

"From every dingy basement on every dingy street/Every dragging handclap over every dragging beat"

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WE WERE
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"You don't picture God with
barbecue stains on his shirt"

AND... **SLINT**

**SMASHING
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Are we rolling?

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Mark Lanegan



"The Sam Peckinpah of rock'n'roll", Warren Zevon

A NUMBER OF THOUGHTFUL readers have written recently to remind me it will be the 10th anniversary in September of Warren Zevon's death, not that I was likely to forget. I came slowly to his music, but then fell hard for it, Warren quickly occupying a high-ranking place in my personal pantheon, up there with the more frequently acknowledged greats of American songwriting.

I actually have Peter Buck to thank for turning me on to him. In June 1985, I was in Athens to interview REM for a *Melody Maker* cover story, ahead of the release of *Fables Of The Reconstruction*. We were at a night shoot for a video the band were filming for "Can't Get There From Here". It was about 3am. Michael Stipe was asleep in a ditch. The film crew were packing up their gear. Mike Mills and Bill Berry had just split. Buck, meanwhile, was knocking back a beer and telling me, among other things, that in a couple of days, he, Bill and Mike would be on their way to Los Angeles to record an album with a singer-songwriter named Warren Zevon, who at the time was managed by an old college friend of Peter's, Andrew Slater.

Warren Zevon! I was frankly shocked. At the time, Zevon for me was part of a discredited West Coast culture of cocaine and excess, self-regarding balladry and narcissistic wimpery, the kind of bollocks punk was meant to have killed off. I had a vague memory of seeing him, perhaps 10 years earlier, supporting Jackson Browne at London's New Victoria Theatre. The only song I really knew of his was "Werewolves Of London", which I took to be a novelty number.

Anyway, Peter listened to me rant and listens some more when I start ranting again, getting a second wind after becoming momentarily breathless.

"Allan," Buck said then. "Just listen to the fucking records and get back to me."

I told him I would and eventually did. Back in London, I began to track down Zevon's back catalogue. There wasn't much of it – just six albums at the time since his 1969 debut, *Wanted Dead Or Alive*. It took a few weeks but I found copies

of Warren Zevon (1976), *Excitable Boy* (1978), *Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School* (1980) and *The Envoy* (1982). There was no sign anywhere, however, of his 1980 live album, *Stand In The Fire*, which I eventually discover, years later, in a second-hand store on Polk Street in San Francisco.

What I heard fair blew my mind. I had been expecting the winsome warbling of some flaxen-haired minstrel, and here was this apparent cross between Randy Newman and Lee Marvin – a sardonic songwriting genius with a legendary taste for vodka, guns and drugs. His talent, I discovered, was matched only by a capacity for self-destruction that had provoked one critic to describe him as "the Sam Peckinpah of rock'n'roll", and it didn't take long to find out why. Spread across those four albums were some of the most amazing songs I'd ever heard – toxic epics about headless machine-gunners, mercenaries, murder, Mexican revolutionaries, rough sex, rape, necrophilia, Elvis, baseball, heroin, heartbreak, incestuous hillbillies and hard-drinking losers.

I was hooked on them, as I would be on the albums that followed – among them the record he'd made with REM, one of his best, *Sentimental Hygiene*. There was a period when he didn't record, but he was prolific towards the end, even making his masterpiece, *The Wind*, as he was dying.

The only time I met him was in September 1992, after a fantastic show at The Town & Country in Kentish Town. We made small talk in a dimly lit backstage corridor, Warren as well groomed as a Mafia don, politely listening to my fanboy blather. I mentioned that my wife, Stephanie, also a fan, had been looking forward to seeing him, but was ill at home. Would he sign something for her?

"Let's do it," he said. I gave him my ticket. He held it against the wall and started writing.

"Is it terminal?" he asked.

What?

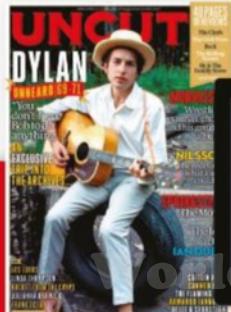
"Your wife is ill," he reminded me. "Has she got anything terminal?"

Uh, no... Why?

"Because I was just about to write 'Get well soon', and I didn't want to sound facetious," he said, and with an unforgettable smile and a brisk handshake he was gone.

Mark Lanegan

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring PADDY McALOON | JOHN FAHEY | SLINT | FACTORY FLOOR



Psychodandies!

THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN, MY BLOODY VALENTINE, and the 1980s indie massive's revolt into style

NOVEMBER 23, 1984. The Jesus And Mary Chain are playing their third London show, at The Ambulance Station on the Old Kent Rd, and only their fourth show anywhere. Like so many of the band's early gigs, it is a fractious affair. The normally shy Jim Reid (pictured on the far right, in front of a maliciously grinning Bobby Gillespie) is moved, at one point, to address the crowd. "We fucking hate you," he says. "We despise you. You are fucking shit. Where were you six months ago, you fucking cunts?"

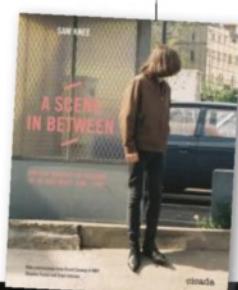
Nearly 30 years on, that audience appears to be more loyal and resilient than most people – including, one suspects, Jim Reid – would have anticipated. In *A Scene In Between*, a new book with the subtitle "Tripping Through The Fashions Of UK Indie Music 1980-1988", author Sam Knee moves swiftly through The Jesus And Mary Chain's confrontational attitude, the chaos and the "overwhelming din", and grapples with his core subject; style, in JAMC's case their "60s beat via Subway Sect threads", a look that he perceives as being influenced by Jürgen Vollmer's early '60s

photographs of rockers and "scruffy early modernists". "I think the jumpers worn by Jim Reid and Douglas Hart on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* were made by my mother," reveals Michael Kerr, of another Kilbide band on Creation, Meat Whiplash.

Like the *Scared To Get Happy* 5CD boxset released earlier this summer, *A Scene In Between* is part of a trend to put the '80s British indie movement into a serious cultural context. Knee is an enduring connoisseur of "charity shop chic, anoraks, bowlcut hairdos, leather trousers, stripey tees" and a world where Stephen Pastel is the ultimate fashion icon, and his research has uncovered a wealth of excellent pictures. The shot of Kevin Shields (above left), for instance, is from the very first My Bloody Valentine gig, on August 17, 1983, in Dublin.

There is, too, a 1984 postcard from Morrissey to Innis McAllister, a photographer, that captures the essence of the project. "I was delighted with the photos," writes Morrissey. "The shirt came out well which, of course, is all that matters."

A Scene In Between by Sam Knee is published by Cicada Books in October



The Jesus And Mary Chain play The Ambulance Station, Old Kent Road, November 23, 1984. Inset: Kevin Shields at the first MBV gig, Dublin, August 17, 1983



A QUICK ONE

► The battle for Black Flag looks to be heading to the courts. Co-founder Greg Ginn, now touring with his own iteration of Black Flag, has filed a lawsuit against former bandmates Keith Morris, Dez Cadena, Chuck Dukowski and Bill Stevenson – now performing as Flag – for alleged copyright infringement. Henry Rollins, who is in neither of the two BF reunion groups, is also named in the suit.

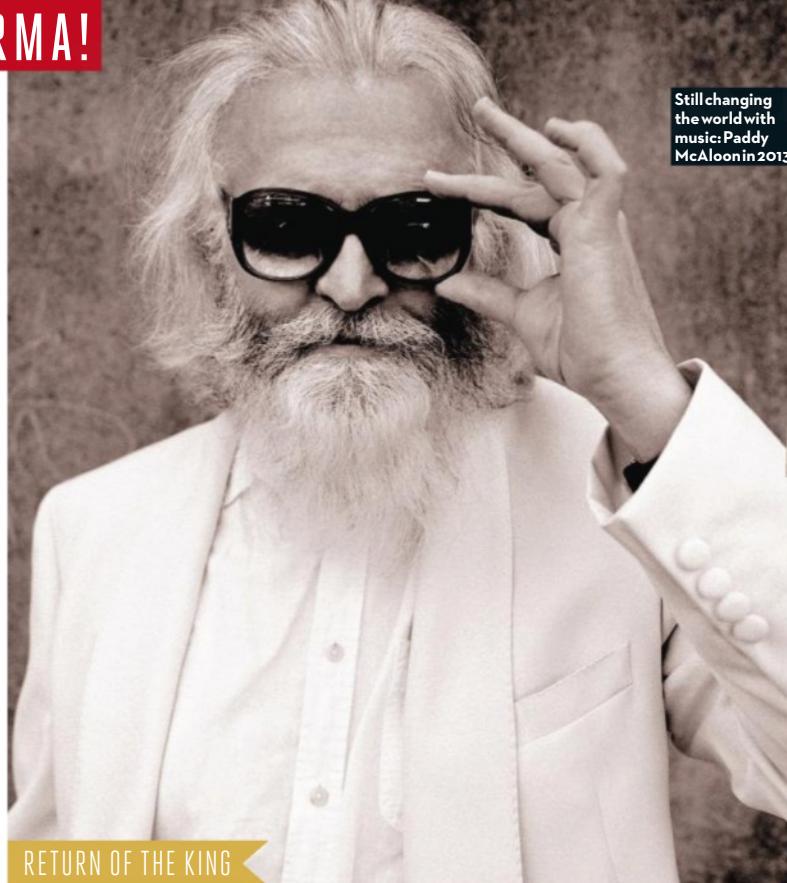
► This month's obligatory Dylan story: London's National Portrait Gallery is hosting an exhibition of the noted artist's pastel portraits. **Bob Dylan: Face Value** continues until Jan 5, 2014.

► Never averse to a grand project, **The National's** Aaron and Bryce Dessner are cooking up another comp for the Red Hot AIDS-awareness charity. This one consists of Grateful Dead covers, and artists already confirmed include Vampire Weekend, Bon Iver and Kurt Vile. "Jerry Garcia," says Bryce, "was a total cat."

► Swift release news: **Uncut** faves **Midlake** and **White Denim** have new LPs imminent: Midlake's *Antiphon* on Nov 4; White Denim's *Corsicana Lemonade* the very same day.

► Bruce Springsteen has remixed and remastered his 4CD *Tracks* set of rarities, outtakes, and demos for a Sept 30 reissue.

► Oh, and please drop by the ever-expanding **uncut.co.uk** for daily news, reviews and classic features from the archives...



Still changing the world with music: Paddy McAloon in 2013



McAloon, 56, has had little luck with his health. In the late '90s, he was nearly blinded by the detachment of both retinas, an experience which tangentially inspired 2003's largely instrumental solo album *I Trawl The Megahertz* (he ended up listening to a lot of radio). Last year, just before beginning work on *Crimson/Red*, which he recorded at home between October and December, he had cataracts removed from his eyes. McAloon relates these travails without self-pity: he is, as ever, an invigorating onslaught of ebullient good cheer. A certain wistfulness descends only when he admits that Prefab Sprout aren't really a band any more.

"There's nobody else playing on *Crimson/Red*," he says, "which is a great sadness to me. I never intentionally wound the whole thing up. But my hearing wouldn't allow me to direct other people playing real instruments, and it's too expensive. Martin [McAloon, Paddy's brother and Prefabs co-founder] has a day job now. He's very good about me using the name. But it isn't ideal."

Asked if there is a defining motif to *Crimson/Red*, McAloon enthuses about strophic form, a style of songwriting in which the choruses have the same music as the verses, or don't really appear at all.

"Songs where you just pick up a guitar and tell a story," he says. "You don't have to invest much meaning, as long as you have a narrative – they're the musical equivalent of a page-turner. There's a few on the album. 'The Best Jewel Thief In The World', 'Devil Came A Calling', 'The Songs Of Danny Galway', which is a portrait of Jimmy Webb, 'Mysterious', which is about Bob Dylan."

McAloon says that, on balance, he rates *Crimson/Red* "fairly highly", and so he should: for all the years that separate them, it shares the incandescent joy at the possibilities of pop that defined the prime Prefabs LPs: *Steve McQueen, From Langley Park To Memphis, Jordan: The Comeback*.

And will he ever finish those lost albums? "I will," he laughs, "but I don't feel like it at the moment. I know how to finish them off, but it feels like office work, like adding up your receipts. For me, the fun is the writing – that's the real spark, the beauty of the whole thing."

ANDREW MUELLER

Crimson/Red is released on October 7 on Icebreaker Records

'I would have happily given it all up for a night's sleep'

The indomitable PADDY McALOON launches PREFAB SPROUT: The Comeback

OVER THE PAST couple of decades, a legend has gathered around Paddy McAloon. It whispers of a sprawling catalogue of unfinished and/or unreleased masterpieces piled up in his County Durham home studio, of which the world is being deprived by McAloon's obsessive perfectionism and/or more prosaic financial realities. These thwarted magnum opuses are said to include a historiography called 'Earth: The Story So Far', a suite inspired by Michael Jackson, and others of which little is known but their titles; 'Zero Attention Span', 'Enter The Trumpets', 'The Atomic Hymnbook', 'Doomed Poets Vol 1'.

Is *Crimson/Red*, the new Prefab Sprout album, plucked from this mythical trove?

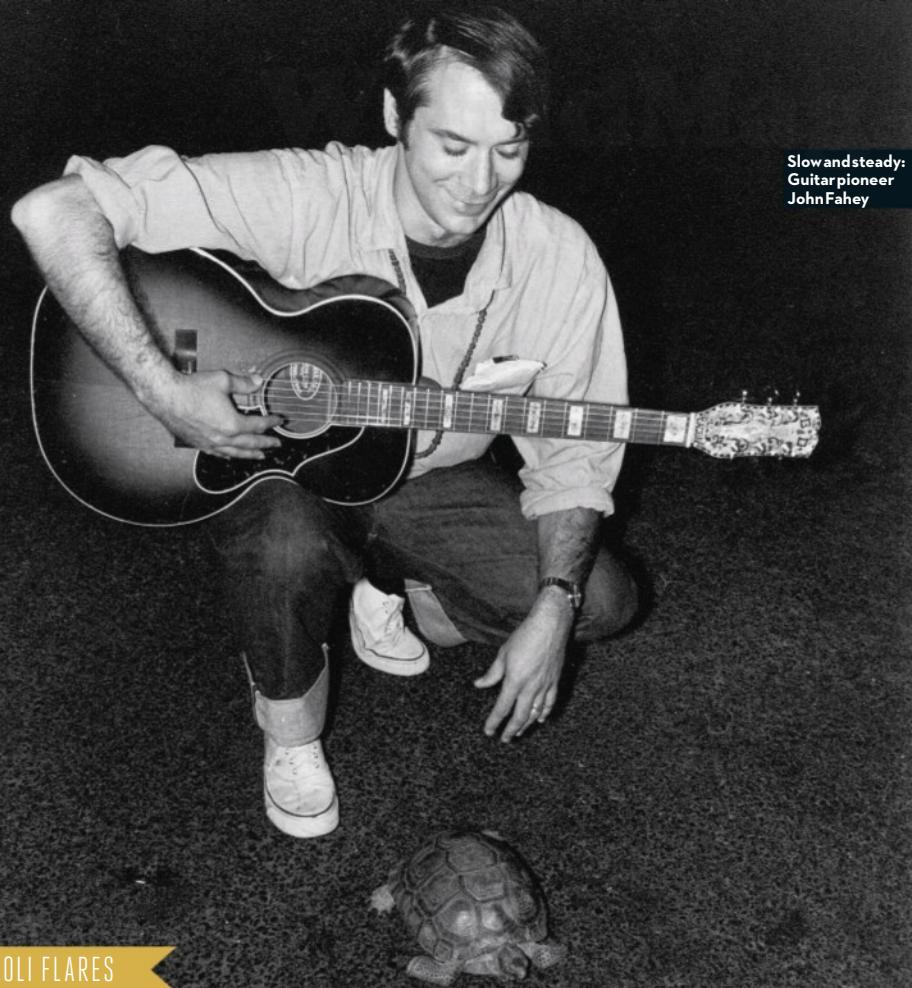
"It's not," says McAloon. "Some of the songs, like 'The Old Magician', were intended for a record called '20th Century Magic', but I missed the deadline. Someone from [record label] Icebreaker asked if it was a new or old record, and I didn't know what to say. It's new if no-one's heard it. The most recent song is 'Billy', from about two years ago, there's some from as far back as 1997, and a lot from 2004-'05, just before my hearing disaster."

There are reasons why *Crimson/Red* is only the third 21st-Century Prefab Sprout album (and 2009's *Let's Change The World With Music* was actually recorded in 1992). In 2006, McAloon was struck by overwhelming tinnitus.

"Either a blood vessel burst, or it was viral damage," he explains. "Something happens in my right ear where bass frequencies disappear, so when I work on

"There's no-one else playing on *Crimson/Red*, which is a great sadness to me"

low-range things I have to shift them to a higher octave so I can hear them. It's more or less manageable now, but I had a terrible six months when the noises in my head just wouldn't switch off. There was a point where I would have happily given it all up, any talent I might have, for a night's sleep. And my three daughters had to learn to be quiet around me, which is a terrible thing for children to have to do."



Slow and steady:
Guitar pioneer
John Fahey

SOLI FLARES

The Resurrection Of Blind Joe Death

Coming soon... a film about JOHN FAHEY. "The folk guitar equivalent of William Burroughs," says Pete Townshend

TO HEAR PETE Townshend talk about him, as he does in a new documentary film to be shown on BBC4, one would think that music fans already know a great deal about the wayward, brilliant career of John Fahey.

"He seemed to be the folk guitar equivalent of William Burroughs or Charles Bukowski," says Townshend in the film, *In Search Of Blind Joe Death – The Saga Of John Fahey*. "He had that

powerful thing we look for in American writers and artists. He created a new language."

As the film explores, Fahey's music (much of it released on Takoma, his own record label) expanded immeasurably the potential for the guitar as an emotional solo instrument, along the way touching on folk, country blues, *musique concrète*, Indian and Brazilian music, even noise – yet never constrained by any one for long.

Fahey's policy didn't bring him riches (before he died in 2001, at 61, he'd been living in an Oregon motel room), but it would be a mistake, says filmmaker James Cullingham, to skew his narrative – a childhood scarred by abuse; problems with alcohol and prescription drugs – towards tragedy. "He was an imp and a great kidder," says Cullingham. "He loved roots music, but refused to become a fetishist about it. He recovered the work of African-American musical geniuses, but treated them as human individuals, not as icons. In that regard, he loved to deflate the folk and civil rights movements. He believed in music and resented attempts to mix it with political debate."

Cullingham met Fahey in Toronto in 1982, and made a doc about him for Canadian public radio, interviewing Fahey as he restrung his guitar prior to playing a packed-out club set, afterwards making dinner for Fahey and his wife. Fahey and Cullingham stayed in touch for several years. In 2009, Cullingham was astonished no-one had yet filmed a Fahey doc. Here, after all, was a man whose expansive music was bolstered by an equally rich personal mythology. "He loved turtles and the natural world," says Cullingham, "and I think saw them as a source of inspiration and comfort. He studied religions, mythology, the origins of psychoanalysis. He knew a staggering amount about railway history and rivers. He could write entertainingly about such topics."

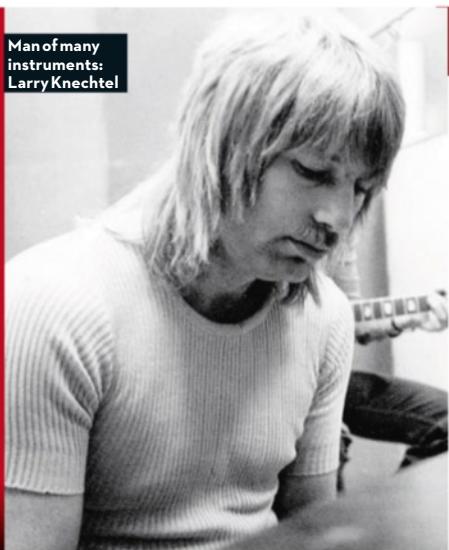
Though it is his classic 1960s recordings for Takoma that are most revered, Fahey continued to reinvent his music, collaborating towards the end of his life with underground musicians like the No-Neck Blues Band. He even began painting.

"I'd suggest the last five years of his life were among his most productive," says Cullingham, "and according to his closest friends he was as funny and zany as ever. He forged on as an artist while renouncing many material comforts."

One of the many nice moments in the film is of Fahey playing live on a local TV station's guitar show in the late '60s. During a slightly awkward but amusing interview, the presenter tells Fahey her thoughts on his playing. "You don't sound like anybody," she says. Fahey smirks. "Good." JOHN ROBINSON

In Search Of Blind Joe Death – The Saga Of John Fahey plays at various locations in the US and Canada and will be shown on BBC4 in late Nov or early Dec. Check www.johnfaheyfilm.com or follow @johnfaheyfilm on Twitter for further information

Man of many instruments:
Larry Knechtel



AND ON BASS & KEYBOARDS... LARRY KNECHTEL

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

► Larry Knechtel originally played bass in Duane Eddy's The Rebels, before working as a pianist for Phil Spector. As part of the Wrecking Crew, he played piano on Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water"; organ on The Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations", "God Only Knows" and "Wouldn't It Be Nice"; bass on The Byrds' "Mr Tambourine Man", The Doors' debut LP and Elvis' 1968 comeback TV special; harmonica for Paul Simon and David Gates. In 1971 he joined Bread



before later playing with Neil Diamond, Dixie Chicks and Elvis Costello. He died in 2009, aged 69.

KEY SESSIONS: Phil Spector's *A Christmas Gift For You*, Jan & Dean's "Surf City", The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, The Monkees' *More Of The Monkees*, Harry Nilsson's *Aerial Ballet*, John Phillips' *John, The Wolf King Of LA*, The Byrds' *Byrdmaniax*, Dory Previn's *Mythical Kings And Iguanas*, Jerry Garcia's *Reflections*, Townes Van Zandt's *A Far Cry From Dead*. PHIL KING



WEB OF SOUND

The quarry men: Slint on the cover of *Spiderland* – (l-r) Todd Brashear, Britt Walford, David McMahan, and David Pajo

'We were going through an emotional tornado!'

SLINT reform for one final time at the last All Tomorrow's Parties festival

FEW RECORDS OF the 1990s have been as mythologised as Slint's *Spiderland*. The second and final album by a group of four young men from Louisville, Kentucky, it has since found its place in the canon as the foundation stone of post-rock, its influence discernible in groups such as Mogwai and Godspeed You! Black Emperor.

For all this, though, there's an enigma at the heart of these songs that encourages deep interpretation. One online essay suggests *Spiderland* is about our experience of sleep, its fractured narratives and irregular time signatures reflective of the state of dreaming. Another posits *Spiderland*'s tales of crumbling fairgrounds and vampire princes as an attempt to render the American Gothic in song.

The cover, picturing the group up to their necks in a quarry lake, was shot by Will Oldham – later to become Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, then just a classmate of singer-guitarist Brian McMahan and drummer Britt Walford at J Graham Brown, a public school in downtown Louisville. The inner sleeve, meanwhile, reached out to "interested female vocalists", a call reputedly answered by a young Polly Jean Harvey. But by the time of the album's release in March 1991, Slint had broken up, and *Spiderland* was only saved from obscurity by the patronage of a few believers. Steve Albini, who recorded Slint's 1989 debut *Tweez*, reviewed it in *Melody Maker*, calling it "flawless" and signing off with the words: "Ten Fucking Stars."

"I never thought any of these reunions would happen," says guitarist David Pajo, who has since passed through the ranks of Tortoise, Stereolab,

Billy Corgan's Zwan and Interpol, and is currently touring keyboardist in Yeah Yeah Yeahs. The three other members of Slint – McMahan, Walford and bassist Todd Brashear – have all since retired from professional music, but an offer from UK concert promoters All Tomorrow's Parties saw them return for a run of shows in 2005; a chance to show off this strange, haunted music to the world for the first time.

"We were pretty over the top about trying to make it sound like the record, so we set out to recreate our '80s gear, right down to the same brand of guitar strings," says Pajo. "It's pretty easy to find on eBay – just this stuff nobody wants." After the 2005 shows, they sold their equipment, only to buy it back in 2007. "During those dates, we'd talked about digging up old stuff, putting together a new album," says Pajo. "But at some point in the tour, one of us pulled the plug and it was over. And now we're starting from nothing again."

Slint are back to headline All Tomorrow's Parties' End Of An Era Part 2 alongside Mogwai and another reformed group, drone-rockers Loop. "I've tried to get Loop to play every single ATP," says organiser Barry Hogan. "It's always been guided by the principle, wouldn't it be good to put on a festival full of bands you like? So I've been pulling out records from my collection over the years, and asking those people to do it. I think some bands will tell you I'm quite persistent."

"We were trying to make it sound like the record – right down to the same brand of guitar strings!"

Pajo reflects on the step up that Slint took between the formative *Tweez* and the fully realised *Spiderland*. Even before Slint, in his teenage metal band Maurice, a certain technicality was evident: "We were into weird time signatures, we'd repeat stuff 13-and-a-half times, just to keep us on our toes." But *Spiderland*, the first album to be written with McMahan's brooding vocals, demonstrated a new breadth of influence. "All of us were getting out of the punk thing," says Pajo. "We were into country, folk, Neil Young. You can hear some Leonard Cohen in there, the way he'll be singing of his girlfriend and he'll call her his 'queen'..."

For all its dreaminess, *Spiderland* is shot through with an unmistakable intensity. Rumours persist that, following the recording, one or more of the band ended up in a mental health institution. "There is some truth in those rumours," says Pajo, cautiously. "For all of us, it was a pretty difficult time period. Brian doing the vocals... it was emotionally charged. I don't want to talk about anything that someone doesn't want to talk about. But whatever emotional tornado we were going through, it really came out in the songs."

"There's so many bands Slint have influenced who have gone on to do amazing things," says Hogan. "The guys have always talked about doing one farewell set, so I guess this will be it."

Hearing Pajo talk about Slint, though, you wonder if this really can be the end.

A documentary by Lance

Bangs, *Breadcrumb Trail*, is in the works, and tantalisingly, there may be unheard music to come. "When we got back together in 1991, we recorded a few songs," he says. "The songs on *Tweez* and *Spiderland*, we'd tuned the E string down to D. But these others, we tuned the E up to F-sharp. It was some cool-sounding stuff, but it never saw the light of day. So we need to see if there's anything there." LOUIS PATTISON

Slint play ATP – End Of An Era Part 2, Pontins Camber Sands Holiday Park, Nov 29-Dec 1

FACTORY FLOOR

Recommended this month: London's disciplined new practitioners of death disco

TO SAY THAT Factory Floor aren't tones to rush things is something of an understatement. "We'd run for perhaps six hours in one day on the same Arp idea," admits guitarist and vocalist Nik Colk Void of their studio MO, "and then we'd take those recordings and find the section where we're really locking in and there's something interesting happening. It does drive us a bit mad, to be honest."

Small wonder, then, that the cultish London trio – who assumed their current shape in 2010 and have released a clutch of singles and EPs that meld minimal techno with death disco, post-industrial punk and avant-garde noise – are only now releasing their first full-length. *Factory Floor* is a thrillingly hypnotic, hyper-modern record that seems to strip dance music down to its component parts and discard all decoration, focusing instead on rhythm, mass and velocity. It's cerebral and ravey.

Void admits that sonic discipline is important to her and partners Dominic Butler (electronics, synths) and Gabe Gurnsey (drums). "We want to get it down to an honest sound, so I'd manipulate my guitars as I was recording them and then try and record that according to what it sounds like, as opposed to putting them through any computer plug-in."

Equally as important, though, is discovery, which is why Factory Floor decided to produce the LP themselves (in the past, they've worked with New Order's Stephen Morris, among others). Says Void, "The thing we enjoy most about making a record is the experimentation

with each of our own parts, and to get to what we want, it takes quite a lot of time to manipulate different set-ups and sounds. We didn't want to lose that investigative approach, and if you ask someone else to do it for you, you don't stumble across creative accidents."

The motherlode of electronic music history has necessarily informed their debut, but the band have always been conscious of the need to forge their own sound. "The great thing about meeting each other was our different influences," Void says, "so we've been able to watch each other's backs. Gabe comes from a dance-oriented background and I come from the avant-noise angle, so if he did something I'd think was a bit too clichéd, I'd say, 'That's not going in!' And he'd say the same to me, regarding noise."

The three work hard and are keen collaborators; they've built their own studio, Random Colours, in a north London warehouse and are currently artists-in-residence at the ICA. Both Gurnsey and Void have done remix work for other bands, Void has released an album with half of Throbbing Gristle as Carter Tutti Void, and the band have also cut an EP with NY composer Peter

Gordon. For now, though, the focus is on their album. "Live, we'd like a situation where we'd have quadraphonic sound," states Void, "so the audience is immersed in the volume. But who knows what's going to happen when we take this album out live? I think it's going to take on another form of its own." **SHARON O'CONNELL**

Factory Floor is released by DFA on September 9



THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

THE WATERBOYS

Fisherman's Box EMI

Mike Scott's epic journey to the soul of Irish music, meticulously reconstructed across seven CDs.

MARK KOZELEK & DESERTSHORE

Mark Kozelek & Desertshore

CALDO VERDE

Third sterling Kozelek effort of 2013. Involves a full band, sundry deaths and the punchline "I hate Nels Cline".

JONATHAN WILSON

Fanfare BELLA UNION

LA renaissance man attempts his own *Pacific Ocean Blue*, with help from Graham Nash, David Crosby, Jackson Browne, the Heartbreakers and Roy Harper.

KELLEY STOLTZ

Double Exposure THIRD MAN

San Fran's terrific, unsung pop craftsman returns. Ultra-catchy garage-baroque that could give Kurt Vile a run for his money.

WILLIAM ONYEABOR

World Psychedelic Classics 5: Who

Is William Onyeabor? LUAKABOP

Often hyped, rarely heard: the remarkable grooves (1978-1985) of a Nigerian mystery man finally receive a proper release.

CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER

Blood-Drums GRAUTAG

Long-overdue return from Tim Gane and one-time Stereolab drummer Joe Dilworth, two-thirds of a synth power trio who recall Add N To (X).

PJ HARVEY

Shaker Aamer ISLAND

Peej breaks her silence with an impassioned song for the last UK detainee in Gitmo. Very much in *Let England Shake* mode.



FERAL OHMS

Living Junkyard

VALLEY KING

In the zone for the upcoming Comets On Fire reunion, Ethan Miller kicks out the jams with another configuration of Bay Area psych-punks.

OMAR SOULEYMAN

Wenu Wenu RIBBON

Characteristically frenzied dancefloor action from the Syrian cult hero, given a little extra polish this time by producer Four Tet.

RONNIE LANE

One For The Road ISLAND

Among other things, work on our forthcoming Small Faces/Faces *Ultimate Music Guide* has prompted a massive Ronnie Lane binge. A favourite, maybe?

For regular updates, check our blogs at www.uncut.co.uk and follow @JohnRMulvey on Twitter

FREE
CD!

FILL HER UP JACKO!

Your guide to
this month's
free CD

1 ROY HARPER

Time Is Temporary

An auspicious comeback to kick things off this month. The indomitable Harper's *Man & Myth* is our Album Of The Month (see p57), and "Time Is Temporary" elegantly illustrates why his first LP in 13 years might also be one of his best. The notably empathetic production comes from LA's new king of the canyons, Jonathan Wilson.



Neko
Case

2 NEKO CASE

Man

Now based on a Vermont ranch, Case has been through a tough time these past few years (see review p76), but you wouldn't necessarily know it from "Man"; a characteristically witty, resilient examination of gender politics set to galloping and ornate powerpop.

3 PROMISED LAND

SOUND

River No More

The debut album from this youthful Nashville quartet has rarely been far from the office stereo these past few weeks. Here, their country-tinged garage rock takes a twanging detour into the sort of Southern States psych originally minted by the 13th Floor Elevators.

4 CALIFONE

Frosted Tips

Tim Rutili's Califone have long worked in Chicago as a sort of underground analogue to Wilco. On this standout from their recent *Stitches* LP, the artful glitches and mutters coalesce into something new for them – a punchy pop song, albeit one still invested with all their discreet craftsmanship.

5 LAURA VEIRS

America

Laura Veirs is not the first pregnant woman to worry about the world that awaits her children, but few in

recent memory have expressed that anxiety with such forceful eloquence as she does on "America". From her ninth, predominantly rockier album, *Warp And Weft*.

6 SURF CITY

It's A Common Life

After the Antipodean glut on last month's *Uncut* CD, Surf City are that continent's only representatives this time round. Good ones, though, especially if you're partial to the sort of buzzing indie-pop released by their Kiwi antecedents on Flying Nun back in the 1980s.

7 THE ICARUS LINE

City Job

Initially, this cut from the LA band's fifth LP seems uncharacteristically restrained. But while "City Job" avoids the shitting punk chaos of their live shows, its churning, gothic build finds The Icarus Line's intensity given a new and ruthless focus. Old At The Drive-In fans should enjoy.

8 BELLE ADAIR

Golden Days

A distinctly soulful kind of roots music is usually associated with Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Newcomers Belle Adair, however, are skilful enough to transcend the hometown stereotypes: "Golden Days" from their debut, *The Brave And The Blue*, turns out to be a honeyed jangle in the traditions of Tom Petty and Teenage Fanclub.

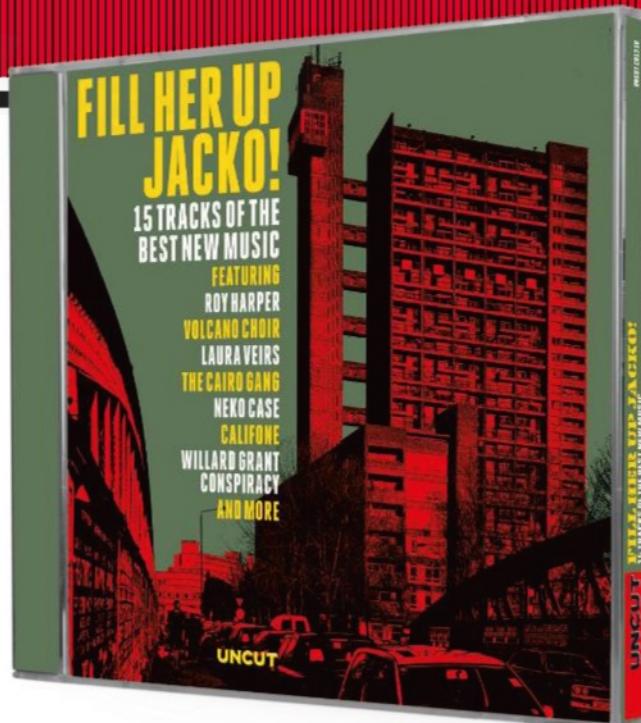
9 VOLCANO CHOIR

Comrade

No *Uncut* comp in 2013 is seemingly



WorldMags.net



complete without a Justin Vernon-related track. This month, he's back collaborating with Collections Of Colonies Of Bees for the second Volcano Choir LP, which reconciles the post-rock experiments of their 2009 debut with the anthemic grandeur of *Bon Iver, Bon Iver*.

10 ISRAEL NASH

Gripka Mansions

It'd be a conspicuous dereliction of duty if we failed to point out that Israel Nash Gripka, currently based in Austin, might be a Neil Young fan, given the ravishing echoes of "Southern Man" and *After The Gold Rush* on this track from his forthcoming third LP, *Rain Plans*.

11 CHEYENNE MIZE

As It Comes

One of those myriad talents in the orbit of Will Oldham, Louisville singer-songwriter Cheyenne Mize provides what might be the most insidious song this month, a

circling beauty, tantalisingly familiar: kin to the earlier work of Neko Case and Feist, perhaps?

12 THE CAIRO GANG

Take Your Time

And here's another key name in Will Oldham's address book, Emmett Kelly, with a highlight from his latest solo LP as The Cairo Gang; a labyrinthine 12-string workout that shoots brilliantly for the elevated zone of "Eight Miles High".

13 ROYAL CANOE

Hold On To The Metal

From Winnipeg, Canada, Royal Canoe sound very much like the consummate 21st-Century North American indie band. There are trace elements of Animal Collective, Vampire Weekend, Yeasayer and compatriots Broken Social Scene in "Hold On To The Metal", grafted into an intricate, complex whole.

14 ANDREW CEDERMARK

Canis Major

The one-time guitarist for rumbustious punks Titus Andronicus, Cedermark's solo career has privileged his old band's semi-obscured love for Springsteen and blue-collar Americana, revealing a thoughtful, gifted new singer-songwriter who stands comparison with the Kurt Vile/War On Drugs cabal.

15 WILLARD GRANT

CONSPIRACY

Incident At Mono Lake

Faithful *Uncut* retainers, the 10th Willard Grant album sees them apply their blasted atmospherics to an uncannily suitable project: a movie about a Californian ghost town. For more details, our review is on p77.

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SELF
PORTRAIT**
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Tony Joe White

Interview: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Anne Goetze

The fabled swamp-country-bluesman on “Polk Salad Annie”, Elvis Presley, Patrick McGoohan, and meeting Tina Turner – “I always thought you was a black man!”

TONY JOE WHITE is speaking to *Uncut* from his back porch as he watches a storm roll across his little patch of Tennessee. “We’re maybe about 40 miles out of Nashville,” he tells us. “It’s a place called Leiper’s Fork, just a couple of grocery stores and a café. I’m out by the river, down near the woods. A lot of musicians live out this way. There must be something here that pulls us all to it.”

Tony Joe White has been refining his particular brand of swampy country-blues and R’n’B since the early ’60s. One of his earliest songs, “Polk Salad Annie”, was covered by Elvis Presley; other artists who’ve recorded his songs include Roy Orbison, Ray Charles and Tina Turner. White himself has recorded over 20 albums, the most recent of which, *Hoodoo*, is released this month. “I did some of the cuts off *Hoodoo* yesterday,” he tells us. “I played up in Denver, Colorado up in the mountains at a festival and put a couple of the new tunes on, and everybody really got into it, so I’ve got good hopes...”

STAR QUESTION



Who inspired you as a songwriter?

Lucinda Williams

I had never really wrote anything until I was playing in the clubs in Texas and Louisiana. I was doing a lot of covers of everybody else, of Elvis, and John Lee Hooker and Lightnin’, and then I heard Bobbie Gentry sing “Ode To Billie Joe”. And I heard that and I thought, ‘How real can you get?’ So I said if I ever try to write a song I’m gonna try to be real and write what I know. So I was lucky to have that in mind right from the start. A few weeks later, I had “Polk Salad Annie” and “Rainy Night In Georgia”: I knew about rainy nights and I knew about polk salad, and I put them down. It was a lucky thing to hear some realness right off and have a guideline in place.

Talk us through a typical “Saturday Nite, In Oak Grove, Louisiana”...

George McQueen, New York

It would be me and a couple of boys, or me and a girl from Boeuf River, which was about 11 miles from Oak Grove, where we all lived in cotton farms. Saturday night you get cleaned up and one of your buddies has a pick-up truck or a good-looking car, and you go to Oak Grove and there was a Dairy Queen there and people either parked in front of the Dairy Queen or circled the Dairy Queen. And most of the night, from as soon as it got dark, which was about 9pm at that time of year, people would start coming in and all of a sudden that’s when we all met, made dates, hung out of the back seat of cars, tried to kiss a girl. This and that.



For a few hollers more: Tony Joe White in 1969



When did you finally get to meet The King?

Peter, Stockholm

I had come back from Europe. I had a lot of action going on in England, France and everywhere.

I’d been over eight weeks, just myself and my guitar and a wooden coat box for my drum. I’d been playing a lot of clubs and I came back to America and “Polk Salad Annie” was No 3 or 4 in the nation and I was kinda shocked – I hadn’t heard any news where I was at. Then I got a call from Felton Jarvis, who was producing Elvis, who said, “We love ‘Polk’, we want to send a ‘plane down to Memphis to pick up your wife and you and bring you to Vegas and watch him cut it live every night on stage.” We went out there, stayed a week, man. They did “Polk” every night, recorded it, and we’d go back to the

dressing-room, hang out and talk or play guitar. He was cool as you can be, real nice. It was odd, because in the early days I was doing a lot of his tunes onstage. And all of a sudden, here’s Elvis doing my song onstage. It showed me how far music can reach.

What are your memories of the sessions for Jerry Lee Lewis’ *Southern Roots*?

Bryan Dury, Manchester
 I came in and did my part as an overdub, it weren’t

when the whole bunch was there when it was cut. I met Jerry Lee a few times. I lived in Memphis for 14 years. He used to sit in a club down town. We would all meet there, Duck Dunn and me, different people... sit in and play a little guitar with him. I met him a couple of times in Stax in Memphis; he was always a pretty wild boy.

STAR QUESTION



Do you think the bass part on “Polk Salad Annie” was too busy?

Norbert Putnam

I thought it was a real cool thing, the lick, because it became like a little trademark for the tune. I thought Norbert did good coming up with something wow like that. It was in the days when he was having to do a lot of C&W music here in this town, and I gave him and them other boys a chance to swamp it up a little bit. A lot of those guys were from Muscle Shoals and they’d moved up here.



“I met Jerry Lee
Lewis down at Stax
in Memphis.
He was always a
pretty wild boy!”



Tony Joe walks in on a scene in *Catch My Soul*, 1974

to make a living playing country, as they weren't doing too good down there in those days. When I came up and hooked up with Bob Beckham at Combine Music, and once he heard me play, he already knew all these boys. He said, "I've got the perfect band for you, man." So he put us together and we rocked.

STAR QUESTION



You played on a Green On Red record all those years ago. Just when things started getting lively you had to duck out and "meet a guy who was fixing your garage door". Did you ever get that garage door issue worked out? **Chuck Prophet**

Lord, I've been through a lot of garage doors since then. I'm always banging into them in my truck, my jeep, or my boat or something. I'd say they're all working, it's only two doors so surely somebody can keep them going. Green On Red were a cool bunch of guys.

Do you have a favourite cover of one of your songs?

Michael Duvall, Leatherhead
I still have to go back to the very first time I heard one of my songs. That was Brook Benton on "Rainy Night In Georgia". It was a shock to hear that. I had it on that LP and 9 or 10 months later, Jerry Wexler sent me a 45rpm of it and I played it 50 times in a row. It was amazing, man, to hear someone take your words and music, and put their soul into it.

What do you remember about working with Patrick McGoohan on *Catch My Soul*?

Christoph Mercer, Eastbourne
Oh, Patrick, I'll never forget him. Him and [producer] Jack Good, they wanted me to come to New Mexico

to do some music for the movie. So I went down, we cut some cool things, and then Patrick, Jack and me would go to this little pub and drink beer and shoot pool until it got real late. One night, all my music was done and I was about to head home and Jack said, "Have you thought about acting?" Patrick stepped in and said, "How would you like to play a part in this movie, just play yourself?" So next thing I know, I'm playing [wino] Cassio. I thought it was a real stick-out type thing, but Patrick told me to change nothing.

What was Nashville like when you moved there? I've read the West End was comparable to Greenwich Village in the '60s...
Jack Gladney, New York

I drove up like I had about three or

he asked me to play a little bit, and that was a very lucky happening, 'cos in those days unless you were C&W no-one would look at you.

Foreign Affair for Tina Turner was something of a comeback for you. How did that happen?

Bill Chalmers, Kent
I had cut "Steamy Windows", "Undercover Agent For The Blues" and "Foreign Affair" and "You Know Who (Is Doing You Know What)" on a little tape while I was still in Memphis. Somehow Mark Knopfler or someone, they got it to Roger Davies, Tina's manager. He called me and said, "Tina wants to cut 'Undercover Agent'. We'll fly

them had chicken wire to stop you catching a beer bottle on your head. It was people dancing and fighting. A lot of them were cowboys and cowgirls and when I started doing bluesy stuff or Elvis, they had a dance called The Alligator, where the boy and the girl would get down on top of each other, like 'gators. It was wild, looking back on it.

How did you come to open for Roger Waters in Magny-Cours France, in 2006?

Etienne Chumba, Rouen
Oh, yeah, man. We played over at a racetrack. It was the Prince of Wales or Monaco or somebody, it was his birthday and he auctions off things, for charity. David Gilmour and I had been friends for a long time so we'd all met back

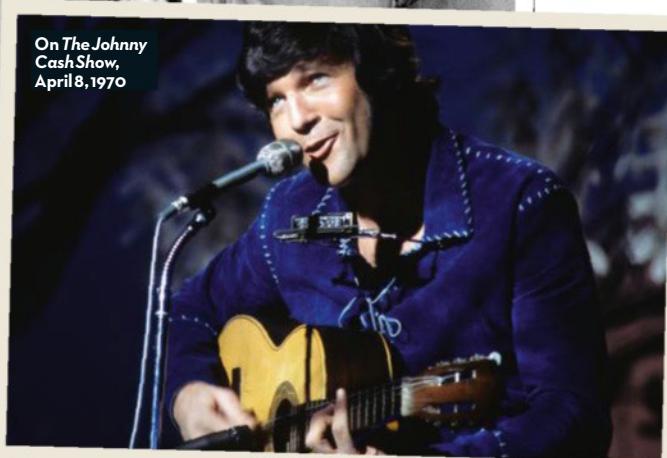
before that, and so were doing a soundcheck, me and my drummer, and Roger comes over and says, "Hey, how about using all we've got onstage, plug in the drums and amps and everything." It was just the two of us, and we had all this Floyd stuff lined up behind us, and God, when we cranked up, it sounded like I had about eight people in my band. Roger... they were all on the side of the stage hollerin' and having fun.

Your album, *The Train I'm On*, was a creative turning point in your career... **Steve Milanowski**

This was the first time I experienced Muscle Shoals and my first time to meet Jerry Wexler and Tom Dowd. The mood was real good. Everyone was in the studio ready to go but the drummer hadn't shown up 'cos he was fishing down in the river. About an hour later, Roger Hawkins comes walking in the back door barefooted and he's got fish scales all over his feet. He'd been outside cleaning fish while we was all in there tuning up. He walked back out, found a hose, sprayed some of the scales off and set up behind the drums. What a perfect drummer, man! These people were brought up like I was, on cotton farms, raised on R'n'B like I was in Louisiana – I knew I'd hit it off with them. ☺

Tony Joe's *Hoodoo* is out on Yep Roc

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DON'T STOP!

As FLEETWOOD MAC's imperial comeback tour reaches Britain, MICK FLEETWOOD reflects on an eventful 46 years as the band's gatekeeper. The early days with Peter Green... the lost guitar heroes... the days of high life and strife... And onwards, towards the next album and the rapturous gigs... "We haven't turned Fleetwood Mac into Cirque Du Soleil yet!"

Story: Andy Gill

Photo: Sam Emerson





Blues boomers the Mac, 1968: (l-r) Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, John McVie

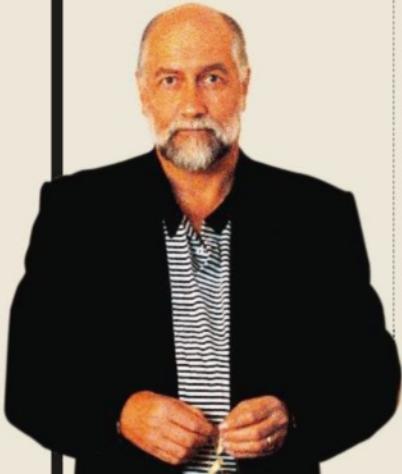
MICK FLEETWOOD IS musing upon the gloriously chequered career of Fleetwood Mac. "We were blessed with finding some uniquely important people at the right time," he says, with typical modesty. "You can thank the angels for that, really." Genial and self-deprecating, Fleetwood always plays the diffident associate, ascribing his band's success to fellow bandmates, both past and present. For years now, he's given the impression of being just a happy crew member, glad to keep cruising along. Yet it's clear that Mick is the backbone of Fleetwood Mac, the self-confessed "nutcase driving force" who's kept the vessel afloat through stormy waters and lengthy doldrums alike, lubricating the sometimes clashing gears of the band's creative elements. As the Mac sails serenely through a world tour occasioned by the success of the 35th Anniversary reissue of *Rumours*, he considers the qualities behind the band's enduring appeal. "Fleetwood Mac's history is very spotted, not everyone's cup of tea all the way through," he says, "but it's never been a bunch of people pretending to do something that's been done before."

"I've almost been sick with the obsession of not letting this band go..."



MICK ON...

Mr Fleetwood on his bandmates...



LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

"He's so focused on, quote, 'his art' and what it means to him, and it's certainly not about the money. He goes about and works his nuts off trying to have people listen to what he's doing, and it's really a labour of love. It's not about going out and making zillions of dollars."



JOHN McVIE

UNCUT: How's the tour going?

MICK FLEETWOOD: We've been touring all over the States, so with rehearsals and stuff, we've been at it for the better part of six months. It's going incredibly well. We're halfway through the tour – we're coming to Europe, as you know, in about eight weeks or less, finishing around December 15.

Do you have surprises for us?

Well, we always try to put a new show together. As long as a good chunk of your show is stuff that people are emotionally attached to, which of course would be the more well-known songs, then we have fun peppering the set with stuff like we're doing in this show – for instance, we recorded an EP before we went out on the road, and there's an old song of Stevie's that had never seen the light of day before, which she wrote way, way back, nearly 40 years ago, about Stevie and Lindsey. We put it in the show, and no-one knows it at all, but people are loving

it. So we spice it up that way, and hopefully we can take the audience on a creative journey, where we're not just schlocking up stuff we've done time after time before. As regards other surprises, no, we haven't turned Fleetwood Mac into Cirque Du Soleil yet! There aren't any midgets or acrobats careening across the stage during "Rhiannon"!

The Extended Play tracks are really good – "Sad Angel", particularly, is as good as you get. I notice you put it out yourselves. What's it like working without a record label?

Well, I don't know whether we really know what we're doing! We're still with Warner Brothers, sort of; we're still working that out – but they let us do it. With all deference to record labels, they are not what they used to be, anyhow. We just wanted to have something out there – I don't think we expected it to be a huge success or anything. The music business has so greatly changed, and we had some contractual things to sort out – we're not sort of super-locked-in to Warner Brothers, but we're not super-locked-out either, so in the interim they gave us permission to do what we wanted to do while this business is all being sorted out.



STEVIE NICKS

"She really feels that we are bound: she is a loyalist at heart, married to this crazy band. She is always there for this band, but she needs to feel there's a real partnership on stage: she looks to the musicians in the band, that's her band, because she doesn't play an instrument and can feel a little exposed."



JOHN McVIE

"I'm very connected with John, he was always at my side, though maybe sometimes not particularly hopeful of the results continuing through lineup changes. He'd say things like, 'Well, let me know – you're out of your mind, I think we're finished.'"

Is there going to be another album?

We've got a whole bunch of songs that we did, and we're hoping we can coerce and have Stevie be enthusiastic about the possibility of completing a body of work that could be construed as a new album, where these songs would make their way into an album presentation. These days, with iTunes, you can do that – release things and down the road add them to an album. I certainly hope that happens over the course of the next few months.

You're effectively a band always in transition, it seems – looking back through your history, you seem to have been able to almost miraculously transform yourselves through the years. How do you do it?

Well, I'm beginning to wonder how we have done it. I've literally been with it since the very beginning, with Peter Green, he had me right next to him when we formed the band, and I really know the road that we've been on. I would say, in truth, I've worked really hard at keeping this band as a band: I've almost been sick with the obsession of not letting go. Having said that – and there is some comedic sense to it – a drummer needs a band! But it was a lot of hard work, hard work that became habit-forming, so it wasn't extraordinary

after a while, it was just what we did: "Someone's leaving? Well, we're not breaking up!" The chemistry of the situation was helped by the fact I wasn't the lead singer and couldn't say, "Well, I'll go off and do my own thing" – I was always looking at creating a stage that would be able to welcome someone new. So my version of writing and being lead singer was: I'm the gatekeeper, if I can find lovely people to create theatre with me, then I and the band have a chance to survive.

You seem to have an instinct for it, as well: as I understand, you hired first Bob Welch and then Lindsey and Stevie virtually unheard, just bumping into them in a studio.

Well, I'd heard them, but they were instantly welcome. With Bob, a friend of mine said, "I know this guitar player", and I really respected her opinion. Bob just got on a train from Paris and arrived at our house in England, where we all used to hang out, a hippy commune kind of thing, and plugged in a guitar. But it was really all about Bob, more than his music, a vibe about the person, that he had his own talent to offer, and to me it seemed evident quickly that this was supposed to happen. I said, "I think he's the right guy" and John and Chris both said, "Yeah." Bob never left – he just unpacked his suitcase, moved from Paris, and we were done.

Is it an instinctive thing?

It's very instinctual – Peter and I used to ask, in any situation, personal or musical, "Is it it?" And it is about intuition, it's about, are you really connecting, are you really moving me? Is the chemistry right? When you're considering making music with someone, you need to know it's 'it', and when it is, you need to let go immediately and not second-guess yourself. That's how those decisions came about, and if there was any alchemy to it, that's as close as I can come to describing what it is. I paid huge heed to what Peter thought. I would say, "Why would you want me in the band? I'm not the best



McVie and Fleetwood with Bob Welch and Christine McVie, August 1974



Nature boys: the Mac with Danny Kirwan, right, 1969

HOW TO BUY...

RUMOURS, TANGOS AND FUTURE GAMES...

The best of Fleetwood Mac



FLEETWOOD MAC (AKA PETER GREEN'S FLEETWOOD MAC)

BLUE HORIZON, 1968
The album which broke the British Blues Boom as a chart prospect, an unassuming mix of Jeremy Spencer's Elmore James slide licks and Peter Green's more delicate, sylvan lead lines which captured the hearts of greatcoated youth across Europe.



THEN PLAY ON

REPRISE, 1969
The first Mac's masterpiece, an album of brilliant diversity and exploration on which new boy Danny

Kirwan showed his abundant potential alongside Peter Green. Sadly, it would prove to be Green's band swansong, save for the hapless "Man Of The World" single.



FUTURE GAMES

REPRISE, 1971
The best of the so-called "transitional" Mac albums, with the arrival of Bob Welch and Christine McVie

alongside Danny Kirwan helping to lay the groundwork for their subsequent melodic pop style. The slow, woozy title track and "Woman Of A Thousand Years" (sung by Christine McVie) are the highlights.

FLEETWOOD MAC



8/10

FLEETWOOD MAC
REPRISE, 1975
The great breakthrough: Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham brought with them hit singles ("Over My Head", "Say You Love Me" and "Rhiannon"), multi-platinum sales, and the rare example of an album that first topped the charts over a year after its first entry.



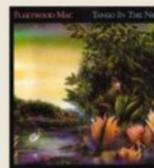
10/10

RUMOURS
REPRISE, 1977
The game-changer: by all accounts sheer torture to record, Rumours remains one of rock's most honeyed listening experiences, a commercial and cultural landmark emblematic of an entire era. More than one in every six US households has a copy.



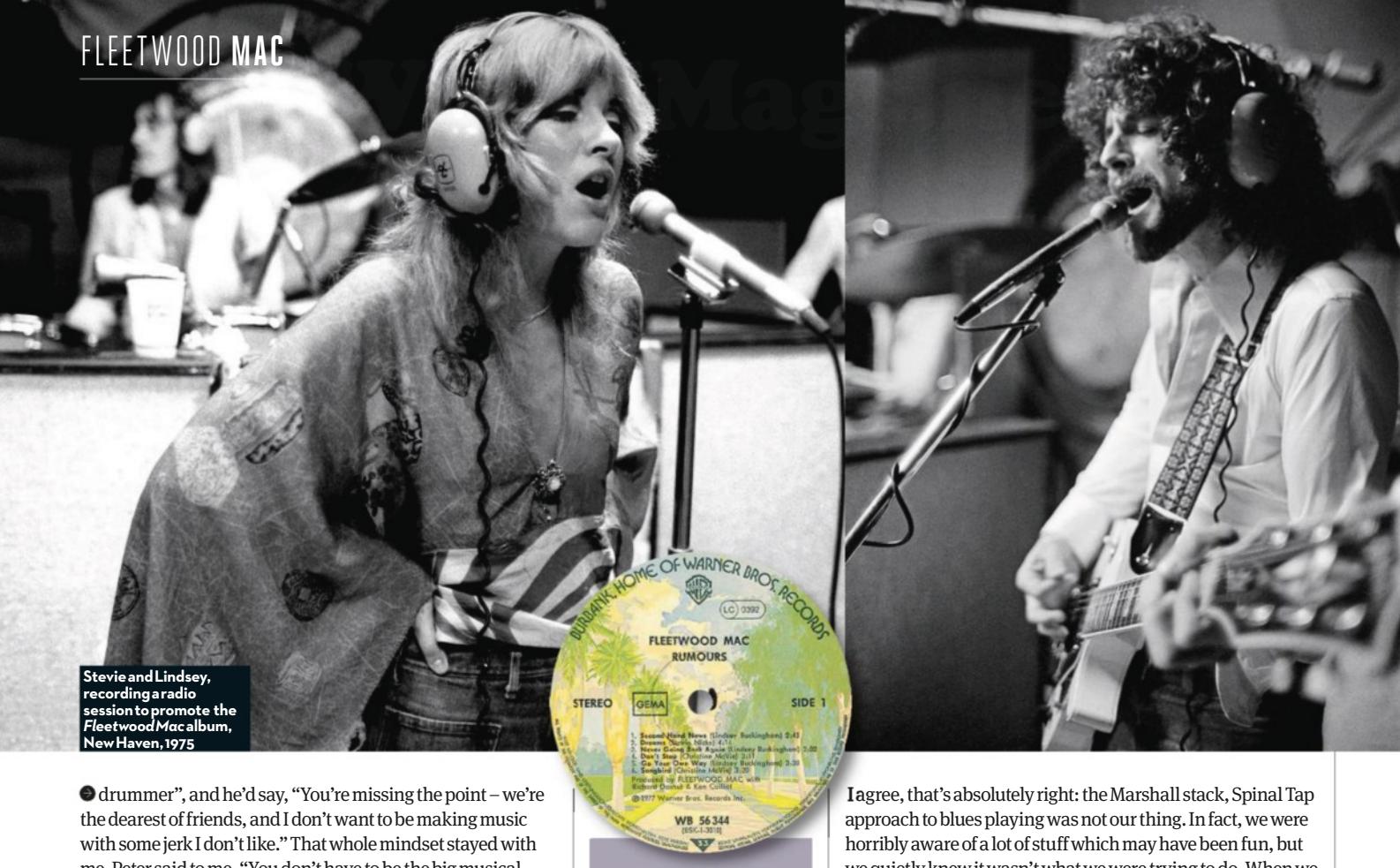
TUSK

REPRISE, 1979
The deal breaker? With the three songwriters operating more independently of each other, and Buckingham given free rein to pursue his exploratory new-wave inclinations, this sprawling double-album perplexed fans expecting Rumours 2. At a mere four million sales, the label considered it a failure, though it remains Mick Fleetwood's favourite.



TANGO IN THE NIGHT

REPRISE, 1987
Originally begun as a Lindsey Buckingham solo album, *Tango In The Night* developed such a gravitational pull it brought the band back together on top form. Among other delights, contains two of Christine McVie's most irresistible songs, "Everywhere" and "Little Lies".



