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"Cause we were all so young and foolish/ Now we are mature..."



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'Crusty old geezer' Neil Young on Sinéad: "Don't ask me to feel any sympathy for her..."

IN THIS MONTH'S Audience With Sinéad O'Connor, she's asked about her traumatic appearance at the all-star bash at New York's Madison Square Garden, put on by Columbia Records to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Dylan's debut album for the label. The concert brought together Dylan and a lot of his old cronies – Neil Young, George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Tom Petty – and a few young bloods like Eddie Vedder, the frankly ridiculous Sophie B Hawkins, and Sinéad, all of them performing their own choice of song from Dylan's vast and astonishing repertoire.

I'd just made it back to my seat from the bar where I'd taken refuge when John 'Cougar' Mellencamp had started doing something to "Like A Rolling Stone" for which he deserved a spell on a chain gang when Kris Kristofferson appeared to introduce someone whose name apparently was "synonymous with courage and integrity". This turned out to be Sinéad, which was a surprise to the audience in whose opinion she was clearly not much more than a foul-mouthed haridan after a recently televised verbal attack on the Pope, for which she is loudly booed, almost swept away by a wave of anger and deafening abuse that leaves her evidently shocked. She screeches a verse or two of Bob Marley's "War" instead of the scheduled version of Dylan's "I Believe In You" before being led away protectively by the noble Kristofferson, who looks in the mood to throw some serious punches.

She's followed that night by Neil Young, who tears the place up with incendiary versions of "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" and "All Along The Watchtower", but makes no mention of the crowd's treatment of Sinéad, which I have the opportunity to ask him about a couple of weeks later in London, where he's fetched up to promote his new album, *Harvest Moon*.

"She got a good reaction," Neil says, by way of surprising reply. "It was a New York reaction, OK?" he snaps, a grizzled veteran of the rock'n'roll wars. "They were booing her, but at least they were reacting. It wasn't like they didn't know she was there. I'd say that was a good reaction."

She seemed pretty distraught.

"I'm surprised by that."

I've also just heard that after talking to God, or at least someone who knows him, she's decided to quit the music business. "Well," Neil says, and you can tell he's not impressed, and may not even be at all interested, "she's gotta do whatever she thinks she's gotta do."

Would he have taken that kind of hostility in his legendary stride? "Absolutely. Shit, I've been booed for my music. Bob was booed for going electric. I was booed for singing with a Vocoder and synthesisers. I was booed here in London. I was booed in Germany, Spain, France, Italy, everywhere. But they never made me run. It doesn't bother me. I just keep on going," he says, playing the crusty old geezer here, the unyielding loner hero. "She blew a great chance to be brilliant. She let the audience get the best of her. I don't want to pass judgement on her and the things she's said or done. I'm sure she has plenty of good reasons. More power to her. You want to protest, go ahead. Be my guest. But there's a time when it's gonna come back on you. You have to be strong. You have to be prepared to take that. She let it beat her. They put her to the test and she just wasn't up to it. So don't," he says with grim finality, "ask me to feel any sympathy for her."

Manjiv

RICHARD CORKER/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring CAN | BLACK CROWES | THURSTON MOORE & MICHAEL CHAPMAN



DAVID BOWIE: Believe The Hype!

As *The Next Day* dawns, a critical piece of DAVID BOWIE and TONY VISCONTI's history comes to light: footage of the Atomic Sunrise Festival, 1970. "The reaction wasn't welcoming," says Visconti. Also featured: GENESIS, HAWKWIND and a water dispenser filled with amyl nitrate...

AS YOU MAY have been aware, 2013 truly high-kicked into life on January 8, when David Bowie marked his 66th birthday with the release of "Where Are We Now?", his first new single for a decade. What's more, his website read, there was an LP imminent, *The Next Day*. "He's back," said producer and seasoned Bowie collaborator Tony Visconti. "Bowie has found out what he wants to do: he wants to make records. Nothing else."

