 22

After spending many years in development hell, this biopic of the much-loved American comedy trio arrives. No Sean Penn, Benicio del Toro or Jim Carrey, though.

### F FOR FAKE

OPENS AUGUST 24

Orson Welles' last major film, from 1973, a freeform documentary about fraud and fakery. Very well worth seeing on the big screen.

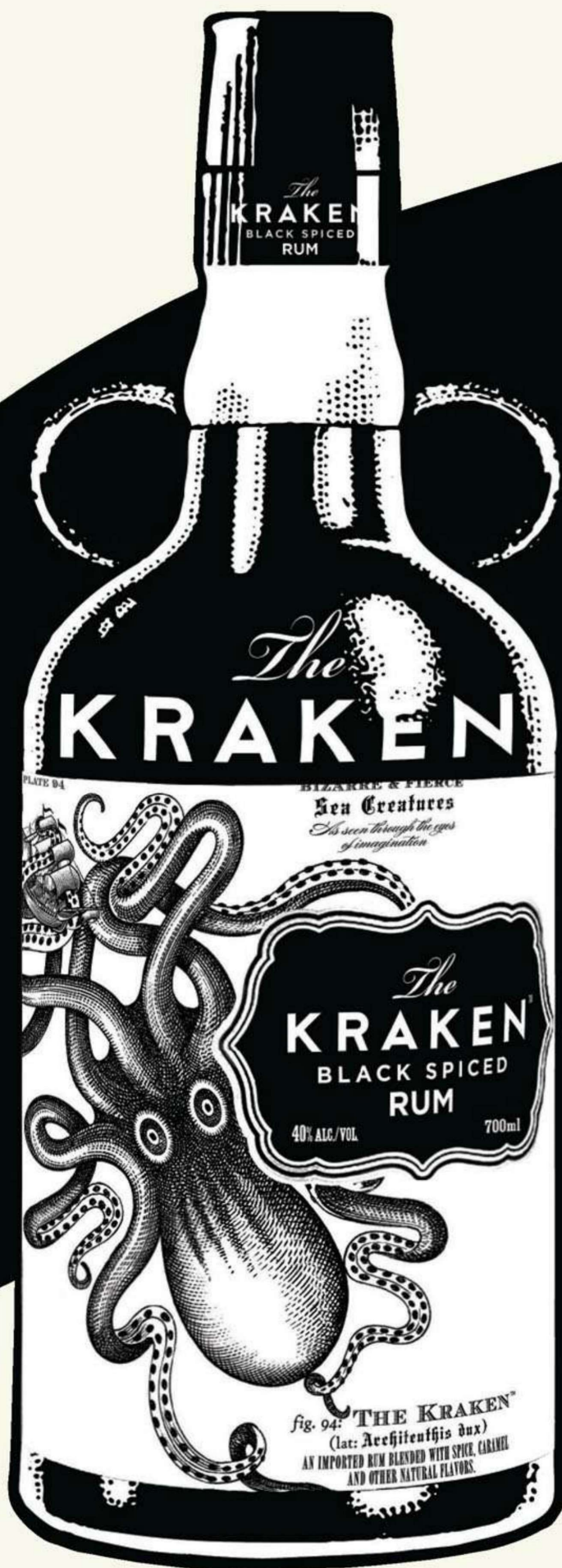


### TOTAL RECALL

OPENS AUGUST 29

Colin Farrell is Arnold Schwarzenegger in 'Why do that?' remake of Paul Verhoeven's batty sci-fi from 1990.





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# Books

BY ALLAN JONES

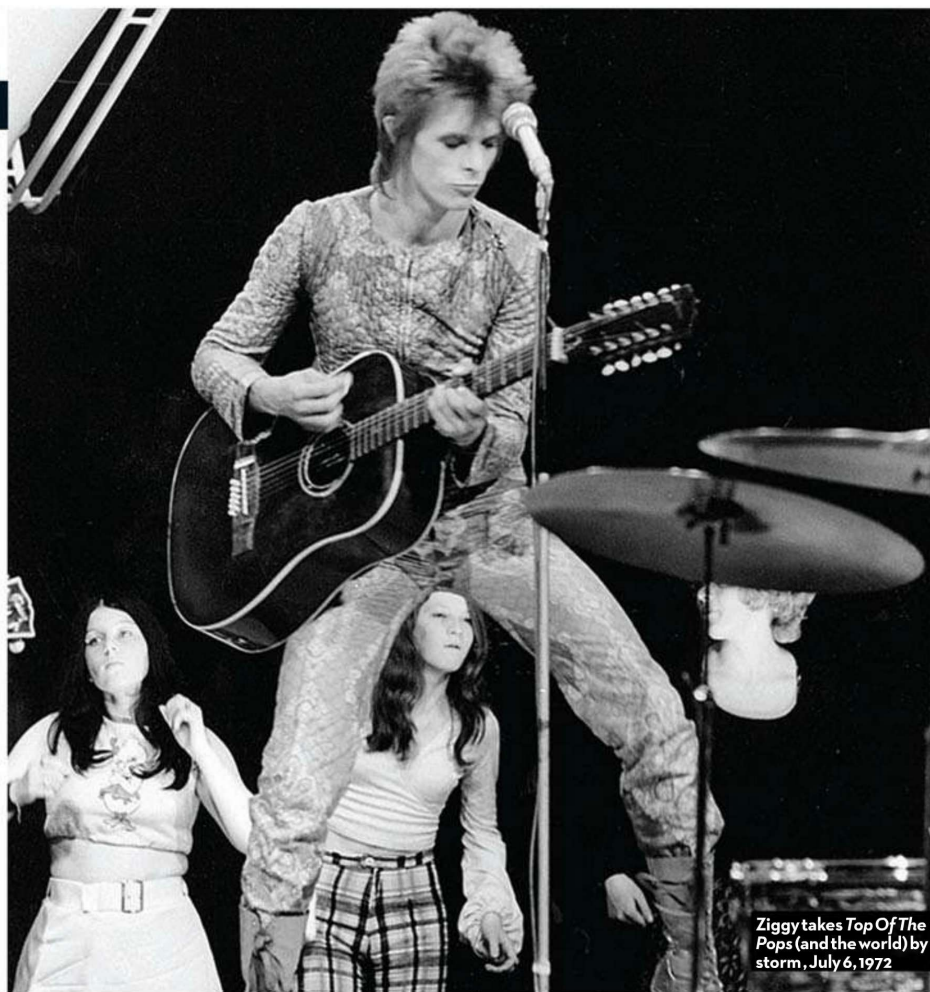
**D**YLAN JONES TELLS us towards the end of *When Ziggy Played Guitar* that he's met David Bowie "dozens of times". Good for him! What a pity, though, that during at least one of these encounters, unless they were all social occasions of the kind that as editor of *GQ* magazine Jones must nobly endure, he didn't come back with any first-hand quotes from Bowie about the subject of this book. Which is, of course, Bowie's appearance on *Top Of The Pops* on July 6, 1972, when he played "Starman", draped a nonchalant arm around Mick Ronson, and the fame he had for so long craved became a hurtling reality and Bowie went – if not overnight, then still very quickly – from one-hit wonder to full-blown pop phenomenon. For Jones, this is a seismic moment that caused a "tectonic shift in popular culture" and "havoc in millions of sitting rooms all over the country, changing the life of the performer as much as the lives of those watching him". After this one TV appearance, nothing would really be the same again, for Bowie or his awestruck young fans, the 12-year-old Jones among them.

At barely 200 pages of generously spaced type with plenty of pictures, *When Ziggy Played Guitar* is a mere footnote compared to the typical bulk of many recent music biographies. Even at this comparatively meagre length, however, the book, as elegantly composed as it is, seems perilously slight and slack editing renders it irritatingly repetitious (I lost count of the number of times we are told that *TOTP* was filmed on the Wednesday prior to broadcast the following evening). Jones is keen also to remind us of the world into which Ziggy was delivered, the sullen '70s, when the UK seemed to be plunged back into a post-war drabness that Bowie via Ziggy brilliantly illuminated.