Stevie and Lindsey, recording a radio session to promote the Fleetwood Mac album, New Haven, 1975

drummer", and he'd say, "You're missing the point – we're the dearest of friends, and I don't want to be making music with some jerk I don't like." That whole mindset stayed with me. Peter said to me, "You don't have to be the big musical svengali, stop feeling so insecure – when you're playing, I feel what you're doing, and you're OK." But although Peter could have been the big power-monger, when he was in Fleetwood Mac he was in a band, and despite clearly being the mainstay, he still put himself in the back: when we made *Then Play On*, Danny Kirwan had only just joined the band, he was like a little schoolboy, but Peter said, "Take half the album" – that's a pretty damn generous thing from someone who could have hogged the whole damn thing!

In the early Fleetwood Mac, it was never a case of loudest and fastest, as it was with most British blues bands. On the contrary, it seemed to get subtler and more delicate as it went along.

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

PERFECT TIMING

GO YOUR OWN WAY...

Where's Christine McVie in 2013?

WHEN CHRISTINE McVIE left Fleetwood Mac in 1998, it was the arduous grind of touring that caused her to finally quit – she simply couldn't face another flight, it was claimed. "She did not enjoy the whole rigmarole of travelling and touring," says Mick Fleetwood today, "and no amount of coercing with golden carrots on strings in front of her nose attracted her to get back on the boards again." McVie moved back to England, settled in the



Kent countryside and contemplated opening a restaurant. Since then, she's steadfastly refused to rejoin the band onstage. This has left a glaring hole in the band's setlist – there's no way they can avoid encoring with "Don't Stop", of course, but how many in the audience

must yearn to hear the likes of "You Make Loving Fun", "Everywhere" and "Little Lies" again? "We are absolutely happily obligated to do some of Christine's songs," admits Fleetwood. As the tour heads to Europe, there are signs that finally, UK audiences at least may get a glimpse of Christine: earlier this year, she flew to

California and Hawaii to hook up with her old bandmates, following which both she and Mick Fleetwood have dropped heavy hints that she may drop in for a duet at one of the O2 shows.

"I hope Rumours' success wasn't just 'cause we were all sleeping with each other!"

I agree, that's absolutely right: the Marshall stack, Spinal Tap approach to blues playing was not our thing. In fact, we were horribly aware of a lot of stuff which may have been fun, but we quietly knew it wasn't what we were trying to do. When we first started, we were a blues band, then Peter started writing, and you had things like "Albatross", which were way beyond that. But we were already accustomed to being tender, because of the dynamics, and all the slow blues we had been doing. The blues model for us was not about boogie, it was about where the dynamic was, and if Peter was singing something like "Need Your Love So Bad", you wondered, Dear God, where is this coming from? Once we'd started spreading our wings with *Then Play On*, the writing skills, particularly Peter's, were taking huge steps into different areas. Sadly, those were the last things he would do with Fleetwood Mac. People often ask, "What would have happened if Peter had not left?", and I truly think he would have developed such a musically diverse, soulful approach that if that incarnation of the band had continued, you would have seen a similar journey to the one Led Zeppelin took, when you suddenly had Moroccan orchestras and funky things, way more adventurous than people realised.

Do you think the success of *Rumours* was partly due to it being rooted in the band's real-life circumstances?

I think so. That certainly had a huge amount to do with the power of what happened during that period – to literally be putting an emotive diary onto a piece of vinyl. But one will never know at what point that began and stopped being the reason why it was so hugely successful. As a musician, one likes to think it wasn't entirely because we were all sleeping with each other! And I don't think it was, by the way.

It's extraordinary how such sweetness comes from such apparent strife.

Correct. And strife it was!

When you first had the enormous success with the first album with Lindsey and Stevie (*Fleetwood Mac*), what was your first great indulgent purchase when you got your royalty cheque? Car, yacht, house...?

Oh! Well, knowing me, I'm sure it was a car. I'm a car freak, always a car freak. But you have to remember that the emotional side of success was something John and I already knew about – we had been at the top of the charts all over

Europe and in Australia. We were huge, and hugely successful. Having said that, it never translated into money! Which begs the question whether we were being ripped off. But emotionally, we had gone through that whole gamut of being struggling musicians loving what we were doing, to being on *Top Of The Pops* wondering, what the fuck's this? Shouldn't we be playing in a pub down the road? We'd had all of that, all the front pages and the adulation, then sort of lost it – when Peter left, we basically tanked, we were floundering, and so we went off to America and slowly built up a following. When we began being hugely successful again, amazingly enough, even going into the *Rumours* period, when we'd just sold six million albums and were able to live like pigs in shit, we never had that dynamic of realising we even had any money! For months and months we'd be touring in the same way we'd always toured, driving ourselves in station wagons – we didn't realise we could afford to rent a small plane, or stay in a better hotel. Of course, that did eventually change, and I have to say, when it did, we went a little too far the other way...

I understand you could have signed with Apple at one point, that The Beatles wanted you to sign with them.

That's true! I don't know why we didn't – I was quite excited about it at the time, because George was actually my brother-in-law. But it didn't happen.

Well, it hasn't worked out too badly at Warner-Reprise.

No, it's been a good old run. All these record companies are in a state of shock themselves right now.

Why did you have such a brief tenure at Immediate?

That I also don't know, because I wasn't in charge of the band then. I think they were going under, it was all going wrong, so we bailed out.

When you came to do *Mirage*, was the sound of the album a response to the more abstract, experimental approach of *Tusk*?

It was. It was really good that on *Tusk* Lindsey had been given his head – looking back, I'm really glad he fought so hard for



Indestructible: the reunited Mac at the Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, April 6, 2013

GIG LOVE

THEN PLAY ON!

Inside the Fleetwood Mac 2013 tour...

Opening date:

April 4, 2013, Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Capacity:

21,000

First song played on the tour:

"Second Hand News"

Last song played on American leg:

"Say Goodbye"

Dates played in America:

48

Total gross to date:

\$58.1 million

Total attendance to date:

538,961

Average length of show:

2 hours 30 minutes

Dates scheduled to play in UK:

8

Wineries scheduled to play at in Australia:

2 (Hope Estate Winery, The Hill Winery)

Odds on headlining Glastonbury 2014:

12/1 (Paddy Power)

that, and that he got it. *Then Play On* and *Tusk* are my favourite Fleetwood Mac albums, because they both represent very similar types of departures, when you think about it. They beautifully signpost the aesthetics of the journey to try and change up – Peter wanted to expand, like Lindsey did – so full kudos to both of those people, and to both of those albums. *Mirage* was a more natural progression from *Rumours*, there's no doubt. *Tusk* at the time was just way too much information for someone who'd enjoyed the *Rumours* album: "What the fuck is this? This guy's screaming at me, and shit!" But I have nothing but absolute regard for the stance Lindsey took.

Can we expect another cover appearance from you? You've made some unusual appearances throughout your career.

This is true. But I don't think there'll ever be another cover appearance exclusively by me. At some point I had to hand over to the possibility of other people being on the cover. I think I've had my day!

I remember buying *Mr Wonderful* and being somewhat startled...

Oh, I know! That too was not really thought out – it was just that no-one else could ever give a shit about anything, really. I was the only one, through being around my sister and other artsy people, I would go, "I'll put something together, I'll find a way to make people look at it – I know, I'll take my clothes off!" We did all kinds of weird stuff. It maybe went on a little too long, but I don't complain about it. I always joke that I've still got a ponytail, so maybe one day I'll have an execution, cut my ponytail off and shave my head, and that will be the end of that character. No more *Mr Rumours*!

Well, if you start out your career with a dog on your cover, any way is up.

Yeah! And then with the dog under my arm, that stuffed dog, which was *Mr Wonderful*; and then years later Lindsey and I put another dog on the cover of *Tusk*. But it didn't mean anything other than that there's another dog there!

All great rhythm sections have their own signature. What's the key to yours and John's?

Our golden rule would be "less is more". I think the fact that we were both blues musicians, trained in that world, means we learned to listen like crazy, and therefore are slaves to dynamics, listening and letting the people out front do their job, and not getting in the way – subservient, in the healthiest sense of the term. That's Mick Fleetwood and John McVie.

Fleetwood Mac's UK tour begins on September 24. A remastered edition of *Then Play On* and a vinyl-only boxset of four albums, *Fleetwood Mac 1969-1972*, is released on August 20 by Warners



Hope springs eternal

Story: Michael Bonner
Photo: Stefan De Batselier

Seventeen long and sad years after MAZZY STAR last released an album, Hope Sandoval and David Roback are back, magically unchanged. What happened? *Uncut* charts the uncanny journey of the pair, from The Rain Parade to their quietly triumphant comeback, *Seasons Of Your Day*. “We’re not so concerned about the outside world,” admits Roback. “They’re not your normal rock’n’roll people,” understates one of their associates...

STEVE WYNN REMEMBERS an unexpected phone call he received one day in 1991 from David Roback, the guitarist and co-founder of Mazzy Star. As Wynn remembers it, Roback said to him, “I’ve been thinking, I want to do some sort of intense, jammy band like Cream or something like that, and I’d like to do it with you.” Wynn had long admired Roback, and readily agreed. “But I think my instant enthusiasm took him aback,” says Wynn. “He said, ‘I mean, just in theory, maybe someday, not right away, maybe down the line, I just want to see what you thought about it.’ So I said, ‘Hey, it sounds really fun, I’d love to play with you so give me a call when you’re ready.’ That was the last time I spoke to David Roback.”

Wynn has known Roback for 30 years, from the earliest days of their careers among the Paisley Underground movement, when Wynn was frontman for The Dream Syndicate and Roback guitarist with The Rain Parade. “Of all the people in that scene, I’ve stayed close to just about everybody in one way or another,” claims Wynn. “But David, he wasn’t that easy to know.”

It’s tempting to ask, does anyone really know David Roback? Along with Hope Sandoval, his creative partner in Mazzy Star, Roback comes across as an elusive, often cryptic personality. Questions about the length of time it’s taken to record Mazzy Star’s new album, *Seasons Of Your Day* – released a full 17 years after its predecessor – are answered frugally. Asked, for instance, what the first song was that they recorded for the album, Roback replies: “Well, we really weren’t working on *Seasons Of Your Day* as it exists now, we were just recording various things. We never really

stopped. We just kept writing and recording.”

Such is the mystique Mazzy Star seem to cultivate around their work that one musician contacted for this article wasn’t even aware that his contribution to *Seasons Of Your Day* had been used; not surprising, perhaps, as he recorded it nearly 25 years ago. Meanwhile, Roback and Sandoval’s interviews with *Uncut* are conducted via Skype, peppered with awkward pauses and elliptical responses.

“They’re not your normal rock’n’roll people,” explains Geoff Travis, whose label Rough Trade distributed Mazzy Star’s 1990 debut, *She Hangs Brightly*. “I think they really do live in their own

“Each individual song is its own world unto itself...”
David Roback

worlds. It’s a very typical musician thing in a way, in that they’re so obsessed with music and doing what they do, that it kind of removes them slightly from normal social mores.”

Looking back over a quarter of a century of Mazzy Star, I ask Sandoval what’s she most proud of.

“I’m proud of the music, and I’m proud of our friendship,” she replies after a typical hesitation.

And when is she at her happiest? Is it when she’s writing songs? Or in the studio? Or after a record is completed? “I’m happy with all of the different aspects of it,” she replies instantly, her voice

taking on an unexpected urgency. “But I’m also miserable with all of the aspects. They’re nice, they’re gratifying, but at the same time they can be difficult and emotional. Every phase, there’s happiness in it, there’s enjoyment in it, but there’s also torture.”

DAVID ROBACK HAS been refining a melancholy strand of American Gothic – steering a course between third-album *Velvet Underground* and The Doors of “The End” – since the late ’70s. He grew up in Brentwood, on the west side of Los Angeles. “There was constantly music on the radio,” he remembers. “The Beatles made a strong impression on me. The Doors. Love. Bands like that. I just thought they were speaking from a world I really wanted to be part of.”

Roback’s earliest collaborators included Steven – his younger brother by three years – and Susanna Hoffs, whose family lived across the street. “We all ended up at UC Berkeley at the same time,” explains Steven Roback. “Susanna and David were living together and they asked me to come and play with them. That’s the origin of a lot of things. It’s the origin of The Rain Parade in a way, and the origin of David’s focus on having a lead singer in a hypnotic, melodic context, the vision he had that ultimately ended up evolving into Clay Allison, Opal and Mazzy Star.”

After graduating, David Roback returned to Los Angeles, where he formed The Sidewalks with former school friend Matt Piucci, a guitarist and singer. They invited Steven Roback to join a few months later, on bass and vocals. The Sidewalks started out playing early Stones and Merseybeat covers before evolving, over a period of six months, into The Rain Parade. “David was key

"Shy and
mysterious..."
Hope Sandoval
and David Roback



HOW TO BUY...

The Prettiest Star...

The best cuts from the Roback/Sandoval stable



THE RAIN PARADE EMERGENCY THIRD RAIL POWER TRIP

RESTLESS

Dreamy psych-pop, with Love and The Byrds as references.

8/10

Standouts include Roback's haunting "Carolyn's Song" (later covered by This Mortal Coil) and Matt Piucci's Nuggetsy closer, "Look Both Ways".



VARIOUS RAINY DAY

LLAMA

Roback masterminded this comp of covers recorded by the Paisley Underground

8/10

bands. If you ever wanted to hear Kendra Smith and Susanna Hoffs sing "Flying On The Ground Is Wrong" or "I'll Be Your Mirror", this is the place.



OPAL HAPPY NIGHTMARE BABY

SST

More than just a blueprint for Mazzy Star, Opal were characterised by

8/10

Roback's spare, distorted guitar work and Smith's cool, Nico-esque vocals. A collection including the two Clay Allison EPs - called *Opal: Early Recordings* - is also available.



MAZZY STAR SHE HANGS BRIGHTLY

ROUGH TRADE

Mazzy Star's debut has gone on to sell nearly 70,000 copies, according to Geoff

10/10

Travis. It remains the template for the band's music: soft focus, Lynchian and nocturnal.



MAZZY STAR SO TONIGHT THAT I MIGHT SEE

CAPITOL

Less blues-y than its predecessor,

the second album expanded their range to include Doors-y organ shuffles ("Mary Of Silence"), and a beautiful acoustic cover of Arthur Lee's "Five String Serenade", alongside their hit, "Fade Into You".



MAZZY STAR AMONG MY SWAN

CAPITOL

Their second and final album for Capitol, although not quite as cohesive as So

7/10

Tonight..., nevertheless contains several highpoints, especially "Take Everything" with guest William Reid adding slow-burning guitar, or the stunning organ-led closer, "Look On Down From The Bridge".



HOPE SANDOVAL AND THE WARM INVENTIONS BAVARIAN FRUIT BREAD

ROUGH TRADE

In cahoots with a new creative partner - Colm Ó Cíosóig - Sandoval's non-Mazzy debut feels a little underdeveloped. Characterised by sparse arrangements, the best tracks are two lovely ballads "Suzanne" and "Charlotte", the latter featuring Bert Jansch.



HOPE SANDOVAL AND THE WARM INVENTIONS THROUGH THE DEVIL SOFTLY

NETTWERK

More textured than its predecessor, and better for it. "Trouble" sounds like vintage Mazzy Star, but "For The Rest Of Your Life" signals a more experimental direction and closer "Satellite" provides a warm, pretty conclusion.



MAZZY STAR SEASONS OF YOUR DAY

RHYMES OF AN
HOUR RECORDS

An impeccable collection. Standouts?

9/10

Many, but the drifting 2011 single, "Common Burn", the eerie "California", and Roback's acoustic showdown with Jansch on "Spoon" are especially captivating. Beautiful, alluring and immersive.

in setting out the vision for the band," admits his brother. "We all loved vintage instruments, the sounds of Rickenbackers and Gretschs. We knew they sounded cool on their own and in context, and we put those instruments together to see what we could get."

"I think there was some interesting music going on then, a lot of guitar interaction and organ," says David Roback. "We were experimenting with sounds and I was writing a lot of songs back then, singing with that band."

The Rain Parade found themselves sharing both concert bills and artistic sensibilities (psychedelia, Nuggets, Big Star, The Velvet Underground) with a loose collection of bands on the fringes of the Los Angeles club scene during the early '80s. "The Rain Parade were as Paisley as the Paisley Underground got," remembers Steve Wynn. "Of all the bands on the scene - The Dream Syndicate, The Salvation Army, Green On Red, even The Bangs who became The Bangles - all of us were coming from a more punk background. But The Rain Parade weren't like that. They were happy to be floating, gentle and trippy. Pink Floyd and The Byrds. Who didn't love that?"

Hope Sandoval performing with Mazzy Star at Coachella, April 2012



OBACK STAYED WITH The Rain Parade long enough to record a single - 1982's "What She's Done To Your Mind?" - and an album, *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip*, the following year. But even before recording the album, he had set in motion another project - Clay Allison, formed with his girlfriend, Dream Syndicate bassist Kendra Smith.

"I remember the first Rain Parade tour, when we were in New York City, playing CBGBs with Green On Red," pinpoints Steven Roback. "We had a couple of days off, and David did the first Clay Allison gig with Kendra at the Pyramid Club. It was David and Kendra, acoustic, and Will [Glenn, Rain Parade's keyboardist] was playing violin and I was on piano."

Clay Allison established the template for Roback's subsequent work - a kind of dreamy psych-folk. After two EPs, Clay Allison morphed into Opal, who recorded one album, 1987's *Happy Nightmare Baby*.

"*Happy Nightmare Baby* was a very electric record," explains David Roback. "We were very orientated towards playing live at that point. What we'd been doing before was very acoustic, then we thought we'd make it very electric, so we went from being somewhat acoustic to very electric, like *Happy Nightmare Baby*."

One admirer of both Roback and Smith's work was a young music fan, Hope Sandoval, who Steve Wynn remembers "used to come to Dream Syndicate soundchecks, in like '82, when I think she was like 14 or 15. Her mum would bring her. She couldn't come to our shows because she was too young. We talked to her and she seemed nice, but I got the





feeling she was particularly mesmerised by Kendra. The beginning of the *All About Eve* saga!"

"I've always loved music," begins Hope Sandoval. "I grew up with older brothers and sisters who were into music, played The Beatles and The Rolling Stones and Aretha Franklin. I grew up in an area of East LA... I think it's called Maravilla area. It's Spanish. I had a project called Going Home with my good friend Sylvia Gomez, and when we met David and Kendra they knew we had this little music thing we were doing, and they were interested in it. David asked us if we'd like to go into the studio and make a record. I thought David was shy. Yeah, and sort of mysterious. What do I think connected us? We liked each other's music. That's really what it was. We didn't really communicate a lot other than just enjoying each other's music. I was asked to do some live shows [with Opal] because Kendra didn't want to be the front person, and I think it just got really difficult for her. It was during a tour that they were doing with The Jesus And Mary Chain, so I got a call from David asking me if I would fly out to New York and finish the tour. That's what it was. That's how I started working with his band."

THE CREATIVE union of Roback and Sandoval was borne out of pragmatic necessity – to finish the Mary Chain tour – it began to take on a more solid shape in early 1988. "I'd gone into the studio with Opal," explains Sandoval. "I wasn't writing, I was just singing the songs he had written and it wasn't really working for me. I don't think for him, either. And I suggested maybe we write together."

"We were performing a lot of Opal material and one day we just thought, let's just start something completely new, and that was Mazzy Star," continues Roback. "We started to write a lot of songs together, that's really what got us."

"I asked David to send me some of his guitar ideas," says Sandoval. "He sent me maybe five or seven beautiful rhythm guitar ideas. Did I have lyrics for them? No. Usually what I do is I write my vocal melody over guitar parts and then I come up with lyrics."

The songs became Mazzy Star's debut album, 1990's *She Hangs Brightly*.

"The majority of that record was recorded in San Francisco at a place called Hyde Street Studios," reveals Roback. "We were recording up there and a little bit in LA, we were back and forth between the two cities, between Berkeley and LA. We were just experimenting with different pieces of recording."

GUEST STAR

When Mazzy met Bert

DAVID ROBACK AND Hope Sandoval were introduced to Bert Jansch by Geoff Travis at the end of the 1990s. "Bert is one of

David's absolute favourite guitar players of all time," explains Travis. "So I came up with the idea, why don't we ask Bert to open for Mazzy Star? They were doing a concert at the Garage in Highbury. He was game, and we were absolutely delighted he came and played. Then they became friends..."

Their friendship led to several collaborations. Jansch played on two songs on the Hope Sandoval And The Warm Inventions album, *Bavarian Fruit Bread* (2001). Sandoval, meanwhile,

The late, great Bert Jansch, July, 2006



appeared on Jansch's *Edge Of A Dream* (2002) and Roback on Jansch's final album, *The Black Swan* (2006). The last time Roback and Sandoval shared a stage until Mazzy Star's 2012

comeback gigs was at Jansch's 60th-birthday celebration on November 3, 2003 at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.

"Just watching him tune his guitar was like watching a concert," Roback says of their time together in the studio. "Every time he picked up the guitar, something amazing would come out of it."

Their final collaboration was *Seasons Of Your Day's* "Spoon". "It was recorded in my flat in Hampstead," says Sandoval. "He came over and we had a few beers and played the song in my living room."

as we still do mostly. Live music in the studio."

The album was released by Rough Trade – who had previously handled the UK distribution for *Happy Nightmare Baby*.

"I remember the first time I met them in person," says Geoff Travis. "In Los Angeles at the Roosevelt Hotel. It's got a pool designed by David Hockney. I met David and Hope together, they were sitting beside the side of the pool. Hope was very quiet. Probably more in thrall to David at that point, than later when she exerted her own individuality. She's a really good soul, Hope. I think of her as the Queen of East LA: softly spoken, but definite and intelligent and bright, lovely. David is a bit more of an elder statesman when it comes to music, but with immaculate musical taste. Again, he's quiet, but very much alive, great sense of humour. But quite an odd individual, really, David."

For all its strengths, *She Hangs Brightly* is best summed up by its opener, the quietly enfolding "Halah": a definitive Mazzy Star composition characterised by gently rolling rhythms, reverb and Sandoval's husky vocals. The LP had been out for a year when Rough Trade went into receivership.

"We made a deal to move them from Rough Trade to Capitol to help avoid the bankruptcy," explains Travis.

To support the album, Mazzy Star toured America in 1990 supporting the Cocteau Twins. "They were quite different," remembers former Cocteau bassist, Simon Raymonde.

"David was serious, quite thoughtful, didn't say an awful lot. I quite liked him. Hope was super shy. There was often a bit of tension between them. Sometimes she'd just storm offstage. I didn't get the impression she enjoyed the live thing. It was never dull, that's for sure."

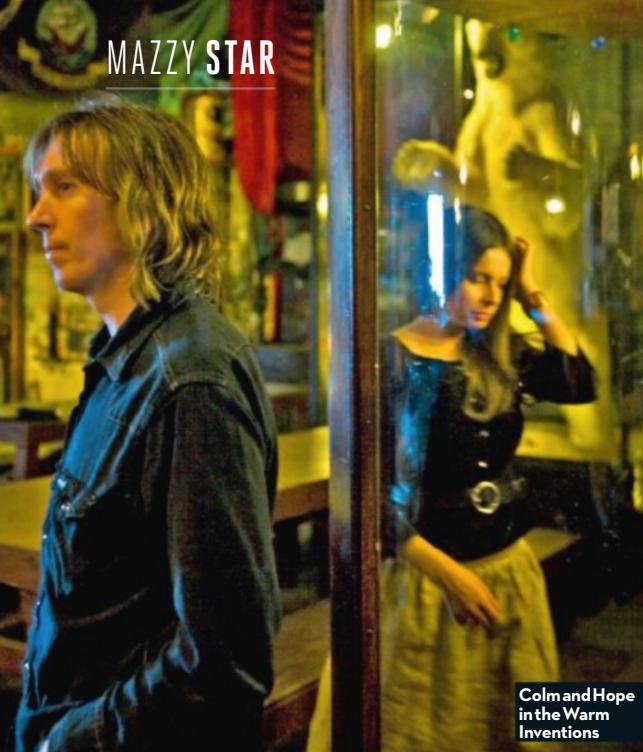
The period following *She Hangs Brightly* was one of transition for Mazzy Star. In 1993, they added to their lineup Jill Emery, former bassist with Hole, who remained with them until 1996. "I went to their rehearsal studio," she says. "Everyone was so reserved. It was a shock, coming from Hole, with an aggressive Courtney Love. Strangely, their quietness matched Hole's abrasiveness, on a different level."

The year 1993 also saw the band settle in London around



David Roback and Kendra Smith, NYC, 1983

"There was tension... Sometimes Hope would just storm offstage"
Simon Raymonde



Colm and Hope
in the Warm Inventions

“It’s about getting into the groove...”

My Bloody Valentine drummer Colm Ó Ciosóig on moonlighting for Mazzy Star

“I MET HOPE first in 1997. She was putting together some musicians to do a project, and I met her at a gig in London and she asked me to come to the audition. We hit it off from there. That was for the Warm Inventions. I met David about a year later, I think, in L.A. We got together in 2000 and did a mini-tour with Mazzy Star. I was around and just jumped in, played various instruments, some bass, some keyboards and guitar.

“I played drums on a few tracks on

Seasons Of Your Day, maybe about five tracks. It’s good being in the studio with David and Hope. It’s definitely a different aesthetic from Kevin [Shields]. It’s different music, it’s about getting into the groove of things. We try and lock things down live as much as we can, not layering too many things on top afterwards, trying to keep as much as we can from the original take.

“How would I compare David and Hope’s working practices from Kevin’s? Kevin gets into the studio and spends a lot of time working on his ideas. The Mazzy Star songs happen a lot faster. When did I record my parts for *Seasons*? We started about 2002, 2003. We did bits and pieces of recording in Norway. We finished a year ago, I think. There were various projects in between, so we were stopping and starting.”

● the time they released their second album, *So Tonight That I Might See*. Continuing the soft-focus, slow motion jams of its predecessor, the album featuring the band’s only hit single – a dusty, lilting ballad, “Fade Into You”.

“Capitol worked ‘Fade Into You’ for about nine months in radio, which I’ve very rarely seen in America,” says Geoff Travis. “They sold a million copies of *So Tonight That I Might See*, which when you think about it today seems an extraordinary number.”

If it can be considered a barometer of the song’s success in the mainstream, “Fade Into You” has appeared in no less than five separate episodes of the *CSI* franchises. There are countless other appearances in films and TV – most recently, it’s been covered by J Mascis. But perhaps the song’s most incongruous appearance is in Paul Verhoeven’s sci-fi shoot ‘em-up, *Starship Troopers*.

“It’s not our film, you know,” says Roback with a dry laugh. “Incredibly violent. Quite a contradiction. But it was interesting. It’s not uncommon to hear music in any context – you could be walking down the street, or at a funeral, and someone’s driving by playing The Beach Boys.”

Characteristically, the question of how they’d follow-up a hit single and album never particularly seemed to trouble the band.

“We’re not so concerned about the outside world,” explains Roback. “It’s a very internal process that we’re involved in. The outside world is really not on our minds, in so far as the music is concerned. We’re really doing it in our own world for ourselves. We’re engaged in the stories of each individual song. It is its own world unto itself.”

“I WAS ALWAYS WORKING with David,” says Sandoval, as she looks back on the years between Mazzy Star’s third album, 1996’s *Among My Swan*, and *Seasons Of Your Day*. “We thought we’d release something, but we weren’t so preoccupied with it. We were working on other things.”

Certainly Sandoval has kept the highest profile since *Among My Swan*, contributing vocals to songs by The Jesus And Mary Chain, The Chemical Brothers, Death In Vegas, Massive Attack and Bert Jansch, and running a successful band – Hope Sandoval And The Warm Inventions, with My Bloody Valentine drummer Colm Ó Ciosóig. “I’m very lucky,” she says. “I work with some of the most amazing artists.”

Roback, meanwhile, produced tracks for Beth Orton and relocated to Norway, where he became involved with artists and musicians including Mari Boine, Helge Sten and Guri



“It reminds me of Van Morrison”

Mazzy Star review J Mascis’ “Fade Into You”



J MASCIS HAS recently covered “Fade Into You” as a limited-edition 7” picture disc, released to accompany shoes he’s designed for Los Angeles

company, Keep. What does David Roback think of the cover? “I have heard it, and I liked it a lot. It’s interesting and the guitar playing is quite fantastic. It’s different from our version. It reminded me of the song ‘Astral Weeks’ by Van Morrison for the way it had sort of free-form, acoustic lead guitar. I thought it was fantastic.”

“I thought it was amazing,” adds Sandoval.

Dahl, making experimental music for films and installations. He also appeared in Olivier Assayas’ film, *Clean*, for which he wrote four songs sung by actress Maggie Cheung. Meanwhile, he and Sandoval continued working on new material. “She’d come to Norway or we’d work in London or California,” he explains. “We weren’t working on *Seasons Of Your Day* as it exists now, we were just recording various things.”

Sandoval is quick to echo Roback: “We didn’t record songs for *Seasons Of Your Day*, we titled the collection of songs after one of the songs.”

“In the studio, I’m usually playing guitar or keyboards,” continues Roback. “We like to get a live version we like. That’s what really appeals to us. Someone asked me recently if we were perfectionists, and I think perfection in music is really a dull thing, the imperfections of music are what give it character. Live, things happen in the moment.”

Among the musicians on *Seasons Of Your Day* are longtime drummer Keith Mitchell and keyboard player Suki Ewers – both Opal veterans – Colm Ó Ciosóig and the band’s old friend, Bert Jansch. Reinforcing how long Roback and Sandoval have been working on these songs, Rain Parade keyboard player Will Glenn is also credited: he died in 2001. Ex-Long Ryders guitarist, mandolin and banjo player Stephen McCarthy believes his credit stems from a session he played in the early ‘90s. “They asked me to bring my steel guitar down,” he remembers. “So for an afternoon I did some demos. David said, ‘Will you come and do some more recording with us later, in a real studio?’ I went and the only thing I remember him saying to me was, ‘Can you do it like you did on the demo?’ I do recall David seeming like he didn’t know who I was, which was confusing as we’d played quite a bit.”

Hope Sandoval, meanwhile, is already looking beyond *Seasons Of Your Day*. “We’re planning to start touring around November in the US and we’ll come out to Europe and do a few shows,” she explains. “I’m looking forward to getting together with everybody and playing some of the old songs, and having dinner and wine, catching up with everybody.”

And her aversion to singing live?

“It hasn’t changed. It’s difficult, but it’s there.”

Are there more unreleased songs?

“Oh, yeah. There’s loads of songs,” she confirms.

Will we ever hear them?

“I don’t know,” she says after a pause. “Probably. Once our families inherit everything after we’re dead and gone, I’m sure people will hear everything...”

Seasons Of Your Day is released on September 24

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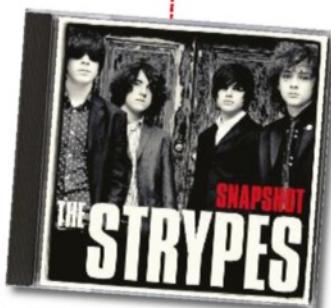
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‘THE CLASH LIVE ON!’

“Being in The Clash,” says Mick Jones, “was a defining moment in our lives, and I’d be lying if I said I’d gotten over it.” Now, though, Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon have curated The Clash’s music for a new boxset, and reunited to talk about their exhilarating and exhausting time in a group that changed the lives of millions. Nothing is off limits – not even the awkward business of Jones’ sacking. Give ‘em enough rope...





THE CLASH

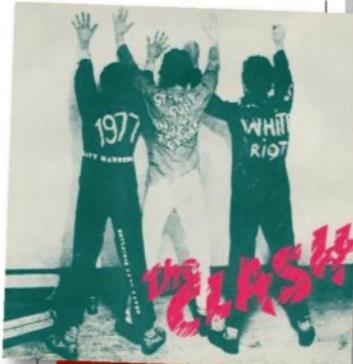
HE LAST TIME I was in a room smaller than Brixton Academy with The Clash, we were in an all-night diner in Washington DC, where at four in the morning Joe Strummer was trying to persuade the rest of the band to join us on a trip to the White House. It was February, 1979. The Clash were just over a week into their first American tour, newly arrived in DC after a harrowing overnight drive from Cleveland through one of the worst blizzards in local memory.

More than 30 years later, Strummer dead since 2002, two of the surviving members of The Clash are grappling with menus not much smaller than a broadsheet newspaper in the plush restaurant of a private member's club near Marble Arch. The third is on his way to join us to talk about *Sound System*, a new boxset that collects the band's first five albums plus three discs of rare and unreleased material and houses them in a box designed to look like a vintage boom-box stereo. It's astonishing to think all this music was made in just five intense years of relentless creativity that produced 16 sides of long playing vinyl and 17 singles during a time the band toured virtually without a break.

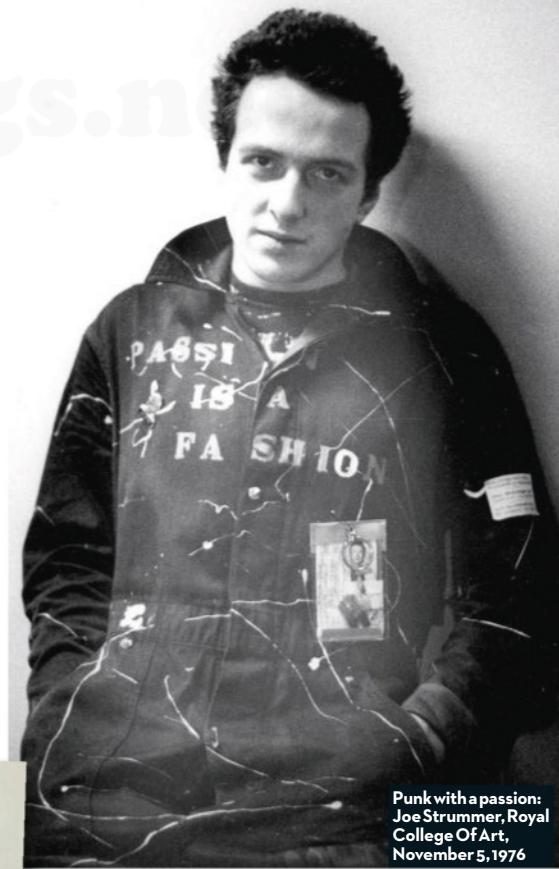
"It's an incredible legacy – double albums, triples, tons of singles. We were out there on our own. No-one else was doing anything like it," Topper Headon tells *Uncut*, while Mick Jones scans his menu. Topper at 58 looks as fit as a butcher's dog. After the many unhappy years that followed his enforced departure from The Clash in 1982 – including a long period of heroin addiction and a spell in prison – he's trim enough to still fit the clothes he was wearing that night in Washington, which can't be said of the rest of us. "The boxset is an amazing thing. I'm so proud of it. I mean – what a legacy to leave behind. Some of this stuff is 30, 35 years old – which is unbelievable in itself – and still sound incredible. We had something that few bands have and that's why the music still stands up and still deserves to be heard. It's all as relevant today as it was when we made the original records."

"The Clash stood for personal politics not party politics..."

Paul Simonon



Punk with a passion:
Joe Strummer, Royal
College Of Art,
November 5, 1976



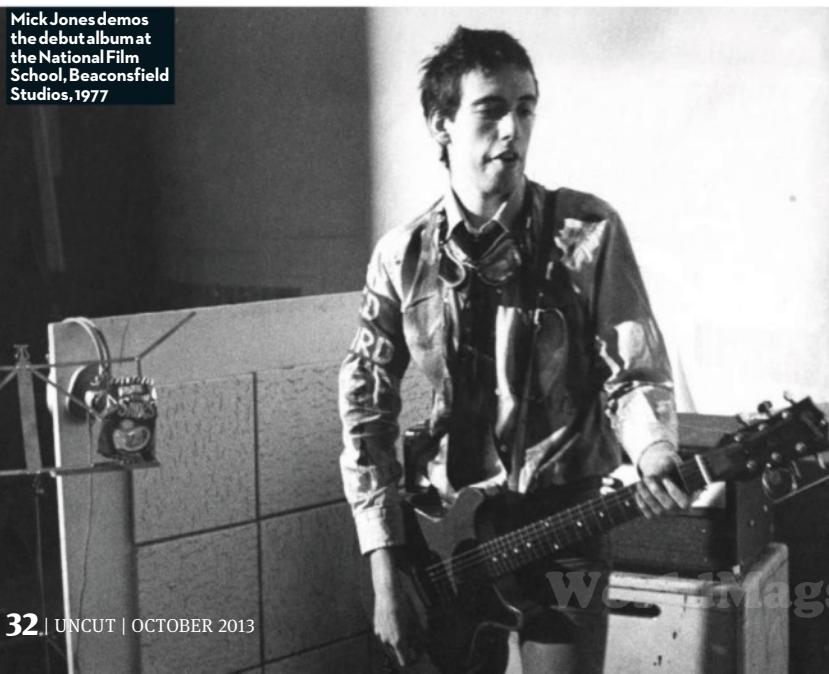
Mick Jones, meanwhile, is wondering whether to have the watercress velouté, whatever that is, for lunch. At 58, Mick is not quite the snake-hipped rock god of yore, cutting a somewhat jollier figure these days and as disarmingly charming as ever, what's left of his hair swept back from the top of his head. He's often to be seen crisply turned out in pin-stripe suits and matching accessories. Today's he rather more casually dressed and has the slightly crumpled look of someone who's fallen asleep on a couch watching the Landscape Channel. He has the raffish air of a venerable actor, popular on TV chat shows for his hilariously indiscreet yarns of thespian wassailing, lost weekends spent quaffing and carousing with legendary hell-raisers from another time, Burton, O'Toole or Richard Harris. In another light, while we're at it, he might remind you of an old-school football manager from the days of sheepskin coats, un-tipped cigarettes and car-park bungs.

Mick seems about to make a decision about the watercress when there's a bit of a commotion and he and Topper are suddenly on their feet. Paul Simonon's belated arrival is a cause for much hugging, back-slapping and good-to-see-you laughter. The same age as Mick and Topper, Paul, like Mick, is no longer the lanky leather-clad colt of the band's charismatic heyday when he would often shoulder in photographs in the manner of a particularly moody young method actor, someone posing with a cigarette dangling from pouting lips. This afternoon, he's dressed in black jacket, shirt, trousers and boots, a small straw hat quickly removed to reveal thinning hair cut brutally short. He looks like he's stomped across a field to get here.

THE THREE OF them settle down, Paul looking at the menu and wondering if they've got egg and chips, which makes Mick laugh. I'm given to wonder if the three of them are often in touch. "We are now," Mick says, which suggests that previously they weren't.

"What Mick means is that we always were in contact," Paul says. "It was just that over the years things between us became disjointed. The communication hasn't always been there. More recently, it's been quite good with me and Mick because we've been working together with Damon [Albarn] and did that whole Gorillaz tour. But it's only recently, since we started work on the boxset, that Topper's got a lot more involved. I don't know why," he says, looking at Topper.

Mick Jones demos the debut album at the National Film School, Beaconsfield Studios, 1977







With Rob Harper
on drums, on
the Sex Pistols'
Anarchy tour, 1976

“Where the hell have you been?”

“I have to put my hands up,” Topper says. “It was mainly my own fault that I hadn’t been involved in whatever was happening. In fact, it was *all* my own fault. I fucked up and had to leave the band. It was no-one else’s fault that I got into cocaine and heroin. But working on this with Mick and Paul has been brilliant and now we talk a lot. When we signed to Eleven Management [Damon’s management company] a few years ago, I met up with them and we talked about the boxset and what we wanted to include and what we didn’t.”

How long have they been working on this?

“Three bloody years,” Paul sighs, as if he hasn’t had a day off since the idea came up, although it was Mick who put in the studio hours.

“I listened to everything we ever did.” Mick looks wan with weariness at the memory. “I got all the CDs and listened to them, and all the tapes, to see what we had and what we could do with them. Did we want to put out everything we ever did, find a place for everything, all the odds and sods, bits and pieces? Just pile it all on? That didn’t seem to me like the way to do it. There’s been a trend over recent years especially with boxsets and legacy editions to pile on so many extras they become overdone. And they’re usually not much cop, to be honest. I mean, how many alternative versions do you need of one song? Who needs like 27 takes? This is much more about the recorded works of The Clash, our musical legacy, rather than a collection of off-cuts, out-takes, rehearsal tapes, things we never put out, and usually for a good reason. You’re missing the point of this boxset if you moan about the fact it isn’t full of stuff like that.

“The main thing for me,” continues Mick, with the concern

RAY STEVENSON/REX FEATURES; CAROLINE COON/CAMERA PRESS

‘THEY WERE BLOODY RUBBISH...’

The Clash made their debut on July 4, 1976, opening for the Sex Pistols at the Black Swan in Sheffield

“WE GOT OUR first mention on the letters page of NME after that,” Mick Jones recalls. “I was thrilled! Someone [Reg Cliff] wrote in saying, ‘I’ve just seen this group, The Clash, in Sheffield and they were bloody rubbish. I was still thrilled.’ “The letter said Dr Feelgood could have wiped the floor with them,” Paul Simonon says, “and then it said the bass player even had to get the guitarist to tune his bass onstage, during the show. That was true enough. I barely had a clue.”

Mick and Bernie Rhodes, during the recording of the debut album, February 1977



of a conservationist, “was to save the music. All the re-mastering was done off the original tapes. Some of them were close to rotting – the older ones, the ones that hadn’t been stored properly. If we hadn’t gone back to them now, they would have deteriorated to the point where if we’d left it much longer there would have been nothing to work with at all.”

“It seemed important to me that what we did should be preserved,” he adds. “The music, especially, which is the point of it all. What this boxset does in a way is carry the name of The Clash forward, you know? So The Clash and what

we did lives on, you know? It was also a way of bringing Joe with us as well, as his words are so strong, so powerful. They live on. We never thought when we started out that what we’d do would end up having such significance, but that’s what happened, and that’s something else the boxset celebrates.”

“The main thing was to be able to hear the music in the best form it’s ever been heard. And this is as close to the original tapes as we’ve been able to come, because of the incredible advances in re-mastering technology. I compare it to watching in HD.

Clarity is everything. Once you’ve seen something in HD you don’t really want to see it in any other format, unless you’re perverse. Have you seen *Casino* in HD? It’s incredible. It’s like standing on the set, watching the action take place around you – it’s just so detailed and the colour is amazing. I wanted to do a similar thing with these re-masters, make them as clear as I could and change the way you listen to them.”

What was it like listening to, say, the first album again?

“Pretty cool, actually,” Mick reveals. “At the same time, I felt a bit removed from it to be honest with you. It’s all so long ago now and I kind of look back on it in retrospect as a fan as much as anything. And I followed the band’s story through the music, rather than the mythology that sometimes surrounds the history of The Clash.”

How large does the legend of The Clash continue to loom in your lives? It’s been 30 years since you split, but has there been a defining experience in your lives since to match it?

“None,” says Mick. “There’s been nothing like it. Being in The Clash was obviously a defining moment in our lives and I’d be lying if I said I’d gotten over it.”

“Personally, I find it easy to put something behind me and move on. I can shake off sentimental attachments,” Paul says. “I’m only reminded of The Clash when things like this boxset come up or someone puts in a request to use one of the songs for a commercial or whatever. Other than that, it’s behind me, really.”

“The Clash was a fantastic thing to have been part of, but it was 30 years ago,” Topper says.

Are your feelings about The Clash coloured by the way it ended for you?

“Not really, no,” he says. “It was my fault it ended the way it did, there’s no blame attached to anyone else. I’m just grateful for the fantastic memories I have. At the same time, the experience was so intense it

ALTERNATIVE ULSTER

'IT WAS A WAR ZONE...'

Paul Simonon on an ill-fated trip to Belfast

IN OCTOBER 1977, The Clash were photographed on the streets of Belfast, posing moodily in a ton of leather with British troops and the Ulster Constabulary lurking nearby. The band were duly castigated for turning a bitter conflict into a photoshoot.

"The whole thing about us going to Northern Ireland is a good example of our intentions being misconstrued," Paul Simonon insists. "The reason we went there wasn't for a photo session with some soldiers on the Falls Road with us going, 'Oh, look at us! We're in this tough place.' We were there because we were trying to encourage more bands to go over and do



some bloody shows. It was more like, 'We're here, come over and do some shows.' No bands had gone over there for ages because some Irish show bands had actually been assassinated. But we wanted to go there because

we'd play anywhere anyone wanted us and we hoped other bands would follow. We didn't set out to romanticise what was going on there. It was a war zone. We were bloody scared to be there. Standing on the Falls Road

or standing outside Long Kesh, it was scary shit. What was amazing was that when we did do a show there, there were Catholics and Protestants in the same hall, enjoying the same band. That's not a bad thing, is it?"

couldn't have lasted much longer anyway. The Clash had to explode or implode or whatever. I'm totally surprised it lasted as long as it did.

"It was always, 'Bloody hell! We've made it through another week.' And then we'd make it through."

What was the extent of your ambition then?

"From the beginning," says Paul, "it was like there was no point in being in a band if we were going to be ordinary because that's just being in a band for the sake of being in a band. There has to be more to it than that. In our case it was to match and go beyond the bands who'd come before us, reach the same heights but on our own terms."

Topper: "There was a great naïvety about The Clash. We wanted to be the biggest band in the world, but there were conditions. We weren't going to play seated stadiums. We weren't going to do this and we weren't going to do that. We're going to do a double album. We're going to do a *triple* album. We're going to be the biggest band in the world but we won't do anything that will make that easy. In fact, we're going to make ourselves a pain in the arse. You had all these other groups who also wanted to be the biggest band in the world and they'd do anything the record company told them if they thought it would bring them the success they were so desperate for. We'd go on these fantastic tours with fantastic support acts and we'd still find a way to piss off the record company. We couldn't do it like all those other bands."

"That's why we were The Clash," says Paul.

And what were Mick's ambitions?

"I just wanted to be in a band," he says. "I grew up in a time when that's what everybody wanted. But I was a lot more serious about it than a lot of people. I studied every band I went to see. I studied every band that came before us. I studied their songs, how they were arranged. I analysed everything about them. What they sounded like. What they wore. I'd check out all their moves."



"I followed the story of The Clash through the music, not the mythology"
Mick Jones



Whatever looked or sounded great, I'd nick."

"Pete Townshend and Wilko from Dr Feelgood were the ones who were really great onstage," admits Paul. "That's what I wanted to be like. That was a bit difficult though because you're supposed to have a guitar to do all that stuff. That's why I didn't really want the job of being the bass player. Because if you were the bass player you were the one who stands in the back like John Entwistle or Bill Wyman. I didn't want the job of standing in the back, so I pretended I was playing Mick's parts."

When you went into the studio to record the first album, how ready were you?

Paul: "We were as absolutely ready as we would ever have been."

Mick: "We were just desperate to get on with it. We'd been waiting long enough for the chance."

Paul: "It didn't seem a problem that we weren't at some kind of musical pinnacle in terms of our professionalism or ability. That didn't seem the point. Being able to play at some elevated level of competence or our musical ability generally wasn't important. We didn't need to be super-proficient at playing. We were an expression of the times and our age and experience. We weren't polished. We weren't slick. I think it gave a certain sincerity to what we were doing."

What did you think of punk, Topper? Joe, Mick and Paul were obviously already central to what was happening, but you'd had your own scene going.

"When I joined the group, I loved the way they looked," Topper recalls. "The three of them were very charismatic and seemed wonderful. The only thing that worried me was whether it would last. The punk thing seemed destined to be short-lived, but in The Clash we had a scene of our own. We were living our own lives. We were just The Clash and nothing else mattered. Nothing else was as important. Being in The Clash meant everything to us."

"The longer we were together the better and better the music got. By the time we came to record *Sandinista!*, it



In Bernie Rhodes' office, Camden, 1978. And below right, in the newsagents opposite Camden Market

It was like free form rock'n'roll. Nothing was written or rehearsed. Someone would grab an instrument and start playing and we'd run with that. Whoever was first into the studio would start working on something and that would become a song with input from all four of us. As Joe always used to say, the chemistry between the four of us was incredible. It was. If I have any regrets I think it would be not appreciating at the time what we had between us. The pity is I took it for granted. Maybe we all did, unfortunately. I mean, for Mick to write those songs and Joe to come up with those lyrics, what a team. The quality of their songwriting was phenomenal. There were so many great songs. Mick and Joe were an amazing songwriting team and, you know, Joe in so many ways has been with us through this whole thing."

"You knew Joe before any of us," says Mick to me. "In Newport, you were at the art school when Joe was there. What was he like?"

I mention Joe turning up at my digs one night, eager to hear some of the music I'd been ranting about in the student union bar after we'd watched some hapless edition of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* with Bob Harris waxing lyrical about Camel or Wishbone Ash and how Joe had not been impressed by The Velvet Underground, David Bowie, Roxy



"The Clash just ran its course and couldn't have gone on... it was too intense"
Topper Headon

the Stones were playing. I'd go down there and wait for them and get in by joining the back of Billy Preston's entourage, as if we were part of it, just swan in. The Speakeasy was where all the bands hung out and that thing with Bob Harris happened just before it closed down, just after all the punks started going there. There was a brief crossover between the dinosaur groups and young punks coming in."

Did you really think of them as dinosaurs? As Robert Plant's reminded me more than once, he was only 29 when punk hove noisily into view. "Some of them, yes," Mick says. "The problem with those bands was they left you as they found you. They did nothing to change you. Some of them barely even acknowledged their fans. I think we did more than most to break down the barrier between the audience and the group. There were a lot of good groups before us – I'm not

Paul and Joe – and below left (centre), Joe in Newport, Wales, 1972

Music or the MC5 and had hilariously described Lou Reed as a decadent slut.

"Joe said that about Lou Reed?" Mick asks, with a look that suggests if he'd known anything about this, Joe would have spent the rest of his career playing the Red Cow with The 101ers.

"It's a terrible thing to say, but I couldn't stand Bob Harris," Paul says. "When I heard Sid Vicious attacked him, I was really happy."

"That was at the Speakeasy, wasn't it?" Mick says, the Speakeasy a club made famous by the '60s rock aristocracy and still a place to be seen in the '70s. "It used to be really cool to go there. When I was really young and had long hair and that, I used to go and wait outside with my mates to see who would turn up. We also used to hang round outside Tramps nightclub, if

talking about some of the more severe cape-wearing progressive groups. I'm talking about the Big Five – the Stones, Who, Beatles, Kinks, Small Faces. They were great and some of the other groups from the same era. Everybody else got what they deserved."

Paul: "We did admire those bands, but it was time for a change. So you had to be brutal. You had to say, 'It's Year One, now. Everything starts again and we want you out of the way. Your time is over.' That said, we had a lot of respect for some people, like Pete Townshend. He was one of the few people who came to our shows. He showed his support by coming to see the band. It meant a lot. It was fantastic, in fact, I don't recall anyone else doing that. Bob Dylan came in the later stages, but Townshend was around a lot. I can't think of anyone else of his standing that came to see us when the shows were to put it mildly very rough and tough."

Topper: "Pete Townshend was wonderful to me after The Clash. He rescued me. He sent me for treatment in LA and paid for it himself. He'd had his own problems so he knew what I was going through. He was no stranger to any of it. I was working with Pete Farndon who'd just been sacked from The Pretenders. He died of a heroin overdose. Pete came up and said, 'You're next. Carry on like this and you'll be the next to go.' He'd just got clean at the time. He was brilliant."

"And of course, we toured with The Who," Mick says. "It was their last tour for a long time and it was almost like they were handing the mantle to us."

Disenchanted fans claimed you'd become what you set out to replace. "I think we did OK, given the contradictions we had to deal with," Mick says. "Whatever some fans thought, it was interesting to see if we could play places like Shea Stadium, environments like that. It was a challenge. That's what we were always looking for."

It was as if a *proper* punk band wouldn't play anywhere larger than The Roxy. "Or sign to CBS," Paul says, grinning.

"The day punk died!" Mick laughs, fanning himself with a napkin like a Southern belle with a touch of the vapours.

Punk fundamentalist were similarly outraged when they discovered Joe had gone to some minor private school and hadn't as they might have preferred been brought up in a workhouse on a diet of mouse droppings or as a child been forced up chimneys. Suddenly, he was inauthentic, a poseur playing at being a punk, not the real thing.

"That totally pissed me off," Paul says, angry. "I've never been to one of those schools and it doesn't matter anyway. I'm from a working-class background, right, but I was furious with that criticism of Joe. It was pathetic. When I first met Joe, he didn't have two pence to rub together. He was living in a squat. The most important thing was that I liked him and he liked me, we communicated well. That's what was important to me, his friendship. It's all I needed to know about him. What school he went to was totally unimportant. We just enjoyed a really good friendship and what I learned from it was that your background, that's irrelevant. It's who you are that counts. When I was younger, I felt differently. It was always, 'Look at them posh cunts, the stuck-up wankers.' I realised as I got older that not all rich people are worthless tossers. Some of them are nice people. They're not all wankers. There are as many poor people who are wankers as there are rich wankers."

Do you think Joe's often florid radical rhetoric was an over-compensation for his background? I'm thinking of his sometimes ill-judged tendency to romanticise revolutionary groups like the Red Brigades. "Yes, I think so," agrees Mick. "That's very possible."



TRIAL BY CLASH

'HE WAS LIKE A SCIENTIST IN THE STUDIO...'

Mick and Paul on working with Sandy Pearlman and Guy Stevens

FOR THEIR SECOND album, *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, The Clash brought in hot-shot American producer Sandy Pearlman, which unsurprisingly didn't sit well with the group's more hardcore, volatile fans. Were they simply being provocative?

MICK: "That wasn't why Sandy got involved at all. He was just really into the band and wanted to work with us, simple as that."

PAUL: "He even got punched out by one of our mates and he still wanted to produce the band. We thought, 'Well, if you've been punched out and still want to work with us you must really want to do it.' So sod the record company or what anyone else thinks, you're in, mate. You've gone through a trial by fire, you're in. Fuck everybody else and their opinions. You're the one."

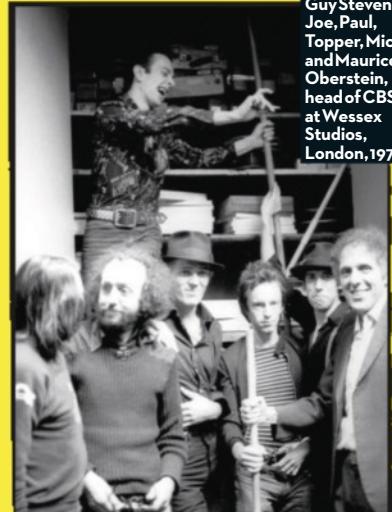
MICK: "I have nothing but good memories of working with him. It was the first time we'd been in America together, it was very exciting."

PAUL: "I have to say I did find it difficult working with him. To me he was like a scientist in the studio with his lab coat."

MICK: "He didn't have a lab coat!"

PAUL: "He might as well have had one. Mentally, he definitely had a lab coat. At the time, I was still trying to learn my craft and there were a lot of mistakes that he kept making me correct. Guy Stevens was the perfect producer for me. When we were doing *London Calling*, I'd say, 'Oh, I made a mistake on 'Brand New Cadillac'. And he'd say, 'It doesn't matter. It sounds like a car crash. It's great. Leave it.'

Bill Price, Guy Stevens, Joe, Paul, Topper, Mick and Maurice Oberstein, head of CBS, at Wessex Studios, London, 1979



"I think that was Joe just trying to work things out. He was always looking for something to believe in," Paul says. "The Red Brigades, he realised that whole issue was a live grenade and didn't want to go near that when he thought things through. We never wanted to align ourselves to any political party, even though we were obviously very much of the left."

So what did The Clash stand for?

"Humanity and compassion," Paul says.

"Personal politics, not party politics."

"The politics of the band were straightforward," Topper confirms. "We said we wouldn't play seated venues. We wanted to give value for money and release as much material as we could as often as we could. That was our politics – giving fans value



Mick on tour in the US, 1979, and below, with the band filming the "London Calling" video, Battersea Pier, Dec '79

for money and meeting them after the gig and being available to them."

"We treated fans as human beings," says Paul. "That was quite new."

Were there times, though, when Joe was on his soap box that you wished he'd maybe for once just shut the fuck up?

"Well, not *shut up* exactly," says Mick. "But you could tell sometimes that we were tired and confused."

In my experience of him, Joe was well-practised in the art of the impassioned rant. But how concerned were you that he might come over as just a mouthpiece for [manager] Bernie Rhodes' more extreme views?

"I don't think Joe was ever Bernie's mouthpiece," Paul weighs in, quite vehemently. "Bernie's influence was very important for the band, but his approach

PENNIE SMITH: Vinnie Zufante/STARFILE

would be that he'd ask you what your opinion was and when you told him, he'd let you know what *he* was thinking and that was always interesting because what he said would often act as a trigger. You'd go away and think about what he'd told you and suddenly you'd come to a conclusion on your own that was maybe different to what you'd originally thought. It was his input that'd spark that. It was always a

very interesting process, but he never told us what to say. It wasn't like we were brainwashed by Bernie. He just made you consider angles you hadn't previously thought of."

NOW THAT THEY are so sainted and their reputation hallowed, it's perhaps easy to forget what a rough ride The Clash even in their heyday were given, often by their own fans. Their so-called punk credentials seemed to be under constant scrutiny by punk's Taliban. Critics were frequently harsh, even mocking. Their idealism made them an easy target for ridicule. Strummer's rebel posturing was a particular target. "You just got used to it," Paul says. "We got all kinds of criticism. Everybody had something they wanted to take issue with. In the end, we just thought, if people are going to knock us anyway, why



HEAVY MANNERS MAKETH THE MAN...

Paul Simonon on the look of Sound System and the art of The Clash

“WITH THE LOOK of Sound System, cassette machines were what we carried around the whole time when we were on tour, in a hotel, or in an airport, or in the bar, even. It's your own music - there wasn't much on the radio, and everywhere you went, you could share it with people. These days, everyone's got their iPods and headphones. It seemed like the ideal representation of each one of us, really. As for what's in it... I still wear the dog tags.

"In the beginning I spent quite a lot of time trying to play the bass, so the music was pretty much left to Mick and Joe - and the art stuff was more down to me. When we signed to CBS, this guy said to me, 'Right I'll show you the art department.' He took me in and said, 'I thought I'd show you your album cover.' It was a picture of a pair of old boots - not even DM boots - on a cobbled street in a Yorkshire town. I said, 'It's a nice picture, but it's not our album cover.' He seemed a bit put out. But we had full control. We set about working on something else.

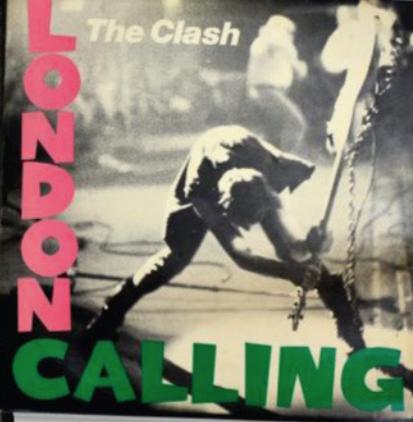
"A lot of our references were down to the music I was listening to... Big Youth, a lot of inspiration came from there. It was the only sort of music that seemed to fit: I don't live in Kingston and I'm not black, but it did speak to me, and a lot of music in that time didn't.