The news signalled the end of a period of exile for Bowie, whose last studio album was 2003's Visconti-produced *Reality*. Covert jams for *The Next Day* had begun in New York in 2010, with Visconti on bass and Bowie stalwarts Gerry Leonard (guitar) and Sterling Campbell (drums). The recording sessions ultimately featured around a dozen players, including longtime guitarist Earl Slick and bassist Gail Ann Dorsey. Visconti says the final result is "eclectic", a mix of "really blistering rock" and, in keeping with the more restrained mood of "Where Are We Now?", some "mysterious and evocative" songs that tap into jazz roots.

In a curious act of accidental symmetry, the release date of *The Next Day* also coincides with the premiere of an historic doc featuring Bowie and Visconti. On March 11 and 12, London's Roundhouse will screen *Atomic Sunrise Festival 1970*, exactly 43 years since the pair, alongside Mick Ronson and drummer John Cambridge, played the third night of the week-long event. The film carries the only known footage of proto-glam outfit Hype, in which a silver-jacketed Bowie, complete with blue satin cape and thigh boots, appeared with his similarly costumed band as superheroes with alter egos like Rainbowman, Gangsterman and Cowboyman. "I thought it looked great," recalls Visconti, aka Hypeyman. "But we weren't a star band and the reaction wasn't very welcoming. My thoughts were constantly fluctuating as to whether it was a good or bad idea while we were onstage."

"Not only did we look strange, but David's music was quite complicated..."

Tony Visconti

The crowd, it transpired, just didn't get it. "Not only did we look strange, but David's music was quite complicated. So maybe we presented ourselves with too much information, too much to take in easily. Also, we didn't follow code. Hipsters always think they're rebels, but they're conformists just the same. We didn't conform that night."

Hype's flashy attire was a gaudy precursor to the Ziggy Stardust persona that Bowie adopted two years later. Marc Bolan, wearing a plastic Roman breastplate, was photographed in the crowd, watching intently. That night was

also notable for Peter Gabriel's Genesis as support band. With the group still some weeks shy of signing with Charisma, *Atomic Sunrise Festival 1970* is the only footage of their first 'pro' lineup, with drummer John Mayhew and guitarist Anthony Phillips. The penniless combo had travelled to the Roundhouse from their Surrey digs in a Hovis van donated by family and friends.

The film's other chief selling point is the inclusion of the first incarnation of Hawkwind, with late bassist John Harrison. "It

Bowie in Hype, live at the Roundhouse, London, March 11, 1970 (Visconti visible just behind him)

→ was before we were really big," remembers co-founder Nik Turner. "We were still building up a following and the Roundhouse was one of those places where all the hippies went. All of the alternative culture was at the festival. People were taking drugs and having a good time. It was LSD mainly, though some took speed and a lot of people smoked pot. The whole atmosphere was very exciting and convivial."

Heralded as "A Week Of Theatre, Lights And Music", the bill featured other underground heroes of the day: Quintessence, Audience, Brian Auger, Juicy Lucy, Third Ear Band, Arthur Brown and a 16-year-old Mike Oldfield, playing his first gig with Kevin Ayers' Whole World. Perhaps the biggest draw, though, was Graham Bond. "The most memorable moment was during his set," remembers Roundhouse DJ Jeff Dexter, who also booked the festival's bands. "The Living Theatre brought onstage a big American drinking dispenser, with a 40-gallon drum filled with amyl nitrate. Then they started dipping sponges in and rubbing it into people's faces. Graham Bond overdosed at one point and fell off his stool."

Dexter says that Atomic Sunrise was largely the brainchild of Danae Brook, an associate of avant-garde troupe The Living Theatre, who "wanted to do this mad week at the Roundhouse. On the final night, someone had spiked the drinking trough of punch with acid. [DJ] Charlie Gillett, then lecturing at Kingsway College, brought some of his students over. They all got spiked with this LSD, as did most of the bands. A lot of people had to stay overnight, because there were so many acid casualties."



Hypeman and Rainbowman—sorry, Visconti and Bowie—onstage at the Roundhouse

I liked most of the groups, though Genesis were booked as a favour to a friend of a friend. I thought they were a bunch of shit, but we needed someone to open for David Bowie."