The point is well made in the first instance, as part of a general overview of the significant political, social and cultural overview of events surrounding the release of the *Ziggy* album. Jones then tells us exactly the same thing, via an extended account of growing up in the dull coastal town of Deal, a place drained of colour until the advent of Ziggy – "the first real postmodern pop star, a bisexual beat messiah, a flame-haired yob in lip gloss and mascara".

With no valuable input on any of this from Bowie, despite their apparently many meetings, Jones further pads out the pages of *When Ziggy Played Guitar* with re-hashed details of Bowie's career, pre- and post-Ziggy, that add nothing new to what you will already know about Bowie or his music.

► Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* is being pumped-up as "the *Catch-22* of the Iraq War". The comparison is not entirely accurate, but it still gives the book a lot to live up to, which incredibly it does. It's a sustained tour-de-force of angry satire, a coruscating lambasting of the mindless "war on terror" declared by the Bush administration that took



Ziggy takes *Top Of The Pops* (and the world) by storm, July 6, 1972

America and its cronies into Iraq with such dreadful results.

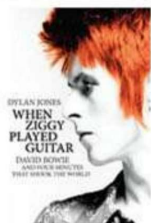
The book is set on a single day, Thanksgiving, 2004. The eight surviving members of Bravo Company are national heroes after a violent skirmish in which they are involved in Iraq is shown on Fox News. They are brought home for a Victory Parade, as a boost to the war and the Bush re-election campaign. Today is their last public engagement before being sent back to the front line and presumably forgotten, an appearance at Texas Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys – America's team – where they will share the half-time entertainment duties with Destiny's Child. The increasingly absurd events of the day are so hilariously recounted that the reader is left dizzy with laughter, each extended episode a masterpiece of comic invention, a seething outrage never far from the surface of this brilliant, stunning book.

► Wilko Johnson's *Looking Back At Me* is a handsomely packaged autobiographical scrapbook, rich with illustrations from Wilko's personal archive and full of droll commentary about a career that has taken him from Dr Feelgood to *Game Of Thrones*, in which he has recently appeared as a grim-faced mute executioner, Ser Illyn Payne ("All I've got to do is look heavy. I can do

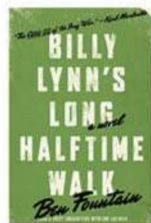
that easy"). The book covers Wilko's childhood on Canvey Island, where as a five-year-old he witnessed the floods of 1953, and his fractious relationship with his father, "a stupid and uneducated and violent person" who died when Johnson was a teenager. From there we follow Wilko to university in Newcastle, where he develops a taste for Shakespeare and Icelandic sagas, the hippy trail to India and on to the Feelgoods. Their brief incandescence is well-captured, though he remains baffled by the bickering that led to their premature split, subsequently much-regretted.

► Eleanor Henderson's irresistible *Ten Thousand Saints* follows a group of hapless teenage friends and their equally dysfunctional parents from 1987 to 2006, taking in smalltown, back-of-beyond Vermont, Manhattan's Lower East Side, pre-gentrification, the straight-edge music scene and the first days of the AIDS epidemic. At its centre are Jude and Teddy, adolescent druggie fuck-ups, who we meet on the "last morning of 1987 and the last morning of Teddy's life", Teddy dying wretchedly two chapters into the book's 500 pages. What follows is a wild and poignant story about love, friendship, music and salvation, moving and hilarious by turns.

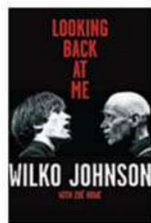
## Reviewed this month...



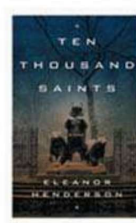
**When Ziggy Played Guitar: David Bowie And Four Minutes That Shook The World**  
Dylan Jones  
PREFACE  
**7/10**



**Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk**  
Ben Fountain  
CANONGATE  
**9/10**



**Looking Back At Me**  
Wilko Johnson with Zoë Howe  
CADIZ MUSIC  
**7/10**



**Ten Thousand Saints**  
Eleanor Henderson  
QUERCUS  
**9/10**



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- 3 Things Have Changed
- 4 Tangled Up In Blue
- 5 Cry A While
- 6 Love Sick
- 7 Ballad Of Hollis Brown
- 8 Spirit On The Water
- 9 High Water (For Charley Patton)
- 10 A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall
- 11 Highway 61 Revisited
- 12 Can't Wait
- 13 Thunder On The Mountain
- 14 Ballad Of A Thin Man
- 15 Like A Rolling Stone
- 16 All Along The Watchtower

## BOB DYLAN

HOP FARM FESTIVAL, KENT, JUNE 30, 2012

Things have changed! Dylan moves to grand piano for the latest phase of the Never Ending Tour...

**T**HIS IS A surprise, although it's not a first outing for one of the songs from his new album, *Tempest*, which we now know is out on September 10 and according to the few who've heard it is a stunning late-career peak. It's still unexpected, though: Dylan onstage at Hop Farm at a grand piano, sitting sideways on to the thing so he's half-turned towards the audience, grinning at them like an old wolf, at one point with his left hand on his hip, an unusually flamboyant gesture. It's not exactly Jerry Lee in

full-on berserker mode, or Little Richard tearing it up with ass-shaking abandon. But it's a crowd-pleasing moment nevertheless, that even gets a wee cheer from the knot of people around me.

Dylan's at the grand for fully half tonight's set, which is eight out of 16 songs. Only swaggering opener "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat" finds him at his usual Korg keyboard set-up, evidence of his considerable good humour apparent in his spry little dance moves, hand gestures, the hiccapping whoops and chuckles that

punctuate the song and his smiling exchanges with guitarist Charlie Sexton. The switch to the grand on so many of the songs that follow turns out to be a stroke of something approaching genius that brings a new freshness to a lot of the most-featured songs in Dylan's current touring repertoire, especially the ones that get played every night. Like "Highway 61...", whose familiar roadhouse chug is transformed into blistering honky tonk, and "Thunder On The Mountain", the latter turned into a rockabilly rave-up. Dylan goes to the piano first when he





Dylan at 71: "You think I'm over the hill, you think I'm past my prime..."

plays "Love Sick" from *Time Out Of Mind*, which he revisits as a stricken, ominous blues, drenched in something on the far side of weary recrimination I don't have a name for, but which anyway sounds like a scary place to be.

Whatever you want to call that palace of murk Dylan inhabits on the song, he's there again on the venerable "Ballad Of Hollis Brown", delivered centre-stage with a hand-held microphone and expansive hand gestures that at moments lend the performance a melodramatic theatricality that would seem perhaps hammy if the song didn't continue to conjure such eternal horrors. "Way out in the wilderness, a cold coyote calls," he sings. "Your eyes fix on the shotgun that's hangin' on the wall," he goes on, more chilling than the wind that's crept up while he's been playing.

Much the same desolation is evoked on "High Water (For Charley Patton)", whose anticipation of dreadful things to come is sombre and austere, Donnie Herron's back-porch banjo a lonesome sound, like something far away calling for help. Darker yet is a brilliantly gnarly version of "Cry A While" from *"Love And Theft"*, with Dylan almost conducting the band, who are fully

alert to his staccato instructions, the stop-go lurch of their performance giving the song a swampy malevolence that surfaces again on "Can't Wait". Rescued from *Time Out Of Mind*, where it sort of lurks in a fuzzy halo of Daniel Lanois-inspired atmospherics, a little anonymous, it's played tonight in an arrangement that recalls the version of it that appeared on *Tell Tale Signs*, something about it now that hints gravely at unreasonable turbulence.

Elsewhere, there's a welcome playfulness to a version of "Things Have Changed", with Dylan ad-libbing lyrics and generally having a hoot, and a version of "Tangled Up In Blue" that tonight sounds less a tortured romantic odyssey than a wonderfully spun tale of restless nomadic wandering, a magnificent shaggy dog story in some respects. It more than once makes me laugh out loud, as does a terrific take on "Spirit On The Water", which Dylan positively milks for laughs. "You think I'm over the hill, you think I'm past my prime," he sings, then with a nod to Charlie Sexton who laughs back in return adds an extemporised exclamation: "Well, maybe I am!"