Those musicians wanted to find their own voice - and so did we. "The clothes, a lot of it was about cost. The thing was to get something no-one else wanted,

like straight-leg trousers. There were loads in the second-hand shops because everyone wanted flares. It's true! It was a look to toughen up. You had to dress tough, which was something I picked up as a kid. With the punk thing that became very important, because after Bill Grundy and the Pistols anyone who looked like a punk was threatened on the streets. That wasn't from any tribal faction - that was from the general public. So you dressed accordingly. Heavy manners.

"I suppose in the early days, the aggressiveness of punk made us rally round each other and made us stronger as a collective. That does resonate: if people are aggressive to you when you come onstage, you learn something. Maybe stagecraft. For every action there has to be a reaction."

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON



The Clash near Bangkok, Thailand, taking time out from the *Combat Rock* cover shoot, 1982



bother to explain ourselves. It was like, 'It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. This is our band. These are our lives. We'll play the music we want to, and just get on with it. If you don't like us, form your own band.'"

"*London Calling* was the point, I think, when we started doing things for ourselves and not worrying what anyone thought," says Mick. "By then we were just determined to do only what we wanted to do. From then on, we did what we wanted and just played the music we liked. That was the most important thing for us."

"When we recorded *London Calling*, we loved each other's company and we were pretty inseparable," Topper recalls. "The camaraderie was amazing. We were just great friends. Being in a band can be a fabulous feeling, but being in The Clash was even more special, particularly at that time."

"People used to look at you when you came through the airport," Mick remembers, sounding rather wistful. "We really made an impression as a group. You couldn't miss us. We really stood out. We looked great. We were great."

These were halcyon days for The Clash. *London Calling* had spectacularly revived a faltering career and having tested punk orthodoxy with a double album, they delivered in December 1980 a triple album, *Sandinista!*.

Fans and critics were largely baffled, often hostile, the album's spectacular stylistic diversity evidence to them less of the band's broadening musical horizons than gross self-indulgence. In the face of virtually unanimous disparagement, they remained defiantly single-minded.

"There was just no stopping us," Mick recalls. "We were fanatical about what we were doing because it really does take fanaticism to work at that level. I can't imagine

"It might have seemed to Paul and Joe that I was acting too much like a rock star"

Mick Jones

now trying to maintain that level of energy and intensity. It would be impossible at our age," he laughs. "But at the time, we pushed everything as hard as we could. The Clash was our life and we were dedicated to it. We lived every moment to the full."

"We lived it, simple as that," Paul says. "Twenty-four hours a day. What you wore onstage, you wore offstage. There was no difference. We went from playing the shows straight into the studio. There was no stopping us. We couldn't even stop ourselves."

"We paid a price for it all, though," Mick says. "None of it was without its cost, as Topper unfortunately knows."

By 1982 and the band's Far East tour at the beginning of the year, Topper's drug addiction had spiralled out of control. He made it through the sessions for *Combat Rock*, but before its release was asked to leave the band. Terry Chimes, who played on *The Clash*, replaced Topper for a American tour with The Who, before he quit the band in early '83, the rancour between Joe and Paul on one side and Mick on the other too much for him. Pete Howard was drafted in for the US Festival in California, which The Clash co-headlined with David Bowie and Van Halen. The Clash played on May 22. It was Mick Jones' last appearance with them. In

September, 1983 in a putsch organised by Joe and Paul, he was sacked from his own band.

"I knew realistically that groups split up," Mick says now. "I mean, I was heartbroken when Bowie split the Spiders. When you've got your own band, though, you don't think that's going to happen to you. When Topper went, something of me went with him. I didn't want him to go, but there didn't seem like an alternative at the time. That's just the way things were."



In New York, 1983, with the reinstated Terry Chimes (second left)



Mick's last Clash gig: the US Festival, May 28, 1983, Ontario, California

He'd become a problem and had to go. As I was about to find out, I was next." Joe said that you'd become as difficult to work with as Elizabeth Taylor in a full-on diva strop. "Well, my mum was a bit like Elizabeth Taylor, maybe I got it from her," Mick says, his humour for the first time faltering at these unhappy memories. "It might have seemed to Paul and Joe that I was acting too much like a rock star, but I didn't see it that way. I do admit I'd maybe become a bit too possessive of the music. I was much too precious with what essentially and for the best, really, was a group thing. I got too much into myself. That could have caused problems."

Paul, how much of a problem had Mick's behaviour become?

"Quite a major problem, really," Paul says, sombre now, too. "For me and Joe, it was like there was so much to do, we needed to get on and do it. We'd been putting up with Mick for about six years. Mick is Mick and he gets up at a certain time and at first

that was OK. But you get to a point where you're not a teenager, you're a man of 27 and it's still, 'Where is he? Why isn't he out of bed? We've got shows to do.' After a while, it wears you down. In the end, we got bloody-minded. You think, 'Sod it. He's got to go. We can't go on like this.'"

"In my defence," Mick says, "I was being pushed into an uncomfortable place with the return of Bernie [after being sacked as manager in 1978, Rhodes was

reinstated in 1981]. "Yeah, but Bernie was unaware what was going to take place," Paul says. "When we said we wanted you out of the band, he didn't know anything about that when he came back. Bernie was shocked. He said he knew something was going to happen. But he didn't know me and Joe were going to sack you."

"I felt I'd been stitched up," Mick says.

"You were," Paul says. "But not by him." "I was amazed when I read Mick had left the band, as well," Topper says. "But that was so typical of The Clash and the way

we did things. The downside of making all that music and touring as much as we did was that we lived together for five or six years. Every morning I'd wake up and know I was going to see Paul, Mick and Joe. And like in any relationship, things when they're so intense are going to sour. You get fed up with each other. I think The Clash just ran its course and couldn't have gone on much longer. It was just too intense."

The table's been cleared. A car is waiting. One more question. What would the young Clash have said if someone had walked into an early rehearsal or their first recording sessions at Beaconsfield, and told them that in 30 years they'd be sitting in a private members club and talking about the music they hadn't yet made in the context of a career-spanning, multi-disc boxset, designed for posterity?

"Laughed, probably," says Paul.

"I would have wondered which one of us was going to end up a member of somewhere like this," Mick says, giving the room a last look before heading for the door. 

The Clash: Sound System and The Clash Hits Back compilation are released by Sony Music on September 9



Paul, Mick, Topper and Joe - the Ivor Novello Awards, 2000

HEADONISM

'IT LOOKED INCREDIBLY INNOCUOUS, THIS TINY LINE OF POWDER...'

Topper on the addictions that cost him his place in The Clash

UNCUT: Given what you went through after being forced out of The Clash, your lack of bitterness is surprising.

TOPPER HEADON: "When I got into recovery, I had to work on my resentments and my biggest one was with The Clash for sacking me. This was like 10 years ago and that's how I felt, until it was pointed out to me that you had this brilliant band that was conquering the world and making double albums and triple albums and going to America and Japan and there's one guy in the band who's like a flat tyre. So the band is like a car that's going really fast and it's got a flat tyre and that's what I became. I don't think it affected my drumming. Someone sent me a recording of my last gig with The Clash recently and the drumming's still good. But now after being nine years

sober, I know being around someone who's drunk all the time is not a pleasant thing."

When did you realise you had a problem? "It just happened, like the band just happened. When I first joined, I used to go to the gym and didn't drink much. But gradually I tried a bit of cocaine and a bit of this and that, and it just happened. From then on, I just wanted more, of everything. I suffer from the disease of

wanting more. However much I'd taken, I wanted more. Drumming was my first addiction - I used to drum eight hours a day to the exclusion of everything else."

"I've got an obsessive addictive nature. Bernie used to tell me to stop hanging out with the road crew - I'd party with Mick on a Monday, party with Joe on the Tuesday, party with Paul on the Wednesday and couldn't see a problem, but the rest of the time I was out with the road crew, so I was partying every night of the week."

Can you remember the first time you took heroin? "Yes. And it looked so innocuous, this tiny line of powder - by then I was taking long lines of cocaine as you will do as your addiction escalates. And the band warned me about heroin, they knew my nature, but I thought I'll try it and I won't get addicted - the same mistake so many people have made. The first time I tried it I was addicted immediately. I loved it. This was in Fulham. The funny thing was, I ended up in Sid Vicious' old flat in Maida Vale, Pindock Mews, with some other people - I came down one morning and saw them in the kitchen injecting heroin and I thought, 'Oh no. I'm off.' And I moved to Fulham and there was some lying around and I started and that was it."

"Obviously, I wouldn't wish being a heroin addict or going to prison on anyone. But I don't know if I'd want to change anything. I was so proud to be in The Clash. I was a great drummer in a great band. I don't regret any of it."

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I Feel Like I'm Fixin'-To-Die Rag

BY COUNTRY JOE AND THE FISH

An accidental Woodstock favourite, and one of the finest protest songs ever: "It's full of vicious humour but it's not anti-soldier," says Country Joe McDonald: "It's become a touchstone for a generation!"

WHEN 'COUNTRY' JOE McDonald was asked to make an emergency solo appearance at Woodstock in August 1969 he didn't expect to become one of the stars of the festival, let alone to do so with a protest song he'd written years previously. But as the crowd sang along lustily to "I Feel Like I'm Fixin'-To-Die Rag", McDonald could see that the song's time had finally come. The national mood had turned resolutely against the Vietnam War and this caustic but jaunty anti-war satire, with its chorus of "Whoopee, we're all gonna die!", was just what people wanted.

"It's the antithesis of Joan Baez," muses McDonald, who recorded the song twice, first with a skiffle band for a seven-inch edition of his folk magazine, *Rag Baby*, in 1965 and again as the title track of his second LP with psychedelic West Coast rock band Country Joe And The Fish. McDonald was steeped in leftist politics – his parents were Communists – but he had served in the Navy, so the song came from a unique vantage point, attacking the economic factors behind the war while sympathetic towards the men called to fight.

It assumed an unlikely popularity among both hippies and marines. The song took on added controversy when the band adapted the preceding 'Fish' cheer ('Give me an F', 'Give me an I' etc) and turned it into the 'fuck' cheer. That got the band in trouble, but also gave them increased counter-

culture cachet in that long, divisive year of 1968. Then came Woodstock, where "Fixin'-To-Die" cemented its reputation both as musical shorthand for the turbulence of the Vietnam era and as one of the finest and funniest protest songs ever written.

PETER WATTS

'COUNTRY' JOE MCDONALD: I wrote it in 30 minutes in the summer of 1965. I was in Berkeley and I'd been working on a song for a play called *Changeover* about the Vietnam War. That took me three days and when I finished, I leaned back in my chair with a guitar and started strumming a melody and singing and before I knew it, I'd written "I Feel Like I'm Fixin'-To-Die Rag".

BARRY 'THE FISH' MELTON: We'd seen each other around playing gigs and at some point he called me and said 'I want to do a record.' We met to rehearse and that's where I first heard it. It was a good song. I can't even count the number of demonstrations we played it at.

MCDONALD: I had played dixieland music in high school and had written ragtime, but I was



KEY PLAYERS

 **'Country' Joe McDonald**
Vocals

 **Barry 'The Fish' Melton**
Kazoo, vocals,
12-string guitar

 **Bruce Barthol**
Bass, vocals

 **David Cohen**
Calliope organ,
vocals

also following a tradition of old-style folk music from the USA. I was raised in a radical family and had a socialist view towards the military-industrial complex. Also at that point I'd only been out the Navy a few years. So I had a rock'n'roll attitude and a military attitude. The song is full of vicious humour, but it's educational and the unique thing is it wasn't anti-soldier.

MELTON: His big hit at demonstrations was actually "Stop! In The Name Of Love" by The Supremes. He'd get up and say, 'I have a message for Lyndon Johnson' and then begin "STOP! In the name of love..." People loved it.

MCDONALD: I was editing a folk magazine, *Rag Baby*. Chris Strachwitz from Arhoolie Records wrote some articles. We didn't have any copy for October '65 so I got the idea of doing a 'talking' issue. We recorded it as a skiffle band: me, Barry,



Country Joe And
The Fish: from the
*Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-
To-Die* album cover
shot, 1967

Mike Beardslee on kazoo, Bill Steel on bass and Carl Shrager on washboard and pressed about 500 copies.

MELTON: We recorded it round a mic in Chris Strachwitz's living room. We did "Fixin-To-Die" with a jug band and "Superbird" as a duo. On the flipside was "Fire In The City" by a guy called Pete Krug about the Watts riot. It was a protest seven-inch that we sold at the first teach-ins against the war at Berkeley in October '65.

MCDONALD: We went electric after we heard *Highway 61 Revisited*. We began to play the dancehalls. Then someone from Vanguard saw us.

DAVID COHEN: I got to California in '65 and jumped into the music scene. There was this old beat-up piano at the Jabberwock coffee house, which was our HQ, and I'd bang away at it. Barry liked the way I played and Joe decided he wanted an organ in the band. The first concert I played was a free concert on campus in May 1966.

BRUCE BARTHOL: I'd been to school with Barry and joined the band in early 1966. We had a few tunes that were real political and played

them regularly and we also had some drug songs. I played on the second EP [*"Thing Called Love"*]/"*Bass Strings*"] and I thought we were going to get arrested because we sang about smoking weed.

COHEN: We were doing "Fixin-To-Die" from the start. The thing I most remember was that it wasn't included on the first album [*Electric Music For The Mind And Body, April 1967*] because Vanguard thought it was too political. So they put it on the second record instead [*I-Feel-Like-I'm Fixin-To-Die, Nov 1967*].

MCDONALD: The story is that they wouldn't put it on the first album because they thought it might be controversial but that's not how I see it. We'd signed a contract to make one album every six months for six years, and in one year they used up my entire repertoire. We had to put it on.

MELTON: Sam Charters, our producer, wanted to spread out the repertoire over two albums so we would have a strong follow-up. That's my interpretation. The Solomon brothers, who ran Vanguard, were more concerned about songs that

had drug lyrics than ones that were political. They were old left from New York and very anti-drugs. The idea that they thought "Bass Strings", which was about smoking marijuana, was a better alternative is quite frankly absurd.

MCDONALD: Vanguard were old-school left-wingers – pro-union, Pete Seeger, propaganda-based folk music – and I don't think they understood what we were doing. I don't think that unless you were part of our generation you could see "*have your boy come home in a box*" as a joke. It was an ironic joke, because we were the boys who'd be coming home in boxes.

MELTON: When we recorded it again, we did it at Vanguard Studio in New York. The studio was right next to the Chelsea Hotel. There's a slickness to that second album that is completely absent on the first.

COHEN: We'd been working on the song for hours. We weren't getting it. We wanted to do something different, in different styles, like a jug band, like a rock band, like a folk band, and we couldn't get it. So we took a break and I sat at the



The Fish in the late '60s: "The draft was a threat to us all!"

• piano and started to play it as a ragtime number and Sam jumped up and said, 'That's it!' and that's how we did it.

MCDONALD: When I was in high school the college band would spell out the name of the sports team, so I got the idea to put "The 'Fish' Cheer" in front of the song. We overdubbed ourselves so it sounded like a crowd. Then we began doing that at shows.

COHEN: It was a pretty obvious switch from 'Fish' to 'fuck'.

MELTON: To my mind that happened to some degree in synchronicity with the filthy speech movement in Berkeley at the time. There was a writer who put 'fuck' in the school paper and got expelled for writing *the word* and it was around that time we integrated the cheer into our repertoire.

MCDONALD: In August 1968 we played the Schaefer Beer Festival in New York's Central Park and the drummer, Chicken Hirsh, got the idea of changing 'Fish' to 'fuck'. From the get-go that was a huge success, the crowd loved it because it was everything rock'n'roll was supposed to be – irreverent and in-your-face, and worked well with the song which was extremely sarcastic. The song itself was controversial, but combined with "The 'Fuck' Cheer" it was mindblowing in an era when the establishment pretended the word fuck did not exist.

COHEN: After the set we were told we'd never play the festival again. We'd also been booked

to play *The Ed Sullivan Show* and they told us to keep the money but not come on the show.

BARTHOL: We were more overtly political than other Bay Area bands but nobody liked that fucking war, nobody liked the racists and nobody liked the drug laws. If you had long hair you got a lot of shit, it was dangerous if you came five miles in from the coast.

COHEN: A lot of people didn't like it. A lot of the bands didn't like it. They were opposed to such overt political statements. But any band, whatever they sang about, when they went to the Midwest they got picked on.

BARTHOL: We got a lot of letters from girls saying 'How could you say this about the war?' but we would play it wherever we went, because the people who came to see us were expecting it and the more worse-off a place was, the more they cheered.

MCDONALD: It was sung at Marine boot camp. Some people got pissed off because they thought that it was unpatriotic, but it's not. The message is that at the end of the day I'm going to do my job, but the job is fucked.

MELTON: The draft was a threat to us all.

BARTHOL: My number came up. I had two physicals and was told 'Get your hair cut and come back in three weeks', but I got a deferment. I came to London and would write the draft board

letters with my left hand until they gave me a 4F, which meant I was unfit for military service. It was my proudest achievement.

COHEN: Jerry Garcia told me about a friend who moved every three months. He'd always tell the draft board but by the time they'd caught up with the new address he'd moved again. I started doing that, until one day I was on the road and my change of address card wasn't sent. The marshals were after me so I turned myself in. I took some acid and when I went to see the psychiatrist I just started babbling until he gave me a 4F.

MELTON: We were always careful when going to bathrooms in airports because there were so many people in khaki and you didn't want to get caught by the wrong folks. But by 1969 the tide of popular opinion turned against the war, and it turned within the military as well. Soldiers that had scowled at us were smiling and flashing the peace sign. They viewed us as allies.

COHEN: We'd get letters from soldiers. We got one from a PoW. He had been held by the Vietnamese for two years and they'd played the song to torture him. They'd say, 'Listen, your country doesn't support you'. He used to laugh at them.

MELTON: The band played Woodstock and we are in the movie for a bit, but Joe got this accidental solo appearance and this big spot on the movie with "Fixin-To-Die".

MCDONALD: A radio station in Manhattan played the song every day for a year, and around

90 per cent of the audience at Woodstock came from the area. So when quite by accident I got up onstage at Woodstock, they all sang along. I only played because Santana were delayed and they asked me to keep the crowd entertained. Nobody knew who the hell I was, but I went out there and shouted 'Give me an "F"!' and everybody started going crazy. The audience really responded to it. It was a unique social-political moment.

MELTON: That little clip has been used over and over. That two-minute appearance on Woodstock was the best-paying two-minutes of my life.

MCDONALD: The court case was crazy. I did a radio show in LA and mentioned that the Kid Ory song was an influence and got sued. The court decided you can't wait 30 years to sue somebody so that was it.

COHEN: It's great seeing the song on television. It's a very powerful song. I believe we had a huge influence in ending the war after it became an anthem.

MCDONALD: There are many parodies – I get sent about one every month. But I've never changed it. It's become a folk song, a touchstone for a generation. 

Summer 1965: Joe McDonald writes "I Feel Like I'm Fixin'-To-Die Rag", records it with Barry 'The Fish' Melton and releases it in October 1965 as a 'talking' version of his Rag Baby folk mag

1966: The lineup of McDonald, Melton, Barthol, Cohen and Hirsh comes together

November 1967: The band release their second LP, *I-Feel-Like-I'm Fixin'-To-Die*, with the "The 'Fish' Cheer"

coupled with "Fixin-To-Die" as the opening track. Within a year, "The 'Fish' Cheer" has become "The 'Fuck' Cheer"

August 1969: McDonald performs the song solo at

Woodstock. He also recites the lyrics when giving evidence at the Chicago Seven trial

August 1971: "Fixin-To-Die" is featured in *The Omega Man* and later on *More American Graffiti*, *Hamburger*

Hill and Generation Kill August 2005: McDonald wins a court case after the relatives of trombonist Kid Ory sue him for plagiarism, claiming the song rips off Ory's 1926 song "Muskrat Ramble"

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Story: Jaan Uhelszki

Photo: Hanly Banks

Hard to get to know... and near impossible to forget

That's how BILL CALLAHAN described himself in "I'm New Here". What, though, is one of America's greatest and most enigmatic songwriters really like? *Uncut* spends an intimate evening at Callahan's house in Austin, unpicking the mysteries of the Artist Formerly Known As Smog... "I left clues?"

ABOUT TWO MILES south of the Interstate, a five-minute car ride from downtown Austin, is Travis Heights. It's the last place Stevie Ray Vaughan called home before he started living out of hotels and storage lockers, and it's where you can spot local resident Robert Plant – whom the locals call "Bob" – and his inamorata Patty Griffin walking their two fluffy dogs through the meandering streets after sundown.

Local legend has it that when Callahan moved to Austin right after a particularly satisfying SXSW festival, he slept in his car in the parking lot of a La Quinta hotel, before finding a house in South Austin. As it was for the city's infamous bats, Austin was somewhere Callahan could hide in plain sight – something the determinedly mysterious singer-songwriter is well-versed in. Callahan's parents both worked for the National Security Agency when he was a child, and so sensitive was their work that he was forbidden to tell his friends what they did for a living.

"It's not too big, it's not too small," he says of Austin. "It's not overwhelming in either of those country or city ways. A bigger city has more angst. Or something that people can put on you."

It's dusk, and there's a squall line of thunderstorms rumbling through the Texas hill country, intermittently pelting Callahan's small frame house with fat raindrops, the 40-mile-an-hour winds causing the dark spindly trees in his front yard – which already look as if they had been manicured by Edward Scissorhands –

to twist into even more unnatural angles. The porchlight is burned out, and the only illumination inside the bungalow comes from a small paper lantern on the floor and a vintage cut-glass lamp with a tea-coloured shade that sits on a scratched end table.

The house is perfectly symmetrical, with all the walls painted a creamy white. Among the very few objects: a photo of Callahan as a teen in a suburban backyard, practising some martial art with a friend. The kitchen cupboards reveal a

"I feel like it's my duty to myself to earn my place on the earth. To earn the air I breathe"

preponderance of tea and organic ephemera, but not enough dishes to have a small dinner party. On the refrigerator there is a take-out menu, a schedule for cutting the brush and, oddly, a \$10 bill stuck on with a teddy-bear magnet.

What's that for, I ask?

"Emergencies."

Further into the spotless kitchen, there is a set of knives on a magnetic strip. And these?

"Emergencies."

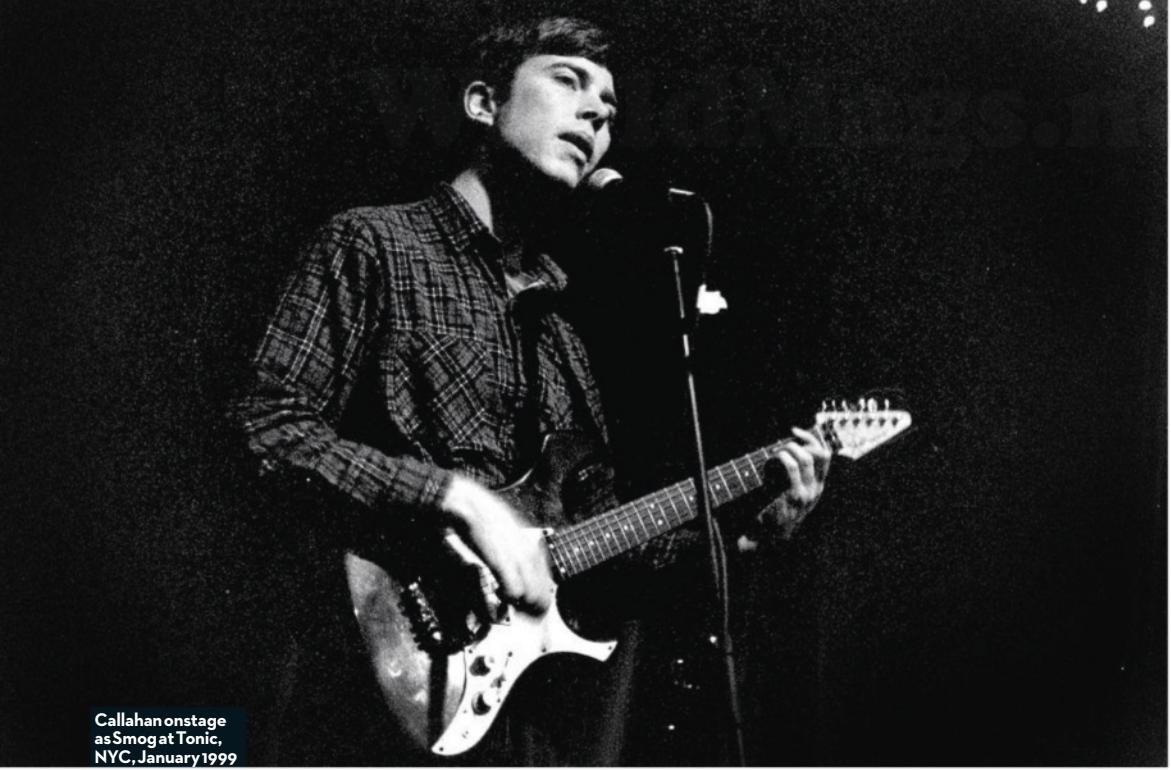
Over 11 fine albums as Smog, and four more exceptional ones under his own name, Bill

Callahan has established himself as a determinedly mysterious singer-songwriter. From his first recordings of found sounds at high school in Maryland, through homemade cassettes, and onto the unknowable canon of Smog, Callahan has obscured as much as he has revealed, creating music for endings, epiphanies and quiet revolutions.

His records are always more like collections of short stories than albums of songs; compressed, minimal, with a sharp sense of isolation and space. The characters in his lyrics are men's men, the kind you might find in a Hemingway novella or Raymond Carver poem – solemn, stoic types who use few words yet impart great wisdom as they try to make their way through the daunting landscape and even more daunting relationships. Callahan has been involved with such arresting woman as the late Cynthia Dall, Chan Marshall, Joanna Newsom and zine-owner and author Lisa Carver, and while he insists that his songs are at most one per cent autobiographical, it's hard not to imagine that some of those romantic *mise en scènes* didn't seep into at least a few songs.

The relationship seems sweeter, more romantic – permanent, even – on his new album *Dream River*, eight songs connected like islands in an archipelago, each an important piece in explaining the importance of love as well as Callahan's self-acceptance.

"I would hope it was more than a relationship album. It's certainly a part of what it's all about. Love. The value of love," he says. Unnervingly,



Callahan onstage
as Smog at Tonic,
NYC, January 1999

His speaking voice is exactly like his singing voice.

Not to be simplistic, but I think you're in love and I think you have somebody to live for, I say. You've left too many clues.

"I left clues?" His tourmaline-coloured eyes narrow.

Certainly in the lyrics. But there are two bikes against the wall. A girl bike and a boy bike.

"Neither of 'em are mine. Those are for you to think about." Eventually, he concedes, "OK, yeah, I'm in a good relationship," he admits. "I just try to keep my personal life out of things. The songs should stand on their own."

Usually, Callahan eschews face-to-face interviews. Yet this time he has allowed *Uncut* into his lair. Why?

"I don't know. It seemed like the right thing to do," Callahan says, uncertainly, as he settles his bare feet under him and sinks into the curve of a Victorian tufted couch, all carved wood pieces and overstuffed pillows. It's the sort of thing you might find expect to find in Stevie Nicks' spare bedroom.

"Well, the furniture is all rented. And so is the house," Callahan says, a little defensively.

Since there is something so uncluttered about Callahan's songs, one assumes that austerity spills into his personal life.

"A lot of people assume I'm neat. My guess is because I don't dress like a pseudo-hippy. But I usually have a very positive feeling when my home is neat as a pin. You don't picture God with barbecue sauce stains on his shirt. But is cleanliness next to godliness? A lot of neat freaks are really ungodly, unhappy people."

NORIKO ANDREW CONROY



Wild Love: Callahan's
ex-girlfriends Chan Marshall,
above, and Joanna Newsom



by his suspects, to their eventual detriment.

"I think the most important thing to know about Bill is that he doesn't consider himself a mystery," explains Hanly Banks, a Texas-born, New York-based filmmaker who directed last year's *Apocalypse: A Bill Callahan Tour Film*.

"I think the name Smog got to feel like a curtain he didn't want anymore," explains Connie Lovatt, the bassist on *A River Ain't Too Much To Love*, the editor of Callahan's novel, *Letters To Emma Bowlcut*, and one of his closest friends. "I do think everyone can see him just a little clearer now."

"When I changed the name, I felt like it wiped the slate clean so I could start out fresh. I don't really see it in the realm of the stuff I've done in the past," says Callahan. "I don't regret ever calling myself Smog, though. It served me because it staved off the tag of 'singer-songwriter' for a long time. Half of the time when I get approached, people say, 'Are you from Smog?' It sounds like a planet. They don't know my name, and that's fine."

Bill Callahan's celebrity isn't the kind that attracts a casual fan. Those who like his music tend to be obsessive about it, and have a sense of ownership over Callahan. Canadian photographer Chris Taylor's life began to unravel eight years ago, when he turned 30, broke up with his girlfriend, left Spain and returned to his hometown of Victoria, BC. About that same time he bought a Smog CD and things began to make sense. Eventually, he contacted Callahan's label, Drag City, with a proposal to photograph the artist every day for a

SUCH A DRAG

FITTING THE BILL

Drag City label boss Dan Koretzky on 24 years of working with Bill...

UNCUT: How did you meet Bill Callahan?
KORETZKY: I had written him about buying his first record - *Sewn To The Sky* - to carry at a record distributor I was working with in 1989.

How did you go from that first



Bill. I know that might read sarcastic but it's genuine. It's always intimidating approaching

meeting to having him on your label? I was a fan of his cassette releases and his first album. After we started Drag City we felt we had enough muscle (we were working with Royal Trux, after all!) to approach

any artist we respect. So we used our "Trux Courage" and Bill responded favourably. I assumed he was equally intimidated to be working with Drag City (we were working with Royal Trux, after all!) but over the years I found that to be untrue, in the best way.

How did he fit into Drag City's aesthetic? Our aesthetic might've been best described as FUBU (Fucked Up By Us), so how does he not fit in to that?

How has his music changed over his years on Drag City? He's to my ears a peerless singer and

Callahan's T-shirt is spotless, albeit a little stretched-out at the neck, his hair is pushed neatly behind his ears, and the wooden floor is freshly swept. The only thing that seems remotely messy is a black wooden bookshelf, with books wedged in haphazardly without regard for order or alphabetical filing. *Bass Playing For Dummies* sits near a King Tubby DVD, and *Learning Spanish* by Michel Thomas, "The Language Teacher to the Stars", is right next to a Stephen Crane reader. *A Moment In The Sun* by John Sayles sits below a signed photograph of Peter Falk, which has pride of place in a corner of the bookshelf. For the best part of 22 years, Falk played Columbo, the ruffled, dissembling detective who was consistently underestimated

songwriter. A superficial change is moving from home to studio recording, and from working solo to involving dozens of musicians and engineers. But the greatest change to me is a continual refinement of his writing and phrasing. Also, he did once pick up a cheque, that was perhaps the greatest shift I've witnessed.

People say he is a man of few words. Where do you think that comes from? He saves them for the records.

Your favourite Bill Callahan song? Today, it's "Small Plane".

month. That project became a 67-page tome, with 35 colour plates catching Callahan in the act of being himself. Released last January as *The Life And Times Of William Callahan*, the first printing of a special edition has already sold out.

"I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do. I realise now I was also reaching out to him in a way. I had gone through a bad break-up, and he was sort of going through that with Joanna Newsom. I don't know if I was just speaking his language, and that's why he agreed to let me come to Austin, but he said yes," explains Taylor.

What began as one photograph a day devolved into 10 sessions over a four-week period because, the photographer said, Callahan intimidated him. "Throughout the time I spent with him, I didn't really know how to keep the sort of rhythm I have. He was always very much slower, and left me feeling kinda funny sometimes. We went on a four-hour car trip to Plano, Texas, and he only said three or four things to me the

entire time. I remember asking him what his middle name was, and there was that long Callahan gap of time to reply, then he just went RAWR, like a tiger. I think I looked at him funny, and he said, 'It's Rahr. It's German, and it means rare.'"

Two years ago, filmmaker Banks spent two weeks with Callahan. "I remember saying he reminded me of a peaceful river. Not because he writes about them, but because the thing about rivers is that they don't end up where they started. And I think every time he moves forward, he moves forward. He does not go back. And there's something both tragic and powerful about that. It's a little bittersweet."

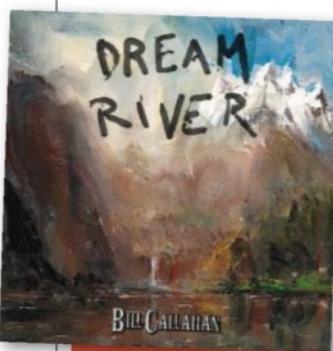
"I agree with that," Callahan says. "I don't think my music has made any kind of straight line. Some

people's stuff gets more and more refined, or it comes closer into a point. I think a lot of great music does that, but I don't. I don't think I keep to any linear course; it's like when you look at a river. If you're walking next to a river, you see it going by and you think it's always something different. I don't think it's ever static. There's all the twists and turns.

I understand that. I like things to be different. Uncertain. I like to be proven wrong. It makes me see things in a different way. It opens things up.

"As for what you call the sparseness of my songs, I always think about it as just cutting away the chaos that there is in thought. I'm always trying to pare it down to something calm and soothing. I work so hard getting there, I feel that's why I want to share it with people. I don't want to say everything's calm, but instead I want to go: 'Look, I found this satisfying combination of words. I want to share it.'

"Anytime I do anything, I feel I'm taking my greatest risk. I'll play a show and I say to myself, 'Why am I going, why am I doing this? Why am I even going onstage? I barely know how to play guitar.' I feel like that about the writing, too. Just saying I'm going to write a song is a risk. When you've written as many songs as I have, I feel the need to validate the fact I'm doing it again. I need to find some new reason for doing it again. I feel like it's my duty to myself to earn my place on the earth. To earn the air that I breathe everyday."



"I just try to keep my personal life out of things. The songs should stand on their own"

HOW TO BUY...

UNFORGOTTEN FOUNDATIONS

Ten of the best Bill Callahan albums



6/10

SMOG FORGOTTEN FOUNDATION

DRAG CITY, 1992

Bill Callahan's second album reveals a very different beast than the compressed minimalist that we've come to know: slurred, blurry vocals, anxious tirades and a delivery that sounds like a malevolent and misanthropic Jonathan Richman.



7/10

SMOG WILD LOVE

DRAG CITY, 1995

Callahan starts to upgrade his sound with the help of producer Rian Murphy, opening up possibilities, spaces and new fretful sounds as on "Sweet Smog Children", his VU homage.



8/10

SMOG THE DOCTOR CAME AT DAWN

DRAG CITY, 1996

Minimal even by his standards, Callahan's fifth album analyses an unravelling relationship. Especially noteworthy: the protagonist constructing an effigy of his former girlfriend from all the clothing and objects she left behind on the spooky "All Your Women Things".



8/10

SMOG RED APPLE FALLS

DRAG CITY, 1997

Callahan had only hinted at concept albums before, but here the narrative thread is the colour red, which seems to have freed something up in him creatively. Unlike the darker ends of his canon, this album contains a frisson of hope that things could turn out right.



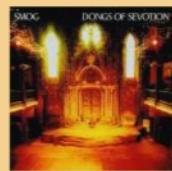
9/10

SMOG KNOCK KNOCK

DRAG CITY, 1999

No one could legitimately call Callahan lo-fi anymore. The sound is fully realised, his vocals ascendant and Jim O'Rourke's production clean. While

not quite a breakup album, there seems to be a sense of trying to outrun the pain with songs about being in perpetual motion: cf "Hit The Ground Running".



SMOG DONGS OF SEVOTION

DRAG CITY, 2000

Like a Woody Allen movie, an album obsessed with love and sex, showing they are ultimately the same thing. Callahan unapologetically catalogues indiscretion on "Strayed" and salaciously advises his wife to "Dress Sexy At My Funeral". Teeters between misogyny and sensuality.



SMOG A RIVER AIN'T TOO MUCH TO LOVE

DRAG CITY, 2005

Recorded at Willie Nelson's Perdernales studio in Austin, album 11 takes on some of that outlaw mystique, channelling what's frightening about Texas at night, and what is equally frightening about relationships. Then-inamorata Joanna Newsom plays spectral piano on "Rock Bottom Riser".



BILL CALLAHAN WOKE ON A WHALEHEART

DRAG CITY, 2007

The first recording released under Callahan's own name. The centrepieces are the deeply intoned "Diamond Dancer" and "Sycamore", which leads one to believe that he has indeed planted roots in loamy Texas earth.



BILL CALLAHAN SOMETIMES I WISH WE WERE AN EAGLE

DRAG CITY, 2009

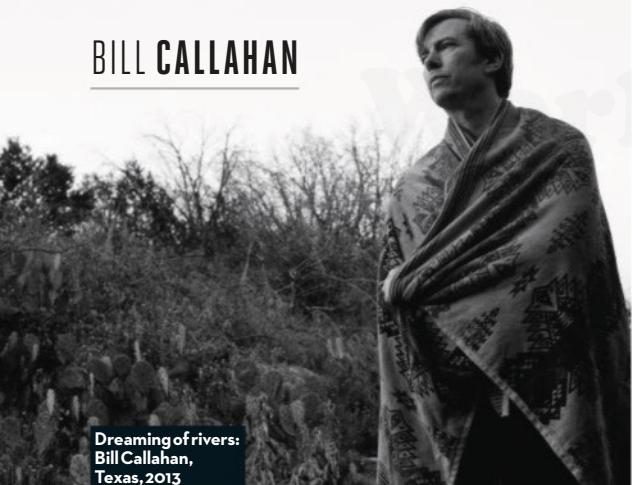
Eagle is Callahan's own elongated *Into The Mystic*, finding him questioning everything he knows and discounting everything he has learned. A spiritual quest? Perhaps, but there are other things to believe in, too, like the ordinary things in album standout "Jim Cain".



BILL CALLAHAN APOCALYPSE

DRAG CITY, 2011

Callahan's love letter to America, in which he easily assumes a cowboy hat and tooled leather boots to ride cattle across the West on "Drover", a song that he says met all his aesthetic goals. Stark, very male, it presents a man wrestling with not being afraid, and almost winning.



Dreaming of rivers:
Bill Callahan,
Texas, 2013

A SELF-CONFESSED NIGHT OWL, Callahan crafted *Dream River* under the cover of night in a small shed behind his house. Not surprisingly, that's when he wants to talk about it.

"When it gets dark, I think of it like an eye closing. But for me, that's when something opens up. Just for a few hours," he explains, running a hand through his silver-streaked hair. "I did a lot of writing for this album in the evening. It felt like a treat, as I'm not supposed to be awake. I've tried hard to be on the schedule everyone else is, and get up early as it seems to breed sanity in people. But I liked indulging myself, working until two in the morning if I felt like it."

Did this nocturnal nature lead to the title, *Dream River*?

"No." There is a long, awkward pause. "OK, I do remember it was late. I often get an album title, sometimes even before writing songs. I do know that I had nothing. I had all the songs, but I do remember sitting many times and thinking about that. Obviously it hit me at one point to name it that. I feel like I was sitting over there," he says, pointing at a space just beyond my left shoulder. "And before you ask, I didn't..."

Dream it?

"'Small Plane' was a dream, the first time that's happened," he explains. "I woke up and wrote down a dream."

On "Eid Ma Clack Shaw" (from 2009's *Sometimes I Wish We Were An Eagle*) you wrote about writing a perfect song in your dreams and when you woke up it was gibberish. Can you tell me about how your dream became 'Small Plane'?"

"Tell you how I dreamed it? How do you tell [someone] about somehow you dreamed something? I fell asleep."

Was it a bad horror movie kind of dream?

"It was exactly that. I was dreaming that I was flying the

HANNAH BANKS

SMOG GETS IN YOUR EYES

"HANDSOME AND PALE..."

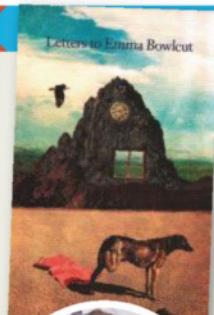
Connie Lovatt looks back on playing with Callahan and editing his novel (right)

UNCUT: When did the two of you meet?

LOVATT: We met in fits and starts in the late 1990s.

What was your first impression of him?
Handsome and pale.

How did you come to be the bassist for A River Ain't Too Much To Love?
I asked him to produce my band, The Pacific Ocean. I must have gotten through my takes with just enough panache because he asked if I wanted to play bass on his new record.



What was working with him like? I was in over my head. He didn't cheer if I did good and he didn't boo if I did poorly. He let me sweat it out myself. When the tracks had been done, Jim [White] and I watched him add little things, wondering if he planned them all along or was just pulling them out of the air. He doesn't talk about the process. He just does it.

What would people be surprised to learn about him?

I've never once seen him roll his eyes. And he can get sarcastic! If I'm feeling self-pity or worried or doubting something, he just texts one word to get me back on track: "Please".

Your favourite Bill Callahan song?
Come on. There's too many.

DREAM DUB

"IT WAS UTTERLY SCARY..."

Callahan's regular arranger/mixer Brian Beattie, on the dub version of *Dream River*

HE ASKED ME about a year ago if I'd be interested in doing a dub record, and I told him I was sure there were folks more qualified to deconstruct his music in that way. When I mixed *Dream River*, he asked again if I'd be interested in doing a dub version of that record specifically, and by that point I guess the potential



fun seemed more potent than my fear of failing. It was utterly scary, because I'd never done anything like that before. I was comforted by the fact that Bill's music is so different from reggae, the results could really only be cursorily compared to the great dub masters.

"Drag City will release a couple of tracks from the dub version, then the 'real' version of the record will come out. The dub version is the same songs, in the same order, but just like a Jamaican dub record. The vocals appear minimally, the songs are all stripped down with maybe just drums and bass for a while, then only the guitar, and everything is drenched in echo and reverbs and exceedingly psychedelic and trippin'."

"I work a little like a pendulum. I tend to want any album that I'm working on to be whatever the last one wasn't..."

plane and I was looking down at the ground. There's a lot of things flying in different forms [on this album], a javelin and a seagull and the airplane," Callahan allows. "I see it as this one thing but it's shifting... so each one has a different perspective. The first ["The Sing"] and the last song ["Winter Road"] are the bookends of the record. There's this sense of travelling, then at the end it's winter and it's like the guy in the first song, who it's all spawning from, is back. It's sort of about dreams, what's awake and what's asleep.

"*Apocalypse* was pretty stark, I wanted this one to be a little warmer. Which is one reason why I got a full-time bass player for every song, and focused a lot more on bass, which makes everything more sensual and flowing. But I work a little like a pendulum. I tend to want whatever the last one wasn't."

I think you make records to figure out where you are in life.
"Yeah. Totally. I totally think that."

So in writing songs you find yourself?

"Yeah, I mean it makes a definition of self, which is always changing. Or maybe not."

He stops, and I notice a small twitch below his left eye.
Are you stalling for time?

"No. I can answer everything, but sometimes I need a little time to think. OK, I don't know what theme the record is.
What do you think the theme is?"

I think on *Apocalypse*, you were dealing with death. There are two songs where the protagonist dies. On *Dream River*, it's like you're waking up to something. I suspect you've fallen in love. You feel reborn. Your relationship isn't tumultuous like on other albums. How am I doing? What is the theme?

"What you said. And no matter what you say, I'm allowed to reuse your answers. I do really think you're right in what you said about the waking up."

Are you sure you don't want to say that in your own words?

"You always give me a hard time when I don't answer things. I remember when you called me a withholder!"

He stops and thinks a long minute, maybe two. Long enough to make a sandwich, or change a lightbulb. Bill Callahan will not be hurried, or inveigled into doing anything he doesn't want to do. It's not that he's shy, or a diva. Rather, he's a deep, reflective thinker who sometimes processes at a glacial pace, and is stringent about never stating the obvious.

"I think there are things that everybody knows, but they just don't admit it. But maybe I'm wrong and people don't know the same things I do. But I think they do... Oh yeah, by the way – I lied about the house. I bought it and I've lived here for four or five years."

I suppose you lied about the bikes, too?
"I did."

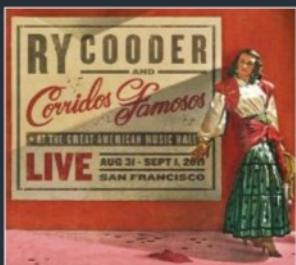
Dream River is released by Drag City on September 16



Sam Amidon Bright Sunny South

The acclaimed label debut from the celebrated musician known for his reworking of traditional melodies into a new form. Produced with legendary engineer Jerry Boys, the album includes the singles 'My Old Friend' and 'As I Roved Out'.

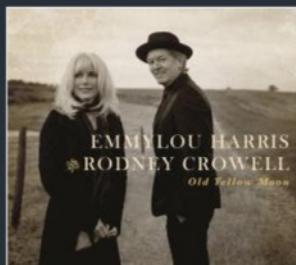
'Very little of Amidon's material is 'original': a folk singer in the traditional sense, what he does is craft old songs in new ways. His originality impresses throughout. Startling, moving stuff!' **Guardian**



Ry Cooder & Corridos Famosos Live in San Francisco

Cooder's first live record in more than 30 years was recorded in 2011 during a special two-night engagement with the Corridos Famosos band at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall. It includes original songs and interpretations of other material from throughout his acclaimed career.

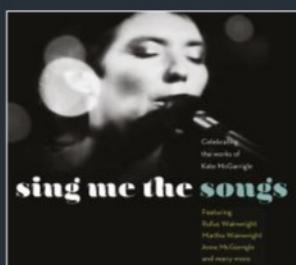
'Cooder has become a Woody Guthrie for our times.' **Observer**



Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell Old Yellow Moon

The first official collaboration from the duo since Crowell joined Harris' Hot Band as guitarist and harmony singer in 1975, featuring world-renowned musicians including Stuart Duncan, Vince Gill and Bill Payne, and members of the original Hot Band.

'Old-fashioned country never sounded so good. It might be a record that looks to the past, but it has Harris and Crowell doing some of the best work of their careers.' **Q**



Sing Me The Songs: Celebrating the Works of Kate McGarrigle

Featuring highlights from concerts in honour of the late singer-songwriter held in London, Toronto, and New York. The album includes performances by Rufus and Martha Wainwright, Anna McGarrigle, Emmylou Harris, Antony, Norah Jones, Teddy Thompson, and others. Net proceeds go to the Kate McGarrigle Foundation for sarcoma research.

'The spirit is irresistible and the sheer range and diversity of the performances constantly surprising. Bow to Kate's wondrous legacy.' **fRoots**



Chris Thile Bach: Sonatas and Partitas, Vol. 1

Performing three Bach works written for solo violin, Grammy-winner Thile explains: "This record to me is not about this iconic violin music played on the mandolin. It's about Bach being one of the greatest musicians of all time, the solo violin music being some of his best work, and the mandolin having the potential to cast it in a new and hopefully interesting light."

'The most remarkable mandolinist in the world!' **Independent**



Rokia Traoré Beautiful Africa

Celebrated Malian singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist Traoré's extraordinary new album, produced by John Parish (PJ Harvey, Eels).

'One of Africa's most distinctive voices. The record fans of her explosive live shows always hoped she would make and a career highpoint!' **Uncut**

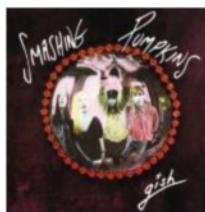
Smashing Pumpkins

Billy Corgan's tortuous and torturous journey to rock stardom – "Fuck you all!"

SINCE FORMING the Smashing Pumpkins, Billy Corgan's career has often been overshadowed by bursts of hubris and rampant egomania. But Corgan's extraordinary ambition for his band has prevailed – they've sold over 30 million albums since the original quartet of Corgan, James Iha (guitar), D'Arcy Wretzky (bass) and Jimmy Chamberlin (drums) convened in Chicago in 1988. Now the sole original member of the band, Corgan looks back on his work to date. "It's a weird thing to have people cherry-pick and go, 'Between here and here, yeah, but between here and here, no...'" he tells us. "Like any life, there are good and bad years. But I would point to Buster Keaton, or Tarkovsky – I'm in that mode, targeting something that only I understand. And in that way I'm an idiot to even play the pop game. I just do it because I'm sort of a sick fuck who enjoys it."



Gishing on a star...
September 1991: James Iha, Billy Corgan, Jimmy Chamberlin, D'Arcy Wretzky



SMASHING PUMPKINS GISH

CAROLINE/HUT, 1991
Recorded at Butch Vig's Smart Studios, just months after Nirvana recorded

Nevermind there, the Pumpkins' debut sold 450,000 copies...

We felt that songwriting-wise, we had a long way to go. But our focus at that time was getting noticed in clubs. A lot of that music had been played for a while before it was recorded, which is why it has a sort of compact density. We were playing to 300, 500 people, in working-class Chicago or Milwaukee on a Thursday, and if people are there, they're drinking and they're talking, and the music has to be really focused. We knew we had to make an impact with the record, too. So with Butch Vig we said, "Can you make this have a kind of kinetic power?" Jimmy and I would drive up from Chicago and stay with these people for a week, and we'd work 12 or 14 hours a day. Mostly me. Butch Vig is a very exacting producer, and suddenly I'm singing a song eight hours in a row.

Reactions to the record were visceral. People loved it, or hated it. Actually in hindsight, the music of *Gish* is quite quaint. Outside of a little bit of strings right at the end, it's basically two guitars, bass, drums. But its success was explosive. We'd come into one town and there'd be 100 people and you'd be super-bummed, we'd go to the next town and there'd be 800 and they were climbing off the walls. So something was happening, and when you're caught in that tidal

wave, it's like an upsweep. You can feel it coming, this earth-rumbling thing. It was heady days.



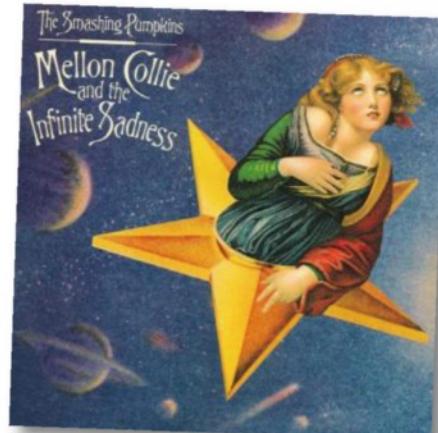
SMASHING PUMPKINS SIAMESE DREAM

HUT, 1993
Corgan controversially sidelines Wretzky and Iha, playing everything bar drums. Hit singles such as "Disarm" distance them from their grunge peers, and the album sells six million copies.

What affected *Siamese Dream* was, you'd better sell a lot of records. Because you're facing a world with "indie" bands selling 10 million copies. If you don't approximate those numbers, you're facing oblivion. I've never felt pressure like that in my life. Butch and I would say to them: "You've had years to prepare yourself for this moment. You've got two people in the band who can do it, and two who can't." James and D'Arcy were there every day. They were in the other room. In terms of the physical recording, *Siamese Dream* is 98% me and Jimmy. I was so focused on not wanting to go back to the record store and being a nobody.

Making it about drove me crazy. Made me deaf, because all the guitars were with fuzz, and fuck, hours of fuzz will kill your ears. I would go home nauseous from the volume. So we literally had to make the album at conversational level. In the middle of that, Jimmy disappeared. You've got the label guy going, "When are you guys going to finish this thing?" You'd play it to him and he'd go, "OK, keep going." Then a month later he's back complaining about the money again [laughs].

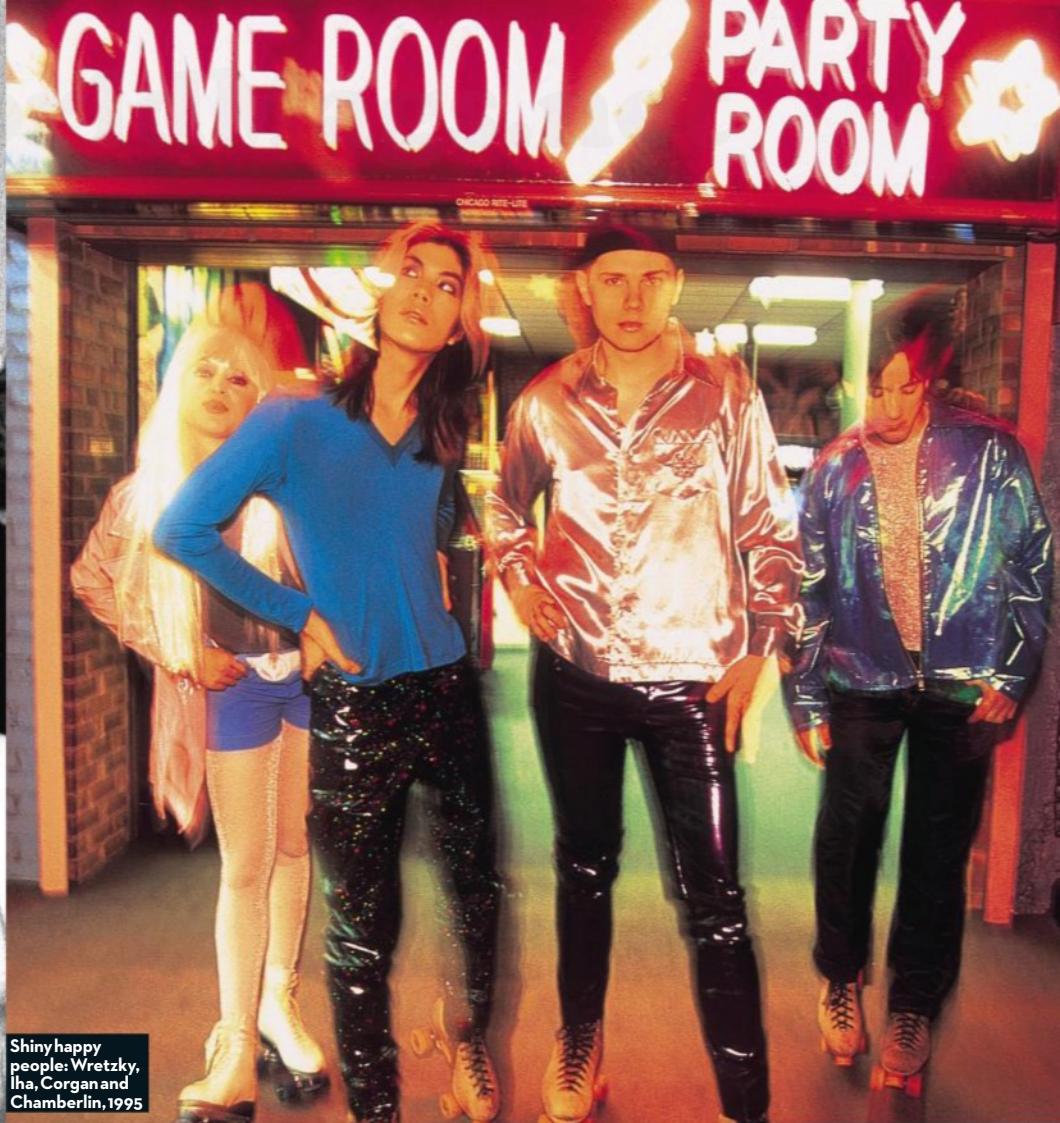
THE UNCUT CLASSIC



SMASHING PUMPKINS MELLON COLLIE AND THE INFINITE SADNESS

HUT, 1995
Corgan gambles the farm on an ambitious, 28-song double-album supposedly describing a 15-year-old's mood swings, from the epic yearning of "Tonight, Tonight" to the heavy "Bullet With Butterfly Wings". A US No.1.

The record was so ambitious. It has a lot to do with having Flood as a producer. He'd teach you to confront your own fears of why you won't go into something. So he'd say, "Let's go try this song like it's a reggae song," and we'd go, "Wha-at?" He'd get you to confront these internal biases of what is cool and what isn't. He'd say, "What is this '70s shit you guys are playing?" And we'd go, "Well,



Shiny happy people: Wretzky, Iha, Corgan and Chamberlin, 1995

it's like the fill the guy plays in 'Love Is Like Oxygen' by Sweet..." and he's like, "Jesus Christ!" It was that kind of dynamic. He'd come at us straight, and he was able to expand the vision of the band to this much more epic scope.

I think I threw around a lot of conceptual language about the record because it was sort of convenient. But when I listen to it now, I don't see it that way. I see it as a willingness to talk about everything I was seeing. So many of those lyrics were written so fast and on the fly, I couldn't even tell you what I was thinking. I'd been non-stop for four years. And now we were back in the solitude of the studio. We decided not to be in a regular recording studio, so we had our own space, which we cutely called Pumpkinland. So we're in Pumpkinland, and it's our table, it's our TV. That created a kind of familial, communal atmosphere. It was a bit more homey, and it felt like, 'This is our world, and OK, that's what we're going to make.'

The record company had a fucking conniption: "Double-albums don't sell..." "You're going to kill yourself." I fought them five to seven times. Then it went to No 1 in America. I mean, that's a weird feeling. Because, to speak like an American, you can't fuck with No 1! I was raised in a home where nothing was ever good enough, and when I got to the top, I expected that finally it'd be like, "OK, Billy, you're in the club." But it doesn't work like that. A very common review for *Mellon Collie* was, "The most unlikely rock star. How did this guy get here?" It was like being in a Kafka book. I kept thinking, "When does this get good?" Psychologically, it was devastating.



SMASHING PUMPKINS THE AEROPLANE FLIES HIGH

HUT, 1996
You want more? Here comes a collection of

five *Mellon Collie* B-sides.

The simple tag-line is, you show me anyone who's insane enough to do 28 songs for an album, and then follow it up with 28 B-sides. [Laughs] It's me waving the flag of insanity! I sacrificed a lot of my personal life at the time to do it, because I was hell-bent on proving whatever point it was that I wanted to prove. And I did. I mean, it sold, it's very successful. I was willing to let it be a little more warts and all, because of the constraints it was made under. I was working three days and then going straight back out on tour. But there's a beauty in its honesty. I was thumbing my nose at everybody. There was a hubris, and it was like, you cannot follow me. I don't care how goth you think you are, I've gone to a deeper, darker place than all of you. Once I realised that the triangle of band, fans and media was not going to align for the Smashing Pumpkins, there's a point where you go, "Fuck you all," because if you're not going to give it to me now, when are you going to give it to me? Like I've done all this, and now what do I do? It feels kind of hollow, I didn't get out of it what I wanted. I'm going to a therapist twice a week going, "How do you keep me from jumping off a roof?" Because the thing I thought should happen now isn't going to happen, and that sets the stage for everything that follows.



SMASHING PUMPKINS ADORE

VIRGIN, 1998
A mournful synth-rock album recorded in tragic circumstances. Touring keyboardist

Jonathan Melvoin dies from an overdose; Chamberlin also overdoses and is sacked, and Corgan's mother dies of cancer.

Did Jimmy being sacked cripple the band? Oh, absolutely. I should've quit right then. Instead, I doubled-down on a bad situation, and it got worse. The band went into a Cold War vibe. People stopped talking. And with walking away from rock stylistically, I was burning my bridges.