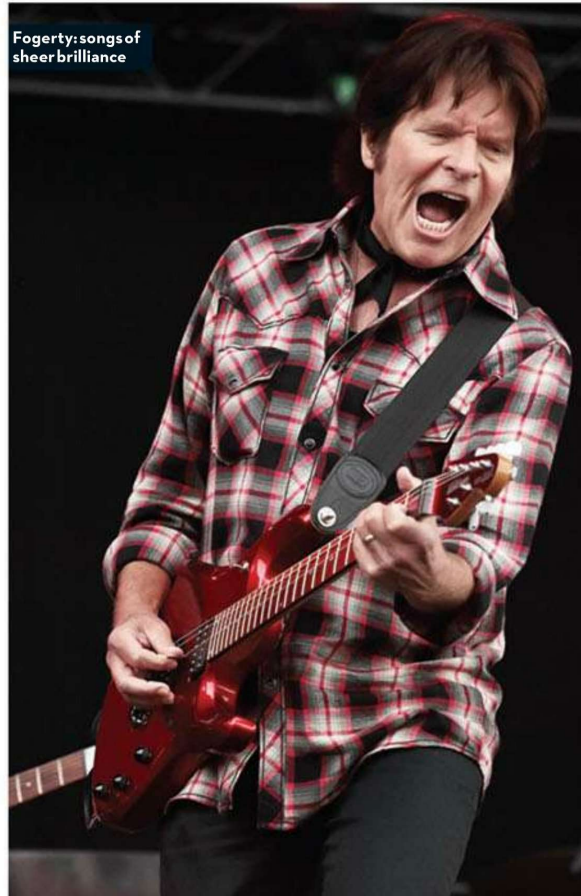
Much is predictably made these days about Dylan's voice, or perceived lack of it, the general coarse grain of it evidently making it hard for some people to even listen to. Tonight, there's a faltering start to "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue", when Dylan opens his mouth to sing the first verse and sounds like he's coughing up nothing but static, which seems to make him lose his bearings momentarily and almost come adrift from what the band behind him are playing.

But for the rest of the set you can only wonder at some of his phrasing, the ways he finds to accommodate the limitations age and the consequences of virtually non-stop touring have imposed on his voice. The sheer power he is still able to muster on a version of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" that moves effortlessly from waltz-time to gospel fervour and a testifying final verse is cause for similar amazement, as is the menace he is still able to call up for "Ballad Of A Thin Man", whose echoed vocals sound especially sinister in this cold moonlight.

There's still time for further surprise, even this late in the set. It comes with "Like A Rolling Stone", which for as long as anyone can remember has typically been dispatched with anthemic gusto and much metaphorical flag-waving. Tonight's version is a slower than usual unfurling, more elegiac than triumphal and touched with the ruefulness that attended the reworking a few years ago of the formerly vindictive "Positively 4th Street". The audience are not wholly attuned to the shift in emphasis – or at least chose to blithely ignore it, to the extent they are moved to sing along to a version Dylan's not playing tonight, much to his amusement.

The closing "All Along The Watchtower", meanwhile, has more in common than is usual with the *John Wesley Harding* original than the Hendrix version that followed and which Dylan's own subsequent renditions have been based on. Dylan breaks into the song to introduce his superb band before winding things up with a flourish and a stately nod of farewell, another thrilling show in the bag, one of his best, certainly, since his 2010 appearance in this same field.

ALLAN JONES



Fogerty: songs of sheer brilliance

## John Fogerty

HARD ROCK CALLING, HYDE PARK, JULY 14, 2012

The 'Hank Williams of his generation' takes on the Springsteen faithful

AS THE OPENING "Hey Tonight" echoes out over a sea of mud and woodchips, John Fogerty's first UK performance in four years isn't shaping up too well. In stark contrast to Creedence Clearwater Revival's taut, restrained sound, the musicians backing the singer, songwriter and guitarist this afternoon (the same as on his last UK tour) apply session chops to Fogerty's compact constructs with little subtlety. The once-menacing "Fortunate Son" is not the only classic subjected to clichéd Hammond sweeps and bombast. At one point, the band's sensibilities seem to have affected Fogerty, too; as at 2007's Glastonbury, the singer introduces "Keep On Chooglin'" with a slice of incongruous tapping that you'd expect from Steve Vai rather than a swamp-rock grandee.

These missteps, though, only help to heap attention on the sheer brilliance of Fogerty's songs, from "Lodi" to "The Old Man Down The Road". His stunning, elastic guitar solos survive, too, especially on "Born On The Bayou", which tonight ascends from lingering refrains into glorious stuttering feedback.

Headliner Bruce Springsteen's description of Fogerty as "the Hank Williams of his generation" during his introduction is spot-on – his songs themselves have become so ingrained in popular culture, and influenced so many artists, that *Uncut* sees multiple audience members amazed as they realise that "Proud Mary", "Rockin' All Over The World" and "Bad Moon Rising" were all written by this unassuming, plaid-shirted 67-year-old.

There's also no hiding the genuine, infectious enthusiasm of a neckerchiefed, fighting-fit Fogerty, trotting across the stage with undisguised joy and throttling his guitar like a man a third of his age. Perhaps lawsuits and resentment can be good for your health. For an unexpected encore, Springsteen joins his hero onstage for "Rockin' All Over The World", a perfect demonstration of the heartwarming power of rock'n'roll. Long may he choogle.

TOM PINNOCK



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Softly, softly:  
Simon struggles  
to be heard in  
Hyde Park



# PAUL SIMON

HARD ROCK CALLING, HYDE PARK, JULY 15, 2012

Graceland revisited, under London skies...

**L**AST TIME PAUL SIMON played in London with this lineup, 25 years ago, seeing the show necessitated crossing a picket line. Simon's 1987 album, *Graceland*, recorded partly in South Africa with South African musicians, caused a measure of affront in those for whom loathing South Africa's government of the time was a rule admitting no exception. Really, the row should never have progressed past the point at which Simon was able to observe that Hugh Masekela and Ladysmith Black Mambazo, among many others, were happy enough to be seen with him in public – as they are, again, tonight. The argument as over as apartheid, Hyde Park should have been the long-delayed celebration that *Graceland* deserved.

And it is – eventually. Simon is less suited than most to outdoor shows. His songs are confessional whispers

in the shadows, characterised by wordiness and intimacy. Until the sun sinks below the treetops circa “Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes”, it's disconcertingly easy to forget that Simon is there at all, as he mumbles through a helping of non-*Graceland* songs: “50 Ways To Leave Your Lover”, “Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard” and “Slip Sliding Away” are all barely audible. It may not be Simon's fault that the volume is so low that it's necessary to squint one's ears to hear him over the crowd's chatter, but were it not for a spirited four-song visit to the stage by Jimmy Cliff, the first hour would have offered little incentive to stick around for the second.

The *Graceland* material fares better, partly because there's so much going on in these busy, fidgety, celebratory songs, mostly because Simon seems to be having so much more fun. In the crowd, there is a

measure of ill-advised attempts to copy Ladysmith Black Mambazo's choreography, but there's also a palpable hush, of people both recognising that something special is afoot, and willing it to become more so. The tension breaks, inevitably, on the finale: “You Can Call Me Al” is buoyed by a lustily bellowed, tens-of-thousands-strong brass part.

“The Sound Of Silence” is, in these circumstances, both an audacious and ironic selection to begin the encore. Simon, alone with an acoustic guitar, deliberately croons around the familiar melody and rhythm of the song, as if determined to forestall a mass singalong. Dylan does this, too, more likely out of plain cussedness, and for that reason it often comes across as pointless belligerence. With Simon, it seems more like a gentle urging to listen to the song, again, as if for the first time: it's a stunning moment, and the

## SETLIST

- 1 Kodachrome
- 2 Gone At Last
- 3 Dazzling Blue
- 4 50 Ways To Leave Your Lover
- 5 The Harder They Come
- 6 Many Rivers To Cross
- 7 Vietnam
- 8 Mother And Child Reunion
- 9 That Was Your Mother
- 10 Hearts And Bones/Mystery Train/Wheels
- 11 Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard
- 12 Slip Slidin' Away
- 13 The Obvious Child
- 14 Hello My Baby
- 15 Nomathemba
- 16 Homeless
- 17 Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes
- 18 I Know What I Know
- 19 The Boy In The Bubble
- 20 Mandela (Bring Him Back Home)
- 21 Stimela
- 22 Crazy Love Vol II
- 23 African Sunset
- 24 Under African Skies
- 25 Gumboots
- 26 Graceland
- 27 You Can Call Me Al
- 28 The Sound Of Silence
- 29 The Boxer
- 30 Late In The Evening
- 31 Still Crazy After All These Years

clear highlight of the night. It's very nearly equalled, however, by “The Boxer”, Jerry Douglas stepping up on dobro, accordion atmospherics provided by the sit-down squeeze-box in the band. The song invites marvel, as ever, on two levels: one, that a man as young as Simon was at the time could have written a line as wise as that one about men hearing what they want to hear; and two, that a young man that wise could have waved through that ghostly bass harmonica part on the original recording. **ANDREW MUELLER**



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OCTOBER 2012

- 09 BILSTON, THE ROBIN
- 11 BRISTOL, THE TUNNELS
- 12 TAVISTOCK, WHARF
- 13 FALMOUTH, BLUES IN THE BAY
- 14 POOLE, MR KYPs
- 16 LONDON, LEICESTER SQ THEATRE
- 19 BRIGHTON, THE HAUNT
- 20 NORWICH, ARTS CENTRE
- 21 SALE, WATERSIDE
- 23 YORK, DUCHESS
- 24 NEWCASTLE, CLUNY
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SEPTEMBER 2012

- 26 WOLVERHAMPTON
- 27 MANCHESTER
- 28 NEWCASTLE
- 29 GLASGOW
- 30 LEEDS

OCTOBER 2012

- 03 NOTTINGHAM
- 04 BATH
- 05 GLOUCESTER
- 06 POOLE
- 07 BRIGHTON

OUT 27-08 LA?

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OCT

- 11 BATH KOMEDIA
- 12 EXETER PHOENIX
- 13 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
- 14 BRIGHTON KOMEDIA
- 17 STRATFORD-U-AVON COX'S YARD
- 18 YORK FIBBERS
- 19 GATESHEAD SAGE
- 24 POOLE MR KYPs
- 25 LONDON O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON
- 26 HERTFORD CORN EXCHANGE
- 27 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
- 28 SCUNTHORPE PLOWRIGHT THEATRE

NOV

- 01 BEDFORD CORN EXCHANGE
- 02 ST HELENS CITADEL
- 03 GLASGOW O<sub>2</sub> ABC
- 04 STAMFORD CORN EXCHANGE
- 22 BURY MET
- 23 MORECAMBE PLATFORM
- 24 CARLISLE BRICKYARD
- 25 BILSTON ROBIN 2

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NOVEMBER 2012

- WED 7 POOLE, MR KYPs
- THUR 8 BRISTOL, THE TUNNELS
- FRI 9 LONDON, O<sub>2</sub> ACADEMY ISLINGTON
- SAT 10 MANCHESTER, ACADEMY
- SUN 11 BRIGHTON, THE HAUNT

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OCTOBER

- 7 ULVERSTON, CORONATION HALL
- 9 BERWICK UPON TWED, THE MALTINGS
- 13 SCUNTHORPE, PLOWRIGHT THEATRE
- 16 SHEFFIELD, CITY HALL
- 19 HUDDERSFIELD, LAWRENCE BATLEY THEATRE



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Thurs 20 Sep Bath Komedia

Thurs 15 Nov Newcastle O<sub>2</sub> Academy

Fri 7 Dec Holmfirth Picturedrome



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Sat 13 Oct - Falmouth Princess Pavilion



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Sun 14 Oct - Holmfirth Picturedrome

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15.09. RYE, Rye Arts Festival  
16.09. LONDON, Union Chapel

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11th	London	The Borderline	0844 847 2465

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NACHOL BERNHARDT · JONNY KEARNEY & LUCY FARRIEL  
LAURA I MANTY · BLACK & BLUE ESCAPADES  
THE FALSE BEARDS · TELLING THE DEEDS · NICKY BREANEY  
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TUE 9 Oct	HULL The Piper Club
FRI 12 Oct	YORK Fibbers
SAT 13 Oct	LINCOLN Tokyo's
SAT 20 Oct	LONDON Islington O2 Academy 2
SUN 21 Oct	FROME Blues Festival
MON 22 Oct	MILTON KEYNES The Stables
WED 24 Oct	SPALDING The South Holland Centre
FRI 26 Oct	* DARWEN Library Theatre
SAT 27 Oct	BARNESLEY Birdwell Venue
FRI 9 Nov	* LEEDS Josephs Well
SAT 10 Nov	* SOUTH WALES Beaufort Theatre
THU 22 Nov	KIRKBY IN ASHFIELD Millers
SAT 1 Dec	* HARTLEPOOL Camerons Club
SUN 2 Dec	BISHOPS CLEEVE Tithe Barn
FRI 7 Dec	GRIMSBY Yardbirds Club
SAT 8 Dec	* DERBY Flowerpot
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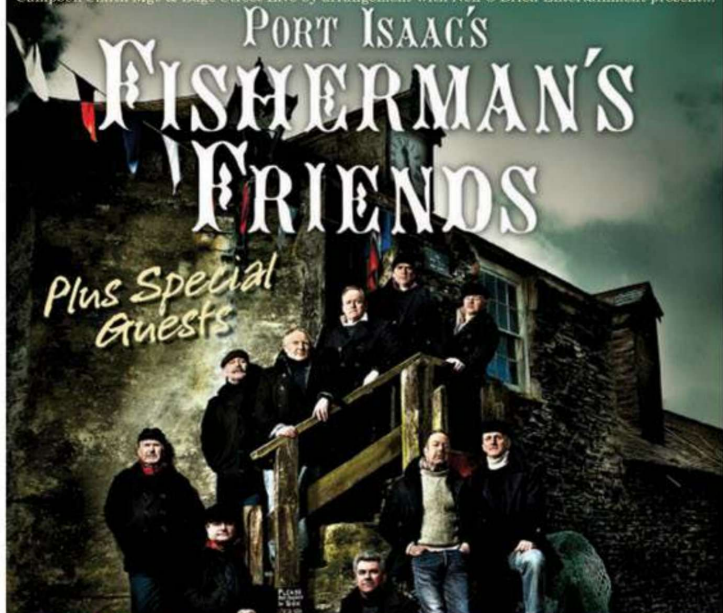
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4 Oct	London*†	Queen Elizabeth Hall	23 Oct	Lincoln†	Drill Hall
6 Oct	Ipswich*	Com Exchange	24 Oct	Nottingham†	Arts Theatre
10 Oct	Liverpool*†	Philharmonic	27 Oct	Cambridge†	The Junction
11 Oct	Birmingham*†	Town Hall	28 Oct	Oxford†	Town Hall
12 Oct	Carlisle†	The Brickyard	1 Nov	Brighton*†	Dome
13 Oct	Glasgow†	Arches			

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7	Harrogate	Royal Hall	01423 500500
23	Basingstoke	Anvil	01253 844244
24	Wells Cathedral Somerset		0115 959 7908

### DECEMBER

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6	Truro	Hall for Cornwall	EXTRA DATE ADDED
7	Truro	Hall for Cornwall	01872 262466