What is so obvious now is, because I wouldn't deal with my mother's death, and then deal with Jimmy's departure, I made a record that tiptoes around what I was feeling. If I allowed myself to feel, I would've stopped. Instead I did something to keep me busy. So the record is rife with this desperation of somebody who needs to take a break mentally, spiritually. I just hear a lot of loss in the music. My argument at the time was, "I've made some good music, it's futuristic." But what I didn't realise was that the album also lacks joy. What you're hearing is basically a funeral march, and usually people only want to listen to those when they're at a funeral. Then, boom, here come the shit reviews, it's not selling, and the label's bailing on the band. I felt burned and spurned. Without Jimmy, I was lacking the other resource that I needed to make it work. I didn't try to replace him on most of the tracks, and it gives the album this weird hollow feeling.

SMASHING PUMPKINS



A new generation—the Pumpkins in 2012: Nicole Fiorentino, Corgan, Mike Byrne, Jeff Schroeder



SMASHING PUMPKINS MACHINA / THE MACHINES OF GOD

VIRGIN, 2000

D'Arcy quits, replaced

by Hole's Melissa Auf der Maur, as Corgan sets course for a final voyage into a black hole of relentless heavy rock.

It gets darker! The key with the *Machina* period is that I finished *Adore* and went, "Right, I want off this sinking ship." I was determined to sink it my way. So I reached out to Jimmy, we hadn't spoken in – three years? I said, "I'd like you to return to the band for one album. Let's get the four of us in a room, make a good album, tour, and then put it to bed." He was open to it, the others weren't so keen. We started doing it, and D'Arcy left. So my perfect plan blew up. So now this album also becomes about the sorrow of who's not there. You've got two albums in a row now about death, loss, the end of the band. Plus the production was so dense. I think people scratched their heads, like, "What trip are you on?" So by the time Melissa joins, it was like, how do we get to the finish line? I was just looking at a calendar going, "Can I make it nine more months?" When it was done, I was like, "Good, it's over." The depression kicked in a couple of months later. "Wow, I don't know where I am, because my whole adult life has been this band. Now what do I do?"



ZWAN MARY STAR OF THE SEA

REPRISE, 2003

Billy, Chamberlin, David Pajo and Matt Sweeney jam – a new band forms. Though not for long...

First of all, I started making a solo album in Salt Lake City, which I have some tracks for which have never been bootlegged, so I have half a solo album somewhere. Then Jimmy flew out to hang out with me, and we started working. Next thing you know we're talking about having a band, it starts to take shape, and the thing I'm noticing is – I'm having fun. I haven't had fun for years.

Like, you just sit together with a couple of buddies and play. So it was like, "Maybe I should have a band where I can have fun. It'll be low-stress, I can write some good pop music." I was listening to a lot of folk music at the time, and for me the best Zwan music was more folk-based and acoustic anyway. What Zwan should have been was a band that got together for a couple of gigs, and that was it. Or like *The Basement Tapes*. Once it became a serious endeavour, that was the fatal error. You can't take indie musicians and expect them to stop acting like indie musicians. I grew up playing sports, I want to win and get to the highest level. I was taking three people who aren't like that into a much larger spotlight, and their reaction was, "We think it's kind of not-cool." I was like, "That's all fine and good, but why are you ordering lobster every night? And why am I paying for it?"



SMASHING PUMPKINS ZEITGEIST

REPRISE, 2007

A solo album flops, then the Pumpkins return – or at least Billy and Chamberlin do.

I'd made my solo album, *The Future Embrace*, where I was willing to take an observational role, which is why the music has a certain coldness to it. Then reforming the Pumpkins came from a combination of forces. I think the Trojan Horse argument holds up. Because here I am with my solo album and it's treated completely differently. Plus, I could see the apathy within the music business and rock'n'roll, and I thought the edge of the Pumpkins' spear still had some bite to it. Especially looking at the *Pitchfork*, snotty world, I thought, the Pumpkins are like poison to those people. With *Zeitgeist*, I thought, 'I'll just reintroduce this, with a cleaner, simpler, more direct, metallic musical statement, and then we'll begin a new journey.' I thought there was some good work on there. All you heard was, "Oh. It's not *Siamese Dream*. Next." I was like, "Huh?" Because in seven years away from that higher level, I didn't realise the culture had turned into Greatest Hits land. I didn't think it'd happen to us. *Zeitgeist* was my last album with

Jimmy. Is he my only musical soulmate? You could argue that, yeah. We played like we were on fire, we broke each other, we broke everything near us, so the audience can sit in a comfortable chair and go, "Oh, that's kind of interesting. Look at those two boys setting themselves on fire." I didn't have to explain myself to him.



SMASHING PUMPKINS OCEANIA

EMI, 2012

Billy goes back to basics with yet another Pumpkins lineup for the abrasive *Teargarden*

By *Kaleidoscope* EPs, which leads to *Oceania*'s synth-folk album, his most prettily approachable music since *Mellan Collie*.

I thought, 'Let's go back to the beginning, record some music with my friends on a four-track machine, and see if it still means anything.' What was most illustrative about the beginning of the *Teargarden* process was not the music I was making – which was decent, not great – but the reaction to it. Because I put out pretty good songs that the average Pumpkins fan should have loved, and they were just shitting all over it. I thought, "OK, now I see your game. You want me to go back to something." Pick your fantasy – that the original band's gonna reform, that Billy's going to make *Siamese Dream*-type melancholy music. Either I'm going to sell out everything I've ever stood for to satisfy you, or I'm going to break this hypnosis. *Teargarden* became about that. Once I'd done that, then I was able to make *Oceania*. You see, the funny thing is, if people would just let me do what I want to without giving me shit all the time, they'd probably get more out of me that they liked, and familiarity. It's just the way I'm wired. So with *Oceania* I've relaxed and gone, you know what, I don't have to play to any crowd any more than I don't want. You see that attitude in people like Keith Richards. You put your foot in the ocean and let the waves hit it, and you can make music another day. Then you're free. ☺

Smashing Pumpkins' Oceania: Live In NYC
DVD is out now on Universal

THIRD MAN

NASHVILLE RECORDS TENNESSEE

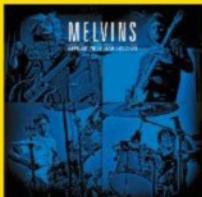
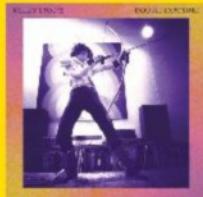
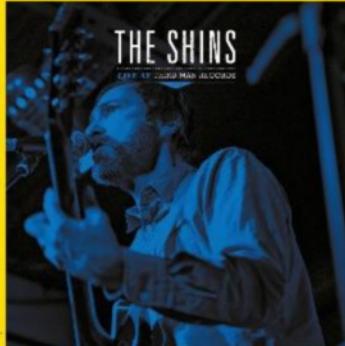
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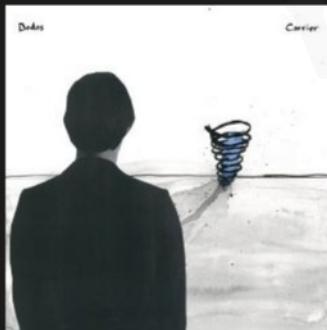
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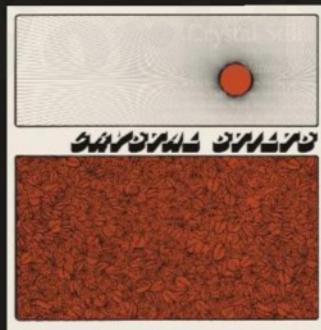
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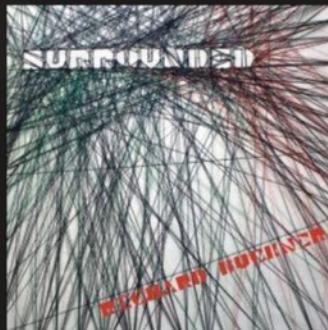
Meric Long and Logan Kroeber transform the shape and sound of electric guitar oriented rock with Carrier. Recorded with John Vanderslice in San Francisco.



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With lyrical themes probing the dark connections between the individual and its environment, their 3rd full length strikes an emotional chord revealing a more human yearning. Nature Noir reaches forth with a very human yearning.



RICHARD BUCKNER SURROUNDED

MERGE LP / CD

“One of the most intriguing songwriters working”
Pitchfork



KING KHAN & THE SHRINES

MERGE LP / CD

Idle No More is full of sweat-drenched, ass shaking, groovy, psyched-out numbers, complete with rip roaring horn lines, southern fried guitar riffs and lysergic melodies.



ESMERINE DALMAK

CONSTELLATION LP / CD

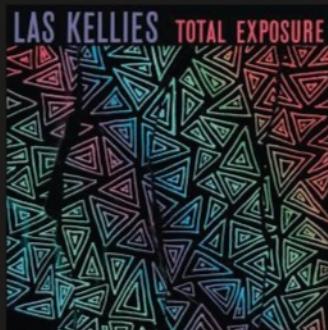
4th album from the instrumental group led by Bruce Cawdron (GY!BE) & Rebecca Foon (Silver Mt. Zion), recorded in Istanbul with local players. Blazing & immersive world music that blends post-rock, Turkish & modern classical influences.



SHIGETO NO BETTER TIME THAN NOW

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL LP / CD

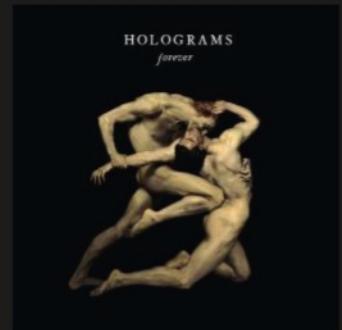
With No Better Time Than Now, Shigeto's sounds continue to develop the warm, inviting washes of liquid synth sounds, the intricate beat production on the jazz-influenced arrangements.



LAS KELLIES TOTAL EXPOSURE

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

A wonderfully eclectic collection of tracks, drawing on post-punk, reggae and dance music with guests including Ian Svenonius from The Make Up and reggae legend Dennis Bovell.



HOLOGRAMS FOREVER

CAPTURED TRACKS LP / CD

A year plus after the release of their powerful debut LP, Sweden's Holograms have returned with their second full-length record. 'Forever' sees release September 3rd, on Captured Tracks.

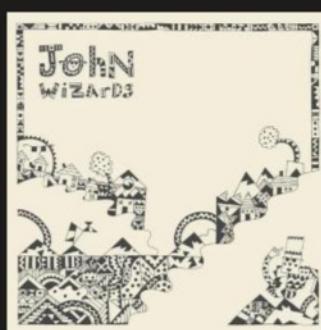


JONNY COLA & THE A GRADES

SPITFIRE

Scratchy LP/CD

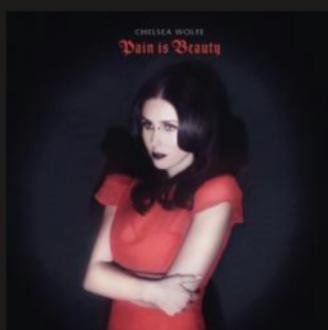
Do you like Bowie, The Manics, Mott The Hoople, Suede ? Do you like foot stomping glam rock ? Have you ever wondered who Jobriath is /was ? Well you are seriously gonna love this twin Rolls Royce powered future indie glam classic... Yowzzza !



JOHN WIZARDS JOHN WIZARDS

PLANET MU LP / CD

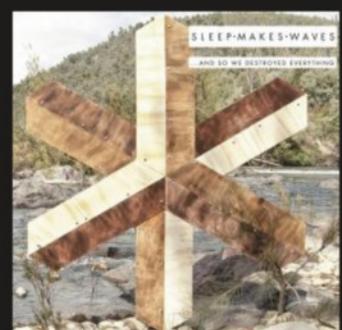
John Wizards are a band from Cape Town, South Africa. They've written one of the most singular and intriguing records of the year, and one of the loveliest to boot.



CHELSEA WOLFE PAIN IS BEAUTY

SARGENT HOUSE LP / CD

The 3rd studio album from LA-based artist Chelsea Wolfe and is a self-described love letter to nature. Many of the album's 12 tracks veer in a decidedly more electronic direction than previous recordings, while at the same time capitalizing on Wolfe's trademark penchant for the morose & otherworldly.



SLEEPMAKESWAVES ... AND SO WE DESTROYED EVERYTHING

MONOTREME LP / CD

Epic, symphonic debut from ARIA Award-nominated Australian instrumentalists - ambient soundscapes, soaring melodic hooks, electronic layers interwoven with slow-burning builds & churning metallic riffs. RIYL Russian Circles, Caspian, TWDY

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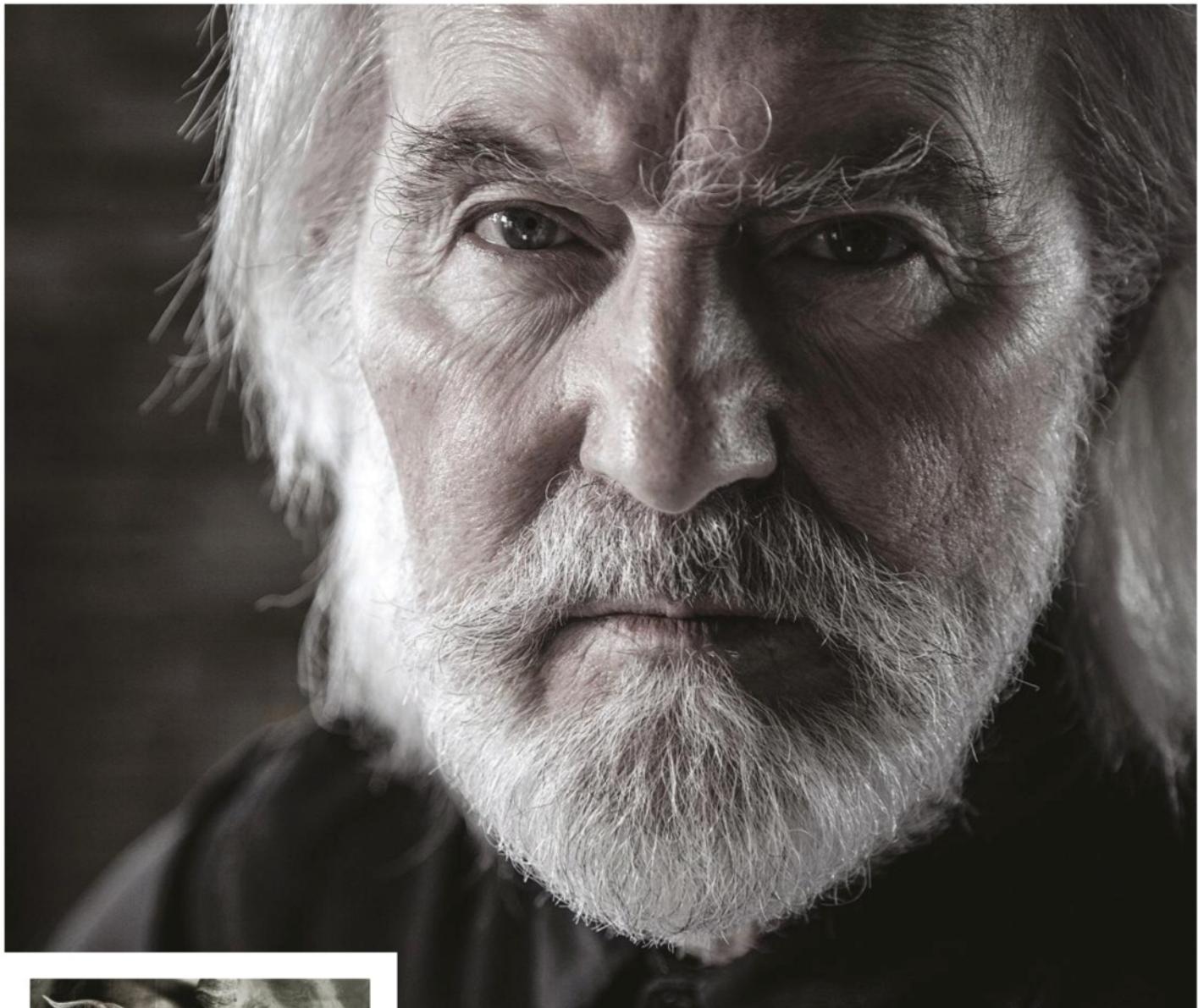
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New albums

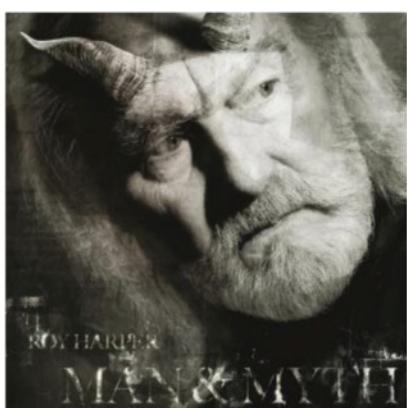
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THIS MONTH: ARCTIC MONKEYS | ELTON JOHN | BILL CALLAHAN & MORE



GEORGE SCOTT



ROY HARPER *Man & Myth*

BELLA UNION

The outsider no more – Harper's first album in 13 years is a magnificent, ambitious rejuvenation. *By Allan Jones*

9 /10

BETWEEN 1967 AND 1975, Roy Harper produced a series of albums of increasingly vaulting ambition that made them emblematic of a time in which adventure was everything, new sonic territories there for the taking, as it were, as if in a land rush. They were pioneering days and Harper's wild poetic imagination and articulate indignation made him something of a standard bearer for the counter culture of the times, quixotic, stoned, outspoken and heroic.

Harper was very much a child of '60s utopianism, although he bristles still at being

mistaken for a hippy, when he in fact shared a more adhesive attachment to the freewheeling Beats and their hipster kin. He had come up through the folk clubs, of course, although calling him a folkie would have left him hopping like a three-legged dog. The truth was that the folk circuit could no more contain Harper than it could Bob Dylan, to whom early on Harper was often cast as some kind of UK equivalent, admittedly a claim made for many young songwriters with an acoustic guitar and a harmonica rack.

For Harper as much as Dylan, the folk scene was a convenient route onto a larger stage, one →

TRACKLIST

- 1 The Enemy
- 2 Time Is Temporary
- 3 January Man
- 4 The Stranger
- 5 Cloud Cuckooland
- 6 Heaven Is Here
- 7 The Exile

New Albums

big enough in Harper's case to accommodate what was fast becoming the almost oceanic swell of his music. "Circle" on his second album, *Come Out Fighting Genghis Smith*, was a hint of what was yet to come, a 10-minute autobiographical opus that combined elements of conventional song-writing with spoken-word monologues, music hall skits and a lot of funny voices. It was not much like anything else you would have heard, even in 1967.

His next album, *Folkjokeopus* (1969), featured the first of the confrontational long-form songs with which he would become famously associated. The 18-minute "McGoohan's Blues", inspired by the cult TV show *The Prisoner*, was the template for epics like "The Same Old Rock" and "Me And My Woman" on 1971's landmark album, *Stormcock*, and the all-consuming "The Lord's Prayer" from 1973's *Lifemask*. These songs and others like them were teeming, tumultuous, equinoxal, unfettered, restless and brilliant. Harper's music in these years made fans of Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel, and while the appreciation of such illustrious types may have been personally gratifying, the major record sales for which Harper aspired continued to elude him, even as critics lavished extravagant praise on 1975's *HQ*.

By now it was 1977 and punk was upon us. Harper was cast adrift, into what he later described as a 20-year exile. There was still a lot of music, albums that only a hardcore of fans probably heard, that would have notably included, if you were a fan of Harper at his most uncompromising, songs like "The Black Cloud Of Islam", from 1990's *Once*, and "The Monster", which indicted Tony Blair as a war criminal and appeared on 2000's *The Green Man*, which turned out to be his last album for 13 years.

Lately, though, Harper has been rediscovered by a new generation of musicians, including Fleet Foxes' Robin Pecknold, who shocked me when I

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Fivestar Studios, LA and Lettercollum Studio, Timoleague, Ireland

Produced by: Roy Harper, co-produced by Jonathan Wilson (California) and John Fitzgerald (Ireland)

Personnel: Roy Harper (acoustic guitar and vocals), Jonathan Wilson (banjo, mandolin, electric guitar, bass and backing vocals), Pete Townshend (acoustic and electric guitar), Bill Shanley (electric guitar), Richard Gowen, Neal Morgan (drums and percussion), Gillon Cameron, Justin Grounds, Tom Pigott-Smith (violins), Bertrand Galen, Vicky Matthews, Gabe Noel, Rachel Robson (cellos), Jason Borger (piano, Hammond), John Fitzgerald (bouzouki, oud), Jake Blanton, Tony Franklin (bass), Andy Irvine (mandola, bouzouki), Beth Symmons, George Harte (double bass), Omar Velasco (clavinet), Matter Gunner (horn), James King (alto sax)



A very sophisticated
beggar: Roy Harper
in 2011

interviewed him around the release of *Helplessness Blues* by talking in vast detail about Harper as

influence and inspiration, Joanna Newsom, who brought him back into the spotlight as a guest on several UK tours, and Jonathan Wilson, who had been working on a Harper tribute album featuring

many of his West Coast cronies and now finds himself producing four tracks on *Man & Myth*, an often spectacular comeback album that confirms Harper's place as one of English music's last great visionaries.

Now 72, age has barely tempered Harper's view of the world as a battleground, where good and

HOW TO BUY... ROY HARPER

The returning mage's best albums



Flat, Baroque And Berserk 1970

The first of Harper's eight Harvest albums is probably best remembered for the uncompromising "I Hate The White Man". It also includes perhaps his greatest love song, "Another Day", covered by Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel. The Nice are on it, too, backing Harper on the raucous "Hell's Angels".

9/10



Stormcock 1971

Four tracks of symphonic folk-rock, complex and labyrinthine, with definitive treatments of recurring themes. "The Same Old Rock" is a blistering condemnation of organised religion while "Me And My Woman" bears a striking resemblance to Radiohead's "How To Disappear Completely".

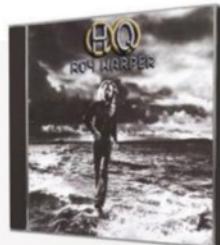
9/10



Lifemask 1973

An entire side was devoted to "The Lord's Prayer", a seemingly endless protest-poem, a virtually uncontrollable epic, as out there as Tim Buckley's *Starsailor*. Harper famously dedicated it to "all the people who'll never hear it".

7/10



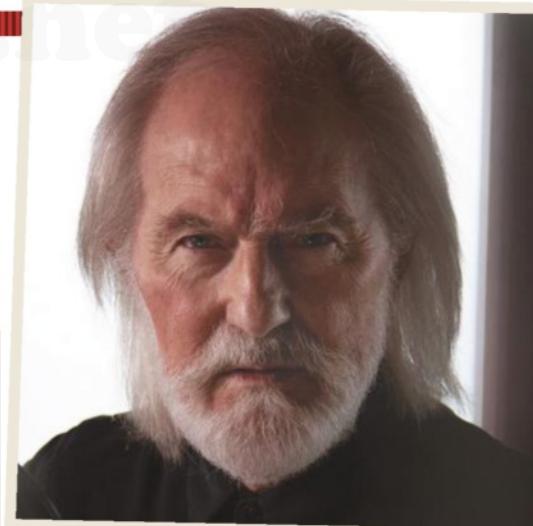
HQ 1975

A full-on rock album, featuring Dave Gilmour and Chris Spedding, and Yes and King Crimson drummer Bill Bruford. "The Game" was another epic, "Hallucinating Light" one of Harper's most haunting songs. But it was the elegiac "When An Old Cricketer Leaves The Crease" that attached itself to the collective memory.

8/10

Q&A

Roy Harper on the nature of myth, his resurgence and the digital frontier



those on its side are ranged against those who are not good, far from it, in fact, and the many more on their side, by inclination or coercion. The rebel in him will clearly never be quietened, nor his robust romantic impulses ever quelled. Like the brave bird after which *Stormcock* was named, Harper continues to sing fearlessly in the face of hostile winds. There is anger aplenty, therefore, on *Man & Myth*, as you suspect there always will be with Harper. But the roaring fulminations of yore are overall perhaps less abrasive. With the exception of "Cloud Cuckooland", a song that in Harper's opinion shares sentiments with The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again" and appropriately therefore features a particularly scorching Pete Townshend guitar solo, the songs here more often than not bring to mind the more burnished miniatures, conceived on a more intimate scale than the vouchsafed epics in Harper's back catalogue, that have always been part of his repertoire. These were usually love songs of one sort or another – sometimes devotional ("She's The One"), occasionally recriminatory ("I'll See You Again"), regretful ("Another Day") or nostalgically wistful ("Commune").

Crudely put, there is less ranting on *Man & Myth* than rueful reflection. These songs in many respects are poignant contemplations on time and its passing, friendship, love, betrayal, memory. On the four tracks he co-produced, Jonathan Wilson brings a wonderfully sympathetic touch to their realisation, imbuing the songs with the vaguely autumnal glow that Elliot Mazer brought to Neil Young's *Harvest*, especially on elegant album opener, "The Enemy", which laments a kind of metropolitan tribalism. One of Harper's worries about *The Green Man* was that his voice had weakened somewhat with age and general wear and tear. But here, it is the equal, I'd say, of anything he has previously essayed. His pipes, in fact, are in spectacular shape throughout, stirring, strong and with no hint anywhere of infirmity – witness the shrill vocal climax of "Cloud Cuckooland".

"Time Is Temporary" – which features on this month's free CD – is a song about love remembered, that touchingly recalls the wistful innocence of "Commune", a solo cello's husky melancholy affording the track an aching poignancy. Time and memory are the focus, too, of "January Man" and "The Stranger" – not so much songs as hauntings, full of ghosts from bygone times, the past and those with whom it was shared a source of almost exquisite anguish. The former is beautifully posed, Fiona Brice's string arrangement reminiscent of the orchestral setting the late David Bedford devised for "Twelve Hours Of Sunset", a trembling at the edge of things, with a hint of brass at the low end of the mix that bathes the track in a sombre light.

What would once have been the equivalent of an entire side of an album is devoted here to two interlinked songs, "Heaven Is Here" and "The Exile". Both are inspired by the story of Orpheus, the musician-poet of Greek mythology, a hero of Jason's epic quest for the Golden Fleece, who on the death of his wife Eurydice pursues her into the underworld where his sweet music negotiates her release from Hades on the condition that until they are both safe he will not look back at her. When he reaches the surface, what does Orpheus immediately do? He looks back. Upon receipt of his backward glance, poor Eurydice, almost home, is returned to hell, this time for good. Orpheus, meanwhile, is condemned to a life of wandering exile and lonely mourning. This is Harper at his most grandly poetic, the music a miasmic tidal whirl, full of estuarial currents and counter-currents, strings, brass, electric guitar and treated multi-tracked vocals. Together, the two songs, a total of 23 minutes, provide a magisterial climax to a magnificent comeback.

WHAT DOES IT feel like having your first album of new material in 13 years coming out? It's wonderful, but frightening. To be out there in the mix again is great, but there are sometimes scary consequences. The music business has shrunk tenfold since music became 'free', so there's much less of a marketplace... but the positive side is that I'm alive and well and recording again.

You say in the press release for *Man & Myth* that you didn't have 'the will to make another album until just recently'. Why? Business, keeping abreast of technical developments and maintaining a profile in the digital age are just a few of the things you have to do if you want the work to survive. The pleasurable effort of creation in a peaceful atmosphere is constantly invaded by hysterical noise from the ether: which seems to me to be an ongoing open Darwinian experiment in survival with a billion voices hacking away at each other. It exposes humanity, and humanity must learn from that, and quickly. Just recently, the will to resume has kicked in because of the renewed interest, but it's a hell of a thing putting yourself up on the coconut shy of the critical jungle again.

How inspired were you by the discovery of your music by a younger generation of artists like Joanna Newsom and Jonathan Wilson? Very. It was an eye-opener. I probably knew it was coming because my heroes, when I was 15 to 18, were mostly in their fifties and sixties, and some were in their seventies and eighties. Big Bill Broonzy, Josh White, Huddie Ledbetter, Henry Miller, William Burroughs, Woody Guthrie, Bunk Johnson and Blind Lemon Jefferson. Acknowledgement is empowering. I no longer thought I was working in a vacuum. It became time to fly the flag again. In another 30 years, there'll be their grandchildren coming through. I'll be trying to hang on, but I think my voice'll be a bit scratchy by then.

What was it like working with Jonathan as co-producer, what did he bring to the album?

Jonathan brought the band and his studio. A collection of lovely guys and a funny old place on the side of a hill. He and I have similar views and tastes, so we get on really well. Plenty of sushi and hanging in cafés watching the girls go by. All I had was "The Stranger" and "Heaven Is Here", so I'd got there too soon to be honest. Jonathan instinctively understands the kind of direction I'm taking. I expect that's partially because a lot of my influences are American. They're folk blues related with an Anglicised edge.

What does the album title tell us about the themes explored in the new songs? Perhaps that the difference between the man, or woman, and the myth is imaginatively huge but actually purely ethereal. And in fact that life is but a dream voyage you embark on with your contemporary dreamers.

The phrase 'man and myth' is a catchphrase that's almost a figure of speech – in my mind it is. Perhaps there's something atavistic about it, but it seems to have been on the tip of my tongue for a lifetime, and as a matter of course I've now spilled the beans. I think that all these songs can be said to have a touch of alter ego about them. "The Enemy" is an ancient concept, "Time Is Temporary" is a way of looking at transience, "January Man" is about being old and young at the same time, "The Stranger" is an estrangement, "Cloud Cuckooland" is another figure of speech, but also an idiomatic destination. "Heaven Is Here" is actually a proposition and "The Exile" lives in two places, and one of them is foreign. I wanted the album to be beautiful, and I think it is, despite its edge.

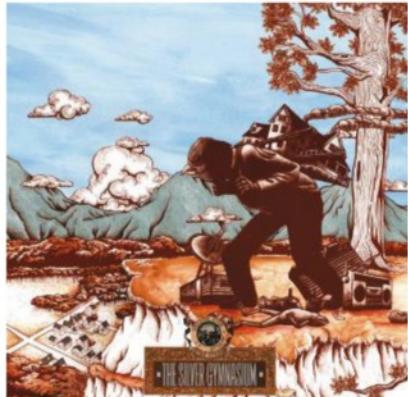
Can you tell us a bit about "Heaven Is Here"? What themes/ideas did you want it to address?

I often think of it being about the psychology of loss, which we all share. I've tried to epitomise a certain topography of loss inside the vehicle of a well-known myth. The myth of Orpheus and Euridice. Where I depart from the myth in "Heaven Is Here" is when I almost accidentally catch a view of myself in the mirror, "Was it reflection, was it me... or was it me?", which, if you listen, is where the recriminations start. So as I'm imagining Orpheus reaching complete desolation, the story exposes the emotional Roy, who then proceeds to dip in and out of the myth for the rest of the song and "The Exile" because he shares all of these experiences and can't resist going for some kind of improbable absolution. He puts words (and even actions) into the mouth of Orpheus. And so it is in life. The man and the myth travel together, and often as each contradicts the other. I'm doing the same thing throughout the record; dipping in and out of myth, and I think that this is one of the great qualities of mankind. That we can suspend our conscious lives and enter our dreamworlds at a moment's notice.

"I'm doing the same thing throughout the record, dipping in and out of myth..."

How did Pete Townshend end up on the record? Had you known him

previously? I've known Pete for about 46 years. I asked him. He thought it was great fun. The reason I asked him is that I thought it was on the same sort of coin as "Won't Get Fooled Again". Yes we will, over and over again, as "Cloud Cuckooland" exclaims. But "Won't Get Fooled Again" is the positive side of that coin, that at least allows us to think there may come a day when none of us are fooled by anything any more. But I think both of us would laugh at that. **INTERVIEW: ALLAN JONES**



TRACKLIST

- 1 It Was My Season
- 2 On A Balcony
- 3 Down Down The Deep River
- 4 Pink-Slips
- 5 Lido Pier Suicide Car
- 6 Where The Spirit Left Us
- 7 White
- 8 Stay Young
- 9 Walking Without Frankie
- 10 All The Time Every Day
- 11 Black Nemo

OKKERVIL RIVER

The Silver Gymnasium

ATO

Will Sheff goes back to the future. By Andrew Mueller

8/10

TERRIBLE THINGS
HAPPENED in the 1980s.
People rolled up the sleeves

of their suit jackets. There were keyboards worn like guitars, and guitars with no heads. It was widely believed acceptable behaviour to play the bass with one's thumb. Every drum sound echoed like a thunderclap, everything else was

drenched in turgid washes of synthesiser. Dave Stewart was paid money to produce things. Of the hair, we shall not speak.

Yet this much-mocked decade was – especially when regarded from a distance of 30 years' steady diminishment of rock'n'roll and fracturing of popular culture – incredibly exciting. MTV, the beginning of the media saturation which would

Q&A

Will Sheff



Why Meriden, New Hampshire, and why 1986?

I love it when art feels local. It's done in films all the time, but rarely in rock music. And I think New England is misrepresented in art, as a sanitised land of picket fences where everyone talks like a Kennedy, and under-represented in songwriting.

The 1980s adolescence seems to have been more so than most. Was there something special about being young at that time?
I actually think it was kind of a terrible, tragic time. Especially in the second half. Something horrible happened to culture. People think of '80s music as silly, but when you look at stuff like *Scary Monsters, Remain In Light, Cupid & Psyche '85*, you see the real promise of the '80s. Then it all crumbled and by the end it was all mullets and DX7s and gated drums and horror.

Was making a concept album kind of an act of rebellion against the way that music has now become so fragmented, so instant?

Yeah. I realised that for better or for worse I compose songs with a lot of love and care, and try to make whole integrated artworks that at least in my dreams will last for a little while. I think I kind of came home to that idea and just thought I was going to make something that felt defiantly substantial.

How important was it to choose a producer associated with the '80s?

I don't want to take the listener to 1986 sonically. I want to take them there emotionally. We didn't stress about period details in the sound. It was more about paying tribute to the spirit of that time, both the carefree and vulnerable aspects of childhood and what a child absorbed from the easy-breezy vibe of rock radio. I wanted a producer who was actually there, but more importantly I wanted a producer who was a real producer.

INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER

eventually eat music alive from within, was in its early stages an invigorating agent making even the furthest flung of settlements feel part of what was going on. Among these hamlets was Meriden, New Hampshire, home to fewer than 500 souls, one of whom was Will Sheff. *The Silver Gymnasium*, Okkervil River's seventh studio album, finds Sheff revving up whatever a 21st-Century mad professor might use instead of a DeLorean, and returning whence he came.

The Silver Gymnasium is, then, a concept album. But it is emphatically not a period piece. Though produced by John Agnello – once an accessory to assorted abominations by Cyndi Lauper, The Hooters, John Cougar Mellencamp and Twisted Sister, among others – *The Silver Gymnasium* conforms mostly to Okkervil River's established template of anxious, wordy new wave power pop (though this was, of course, a staple genre of the MTV era in the first place). The musical gestures to the period in which *The Silver Gymnasium* is set are few, and unshowy. Were one not equipped with foreknowledge of what Sheff was doing here, the big tinkling Cheap Trick keyboard riff on "Down Down The Deep River", the shuffling Mr Mister white-boy funk of "Stay Young" would appear so seamless as to be unremarkable.

The Silver Gymnasium, is no exercise in whimsical nostalgia. The opening track, "It Was My Season", conceals beneath its jaunty Gilbert O'Sullivan-ish piano, and references to VCRs and Ataris, blurred recollections of teenage anguish which seem to surprise Sheff with its lingering potency, as memories of this febrile period in any person's life can ("This pain inside's still just too sharp/What was I thinking?"). There are recurring memories of

assorted car crashes, some accidental, some apparently deliberate ("Lido Pier Suicide Car"). There are what appear laments to compadres who didn't make it out of Meriden and/or adolescence ("Walking Without Frankie").

There are also, more happily, any number of reminders of Sheff's treasurable idiosyncrasies as a writer, of the fact that he is one of very few whose voice is recognisable in just a couple of lines of any given lyric sheet. The baleful yet irresistible singalong "All The Time Every Day" is structured as a Q&A dialogue, the chorused title replying to such posers as "Do you watch the world get cold, and crushed and small?/And when you could do so much, do you do fuck all?"

This last reproach is as crucial to *The Silver Gymnasium*, as it is to all examinations of youth as reviewed from middle age (though Sheff is not yet 40, his precocity advances him a decade or so). If we knew then what we know now, we'd be richer, happier and/or would at least have gotten laid a lot more. Conversely, if only we could unlearn some of what we have picked up since then, we'd be braver, kinder, more passionate. Or, as Sheff puts it on "Stay Young", "Don't get tough/Don't 'get on with it'/Stay on/It's so heartbreaking and it's so sad when it's gone."

The Silver Gymnasium is the archest conceit Okkervil River have yet attempted – a considerable accolade for this group in particular. But it is also the sincerest, most heartfelt album they've yet assembled, and it's all the more powerful for it.

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

p62 ELVIS COSTELLO

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p76 NEKO CASE



ED ASKEW

For The World

TIN ANGEL

Fancy a tiple...? Lost wyrd-folk artist finally gets the band treatment Ed Askew's ESP-Disk debut remains one of the wyrdar artefacts from the late '60s,

featuring only his urgent, tremulous voice and 10-string Martin tiple. Now a septuagenarian cult figure, he finally gets the band treatment but Askew's voice and tiple remain distinctively *sui generis*, as does the air of fairytale enchantment about his songs of children's dreams, birds and fishes, city streetlife, blue-eyed babies and brown-eyed boys. On "Gertrude Stein", the plaintive strum of tiple carries a lyric which mingles reminiscences of NYC with musings on the home life of Stein and Alice B Toklas, though the most affecting piece here is "Radio Rose", a wintry tableau in which harp and guitar percolate through undulating piano figures.

ANDY GILL



MULATU ASTATKE

Sketches Of Ethiopia

JAZZ VILLAGE

Dynamic global jazz from veteran

Ethiopiques cult hero

One of the few stars of the golden age of '70s Ethio-jazz still active, Astatke has created a cosmopolitan mash-up of ancient Ethiopiques harmonies and contemporary jazz and funk grooves. Recorded in London and Addis Ababa, Ethiopian flutes, lutes and the single-stringed *masinko* combine boldly with the freeform jazz riffing of Byron Wallen's trumpet and James Arben's sax. Guest vocalists Tesfaye and Fatoumata Diawara provide further seasoning and the disparate ingredients are blended into a rich stew by Astatke's inventive arrangements and virtuosic piano/vibraphone playing. If the term 'world jazz' is an instant turn-off, Astatke is here to change your mind.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

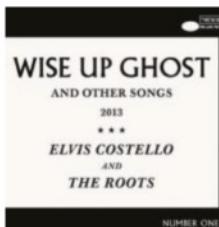


ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ROOTS

Wise Up Ghost

BLUE NOTE

EC's metatextual affair with the jazzy neo-hip-hoppers. By Graeme Thomson



6/10

His latest unlikely partnership is with The Roots, the jazzy neo-hip-hoppers who moonlight as the house band on NBC's *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon*, which is where this union first sparked into life. Having been given carte blanche to deconstruct the likes of "High Fidelity" when backing Costello on the show, talk then turned to The Roots retooling a Costello classic for Record Store Day. That grew into a mooted EP, before both parties realised that they were already in the throes of making an album.

The plan to re-record material from Costello's past was dropped, but the outline of that idea remains visible. *Wise Up Ghost* is a metatextual affair: on one level its sights are set on new frontiers; on another it's hugely self-referential, constantly recycling words and musical motifs from his back catalogue.

Half of this curious but at times compelling collaboration sets lyrics from old songs to new tracks – though not always to their benefit. "Refuse To Be Saved" marries the words from *Mighty Like A Rose*'s "Invasion Hit Parade" to one of those strident non-melodies that Costello tends to throw at his music when inspiration isn't returning his calls. The skeletal "(She Might Be A) Grenade" reconfigures "She's Pulling Out The Pin" to similarly slight reward. At other times the past is resurrected more

ELVIS COSTELLO HAS seldom played it safe in his choice of collaborators. From Billy Sherrill to the Brodksy Quartet, Anne Sofie von Otter to Wendy James, Bill Frisell to Burt Bacharach, eclectic and promiscuous just about covers it.

effectively. The tender "Trip Wire" revisits the circular doo-wop of "Satellite", while "Wake Me Up" creates a convincing new home for the bloodied words to "Bedlam", from *The Delivery Man*, setting them to the kind of sparse New Orleans funk which invokes the Dirty Dozen Brass Band's contributions on *Spike*. There's nothing random about any of it. These are some of Costello's most acerbic, even apocalyptic words, and amount to a full-bore indictment of personal, corporate and political mendacity. The spectral dub of "Walk Us Uptown" sets the tone, Costello crowing: "Keep a red flag flying, keep a blue flag as well/And a white flag in case it all goes to hell." Elsewhere there are swipes at "boom to bust" culture and those who insist that "two and two is five". Musically, *Wise Up Ghost* is equally stark. A brooding rhythm record most closely resembling the claustrophobic beat-music of

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Feliz Habitat Studios, NYC; Hookery Crookery Studios, Vancouver

Produced by: Steven Mandel, Elvis Costello, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson

Personnel: Elvis Costello (vocals, guitars, keyboards); The Roots; La Marisol (vocals); Brent Fischer (strings)

When I Was Cruel, it's sweetened only slightly by Brent Fischer's inventive string arrangements and Mexican-American singer La Marisol, who duets on "Cinco Minutos Con Vos". When the combination works it conjures a sense of foreboding. "Viceroy's Row" – "where all of the nightmares go" – is malevolent and hypnotic, its dragnet groove filled with dubby bass, trippy flute and fluttering layers of backing vocals. "Sugar Won't

Work" welds a sharp guitar lick to one of the record's few really persuasive melodies, while the title track is an ominous meditation intoned over feedbacking guitar and a string figure sampled from yet another corner of Costello's past. It has drama, poise and – unlike many other tracks here – evolves, rather than staying locked in its rhythmic straitjacket.

Such moments justify this collaboration, yet when *Wise Up Ghost* goes wrong it goes really wrong. The Roots are tight but a tad slow-footed – hip-hop you can happily take home to mother. "Come The Meantimes" is like G Love & Special Sauce tackling Portishead's "Sour Times", with Isley's guitar tacked to the end. "Stick Out Your Tongue" does unseemly things to "Pills And Soap", laying out one of EC's greatest lyrics like a corpse over a lacklustre jam. For all its purposeful intent, the prevalence of these and other misfires prevent *Wise Up Ghost* fulfilling its intriguing promise. It's still better than that Anne Sofie von Otter album, though.

Q&A

Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson



How did the idea for the album start to take shape?

On the Fallon show, Elvis gave us the liberty to flip his songs, he trusted us so much, and after the last time he was on we thought,

'Why don't we do this for real instead of every six months?' At first it was going to be to remix Elvis' favourites, but I objected to that pretty quickly. I didn't want to get the blame for messing with his classic stuff!

How were the songs written? Elvis might come to us with a ghost of an idea and we would flesh it out, or sometimes the ghost of the idea was enough. We approached it like a hobby. It wasn't until we had 13 songs we thought were great that we knew we had a record on our hands. He is the most open-minded artist I've ever encountered. We recorded this entire record in our dressing room [on Fallon], not even in the studio. The whole room can barely hold eight people.

Any shows planned? Are you kidding? I can't wait to put my spin on a 20-minute version of "I Want You"! I've got four separate song lists, and I guess by October or November we'll start doing heavy rehearsals for our dream show. GRAEME THOMSON



WILLIS EARL BEAL **Nobody Knows**

XL

Eccentric lo-fi soulman bolsters mystique with songwriting substance

7/10

A carefully elusive backstory paints alt.folk soulman Willis Earl Beal as an outsider artist with a mysterious past as a street-busking drifter and publicity-shy loner. His *X Factor* audition is never mentioned, but all this Dylan-esque myth-making suits his bare-bones aesthetic and potent, shape-shifting voice. More polished than 2012's ragged debut, *Acousmatic Sorcery*, the Chicago native's second features loops courtesy of Rodaith McDonald, plus an agreeably raw duet with Cat Power. Between Beefheart-ian yelps and Waits-ian growls, Beal hits the emotional target with his grainy falsetto on the avant-soul ballad "Everything Unwinds" and the ghostly sonic collage "Disintegrating".

STEPHEN DALTON



BIG BLACK DELTA **Big Black Delta**

MASTERS OF BATES

Polished electro-rock debut feels rich in commercial potential

7/10

The solo-project alias of Jonathan Bates, former frontman of LA post-metal rockers Mellowdrone and touring member of French electro outfit M83, Big Black Delta combine 1980s analogue synth-pop signifiers with contemporary digital production. "Side Of The Road" is a melodic techno-rock epic stacked with robo-tweaked vocal harmonies, sounding like Muse jamming with ELO. Drenched in syrupy synth strings and clammy declarations of undying love, "Dreary Moon" is a Lynchian romantic ballad while "PB3" is a shuddering symphony of super-sized shoegazing drones. Knowingly nostalgic and highly polished, this rich debut contains retro-cool references but also chunky pop hooks.

STEPHEN DALTON



BLONDIES **Swisher**

RVNG INTL

New York duo's dreamy techno-infused debut

6/10

Sam Haar and Zach Steinman are a couple of preppy young Brooklynites whose attraction to the romantic notion of rare nirvana means their music as Blondes increasingly resembles tie-dyed mid-'90s Euro techno. Done well, as it is on *Swisher*, their first album following last year's singles round-up, the results can be pretty euphoric: "Andrew" and "Rei" chug away tastefully in the key of acid, and the final "Elise" has a bittersweet allure. But having phased out the shoegaze from their sound, Blondes at times now struggle to address the dancefloor head-on. The manicured house of "Poland" and "Clasp" seems to pulse without purpose.

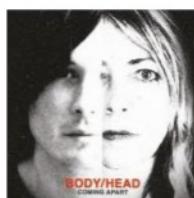
PIERS MARTIN

Eccentric lo-fi soulman bolsters mystique with songwriting substance

7/10

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STEPHEN DALTON



BODY/HEAD **Coming Apart**

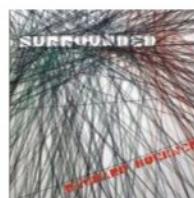
MATADOR

Throbbing, noisy drone sculptures in the wake of Sonic Youth

7/10

This is the new duo of Kim Gordon and experimental guitarist Bill Nace, a fresh start after Gordon's divorce from Thurston Moore this year which brought Sonic Youth to a close. On the SY spectrum that featured everything from post-grunge hits to free improv meltdowns, it certainly tends towards the latter, but Gordon's keening voice remains eternally accessible even as she sings about rape and violence. Her songs, anchored around throbbing, freeform electric guitar that teeters on the edge of feedback, don't so much drift as press steadfastly onwards into the unknown – all of them stick in your head despite little trace of a tune.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



RICHARD BUCKNER **Surrounded**

MERGE

Further adventures in off-the-rails songwriting As chronicler of the inner ruminations and slippery notions of tormented

8/10

minds, onetime alt.country darling Buckner has no viable peer. *Surrounded* furthers the downcast moods and claustrophobic realities of *Meadow* (2006) and *Our Blood* (2011), eschewing verse/chorus for a daring prose approach, short-story narratives and flashing imagery set afloat via sound collage, its protagonists facing constant disharmony. It's occasionally jarring ("Foundation"), more texture than rhythm, brittle home recordings accentuated by muted acoustic guitar, electronic autoharp and effects that lend the work a roiling tension (see the incessant sawing in "When You Tell Me How It Is"). In short, dense, mesmerising, involving.

LUKE TORN



BURNING HOUSE **Walking Into A Burning House**

NAIVE

Franco-American funk project: better than Daft Punk

8/10

Burning House are a duo comprising Chief Xcel (the DJ from Californian backpack hip-hoppers Blackalicious) and San Francisco-based French analogue synth purist Hervé Salters (from General Elektriks). Rather like the best bits on Daft Punk's last album, this is Franco-American music that combines slightly clinical, jerky, *plastique* French synth-pop with the quirkiest of US funk. It's slightly exhausting to appreciate in one go, but there are squelchy ballads ("Copy That"), squeaky funk workouts ("Whispers In Your Headphones") and shouty, child-friendly sing-alongs ("The Nightbird") that should, in an ideal world, be bigger than "Get Lucky".

JOHN LEWIS



BILL CALLAHAN **Dream River**

DRAG CITY

Where the artist formerly known as Smog finds beauty in home comforts

9/10

"Riding for the feeling," Bill Callahan evangelised on 2011's *Apocalypse*. That's where *Dream River* picks up, with the same band – pattering hand percussion, fiddle and flute filigrees – and a touching commitment to life's simpler pleasures: "I really am a lucky man," he sings on the softly warped "Small Plane", flying home with his love asleep beside him. He celebrates the happy silences that come after successful serenades ("The Sing"), and all but abandons traditional structure for groove-led intuition. Relative shade keeps his 15th album vital; the devil-may-care lust of "Spring", and the lyrical and musical tension on "Ride My Arrow" leave *Dream River* among Callahan's very best.

LAURA SNAPES

HOW TO BUY... **RICHARD BUCKNER**

Songs in several shades of grey



Devotion + Doubt

MCA, 1997

Buckner's major-label debut and as sombre and pain-wracked a record as you might expect of one written in

the wake of a divorce. Its hushed, desolate vocals and finger-picked delicacy underline why Bon Iver is such a big fan, while the strikingly stark "Fater" in particular shows how deep RB's expressive river runs.

8/10



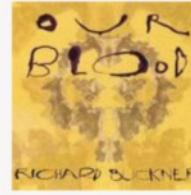
Dents And Shells

MERGE, 2004

His sixth sees Buckner inviting an unlikely guest on drums - former Butthole Surfer

King Coffey – and adding breezy pedal-steel to his impressionistic and isolationist mix, but it's some way from a rollicking party. His familiar grazed vocal tones carry the tunes' country-rock swing, and grey is still the general hue.

8/10



Our Blood

MERGE, 2011

Nine, single-word titles ("Traitor", "Thief", "Witness"...) convey a bluntness that isn't really there in the songs, some of which suggest *The Ghost Of Tom Joad*. There's a weariness in RB's voice that might be as much actual as an existential reflection – the album was made three times, due to tape-machine death and laptop theft.

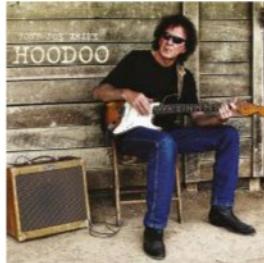
7/10

SHARON O'CONNELL

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



TONY JOE WHITE

Hoodoo

YEP ROC

9/10

expository electric guitar and his trademark whisper-to-a-growl baritone, waxing poetic on floods and storms, alligators and picking cotton in a girt sack. As Neil Young once observed, it's all one song.

Hoodoo strikes a shady, shadowy, all-hell-about-to-break-loose vibe from the get-go. "I was sitting in a graveyard late one night, didn't know why..." he intones, as opener "The Gift" picks up steam. By the time *Hoodoo* heads toward its heart of darkness – a seven-minute trudge into the apocalypse called "The Flood" – life has been reduced to a simple struggle for survival. Then, it gets worse. "Storm Comin'", a howling rocker – Owings pushing the rhythms with ominous, stabbing punches – finds the protagonist frantically trying to get the kids up, dressed, and out the door before the deluge hits. White has rarely been this animated, moaning and grunting John Lee Hooker-style at times, punctuating his dark tales with piquant observations and funny asides. In "Holed Up", his bedraggled sad-sack subject, stranded in his Airstream trailer, discovers his weed-eater is busted. In the would-be comic-relief closer – "Sweet Tooth" – which ends poorly nonetheless, White sensibly advises his sweetheart to lay off the cookie dough. And odd spiritual revelations crop up whenever: "You can't eavesdrop on the future, or tap-dance to the past," he wryly observes in "Gypsy Epilogue". In short, *Hoodoo* is spellbinding stuff, a new high mark in a delightful late-career renaissance. LUKE TORN



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Two years on from fine debut *The Place I Left Behind*, Canadian roots combo **The Deep Dark Woods** return in October with *Jubilee*, produced by Jonathan Wilson. Sounds like a nudge

towards new territory too, the band promising flavours of early Neil Young, The Byrds and Fairport, plus "psych-synth experimentation". Meanwhile, North Carolina bluegrass types **The Steep Canyon Rangers** have swiftly followed up 2012's Grammy-winning *Nobody Knows You*. Cut at Levon Helm's Woodstock studio with the late musician's producer-collaborator Larry Campbell, the freewheeling *Tell The Ones I Love* was

recorded almost entirely live and much in the spirit of Helm's weekly roots jamboree, the Midnight Ramble. Sticking with mountain music, US filmmaker **James Reams** has finally released his 11-years-in-the-making doc, *Making History with the Pioneers of Bluegrass: Tales of the Early Days in Their Own Words*. One of its key elements is an appreciation of Ernest 'Pop' Stoneman, a man whose work on Okeh predicated even that of the Carter Family. On the live front, Southport's new arts venue **The Atkinson** has announced its first Americana Festival. *From A Distance* runs from 20-22 Sept and boasts some fine talent, not least **Lincoln Durham, Kelly Joe Phelps and Peggy Seeger**. The latter also hosts a workshop – 'A Feminist View Of Anglo-American Traditional Songs'. Weekend tickets are £59 from www.theatkinson.co.uk. ROB HUGHES



CARLTON MELTON

Always Even Agitated

Deeply trippy psych-veterans return with fourth LP

7/10

There's nobody quite like Carlton Melton, four dudes in their forties (two of whom were once in '90s garage rockers Zen Guerrilla) who record improvised blissed-out hallucinatory rock inside a geodesic dome (a sort of giant golfball) located deep in the North Californian woodlands. The recording environment gives the band a smooth, immersive, enveloping sound, and they really get inside your head on tracks like the deep space shimmer of "Slow Wake", the chugging "Keeping On" and coruscating "Sarsen", where trippy organs and heavy metal guitars slip in and out of the mix, sounding like Jean Michel Jarre collaborating with Sunn O))).

PETER WATTS



CHVRCHES

The Bones Of What You Believe

VIRGIN/GOODBYE

Vowel-dropping Scottish trio preach to the converted

7/10

Shortlisted in the BBC's Sound Of... poll earlier this year, Glasgow's Chvrches have been slow to capitalise on the early hype, instead engaging in lengthy US tours while drip-feeding fans back home with a series of singles. Thus, many of the tracks on their debut album will already be familiar. Led by Lauren Mayberry's high-pitched vocals, *The Bones Of What You Believe* serves to refresh the synth-pop template dreamt up by the likes of Gary Numan, Pet Shop Boys and OMD. While their pristine sound lacks grit, in lyrical terms the troubled "Lies" and "The Mother We Share" show that Chvrches are blessed with hidden depths.

FIONA STURGES



JOSIENNE CLARKE & BEN WALKER

Fire & Fortune

NAVIGATOR

Polished, low-key third from young folk contenders

7/10

Vocalist Clarke and guitarist Walker are both classically trained and it shows in their precise, technically adept approach to the British folk canon. Clarke's lovely voice certainly climbs easily around the scales, but her delivery can be bloodless on trad material like "Green Grow The Laurels", whereas she's fully engaged on self-penned material like the brooding title track and the waltz time "Another Perfect Love". Ben Walker's arrangements are always considered, whether adding discreet fiddle, hushed drums or, on the spartan "The Month Of January", a woodwind drone. A charming, slow-burn set.

NEIL SPENCER



DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD

Stay True

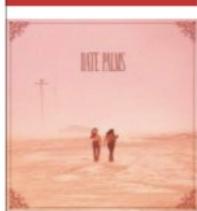
LOOSE

Ragged but righteous country soul

7/10

In a chequered career that's seen him map a singular Americana highway running from his Australian birthplace to adopted South London home, Danny Wilson's wide-eyed optimism has been a constant. Now, with a stabilised lineup and a set of songs that winningly combine banjo-flecked homily and Muscle Shoals confessional, this latest is fuelled by tender nostalgia and resilience – apparent in both the title track and exuberant opener "(Never Stop Building) That Old Space Rocket". The material is well-suited to a live-in-the-studio sound, emphasising the warmth of give'n'take collegiate endeavour over restrictive perfectionism.

GAVIN MARTIN



DATE PALMS

The Dusted Sessions

THRILL JOCKEY

American duo mapping landscapes through country cosmology

8/10

forth the expansive in musicians: think of Brightblack Morning Light's languorous blues kosmische. Date Palms, the duo of Gregg Kosalsky and Marielle Jakobson, who've re-convened here with a quintet, get that vibe. On *The Dusted Sessions* they essay, via Rhodes, tampura, guitar, synths, violin and bass, collective driftworks that channel the spirit-guiding breaths gusting across expansive, parched-earth scenery. It exists in the same wasted-devotional space as Popol Vuh or Siloah, two other groups who knew how to grasp the infinite via minimal means, lungfuls of drone reaching the stars.

JONDALE



DEER TICK

Negativity

PARTISAN

Soup-to-nuts Americana from the rowdy Rhode Islanders

8/10

events of the past year, chief among them a broken engagement and the imprisonment of his father, have resulted in Deer Tick frontman John McCauley offering up such a soul-tearing work as *Negativity*. Certainly, there's anguish aplenty in songs like "Trash" and "Pot Of Gold", the latter imploring some higher power for salvation. But the upshot is an injection of newfound plurality in the quintet's music. Cue spirited shots of Memphis-style R'n'B, busted FM rock, sour piano ballads and fuzzy country-boogie on a record that spurts gloriously in all directions.

ROB HUGHES



THE DEFIBULATORS

Debt'll Get 'Em

KINDRED RHYTHM

Expansive Brooklyn septet take zany twang downtown

6/10

These irreverent punkabilles demonstrate plenty of raucous spirit and country chops on their third LP, with material inspired by fertile, age-old dichotomies: urban/rural, young/old, college hipster/country bumpkin. They're going for madcap – see country-boy-in-the-big-city character sketch "Cackalacky" and statement of purpose (one supposes), "Hee-Haw In Heaven" – but it's all been done better (cf. Beat Farmers, Mojo Nixon, Hickoids, et al). Still, the zippy, instrumental "Rumble Strip" is spectacular – shades of Jimmy Bryant/Speedy West – and when the Defibs add a dollop of gritty realism, as on the class-conscious "Working Class" and "Pay For That Money", they hit a nerve.

LUKE TORN



DESERT HEAT

Cat Mask At Huggie Temple

MIE MUSIC

Elevated dustbowl jams from 2013's breakthrough guitarist

Brooklyn-based Steve Gunn is on a hot streak this year. After an exquisite solo set (*Time Off*), and a mellow collaboration with Hiss Golden Messenger (*Golden Gunn*), *Cat Mask...* is more exploratory, moving back into the blues-raga territory of his two Gunn-Truscinski Duo LPs. John Truscinski returns on drums, playing Billy Higgins to Gunn's Sandy Bull. These two long jams are given added heft, though, with the addition of Cian Nugent, an Irishman who's shifted from acoustic fingerpicking to a more psychedelic, electric style. Further evidence, perhaps, that the prevailing underground fashion is for John Fahey acolytes to plug in, without sacrificing intricacy and nuance.