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4	Southampton, The Brook	18	New Brighton, The Floral Pavilion
	023 8055 5366		0151 666 0000
5	Bristol, The Tunnels	20	Bromsgrove, Artrix
	0845 605 0255		01527 577330
7	Brighton, Komedia	21	Pocklington, Arts Centre
	01273 647100		01759 301 547
8	Swindon, Arts Centre	22	Glasgow, St Andrews In The Square
	01793 614837		<a href="http://www.ticketweb.co.uk">www.ticketweb.co.uk</a>
9	Bridport, The Electric Palace	23	Kendal, Brewery Arts Centre
	01308 426336		01539 725133
10	St Albans, Arena	28	London, Union Chapel
	01727 844488		<a href="http://www.unionchapel.org.uk">www.unionchapel.org.uk</a>
11	Manchester, Royal Exchange	29	Nottingham, Rescue Rooms
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Fri 12	Stockton The Arc	Wed 24	Norwich Arts Centre
Sun 14	Gateshead The Sage	Thu 25	Worthing Assembly
Thu 18	Liverpool St Georges	Fri 26	Basingstoke The Forge
Fri 19	Newport Barnabas Arts	Sun 28	Bromsgrove Artrix
Sat 20	Bristol Colston Hall		

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## OBITUARIES

# Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

## JON LORD

Keyboard player for Deep Purple

1941-2012

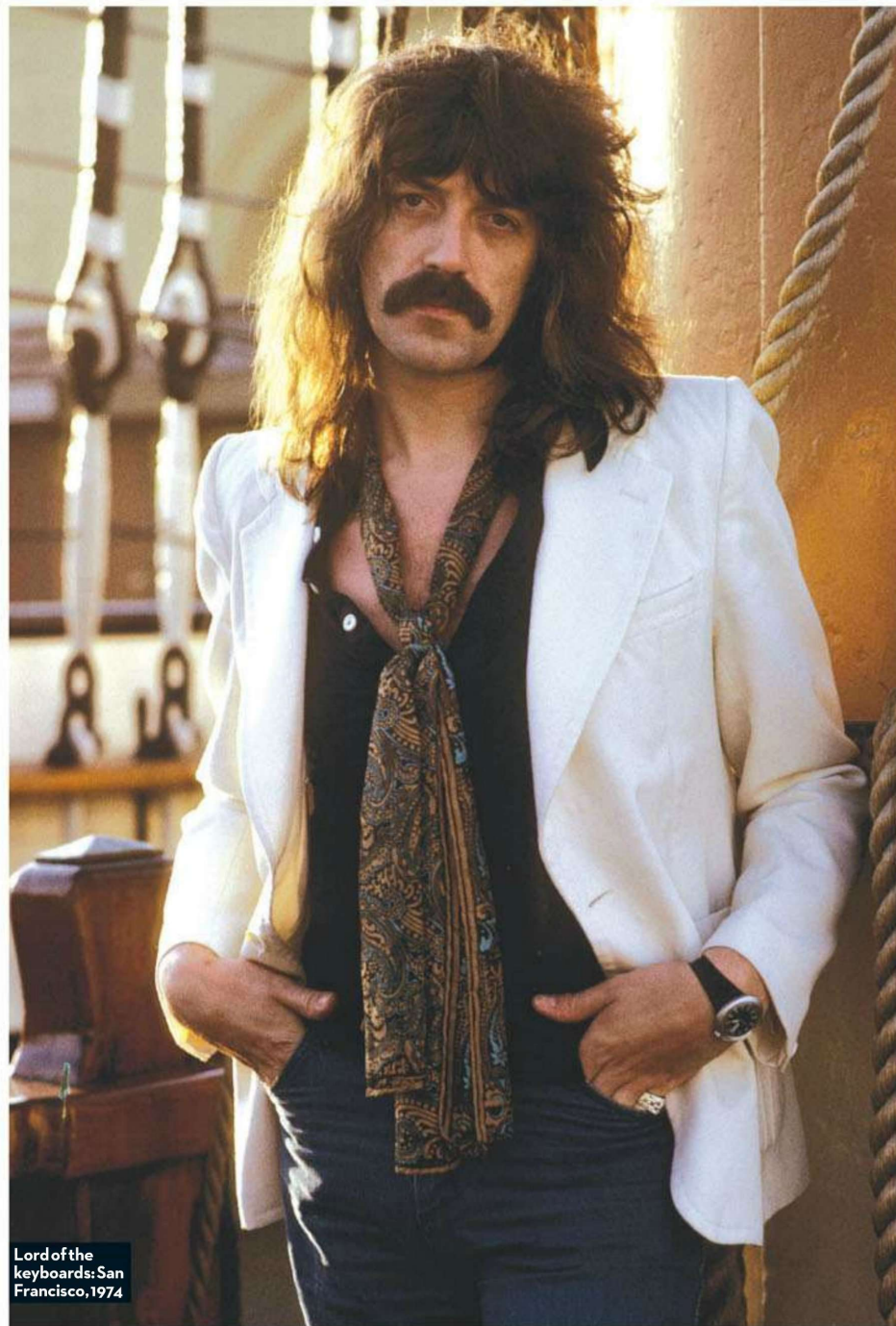
**F**EW ARTISTS HAVE managed to merge rock and classical music to such telling effect as Jon Lord, who has died of complications from pancreatic cancer. As keyboard player for Deep Purple, Lord's dynamic rhythms were as integral to the band's power as the hard-edged guitar of Ritchie Blackmore. Yet he was also a classically schooled pianist and composer capable of ravishing symphonic pieces, the most celebrated of these being 'Concerto For Group And Orchestra', first performed with Deep Purple at the Royal Albert Hall in 1969.

Born in Leicester, Lord's early classical training was derailed as a teenager when he discovered the records of Jimmy Smith and Jerry Lee Lewis. He played his first electric organ with London combo Red Bludd's Bluesicians, and by 1964 had joined The Artwoods, led by Ronnie Wood's brother, Art. Lord also secured himself some session work, the most notable being keyboardist on The Kinks' "You Really Got Me".

The Artwoods' three-year career proved unsuccessful, after which Lord briefly joined Ronnie Wood, Twink and Kim Gardner in Santa Barbara Machine Head. He signed up with one more similarly doomed outfit, The Flowerpot Men, before he and the band's bassist, Nick Simper, set about forming Deep Purple in 1968, along with Blackmore, singer Rod Evans and drummer Ian Paice. They scored a US hit later that year with a cover of Joe South's "Hush", and a minor one with their version of Neil Diamond's "Kentucky Woman". But it wasn't until Evans and Simper were replaced by Ian Gillan and Roger Glover in August 1969 that Deep Purple were born in earnest.

Lord's contribution to their breakthrough success was immense. *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*, recorded the following month with the help of the Royal Philharmonic and Marshall's new 600-watt PA system, landed the band their first Top 30 album in January 1970. His songwriting acumen was pivotal to the metallic KO of a number of Deep Purple's major hits, among them "Black Night", "Smoke On The Water" and "Strange Kind Of Woman". Lord and Paice were the only constants in the band through a succession of huge-selling albums – from 1970's *Deep Purple In Rock* through to *Come Taste The Band* – before they split at the end of a UK tour in July 1976.

Post-Purple, the pair teamed up with singer Tony Ashton to form Paice, Ashton & Lord, though the band enjoyed only a short lifespan with 1977's *Malice In Wonderland*. Lord then hooked up with David Coverdale, who had replaced Gillan in Deep Purple in 1973, for latest project, Whitesnake. But by 1984 he was back



with a reformed Purple, playing once more alongside the classic lineup of Blackmore, Gillan, Glover and Paice.

Before quitting for good in 2002, Lord again directed the band and the London Symphony Orchestra for a 30th-anniversary performance of 'Concerto For Group And Orchestra' at the Royal Albert Hall. It was to prove a signal moment. "Thirty years later the piece came back and changed my life again," he recalled. "It gave me the courage to step outside and carve a career for myself outside the band."