JOHN MULVEY

DESTRUCTION UNIT

Deep Trip

SACRED BONES

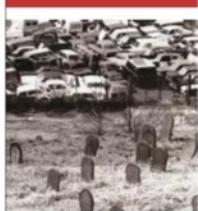
Heavy psych trip from Arizonan juggernaut

8/10

A band who call themselves Destruction

Unit are never going to be playing folk, so no surprise that *Deep Trip* opens with the ear-deadening electric storm of "The World On Drugs" and there is no respite from the torrid, churning atmosphere until majestic third track "Bumpy Road" chills things out a notch. This is psych rock from the metal end of the spectrum, febrile and violent explorations of noise with titles like "God Trip" – a sort of horror-rock feedback jam – and the warped space-pop "The Holy Ghost" that are malevolent in sound and magnificent in scale. Intense, relentless and spellbinding.

PETER WATTS



DRENGE

Drenge

INFECTIOUS

Politician-tipped siblings' blues explosion

Hot-blooded Peak District duo Drenge

7/10

were understandably "not overjoyed" when Labour MP Tom Watson arbitrarily endorsed them in his resignation letter earlier this summer. Still, the event drew attention to the Loveless brothers' raw, Black Keys-style rock'n'roll – Eoin sings and plays guitar, while Rory drums – and this promising debut also casts Eoin as a shrewd observer of smalltown teenage tedium in the vein of Alex Turner. His ragged yowl tears through "I Want To Break You In Half" and "People In Love Make Me Feel Yuck", but across a full album the monotony that fuels their material threatens to snuff out any sparks.

PIERS MARTIN



ELTON JOHN

The Diving Board

MERCURY

The rocket man returns to his very best on 30th LP, says *Andy Gill*



9/10

Board may be the best LP of Elton John's career.

Clearly reinvigorated by *The Union*, his 2010 collaboration with Leon Russell, Elton hooked up again with producer T Bone Burnett for a blizzard of work. In three days, he and Taupin had written 11 songs, the bulk of which were recorded virtually live in the studio in just five days with a typical T Bone crack team designed to re-focus the star on a basic piano trio format, with the peerless Jay Bellerose bringing snap, punch and roll to the grooves, and Raphael Saadiq lacing expansive basslines through the songs. Around these core tracks, further colouration is provided by keyboardist Keefus Ciancia, Motown percussionist Jack Ashford, and Doyle Bramhall II and Burnett on guitars.

It's a supple, flexible crew capable of bending to accommodate whatever style and emphasis is demanded from Elton's best collection of songs and stories in ages, an anthology in which threads of maturity, melancholy, sympathy and insight are braided into a strong, compelling rope that pulls the listener from the opening valediction of "Oceans Away" to the closing rumination of "The Diving Board". In the former, he adopts a smart, in places

COMBINING INTIMACY AND extroversion, immediacy and reflection, in a way only accessible to a performer able to tweak one's tearducts while wearing a lavishly embroidered, gold-lamé general's costume, *The Diving*

almost military, inflection to pay tribute to old soldiers haunted by fallen friends, "the ones who hold onto the ones they have to leave behind", a respectful acknowledgement of duty discharged. By contrast, the latter deals waspishly with the modern fascination with empty celebrity, a talent-show lottery culture which places its supposed winners high up on the diving board – a place from where "you see it all", but which equally exposes your every move and mistake to public gaze. With Elton's bluesy delivery tinted with subdued horns, it's Ray Charles crossed with Randy Newman.

In between these poles reside a host of characters struggling to find their rightful place, their due respect, their heart's ease: from the would-be poet of "My Quicksand", long since sucked into a corrosive lifestyle, and the Depression-era dance-contestants of "The New Fever Waltz", to the blind black musician of "Ballad Of Blind Tom", using his instinctive gift to both lubricate his way through life, and bring more intangible aesthetic satisfaction. Several tracks hint back to Elton's early career, with both the dustbowl odyssey "Town Called Jubilee" and the gospel number "Take This Dirty Water" throwbacks to *Tumbleweed Connection* territory.

Leon Russell's influence is reflected in the frisky R'n'B piano of "Mexican Vacation", while the shadow of David Ackles, an important model for the John/Taupin songwriting style, falls across "Voyeur", once considered as the LP's title track. It's a sombre work dealing with the way we seek respite

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

T Bone Burnett

Recorded at: The Village, Los Angeles

Personnel includes:

Elton John (vocals, piano), Doyle Bramhall (guitar), Raphael Saadiq (bass), Keefus Ciancia (keys), Jay Bellerose (drums) Jack Ashford (percussion)

from adversity and melancholy, wars political and emotional, in the temporary solace of snatched liaisons, where "a whisper in the dark is holding more truth than a shout".

Elsewhere, the jaunty country-pop plaint "Can't Stay Alone Tonight" deals in more optimistic manner with the same theme of estrangement covered in "Home Again". One of the album's highlights, the latter confronts the need to leave, and the desire to return, against a bleak piano soundscape whipped by wispy, wind-like synth noise, the homesick protagonist regretting "all this time I spent being someone else's friend". Another standout is "Oscar Wilde Gets Out", in which the writer's flight from Reading Gaol to France is borne on a compelling piano setting whose momentum evokes both furtive escape and decisive break, driven along by the restrained slap-punch of Bellerose's drums. It's also one of Taupin's best lyrics, blending regret and fond reminiscence with the bitter sting of humiliation, Wilde compared to "the head of John The Baptist in the arms of Salome".

Punctuated by three piano miniatures, "Dream #1, #2 and #3", which serve as palate-cleansing sorbets between sharp changes of mood and direction, it's an impressively strong set of songs, diverse in both lyrical themes and musical styles, and delivered with a confident range of drama and empathy by a "heritage" act resolutely refusing to rest on his laurels, an artist secure in his abilities – and, yes, in his continuing relevance.

Q&A

Elton John

How did these sessions work? On the first three days of recording, in 2012, we wrote 11 songs. All the tracks on the first session were done in five days. We went back this year and Bernie wrote some additional lyrics. I chose four and they were written and recorded in two days.

You continue to work prolifically with Bernie Taupin... The great advantage of having Bernie as a lyricist is he's a very cinematic writer. I get a piece of paper [from him] and it has a story on it.

Then I sit down at the keyboard... and because the story he's telling affects what I'm hearing... something comes out. I don't know what it is. It's as exciting as it was when I wrote the first melody to his first lyric, way back in 1967.

What was it like working with T Bone Burnett?

When you've got musicians like these guys behind you, it's so exciting. This was done, more or less, live. That's the way I used to record. In the old days, with the *Elton John* album [1970] we were recording live with an orchestra, and I was terrified. But it's the way to do it. And that's the way T Bone does it... he assembles this great group of musicians, and hence things don't take five or six months.



THE DROWNING MEN

All Of The Unknown

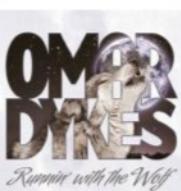
BORSTAL BEAT

West Coast five-piece aiming for the big time

6/10

There's a bravura tone to The Drowning Men's second album, the follow-up to 2009's *Beheading Of The Songbird*, the sound of a band that feel they may be ready to move onto bigger things. The Californian rockers come across a little like a nascent Kings Of Leon on tracks like album opener "Lost In A Lullaby", which marries swagger with melody to create an anthemic feel that the rest of the LP strives to follow. They've still some way to go, but on "Smile", the band attempt a more muscular take on Coldplay and almost pull it off, while "Fix Me Love" has an intriguing John Grant-esque disco underbelly.

PETER WATTS



OMAR DYKES

Runnin' With The Wolf

PROVOGUE

Howlin' Wolf tribute from the veteran frontman of Austin's Omar & The Howlers

6/10

It's a brave man who essays an album of Wolf covers, for the great man's recordings of "Little Red Rooster", "Spoonful", "Back Door Man" and others are among the most bone-crunchingly memorable vocal performances ever committed to disc. Drawing on the reinterpretations of 1960s white blues-rock revivalists as well as the primal spirit of the Chess originals, Dykes' deep, gritty voice has obvious parallels and you'd love to hear him perform this set in a heaving blues club. But the most satisfying track is the solitary non-cover, Dykes' swaggering homage on the title track, which smartly name-checks all the great song titles and is delivered with irresistible relish.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



FACTORY FLOOR

Factory Floor

DFA/ROUGH TRADE

London industrial trio, blessed by Chris & Cosey. Factory Floor's growing reputation rests on their uncompromising live

7/10

shows, the closest the current generation has come to reproducing the bridling intensity of Throbbing Gristle or Swans. 2011's signing to DFA heralded a shift towards beatier territory, and much of this album resembles the kind of murky '80s proto-techno recently unearthed by Trevor Jackson for his *Metal Dance* comps, with Nik Colk Void's monotone vocals ceding centre stage to the restive machine rhythms that constantly threaten to rise up and overthrow their human masters. "Here Again" perfects the formula, which subsequently begins to feel rather repetitive – though the band themselves may take that as a compliment.

SAM RICHARDS

West Coast five-piece aiming for the big time

6/10

There's a bravura tone to The Drowning Men's second album, the follow-up to 2009's *Beheading Of The Songbird*, the sound of a band that feel they may be ready to move onto bigger things. The Californian rockers come across a little like a nascent Kings Of Leon on tracks like album opener "Lost In A Lullaby", which marries swagger with melody to create an anthemic feel that the rest of the LP strives to follow. They've still some way to go, but on "Smile", the band attempt a more muscular take on Coldplay and almost pull it off, while "Fix Me Love" has an intriguing John Grant-esque disco underbelly.

PETER WATTS



VIEUX, FARKA TOURÉ

Mon Pays

SIX DEGREES

Fourth album from Malian guitarist with a famous lineage

7/10

Vieux has achieved enough in his own right not to be habitually defined as 'Ali Farka Touré's son', although he pays familial tribute with a stirring cover of the old man's desert blues guitar tune "Safare". *Mon Pays* draws defiant inspiration from the recent crisis in Mali, which led to Touré and his family fleeing their home to escape the tide of Islamic extremism. "Yer Gando" with its haunting call-and-response vocal, and the ringing guitars of "Kele Magni" find Touré directly addressing the events that have ruptured his country. A brace of instrumental guitar/kora duets with Sidiki Diabate titled "Future" and "Peace" offer a more meditative commentary.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



FOREST SWORDS

Engravings

TRI ANGLE

Spooked pagan electronic, forged in the Wirral

Matthew Barnes' recordings as Forest

7/10

Swords essentially does for the English countryside what Burial's music did for the inner city: spooked, somnambulant pieces grounded in modern urban production styles, but gesturing at something ghostly and esoteric. *Engravings*, his debut album proper after five years of low-key releases, is a vision of some shadowy Arcadia, its minimal Timbaland beats and lurking *Mezzanine*-style bass presented with mud and moss under the nails. Guitars glint like ancient arrowheads on "The Weight Of Gold", "Onward" conjures *Exorcist* dread, and vocalist Anneka adds a lilting human presence to the pagan trip-hop of "Anneka's Battle".

LOUIS PATTISON

HOW TO BUY... THE TOURÉ FAMILY

More Malian magic



ALI FARKA TOURÉ & TOUMANI DIABATÉ

Ali & Toumani

WORLD CIRCUIT, 2010

Recorded in 2005 when Ali knew he was dying from cancer, a poignant, soulful intensity fills these fluid guitar/kora duets. After the two Malian maestros had already won a Grammy for their peerless collaboration on *In The Heart Of The Moon*, Ali's playing suggests he was determined to pour all the sagacity and experience of a lifetime into their final collaboration.

10/10



ALI FARKA TOURÉ

Savane

WORLD CIRCUIT, 2006

Saving his best until last, Ali's final solo release was steeped in the African blues, as deep and unearthly as Robert Johnson or early Muddy Waters. But it was also an LP of wonderfully contrasting textures as he made the sax of Pee Wee Ellis and the reggae lilt of the title-track sound like they were coming home to their African source.

10/10



THE TOURÉ-RAICHEL COLLECTIVE

The Tel Aviv Session

CUMBANCHA, 2012

A chance meeting in a German airport lounge between Vieux and dreadlocked Israeli pop star/keys player Idan Raichel led to an organic and mostly instrumental collaboration rich with spontaneous delight. From the churning blues of "Bamba" to the epic fusion of "Alem", the hybrid guitar/piano interplay is glorious.

8/10

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE GARIFUNA COLLECTIVE

Ayó

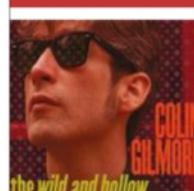
CUMBANCHA

Belated but poignant follow-up to world music milestone

6/10

In 2007 Andy Palacio and his collective released *Wátina*, an album of swaying, acoustic global roots-pop which brought to the world the threatened culture of the Garifuna people of Belize. Exploiting the same musical values that made Buena Vista Social Club a global phenomenon, *Wátina* won just about every 'world music album of the year' award, but within months Palacio was dead at the age of 47. Six years on his fellow musicians have re-assembled to create a follow-up and tribute. It's a more crafted studio production with less reliance on organic spontaneity, but the bucolic charm of the gentle Latino rhythms, tropical lilt and soul-stirring melodies remain undimmed.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



COLIN GILMORE

The Wild And Hollow

WOOBETOWN

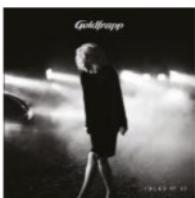
Gleaming country-rock from the son of a Flatlander

8/10

With his philosopher's wit and an infectious, Buddy Holly-esque gift for pop hooks, Lubbock-cum-Austin songwriter Colin Gilmore extends his three-album winning streak. *The Wild And Hollow*, at once more pensive and more authoritative than his stunning 2010 album *Goodnight Lane*, revolves around the somber, chilling "Wake Me In The Night". A gripping tale of internal turmoil and (hoped-for) redemption, delivered with stern intensity, its gravity is counterbalanced by the good loose fun of "Wait", "Only Real To Me" and Nick Lowe's "Raging Eyes", sparkling, infectious pub-rock gems eloquently framed by Jason Bennett's ringing, serpentine guitar leads.

LUKE TORN

New Albums



GOLDFRAPP

Tales Of Us

MUTE

Shapeshifting diva's mellow sixth returns to the folk of *Felt Mountain*. If the '80s synthpop of last album *Head First* rather cheapened the

6/10

Goldfrapp brand, *Tales Of Us* is an attempt to reconnect with core values such as intrigue and elegance. Hence a return to the creamy folk music of *Felt Mountain*, a photo of Lana Del Rey pinned to the dartboard. Pitched as a hallucinatory English fairytale, each song named after a different character, it's more fireside snooze than woodland romp. Will Gregory and Alison Goldfrapp conjure a crepuscular mood with soft psych-folk swaddled in film-score strings that builds to a stirring climax on highlight track "Thea", but excitement seems to be in short supply.

PIERS MARTIN



GOODIE MOB

Age Against The Machine

ELEKTRA

Cee-Lo Green gets the old band back together...

8/10

'Dungeon Family' collective as OutKast, invented the term 'Dirty South', and made three acclaimed albums before Cee-Lo Green left in 1999 to become a post-Gnarls Barkley megastar. Despite the lousy title, this reunion album is a surprisingly thrilling state-of-the-nation address, ranging from the pop rap of "Special Education" and "Valleujah" to the art-noise of "I'm Set" and the provocative "Power", whereby Green chants "white power!" repeatedly while examining American racism. The result is both an ambitious concept album and a glorious booty-shaker.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



DANNY PAUL GRODY

Between Two Worlds

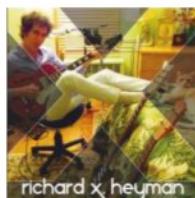
THREE LOBED RECORDINGS

Californian guitarist drifts gracefully into new age territory

7/10

The third solo LP by Cali guitarist Grody arrives, serendipitously, around the same time as the reissue of Robbie Basho's first solo LP for Windham Hill (see p89). Grody, formerly of post-rockers Tarentel, is very much one of those guitar soli in the Basho mould, who pushes his music away from Primitive American tradition and towards something more meditative. James Blackshaw is perhaps his most obvious 12-string contemporary, but Grody moves further still into ambient and minimalist zones. Subtle electronic drones seem to increase as the album progresses, situating his music as close to an experimental duo like Mountains as that of the new-school Takoma kids.

JOHN MULVEY



RICHARD X HEYMAN

X

TURN-UP

Sumptuous guitar-and-harmony pop from underground legend

8/10

With his chiming, droning waves of guitar jangle, silky, multi-tracked harmonies, and persistently tuneful, mellifluous melodies straight out of the book of Byrds, Badfinger, and Big Star, New Yorker Richard X Heyman is a throwback pop marvel. *X* represents his 10th solo album, though his Zelig-like career stretches back into the 1960s (The Doughboys), and backup stints for Brian Wilson, Jonathan Richman and others. Think gorgeous, creamy melodic Marshall Crenshaw-inspired pop ("Be The One"), mid-tempo, '80s-style guitar rockers ("Hangman Smiles", "Firing Line"), sprinkled with the occasional fragile ballad ("If You Have To Ask").

LUKE TORN

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Haim



"I don't really know what 'soft rock' means," claims 24-year-old guitarist and lead vocalist Danielle Haim, when quizzed about the band's love of Fleetwood Mac, Pat Benatar and similar high-gloss chart toppers, "but there is definitely a big attraction to the sounds of the many different genres of those eras. I'm not snobby when it comes to the tape-vs-digital argument, but there is something about the warmth of those drum and bass sounds that really excites us." She adds, "We also love every drum machine we've met from the '80s."

According to Haim, the reason their debut was such a long time coming was simply because they were committed to getting it exactly right. "We like to experiment in the studio and need the time to flush ideas out. We had up to five different versions of most of the songs that made it onto the record. We experimented with plenty of different sounds and when we got it, we knew immediately. It just takes some time to get there."

Unlikely as it may seem, given their ages, the girls' parents still sometimes tour with them. "They don't normally get onstage," Haim explains, "but if it's a special show, we bring them up to play a cover of 'Mustang Sally'. It's the first song we learned together as a family band, when we were much younger."

SHARON O'CONNELL



HAIM

Days Are Gone

POLYDOR

Seductive but somewhat same-y first

There's some irony in that title, even more in the clipped chorus of the single, "Falling", with its

7/10

advice to "never look back". Frankly, it's hard to imagine how LA's hip Haim sisters might have delivered a more faithful and potent distillation of MTV-friendly, early '80s soft rock/new wave pop than their highly anticipated debut. Deeply indebted to Fleetwood Mac, Peter Gabriel and The Thompson Twins, it's the stuff of multi-tracked vocal harmonies, whip-crack snares, prowling bass lines and burnished production, updated with subtle electronics and an air of soulful nostalgia. Hook-heavy hummability abounds, but most interesting are the newer "My Song" and "Let Me Go" – darkly atmospheric chunks of contemporary R&B/hip-pop.

SHARON O'CONNELL



RODDY HART & THE LONESOME FIRE

Roddy Hart & The Lonesome Fire

MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

Scots rocker goes widescreen with Coldplay producer

7/10

Hart's winding career has included a couple of so-so indie albums, playing curator and backing band for Celtic Connections, and a weekly radio show. He reaches for the brass ring here, evoking the epic, straining rock of Springsteen and U2. The pattern is predictable – moody, poetic vocals over keys mutating into soaring guitar blitz – but Hart, singing in mid-Atlantic, has the voice and verve to carry it off, and the sonic touch of producer Damon Supple is sure. "Bright Light Fever" and "Tree Of Darkness" are early- and late-period Bruce, respectively, while single "Cold City" is Coldplay-esque. Local hero turns contender.

NEIL SPENCER



HOLOGRAMS

Forever

CAPTURED TRACKS

Pleasure's unknown for super-sensitive Swedes

Luckless waifs from the wrong side of Stockholm, Holograms have found

rock'n'roll to be a fashionable way to starve, but in the spirit of Knut Hamsun's pioneering 1890 novel of bohemian desperation, *Hunger*, poverty has made them interesting as well as a little unhinged. Their second album, *Forever* is speeded-up 1980s stadium goth on an Aldi budget, with monstrous one-finger keyboard playing and a sense for drama whipping a lot of sub-Joy Division guff into something colossally pompous but hugely compelling; "Flesh & Bone", for one, sounds like Killing Joke and Mountain's "Nantucket Sleighride" simultaneously. A power-shower of dour.

JIM WIRTH

VOLCANO CHOIR

Repave

JAGJAGUWAR

Justin Vernon and his able mates set sail, under a strong wind, on what could prove to be an epic musical odyssey. By Bud Scoppa



9/10

THOUGH HE MAY indeed be "winding it down" (as he put it a year ago) in terms of Bon Iver, Justin Vernon's sonic and spiritual adventures are ongoing under another nameplate. The tellingly titled *Repave*, the second collaboration between

Vernon and Collections Of Colonies Of Bees, doesn't appear to be merely another diversion in Vernon's ever-unfolding narrative, which, since the release of 2011's *Bon Iver*, has encompassed key roles on album projects with Megafaun, Kathleen Edwards, Colin Stetson and Shouting Matches, as well as guest appearances with Kanye West and POS.

No, this record has all the earmarks of Vernon's next big thing. Unlike Volcano Choir's test run, 2009's *Unmap*, the new follow-up is a proper album – and a bona fide rock album at that. "I felt like I was in a rock band almost for the first time", Vernon says in Dan Hunting's mini-documentary on the making of the LP. COCOC, comprising Volcano Choir's other members – drummer/percussionist Jon Mueller, guitarists Chris Rosenau and Dan Spack, keyboard player Tom Wincek and bassist Matthew Skemp – is, of course, hardly a standard rock band, with an extensive discog of envelope-pushing experimental music. This project is a different exercise for both parties – the result of a back-and-forth between instrumental pieces made by Rosenau, Wincek and other bandmembers, which Vernon then manipulated (as he's shown, he's a masterful manipulator), with Mueller's percussion and Vernon's vocals as the final ingredients.

The first sound we hear is an oversized liturgical organ, out of which float those familiar stacked falsetto harmonies, but here, on "Tideways", the groove throbbing beneath the airborne voices is wilder and more aggressive than we've come to expect from Vernon, more four-square than previous COCOC efforts. On the following "Acetate", he introduces his lower register amid tribal drums, Gregorian chanting and twinkling piano notes in a syncopated yet regal arrangement, with a twist of Motown in the climax. He stays with his natural voice, an earthy baritone, in the intro to "Comrade", then slides upward, as the track churns along in symphonic splendour. At mid-song, the arrangement enlarges into all-out majesty as Vernon conjoins his low end and falsetto into an eerie hybrid, which in turn gives way to the rumble of an Auto-Tune-created humanoid, as the surrounding sounds wither away.

"Byegone", the first single, is lush from the get-go, a lilting plucked acoustic setting the mood before it's surrounded by the massed ensemble, the whole of it sounding like a pastoral Windham Hill piece enlarged to arena-rock scale. Vernon nestles into the plush aural tapestry with the most natural-sounding vocal he's ever recorded; doubled in the classic



SLEEVE NOTES

► Produced by:

Volcano Choir

Recorded at:

April Base, Fall Creek, WI

Personnel:

Justin Vernon (vocals, guitar), Chris Rosenau (guitar), Matthew Skemp (guitar), Tom Wincek (keys, electronics), Dan Spack (bass), John Mueller (drums, perc), Jaime Hansen (additional "choiring")

Lennon style, it's grand and intimate at once. On "Alaskans", we enter calm waters after the preceding series of crashing waves, but there's something unsettling here, too, as Vernon's vocal morphs from a sort of Gordon Lightfoot-like burnished folksiness to an ominous, all but demonic growl. The groove comes to the fore on the playfully titled "Dancepack", but it's implied before Mueller begins to pound it out. Vernon's vocal is playful, theatrical, Bruce-like, as he powers into the incantatory refrain, "Take note, there's still a hole in your heart", while an electric guitar flirts with dissonance, forming lemon-tangy chords.

"Keel" begins in suspended animation, with Vernon's falsetto gliding over an implied expanse of woodland, as muted instrumental sounds weave

a beckoning still life below him. The sustained sonic foreplay is released with "Almanac", a titanic, shape-shifting universe of thunder-crack percussion and soulful vocal signifying that opens into a celestial chorale of burbling, over-lapping voices. There's a revelatory moment in mid-song, as Vernon sings "ALL NIGHT/It's on, RIGHT/SO FRESH that it sizzles", as if marveling at the open-ended beauty they're creating as it's happening, and imagining where these art/soul

brothers can take it from here. There's little doubt at this point that Vernon's overarching ambition is matched by his limitless inventiveness, and now, that of his co-conspirators. On this monumental outing, as he's noted, he's fronting a real rock band. My guess: there's no turning back now.

Q&A

Justin Vernon, Chris Rosenau

Is your commitment to Volcano Choir as deep as *Repave* suggests?

Rosenau: Right now, we're in the moment. We're trying to figure out how to play this stuff live and make it gigantic. At some point, someone's gonna get a bug up their ass and write another Volcano Choir song. There won't be a timeline, but it's too much fun not to play with these guys. **Vernon:** I'm getting a Volcano Choir tattoo next week! No, it's been central to me. It's been a way to take all of the confusion of the other things

I've been doing on my own. It's been shaping more than anything I've done; emotionally and [in terms of] reflection and reacting. I don't think I've ever sung like this before. It was challenging, but it revealed itself to me, and it was because of these guys. It's here to stay.

Where did the band name come from?

Rosenau: Vernon had been sending me choral stuff under the name Fall Creek Boys Choir, and that "choir" thing stuck with me. And even on *Unmap*, there were moments that were a portent of how huge this could be musically. John came up with Volcano Choir, and it instantly resonated. **Vernon:** It also has a lot to do with marijuana!

INTERVIEW: BUD SCOPPA



THE ICARUS LINE *Slave Vows*

AGITATED

LA noise-rockers, as intense as ever Six albums in and The Icarus Line remain terrifying, riding a tsunami of malevolent noise,

8/10

sweat and havoc while producing some of the most intense and exceptional rock music around. *Slave Vows* begins with the extraordinary "Dark Circles", which takes a single churning riff, surrounds it with feedback and adds satanic, throaty, whispering vocals for six minutes, before stripping it all back for the epic, minimalist, almost Doors-like comedown. Elsewhere, "Marathon Man" is slinky and explosive, "No Money Music" slashes and burns. "City Job" drawls diligently while "Dead Body" has something of the swagger of the band's classic second album, *Penance Soiree*.

PETER WATTS



NIALL KELLY *Hand In Fire*

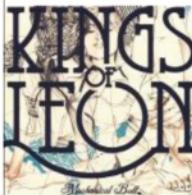
NIALLKELLYMUSIC.COM

Exiled Derryman's debut album fans Celtic soul flame With his vivid vibrato, honed over 10 years on the London circuit,

5/10

Northern Ireland's Kelly has a striking facility for extended dream-meditations in the vein of *Astral Weeks*-era Van and early Tim Buckley. But a tendency to showboat vocally and compositionally accompanies it – the lead single "Lady Dancer" strong-arms the country'n'Irish connection, foregrounding wife Caitlin's overripe fiddle, and the tourist-board spirituality of "County Down" heightens the ersatz mood. A cranked-up finale of effectively feral old-school R'n'B shows versatility and a possible future. Just don't expect it to include half measures.

GAVIN MARTIN



KINGS OF LEON *Mechanical Bull*

RCA

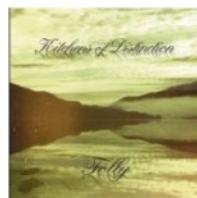
Feeling the heat, KOL come through in the clutch

The Followills took the stateside commercial breakthrough of 2008's

9/10

Only By The Night as license to experiment, but 2010's *Come Around Sundown* befuddled the new fans. KOL have responded to the resulting pressure by zeroing in on their gifts for visceral rock grooves and soaring hooks – lifting the standout tracks on their sixth album to a Springsteen-like level of gritty grandeur. Caleb emotes with underdog pugnacity, cousin Matthew unspools shimmering riffs and they lock together thrillingly with the genetically attuned rhythm section on the hookfest "Supersoaker", the gospel-inflected, battle-of-the-sexes anthem "Beautiful War" and the down-but-not-out burner "Temple".

BUD SCOPPA



KITCHENS OF DISTINCTION *Folly*

3 LOOP MUSIC

Move over MBV! First new music from KOD in 19 years...

7/10

Caught between post-Smiths jangle and shoegazing, Kitchens Of Distinction infuriatingly never achieved the acclaim enjoyed by many of their late-'80s contemporaries. Fifth album *Folly* finds the band's core attributes – Patrick Fitzgerald's pointed lyrics and Julian Swales' textured guitar lines – reassuringly intact. Predictably, the vibe is older and wiser: "We stuck through it, despite the removal of hope," Patrick sings on "Oak Tree", chronicling the very literal death of a relationship. Elsewhere, the spindly guitars of "Extravagance" recall *Treasure*-era Cocteaus, while "Tiny Moments, Tiny Omens" remind of earlier career highs like "Quick As Rainbows".

MICHAEL BONNER



RM HUBBERT *Breaks & Bone*

CHEMIKAL UNDERGROUND

Glasgow guitarist's intimate third album Robert "Hubby" Hubbert won the 2013 SAY Award (best Scottish album), for *Thirteen Lost & Found*,

a collaboration with old friends (Alex Kapranos, Aidan Moffat, Emma Pollock) undertaken as a way of excusing a five-year depressive absence. The Glasgow guitarist's follow-up is more singular, placing Hubbert's spidery flamenco-influenced instrumentals (the deft tribute to his dog, "Son Of Princess, Brother Of Rambo") alongside some less compelling vocal outings ("Feedback Loops", about bedroom arguments). He's a compelling player: on "Go Slowly" the delicate hesitations in the tune flutter between the dissonant vibration of the strings.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

KING KHAN & THE SHRINES *Idle No More*

MERGE

Cultish fire still burns, 14 years on Indo-Canadian émigré Arish Ahmad Khan is self-styled "emperor of R&B" King Khan, who fronts hyperactive, psychedelic garage-soul gang The Shriners. They've recorded seven albums for almost as many labels, never straying far from their James Brown/Sun Ra/*Nuggets* template, but *Idle No More* shows them settled somehow, and in sharper focus, with homage taking a back seat to their own identity. Standout cut "Darkness" opens by borrowing the riff from "House Of The Rising Sun", then plunges into something far more deeply soulful and dramatically ruined. Nothing here is exactly restrained, but KK&TS seem to have realised that the slow(er) burn can be just as effective as the full blaze.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MARK LANEGAN *Imitations*

HEAVENLY

Covers album trawls the dark end of the street A genuine emotional affinity underpins this marriage between Lanegan's lupine growl

and 12 melodramatic songs of masculine despair, be they easy-listening classics "Solitaire", "Lonely Street" and "Autumn Leaves", or Greg Dulli's "Deepest Shade". Sometimes the self-deprecating title proves over-apt – a faithful version of John Cale's "I'm Not The Loving Kind" is little more than genuflection – but elsewhere Lanegan cuts his cloth more wisely. "Mack The Knife" takes its cue from Dave Van Ronk's finger-picked version rather than Bobby Darin, "You Only Live Twice" is oozing stripped naked, while Nick Cave's "Brompton Oratory", bathed in horns and burnished romance, might trump the original.

GRAEME THOMSON



Blues Funeral

4AD, 2012

Eight years on, and almost comical in its titular playing to type, ML's seventh reflects a real dynamic shift, several songs being written on keys and drum machine, rather than guitar. The experimentation of *Bubblegum* has settled in, most noticeably on the synth-y "Ode To Sad Disco", which – bonkers as it might seem – recalls Goldfrapp and Erasure.

8/10

SHARON O'CONNELL



LANTERNS ON THE LAKE Until The Colours Run

BELLA UNION

Atmospheric dream-folk from the Geordie shore

8/10

If there was a cautious feel to their promising 2011 debut, the second album by this Newcastle five-piece feels considerably more confident and unified. Their blend of widescreen folk, anthemic rock and atmospheric electronics (opener "Elodie" features all three at once) now comes swathed in a dream-pop haze which, on "The Buffalo Days" and the outstanding "Another Tale From Another English Town", recalls the Cocteau Twins, and elsewhere evokes Sigur Rós, Wild Beasts and a gloomier Camera Obscura. Even when a hush descends on "Green And Gold", its ambient piano framing Hazel Wilde's haunted voice, *Until The Colours Run* casts a spell which lingers.

GRAEME THOMSON



JESSY LANZA Pull My Hair Back

HYPERDUB

Sumptuous synth-soul debut from Hamilton, Ontario

8/10

Like her British namesake Jessie Ware, Lanza is an effortlessly graceful singer with a yen for contemporary R&B and classy '80s pop. Together with fellow Hamiltonian Jeremy Greenspan of Junior Boys (who are still in a class of their own when it comes to dreamy, sophisticated synth-pop), she's made a hugely satisfying album of slinky electronic soul. Lanza's vocal lines rely on tried-and-tested R&B phrasing for their sensual power, but the music beneath owes more to cosmic disco ("Keep Moving") and the beatific end of acid house ("Fuck Diamond"). It's a seductive combination.

SAM RICHARDS



LISSIE Back To Forever

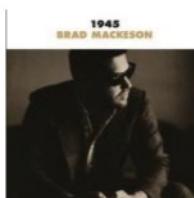
COLUMBIA

Plush and forceful second album from Illinois-raised, LA-based singer-songwriter

6/10

Teaming with producer Jackknife Lee (REM, Snow Patrol) has elevated Lissie Maurus – happily her rugged individuality matches up to the grandstanding platform. A glossy widescreen sheen and palpitating, multi-tracked vocals on "Further Away (Romance Police)" reconfigures the FM radio heyday of her hometown. Her expressive voice stretches and thrives on anthem-in-waiting "I Don't Wanna Go To Work". With the poignantly heartfelt eco trauma of "Mountaintop Removal" the highlight, Lee's big, bold beat-strewn backdrops have a commercial breakthrough in sight, one Maurus appears fully equipped to make on her own terms.

GAVIN MARTIN



BRAD MACKESON

1945

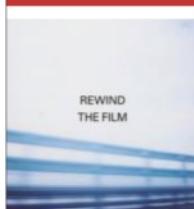
BRADMACKESON.COM

Wordy soul-searching on an accomplished debut album

7/10

Having started writing songs at the tender age of 11 in his native Portland, the now-23-year-old and Nashville-based Mackeson sings with a striking world-weariness on his debut album. A DIY alt.country ethic runs through the 11 tracks, with shades of the more rustic Neil Young ("Love Is For Gamblers"), the sonic restlessness of Beck ("Rooftop"), and the languid country blues of Lucinda Williams ("Gonna Be Fine"). These are tales of hearts torn apart and souls stripped bare, ringing with instantly memorable melodies and the articulate wisdom of a writer far beyond his years, best exemplified on the Lennon-esque title track.

TERRY STAUNTON



MANIC STREET PREACHERS Rewind The Film

COLUMBIA

Mellow Manics? Not quite yet...

7/10

Accomplished music critics as well as self-mythologisers, the Manics think this 11th album is most like *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours*. In fact, it's less windy than that, a downbeat and occasionally poetic work with some unexpected reference points: the sophisticated "3 Ways To See Despair" even sounding a bit Pink Floyd. Older, wiser and a mite less wordy suits MSP very nicely, though the appearance of mellow Richard Hawley on the excellent title track doesn't completely mean they're reaching for the pipes, slippers and mid-life stock-taking. The closing "30-Year War", essentially a rockification of Ken Loach's *The Spirit Of '45* – is a throwback to their angriest younger selves.

JOHN ROBINSON



MAN MAN On Oni Pond

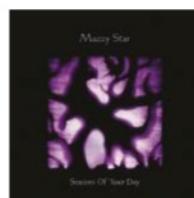
ANTI-

Best set yet from theatrical Philly collective

8/10

Despite entering the post-hype, workmanlike phase of their career, Man Man are churning out songs with an energy that many of today's fêted bucks lack. Their dominant style is that clown-car jazz of Captain Beefheart and Tom Waits' manic moments, and here it's poppier than ever before, with big hooks played with funk and bossa nova fills, fat Balkan brass and imaginative lyrics full of bug-eyed images: double scoops of saline and guys who look "like Popeye raised on lead paint". Their mid-tempo moments like "Head On" are tender yet emotionally rocksteady, and there's even a slinking ska number in "King Shiv".

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



MAZZY STAR Seasons Of Your Day

RHYMES OF AN HOUR

Seventeen years later, another beautiful set of bruised blues

9/10

It took Mazzy Star approximately three minutes to define their sound: "Halah", the opener from their 1990 album *She Hangs Brightly*, pretty much sums up everything they've done since. But there's plenty to be said for consistency, and on *Seasons Of Your Day*, their first album in almost two decades, David Roback and Hope Sandoval are on stunning form, with each song a minimal jewel, sleepwalking through the blues on "Flying Low", playing like The Doors in slow motion on "In The Kingdom", and stretching out long and languid on "Spoon", with the late, great Bert Jansch on second guitar.

JON DALE



MGMT MGMT

COLUMBIA

Aural astronauts further light years removed from the earthbound delights of *Oracular Spectacular*

7/10

Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser make it abundantly clear on their third opus that they have no interest in further exploring their gift for the elevated electro-pop songcraft that made them instant stars a half-decade ago. Instead, the New York duo continue on the path that yielded 2010's kaleidoscopically wiggled-out *Congratulations*, but this time with increased focus. From the relatively coherent opener "Alien Days" to "Orphan Of Fortune", which evokes a Venesian sunset, the pair unleash a succession of hallucinatory soundscapes that feel hermetically sealed yet confrontational, as if daring us to fire up a fat blunt and allow this sleek beast to burrow into our frontal lobes.

BUD SCOPPA



MOBY Innocents

LITTLE IDIOT

Bogglingly successful dance musician calls in some favours

8/10

On his 11th album, the gazillion-selling US electronic musician draws on a long list of collaborators to bring character and depth to his distinct brand of ambient techno, with frequently haunting results. On "A Case For Shame", Cold Specks' Al Spx sings of broken gazes and lost souls, while on "The Last Day" – the closest thing here to the down-tempo vibe that made 1999's *Play* Moby's breakthrough – Skylar Grey mournfully anticipates the end of times. Sitting head and shoulders above all these, however, is "The Lonely Night", featuring Mark Lanegan, a sparse and darkly gripping account of psychological turbulence in the small hours.

FIONA STURGES

New Albums



NINE INCH NAILS Hesitation Marks

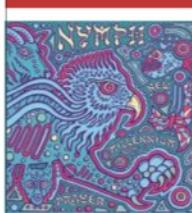
POLYDOR

First album in five years from Reznor's industrial veterans

5/10

With vogueish labels like Blackest Ever Black pushing a neo-industrial aesthetic, and Trent Reznor riding high off his Oscar-winning film score work, the time is right for Nine Inch Nails to prove they can be one of the last great rock bands we have. And in "Came Back Haunted" and other early moments here, they do, with sinewy techno and static-clouded guitar constricting Reznor into butch contortions. But soon they lapse into generic trip-hop beats, their beloved haunted-nursery piano motifs, and, on "Everything", a thrash-Britpop hybrid that absolutely no-one asked for. Black gothic grandeur, but with a beige, biscuit-coloured centre.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



NYMPH New Millennium Prayer

NORTHERN SPY

New York City's free-floating octet makes bricolage jams

7/10

Nymph are a Brooklyn-based eight-piece who've cottoned onto the polymath impulse of modern underground music: on *New Millennium Prayer*, they stretch across derailed Krautrock, tangleweed Afrobeat, blasts of ecstatic jazz, and on "Raag Mon", transcendent synth jams, all while Eri Shoji sighs her consumptive, orgasmic nothings. Occasionally it slips into pastiche mode, particularly on the clumsy 'free music' sections of "Battle Funk", which suggests Nymph have a way to go yet before they're confidently making the music their record collections suggest they want to make. But *New Millennium Prayer* is still a fine blast of free air.

JONDALE



AGNES OBEL Aventine

PIAS

Piano-led folk-pop by classically trained singer-songwriter from Denmark

7/10

Obel's first album, *Philharmonics*, since it was as much about silence as it was sound. Even so, it was lauded all over Europe, going gold in Holland and five-times platinum in the singer's native Denmark where she also won five music awards at the country's answer to the Brits. Her second album is similarly slow-moving and elegant, comprising mainly piano, cello and violin alongside Obel's extraordinarily pure vocals. The pace picks up a little in "Tokka", a reflection on the changing seasons, though for the most part, *Aventine* remains pleasingly measured and minimal.

FIONA STURGES



YOKO ONO Take Me To The Land Of Hell

CHIMERA MUSIC

Take Me To The Land Of Hell is one of Yoko Ono's strongest efforts, full of harrowing images of pain and death, and

the occasional piercing *aperçu* ("Remember we were offsprings of lovers and dreamers, descendants of thinkers and builders/But now we are readers of abuse and neglect, victims of murders and theft"). Musically, Sean Lennon has marshalled a team of feisty, exploratory spirits including Cibo Matto's Yuka Honda, Wilco's Nels Cline, ?uestlove and Cornelius. As might be expected, her husband's death haunts many songs, including the title track, the brutal nursery-rhyme "Little Boy Blue" ("...blow your horn, mommy's weeping, your daddy's gone"), and the disturbing anxiety dream "7th Floor".

ANDY GILL

8/10

HOW TO BUY... YOKO ONO

Back to the future...



THE PLASTIC ONO BAND

Live In Toronto

1969 APPLE, 1970

Used record stores were accustomed to receiving copies of this album with one side (Lennon-fronted rock'n'roll) worn out, and the other of Yoko jams pristine and unplayed. More fool those listeners: "Don't Worry Kyoko" is a proper groove, while the feedback at the end of "John, John" practically invents Sunn O))).

7/10



YOKO ONO

Fly APPLE, 1971

A huge work in every respect, bridging the impossibly large gap between Fluxus and Eric Clapton. It's a sensitively

programmed work, ranging from demented slide guitar freakout "Mindtrain" to emotional and Fahey-esque acoustic guitar collage ("Mind Holes"), to moving and strange third-person balladry ("Mrs Lennon").

9/10



YOKO ONO

Approximately Infinite Universe

APPLE, 1974

While the music on her previous albums had mirrored Yoko's ribald sexual politics in cathartic jams, this presented them in slick rock moderne – strings, saxes, funk and, as Mick Jagger put it at the time, "really trying to sing". Serves to put her unadorned lyrics in an even more striking context: "Something inside me died that day..."

8/10

JOHN ROBINSON



OVER THE RHINE Meet Me At The Edge Of The World

GREAT SPECKLED DOG

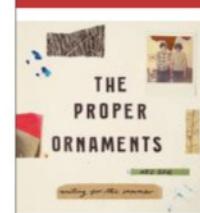
Mercy, mercy me – the Ohio ecology

On one of their most ambitious undertakings, veteran DIY duo Karin

Bergquist and Linford Detweiler have crafted a 19-song pastoral celebrating the flora and fauna that surrounds the couple's Southern Ohio farm house. The thematic centerpiece "All Over Ohio" is at once a photographically detailed environmental ode, a critique of local bigotry and an elegy for Detweiler's late dad. The Joe Henry-produced LP is full of subtle beauty and rich imagery, but there's so much of it, the listener is galvanised by each appearance of Mark Goldenberg's serrated electric guitar licks and the venom in the voices of Bergquist and Aimee Man on the welcome change-of-pace "Don't Let The Bastards Get You Down".

BUD SCOPPA

7/10



THE PROPER ORNAMENTS Waiting For The Summer

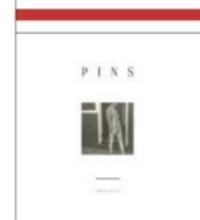
LO RECORDINGS

West London pair indulge their own Creation myth on first full-length album

London duo James Hoare and Max Claps do for C86-era indie-pop what the Allah-Las do for '60s psych-pop: bring an entire era beautifully back to life without settling for ironic pastiche. The spirit of Felt, The Pastels and pretty much everything on the early Creation label haunts the lo-fi jangles, drones and thrums of *Waiting For The Summer*, but the precision of Hoare's spidery guitars and the pair's wide-eyed, reverb-drenched harmonies feel like a very specific – and very pretty – art statement, and the ideal companion to Hoare's other band, the fizzier, girl-led Veronica Falls.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

7/10



PINS Girls Like Us

BELLA UNION

Ingénue wave: the sound of young Manchester

Five years too late to be the British Crystal Stilts, and at least 20 years too young to be Riot Grrrls, Manchester's Pins may have to settle for starting a riot of their own. Brute force *Funhouse*-era Stooges leavened with only the tiniest sprinkling of The Shangri-Las, the all-female four-piece's maiden outing is thrillingly rudimentary – a churning, minor-chord thunderstorm anchored by the gut-churning thud of Sophie Galpin's drumming. Best bits: the skittering guitar break on "Waiting For The End", and the anti-chorus of "Lost Lost Lost" ("Whooh!" shrieks singer Faith Holgate – "Shhh"). Inarticulate, perhaps, but indubitably exciting.

JIM WIRTH

8/10

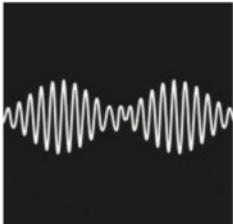


ARCTIC MONKEYS

AM

DOMINO

Songs about heavy nights, and the mornings after. It's clearly been emotional, says John Robinson



8/10

world as much of the soul as it is of the clock. It's a place of late-night drinking and poor decisions, of blurred boundaries, of pursuing the moment.

It's a place that Alex Turner, the band's songwriter, clearly finds filled with possibility. While Jarvis Cocker hid inside your wardrobe, Turner is writing the fifth Arctic Monkeys album from the vantage point of the sofa, occasionally the carpet. "Knee Socks", one of the slighter songs on the album, pinpoints its locale: "You were sitting in the corner," Turner sings, "By the coats all piled high..." Earlier on, we find him spilling drinks on his settee and drunk-dialling late at night.

Voice of a generation – it's been a tough gig. Since the Arctic Monkeys' 2006 debut album unveiled Alex Turner's raw voice, great tunes and gift for what was not inaccurately called "social reportage", it's been hard for the band to fulfil expectations. They have got heavier (2007's *Favourite Worst Nightmare*; 2009's *Humbug*) and experimented with a partial return to the indie rock sound of their debut (2011's *Suck It And See*), and all have been huge commercial successes. Still, of late it has started to seem as if some of the band's charm has been misplaced along the way. Turner's jokes,

unthinkably, even started to sound a little forced.

AM, however, feels a considerably more self-assured album: heavy in a dramatic and confident way, conceptually strong, and not without groove. More importantly, the album has returned Turner to a social milieu which he can anatomise with his customary talent. It's the domain of the newly single man, a crepuscular world with its own codes and behaviours.

Opener "Do I Wanna Know?", the collection's finest rock song, serves as an establishing shot for the whole album. Over a crunching march-time blues riff, Turner ponders a relationship's indeterminate state – does he really want a conclusive answer about the critical status of this love affair? As they do throughout the album, falsetto backing vocals, reminiscent of those favoured by Queens Of The Stone Age, serve to give expression to the dissenting opinions in the singer's head. "R U Mine?" continues both the hard rock and the uncertainty – is this a fleeting tryst, or something more substantial? "One For The Road", though a small song, mines the cliché of the expression for all it can offer, as the speaker, in fear of morning's clarity, attempts to extend the night. "I Want It All" isn't Turner's finest song, but it fleshes out his world. "It's a year ago since I drank your whisky and shared your coke/You left me listening to the Stones' '2000 Light Years From Home'..."

AM has a strong, dramatic arc. For all these fervid

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: James Ford/Co-produced by Ross Orton

Recorded at: Sage & Sound Recording, LA and Rancho De La Luna, Joshua Tree

Personnel includes: Alex Turner (vocals, guitar), Matt Helders (drums, vocals), Jamie Cook (guitar), Nick O'Malley (bass, vocals), Josh Homme (vocals on tracks 3 and 11), Pete Thomas (percussion on track 7), Bill Ryder-Jones (additional guitar on track 8)

nights, it's impossible to escape the morning after, a mood broached particularly well in the Lennon/Pulp-like "Number 1 Party Anthem", and particularly, "Fireside". In this song, reminiscent of Julian Casablancas at his jaded-at-the-afterparty best, Turner surveys an empty hotel suite and ponders whether "it's really gone for good/Or is it coming back around?" It's a wonderfully well-articulated melancholy, from which it's tough to bounce back.

That, however, is what the final few tracks attempt. "Why'd You Only Call Me When You're High?" finds Turner

back on the sofa with a phone in his hand, but the song is a rather more playful one. "Snap Out Of It" is a glam-rock conversation about love with the lads back home, while "Knee Socks" sees the band approximating a sound part Justin Timberlake, part David Bowie.

It's a fun few songs, but there's no escaping the loneliness at the album's core, and AM duly ends on a downbeat note, as Arctic Monkeys take on John Cooper Clarke's punk-rock wedding reading "I Wanna Be Yours" ("I wanna be your Ford Cortina/I will never rust..."), turning it into a kind of indie rock Southern soul, with a beautiful end-of-the-night desperation. They're not much older, but the experience of AM seems to have made Arctic Monkeys considerably, and profitably, wiser. Having made it through the night, they now sound ready to face the day.

Q&A

Alex Turner

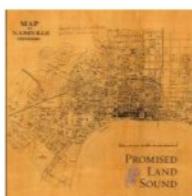


You've called it AM, but it's a night-time album, isn't it? But that would be AM – at least in my neighbourhood. There's an after-hours element to it. Whether that's sitting late at night with a whisky, longing for something – or wondering where you put that thing you left behind. Or you find yourself in a strange situation at midnight that feels a bit like an alternative universe. You have your worst ideas in the middle of the night.

Are you pleased with how it turned out? It sort of feels right where we should be – it's a new sound that we haven't made before, so it kind of made sense to self-title it. Which I would have done, if we didn't have such a ridiculous name.

Why did you decide to incorporate a John Cooper Clarke lyric? It was him that inspired me to write the sort of lyrics I did – he's always been in my mind. We had this... angular instrumental with a complicated time signature: I sang "I Wanna Be Yours" over it, then remembered about the Johnny Clarke poem, and thought wouldn't that be a cool thing? Like a lot of songs on this album it was one thing on one day, then it became something else. *INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON*

New Albums



PROMISED LAND SOUND

Promised Land Sound

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

Endorsed by Jack White – it's the Nashville Allah-Las

8/10

The cover image, of an old Nashville street map, clearly asserts the geographic and aesthetic loyalties of Promised Land Sound, and it's easy to pitch their fine debut as a Southern analogue to the Allah-Las album from last year. A keening country-rock flavour (cf the Gram-like "For His Soul") replaces the Allah-Las' LA surf twang. Mostly, though, the quartet and their producers (Jem Cohen, from The Parting Gifts, and the perpetually busy William Tyler) capture the sense of a mid-'60s garage rock band adding a little local colour to their Stones homages. An exemplary historical re-enactment, with songs good enough to transcend novelty status.

JOHN MULVEY



RIZZLE KICKS

Roaring 20s

ISLAND

Well-connected Brighton lads' corny reggae Rizzle Kicks are the everylads of the selfie generation, two likeable Brit School blokes mugging

5/10

through the world of light entertainment with hip-pop as their Trojan horse. Second album *Roaring 20s* provides cod-reggae backing for Jordan Stephens and Harley Alexander-Sule to discuss the impact of social media and the nature of fame. "When I heard people buy [YouTube] views I was more confused than all John Terry's black friends", says Stephens, daringly, on "Lost Generation". Elsewhere, "Skip To The Good Bit" is EMF's "Unbelievable" with added banter, while Dominic West plays a boozy barman on big-beat gurner "That's Classic".

PIERS MARTIN



ROCKET NUMBER NINE

MeYouWeYou

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

Noisy fraternal duo giving Essex jazz-funk a good name

7/10

Taking their name from a Sun Ra composition, Essex duo Tom and Ben Page make a kinetic electro-jazz hybrid that has already caught the approving ear of Neneh Cherry, Thom Yorke and Kieran "Four Tet" Hebden. Live percussion and skeletal electronics dominate the harder tracks, with the propulsive sci-fi samba "Rotunda" blending steel-drums and staccato techno bleeps, while "Slide" builds from rubbery dubstep shudders to a churning crescendo of bustling, burly Krautrockery. A handful of overlong muso-ish clatter-grooves and weedy tributes to early '90s rave music feel like makeweight fillers, but this is still a dynamic and energising debut.

STEPHEN DALTON



NTJAM ROSIE

At The Back Of Beyond

GENTLE DAZE

Cameroon-born, Dutch-based star finesse her fusion blend

8/10

Academy schooled in Rotterdam, here quick-learning Ntjam's (pronounced Jam) high-minded, modern-day pan-global pop really blossoms. Featuring her joyfully diverse guitar for the first time on assertive opener "Let Go", the neo-soul-influenced jazz natural's rhythmically assertive sense of self and spirit is accentuated by relaxed assurance of the Latin, Brazilian and Cuban touches. Minnie Riperton-alike octave scaling climaxes the suitably liquid joy of "Secret Waters", a trilingual vocal banquet (French, English, Bulu) is crowned by "Nsissam Zambe"'s gorgeous double-tracked vocal over samba-patterned percussion: a peak among many. Pure class.

GAVIN MARTIN

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

San Fermin



► On graduating, most students factor in at least a brief sofa slump before trying to realise their potential. Not Ellis Ludwig-Leone, 23-year-old leader of Brooklyn's San Fermin. As a classical music major at Yale, he unpicked 19th-Century pieces and attended avant-garde composition seminars, though starting an ensemble with friends connected the disciplines and made him understand the possibilities within. They gave an ambitious end-of-semester concert - chamber music, rock songs with wild string arrangements - that kickstarted San Fermin, Ludwig-Leone's first band "that feels like it's making a proper statement," he says, embarrassedly noting some past groups, their missive essentially, "Hi girls, I'm in a band." With college over, he travelled to the Canadian Rockies to write *San Fermin*, the project's 17-song debut, which chronicles an uncertain relationship from both parties' perspectives. He wrote the LP's first draft "as fast as I could - a song a day" to ensure that no matter how varied the sound, the songs came from the same place: "These characters are trying to figure out who they are, and there's a stylistic wildness that feels honest to my mental state at that point." It also reflected his work as an assistant to composer Nico Muhly, whose "constantly changing army of collaborators - one month it's arrangements for Passion Pit, the next it's Two Hearts with the NYC ballet" taught Ludwig-Leone "how to work with other artists" - and how to juggle his many muses, presumably. LAURA SNAPES



THE SADIES

Internal Sounds

YEP ROC

Radiant country-rock from the Canadian combo

8/10

The Sadies' 15-year discography is so peppered with worthy collaborations, from André Williams and John Doe through to Jon Langford and Neko Case, that it's easy to forget just what a glorious noise they make when left to their own devices. *Internal Sounds* is a sparkling conflation of '69-vintage Byrds, early Burritos and psychedelic country, helped along by the odd splash of boiling surf. Dallas Good's vocals recall the soulful ache of The Smithereens' Pat DiNizio, especially on "So Much Blood" and "Starting All Over Again", while Buffy Sainte-Marie crops up on the Romany-scented "We Are Circling".

ROB HUGHES



SAN FERMIN

San Fermin

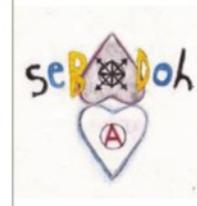
DOWNTOWN

Accomplished debut by prodigal son of New York's cerebral indie set

8/10

As assistant to composer-arranger Nico Muhly, there are few degrees of separation between 23-year-old Yale graduate Ellis Ludwig-Leone and the luminaries of 21st-Century NYC art-pop. It shows on his band's debut album, which, oddly, he calls "a pastiche". His cod-National epithets are sweetly over-studied, but vocal foils Jess Wolfe and Holly Laessig hint at the winsome chaos of Dirty Projectors, while the traffic jam scramble of "The Count" shows that Ludwig-Leone's best when he abandons imitation. *San Fermin* proves Ludwig-Leone to be a fantastically ambitious songwriter on the way to finding a voice of his own.

LAURA SNAPES



SEBADOH

Defend Yourself

DOMINO

First album in 14 years from the reformed lo-fi trouvers

6/10

When Lou Barlow split briefly from his long-term partner Kathleen in the early '90s, it inspired a raft of classic Sebadoh songs, from "Soul And Fire" to "Willing To Wait", as he strove to win her back. Now their marriage is apparently over, Barlow's latest set of confessional have taken on a different tone: apologetic, even slightly defensive - a marked contrast with Sebadoh's traditional mode of plaintive loserdom. As a result the band's amiable punk-folk chunter lacks a little of its usual charm. When a brace of sinewy Jason Lowenstein songs ("Beat", "Can't Depend") provide the highlights, you know this isn't quite vintage Sebadoh.

SAM RICHARDS



SMALL FEET

Liar Behind The Sun

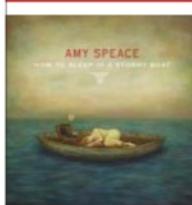
KNING DISK

Neil Young-esque debut album from Swedish trio

7/10

The striking tenor voice of Simon Ståhlhamre dominates Small Feet's beautifully calm but raw baroque pop, the debut work of a Swedish trio who excel on tracks like the melancholic sway of the spookily Neil Young-esque "Dagmar", the haunting shanty "Rivers" (recorded on an iPhone) and the gorgeous if tantalisingly brief "Hymn", which has Ståhlhamre's voice starkly framed by a gentle acoustic guitar. Other songs, like "Liar Behind The Sun" and "Smoke And Mirrors" have more of an indie strum and melody, like lost tracks from *Hateful Of Hollow*, allowing the band to step out from behind Ståhlhamre's exceptional vocals.

PETER WATTS



AMY SPEACE

How To Sleep In A Stormy Boat

CONTINENTAL

Sixth outing for Nashville-based actress turned songwriter

6/10

'60s songbird Judy Collins was so impressed by Amy Speace that she signed her to her label. Speace's crystalline vocals are not unlike Collins', while the former Shakespearean actor pens intelligent, poetic compositions, best realised here on "The Sea And The Shore", a duet with the gravel-voiced John Fullbright. Throughout, producer Neil Hubbard adds tasteful orchestral flourishes. Yet over the course of an 11-song break-up album, Speace's earnest tone and verbal conceits ("a dream rolling downhill") can become claustrophobic, and a straightforward lament like "Left Me Hanging" is a relief. A tad precious.

NEIL SPENCER



MIKE STINSON

Hell And Half Of Georgia

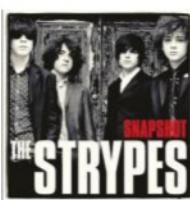
MIKE STINSON MUSIC

Cosmic American music, Texas division

9/10

State's staunch honky-tonk/hard-country tradition of late, *Georgia* aligns him with producer RS Field (Billy Joe Shaver, Justin Townes Earle) for a twang-drenched, meat-and-potatoes rock'n'roll barnburner. Amps to 11, duck-walking guitars set at stun, Stinson pours out a set of funny yet world-wise missives: thumping rockers "Late For My Funeral" and "The Kind Of Trouble I Need" are instant classics; "Died And Gone To Houston", ersatz Ernest Tubb-style vocal driving a bopping Berry/early Stones beat, is pure left-field genius. The ballads, especially the autobiographical "Box I Take To Work", are arguably even better.