Subsequent years saw him collaborate with ex-Abba singer Anni-Frid Lyngstad and form the blues-based Hoochie Coochie Men. In 2009 the album *Live*, recorded in Bucharest with a full orchestra, featured classical reworks of three Deep Purple landmarks: "Pictures Of Home", "Soldier Of Fortune" and "Child In Time". Most recently, Lord had been working on a definitive studio recording of 'Concerto For Group And Orchestra' with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and a number of special guests, including Bruce Dickinson, Joe Bonamassa and Steve Morse.



# TIM MOONEY

American Music Club/Sun Kil Moon  
drummer, producer

1958-2012

**“H**E WAS ABSOLUTELY instrumental in whatever sound we had,” declared Mark Eitzel in tribute to his ex-American Music Club bandmate, Tim Mooney. “His style was absolutely unique and as an artist no-one could match what he did.” Mooney, who has died from a suspected heart attack, initially served as drummer for the Bay Area band from 1992 up to their split in 1995, playing on landmark LP *Mercury* and its marginally less impressive follow-up, *San Francisco*.

He’d begun in the late ’70s with post-punk outfit Sleepers, who issued a 1978 EP and sole album *Painless Nights* three years later. There were also stints in fellow locals Negative Trend and Toiling Midgets. On joining AMC, in the words of Eitzel, Mooney “took all our disparate musical ideas and tied them together with a style that just cut through.”

Post-split, Mooney played on 2000’s *Rock’n’Roll Singer*, the solo debut from former Red House Painter Mark Kozelek, and on the latter’s new project as Sun Kil Moon, *Ghosts Of The Great Highway*. In 2004 American Music Club regrouped for the ravishing *Love Song For Patriots*, engineered and co-produced by Mooney.



American Music Club: (l-r) Dan Pearson, Tim Mooney, Vudi and Mark Eitzel

When AMC disbanded again in 2007, he shifted focus to Closer Recording, his own studio in San Francisco, where he’d already produced *World Without End*, a startling album of murder ballads from Bob Frank and John Murry. Most recently, Mooney had overseen Murry’s wonderfully evocative follow-up, *The Graceless Age* (reviewed page 70), and engineered *Mutt*, a ripe slice of Americana from Mississippi songwriter Cory Branan.



## KITTY WELLS

The first Queen Of Country

1919-2012

BEFORE LORETTA LYNN, Tammy Wynette or Dolly Parton, Kitty Wells (above) laid claim to being the first Queen Of Country Music. 1952’s “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels”, an indignant riposte to a similarly titled ‘cheating song’ by Hank Thompson, made her both the first female to sell a million records and make No 1 in the country chart. Wells’ image may have been cookie-cutter wholesome, often pictured in pinnies and bonnets, baking biscuits at home, but the lyrics struck a blow for sexual equality: “Too many times married men think they’re still single/That has caused many a good girl to go wrong.” The hits kept on coming throughout the ’50s and ’60s, her popularity such that she was voted America’s top female

country artist for an unprecedented 14 consecutive years.

## BRIAN HIBBARD

Flying Pickets singer, actor

1946-2012

WELSH ALL-ROUNDER Brian Hibbard’s most recent TV work included roles in *EastEnders* and *Casualty*, though he’s perhaps best known for his time as singer with oddball a cappella outfit The Flying Pickets. Their version of Yazoo’s “Only You” topped the singles chart for five weeks in 1983, with follow-up “When You’re Young And In Love” cracking the Top 10 a year later. Hibbard quit the band in 1986.

## DENNIS FLEMION

Co-founder of The Frogs, Smashing Pumpkins associate

1955-2012

OCCUPYING A SPACE somewhere between The Fugs and Ween, the scattershot satire of Milwaukee siblings The Frogs earned them a cult following and the fandom of Kurt Cobain, Eddie Vedder, Beck and Billy Corgan. Elder brother Dennis, who has drowned in a Wisconsin lake, was remembered as a “creative genius and artist in the truest sense of the word” by Corgan, who briefly employed him as the Smashing Pumpkins’ live keyboard player in the ’90s and

used the Flemions as back-up vocalists on 1998’s *Adore*. There were few subjects deemed off limits by The Frogs, whose provocative songs, mostly improvised in their home studio and encompassing anything from folk balladry to glam-punk, took aim at race relations, the gay community, weird sex and the music business itself.

## GERRY BRON

Manager of Uriah Heep, owner of Bronze Records

1933-2012

THE SUCCESSFUL RISE of Uriah Heep owed much to the stewardship of manager Gerry Bron. From 1970 debut ...*Very ’Eavy ... Very ’Umble* through to 1980’s *Conquest*, the elder brother of actress Eleanor Bron also produced 11 Heep albums, mostly on his own Bronze label. His CV included Motörhead, Colosseum, The Damned and Gene Pitney, alongside production credits for the first two albums by The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band.

## OSSIE HIBBERT

Producer, engineer, arranger

1950-2012

HIBBERT MAY HAVE been one of the less publicly fêted figures on the JA music scene, but his contributions were crucial. He began as a keyboard player in the ’70s with The

Professionals, The AggroVators and The Revolutionaries, being much in demand as sessioneer for Johnny Clarke, King Tubby and countless others. It was a schooling that fed into his studio work behind the desk, most prominently as producer of Dillinger’s 1978 classic *Cocaine In My Brain* (including its signature title track) and albums by Gregory Isaacs and Freddie McKay. By the early ’80s he’d founded his own company, Ossie Hibbert Productions, and had most recently worked with The Wailing Souls and Errol Dunkley.

## LOL COXHILL

Free-improv saxophonist

1932-2012

THE EXPRESSIVE RANGE of Lol Coxhill was mirrored in the diverse nature of his career. He began as backing player for visiting US stars like Rufus Thomas and Champion Jack Dupree in the ’60s, though by the start of the next decade he’d established himself on the Canterbury scene with Kevin Ayers and The Whole World. The ’70s saw him duetting with ex-Delivery piano player Steve Miller, before hoofing it around with The Damned and playing in the avant-jazz orchestra assembled by guitarist Derek Bailey. Coxhill’s impish humour was best illustrated by a bizarre tour of Yorkshire in 2004, where, in true Dadaist style, he played solo from inside a skip. **ROB HUGHES**



# Feedback...

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## LETTER OF THE MONTH

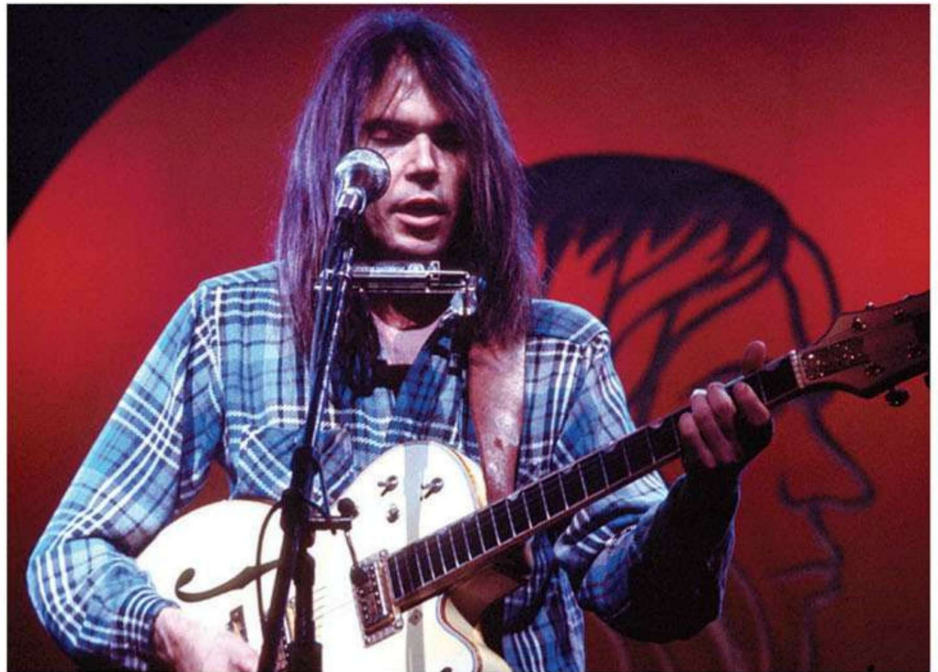
### FOREVER YOUNG

I WAS INTERESTED to read your Are We Rolling? column in your August issue as I too saw Neil Young on that tour at Hammersmith, though I saw the Wednesday show on the March 31. That show was significant for two reasons.