LUKE TORN



THE STRYPES

Snapshot

VIRGIN/EMI

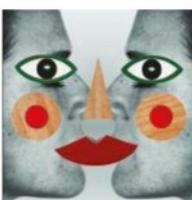
Elton-favoured lads debut their black-and-white rock

From Ireland, the Strypes play R'n'B as it might have been heard by lads in collarless jackets at Klook's Kleek in 1964 – which is to say in the tradition of the Animals and (10 years later) Dr Feelgood. The band are at their best on this debut when they keep it brisk and uptight as they do on "I Can Tell", "Perfect Storm" and opener "Mystery Man" – all Wilko Johnson guitar chopping. Producer Chris Thomas has kept things sounding (reasonably) modern, and if there's a suspicion that without a White Stripes-style breakthrough the band's next steps might be a little problematic, the likes of "Hometown Girls" are for now a guileless pleasure.

JOHN ROBINSON

7/10

international chart-topper for Icelandic singer Emiliana Torrini, so you might expect its belated follow-up to cash in with another pounding hen-night anthem. Instead, after moving back to Iceland from the UK, she's made an introverted album that mixes bossa nova with low-key electronica, with "Tookah" and "Elisabet" recalling an unplugged Cocteau Twins. Much of the album meditates on Torrini's new status as a mother but does so through some intensely poetic lyrics – particularly memorable is a haiku about sparrows perched on telephone cables: "like the notes of a song waiting to be sung".



EMILÍANA TORRINI

Tookah

ROUGH TRADE

Deliciously low-key fourth album from Icelandic maverick

The 2009 single "Jungle Drum" was a massive

international chart-topper for Icelandic singer Emiliana Torrini, so you might expect its belated follow-up to cash in with another pounding hen-night anthem. Instead, after moving back to Iceland from the UK, she's made an introverted album that mixes bossa nova with low-key electronica, with "Tookah" and "Elisabet" recalling an unplugged Cocteau Twins. Much of the album meditates on Torrini's new status as a mother but does so through some intensely poetic lyrics – particularly memorable is a haiku about sparrows perched on telephone cables: "like the notes of a song waiting to be sung".

JOHN LEWIS

7/10



SUMMER CAMP

Summer Camp

MOSHI MOSHI

London duo abandon nostalgia for pop vitality

Most of 2009's nostalgia-pop proponents have faded away by now: Washed Out grows ever more muzak-like, while Toro Y Moi plunders MOR funk. London duo Summer Camp, though, grow ever brighter. Their debut was a pastel-soft account of a fictional US town, which they chased last year with the dancier "Always" EP. On *Summer Camp*, they develop those leanings, skimming disco's history from Blondie to Chromatics, and chopping up Disney strings to give these more intimate tales of devotion a magnetic fairground swirl. Stephen Street produces, giving Jeremy Warmley and Elizabeth Sankey's stylish vocal interplay and arrangements extra kick. Summer Camp are no longer a memory of a pop band, but the real thing.

LAURA SNAPES

8/10

and melodic nous – that and a tendency to confound expectation. The producer has ranged across minimal techno, progressive house, ambient noise, shoegaze and glitch, and his latest is no less a mixed bag, with guests including Low, Kazu Makino from Blonde Redhead and Ghost Society. "Never Stop Running" suggests Guillemots working through a Cure fixation, but soon Trentemøller unrolls his brooding electronica, which peaks with the gently suppurating "Come Undone". That "Constantinople" should suggest "I Feel Love" transported to a '60s Turkish souk makes perfect sense – if only in Trentemøller's universe.



TRENTEMØLLER

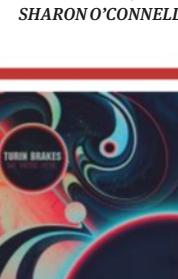
Lost

IN MY ROOM

Great Dane's diverting third

If there are constants in the work of Anders Trentemøller, they're his

deft compositional skills and melodic nous – that and a tendency to confound expectation. The producer has ranged across minimal techno, progressive house, ambient noise, shoegaze and glitch, and his latest is no less a mixed bag, with guests including Low, Kazu Makino from Blonde Redhead and Ghost Society. "Never Stop Running" suggests Guillemots working through a Cure fixation, but soon Trentemøller unrolls his brooding electronica, which peaks with the gently suppurating "Come Undone". That "Constantinople" should suggest "I Feel Love" transported to a '60s Turkish souk makes perfect sense – if only in Trentemøller's universe.



TURIN BRAKES

We Were Here

COOKING VINYL

Time-shifting sixth album from acoustic duo

We Were Here places Olly Knights and

Gale Paridjanian's always-melodic acoustic alt.pop in a variety of early '70s musical contexts. There's a taste of Pink Floyd's pastoral prog-rock on "Blindsided Again", a dose of trippy jazz-funk flute on the bluesy "Dear Dad", and numerous neo-Neil Youngisms on "Time And Money" and "Sleeper", before they head for Laurel Canyon, via Ray LaMontagne's place, on "Part Of The World". It gets a bit ploddy at times, but their knack for a good tune, a sweet harmony and the odd fiery guitar break keeps it all on the right side of mellow.

GRAEME THOMSON

7/10



THROWING UP

Over You

O GENESIS

East London minnows' bedsit garage

Simplicity and brevity are the cornerstones of good pop, and whether by accident or design, Dalston upstarts Throwing Up – the vocals-guitars duo of Camille Benet and Clare James Clare – possess these qualities. Affairs of the heart dominate *Over You*, which crams 11 lo-fi nuggets into 20 minutes. Three-chord flurries "Red Ribbon" and "Snake" zip by like vintage Elastica demos, while the C86 jangle of "Sarah" and "Stomach Pain" belies lines like the latter's "Can't get you out of my head/My mouth is filled with dread". Final track "When I Touch You" ends with a scream – but Throwing Up already have your attention.

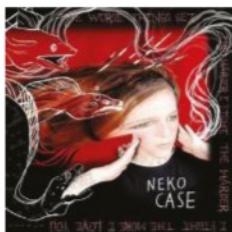
PIERS MARTIN

NEKO CASE

The Worse Things Get, The Harder I Fight, The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You

ANTI-

Songs of bereavement and grief on mature sixth. By Laura Snapes



9/10

and The Corn Sisters. There's Case the self-deprecating Twitter wit, prone to posting butt jokes and photos of the cows on her Vermont ranch, a quite different persona to the woman partially visible through her increasingly rugged solo albums to date.

After moving from honky-tonk gal to the bruised, unceremonious opposite on her earliest solo releases, over Case's past couple of albums, she's smuggled her own stories within broader narratives: mutated American myths on 2006's *Fox Confessor Brings The Flood*, and a whirl through the fury of the natural world on 2009's fantastic *Middle Cyclone*, where she personified herself as different destructive wind formations and an array of critters. Written over a three-year period where Case lost both her parents along with several close friends, she's billed her sixth studio album, *The Worse Things Get, The Harder I Fight, The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You*, as a more inward-looking record.

Perhaps surprisingly, here, declarations of identity are scant – she's a man, a Friday night girl, and a fighter for the right to be wild, though she bristles at someone's suggestion that she might be a lady. Taken as a whole, however, the album's most striking statement is the revelation that these bereavements left Case grasping for her sense of self. She rebuilds it with meticulous control (and with the help of heavy friends M Ward, Carl Newman, Tracyanne Campbell, Howe Gelb among others) over these 12 largely boisterous songs, and cannily uses the uncertainty to tackle some prescriptive ideas of how a woman should be along the way.

Case has sung beautifully about grief before, most notably on "South Tacoma Way" from 2000's *Furnace Room Lullaby*. Where that song took place in the immediate aftermath of a friend's death, grief skirts the periphery here, sidling up in a change of light, as in life. Among the seafaring circular guitar figures of opener "Wild Creatures", Case recounts how in childhood she was told she could be anything – well, "the king's pet, or the king" – her frayed voice growing angrier at the futility of it all before shrugging in the last line that it barely matters anyway, since now "there's no mother's hands to quiet me." The knowing "Where Did I Leave That Fire?" goes from ambient

CONSIDERING HER 20-year career, it makes sense that Neko Case has moved through a host of different identities. Probably best known as Case the New Pornographer, there's also the Case of '90s acts Cub, Maow, The Sadies



introduction to a crisp snare-rim snap and nervy tug of electric guitar as Case admits, "I wanted so badly not to be me," before imagining a tragi-comical situation where her internal flame ends up in some celestial lost property office.

What makes *The Worse Things Get...* work is that Case's fire is still very much in evidence; if these songs were written at rock bottom, at least that flame illuminated the idiosyncrasies of the crevices, and fueled her defiance. Lead single "Man" is potentially the hardest song Case has ever made, where metallic guitar judders between lines about being a man in the essential, human sense – picking up the theme from *Middle Cyclone*'s "I'm An Animal".

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced By: Neko Case, Tucker Martine, Chris Schultz, Craig Schumacher

Recorded in: Portland, Oregon; Wavelab, Tucson, Arizona; The Seaside Lounge, Brooklyn, NY

Personnel includes:

Paul Rigby, Tom V Ray, Kelly Hogan, Jon Rauhouse, Kurt Dahle, John Convertino, M Ward, Carl Newman, Steve Turner, Howe Gelb, Bo Koster, Jim James, Tracyanne Campbell

On "City Swan", she realises her unmooring has become a near-permanent state, but reclaims it on a stellar cover of Nico's "Afraid", a bell-like layer of voices reassuring, "You are beautiful and you are alone."

"Perhaps it's best if I continue starring me as you," Case sings on the cool-headed "I'm From Nowhere". On *The Worse Things Get...*, Case asserts herself less in a literal sense, but paints the most emboldening and endearing portrait of herself yet, standing at a crossroads where

self-sufficiency is the only path to survival and realising you have to be everything for yourself, because those you love won't be around forever.

Q&A

Neko Case

Tell me a bit about making the album and the people who play on it with you.

Well, it took long enough! I worked with my regular band – Kelly Hogan, Kurt Dahle, Paul Rigby, Tom V Ray, Jon Rauhouse, John Convertino – plus a ton of guests. Everyone who took part is family and it was a lovely time with lots of good dinners with quality people.

***The Worse Things Get...* marks your emergence from a long period of grief. Was it cathartic to make in any sense?**

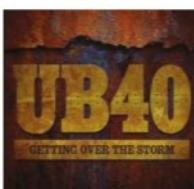
No, it was dirty and crappy and dragged time around like a dead leg. I hope to never have to

work like that again. I learned what it means to wrestle serious depression and get through, which is good and not so good at the same time. It's sad that that much work makes you stronger but leaves you with something to genuinely fear. I didn't have that before. It gives you respect for endurance, but it's not an exciting struggle – it's more like having to slowly empty an Olympic swimming pool of dirty dish water through a straw. Slow, monotonous. The songs turned out well despite the circumstance rather than because of it.

You cover Nico's "Afraid" on the album – what's your connection to that song?

I have always been comforted by it and I thought that the songs on the record needed similar comforting.

INTERVIEW: LAURA SNAPES



UB40 Getting Over The Storm

VIRGIN

Reggae re-imaginings of redneck anthems

Three years on from *Labour Of Love IV*, UB40's 20th album isn't quite another

6/10

wholesale covers project, but it does contain some curious choices of other people's songs. For their second release with Duncan Campbell on lead vocals (in place of departed brother Ali), the band delve into country music archives for about half the cuts. The title track re-upholsters George Jones' survivor ode, lovers rock sweetness is added to Vince Gill's "If You Ever Have Forever In Mind", and Willie Nelson goes to Trench Town on "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain". For the most part it works, the innate simplicity of the originals lending itself to makeovers, although country purists are advised to steer clear.

TERRY STAUNTON



ULTRAMARINE This Time Last Year

REAL SOON

Classy return by the neglected adventurers of ambient techno

A discreet, eclectic presence on the '90s electronica scene, Ian

7/10

Cooper and Paul Hammond's music could encompass beatific West Coast vibes (1992's *Every Man And Woman Is A Star*) and Canterbury folk-prog (1993's *United Kingdoms*, featuring Robert Wyatt). The first influence recurs on this, their first album in 15 years: fusion-tinged chill-out grooves, with a craftsmanlike detailing that saves them from blandness. A studio in the Essex marshes is an unlikely place to concoct music so redolent of Southern California, but "Eye Contact", in particular, presents the odd and rather pleasant fantasy of Mike Post recording an album for the Warp label.

JOHN MULVEY



VARIOUS ARTISTS Inside Llewyn Davis

NONESUCH

OST to the Coen Bros' hymn to the '60s Village folk scene

7/10

This soundtrack to the Coens' 2013 film offers a reasonably authentic account of the '60s' romantic troubadour repertoire, performed mostly by leading actor Oscar Isaac. He's at his best on a bluesy version of "Green, Green Rocky Road", and accompanied by Marcus Mumford on "Fare Thee Well". Less welcome is Timberlake, Carey Mulligan and Stark Sands' earnest "The Last Thing On My Mind", the kind of thing that had Bluto Blutarsky smashing the folkie's guitar in *Animal House*. Unsurprisingly, some of the better tracks are those by authentic Village legends John Cohen, Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan, especially the latter's previously unreleased "Farewell".

ANDY GILL



LUCY WARD Single Flame Navigator

7/10
Powerful, intricate folk
Sensitive and reflective originals alongside obscure traditional songs, Lucy Ward's follow-up to 2011's

debut, *Adelphi Has To Fly*, keeps it clean and effortless instrumentally, particularly effective on the minimalist Americana-influenced "Lord I Don't Want To Die In The Storm". The downcast, contemplative mood rarely lifts above a preoccupation with loss, death and environmental destruction that confirms Ward as a writer whose songs have intrinsically soaked up the folk tradition. It's a rare skill, exquisitely served by unaffected, passionate singing. As with June Tabor's recordings, sometimes the intensity is overbearing, but overall, very impressive and highly absorbing.

MICK HOUGHTON



KATHRYN WILLIAMS Crown Electric

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Quietly spiky work from the Liverpool-born singer-songwriter

8/10

In the 13 years since her Mercury-nominated LP *Little Black Numbers*, Kathryn Williams has become a consistent, if not exactly chart-busting, presence on the UK folk scene. Her 10th album, named after the company that employed the teenage Elvis as a truck driver, neatly illustrates the reasons behind this longevity: the easy melodies, the shimmering arrangements, the sweet vocals counteracted by engagingly prickly lyrics. The dominating theme here is the passing of time, most elegantly expressed in "Count" and the bittersweet "Out Of Time" ("Walking out of time, when you're supposed to know you're in your prime"). Wonderful stuff.

FIONA STURGES

REVELATIONS

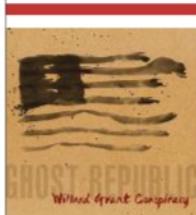
UB40 touch base with their country influences

► "We were hanging around outside a truck stop in the middle of America about 20 years ago, when this huge tourbus pulled in – and out stepped Willie Nelson!" says sax player Brian Travers of the first time UB40 met their country music hero. "He came over to say hello, asked who we were, and we shared a couple of spliffs. Since then he's been like a brother to us; we've played his club in Texas a few times, and his kids and grandkids come to a lot of our shows."

Unfortunately, prior commitments prevented Nelson from contributing to UB40's version of his signature hit "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain", one of several country covers given a subtle reggae makeover on the band's new album, *Getting Over The Storm*.

Travers wrote the five original tracks on the record, also in a country vein. "There's a lot of common ground between reggae and country, and when we go to Jamaica it seems like everyone has Jim Reeves or George Jones records in their collections. I think both forms have a blue collar sensibility that taps into similar emotions. They're poor people's music that gives strong, proud men an excuse to shed a tear."

TERRY STAUNTON



WILLARD GRANT CONSPIRACY Ghost Republic

LOOSE

Evocative desertscape from American roots types

7/10

Having existed as an amorphous collective for the best part of 20 years, Willard Grant Conspiracy are now down to a core duo of David Michael Curry and founder Robert Fisher. This first LP in four years serves as a soundtrack companion to both a book and upcoming film of the same name, detailing the arrested decay of real-life California ghost town, Bodie. The mood is resolutely sombre, like an extended wake for some forgotten hub of American ambition, with Fisher's soft baritone gently picking its way through mournful violas, spare guitars and pianos that toll like lonely chapel bells.

ROB HUGHES



ZOO ZERO Zoo Zero

CREST CONT

Uncut sub turns in headline performance on noisy debut

Zoo Zero's thrash, dissonant take on Krautrock seems to tick

lots of hipster brownie points, but this London four-piece are heavier and more complicated than most post-punk revivalists. Tracks like "Stationed" and "Show Me Your Flag", with their irregular time-signatures and Black Sabbath guitar crunches, are closer to heavy metal than punk, as are the diabolic, Wagnerian chords on "Oryx". Elsewhere, they flirt with those psychedelic intros you'd associate with Hawkwind or the Pink Fairies. Throughout, Tom Pinnock's echo-laden vocals are kept low in the mix, which only adds to the appealing sense of mystique.

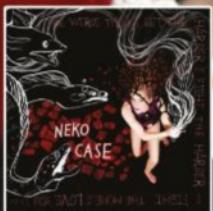
JOHN LEWIS

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SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

10 Masterpiece

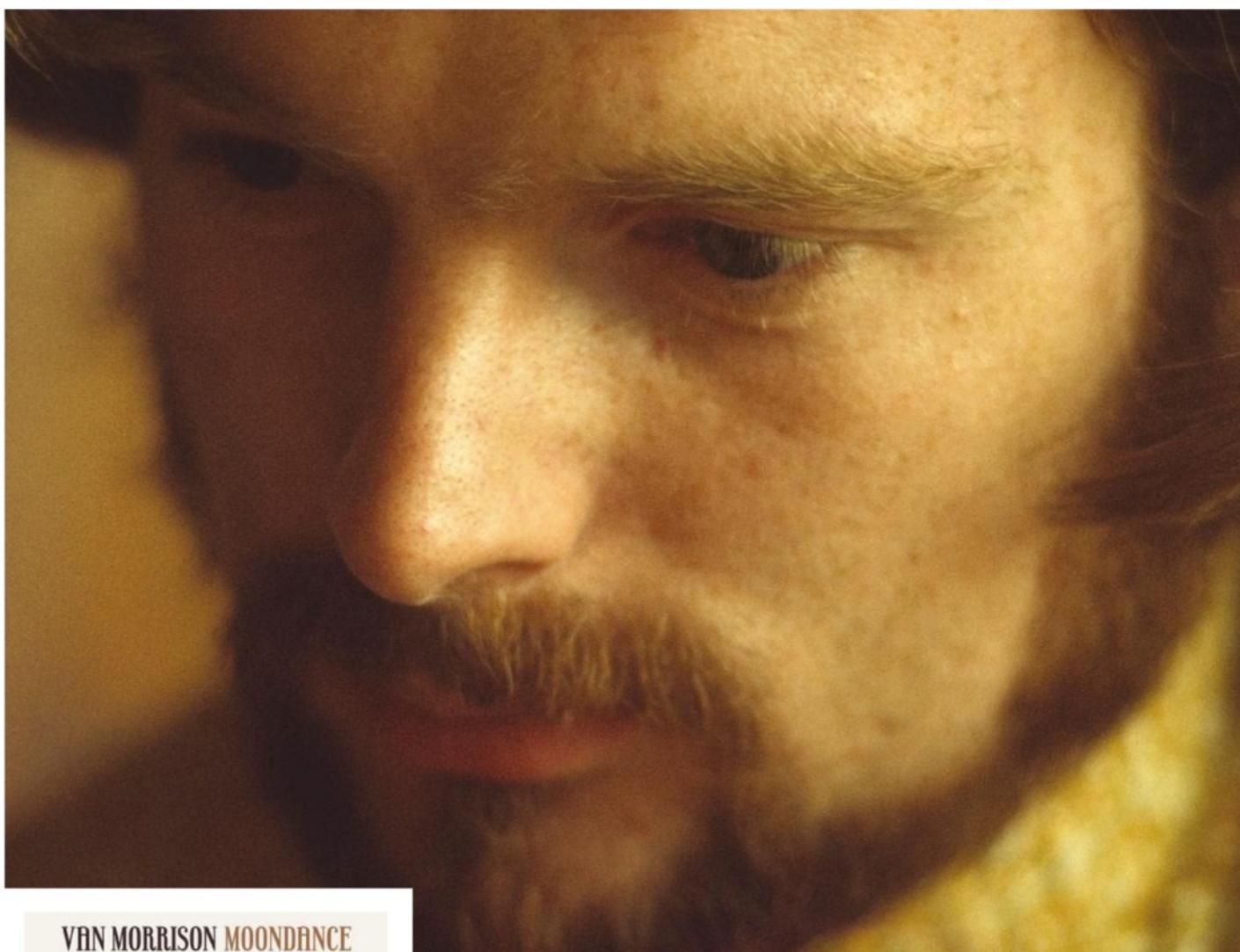
1 Poor!

SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

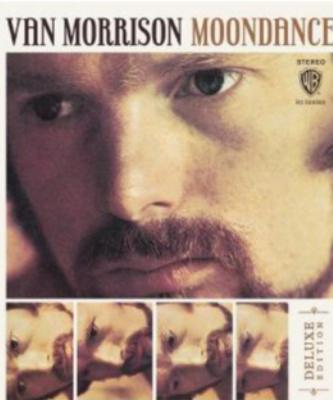
10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrapings

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



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TRACKLIST

CD ONE: Original Album Remastered

- 1 And It Stoned Me
- 2 Moondance
- 3 Crazy Love
- 4 Caravan
- 5 Into The Mystic
- 6 Come Running
- 7 These Dreams Of You
- 8 Brand New Day
- 9 Everyone
- 10 Glad Tidings

VAN MORRISON

Moondance: Deluxe Edition

WARNER BROS

How much of a good thing is too much? By David Cavanagh

7/10

“IT’S TOO LATE to stop now,” sang Van Morrison on *Moondance* in 1970, and he was right: here we are again in its aura, drawn back like wanderers to the light of an inn. Recorded when he and his wife Janet (pregnant with their daughter, Shana) lived in the mountains near Woodstock, *Moondance* was the third LP in a solo career that stretches to this day. Morrison had already made his first masterpiece, *Astral Weeks*, and was assiduously cultivating his five-decade grudge against those he deemed the enemies of his music. It was far too late to stop.

Astral Weeks and *Moondance* are profoundly different works, apparently unconnected by theme or progression. If you didn’t know, you might suppose *Moondance* was created first,

since *Astral Weeks* is the more Joycean, the one with bigger ideas, while the 10 songs on *Moondance* have conventional structures and fall into recognisable genres (soul, country, jazz). But as this 60-track, 4CD/1 Blu-Ray boxset reveals, Morrison was aiming for something quite ambitious on *Moondance*: a combination of understated music and consummate ‘feel’, which would be locked down and given modest embellishment (flute, harpsichord), leaving the framework just flexible enough to allow the musicians to produce little moments of magic.

Moondance transports and elevates.

Atmospherically fluid (it starts with pouring rain but the sun soon shines), it turns a boyhood swim into a transcendental episode (“And It Stoned Me”), finds impossible romance in

TRACKLIST (Continued)

CD TWO: All Previously Unreleased

- 1 What do we call this Van?
- 2 Caravan (Take 1)
- 3 Caravan (Takes 2-3)
- 4 Caravan (Take 4)
- 5 Caravan (Takes 5-6)
- 6 Caravan (Take 7)
- 7 Caravan (Take 8)
- 8 I've Been Working (Early Version Take 1)
- 9 I've Been Working (Early Version Take 2)
- 10 I've Been Working (Early Version Take 5)
- 11 Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out (Outtake)
- 12 I Shall Sing (Take 1)
- 13 I Shall Sing (Takes 2-3)
- 14 I Shall Sing (Takes 4-6)
- 15 I Shall Sing (Take 7)
- 16 I Shall Sing (Takes 8-12)
- 17 I Shall Sing (Take 13)

CD THREE: All Previously Unreleased

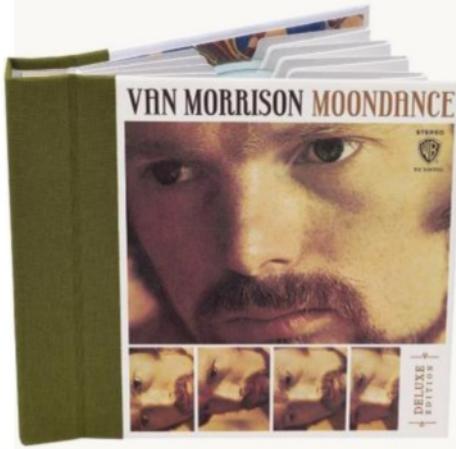
- 1 Into The Mystic (Take 10)
- 2 Into The Mystic (Take 11)
- 3 Into The Mystic (Takes 12-13)
- 4 Into The Mystic (Takes 14-16)
- 5 Into The Mystic (Take 17)
- 6 Brand New Day (Take 1)
- 7 Brand New Day (Take 2)
- 8 Brand New Day (Take 3)
- 9 Brand New Day (Take 4)
- 10 Brand New Day (Takes 5-6)
- 11 Brand New Day (Take 7)
- 12 Glad Tidings (Take 1)
- 13 Glad Tidings (Takes 2-4)
- 14 Glad Tidings (Takes 7-8)
- 15 Glad Tidings (Take 9)
- 16 Caravan Redo (Takes 1-2)
- 17 Caravan Redo (Take 3)

CD FOUR: All Previously Unreleased

- 1 Come Running (Take 1)
- 2 Come Running (Take 2)
- 3 Come Running (Takes 3-4)
- 4 Come Running (Take 5)
- 5 Come Running ("Rolling On 4")
- 6 Moondance (Take 21)
- 7 Moondance (Take 22)
- 8 Glad Tidings (Alt. Version)
- 9 These Dreams Of You (Alt Version)
- 10 Crazy Love (Remix)
- 11 Glad Tidings (Remix 1)
- 12 Glad Tidings (Remix 2)
- 13 Glad Tidings (Remix 3)
- 14 Caravan (Remix)
- 15 These Dreams Of You (Remix)
- 16 I Shall Sing (Mix)

CD FOUR: Blu-Ray Audio disc

High-resolution 48K 24-bit PCM stereo and DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 Surround Sound audio of original album (no video)



the life of a gypsy ("Caravan") and uses its own vocabulary ("fantabulous", "magnificently") to raise a homespun insight or a pleasant evening to the stature of an epiphany. Even the unwelcome businessmen shaking hands and talking in numbers ("Glad Tidings") can't spoil the wild beauty of Morrison's landscapes. *Moondance* has always been huge in his body of work.

Years of demand for remasters of *Moondance* and *Astral Weeks* were answered in 2008 with Japanese CDs that can still be found on Amazon. The lure of this Deluxe Edition is not so much sound quality (you may feel the remastering is too intense and bass-y) but access to the *Moondance* vaults. So, for example, the second disc ('The Sessions') has eight takes of "Caravan" – three of which break down almost immediately – and the third disc ('More Sessions') has eight takes of "Into The Mystic" and seven of "Brand New Day". Far from being fragments or sketches, most of these are complete performances with vocals. The problem is that Morrison worked painstakingly with acoustic guitar, bass and drums for six or seven takes at a time, making

only minor adjustments as he went. Don't expect stunning new arrangements every time.

"Into The Mystic", as it happens, is an elegant piece that can withstand being heard a number of times in a row. The heart leaps each time it begins, and some takes are so fine that it's not easy to hear the faults that Morrison detected in them. Whatever he was after, it was obviously something subtle. Finally, piano, horns and electric guitar are added on Take 17, by which time the song is almost home. But seven takes in the company of "Brand New Day" are not nearly as thrilling. Its arrangement is dependent on a piano and gospel vocal trio and it sounds barren without them. By Take 4, a five-minute instrumental, facetiousness set in and I started lustily singing "A Whiter Shade Of Pale" over the chords. "Glad Tidings" is more interesting because they can't decide on a tempo and the song vacillates between a lively, "Brown Eyed Girl"-style canter and a more ballad-like tempo that's all wrong for the lyrics' optimistic message. By Take 7 they're getting into minute specifics ("Van – one hair slower", suggests someone over the intercom) but are no closer to finding the

MOONDANCE HIDDEN GEMS

LOST LUNAR TAKES...

Four highlights from the extra discs

CARAVAN (Take 1)

This six-minute version of Morrison's gypsy freedom song is ridiculously good for a first take. Notable differences from the album version are a saxophone solo, a slightly slower groove and a quiet passage towards the end. Van sounds raspy, as if he's arrived straight from a gig.

INTO THE MYSTIC (Take 10)

With the merest of oil on canvas – acoustic guitar, bass, drums – Morrison and the two-man rhythm section provide an absolute definition of the term 'in the pocket'. You have to imagine the "foghorn" blowing, but just

marvel at the controlled, commanding vocal.

MOONDANCE (Take 22)

Swinging a notch more lazily than the version we're used to, this take has a 1930s-style horn arrangement that was later abandoned. There's no flute yet. Even after 22 takes, "Moondance" still has a way to go. Morrison is absent from most of this solo-heavy performance.

CRAZY LOVE (mono mix)

The album version of "Crazy Love" is a delicate ballad with vibraphone and gospel backing vocals. Here, in up-close and personal mono, the song seems to head southwards to FAME Studios, Alabama, and become a deep soul 45 in all but name.

the VAULT

In the midst of a highly creative phase: Van Morrison in September 1970



"Sophisticated is the word I'm looking for..."
Van, April 1970

solution. The fourth disc ('Sessions, Alternates & Mixes') puts "Come Running" and "Moondance" under the microscope (six and two takes, respectively), with a few takes where one of the musicians sings a prominent high harmony on "Come Running". It could be seen as a foretaste of the interplay that Morrison would later adopt with Brian Kennedy, but the idea was scrapped for the LP version.

Some songs from the *Moondance* sessions didn't make it onto the album. "I've Been Working" was given a total rethink and held over for the follow-up, *His Band And The Street Choir*. On the takes here, it's a funky vamp like The Bar-Kays with Morrison improvising lyrics about Jesse James and Lord Tennyson. But 11 mins (Take 1) and 10 mins (Take 5) are a long time to sit through a jam that's clearly not suitable for *Moondance*.

"Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out" doesn't get far either. In the hesitant run-through we hear, only Van and the pianist sound confident of the song's changes. The much-bootlegged "I Shall Sing", meanwhile, is a catchy tune with a buoyant calypso flavour in the horn part. We quickly become very familiar with this horn part, because "I Shall Sing" extends to 13 maddening takes. The song falters; they start again. Van stops it; it resumes. There's a mistake; the mistake is corrected. Precisely 15 minutes elapse before our stoicism cracks and we turn into John Cleese shouting at the bouzouki players in the Cheese Shop sketch. No wonder it was left off the album. Morrison must have been sick of hearing it.

Perennially disgruntled that Warner Bros, and not he, owns the masters of *Moondance*, Morrison has condemned the Deluxe Edition as "unauthorised" and akin to the theft of his music. It might have been better to leave it alone. Yes, it's fascinating at times to be a witness to the meticulous construction of great music, but the contents of this boxset feel a mite desperate, rather than generous, and the flabbiness of its 11-minute jams is entirely inappropriate for an album that famously doesn't contain an ounce of fat. The 2CD Expanded Edition, featuring 11 tracks from the Deluxe, would be a less expensive option for the non-obsessive *Moondance* fan.

FEBRUARY, 1974: Van takes us through *Moondance* song-by-song...



NME
23/02/1974

How long after *Astral Weeks* came out did you start thinking about making *Moondance*?

About 10 months, I think. I'd like to have done that live – to have got the same musicians again. That would have been killer.

"Moondance", I wrote the melody

first. I played the melody on a soprano sax and I wrote lyrics to go with the melody I'd played on the horn. I don't really have any words to particularly describe that song – sophisticated is probably the word I'm looking for. Frank Sinatra wouldn't be out of place singing that.

"Crazy Love". Basically what it says. "Caravan".

That's getting back into the romanticism bit, with gypsies and all that. I'm really fascinated by gypsies... I love 'em. "Into The Mystic" was originally "Into The Misty". That's how it started off but I thought it had an ethereal feeling so I called it "Into The Mystic". That song is kinda funny because when it came time to send it to Warner Bros I couldn't figure out what to send them. Because as far as the lyrics go, there are two sets of lyrics. Like "I was born before the wing" and "I was borne before the wind". "Also [and 'all

so'] younger than the sun ['son']" and "the bonny boat was one ['won']". It had all these different meanings and they were all in there... whatever you want is in the song.

"Come Running" is a very light type of song... it's not too heavy, it's just a happy-go-lucky song. There are no messages or anything like that. "These Dreams Of You" is, of course, the dream I had about Ray Charles. "Brand New Day" expresses a lot of hope. I was in Boston and

having a hard job getting up spiritually. Nothing I heard on the radio could I relate to. One day this song came on, and it had this particular feel and this particular groove, and it was totally fresh. You know what I mean, things were starting to make sense as far as the music scene was concerned. The drums were playing really laid-back – and

I didn't know who the hell it was.

It turned out that it was The Band. I was sitting over there and I looked up at the sky and the sun started to shine, and all of a sudden, the song just came through me head. So I went in the house and I started to write it down – "when all the dark clouds roll away". I turned on the radio and I heard that song and I just thought, something's happening. It was either "The Weight" or "I Shall Be Released".

RITCHIE YORKE

"I was having a hard job getting up spiritually. Nothing I heard on the radio could I relate to. One day this song came on, and it had this particular feel and this particular groove, and it was totally fresh. You know what I mean, things were starting to make sense as far as the music scene was concerned. The drums were playing really laid-back – and



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- CD3** 1967-71
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- CD6** From The Vaults

THE BEACH BOYS

Made In California

CAPITOL

Hits, rarities and more – the two sides of The Beach Boys laid bare in extensive boxset. By *Richard Williams*

8/10

8/10 IT HAS BEEN The Beach Boys' habit to confound those ready to predict their demise. Despite functioning (or, at times, dysfunctional) largely as a deluxe oldies act since before the Reagan presidency, there have been occasional glimmers of creativity throughout the latter stages of their career, with perhaps the biggest surprise coming last year, when they marked their 50th anniversary not just with a 73-concert tour featuring all surviving original members, but with an album of new material that was at worst tolerable and at best

excellent. But there are, of course, two groups called The Beach Boys: the celestial choir that first caught the ear with the stained-glass harmonies of hits from "Surfer Girl" to "God Only Knows", and a second outfit that emerged much later, a group whose voices (like those of The Band) came together as individual sounds, each with its own grain, rubbing against each other to create little abrasions that mirrored the internal tensions of an institution frequently riven by disputes but held together by bonds of blood and commerce.

That second group began to show itself

Q&A

Mike Love

**Did you come across any nice surprises as you went through the archives?**

There's a song called "Going To The Beach". I wrote it and we all recorded around the time we were doing the *Keepin' The Summer Alive* album, maybe it was 1979 - and I'd forgotten all about it. Here it surfaces, and I'll be darned if it isn't a great song. It kind of harks back to the old "Surfin' USA" days. We're doing it on our concerts these days, in the encore section.

Looking back at the 50th anniversary tour and album, what are your thoughts?

What the anniversary established was a couple

of things. One, that we can get in the studio together and still sound great. Listening to the songs coming back through the speakers, with all the harmonies and so on, it kind of harked back to the mid-'60s. Both Brian and I remarked on that. It was kind of like sonic *déjà vu*. In terms of the shows we did, there were originally scheduled to be 50, but it actually expanded to more like 73. That was done by agreement that we would all put aside our individual pursuits and do this fixed number of shows. It was a really good thing to have done, and now we're back on our merry way.

Could it happen again, live or in the studio?

I don't know. I know they've announced Brian is working on a solo album. He may have two or three projects he's working on, so he's pretty busy. As far as getting together again, it remains to be seen. I would like to write songs with my cousin Brian. I'd be up for doing that. I'll leave it there. *INTERVIEW: RICHARD WILLIAMS*

when Brian Wilson's soaring falsetto lost its unblemished purity and Dennis Wilson, the youngest of the three brothers, stepped out from behind the drumkit with his own songs and his hoarsely compelling lead vocals. The personalities of each member came into clearer focus: they were not, after all, merely five indistinguishable versions of the same person. Their music became even more interesting, if much less predictable and consistent.

As time goes by, that phenomenon becomes easier to identify and appreciate. Twenty years ago, with Dennis already 10 years in his grave, a boxset titled *Good Vibrations* marked the group's 30th anniversary, assembling the hits alongside a substantial quantity of rare material. Since then much has happened, notably the death from cancer of Carl Wilson in 1998, the rebirth of Brian's public career - symbolised by the triumphant 2004 restoration of the lost masterpiece *Smile* - and the atomisation of the core group into at least three performing units. *Made In California*, compiled to celebrate last year's golden jubilee, offers - in the words of Mike Love - "a window into all the various eras of The Beach Boys and a peek into things that were less well known or simply unreleased."

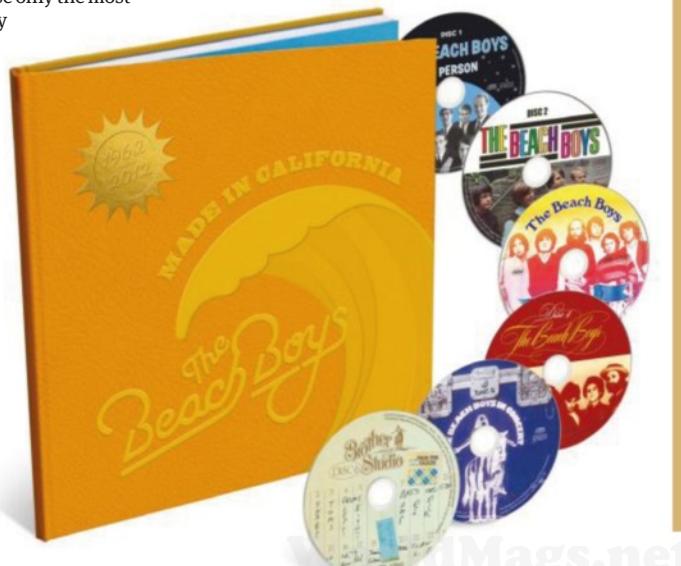
Inevitably depleted by previous raids, the vault of unseen treasure will nevertheless continue to yield gems and new perspectives for a few more anniversaries yet. If Love's 1979 composition "Going To The Beach" (see Q&A panel above) is a trifle to please only the most undeveloped palate, the many treats for the hardcore

include glorious a cappella mixes of *Surflower's* "This Whole World" and "Slip On Through", the sumptuous instrumental track from Glen Campbell's "Guess I'm Dumb" (recorded during the *Beach Boys Today!* sessions), Dennis' unreleased and epically yearning ("Wouldn't It Be Nice To) Live Again", "Don't Worry, Baby" with an alternate (and slightly inferior) lead vocal, three excellent and previously unheard Phil Spector covers - "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" (with Brian's lead vocal) from the *Beach Boys*

Love You sessions in 1976, Carl singing "Da Doo Ron Ron" from 1979 and Brian and Mike duetting on "Why Don't They Let Us Fall in Love" from 1980 - and excellent unreleased versions of "Soul Searchin'" and "You're Still A Mystery", produced by Brian, Andy Paley and Don Was in 1995.

A selection of live tracks is highlighted by three songs - "Wendy", "When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)" and "Hushabye" - recorded at the BBC in 1964, during their first UK visit, and by an exquisite version of "Only With You" from Carnegie Hall in 1972, just prior to the release of *Holland*, with Carl and Dennis sharing the lead on what may be the loveliest of all the group's songs.

The hits are here, of course, from "Surfin'" in 1962 to "Kokomo" in 1988, but some of their most startling material has always been found down the back of the sofa, among such relatively unconsidered trifles as "In The Back Of My Mind" (from *The Beach Boys Today!*), with its still-astonishing orchestral arrangement, and "Angel Come Home", a song written by Carl with his occasional collaborator Geoffrey Cushing-Murray, sung by Dennis and left to languish on the 1979 collection titled *LA (Light Album)*. In those two songs, recorded 15 years apart, the second of the two bands called The Beach Boys stands revealed: one capable of the most beautifully textured and exquisitely pain-racked white soul music ever made.

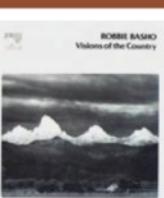
**THE BAND****Live At The Academy Of Music 1971**

CAPITOL/UME

The classic Rock Of Ages grows to a 4CD + DVD boxset**10/10**

One of the best-ever live LPs just got better. Originally released in '72, The Band's fifth LP, *Rock Of Ages*, captured this superb performing unit, frequently joined by a crack five-piece horn section, during a four-night run at Manhattan's Academy Of Music that culminated in a marathon New Year's Eve show. At 56 tracks, the comp obviously doesn't contain every number - that would be overkill. Instead, producers Robbie Robertson, Michael Murphy and Matt D'Amico have culled what they've deemed to be the strongest take of each song The Band played during the four-night run, 29 in all, newly mixed by Bob Clearmountain; these take up the first two discs. CDs 3 and 4 contain every second of the 27-song New Year's Eve show, climaxing with Dylan's thrilling surprise appearance, mixed from the original soundboard tapes. The first half captures the quintet's taut improv in all its splendour, while the New Year's Eve show is electrifyingly in the moment, transmitting the energy coming off the stage and permeating the ecstatic crowd. The boxset is a king's bounty, documenting one of the greatest groups to ever take the stage at its absolute peak.

EXTRAS: 17 unreleased tracks; DVD contains 9/10 Clearmountain's 5.1 SurroundSound mix of all tracks on Discs 1 and 2, and newly discovered film footage of two songs.

BUD SCOPPA**ROBBIE BASHO****Visions Of The Country**

GNOME LIFE

The guitar master's 1978 album for the Windham Hill label, rescued from oblivion

9/10

Of all the guitarists associated with the Takoma School, it's hard to think of one who imbued folk music with quite as much mystical portent as Robbie Basho. *Visions Of The Country*, his 10th album, is a fantastic case in point: "I would paint for you a portrait of North America as a beautiful woman," he wrote in the original sleeve notes, "when she was young and unarmed."

Consequently, Basho turns a suite about the American West into a courtly romance; imagine John Renbourn drawing on Native American myth rather than old English legend, perhaps. *Visions Of The Country* has been long out of print, thanks in part to it having been struck out of the catalogue of its original label, Windham Hill, deemed too spirited for the New Age brand. Now, though, it's revealed as one of Basho's masterpieces, up there with a personal favourite, *Venus In Cancer* (1969). Alongside the lyrical 6- and 12-string solo pieces ("Elk Dreamer's Lament" is terrific), there are rare piano études, while his reverberant, often-criticised voice has echoes of Tim Buckley on "Blue Crystal Fire", especially. During "Leaf In The Wind", Basho also reveals himself to be a highly accomplished whistler.

EXTRAS: None.**JOHN MULVEY**

Rediscovered! ▶

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



IASOS

Celestial Soul Portrait

NUMERO GROUP

8/10

Open your third eye! Blissed-out new age voyager's early work compiled

Iasos – like Lawrence, first name only – is a wide-eyed 66-year-old pioneer of what was dubbed “new age” music in the mid-1970s. Born in Greece but raised in California, he is the pre-eminent exponent of the kind of soothing, free-flowing, broadly electronic mood pieces that rightly or wrongly are forever associated with wind chimes and dreamcatchers, yet *Celestial Soul Portrait* presents a persuasive case for Iasos as a radical, visionary figure operating on the same wavelength as Eno or Vangelis. Crucially, what separates Iasos from his peers is his belief that since the early '70s he has been merely externalising the ecstatic musical visions transmitted to him telepathically by a being known as Vista. “The instant that I sensed him it released a huge waterfall of love from me to him,” says Iasos from his Marin County home, where he feeds the local wild deer each morning. “The music I was hearing was very unusual, it wasn't like any earth music. It was lovely, it was sweet, it was uplifting and happy and full of love. It was so harmonious as to be unearthly.”

In Iasos' hands, it was also naïve, sincere and, on a flute-speckled cut such as “The Winds Of Olympus”, almost jazzy. Fans of modern-day drifters Emeralds and Oneohtrix Point Never will coo over the pitch-shifted drone and patchouli-scented vibe of “The Royal Court Of The Goddess Vesta” and “Crystal White Fire Light”, while US psychologists have stated that Iasos' 1978 meditative masterpiece “The Angels Of Comfort”, included here, most resembles the music heard by people who've had near-death experiences during their near-death moments. Even R Buckminster Fuller enthused over the qualities of Iasos’ “profoundly beautiful” music. Though *Celestial Soul Portrait* focuses on the first decade of Iasos' output, when he released cassettes on his Inter-Dimensional Music label, he's still active today. His latest single? “Smooth Sailing Over Enchanted Lands”. “People have always said: ‘Iasos, you're way ahead of your time.’ And so now it's 2013, people are getting interested in music I released in 1975. Better late than never.”

PIERS MARTIN

I'M YOUR FAN

“Iasos is one of the early masters of higher-consciousness space music. His music is designed for psycho-spiritual healing”

LEE UNDERWOOD



NICK DRAKE
Five Leaves Left: Remastered And Boxed Edition
(reissue, 1969)

ISLAND

9/10

Much-updated, never goes out of style

The covers of these new audiophile vinyl reissues of Drake's catalogue bear testament to how the man's music was gradually disseminated – rather than ‘as new’ artwork, these represent Nick Drake's grey economy presence, where his legend was born: these are sleeves as they were discovered after a journey, remaindered, passed on from sisters, bought second-hand, long after the minimal initial promotional drive. All of which yellowed and tea-stained history is rather undercut by the continued vividness of the music: Drake's debut is as fresh as the early autumn of its original September release. History is mistaken if it regards the cover of a young man looking out of the window of a derelict Wimbledon house as a tragic figure. *FLL* is a work of great poise: it begins with the self-confident “Time Has Told Me”, while Drake's highly articulated playing and bucolic songcraft stands up to the over-the-top string-bending of guest Richard Thompson.

EXTRAS: Let's not mislead anyone: this is a box **7/10** containing the music you probably already love in various high-quality formats, accompanied by reproduction artefacts (shop poster, lyrics, etc) that suggest you might have been there at the time, even if you weren't. It's a nice thing to have, but it's the music, not the ephemera, that will console you down the years.

JOHN ROBINSON



BOB DYLAN
Another Self Portrait 1969-71

COLUMBIA

Unloved Dylan LP, with varnish removed

Not the best-loved of Dylan's work, *Self Portrait* was mystifying on its release, a collection of covers, a few slight originals, and some arbitrary selections from Dylan's 1969 Isle Of Wight show. This new archival release helps reverse that view, instead positioning the album as the cornerstone of the period covering *Nashville Skyline* to *New Morning*. Here, track selection from the sessions tends to grittier covers (there is a spectacular version of “House Carpenter”); while strings are removed from many of the songs like “Little Sadie” and “Days Of '49”. This selection replaces the original album (only available in the deluxe edition, alongside the slyly superb full IOW set), and casts much of the material, and also the sharp acoustic guitar playing of David Bromberg in a bright new light. Producer Bob Johnston has tacitly become the scapegoat for *Self Portrait* excesses like strings and backing singers, as if Dylan would rescind responsibility for his own music, but the set also reveals an interesting point. Which is that even though Dylan will reject performances for being too focused on guitar and voice, and therefore “too Bob Dylany” this illustrates that being Bob Dylany is sometimes an attractive option, even for Bob Dylan.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



FAIRPORT CONVENTION
Rising For The Moon: Deluxe
UMC/ISLAND

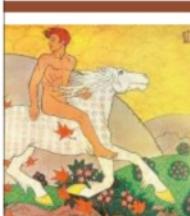
7/10

Fairport's 1975 make-or-break album – they broke – plus unreleased live set

It looked good on paper – the combined forces of Fairport and Fotheringay, fronted by Sandy Denny and produced by hit-maker Glyn Johns to provide an entrée into the US market. A career as an alt.folk Fleetwood Mac beckoned. Alas, Johns alienated drummer Dave Mattacks, and despite Denny's ringing title track – an anthem in waiting – *Rising* proved an unhappy compromise. Sometimes old-school Fairport ("Night-Time Girl"), sometimes clumsy rock-out ("Iron Lion"), often Denny solo album ("After Halloween"), the record and its expense wrecked Fairport. The live set, from a 1974 four-night stint at LA's Troubadour, underscores the uncertain identity. Are they Denny's backing band – she sings wonderfully while plugging her solo album? A wannabe Band (a funk version of Dylan's "Down In The Flood")? Or electric folkies ("Hexhamshire Lass")? Amid the competing agendas come great versions of "Like An Old Fashioned Waltz", "Down Where The Drunks Roll" ("a song you won't have heard before") and a storming "Matty Groves".

EXTRAS: A live TV cut of "White Dress" is **6/10** expendable, an acoustic "Dawn" is more appealing, while demos of "What Is True", "Halloween" and "King And Queen Of England" are musts for Denny fans.

NEIL SPENCER



FLEETWOOD MAC
Then Play On (reissue, 1969)
RHINO

8/10

Expanded reissue for the mighty Mac's final album with Peter Green

Originally released in 1969, *Then Play On* found Fleetwood Mac in transition, not merely because the mental disintegration that would soon result in Green's departure was already under way, but because the band was starting to move beyond the confines of its early fixation with Elmore James riffs to embrace a more expansive prog-rock experimentalism. There's still plenty of wall-shaking blues power on "Rattlesnake Shake" and "One Sunny Day" and some thrilling Delta slide guitar on "Show-Biz Blues". But the blues template is left far behind as Green floats spacially into Grateful Dead territory on the psych instrumental "Underway", essays a haunting rock ballad on "Closing My Eyes", and inserts a weird symphonic interlude into the heads-down twin guitar rave-up on "Searching For Madge". The signs that he was getting close to the end of his tether were manifest, but went unread or were ignored at the time. With hindsight they lend an additional layer of fascination to the group's most schizophrenic album.

EXTRAS: The addition of the non-album hit **7/10** singles "Oh Well" and the positively scary "The Green Manalishi..." hugely enhances the package. Two of the finest tracks Green ever fashioned, they're by some way the standouts here.

NEIL WILLIAMSON



FLUX OF PINK INDIANS
Strive To Survive Causing The Least Suffering Possible (reissue, 1983)
ONE LITTLE INDIAN

7/10

Dog-on-a-string-band's anarcho apotheosis

Bishop's Stortford's Flux Of Pink Indians were among Crass' first and most steadfast apostles – anti-religion, anti-war, anti-animal cruelty, but all those negatives blur into a perverse positive on their debut album, remastered for similarly paranoid times. An extended harangue – even the drumming is hectoring and dogmatic – it features anarcho punk's "Stairway To Heaven", "TV Dinners", and while its monstrous earnestness would have drawn a sneer from most *Face* readers ("There are many, many alternatives; go and have a look," Colin Latter barks reasonably on vivisection rant "Blinded By Science"), Flux's conviction is daunting still. It went weird soon afterwards, follow-up *The Fucking Cunts Treat Us Like Pricks* seemingly rejecting music as a bourgeois conceit, but *Strive To Survive...* stands undefeated; three chords and, maybe, the truth.

EXTRAS: CD and download buyers get a live

8/10 show by the reformed Flux from 2007, but the real bonus is debut EP "Neu Smell", featuring the mighty "Tube Disasters". "Build up some speed, don't shut your eyes, make sure that everyone in the train dies," bellows Latter, his maniac's fantasy crumbling into an attack on the society of the spectacle, then a hippy poem about nuclear apocalypse. A smash hit.

JIM WIRTH



JORMA KAUKONEN
Quah (reissue, 1974)
FLOATING WORLD

8/10

Long-unavailable solo debut by Airplane guitarist flies again

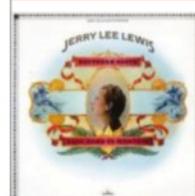
By 1974, Jefferson Airplane had crash-landed and

Kaukonen had redirected his energies into Hot Tuna. Initially conceived as an acoustic blues duo with bassist Jack Casady, Hot Tuna had swiftly outgrown side-project status to become a headline attraction as a heavy, electric blues-rock outfit which left Kaukonen's acoustic sensibilities unsatisfied and without an outlet. The result was his solo debut *Quah*, still rightly regarded by fans as his finest album away from the Airplane/Hot Tuna collective axis. His intricate acoustic playing has something in common with the John Fahey/American primitive school but is more directly rooted in the antique stylings of original blues guitar masters such as Blind Blake and the Rev Gary Davis, both of whom exerted a similarly strong influence on the picking of a youthful Ry Cooder. Kaukonen covers songs by both Blake and Davis, along with other trad blues standards such as "Another Man Done Gone" plus five of his own, three of which are augmented by understated but exquisite string arrangements, including the standout tracks "Genesis" and "Song For The North Star".

EXTRAS: Four previously unreleased acoustic

5/10 tracks from the same sessions, three of which feature vocals from Kaukonen's old college friend and obscure picker Tom Hobson.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



JERRY LEE LEWIS
Southern Roots
BEAR FAMILY

9/10

Double-disc documenting X-rated, mother-humping *Anarchy In The USA*

Half high parody, half

rock'n'roll masterpiece, and all ego trip, *Southern Roots* is one bizarre album. Outweirding its share of far-out psychedelia, Jerry Lee waxes rhapsodic and beatific on many subjects, but mainly on Jerry Lee, Jerry Lee's sex life, and women's evil ways toward Jerry Lee, on a repertoire filtering everything from Fats Domino to Doug Sahm. Various Stax luminaries join in on standards redefined ("When A Man Loves A Woman"), cultural commentary turned upside-down (Sahm's "Revolutionary Man"), and, well, "Meat Man" may be the creepiest, most lascivious pop single ever released.

EXTRAS: As strong if maddening as the original

9/10 album is, Bear's big coup is the nine-track *Lost Southern Roots* tape. Other than a positively debauched, alternate "Hold On, I'm Coming", it's an entirely different tracklisting. A breathless "Raining In My Heart", a ramrodding "Honey Hush" chasing ghosts of Johnny Burnette's original, and Charlie Daniels' "All Over Hell And Half Of Georgia", Lewis' piano front-and-centre in the mix, are among the riveting artefacts. Another second disc of false starts, outtakes and uproarious studio banter, superb Hank Davis liners, and rare photos round out an exemplary accounting of this peculiar chunk of rock'n'roll mythology.

LUKE TORN

HOW TO BUY...
JORMA KAUKONEN POST-AIRPLANE



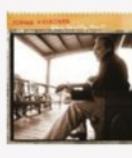
HOT TUNA
Yellow Fever GRUNT, 1975

On which the Airplane offshoot morphed into the heaviest blues-rockers in the land. Tracks such as "Sunrise Dance With The Devil" and "Song For The Fire Maiden" served as brilliant vehicles for Kaukonen's riffs and psych-guitar effects over the thundering rhythms of Jack Casady and Bob Steeler. Seldom had a power trio sounded as satisfying since Cream.

8/10

HOT TUNA
Live At Sweetwater

1992 Kaukonen and Casady returned to acoustic roots on Tuna's first 'unplugged' LP since the 1970 debut. Bob Weir and Maria Muldaur are among those helping out on a warm set of blues standards and highlights from Kaukonen's back catalogue.

8/10

JORMA KAUKONEN
Blue Country Heart

2002 Steeped in the Depression-era traditions of the Harry Smith Anthology, Kaukonen revisited songs by Jelly Roll Morton, Jimmie Rodgers and the Delmore Bros on his best solo LP since *Quah*.

8/10

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

ROKY ERICKSON & THE ALIENS

The Evil One (reissue, 1981)

ROKY ERICKSON

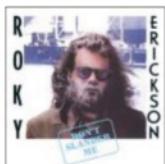
Don't Slander Me/
Gremlins Have Pictures
(reissues, both 1986)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Roky's legendary mid-period – ghouls, aliens and The Creature With The Atomic Brain... *by Jon Dale*



7/10



7/10



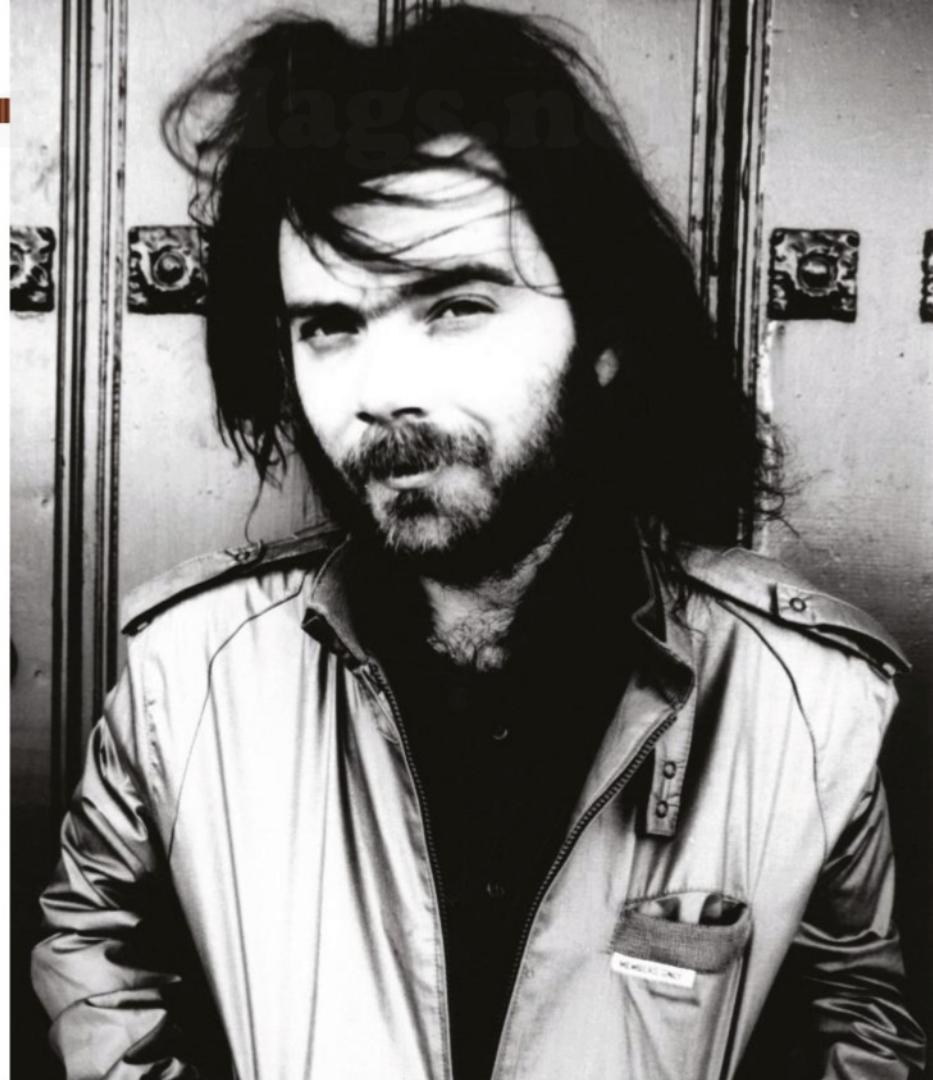
8/10

inmates. Released from Rusk after three years, he hit the ground running, with initial, unsuccessful encounters with other ex-Elevators leading Erickson on to more fruitful collaborations throughout the '70s, such as his sessions with his group Bleib Alien, which were overseen by Doug Sahm. As the decade drew to a close, Erickson found himself with another group, The Aliens, recording 15 songs' worth of brutalising hard rock under the watchful eye of Creedence Clearwater Revival bass player Stu Cook.