Firstly, at the end of the second encore, we left the venue and caught the tube back to Victoria to get the midnight train. After a while we met another couple who'd been at the same gig and they said that so many people didn't leave when the house lights went up after the second encore that Neil came back on, alone, and did "Cowgirl In The Sand", so I missed a genuine encore!!

Secondly, when I met the lady who became my wife in the late '80s, she knew I was a fan of Neil's so, at a boot fair, she saw a guy selling bootleg tapes, and bought me a Neil Young tape – without knowing it, she bought me a tape of the gig I was at on March 31, 1976!! It was just one of the things that made me realise this relationship is destined to last.

I was lucky enough to see CSNY at Wembley in September 1974 and Neil's solo set practically reduced the stadium to the intimacy of a small club, he was that good. I've seen him a lot over the years and, though he's an ornery old goat, as cantankerous as they come, and has released albums that are a blot on his good name (*Landing On Water? Reactor? Are You Passionate??*), I've stayed the course and it's been quite a ride.



I just hope there's still one more, great solo LP and Crazy Horse LP left in the man before it all goes pearshaped. We'll never see his like again, that's for certain, and I feel privileged to have been part of his trip.

**Laurence Todd, via email**

Letters about Neil and that amazing Hammersmith Odeon show pretty much dominated this month's Feedback correspondence, to such an extent you wonder if everybody who saw him there has ended up an Uncut reader! It certainly seems like it. – Allan

### YEAR OF THE HORSE

Many thanks for reminding me of my first Neil Young & Crazy Horse gig at the Hammersmith Odeon. I went with my 'new wife' and brother in law. I managed to get three standing tickets at the back of the auditorium. I remember Mr Young wandering onto the stage wearing a deerstalker, Sherlock Holmes must have been livid. In truth, I thought it was yet another roadie. It was only when he sat down and began strumming his guitar that I recognised it was the great man himself!

From my perspective it was a dream come true to see Neil up close. I had seen him the previous year at the old Wembley Stadium from about half a mile away, when he played with CSNY. So tickets at the back of the theatre were a real treat. Mind you, when Crazy Horse appeared for the second half of the show I was pretty glad that we were at the back. Man, they were 'loud'. I have seen Neil and Crazy Horse

on numerous occasions over the years and actually nearly bumped, quite literally, into Neil, outside the Apollo Manchester on his recent European tour, have enjoyed many a good night/day watching Mr Young and the "Horse", as we fans know them, but Hammersmith Odeon brings back some smashing memories. The sight of Neil and Billy Talbot's hair being blown about by a giant fan will never leave me. Magical. Thanks.

**Ted Scott, via email**

I read with interest the interview with Neil Young in the August edition. As a lifelong fan of his music I have recently taken issue on several Neil sites about *Americana* and been accused of living in the '70s. But let's all be honest here. *Americana* must have sounded great as Neil and Crazy Horse worked out in the studio and I'm sure it was fun to record, but to me it's another disappointing fork in the road. A couple of the songs work

but the rest have the whiff of self-indulgence. As we all know, Neil moves on quickly so the chances of seeing another Neil & Crazy Horse record this year is doubtful. I love Neil and his music, but recent releases have led me back to his '70s music which is timeless. By the way Stills first wore that poncho in 1969! Tell them who we are, man!

**Andy Riggs, Wallington, Surrey**

I too was at the Neil Young show in 1976. I sent off and somehow ended up with second-row tickets.

I was into punk and was there with a girlfriend who had never heard of Neil. We both looked like hell, with dyed spiked hair and her with pre-goth make-up etc. Billy Talbot pointed us out to Neil and he had a good look and said something funny – either way they were amused. It might have been their first sight of punk rockers at a show as it was a long time before that London look spread around. Got to say, there were no other punks

there as far as I remember.

Second thing, when those industrial fans kicked off, I remember a wall of dust hitting us (either off the stage or off of Neil) and getting eyefuls. Finally, much as my friend was questioning what kind of a show I had taken her to, she ended up convinced!

**Dave Underwood, via email**

### BUY THE WAY

The slightly saccharine and overwrought promise of essential buying guides comes to grief with no mention of *April* in the Sun Kil Moon guide, and no mention of *Over* in the Peter Hammill guide.

**Andy Hemsley, via email**

### LIFE BEGINS AT THE HOP

I was at the Hop Farm festival and was standing close to Allan Jones at the time of Patti Smith's slot and noticed him jotting down a number of points in his notepad. I sincerely hope he enjoyed it as much as I





did. I have seen her a few times including Reading Rock Festival but her versions of "Free Money" and "Gloria" at Hop Farm were in my view simply superb.

I thought she was the star of the festival, closely followed by Peter Hook's set on the Saturday night.

I'm already looking forward to next year. See you there.

**Neil Haddock, via email**  
"Gloria" was definitely sensational, although I wasn't that struck by much else Patti played, and missed Peter Hook completely. Glad you had such a great time, though, Neil. There's a review of Dylan's Hop Farm set on page 110, by the way. - Allan

## NO MORE HEROES

Much as I enjoyed reading the features on MC5 and Peter Tosh in Take 183, I was left saddened by the absence of radical politics and subversion in today's mainstream music. One of the main reasons I was drawn to music in the first place was that it didn't speak for my parent's generation and caused a great deal of offence (even if it was just about someone's hair or their mode of dress).

In today's world of criminal bankers, terror threats, right-wing politics and continuing inequality, where are the mainstream artists who are prepared to say something daring or to be openly critical or offensive? Elvis, Chuck Berry, Marvin Gaye, The Beatles/Stones, Airplane, Marley, Pistols etc all had their moments – however naïve they might seem at times. The Jubilee concert only underlined how establishment the whole thing has become – sad days indeed!

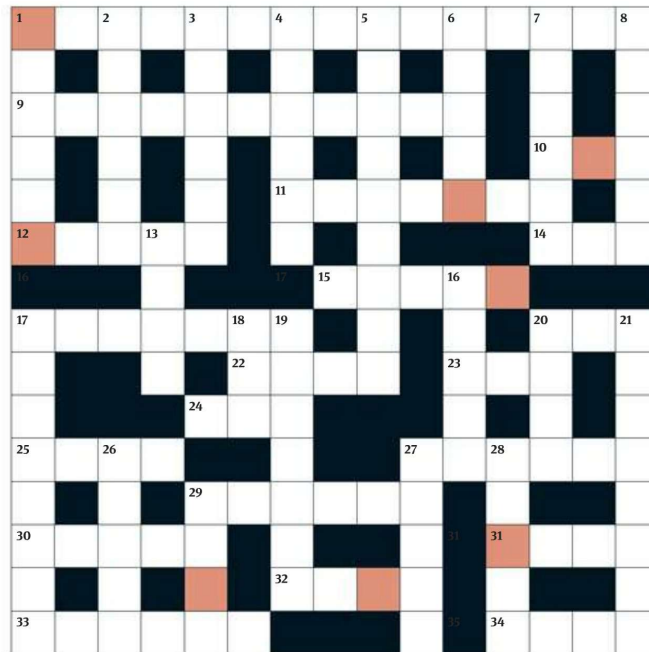
**Hugh Jones, Dunblane, Scotland**

## PATTI HAS THE POWER

Thank you for your recent interview with Patti Smith. I discovered Patti just this year in an interview on *CBS Sunday Morning*. I am a year younger than her. She was totally off my radar way back when. I was listening to Crosby, Stills & Nash. I am amazed by this phenomenon... like that passion of first love. But this is deeper, a connection as deep as human consciousness itself. I have written to President Obama and requested he employ Patti to write the poem for his 2013 inauguration. I pray she will travel further into the USA with her mission of *Banga*.