The sessions would prove challenging: as Roky's attention span deteriorated, Cook found himself having to 'wild synch' vocal takes together, reconstructing the songs out of component parts. That Cook should 'Frankenstein' together *The Evil One* makes a certain kind of circular logic, given that by this stage, Erickson's lyrical concerns were ghouls, horror films, interplanetary visitations – a B-grade, pulp fiction vision of schlock and surrealism. On *The Evil One*, Cook's surgery is exacting, and you really can't tell where the constituent parts fall: Erickson classics like "Bloody Hammer", "Mine Mine Mind" and "I Think Of Demons" emerge seemingly fully realised. They're also jet-propelled, thanks to The Aliens, who trade

ROGER KYNARD ERICKSON'S legend rests, these days, on the psych-rock he made with Texas' greatest, the 13th Floor Elevators. A major part of underground rock and modern psychedelia's DNA, their three albums are templates for any plucky punks picking up guitars with loose action and rusty coils, wanting to hymn the twin powers of altered states and vernacular rock'n'roll.

Which is all well and good, but Erickson's story gets even weirder once the Elevators disintegrate in '69, in part due to his arrest for possession, and subsequent incarceration at the Rusk State Hospital For The Criminally Insane. There Erickson was subjected to electroshock therapy and liquid Thorazine treatment. During his time at Rusk he also read voraciously, wrote hundreds of songs, and formed a group, The Missing Links, with three other



in an at times ferocious, sharp-edged hard rock, all drilling guitar solos and metallic riffs. But there's something in the clarity of the production, also, that's a bit of a turn-off: it's too lacquered and clear in places, giving both *The Evil One* and 1986's *Don't Slander Me* a weirdly alienating feel. They sing of their decade: it's a very '80s production. This is not to dismiss Cook's painstaking attention, both aesthetic and personal, to *The Evil One*, or Aliens member Duane Aslaksen's work on its successor. By *Don't Slander Me* Erickson has dropped some of the more spooked elements of his lyrics, and the songs are similarly pared back, each one a classic shot deep into the rock'n'roll void. The furiously punk edge of the title cut is a blindsider, opening the album out to 1,000mph rockabilly, grinding blues taunts and, toward the end of the album, a clutch of gorgeous love songs, like "Hasn't Anyone Told You" and "Starry Eyes". These are as affecting as anything Erickson's ever written, echoing the teenage wall of tears of Phil Spector and Shadow Morton's girl group productions, reminding that behind the ghouls and aliens lies a pop music classicist.

"Starry Eyes" reappears on *Gremlins Have Pictures*, a set of live recordings and acoustic sessions pieced together by Roky and the team at Orb Productions. Shorn of the studio surface sheen, Erickson's songs paradoxically emerge here in full flower, and of the three albums reissued by Light In The Attic, this one is the pick. "The Interpreter" is the Velvets' "Sweet Jane" with pirouetting guitar fills; Erickson repays the favour with a chugging cover of "Heroin", reinterpreted as if it appeared on *Loaded*. The acoustic recordings are no slouches either, with "I Am" ghosted by aerial slide guitar noise, and "Anthem (I Promise)" an almost eschatological love song of sorts, with Roky offering his "green and blue eyes to you". *Gremlins...* offers the fullest purview of Erickson's abilities, from acoustic heartbreakers and Dylan-esque social broadsides to clenched-fist rockers. Here's hoping there's more in the offing; collections of Erickson's concurrent music with Evil Hook Wildlife ET, and also his disarmingly moving acoustic tapes like *Never Say Goodbye*, would be most welcome. But these three reissues are enough to get anyone started. Damn right you need 'em.

Q&A

Stu Cook



How did you hook up with Roky?
Through Doug Sahm. Cosmo [Doug Clifford] and I worked with Sahm on *Groover's Paradise*, and I became drawn into the Texas music cyclone.

What are the defining memories of the sessions, and of working with Roky?
The agony of defeat, the thrill of victory. When we met each day I never knew if it was going to

be magic or pulling teeth. Fortunately for all of us there were far more days of magic.

I've read you saying that you "had to strike when the poker was hot"... Roky was easily distracted. It was my task to catch him when he was in his most fluid state. Some times were truly cosmic, and others were not.

Have you caught any of Roky's recent shows?
I saw Roky with the Explosives at Austin City Limits Festival a couple of years ago. Absolutely stunning. I think he was awarded Austin Musician Of The Year. Roky can hit you over the head, so don't take your eyes off of the man.

INTERVIEW: JON DALE



LIFE

Life (reissue, 1971)
RPM INTERNATIONAL

Lost Swedish prog masterpiece re-released in two languages

Life is the sole album by Swedish prog three-piece Life, which disappeared

8/10

without trace when first released, despite being recorded in both English and Swedish versions, presumably with an eye to capturing a global audience. This re-release brings both versions of the album together in splendid fashion, allowing listeners to compare between two takes on the same songs – the English ones supplemented by a recently acquired Moog and seemingly having a slighter heavier, denser mix. What dominates *Life* is a sense of drama. The band – and producer Anders Henriksson – are always looking to bring some showmanship to the songs, whether it's the epic torch song “Hon Vandrar Över Rummet – På Jordens Klot” (“She Walks Across The Room”), with its huge chorus and dynamic wah-wah guitar, the Zep-esque “En Bit Av Evgigheten” (“Sailing In The Sunshine”), the Hendrix-style psychedelic jam of “Att Leva År Att Älska” (“Living Is Loving”) or the jagged, pre-post-punk brilliance of “En Av Oss” (“One Of Us”). In between these gigantic songs come curious instrumentals and piano riffs, while “Punda’ Vidare” (“Experience Of Life”) brings a flurry of semi-drunken chanting and found sounds. It all adds up to an odd and entertaining listen.

EXTRAS: Three non-album singles, two versions of the album and new sleeve notes.

PETER WATTS

SOUAD MASSI

The Definitive Collection

WRASSE

Career highlights from a potent voice of the 'Arab Spring'

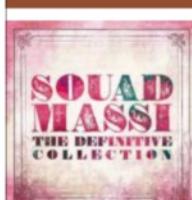
Massi comes with

a highly credible backstory, playing in the 1990s with the politically charged Algerian rock band Atakor during the catastrophic civil war. Death threats by Islamist extremists led her to dress as a man and cut her hair as a disguise and ultimately forced her into exile in Paris. Since 2001 she's released four solo albums, which have won a clutch of world music awards but have failed to crossover to a wider audience. Hopefully this collection will change that. Massi's default setting is the melancholic Arabic ballad, sometimes intensely personal and at other times bearing the imprint of Algeria's troubled history. But she's also a bold musical innovator and the fiery flamenco of “Ech Edani”, the poignant guitar-and-voice sparseness of “Le Bien Et Le Mal” (the track which launched the oft-repeated ‘North Africa's Tracy Chapman’ analogy), the Arabic country of “Une Lettre” and the cosmopolitan indie of “Yawlid” illustrate an impressive versatility.

EXTRAS: None. Translations of her highly poetic lyrics are helpfully provided, but the lack of any other background information in the liner notes offers a hopeless lack of context to a collection that is presumably aimed primarily at those new to Massi's work.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

7/10



NIGEL WILLIAMSON



ELA ORLEANS

Mars Is Heaven (reissue, 2011)
LA STATION RADAR

Uneartly, dream-sick musings, broadcasting outta Glasgow

8/10

Born in Poland, loop-pop chanteuse Ela Orleans lived through the privations of communism in the town of Auschwitz, before escaping to Glasgow. It's something of a spiritual home for her, as the gently spooked, bricoleur avant-populism of her music perfectly fits the aesthetics of the Scottish city's underground. But this sound also has more personal resonance – in interviews, she's discussed a childhood concussion which left her, in her own words, “oddly attracted to all kinds of noise others would find disturbing”. While she's spent time in Glasgow group Hassle Hound, and collaborated with artists like Skitter, Orleans has come into her own in the last few years, releasing a clutch of beautifully confusing solo albums with the heavyweight implications of Nico's '70s work, or closer to now, Le Volume Courbe's secretive gem *I Killed My Best Friend*. Like those records, there's a serious feeling of disorientation and disconnect to some of *Mars Is Heaven*, particularly when Orleans lets percussive loops or snatches of '60s pop songs spin into refractive, kaleidoscopic patterns. But hidden behind the delirium is a knack for mysterious, seductive pop songs, all choral voices and drowsily catchy melody.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE



RAY PRICE

Welcome To My World – The Love Songs Of...

HUX

Cherokee Cowboy's romantic side compiled

6/10

When he started out in the 1950s, Ray Price was influenced by Hank Williams; his band, the Cherokee Cowboys, included members of Hank's Drifting Cowboys. The Texan's reputation was made by hits such as “Crazy Arms” and “Heartaches By The Number”, but by the 1960s he veered into easy listening, crooning over strings and ditching western attire for formal evening wear. This compilation focuses on his lounge period, including “For The Good Times” (also a hit for Perry Como), and a fine rendition of Jimmy Webb's “Didn't We”. Also present is Price's version of the Al Martino standard “Spanish Eyes”, which is delivered with an intensity that takes it to the brink of self-parody (in truth, the orchestra go over that cliff, but Price's vocal has a compelling note of self-destructive passion). A country flavour is evident in the melodrama of “I'll Go To A Stranger” and the lyric of the splendidly bitter “Black And White Lies” in which a spurned husband sends fond wishes to his ex. In recent years, Price has revisited his country roots, but this survey of his period as a romantic balladeer closes with his swinging version of Bill Mack's ode to woozy self-deception, “Drinking Champagne”.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

HOW TO BUY... BRITISH INSTRUMENTAL GUITAR RECORDS



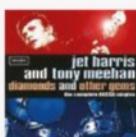
THE OUTLAWS

Dream Of The West

CORONET, 2012

Joe Meek's occasional house band's '61 Wild West concept LP was written and produced under his pseudonym Robert Duke, highlighted by the echo-drenched “Valley Of The Sioux” and surf-psych hybrid “Crazy Drums”.

7/10



JET HARRIS AND TONY MEEHAN

Diamonds And Other Gems: The Complete Decca Singles RPM, 2008

The ex-Shadows rhythm section had three pulsating Duane Eddy-style hits in '63, defying Merseybeat dominance, including “Diamonds” (feat. Jimmy Page), plus Harris' throbbing “Man With The Golden Arm”.

7/10



VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Haunted Pad EL, 2012

35 sturm'n'twang tracks, showcasing Big Jim Sullivan's Krew Kats and Meek ingenuity with The Moontrekkers' “Night Of The Vampire”, while the Ted Taylor Four's proto-pop art and Judd Proctor's multi-tracked Les Pauls shun the Shads' blueprint.

8/10

MICK HOUGHTON

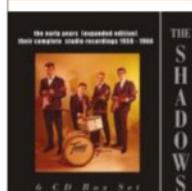
THE SHADOWS

The Early Years – Expanded Edition

EMI

Influential British pop institution

Six-disc set that includes every Shadows studio recording from their first



7/10

as The Drifters in 1959 to penultimate Columbia hit, “Thunderbirds Are Go”, in November 1966. They were fortunate not to be dropped by EMI following three lame singles (only one an instrumental) before renaming themselves The Shadows. Once established as Cliff Richard's backing band, the second Shadows single “Apache” deposed his “Please Don't Tease” as chart-topper in summer 1960. It launched an enduring career and a seven-year run of hits making them easily Britain's most successful pre-Beatles group. Bar a handful of minor vocal efforts, The Shadows stuck to a formula of crisply recorded, dramatic instrumentals with clear separation between Hank Marvin's vibrant lead and Bruce Welch's rhythm guitar. The tempo switched between jaunty foot-tappers and dreamy ballads often dependent on familiar film themes and catchy, evocative titles. After rowdy bassist Jet Harris left in 1962, the Shads readily became all round entertainers, appearing in panto, on variety shows and as Cliff's jolly film companions. Showbiz or not, The Shadows inspired the skiffle generation to plug in and long survived the subsequent Merseybeat onslaught.

EXTRAS: Three stereo mixes and a disc of 5/10 rare mono mixes.

MICK HOUGHTON

The Specialist

Metal



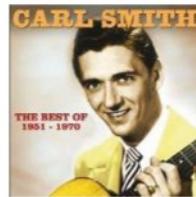
► Thanks to the patronage of Metallica and strong reviews for their 2012 double album **Yellow & Green** SAVANNAH, Georgia's **Baroness** stood on the brink of mainstream breakthrough last year – a breakthrough cruelly curtailed when the band's coach fell from a viaduct midway through their UK tour, resulting in injuries that would force drummer Allen Bickle and bassist Matt Maggioni to leave the band for good. A revived **Baroness** return to UK shores in October, and their return is marked by **Live At Maida Vale** RELAPSE 7/10, an EP-length recording that neatly captures the group's blend of broiling sludge riffs, porchfront contemplation and gruff songcraft reminiscent of a Southern-fried take on Metallica's '90s heyday (especially on "Take My Bones Away").

Baroness are but one of a generation of metal bands refining their heaviness by letting other quintessentially American sounds leak in. The second album by Richmond, Virginia's **Windhand, Soma** RELAPSE 9/10 has the feel of some late-'80s Sub Pop relic, gusty post-Sabbath doom shot through with a psychedelic grunginess that recalls early Screaming Trees.

Naturally expansive, they're comfortable sprawling out – see the solo-strewn 30-minute lumber of "Boleskin" – but are equally capable of dialling it right back, too; vocalist Dorthia Cottrell cuts a spectral presence on the desolate acid-folk of "Evergreen". Also notionally based in doom metal are Salt Lake City's **Subrosa**,



Last City Zero NEUROT 8/10 takes a leaf from the Swans book of misery and abjection, but its elegantly spun shadowplay of apocalyptic folk, pummelling industrial and end-times beat poetry seeks, and sometimes succeeds, in locating a beauty in decay. **LOUIS PATTISON**



CARL SMITH
The Best Of – 1951-1970

HUX

Career-spanning compilation from "The Country Gentleman"

8/10

Carl Smith retired in 1979 to raise horses, and his reputation dwindled until his admission to the Country Music Hall Of Fame in 2003. He died seven years later, but should be celebrated as a fine honky-tonk singer in the vein of Hank Williams and Ernest Tubb who – under the stewardship of London-born producer Don Law – steered country towards commercial paydirt, without diluting the music's emotional purity. Born on a farm in Maynardville, Tennessee, Smith made his first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry in 1950, and was voted 1952's No 1 Hillbilly in the magazine *Country Song Roundup*. In fact, he took country music away from its hillbilly image, dropping western gear in favour of a smart-casual look after a costume clash with Ernest Tubb. Musically, he kept it crisp and not too countrypolitan. He was still under Hank Williams' spell in 1951, at the time of his first No 1 single, the playfully romantic "Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way", but by 1955, with "There She Goes", he had found his own voice, rendering self-pity with cool assurance and a measure of wit as the plaintive steel guitar signalled emotional dissolution.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



THE SWIMMING POOL Q'S

The A&M Years: 1984-1986

BAR/NONE

9/10

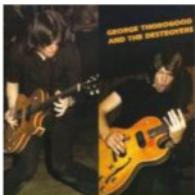
Misunderstood, lost-in-the-shuffle popsters rediscovered... finally

Odd band out in the 1980s Atlanta/Athens new-wave nexus that produced many iconic acts (B-52's, REM), The Swimming Pool Q's had trouble fitting in even in a sea of misfits. Two major-label stints (A&M/Capitol), high-profile tours and mountains of good press never got them into the larger conversation, really. But these two long-buried LPs are a revelation. Fired by singer-songwriter Jeff Calder and singer-extraordinaire Anne Richmond Boston, their A&M debut is an auspicious mix of pulsing rhythms, playful pop and hyper-literate folk/rock. Produced by legendary Zappa/Beach Boys confidant David Anderle, its jangly guitars, tumbling melodies and superb boy/girl vocals hinge on poetic visions of the South and the passing of time ("The Bells Ring"); think a new-wave Dixie-fried Fairport. *Blue Tomorrow*, the 1986 follow-up, was more ambitious sonically, but also more diffuse. Scattered songs, though – the soaring, majestic "Pretty On The Inside" and "Wreck Around", an ensemble tour de force, both featuring shiver-inducing, Sandy Denny-territory vocals by Boston – are monumental.

EXTRAS: Disc of rarities, including a fine

8/10 "country" demo of "The Bells Ring", a fourth disc featuring 13 video clips, plus rare photos and liners by journalist Geoffrey Himes.

LUKE TORN



7/10

GEORGE THOROGOOD & THE DESTROYERS
George Thorogood & The Destroyers/Move It On Over (reissue, 1977/78)
 ROUNDER



8/10

Early works from meat-and-potatoes blues-rockers

He's hardly an original. In fact he's almost strictly a copyist – a loud, sloppy, plugged-in copyist with a predilection for desultory vocals counterbalanced by an army of down-and-dirty guitar riffs. But in stripping down the works of icons like Diddley and Hooker, his super-simple, punked-up sound made virtually every white-boy blues player of the previous generation sound pretentious, even silly. A bone-crushing, eight-minute Hooker cover on Thorogood's debut, "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer", serves as a career manifesto, though the exhilarating roadhouse romp "Homesick Boy", a rare original, holds its own. Bits of the second record come off as passé now – Stevie Ray Vaughan subsequently owned "The Sky Is Crying"; but a relatively inexplicable few have ever deigned to graft sizzling guitar runs and a high-voltage R'n'B gallop onto anything in the Hank Williams catalogue, à la the irresistible "Move It On Over". Palate-cleansing music.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



8/10

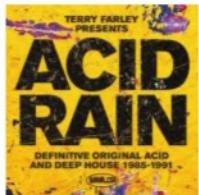
JOHNNY THUNDERS
Hurt Me (reissue, 1983)
 EASY ACTION

Disarming acoustic set from the late Dolls and Heartbreakers mainman

The tales of too much junkie business make for good copy, but Johnny Thunders was always so much more than just another drug casualty. His time in the New York Dolls, and with the Heartbreakers, made for some of the most gloriously stroppy teenage punker moves of the '70s; his first solo album, 1978's *So Alone*, was Thunders' love letter to girl groups and old-fashioned rock'n'roll. But *Hurt Me* is the real grail for Thunders fanatics, a disheveled set of acoustic songs that grab-bags from both his career – see, in particular, the rejected title track for the Dolls' *Too Much Too Soon* – and his record collection, with great covers of Bob Dylan, PF Sloan, and The Rolling Stones' "I'd Much Rather Be With The Boys". It's also the place to go if you need reminding that Thunders was a truly great, yet rather unheralded melodist; it sits very nicely alongside other deeply zoned-out singer-songwriter passes like Peter Laughner's *Take The Guitar Player For A Ride*.

EXTRAS: Great liner notes from Kris Needs, 8/10 and an extra disc of the album launch gig at Dingwalls. If you're quick, you can also pick up the limited live bootleg recording of the following night's show, *The Pipeline*.

JONDALE



9/10

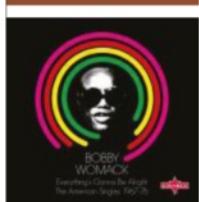
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Terry Farley Presents Acid Rain: Definitive Original Acid And Deep House 1985-1991
 HARMLESS

Exhaustive survey tracing roots of US dance music

Misty-eyed acid house compilations have been 10-a-penny since 1988's second summer of love, but few have approached the subject with the level of commitment displayed by veteran Boy's Own DJ Terry Farley on this colossal 5CD, 61-track appraisal of this evergreen genre. *Acid Rain* takes time – over seven hours, in fact, the length of a good night out – to join the dots between staples such as Mr Fingers' "Can You Feel It", DJ Pierre's "Box Energy" and Phuture's "We Are Phuture", and in doing so reveals the influence of synthpop, soul and disco on this primitive machine music, the house sound of Chicago. "Bad Boy" by Frankie Knuckles and Jamie Principle, for example, could be a Soft Cell number. What strikes you is how wild and uncontaminated these tracks are, how consistently crazy the output of labels like Trax and Hot Mix 5 was across the six fertile years covered here. Delirious filth such as Phuture's "Your Only Friend (Cocaine)" and Marcus Mixx's "Psychousic" were designed to drive dancers insane in clubs, and still do so today. To suggest there's too much to take in here would be to miss the point. Intense, pounding and repetitive, acid house is meant to overwhelm.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN



8/10

BOBBY WOMACK
Everything's Gonna Be Alright: The American Singles 1967-76
 CHARLY

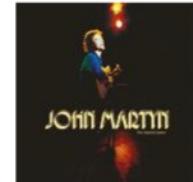
Ten years of 45s and flip sides

Already an industry veteran courtesy of his sibling group The Valentinos and touring with big-hitters Sam Cooke and Ray Charles, Womack faced an unforeseen problem when Minit Records signed him to make a solo album in '67 – he'd given virtually all his material to soul shouter Wilson Pickett. Plans for the long player were put on hold while Bobby began writing from scratch, and it took until his third single release, "What Is This", for the label to start reaping dividends from their new charge. Even then, however, the next few 45s forsook originals for inspired re-workings of standards ("Fly Me To The Moon", "I Left My Heart In San Francisco") and recent pop hits ("California Dreamin'"). What these proved was that Womack was one of the most innovative soul brothers on the block, with one foot in the classicism camp of his mentor Cooke and another attuned to the seismic shifts in the form, as much a musical adventurer as the ever-evolving Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye or Curtis Mayfield. And so it went (via Minit, Liberty and United Artists), Womack pushing envelopes with "The Preacher", "Woman's Gotta Have It", "Looking For A Love", constantly rewriting and updating the grammar of soul.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

COMING NEXT MONTH...



► A new album by **Paul McCartney** is always to be welcomed, and this autumn we are privileged to report that rather than a live recording, classical work or an album of

covers, his new release will be a collection of new rock songs. The album has been worked on with a number of successful young producers from **Mark Ronson** to **Paul Epworth**. From what we've heard so far, though, some of the best work has been done with the slightly less hip **Giles Martin**. Our audience with the material suggested "Beatles '67" was not an inappropriate reference.

Fans of British folk are well catered for by way of a new **Linda Thompson** album, **Won't Be Long Now**, her first since 2007's **Versatile Heart**, and recorded with (among other musicians) her ex-husband Richard ("like another session player," she says. "But a really good one.") and their children Kami, Muna and Teddy. Over in the Archive section, meanwhile, a substantial 18-disc **John Martyn** boxset, **The Island Years**, which collects his landmark albums, demos for the rejected album **The Apprentice** and also historic live performances, including one from The Hanging Lamp on May 8, 1972, the first occasion

Martyn played live with an Echoplex analogue delay – a sound that ultimately became his signature.

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Morrissey has a rather dismal time of his 25th anniversary, Casey Affleck heads up a high-quality indie drama, Hunt vs Lauda fight it out on the track, and the latest Irvine Welsh adaptation gets unsurprisingly seedy...

MORRISSEY 25: LIVE As 25th anniversaries go, Morrissey has had a pretty dismal time of it. Ongoing medical problems and tour cancellations – the most recent due to lack of funding – led him to note, rather glumly, “the future is suddenly absent”. It’s a miserable state of affairs for Morrissey – and perhaps reflecting that, all we are given for an anniversary present is a concert film recorded at the Hollywood High School in Los Angeles on March 2, 2013. Where are the treats in that? It’s interesting, of course, that an artist who is as conspicuously, so parochially English as Morrissey has been embraced so readily by the Americans – both north and south. “Viva Mexico!” he announces as he takes the stage. Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Davy Hulme anymore. Watching Morrissey now, I’m reminded of Simon Armitage’s description of him as looking like “a retired shire horse standing on its back legs”. Morrissey has constantly had his youth beamed back at him. The natural spread brought on by age – he’s 54 now – is inevitably reinforced whenever a picture of his youthful, Smiths-era self appears. Which is quite often these days. Not that the fans captured in James Russell’s film seem to care. An interlude, in which Morrissey offers audience members the microphone, is capped when a superfan called Julia intones liturgically into the microphone, “Morrissey, thank you for living and for singing so open-heartedly, bless you always.” Surely even Morrissey is above such flagrant self-indulgence? Ah. As a performer, at this stage in his career Morrissey has the craft and timing of a showbiz veteran. The setlist, however, is often patchy – a surprise, if you consider he has nine solo albums to choose from. Stodgy “Alma Matters” and “You’re The One For Me, Fatty” are hardly career highs. “November Spawned A Monster” and “Everyday Is Like Sunday” are both excellent on the other hand, but it’s worth noting the best material here – “Meat Is Murder”, “Still Ill” – was written while he was still in his twenties.

► **Ain’t Them Bodies Saints** finds Casey Affleck’s Bob Muldoon in prison, serving 25 years



Race for the prize:
Chris Hemsworth and
Daniel Brühl in *Rush*

for armed robbery and shooting a policeman. He writes to his girlfriend Ruth (Rooney Mara), the mother of a daughter he’s never met, promising, “someday I’ll touch your face and I’ll kiss you”. Much of director David Lowery’s film is about what happens to Ruth after Bob breaks out of jail and comes looking for her, and the complicated triangle that develops between Bob, Ruth and Patrick (Ben Foster), the well-meaning cop who got shot and has since taken a shine to Ruth. Set in Meridian, Texas in the 1970s, but grounded in an earlier sensibility that stretches back to the Depression, Lowery’s film – with its voiceover and lens flare – evokes easy comparisons to Terrence Malick. But this tale of estranged love is tighter and more accessible – more rooted in character and place – than Malick. Affleck and Mara are both excellent – Affleck’s voice cracks and drifts off as he finishes sentences, a stunted, semi-

literate man. “We did what we did and that’s who we are,” he says with simple logic. Particular props go to Keith Carradine, as Skerritt, Bob’s adoptive father and the owner of the town’s hardware store, whose motives for helping out Ruth while Bob’s in prison are ambiguous; Lowery has an infuriating way of holding back details, but it says much about Carradine’s performance that even at the film’s close he remains the most elusive character here.

“You fucked over a lot of people in your day,” he tells Bob.

“Then I got caught,” replies Bob.
“Not by them, you didn’t,” warns Skerritt.

► **Rush** arrives in the slipstream of *Senna*, the 2010 documentary about Brazilian Formula 1 champion, Ayrton Senna. *Senna* did solid business at the box office – \$11 million – and now

Reviewed this month...

MORRISSEY 25: LIVE
Director
James Russell
Starring Morrissey
Opens August 24
Certificate PG
6/10



AIN’T THEM BODIES SAINTS
Director
David Lowery
Starring
Casey Affleck
Opens Sept 6
Certificate 15
9/10



RUSH
Director
Ron Howard
Starring Chris
Hemsworth,
Daniel Brühl
Opens Sept 13
Certificate 15
7/10



LA GRANDE BELLEZZA
Director Paolo
Sorrentino
Starring
Toni Servillo
Opens Sept 6
Certificate 15
9/10



FILTH
Director
Jon S. Baird
Starring
James McAvoy,
Jamie Bell
Opens Sept 27
Certificate 18
6/10



director Ron Howard has taken on an earlier chapter in motor-racing history that offers its own share of manly, high-speed thrills: the on-track rivalry between James Hunt and Niki Lauda. Howard and screenwriter Peter Morgan previously collaborated on *Frost/Nixon* – another dramatic recreation, focusing on the public duel between two high-profile figures of very different temperaments. There's something of that going on here: the pivotal events in *Rush* take place during the 1976 Formula 1 season, one year before David Frost's television interviews with Richard Nixon.

Much as Frost was an affable showman with plenty of hustle, so James Hunt is a charming ladies' man with lashings of derring-do. His rival, Niki Lauda, is as unlikable as Nixon; although he lacks the former President's menace and presence, he is small and flinty-eyed with ratty front

teeth. As Hunt, Chris Hemsworth – Thor to you and me – gets to swagger around in a donkey jacket, being charming and having sex with air hostesses – “he's a good driver, but an immortal fuck” – while Daniel Brühl is presented as the more serious of the two men, a professional who wants to win races, not make friends. All of this

opens in England in 1973, when the two men first meet in Formula 3. The narrative exposition is high: the first 45 minutes is basically people telegraphing data about who they are and what they're going to do to the audience. “You're just a rookie! The only reason we took you on is because you paid us!” And so on. Thankfully, at no point does Lauda turn to Hunt and say, “You know, James, maybe we are not so different after all...”, although on occasion Peter Morgan's script teeters close. Howard shoots the race scenes brilliantly, though a little Tony Scott in terms of over-saturated colour and jump cuts, but it's an effective treatment, especially on the climactic Japanese Grand Prix, in the shadow of Mount Fuji in lethal weather conditions.

► **La Grande Bellezza** The last time we met Paolo Sorrentino in these pages it was for *This Must Be The Place* – the director's digressive excursion into a Wim Wenders-style road movie, with Sean Penn as an ageing rock star of the Robert Smith variety. *The Great Beauty* finds Sorrentino back in his native Italy, in the company of one of his key collaborators – actor Toni Servillo – for this magnificent piece of couture cinema, a contemporary take on *La Dolce Vita* or *The Great Gatsby*. Indeed, as Sorrentino's swooning opening shots of Rome in the early morning suddenly jump to a riotous Eurotrash party, cut to pumping dance music, you might wish it had been Sorrentino, rather than Baz Luhrmann, who had filmed F Scott Fitzgerald's novel. The ageing but still handsome Servillo plays Jep Gambardella, a once celebrated writer who has been distracted from his early promise by a decadent life in Rome's social whirl. Just as Fellini covered the seductive but pointless hedonism of Rome during the post-war era, so Sorrentino attempts a similar study of the city during the recent Berlusconi years. We learn Rome's overwhelming beauty masks a multitude of sins: nothing new, perhaps, but Sorrentino's film, shot in vignettes and flashback, aims high, and Servillo, as he contemplates whether his failures are his own doing or a symptom of Roman society in general, is at his peak.

► **Filth** is Irvine Welsh's take on *Bad Lieutenant* – and more so the Werner Herzog version than the Abel Ferrara. Based on Welsh's third novel, published in 1998, this adaptation finds James McAvoy playing corrupt policeman Bruce Robertson working a murder case in Edinburgh whose mental health unravels as he digs himself deeper into a mire of adultery, drink and “cocaine and chip suppers”. Looking uncannily like Gerard Butler, McAvoy seems happy to go the extra mile here – his cop is sociopathic, racist, misogynist and a chronic masturbator, too. The film's first

hour or so keeps itself to a seedy, sweaty variety of black comedy, with plenty of broad humour – in particular an interlude when McAvoy and Eddie Marsan, as a hapless friend, go on a three-day booze and drugs bender in Amsterdam. The final third, though,

pushes the narrative too far, as Robertson's breakdown becomes fully manifest. *Filth* very much wants to be a drop of the dark stuff – and it partly succeeds – but with a supporting cast including John Sessions, Jim Broadbent, Shirley Henderson and Jamie Bell, the vibe often strays a little close to a BAFTA free-for-all.

As James Hunt, Chris Hemsworth gets to swagger around in a donkey jacket, being charming and having sex with air hostesses

Also out...

ABOUT TIME

OPENS SEPTEMBER 4

Richard Curtis' latest – possibly last – is a time travel romcom. Bill Nighy plays Bill Nighy.

RIDDICK

OPENS SEPTEMBER 4

Soon to play a tree in a Marvel movie, Vin Diesel belatedly returns to the scene of his earliest triumph – the John Carpenter-ish *Pitch Black* – to blow things up.

THE STUART HALL PROJECT

OPENS SEPTEMBER 6

Unfortunately titled, perhaps, all the same this is a powerful portrait of the life and philosophy of the influential British theorist, Stuart Hall.

DEF LEPPARD VIVA HYSTERIA

OPENS SEPTEMBER 13

Bula Def Leppard, maybe? Concert film, shot during the band's 11-date run in Vegas, in which the British metallers play their *Hysteria* album in its entirety.

COLD COMES THE NIGHT

OPENS SEPTEMBER 20

Bryan Cranston, post-*Breaking Bad*, as a Russian criminal who kidnaps a motel owner when a bunch of cash goes missing.



DIANA

OPENS SEPTEMBER 20

Oliver Hirschbiegel, director of *Downfall*, directs this biopic of late-era Princess Diana with Naomi Watts on the run from the Windsors. Douglas Hodge is Paul Burrell.

HWINKING

OPENS SEPTEMBER 20

Much as you'd expect, a doc about Stephen Hawking, from filmmaker Stephen Finnigan, who charts the physicist's life.

AUSTENLAND

OPENS SEPTEMBER 27

An American obsessed with Jane Austen travels to a British resort in which the 1800s are lavishly recreated.

BLUE JASMINE

OPENS SEPTEMBER 27

This from Woody Allen's late-period career pick-up finds Cate Blanchett with her life coming apart; Alec Baldwin, Louis CK and Andrew Dice Clay (yes) co-star.

RUNNER RUNNER

OPENS SEPTEMBER 27

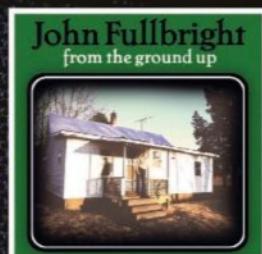
Crime drama, with Justin Timberlake's poker-obsessed student hooking up with Ben Affleck's dodgy entrepreneur.

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John Fullbright Album Out Now



Grammy Nominated Album

"Folkrock straight outta Okemah"
LA Times

"Oklahoma kid hits big time" Times

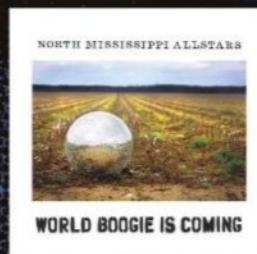
"...a remarkably accomplished record from a gifted up and coming storyteller." WXPN Philadelphia

<http://www.johnfullbrightmusic.com/>

Live

26/09	St. Bonaventure's - Bristol
27/09	The Purcell Room - LONDON
03/10	Caedmon Hall - Gateshead
04/10	Pleasance Theatre - Edinburgh
06/10	Whelans - Dublin
07/10	The Black Box - Belfast

North Mississippi Allstars Album Out Sept 30



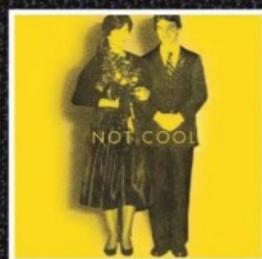
Recently crowned "Americana music luminaries" by NPR. Their career defining record, 'World Boogie is Coming' was produced by Luther & Cody at their own Zebra Ranch Studios in Coldwater, MS... one of the most intriguing acts to emerge from the loam of Southern blues and roots rock.

<http://www.nmallstars.com/>

Live

22/10	St Bonaventure's - Bristol
23/10	100 Club - LONDON
24/10	Oran Mor - Glasgow
25/10	Fibbers - York
26/10	Academy - Manchester

Tim Easton Album Out Sept 9



"a tightly wound gearbox of tunes that showcase his influences, including Doc Watson, Elmore James, and Keith Richards."

Rolling Stone praised Easton as having a "novelist's sense of humanity,"

<http://www.timeaston.com/>

Live

30/10	Dublin - Whelans
02/11	The Cluny2 - Newcastle
03/11	MFN Club - Nottingham
04/11	High Wycombe - Kingsmead
06/11	GreenNote - LONDON

Garland Jeffreys Album Out Sept 30



His recent acclaimed creative rebirth is followed with Truth Serum, with its confident blend of blues, pop, reggae and soul confirms that this unique and uncompromising American artist has more relevance than ever

"A revelation..." THE SUN

"This guy is brilliant..." THE SUNDAY TIMES

"8/10..." UNCUT

<http://garlandjeffreys.com/>

Live in October

Gregory Alan Isakov Album Out Aug 26



"strong, subtle, a lyrical genius,"

Gregory Alan Isakov has been traveling all his life. Songs that hone a masterful quality beyond his years tell a story of miles and landscapes, and the search for a sense of place.

<http://gregoryalanisakov.com/>

Jason Isbell Album Out Oct 7



"... one of the year's best in any genre." Rolling Stone

"One of America's thoroughbred songwriters" New York Times Magazine

"Few songwriters today write with Isbell's combination of lyrical economy, deep-seated empathy, and masterstroke axe melodies." Austin Chronicle

<http://www.jasonisbell.com/>

Live

18/11	Thekla - Bristol
20/11	The Garage - LONDON
21/11	Bodega - Nottingham
22/11	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut - Glasgow
24/11	Whelan's - Dublin
25/11	Ruby Lounge - Manchester

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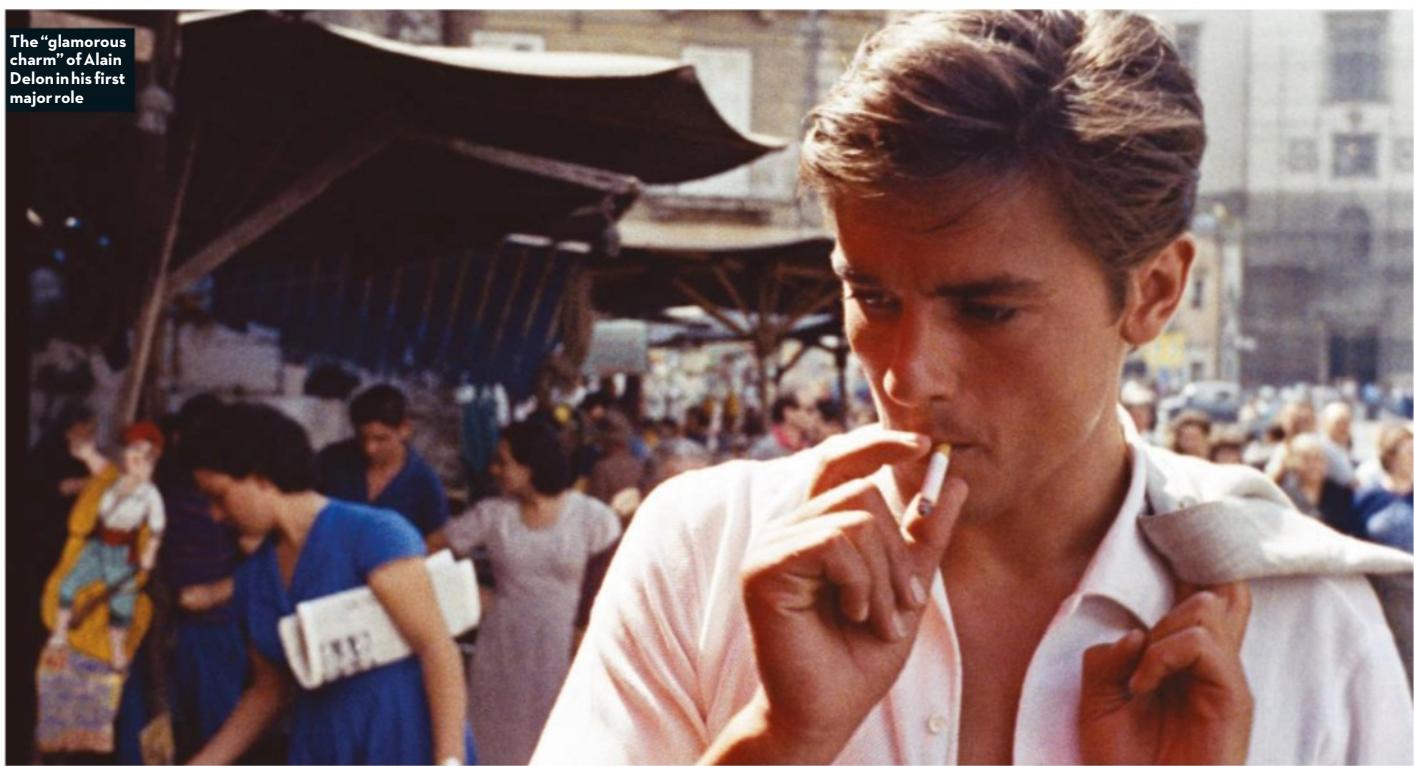
WorldMags.net

DVD & Blu-ray

SCORING:
10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

THIS MONTH: DUANE ALLMAN, JIMI HENDRIX, SPRING BREAKERS

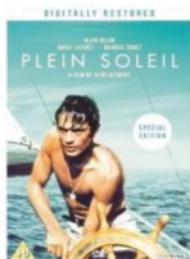
The "glamorous charm" of Alain Delon in his first major role



PLEIN SOLEIL

STUDIO CANAL DVD & BLU-RAY

Stylish New Wave thriller restored. By Jonathan Romney



8/10

INTRODUCED AS THE anti-hero of a 1955 novel, Patricia Highsmith's charming sociopath Tom Ripley has lasted the course as a figure of fascination for crime cinema. He's been played, to very varying effect, by Matt Damon (an all-American boy turned bad in Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr Ripley*), by Dennis Hopper (a feral cowboy in Wim Wenders' *The American Friend*), and as a needlepoint-loving aesthete by John Malkovich (in Liliana Cavani's underrated *Ripley's Game*). But the original screen Ripley was the playfully lethal incarnation created by a 25-year-old Alain Delon in René Clément's 1960 film *Plein Soleil*, sometimes known as *Purple Noon*.

Clément's opulent adaptation of Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley* begins with Delon's Tom hanging out uproariously in Rome with his old acquaintance Philippe Greenleaf (Maurice Ronet), a spoiled playboy whose parents have sent Ripley to fetch him back to the US (it's one of the film's more awkward premises that French actors are playing supposedly American characters).

Tom and Philippe are clearly both rotten eggs, and made for each other – they're seen on a night out using a blind man's cane to con a woman into a potential ménage à trois. They appear to have formed a quasi-homoerotic bond, to the despair of Philippe's put-upon girlfriend Marge (Marie Laforêt). Tensions between the men come to a head – knowingly provoked by the perverse Philippe –

while sailing on the latter's boat, and before long, Ripley is putting his dubious talents to work as forger, impersonator, master plotter and murderer.

Alfred Hitchcock – who adapted Highsmith's *Strangers On A Train* in 1951 – might have made darker, more fiendish work of this first Ripley tale, and indeed there is the occasional Hitchcockian touch to René Clément's version, such as the shot of a corpse's hand flopping idly over a banister. But Clément – a variable but supremely confident director in the French mainstream tradition – is after something more elegantly, lightly sinister. *Plein Soleil* (literally, 'full sun') is a very luminous film in which glossy Mediterranean local colour is as important as the drama itself; Henri Decaë's photography is coolly vibrant, especially in this restored version (was there ever a bluer sea on screen?). Zigzagging between Rome and southern Italy, the film accommodates elegant expat leisure and touristic glamour with impeccable casualness – a lifestyle film par excellence, *Plein Soleil* is as much about sleek shoes, white suits and hotel lobbies as it is the business of murder and guilt.

Plein Soleil is a curious film, at once old-fashioned and troublingly modern. Very 1950s American in feel, it has its stiff, archaic moments. In many ways, it belongs to the school of highly produced formal cinema that the French New Wave was beginning to displace (although Clément's co-writer Paul Gégauff would become a mainstay of the young movement, as longterm collaborator with Claude Chabrol). Yet there's also a stiff breeze of modernity blowing through *Plein Soleil*, partly in the outbursts of visual dynamism and quasi-documentary touches: for the former, an astonishingly intense shipboard sequence, and for the latter, the location shooting

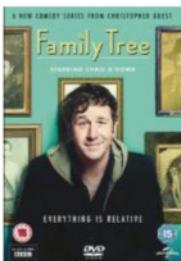
and sequences such as Ripley's relaxed stroll around a market. Nino Rota's melancholy score adds a further authentic Italian touch.

But what makes *Plein Soleil* most modern – and still refreshingly unsettling – is its depiction of amoral perversity, despite an ending that's rather more cautious and reassuring than Highsmith's original. Ronet's Philippe is mesmerisingly brutish and, we feel, deserves all he gets. But he's also an object of fascination to Ripley, and the ambivalent vibrations between the two men early on are quite startlingly intense.

What drives the film later, once Ripley properly takes over centre-stage, is the glamorous charm of Alain Delon, in a career-making role. His Ripley is restless, energetic, hungry and oddly boyish, his criminal activity a sort of game that he can't help getting himself into. Delon's raffish lightness of touch lends itself to such black-comedy notes as his guzzling a roast chicken a few steps away from a fresh corpse – and later, to the quietly torrid scenes in which he zooms in on Laforêt's fragile Marge. And, when it comes to making a sexually charged screen icon, there's no beating the scene in which a narcissistic Ripley kisses his own image in a mirror (shades of a famous image in Cocteau's *Orphée*, beloved of Smiths fans).

Delon's cub-like feral freshness is hypnotic, and dangerously photogenic. Certainly the actor looks at ease in Italian settings, which stood him in good stead in the '60s, when he was cast by Luchino Visconti in *Rocco And His Brothers* and *The Leopard*, and by Michelangelo Antonioni in *L'Eclisse*. Delon went on to be one of French cinema's major stars – his glacial assassin in Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samouraï* (1967) attains the heights of enigmatic killer cool – and he remains, arguably, the only real male sex symbol that the Gallic screen has ever produced (Depardieu? Seriously?). René Clément had a reputation among cinephiles as a stuffed shirt director, but *Plein Soleil* is a film in which he gives himself up to a certain Mediterranean hotness, to richly entertaining effect.

EXTRAS: Alain Delon interview; René Clément 8/10 documentary; restoration footage.



FAMILY TREE

UNIVERSAL

Chris O'Dowd leads in new HBO comedy from Spinal Tap's Guest

An origination of (and co-starring) Christopher Guest, *Family Tree* marks the continuation of the Spinal Tap man's interest in improvisation. It also continues his interest in England as a country of

faintly amusing little people, whose voice, eccentricities and sitcoms this ex-pat Baronet feels himself to have a pretty strong ear for. *Family Tree* is a nice idea (after a breakup, 30-year-old Tom finds meaning in a box of bequeathed bric-a-brac), but the running gags and stereotypes are as clichéd as anything Guest imagines was left behind in a 1970s sitcom.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON

6/10

JIMI HENDRIX: THE GUITAR HERO

UNIVERSAL

Yet another Hendrix doc

As the title suggests, this documentary from director Jon Brewer (*Legends Of The Canyon*) focuses on Hendrix's extraordinary musical prowess, rather than a biography or salacious tales of the guitarist's wild



5/10

life and early death. However, there's little in the way of insight or revelations Jimi fans might not already know. Archive performance clips are plentiful, but routinely cut short and frustratingly interrupted by talking head quotes from Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor and sundry others that rarely say more than "amazing", "incredible" or "blew everyone away".

EXTRAS: Archive footage, extended interviews, 6/10 photo gallery.

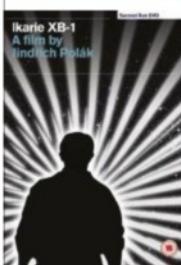
TERRY STAUNTON

IKARIE XB-1

SECOND RUN

Cult, visionary, Eastern Bloc sci-fi

It's cited as influencing Kubrick's 2001 – there's evidence in production design, sombre mood and mankind's place in the universe theme – but this 1963 Czechoslovakian production deserves



8/10

to be known on its own pioneering artistic merits. In sharp black and white, and to a radiophonic score, we follow the *Ikarie*'s anxious crew on their mission to find life deep out there, haunting interludes along the way, especially when they encounter a derelict spaceship. Originally released in the West in an edited, dubbed version complete with capitalist references, this restores the original trip magnificently.

EXTRAS: Booklet.

7/10 DAMIEN LOVE



PLAYS FOR BRITAIN

NETWORK

Vintage, ground-breaking ITV series on two discs

Although recent shows like *The Fall* and *Southcliffe* have proved to us that British TV drama can still deliver a punch, this six-episode ITV anthology

series from 1976 reminds us of a time where commissioning editors weren't afraid to risk new talent on prime time. Stephen Poliakoff and Howard Brenton are among the writers starting out in their careers. Not quite up to the gold standard of *Armchair Theatre*, but *Fast Hands* – an early collaboration from Roy Minton and Alan Clarke, pre-*Scum* – is worth catching.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER

7/10



SLEEPWALKER

BFI

'80s kitchen-sink horror oddity gets its dues

Another fascinating release in the BFI's *Flipside* line, this 1985 horror featurette from former Lindsay Anderson protégé Saxon Logan – what a name! – is fuelled by a murderous

culture-clash between well-heeled Richard and Angela and a socialist brother and sister. Weird stuff happens in an old house, some of it involving Mr Mackay from *Porridge*. Pitched somewhere between Mike Leigh and Dario Argento, with a terrifying final shot that recalls *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*, this is operating in a gear all of its own.

EXTRAS: Three shorts and a featurette.

7/10 MICHAEL BONNER

7/10



SPRING BREAKERS

UNIVERSAL PICTURES UK

Beach parties, bikinis and armed robbery

Harmony Korine's gleefully amoral yarn follows four college girls on their spring break. They finance their hedonistic trip through armed robbery and when they're arrested

bail is posted by gold-toothed rapper/drug dealer Alien (James Franco). One girl (Selena Gomez) bails out early on but the other bikini-clad temptresses are up for whatever mayhem Alien can throw their way. After the dinginess of *Gummo*, *Julien Donkey-Boy* et al, Korine relishes the cartoonish Day-Glo colours of Florida beach society.

EXTRAS: Audio commentary, behind-the-8/10 scenes, featurette, doc, trailer.

GEOFFREY MACNAB

9/10

to restore the original trip magnificently.

EXTRAS: Booklet.

7/10 DAMIEN LOVE

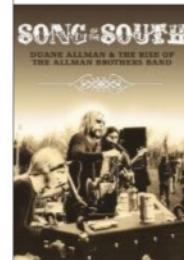


Southern saviours
the Allmans in May 1969 (Duane, third left)

SONG OF THE SOUTH

Duane Allman & The Rise Of The Allman Brothers

SEXY INTELLECTUAL



Ambitious framing of the short life and times of Duane Allman

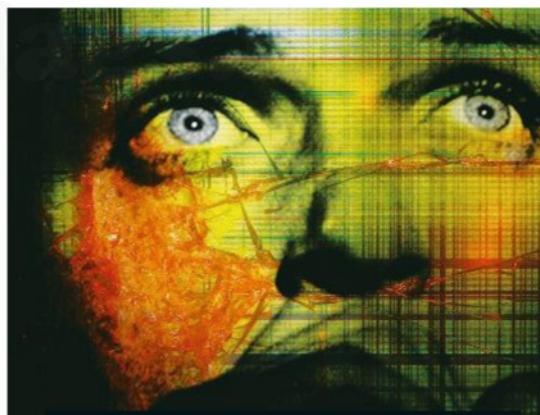
It is very difficult, when contemplating the death of any 24-year-old, not to dwell morbidly on what might have been, rather than giving thanks for what was. That difficulty is magnified when the 24-year-old in question was blessed with the sort of talent that descends two or three times in a generation, if that generation is lucky. When Duane Allman came off his motorcycle in Macon, Georgia, in October 1971, he'd already upended conventional thinking about what soul music could be – on FAME classics by Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge, among others – and laid the foundations of what would be known as Southern rock. He appeared capable of anything. But this terrific documentary aims for, and hits, a tone of celebration rather than mawkish mourning.

Song Of The South finds extra dimensions to Allman's story by thoughtfully setting his music against the context that spawned it – the post-war US South. For all that early rock'n'roll was, at heart, the affectionate bastardisation of black music by white Southerners, the region and its people were never exactly fashionable. Especially not by the time Allman was growing up in 1960s Florida, when a growing Civil Rights movement had (not altogether unreasonably) cast people who looked and talked like Jerry Lee Lewis as the bad guys. As noted by contributor Mark Kemp, this was a time when fashionable music meant Dylan jeering "Oxford Town". A similar jeremiad from Neil Young would, of course, inspire by way of retort from Lynyrd Skynyrd the definitive anthem of Southern rock, the genre which Allman was about to invent.

The story is told straightforwardly, assembled from the insights of pundits such as critic Robert Christgau and assorted Allmans friends and associates, including producers the Albert Brothers and Muscle Shoals compadres Jimmy Johnson and David Hood. The times they recall seem, mercifully, longer ago than they were: in the South of the 1960s, white boys who grew their hair and played with black musicians were not universally approved of. *Song Of The South*, though, is ultimately a story of transcendence: Allman's short life, and the music he made during it, both remain compelling and enticing demonstrations of what is possible.

EXTRAS: Interview with tour manager Willie Perkins, profile of Criteria Studios, contributor biographies. **ANDREW MUELLER**

GIGS



LIVE TRANSMISSION

JOY DIVISION REWORKED

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Royal Festival Hall



IRISH SEA SESSIONS

Monday 21 October

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Queen Elizabeth Hall



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Royal Festival Hall



TOUMANI DIABATÉ

Friday 22 November

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Royal Festival Hall



SINEAD O'CONNOR

THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME

Tuesday 10 December

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Royal Festival Hall

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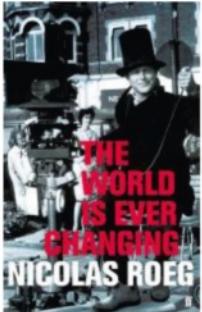
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UNCUT

Books



Donald Sutherland in Roeg's masterpiece of psychological horror, *Don't Look Now*



The World Is Ever Changing

Nicolas Roeg

FABER & FABER

8/10

film was 2007's *Puffball*. Arguably, there are few directors who are better placed, then, to consider the tremendous sea changes that have occurred in British cinema over the past six decades. *The World Is Ever Changing* is part autobiography, but also a means for Roeg to pass down his accumulated knowledge and experience.

At this point, it's worth mentioning that readers expecting fruity yarns about, say, David Bowie will be disappointed. *The World Is Ever Changing* – which takes its name from a line of dialogue in *The Man Who Fell To Earth* – comes without an index. This is not the kind of book where you can casually look up "Jagger, Mick" in the hope of finding some salacious gossip about his antics with Anita Pallenberg on the set of *Performance*: Roeg is very much a gentleman of the old school, and the dishing of dirt is not on his agenda. But nor is it especially scholarly. In its tone, *The World Is Ever Changing* is conversational and leisurely – a bit like a wonderfully digressive fireside chat with a kindly uncle – with Roeg referencing a myriad of sources,

NICOLAS ROEG is most widely known for the superlative run of films he made during the 1970s – including *Performance*, *Don't Look Now*, *The Man Who Fell To Earth* and *Bad Timing* – but as *The World Is Ever Changing* reveals, his interests are many and wide-ranging. In fact, the tendrils of Roeg's career stretch in both directions: back to his first job in 1950 through into the 21st Century. His most recent

from Abel Gance's *Napoleon* to the poetry of Auden, Poe and Housman, and the paintings of Bruegel and Velázquez, as he explains the thought processes and inspiration behind his own works. Meanwhile, very much in keeping with Roeg's films, *The World Is Ever Changing* doesn't have a chronologically structured narrative; instead, it's divided into chapters according to themes – "Image", "Sound", "Script", "Directing", "Actors" and so on.

Roeg's career began in the early 1950s, where his first job was at Marylebone Studios, making the tea and running errands, before progressing to a French dubbing studio run by Major De Lane Lea, a former British intelligence officer. Roeg's early credits – as an assistant camera operator or focus puller – consist of long-forgotten films like *Cosh Boy*, *Passport To Shame* and the brilliantly titled *Jazz Boat*. There are some smart, funny tales about encounters with Clark Gable and Jacob Epstein, and Roeg is sharp on the awkward transition from black and white to colour filming. Early in the book, he recounts a story about a little boy and his mother who, while watching a location shoot in London, asked Roeg if they could look through the camera. When the mother took her turn, she said to Roeg, "Oh, it's in colour is it?" Continues Roeg, "She was expecting the image to be in black and white. She hadn't associated the camera with seeing the world as she saw it with her own eyes. Black and white was what was most natural in films."

Roeg's big break came in 1962, when he was hired to work on *Lawrence Of Arabia* for David Lean. In Roeg's book, Lean cuts a marvellous, if rather distant, figure, smoking "rather elegant, long cigarettes", and who "didn't take kindly to any sort of structural or production suggestions". Roeg is witness as the film's second unit cinematographer André de Toth is dismissed from the shoot for proposing an alternative way to shoot the Tafas massacre; Roeg took on his duties (Roeg was later fired from *Doctor Zhivago* after

similarly making creative suggestions to Lean).

After *Lawrence*, Roeg worked as director of photography for Roger Corman, François Truffaut, Richard Lester and John Schlesinger, before his directorial debut with *Performance* in 1970. There is little here about Jagger – or indeed the film itself – though *Walkabout* and particularly *Don't Look Now* feature prominently in the book. Roeg keeps coming back to *Don't Look Now*, one of his greatest films, gradually unpeeling its layers. In one of the most informative chapters – "Mirrors" – Roeg sets out to explore the use of mirrors in his own films, but manages to take in Orson Welles' *The Lady From Shanghai* and *The Rokeby Venus* by Velázquez.

Most of all, Roeg's book feels like a collection of ideas – some of which he can tease into a thread, but at other times he ascribes to a kind of curious coincidence. He ponders on whether or not it's important that the wife of sculptor Antony Gormley is the daughter of the couple whose farmhouse features in the early scenes in *Don't Look Now*. "I don't know why I connect these odd stories to magical thought," he admits. But cumulatively, the impression here is of a restless and keen intellect, a man who – even in his 85th year – is willing to embrace new ideas. After all, why else would you call your autobiography *The World Is Ever Changing*? A chapter towards the end of the book, "Disjecta Membra", manages to weave together a curious meeting with a medium, who arrives unannounced on Roeg's doorstep looking for a "Reggie Nicholls", some thoughts on reincarnation, neuroscience and "the mysteries of the present-day world".

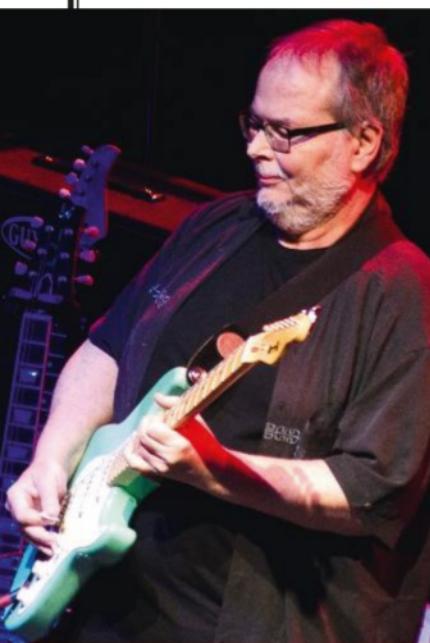
Roeg's book ends with a coda set in Venice, during the shoot for *Don't Look Now*. In the background of one shot, Roeg notices a poster for an old Charlie Chaplin movie – the title in Italian, *Uno Contro Tutti*. One Against All. "How true that turned out to be," he writes.