I'm listening to it constantly. Send her my love.

**Joan Son, via email**  
We will, and let us know if you hear back from Obama, Joan. He can be a bit slow. - Allan



### HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by The Clash. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut August 2012 Xword Comp, 9th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: August 23, 2012. This competition is only open to European residents.

### ACROSS

- 1+17D** And on the seventh day...  
"I can hear music, sweet sweet music"  
(5-3-3-4-3-5)  
**9** "Forget what we're told before we get too old", 2006 (7-4)  
**10** "Listen to the silence, let it ring on/Eyes, dark grey lenses, frightened of the \_\_\_\_", Joy Division, "Transmission" (3)  
**11** "Your looks intoxicate me, even though your folks hate me", 1968 (7)  
**12+33A** "Just about to flip your mind, just about to trip your mind", 1966 (5-2-4)  
**14** Elton's label for his early albums (1-1-1)  
**15+26D** Jamaican singer whose hits include "Wonderful World, Beautiful People" (5-5)  
**17+27D** That ELO/Steps remix is for Can's new album (3-4-5)  
**20** Janis \_\_\_\_, Grammy Award-winner for her "At Seventeen" (3)  
**22** (See 4 down)  
**23** (See 2 down)  
**24** A bit of a busy day with Pink Floyd (3)  
**25** (See 16 down)  
**27** Xmal Deuschland album in cost adjustment (6)  
**29** Dead Kennedys frontman with name of a short-lived African state (6)  
**30** REM's arrangement of Verdi (5)  
**31+34A** US singer-songwriter who went "Walking In Memphis" (4-4)  
**32** Your comfort zone is where this Procol Harum album is at (4)  
**33** (See 12 across)  
**34** (See 31 across)

### DOWN

- 1** Giant Giant Sand's album tells us where they're coming from (6)  
**2+23A** Moving Alan among the new stuff from Joe Walsh (6-3)  
**3** Band that featured Jay Ferguson (6)  
**4+22A** Had Steve Winwood's performance of this song once been a bit short on passion? (6-4)  
**5** "Well, how do you do, Private William McBride/Doyou mind if I sit here down by your \_\_\_\_?", The Men They Couldn't Hang, "The Green Fields Of France" (9)  
**6** Pet Shop Boys album of which there have been four incarnations (5)  
**7+19D** Did Roger Waters listen to Killing Joke before recording? (6-2-5)  
**8** He's had a *Relapse* and a *Recovery* (6)  
**13** Grunge rockers who are *Pretty On The Inside* (4)  
**16+25A** Mock Rambo for turning up with a Bill Haley disc (5-4)  
**17** (See 1 across)  
**18** Massive Attack carried out craftily (3)  
**19** (See 7 down)  
**20** Last year Ciaran Gribbin became lead singer for this band (4)  
**21** Not a single person is able to get this Marillion single (2-3-3)  
**26** (See 15 across)  
**27** (See 17 across)  
**28** "I'm a hapless romantic/St-t-tuttering p-poet, just call me a tragic \_\_\_\_", Extreme (5)  
**29** Lou \_\_\_\_, had 1999 No 1 with "Mambo No 5" (4)

### ANSWERS: TAKE 182

**ACROSS** 1+21D By Popular Request, 6 Bitch, 9 Telegram Sam, 11 Stray, 12 Ellison, 13 Air, 15 Dumb Waiters, 19 Adele, 20 Strangeland, 23 E.S.P., 27 What, 30 Hut, 31 Ice, 32

Soldier, 33 Cut, 34+29D Eat The Rich, 35 Ohio.

**DOWN** 1+22D Both Sides Now, 2 Pilgrim, 3+10A Peggy Sue, 4+8D Leave Home, 5 Resolve, 6 Bombs, 7 The Snake, 14 Reet Petite, 16 Win,

17+26D Talk Talk, 18 Sad, 23 Ethics, 24 Smile, 25+24A It's Oh So Quiet, 28 Harpo.

**HIDDEN ANSWER**  
"Kimberly"

**Compiled by**  
Trevor Hungerford

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## MY LIFE IN MUSIC

# Grizzly Bear

Ed Droste's favourite records. Involves "strong, wild females" and the "indie-rock dreamboat with attitude"...

PAUL SIMON  
GRACELAND



### The soundtrack to my childhood

#### Graceland

Paul Simon 1986

This was the album that the parents of everyone I knew growing up had in their car. I heard it 1,000 times on cassette, on the way to and back from school – so much

so that it's ingrained in my mind and I know every song perfectly. We performed with Paul Simon at Brooklyn Academy Of Music in 2008, and did total reinventions of two songs of his, so it came full circle.



### The album that spoke to me as a teen

#### Exile In Guyville

Liz Phair 1993

This was the defining album of my teen years; I was obsessed with Liz Phair to the point where I'd buy demos on tape from people at gigs. I love her confessional

stance, her frank lyrics and her gruff, gravelly voice. And her song structures on this were really interesting. She's evolved into something completely different now, but for me, this album stands the test of time.



### My introduction to independent music

#### Surfer Rosa

Pixies 1988

My Scottish cousin first introduced me to Pixies when she was visiting for Christmas and I was like, "This is amazing." Then I bought every single album they'd recorded.

I'm obsessed with Kim Deal and was a major Breeders fan, but with Pixies it's the combination of her and Frank Black. They were so fresh to my ears then and snapped me out of just listening to whatever was on the radio.



### The record that popped my R&B cherry

#### Supa Dupa Fly

Missy Elliott 1997

Perhaps my favourite R&B album of all time, along with Aaliyah's *One In A Million*, but *Supa Dupa Fly* doesn't have a weak song on it, and I still listen to it regularly.

There's something about it that makes me happy through and through. Missy's the one who got me into R&B and it's such a big part of my life now. Her melodies are amazing and Timbaland's production is insane.



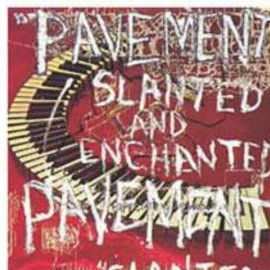
### My all-time musical heroine

#### Rumours

Fleetwood Mac 1976

I'm into strong, wild, female personalities in the music world and I'm obsessed with Stevie Nicks. I want to have dinner with her – that's my life-long goal. I went through

quite a long electronic phase, but in a weird way my bandmates brought me back to this, because they're fans, too, and would put it on, on the road. I love the beautiful harmonies on this album. It's undeniably amazing.



### My favourite Pavement album

#### Slanted And Enchanted

Pavement 1992

I love *Wowee Zowee* and *Crooked Rain*, *Crooked Rain*, too, but this is the first one I got. It's weird in that it's very discordant at times and Stephen Malkmus' voice can be

vaguely out of tune, but it's still catchy and intelligent and I loved his nonsensical lyrics. Plus, I think I had a little bit of a crush on him when I was a teenager. He was the indie-rock dreamboat with attitude.



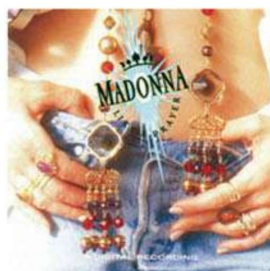
### The album that got me through a hard time

#### Vespertine

Björk 2001

I'm a huge Björk fan, but this struck an emotional chord in a way that not a lot of albums do. It was just after 9/11, I was pretty new to the city and going through a

lot of stuff in my life and *Vespertine* was the answer to everything. It's so beautiful and slow-moving and it really helped me get through things. Especially "Cocoon"; I could listen to that over and over.



### An enduring pop crush

#### Like A Prayer

Madonna 1989

Up until the age of 11 or 12, I just listened to the radio and so I was a very big Madonna fan. I remember buying this single and listening to it over and over on my yellow

Sony Walkman, just pressing repeat. I love her pop, I love her persona and I think what really sealed the Madonna deal was that I got to see her on the *Blonde Ambition* Tour.

The fourth *Grizzly Bear* album, *Shields*, will be released by Warp Records on September 17

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