MICHAEL BONNER

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

Not so *untouchable* these days... Donald Fagen and, inset, Walter Becker, onstage at the Riverside Theater



STEELY DAN

RIVERSIDE THEATER, MILWAUKEE | JULY 28 | 2013

SETLIST

- 1 **Blueport**
- 2 **Your Gold Teeth**
- 3 **Aja**
- 4 **Hey Nineteen**
- 5 **Show Biz Kids**
- 6 **Green Earrings**
- 7 **Black Friday**
- 8 **Time Out Of Mind**
- 9 **Godwhacker**
- 10 **Monkey In Your Soul**
- 11 **Bodhisattva**
- 12 **Razor Boy**
- 13 **Deacon Blues**
- 14 **I Want To (Do Everything For You)**
- 15 **Josie**
- 16 **Peg**
- 17 **My Old School**
- 18 **Reelin' In The Years**
- ENCORE**
- 19 **Kid Charlemagne**
- 20 **Untouchables Theme**

“Grab a piece of something that you think is gonna last...”
Becker and Fagen revisit their formative years

FOR A BAND that will be a fixture on classic-rock radio until the very last classic-rock radio station is swallowed into the bowels of the Earth, Steely Dan aren't really regarded as an actual rock band. For many, the group's image is forever fixed in its post-*Royal Scam* period, when Donald Fagen and Walter Becker dropped any pretence of Steely Dan being a touring outfit and holed up with some of the world's finest studio musicians in order to create the most impeccably recorded pop music in the history of mankind. Records like *Aja* and *Gaucho* cinched Steely Dan's rep as thinking-man's fusion, with their lush soundscapes, jazzy arrangements and airport lounge-ready female backing vocals.

But lest it be forgotten: in the beginning, Steely Dan knew how to rock. OK, maybe “rock” is too strong a word: nobody is going to confuse

1972's *Can't Buy A Thrill* or '73's excellent *Countdown To Ecstasy* with Thin Lizzy. But relative to their work in the late '70s and beyond, Fagen and Becker were much more open in the early '70s to driving rhythms and stinging guitar solos that could out-shred the sharpest players from the Dan's hard-rock competition on FM radio. The punchiness and indelible grit of those early albums is an antidote to the languor with which Steely Dan became synonymous. While Fagen and Becker generally prefer to indulge their tasteful jazzbo sides in the current touring incarnation of Steely Dan, the muscular physicality of their initial work hasn't been completely subjugated, as evidenced by this show at the Riverside Theater in Milwaukee.

After spending most of the '70s turning out a steady stream of albums while mostly avoiding touring, Steely Dan have flipped the

script in recent years, hitting the road for annual tours in spite of having no new material to play (Steely Dan's last album was 2003's *Everything Must Go*; this summer's tour is the band's sixth jaunt since '06). Lately, Fagen and Becker have followed the format embraced by so many greying boomer artists, presenting live versions of classic albums in their entirety. The Steely Dan records that have received the most attention are the aforementioned *Aja* and *Gaucho* but, for this summer tour, Fagen and Becker have reached further back into their catalogue to reconnect a bit more with their rock'n'roll roots.

While the setlist draws plenty of material from *Aja* and *Gaucho* – including obvious crowd-pleasers like “Hey Nineteen”, “Josie”, “Deacon Blues” and “Peg” – Steely Dan also dig into the hardest charging tracks from its toughest album, *Countdown To Ecstasy*, including the rip-roaring opener “Bodhisattva” and the



Patti Smith

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, BRIGHTON, AUGUST 9, 2013

"An Evening Of Words And Music" Also: a genteel riot

RIIGHT FROM THE OUTSET, Patti Smith's 'Evening Of Words And Music' is a show with a split personality.

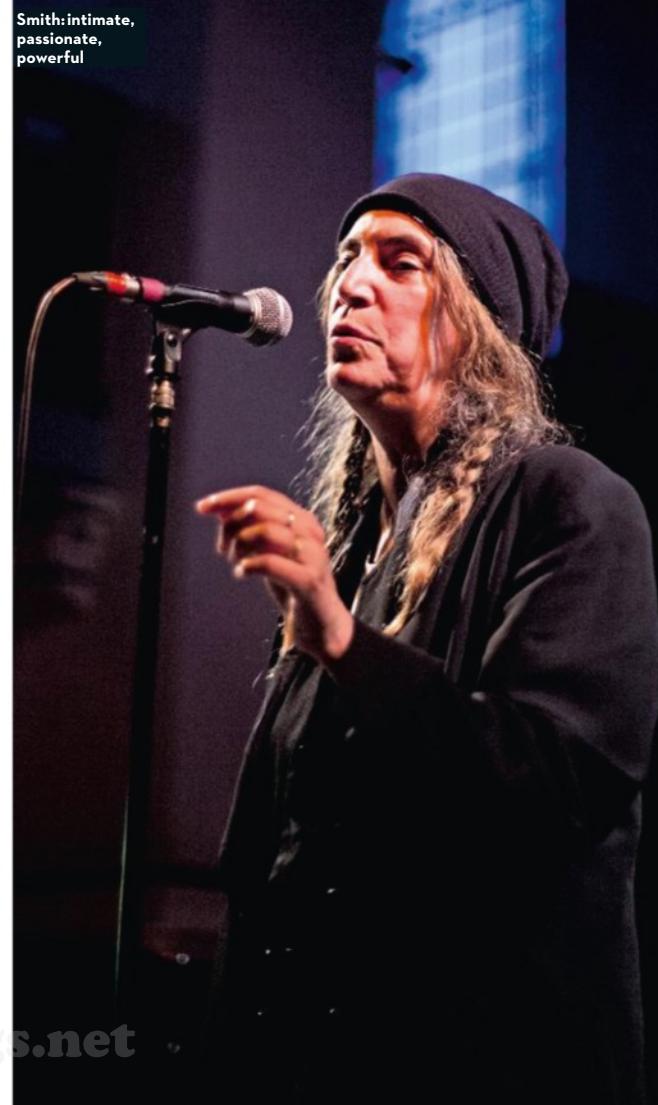
On the one hand, the besuited Smith, backed by Tony Shanahan on acoustic guitar, Patrick Wolf on violin or harp and *Double Fantasy* drummer Andy Newmark, enters straight into a cosy love-in with the Brighton audience. On the other, the intro to the first song is abruptly terminated when a single photographer steps near the stage for a shot. The poor sod scuttles away like a man caught pissing in the altar, while a silent hall glares accusingly.

It's the gentle Americana of the early part of the set, including a very pretty "Dancing Barefoot", that sets the tone for much of this intimate evening; the few 'words' consist entirely of Smith reading passages from her Robert Mapplethorpe memoir *Just Kids*. And there is something a little too cute about versions of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" and Lennon's "Beautiful Boy".

But then a passionate "Pissing In A River", carried by Shanahan's stormy piano and sung with astonishing power, completely turns the show on its head, bringing a long, somewhat awestruck ovation. And after a glorious "Because The Night", a three-song encore comprising a feral, evil "Banga", a hymnal version of Neil Young's "It's A Dream" and a triumphant, almost Velvets-esque "People Have The Power", sees the closest the sleepy St George's Church may ever get to a stage invasion, with the diminutive singer lost among pogoing revellers. At the age of 66, Smith has lost none of her punk-defining energy nor her ability to amaze; she's just become a little more Jekyll and Hyde about it.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

Smith: intimate, passionate, powerful



searing "My Old School", which draws the most enthusiastic response of the night. Both songs feature exemplary playing from drummer Keith Carlock (who previously brings down the house with his exquisite fills on the early concert highlight "Aja") and guitarist Jon Herington, who assumes ownership of nearly all of the concert's solos as Becker seems content to strum away in the shadows. The third rocker from *Ecstasy*, "Show Biz Kids", is treated more coolly by the band, with Fagen tempering the sarcasm of the lyrics with a slinky, soulful delivery over music that defangs the original recording's bite.

Herington winds up being the busiest man onstage, as Steely Dan spend the night investigating some of the more obscure and bluesy corners of its discography. Only on the apocalyptic "Black Friday" does Becker step in to deliver some standout six-string asides. Compared to Fagen, whose most extroverted gesture during the 130-minute performance is occasionally stepping out from behind his keyboard to play a wheezy melodica solo, Becker is relatively outgoing as the night progresses, even engaging in a mildly amusing monologue in the middle of "Hey Nineteen" that implores the middle-aged crowd to use this night as an opportunity to make love after the concert. Becker also takes over lead-vocal duties on the *Pretzel Logic* deep cut "Monkey In Your Soul", though his unremarkable singing only fortifies Fagen's position at the head of the band.

Overall, the twin heads of Steely Dan seem reasonably engaged in the night's

proceedings. Many of the band's biggest hits – "Do It Again", "Rikki Don't Lose That Number", "Dirty Work" – are passed over in favour of tracks only true-blue fans would recognise. Considering the ample exploration that Fagen and Becker have done of their back catalogue in their current guise as road dogs, it's no small feat to figure out a new way to present this music in a way that seems at all fresh. The introduction of covers into the mix also help to liven up the setlist, though renditions of Gerry Mulligan's "Blueport" and Nelson Riddle's "Untouchables Theme" – which opened and closed the show – don't even include the evening's stars.

It seems like Fagen and Becker were rushing out as soon as possible in order to get to the next night's gig (which features an identical setlist), and that only adds to the suspicion that Steely Dan are rehashing some well-worn material by rote at this point. But by the time the concert climaxes with "Reelin' In The Years" and "Kid Charlemagne", Fagen and Becker have capably served their own legacy. The band sounds great, the musicianship is never less than excellent, and the songs remain timeless packages of bright melody and lyrical subversion. But is it exciting? Not exactly. Fagen and Becker have by now made up for lost time on the touring circuit. Perhaps it's time to reinvigorate Steely Dan once again as a creative entity and regain the spark of old?

STEVEN HYDEN

DAN BURKE

Vest in Peace: Thom Yorke and Flea onstage at London's Roundhouse



ATOMS FOR PEACE

ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON | JULY 24 | 2013

The kings of limbs! Thom Yorke and friends get physical

AT 7PM ON the first night of Atoms For Peace's London residency, the Amok Drawing Room has already sold out of commemorative mugs. The Enterprise pub across the road from the Roundhouse has been rebranded in expressionist monochrome, and an upstairs room is upholstered in Stanley Donwood wallpaper, the better to sell exquisite £500 prints, T-shirts screenprinted while-you-wait, and a pointedly apocalyptic jigsaw puzzle.

There are 12" too, racks of DJ-friendly vinyl that assert, boldly, how Atoms For Peace are embedded in the culture of dance music. Radiohead shows might still attract a rump of gig-goers frustrated by the band's focus on their 21st-Century music, but these people do not, one suspects, come too close to Thom Yorke's extra-curricular

activities. Atoms For Peace represent the triumph of Yorke's latterday aesthetic, where his music can be finally untethered from the weight of Radiohead's '90s albums.

As "Before Your Very Eyes..." kicks into perpetual motion, then, the five members reveal themselves to be a kind of ornate pararhythmic unit, with Joey Waronker and Mauro Refosco plotting endless percussion circles around one another, and Flea finding elaborate basslines that carry melodic as well as rhythmic thrust. There's a weird parallel with Phil Lesh, at times, in the way Flea takes charge of the spaces where, in more orthodox rock bands, lead guitar and keyboard lines might sit more prominently.

Yorke's voice – all those epically wrought vowels – and guitar, and Nigel Godrich's contributions on

keyboards and guitar, mostly provide slow, ebbing melodies that slide over each other, ceding the foreground to a barrage of rhythmic intricacies. Global learning seems to have been channelled and accelerated into a relentless worldbeat throb, so "Before Your Very Eyes..." and "Stuck Together Pieces" are a sort of hyperdetailed Afrobeat – though it's unclear whether a washboard, which is what Refosco seems to be playing on the latter, ever got much of a workout at The Shrine.

Refosco's instrumental choices often provide a clue as to at least part of the influences on specific tracks. During "Unless", he wanders into Flea's performance space with a drum, for what might be a kind of batucada workout. For "The Clock", he has a stringed gourd which brisk internet research possibly identifies as a

SETLIST

- 1 Before Your Very Eyes...
- 2 Default
- 3 The Clock
- 4 Ingenue
- 5 Stuck Together Pieces
- 6 Unless
- 7 And It Rained All Night
- 8 Harrowdown Hill
- 9 Dropped
- 10 Cymbal Rush

ENCORE

- 11 The Hollow Earth
- 12 Feeling Pulled Apart By Horses
- 13 Rabbit In Your Headlights
- 14 Amok
- 15 Atoms For Peace
- 16 Black Swan

berimbau, another hint of his Brazilian roots.

"The Clock" is one of six songs from *The Eraser* that are treated to the full band upgrade, austere digitalia given a skittering new complexity. The transition works brilliantly, especially on "Cymbal Rush" and "Black Swan", and only "Harrowdown Hill" misfires slightly, overdriven to the point where Yorke's vocal line becomes frayed and strained, the whole construct a little too fragile to withstand the battering.

In general, though, Yorke's gauzy melodies prove a lot more robust than they first appear, and if the percussive assault visited upon the Satie-esque piano figures in "Cymbal Rush" seems on one level perverse – a calculated attempt to undermine Radiohead's sombre prettiness, perhaps – it's also immediately, pulverisingly effective.

Ironically, the most becalmed part of a frantic night comes when Yorke exhumes his first public negotiation with electronica; "Rabbit In Your Headlights", a 1998 DJ Shadow collaboration from Unkle's bloated *Psyence Fiction*. There are also two fine songs from the 2009 solo single, "The Hollow Earth" and "Feeling Pulled Apart By Horses", the latter recalling – probably thanks to the massive bassline of Flea, a noted post-punk/punk-funk scholar – 23 Skidoo.

Before they play "Feeling...", Yorke drolly claims they're going to make a "workout video" – not the most outlandish concept, actually, given how Yorke, with topknot, vest and taut demeanour, looks very much like a yoga instructor (a bikram specialist, maybe, given the venue temperature). His interpretive dancing has sometimes seemed an uncomfortable mixture of the self-conscious and the abandoned, but tonight it feels like an essential physical response to the orchestrated frenzy of the music.

It also reflects a sense that Atoms For Peace's music is exhilarating and liberating, while always following its own fastidious set of rules – even when those rules are being processed with a breakneck fluidity. At the centre of it all, Yorke has every reason to feel proud and fulfilled: a pan-global techno yogi, achieving transcendence through discipline.

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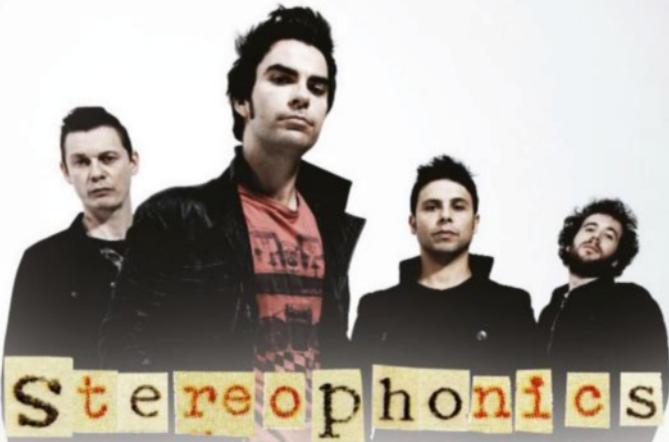
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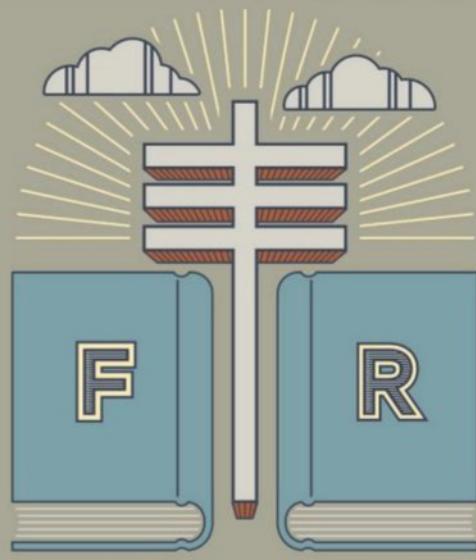
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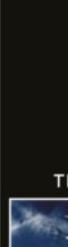
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- 11 CAMBRIDGE Junction 2
- 13 WINCHESTER Discovery Centre
- 14 EXETER Phoenix
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- 15 MANCHESTER The Deaf Institute
- 16 BIRMINGHAM Hare & Hounds
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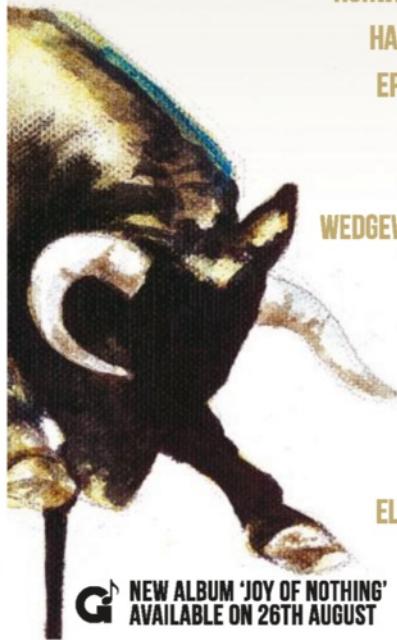
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- 19 NOV NORWICH ARTS CENTRE - NORWICH
- 21 NOV HARE & HOUNDS - BIRMINGHAM
- 22 NOV EPSTEIN THEATRE - LIVERPOOL
- 23 NOV GORILLA - MANCHESTER
- 24 NOV THE BODEGA - NOTTINGHAM
- 27 NOV WEDGEWOOD ROOMS - PORTSMOUTH
- 28 NOV KOKO - LONDON
- 29 NOV LEADMILL - SHEFFIELD
- 30 NOV NON ZERO'S - DUNDEE
- 02 DEC TUNNELS - ABERDEEN
- 03 DEC TOLLBOOTH - STIRLING
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19 EXETER GREAT HALL

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22 NORWICH UEA

23 WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL

25 MANCHESTER ACADEMY

26 GLASGOW BARROWLANDS

28 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY

29 LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY

31 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE

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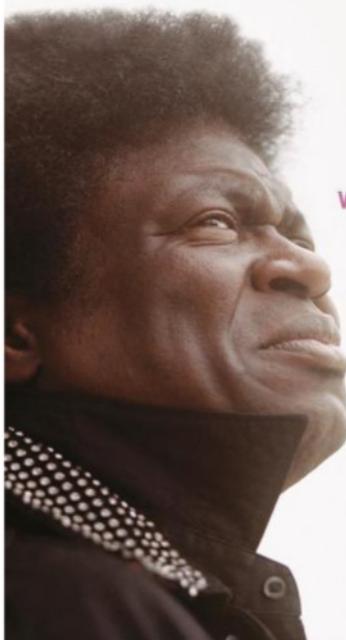
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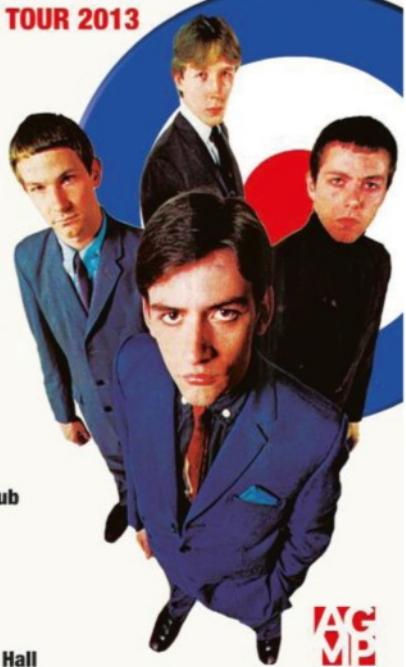


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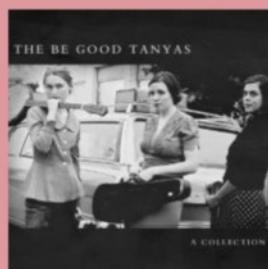
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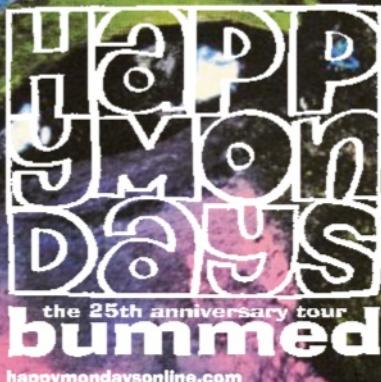
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Not Fade Away

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JJ CALE

Singer-songwriter, Tulsa Sound originator

1938-2013

THE STORY GOES that a dispirited JJ Cale was ready to quit music altogether until he chanced upon Eric Clapton's version of his song, "After Midnight". He was making ends meet with odd day jobs and occasional bar gigs when it popped up on his car radio at the back end of 1970. Cale had released it as a single four years earlier, only for it to sink without a ripple. But Clapton gave him hope. "When I heard it," Cale recalled later, "I said, 'Oh man, I might stay with the music business.'"

Encouraged by producer friend Audie Ashworth, he set about recording his first solo album in Tennessee with a bunch of session players that included David Briggs, Tim Drummond and Clapton's buddy, Carl Radle. Such was the lack of any budget that Cale often used a drum machine rather than the real thing. The result, 1972's *Naturally*, gave him a Top 40 hit with "Crazy Mama", some 14 years after his recording debut.

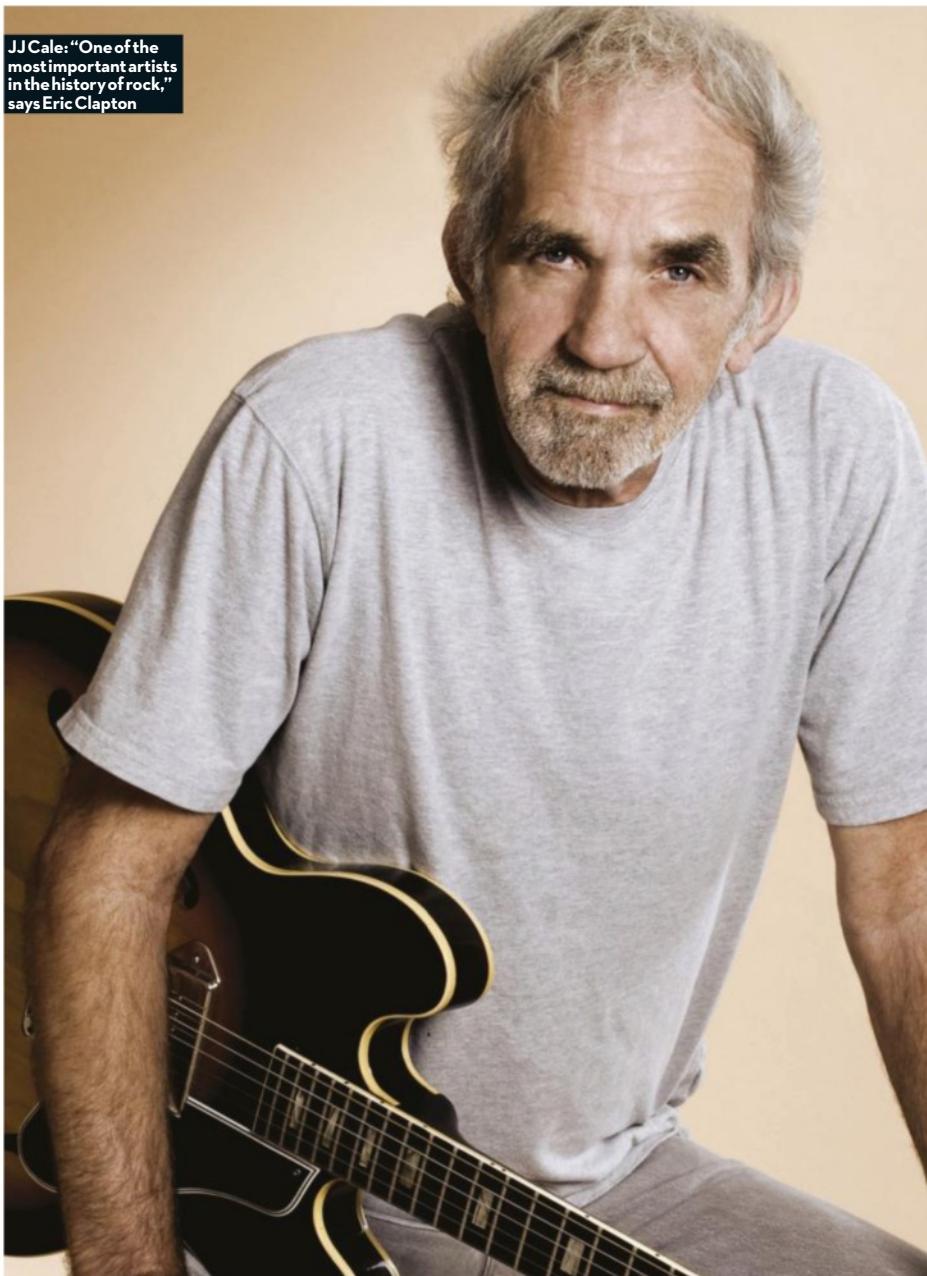
The album also set the template for the rest of his career: shuffling grooves, erudite finger-picked guitar and a murmuring husk of a voice that sired a new kind of minimalist country-blues. Ever mistrustful of the need to record more than one or two takes, Cale's intimate songs often carried the feel of porch demos. It was a discreet approach that offered a compelling alternative to the bluster and polish of much of the modern rock world.

He was to remain on Clapton's radar. The latter attributed his early '70s transition to a more low-key style of guitar playing to Cale, before going on to cover another of his compositions, "Cocaine", on 1977's *Slowhand*. "In my humble opinion," offered Clapton in his 2008 autobiography, "[Cale] is one of the most important artists in the history of rock, quietly representing the greatest asset his country has ever had."

He wasn't alone in his effusive fandom. Neil Young has cited Cale as "a huge influence." In the 2002 biography *Shakey*, the Canadian acknowledges Clapton's populist status as guitar god, but contends that "he can't play like JJ. JJ's the one who played all that shit first... Of all the players I ever heard, it's gotta be Hendrix and JJ Cale who are the best electric guitar players."

John Weldon Cale hailed from Oklahoma City but grew up in Tulsa. He cut a trio of rock'n'roll 45s in his early twenties, beginning with 1958's "Shock Hop", billed as Johnny Cale. By 1965 he'd fetched up in Nashville, where his recording debut as JJ Cale was "It's A Go Go Place". A year later he was in LA, supporting the likes of Love and The Doors at the Whisky, before teaming up with label owner Snuff Garrett to form short-

JJ Cale: "One of the most important artists in the history of rock," says Eric Clapton



lived psych-rock outfit The Leathercoated Minds. Their sole LP, *A Trip Down The Sunset Strip*, was a bizarre mix of originals and covers of The Byrds, The Count Five and Peter, Paul And Mary. Seemingly adrift, Cale soon headed home to Tulsa, recording a string of tunes for the Liberty label, among them "After Midnight".

After the commercial breakthrough of *Naturally*, he kept up a steady flow of albums throughout the '70s and into the early part of the next decade, chief among them *Okie*, *Troubadour* and *Grasshopper*. Despite his reclusive nature and aversion to promotional duties, Cale's profile was spiked by other artists queuing to cover his songs. The list included Jerry Garcia, Captain Beefheart, Tom Petty, Carlos Santana and

Johnny Cash, although perhaps the most celebrated was Lynyrd Skynyrd's 1974 version of "Call Me The Breeze".

His output began to slow up during the '90s, returning after an eight-year hiatus with 2004's well-received *To Tulsa And Back*. In 2006 he finally made a collaborative effort with Clapton, *The Road To Escondido*, which landed them a Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album.

Cale was always at pains to keep his public and private lives separate, revealing few personal details in the selective interviews he gave. "I'm not a showbiz kind of guy," he once said. "I had the passion to do music as much as anybody, but I never wanted to be the patsy upfront. And I still don't want to be famous."

JON BROOKES

Charlatans drummer

1968-2013

JON BROOKES, WHO has died of brain cancer aged 44, was one of just two original members still active in The Charlatans. He co-founded the band in his native West Midlands in 1988, alongside bassist Martin Blunt, guitar player Jon Day, keyboardist Rob Collins and frontman Baz Ketley. Driven by Collins' Hammond organ runs and the robust rhythm section of Blunt and drummer Brookes, the band hit on an R'n'B-style powered by both '60s soul and garage. The lineup was only truly defined when Ketley was replaced by Tim Burgess, who was in the audience when they supported The Stone Roses one night in Manchester.

The Charlatans' relocation to Burgess' adopted hometown of Northwich in Cheshire brought them closer to the emergent Madchester scene. They scored a Top 10 hit with infectious second single "The Only One I Know", while debut LP *Some Friendly* made No 1.

Their fortunes dipped over the next few years, though they restored their reputation with 1995's self-titled fourth album, an ebullient set that chimed with the cocky promise of the Britpop era and took them back to the top of the charts. *Tellin' Stories*, issued two years later, repeated the trick, fired by Top 3 hit, "One To Another". The song featured a crashing intro by Brookes, whose forceful, slippery rhythms gave The Charlatans much of their soulful groove. The band scored 11 more Top 40 hits up until 2006's "Blackened Blue Eyes".

In September 2010, while touring most recent album *Who We Touch*, Brookes collapsed onstage in Philadelphia. Diagnosed with a brain tumour, he had several operations and courses of chemotherapy, returning to action in 2011. He suffered a relapse last September and was operated on again this July. A statement from the band read: "Jon was a brilliant drummer, an inspiration, a founding member of The Charlatans, part of our family and a friend to everyone in and around the band. Losing someone who was always so full of life is a tragedy that will be shared by so many."



Jon Brookes performing at Guilfest on July 11, 2009

GEORGE DUKE

Keyboardist, composer

1946-2013

AS KEYBOARDIST, COMPOSER, producer and vocalist, George Duke's plurality served him well throughout a career that spanned nearly 50 years. He started out as a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory in 1967, experimenting in jazz fusion and issuing collaborative LP *The Jean-Luc Ponty Experience With The George Duke Trio* two years later. But it was Frank Zappa, for whom he played on over a dozen albums throughout the '70s, who suggested he specialise in one instrument. "He told me one day that I should play synthesisers," Duke recalled. "It was as simple as that!" His subsequent dexterity on the ARP Odyssey resulted in a crossover to funk and R&B. Aside from featuring on LPs by Miles Davis and Al Jarreau, he played with George Clinton and was sessioneer on Michael Jackson's 1979 mega-seller, *Off The Wall*. One of his best-known works, *A Brazilian Love Affair*, with singers Milton Nascimento and Flora Purim, also landed that year. In 1984 he produced Deniece Williams' international chart-

topper, "Let's Hear It For The Boy", while his solo catalogue was later sampled by artists like Ice Cube, Kanye West and MF Doom. The most high-profile example was Daft Punk, who borrowed "I Love You More" for 2001's "Digital Love".

TIM WRIGHT

Pere Ubu and DNA bassist

1952-2013

BASSIST TIM WRIGHT began as a roadie for Cleveland avant-punks Rocket From The Tombs, before joining frontman David Thomas in Pere Ubu when the group splintered in 1975. He remained there for three years, playing on seminal early 45s like "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" and "Final Solution", as well as two songs from 1978 debut *The Modern Dance*: the title track and "Sentimental Journey". That year he quit the band, relocated to New York and hooked up with Arto Lindsay in no-wave noiseniks DNA. Wright's arrival signalled a change in their sound. Having replaced Robin Crutchfield, a keyboardist, his angular basslines added a foreboding air of disquiet to Lindsay's abrasive guitar and drummer Ikue Mori's free jazz rhythms. They subsequently

proved a key influence on the likes of Sonic Youth and Blonde Redhead, who took their name from one of the songs on 1981 EP "A Taste Of DNA". The group broke up a year later, though not before Wright featured on Brian Eno And David Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, credited as co-arranger on "America Is Waiting". He also cut two solo LPs, *Survival* (1994) and 2008's *Beyond Your Back Door*.

COWBOY JACK CLEMENT

Country producer/songwriter

1931-2013

'COWBOY' JACK CLEMENT was an enabler as much as he was a

successful producer, songwriter, and arranger. Protégé-ofsorts Kris Kristofferson cited him as the reason he decided to quit the military and try his luck in Nashville in the '60s. By then, Clement was in-house producer at RCA, where he personally oversaw the rise of country's first black superstar, Charley Pride. It was an association that spanned 13 albums through to the early '70s. Prior to RCA, Clement had been a major figure at Sam Phillips' Sun Records, where he produced Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis and the legendary Million Dollar Quartet session of Lewis, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash. He wrote two early Cash staples, "Guess Things Happen That Way" and "Ballad Of A Teenage Queen", later providing the distinctive horn arrangement on "Ring Of Fire". Another of his formative charges was George Jones, encouraging him to cut Dickey Lee's "She Thinks I Still Care". The song gave Jones a huge country hit in 1962. Clement also helmed Waylon Jennings' 1975 opus *Dreaming My Dreams*, a key moment in the burgeoning Outlaw Movement, and returned to Sun Studios in 1987 to co-produce three tunes on U2's *Rattle And Hum*.



Clement playing Nashville's Renaissance Hotel, August 23, 2009

OBITUARIES

MICK FARREN

Deviants frontman, punk provocateur, author

1943-2013

FEW WOULD ARGUE with Mick Farren's own assertion that he was a lousy singer, but "an excellent rock star". He led anarcho-punks The Deviants through the latter half of the '60s, and wrote lyrics for Hawkwind, Motörhead and Wayne Kramer, but his real vocation was that of a provocateur, a cultural commentator and activist with a blazing mind, razor wit and keen sense of egalitarianism.

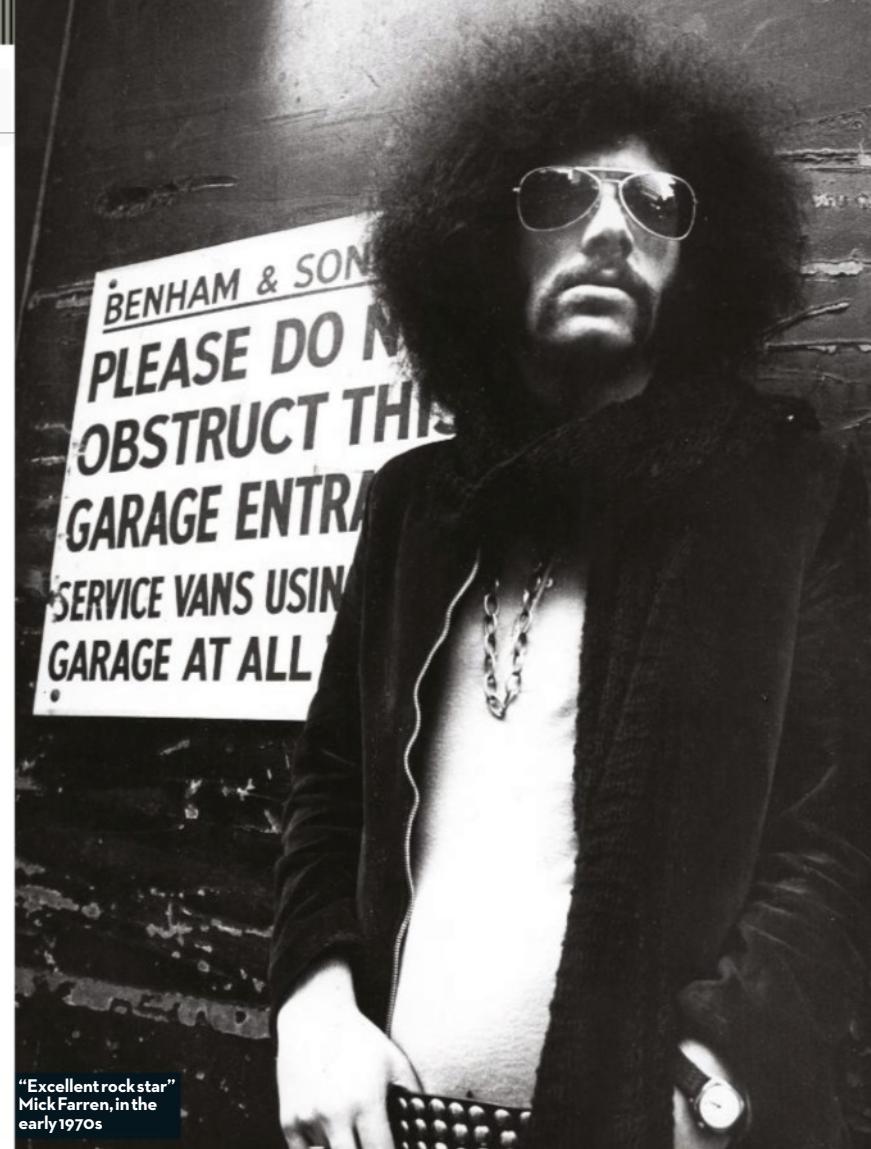
He founded the British arm of social radicals the White Panthers and in July 1970 co-created alternative rock festival Phun City, protesting against what he saw as the commercial appropriation of the counterculture. A month later he spearheaded an assault on the Isle Of Wight festival, tearing down fences and setting up encampments that allowed those without tickets to see the bands. He later likened the event to "a psychedelic concentration camp". That same year saw Farren and friends gatecrash David Frost's live TV show during an interview with hippy agitator Jerry Rubin.

In 1971, while editor of free press bible *International Times*, he successfully defended himself in court against obscenity charges brought against his underground comic *Nasty Tales*. By 1974 he'd joined the *NME*, where he began fashioning the outlandish 'Thrills' section as "a cross between *The Daily Mirror* and *National Enquirer*".

Two summers later, *NME* published Farren's landmark piece, 'The Titanic Sails At Dawn', a rallying cry against the stagnancy of the rock scene. He argued for the reclamation of "a vibrant, vital music that from its very roots has always been a burst of colour and excitement against a background of dullness, hardship or frustration." With punk about to explode, it was highly prescient.

Born in Cheltenham, Farren became intoxicated with the bohemia of '60s Notting Hill after initially moving to London to study art at St Martin's. He was briefly a doorman at the UFO Club, before forming The Deviants (originally known as The Social Deviants) with a loose-knit band of brothers that included Paul Rudolph and Duncan Sanderson. The best of the three albums they recorded from 1967 to '69 was their self-titled send-off, which tapped into the acerbic misrule of Frank Zappa and The Fugs.

After the band split, Farren issued 1970 solo LP *Mona, The Carnivorous Circus*, which came with an "approval patch" from the Hells Angels. He occasionally returned to the studio over the following decade, most notably for 1978's *Vampires Stole My Lunch Money*, whose guests included fellow *NME* scribe Chrissie Hynde and Dr Feelgood's Wilko Johnson. He and Lemmy also co-wrote Hawkwind's "Lost Johnny", before reuniting for



"Excellent rock star"
Mick Farren, in the
early 1970s

Motorhead tunes "Keep Us On The Road" and "Damage Case".

In addition, Farren built a reputation as a prolific author. His myriad books included studies of hero Elvis Presley, sci-fi fantasias and a series of vampire novels centred around millennium-old anti-hero Victor Renquist. In later years he suffered from severe emphysema and, against doctor's orders, headed up a revamped lineup of The Deviants. He died after collapsing onstage at London's Borderline. "He loved performing," said longtime friend Wayne Kramer. "He couldn't have written a better end for himself."

WALTER DE MARIA

Proto-Velvets drummer, sculptor

1935-2013

WALTER DE MARIA'S CAREER could've gone one of two ways. Before he devoted himself to becoming one of America's most celebrated modernist sculptors, he was drummer in The Primitives, the New York group founded by Lou Reed and John Cale in 1965 as a precursor to The Velvet Underground. "This was six months before they met Andy Warhol," De Maria told the Smithsonian Institution in 1972. "It was a great band, the first band to have any drug lyrics and the first to have heavy electronic feedback." Yet De Maria, who also played in experimental combo The Druds and Henry Flynt's avant-garde troupe The Insurrectionists,

was ultimately caught between being an artist or musician: "I said, 'Do I want to go to rehearsal every day and every night, you know, take all these drugs? Do I really just keep playing these rhythms, is that going to be enough?' That was really a painful decision." He was originally replaced by Reed's college classmate Sterling Morrison on guitar, before Angus MacLise took over as percussionist prior to the arrival of Mo Tucker in November '65.

EYDIE GORMÉ

American pop vocalist

1928-2013

A 1953 RESIDENCY on US TV's *The Tonight Show With Steve Allen* proved a pivotal time in Eydie Gormé's life. Not only did it launch her career on a nationwide scale, it

also marked the occasion when she met future husband and longtime duet partner, Steve Lawrence, then a young cast member. The duo's sophisticated and resolutely old-school approach, donning evening attire to perform classics by Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Rodgers & Hammerstein, served them well over the next five decades. They picked up a Grammy as best pop duo in 1960 and an Emmy for late '70s variety show, *Steve & Eydie Celebrate Irving Berlin*. Gormé's biggest solo success came in the shape of Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann's "Blame It On The Bossa Nova", which she took into the Billboard Top 10 in March 1963. Outside of her homeland, she was especially popular in Spanish-speaking territories through songs like "Amor". She continued to perform until 2009.

MIKE SHIPLEY

Hard rock producer/engineer

1956-2013

"NOTHING GOT PAST him if it wasn't up to scratch," said Def Leppard's Joe Elliott in tribute to producer-engineer Mike Shipley. "From *High 'n' Dry* in 1981 to the last thing we did together, 1993's *Two Steps Behind*, he was a joy to work with." Shipley became synonymous with metal and hard rock – recording Aerosmith, Van Halen, The Scorpions, Ratt and Whitesnake – but the Australian's CV was nothing if not eclectic. He began on sessions for The Damned and the Sex Pistols, before heading to LA in 1984. Aside from working with Devo, Starship and Shania Twain, he recently won a Grammy for Alison Krauss & Union Station's *Paper Airplane*. ROB HUGHES



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THE TRUTH ABOUT SUGAR MAN?

I enjoyed the recent article on Rodriguez in Take 194, but the statement that his albums "went on to provide the soundtrack for the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa" is hardly accurate. Sure enough, in the 1970s Rodriguez's music was ubiquitous, as much part of the South African landscape as "sunshine and Chevrolet" (to quote Dan Roodt), but so was Neil Diamond's "Hot August Night", and he's hardly ever hailed as an anti-Apartheid hero. *Cold Fact* was available for decades at every CNA (Central News Agency) branch in every town – usually in the bargain bin, and often offered as a "twofer" with a Peter Sarstedt compilation – so it's hardly surprising that many (white) South African households owned a copy. However, it's doubtful whether many people who bought it were actively involved in the anti-Apartheid struggle.

The Censorship Board sabotaged the careers of songwriters like Roger Lucey, but Rodriguez was never considered a threat or even worthy of investigation. It's true that the anti-establishment message resonated with many listeners, but maybe lyrics like "I wonder how many times you've had sex/And I wonder do you know who'll be next" were more appealing, fuelling the imaginations of sexually repressed white South Africans. Lastly, another thing that doesn't ring true in *Searching For Sugar Man* is Stephen Segerman relating how difficult it was for him to find any information about Rodriguez, and analysing the lyric sheet for clues as to where he's from. However, the name of the studio where it was produced appears at the end of the lyric sheet... Nevertheless, I'm glad the story of "Rodriguez and the South African connection" got the big-screen treatment such a story deserves, and that Rodriguez is tasting success at last. His tales of "inner city blues" belong alongside Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* and Curtis Mayfield's *There's No Place Like America Today*. Let's hope he makes another great album. If not, the small canon of *Cold Fact* and *Coming From Reality* have already established his greatness.

**JG van der Westhuizen,
Windhoek, Namibia**



CRAZY HORSE NIGHTS

In his review of Neil Young and Crazy Horse's London show (Take 195), John Mulvey draws several ill-informed conclusions about the audience at the preceding concert in Dublin. Had Mr Mulvey looked beyond Kevin Courtney's fairly dire review in *The Irish Times* for source material, he might have discovered that (Courtney's personal issues with the show aside) the vast majority of complaints made by audience members during and following the Dublin concert were in fact valid ones. Unlike most venues chosen for the Alchemy tour, the RDS in Dublin is outdoors. The day of the show was very breezy with the sound being blown back towards the stage. Despite this, there were no speaker towers anywhere beyond the sound desk on the pitch, so large sections of the audience in the stands experienced extremely poor sound throughout the show and this was the most common complaint. Further, unlike the London show the reviewer attended, there were no big screens in Dublin so many attendees could neither hear nor see the show. Also, the "giant fake amps" Mulvey deemed so integral to the spectacle in London were absent in Dublin, as was the entire Alchemy set – no backdrop here, and no "scurrying scientists". Thus Mulvey's assertion that "Young works methodically

within the fixed parameters of each project", cannot be applied to the Dublin show given that the iconic stage set of the Rust Trilogy (as Young calls the Rust Never Sleeps, Weld and Alchemy tours) was left on the trucks. The language Mulvey uses in his piece to describe the Dublin audience is as risible as it is inaccurate. The attendees in Dublin were no more "bewildered" than those in any other city, there were simply more unhappy punters as a result of the issues described above. His claim that a future acoustic project from Young would be "Dublin-pleasing" is careless journalism given that Neil Young and Crazy Horse have played to a rapturous reception in Dublin several times in the past. I buy *Uncut* over other music magazines because of the very detailed research that obviously goes into your excellent articles (Graeme Thomson's piece on The Band in the same issue being a prime example). Sadly, John Mulvey's article exhibits a notable dip in *Uncut*'s generally peerless research standards.

Daniel Conneally, Dublin, Ireland

RIP JJ CALE

It's 1973 and I'd recently moved to Cambridge from London to study at CCAT, taking my box of albums and the hope of sharing my love of *Henry The Human Fly* and *The North Star Grassman And The Ravens* with

anyone who showed an interest. However I was unprepared when a new college friend, Serena Mason, played me *Naturally* by JJ Cale. No name on the front, voice and guitar way down in the mix, musicians playing with a rare empathy for the blues of the Tulsa man. Over the years I gladly purchased the albums with the minimalist titles, *Really*, *Okie*, *Troubadour*, *5*, *Grasshopper*... not a word or note wasted.

I never got to see him live, but his catalogue and whole persona stands testament to a wonderful musician who stood outside the mainstream and played it as it was.

So thanks Serena, and rest in peace JJ, with a warm wind keeping you one step ahead of the blues.

Gregor Alvey, via email

A HEATED DEBATE

Great to see a Canned Heat article at last. But one of your sources is unreliable to say the least. Skip Taylor has been peddling the same old lies about Alan Wilson's death for over 40 years now and he is still at it I see. In the third edition of his book, *Fito de la Parra* now distances himself from Taylor's nonsense. Firstly it was Bob Hite's wife Verlie who found Alan's body the next day. There was a big party at Bob's house the night before and with a plane trip to Europe next day, Alan went off for some sleep with the aid of some reds. He did not take all he

WIN!

CROSSWORD



...one of five sets of
The Clash's first five
albums remastered...

had. There was no alcohol in his system. There was no empty bottle of gin or empty bottle of Seconal. The official verdict was accidental overdose. Skip was not there. Alan's body was identified by his father Jack and his son-in-law. Again Skip was absent. Perhaps in future Skip will give away a free pinch of salt with every interview given.

Terry Andrews, via email

SUPER MAN

I just watched the hilarious third season of *United States Of Tara*. Tara was boxing up old vinyl, and I thought my eyes were deceiving me, so I paused the show, and sure enough, she was holding a copy of *The Welsh Connection* by Man. When I was a young bloke in England in 1983 on my overseas travels, I was fortunate enough to catch them at the Marquee. What a buzz, and what a show. I even managed to get backstage to meet them, and get them to sign their names. What a great bunch of guys. I was a bit under the weather and in my state I knocked over the late, great guitarist Micky Jones' rum and coke. Humiliated or what! I offered to replace it, but they wouldn't have it. They just carried on signing for me and laughing. It's a bit blurry but I believe when they brought a replacement for Micky, they even brought one for a poor, drunken kiwi!

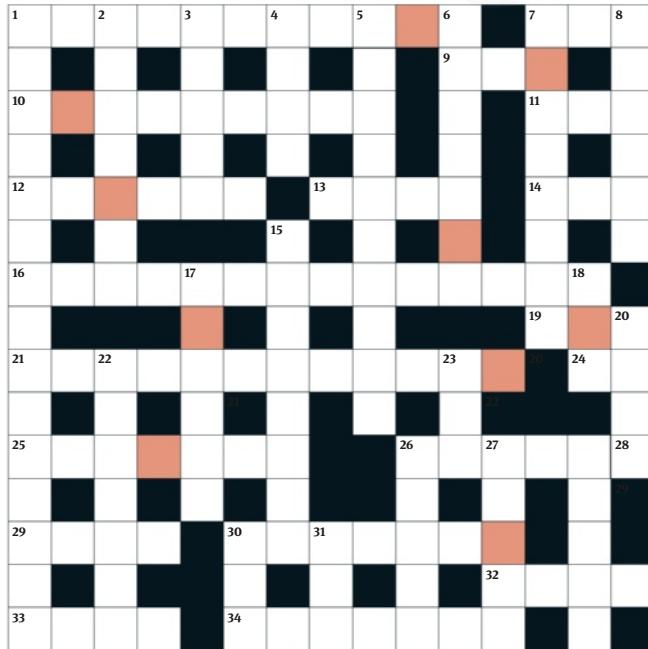
Andrew Harvey, Auckland

THESE 50 YEARS

I've been reading the music press for 50 years now and have lost interest in much of it along the way. But I have to say that since subscribing to *Uncut* just over a year ago, after having read it on and off over the years, it is absolutely at the top of its game. Take 195 with its 11-page extravaganza on The Band was excellent – apart from the omission of their last album, *Islands*, and the admittedly cobbled-together *Live At Watkins Glen* from the list.

Also, Neil Young at the O2, was a show I attended, and enjoyed, with some reservations. The false endings got a bit tiresome. Reading the Stones at Hyde Park piece was bittersweet for me as my late wife was there – she would have loved the article! Good to see Richard Williams back and writing on music again. I've been reading his stuff since we were both in our twenties (I'm 63 now!). Keep it up, perhaps a few jazz reviews appropriate to the *Uncut* readership might be a good addition? My albums of the year so far, incidentally, are *Quercus* by June Tabor, Iain Ballamy and Huw Warren and Leah Kardos' *Machines*.

Stewart Tray, Manchester



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* October 2013 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: September 24, 2013. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Edward Sharpe And The Magnetic Zeros are 'Here' but started off down under (2-4)
- 7+26A Down under band who were "Down Under" (3-2)
- 9 Solo album from Grateful Dead's Bob Weir included in Facebook (3)
- 10 Scottish singer-songwriter who played at the very first Glastonbury in 1970 (2-7)
- 11 (See 13 across)
- 12 Kings Of Leon are waiting by the phone for some work to come (2-4)
- 13+11A Everything in my possession? Just this one single by Newton Faulkner (3-1)
- 14 Heavy metal frontman involved in Radiohead (3)
- 16 "The _____ are in my mind, they guide me back to you", Renaissance (8-6)
- 19 A bit of ketchup... that's a bit of The Wonder Stuff (3)
- 21 (See 6 down)
- 24 Albums by Eloy and Utopia named after ancient Egyptian sun-god (2)
- 25 The O2 attempts to include The Cure's performance on album (7)
- 26 (See 7 across)
- 29 It's a really long story, but anyway it ends up as an album by Sharon Van Etten (4)
- 30+20D Upset at April Kerr for bringing along a Beth Orton album (7-4)
- 32 "There is a house in New Orleans they call the rising sun/ And it's been the _____ of many a poor boy" (4)
- 33 Hounds The Who to perform an old number (4)
- 34 CMorley somehow becomes singer with doo-wop group The Flamingos (7)

ANSWERS: TAKE 195

Rouse, 24 Day, 25 Yield, 32 Hotel, 34 Lynch, 35 No Hope, 36 As.

ACROSS

- 1 Like Clockwork, 8 Up
- Around The Bend, 10+22D
- All The Best, 11 My Guy, 14 Power, 15 Accelerate, 19 It's Me, 20 Moretti, 21 Roth, 23

DOWN

- 1 Laura Palmer, 2 Krall, 4+29A Oh No Not My Baby, 5 Kathy, 6 Open Up, 7 Keef, 9 Dupree, 12 Youth, 13 Brain
- 36 As.
- 37 Dells, 30+31D Yeh Yeh, 33+29D One Nil.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Caledonia Mission" Compiled: Trevor Hungerford

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Mark Lanegan

A cleaner of sheds, a lover of Gene Clark's pants... the fearsome Lanegan picks his favourite records...



My favourite Alex Harvey song

SAHB

Harp 1972

It's spooky, it's dark, it's evocative and there's a mystery to it. It's not what you would normally expect from Alex Harvey, who was more well-known for his theatrical, over-the-top hard rock stuff. So to hear this acoustic track is dead out of the ordinary. That's what hooked me at first, and then the lyrics and the sense of history and mystery, man. I love Alex Harvey, huge fan.



A song that gets better and better

Gene Clark

From A Silver Phial 1974

I'm drawn to stuff that has sort of a puzzle to it. I don't know what he's talking about here. I get a sense of dark foreboding, but also hopeful beauty, I don't like to be knocked over the head with meaning, I like to have things unfold slowly. [No Other] is just a genius record from start to finish. But more genius than all of that is the pants he's wearing on the [back] cover, which are fuckin' badass...

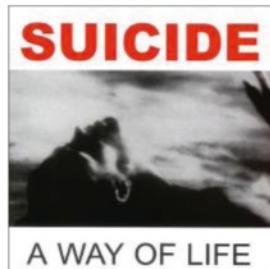


The best song on a perfect record

Sixteen Horsepower

Horse Head Fiddle 2002

Musically it's got a sort of ambient, ominous violin – like an orchestra tuning up. And the singing and lyrics are fantastic. He's singing about a dream and it's very dreamlike. I would suggest anyone who hasn't heard that record, *Folklore*, get on it because it's really fantastic. That just happens to be one of the great songs on a brilliant record – as perfect a record as I've ever heard.

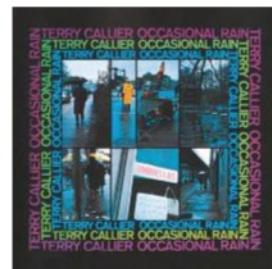


A song I used to play every day

Suicide

Wild In Blue 1988

It's the first song on the forgotten third album and there was a period where that would be the first song I'd put on every single day, for months on end. I was totally obsessed with the song and the record, but mostly the song. I was probably not in the brightest of places then, but it definitely helped brighten things up, haha. I just know it's a great record. It shouldn't be the forgotten record.

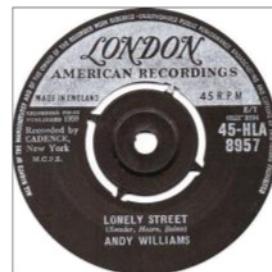


A song I listen to while cleaning out the shed

Terry Callier

Trance On Sedgewick Street 1972

That track is about seven minutes long, it's like the title, it sort of puts me into a trance. Great lyrics, great singing, of course, 'cause he was a great singer. If I'm cleaning out the shed I will have the song on repeat for hours on end. I first heard it in the '90s, I was at a party, and somebody asked me, 'Have you ever heard of Terry Callier?' – that was the first time I heard him.

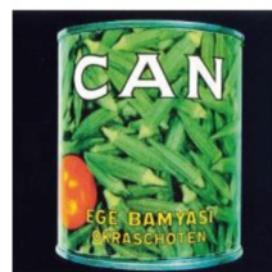


A song I've always wanted to cover

Andy Williams

Lonely Street 1959

This is a song I'd wanted to cover for years. Andy Williams is one of the greatest singers of all time and his version of this is really unbeatable – but I did it anyway [on his new *Imitations* album]! My parents listened to Andy Williams, I can thank them for that. I'm sure this'll be an unpopular statement to make, but Andy Williams blows Sinatra out of the water.



A song that puts me in a peaceful place

Can

Sing Swan Song 1972

I'm a fan of all the Can stuff, but I love this song – like the Terry Callier song, I could just throw this on repeat forever, you know, and sort of just drift away, and it puts me into a peaceful place. Is *Ege Bamyasi* my favourite Can album? Tough call – I like *Monster Movie*, I like *Tago Mago*, I like *Delay*, the collection of early tracks, but *Ege Bamyasi* is definitely in my top three.



A live version that beats the studio track

The Velvet Underground

Ocean (Live, 1969) 1974

This live version is the one I fell in love with. Actually at first I fell in love with the panties on the cover... There's really no magic to it – it's long and it's good. On that record Lou Reed famously refers to Doug Yule as 'my brother, Doug'. Which is why I always introduce my bandmate Aldo Stryj as 'my brother, Aldo'. But I think I prefer John Cale's catalogue to the Reed catalogue actually...

Mark Lanegan's new covers album, *Imitations*, is released by Heavenly on September 16. He tours the UK from 1-8 November.



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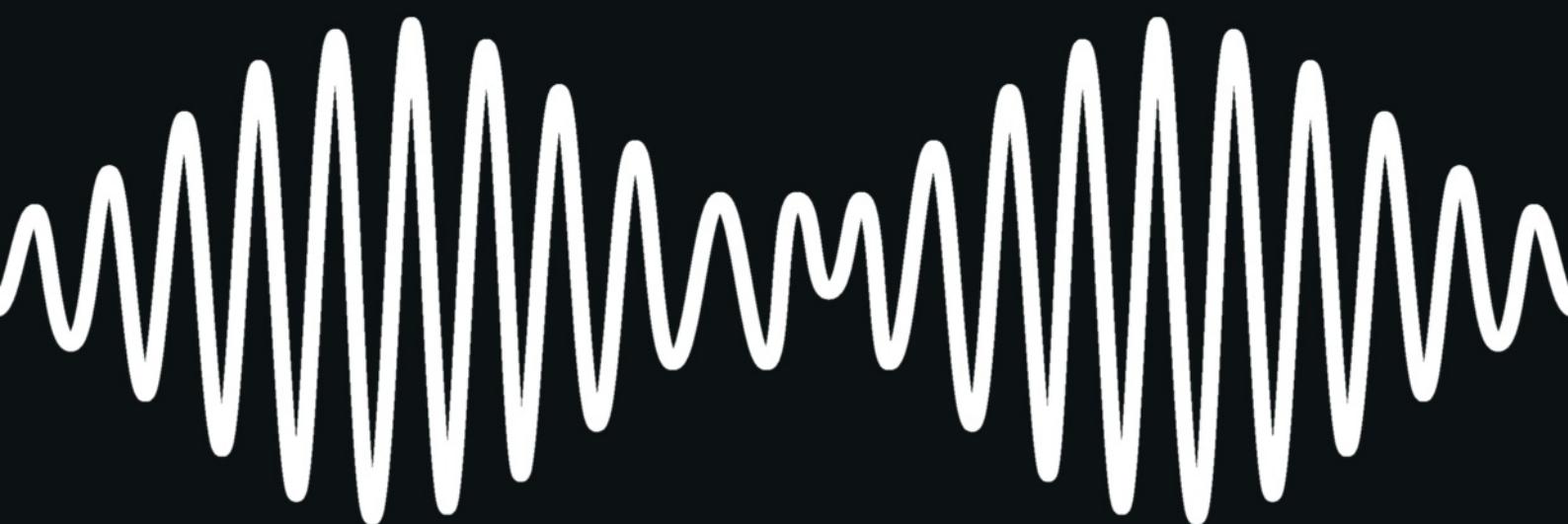
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