For Nik Turner, Arthur Brown was a highlight: "He'd moved on from 'Fire' and you could almost say he'd seen God. He was really wild. He used to leap about in a strobe and it was quite frightening. The overall feel at Atomic Sunrise was of lots of very creative things happening. There was not only a cultural change, but a change in awareness."

The remarkable footage itself, a full 33 hours of it, was bought by *Atomic Sunrise*... producer Adrian Everett in 1990, after lying in a warehouse for two decades when filmmakers Allan King Associates went bust. By then the original soundtrack had been lost, which has forced Everett to sync sound from other sources. He's applied for clearance from each of the artists, he says, and intends to use the profits from the Roundhouse screening to fund a final edit. "I want it done well and it should be shown in the cinema, ideally," he offers. "It's a historic film as people like Bowie and Genesis were the underlings at the time. They were still outsiders, to say the least."

Which brings us back to Tony Visconti. His prevailing memory is of having his clothes stolen backstage, requiring him to travel home in his thin Hypeman get-up. "That was a bummer," he says. "I'm glad so many people were in the car for the drive back, because the heater in David's Riley was broken [Bowie's 1932 Riley Gamecock racer and subject of 1971 outtake "Rupert The Riley"]. It took about 15 minutes for the communal body heat to kick in. Don't forget, we were poor too. It took a while to buy new clothes!" **ROB HUGHES**

Atomic Sunrise is screened at London's Roundhouse on March 11/12



Collaborators Irmin Schmidt and Jono Podmore: "With Cyclopean, we've tried to recreate the excitement of early Can"

CANNED MEET

HALLELUHWAH!

CAN's JAKI LIEBEZEIT and IRMIN SCHMIDT reunite in *CYCLOPEAN*. Oh yeah!

ARARE COLLABORATION between drummer Jaki Liebezzeit and keyboardist Irmin Schmidt is about as close to a Can reunion as you're likely to get these days. "We work together occasionally," says Schmidt, "but Jaki and I don't talk so much. I live in the south of France, Jaki is in Cologne. There is a recommended security distance between us of approximately 1,000 kilometres."

Cyclopean (a style of masonry, apparently, pronounced sigh-CLOP-ian) unites the pair, but more specifically two post-Can duos that have been operating for more than a decade: Liebezzeit's partnership with oddball German electronica maverick Bernd Friedmann (aka Burnt Friedman) and Schmidt's union with English producer and electronics whiz Jono Podmore (aka Kumo). The quartet was the suggestion of Schmidt's wife, Hildegard, who manages Can-related events.

After two weeks of intensive recording in Schmidt's studio in Provence, they've come up with a four-track taster EP of atmospheric instrumentals, half of them in odd time-signatures. "They are not odd to us," says Schmidt. "Playing in 5/4 or 7/4 is only odd in the simplistic world of pop, but it is common in a lot of European and African folk music. Jaki and I have used these rhythms for a long time."

Throughout these elegant constructions, it's often difficult to work out who is creating each weird and wonderful sound. The stray bleeps and squelches could be coming from Podmore's Theremin, Friedman's invented instruments (like his "rubber band guitar", made by stretching a few rubber bands over a cigar box) or Schmidt's prepared piano ("I buried myself inside the instrument, plucking and scraping the strings like John Cage").

But the one constant is Jaki Liebezzeit's metronomic, tribal drum pulse.

"It's the one thing that's always Can-like," says Podmore. "One reason Jaki's so distinctive is that he plays without using his feet. He never uses pedals or hi-hats, just toms, snares and cymbals, with a large floor tom instead of a bass drum. He says it gives him more postural stability, more balance, more accuracy, so his timing is better. You can hear him improvising for 50, 60 minutes and there are never any drops in tempo."

Podmore, a London-based Scouser who leads the electronica outfit Metamono, is almost an honorary member of Can. He's been collaborating with Schmidt for more than 15 years, is married to Schmidt's daughter Sandra (who runs Can's label, Spoon Records), and also spent more than a year remastering all of Can's albums for the 2005 reissue package. He is also overseeing the band's vinyl remasters, released later this year to coincide with the 40th anniversary of *Future Days*.

"I got to know Can's music back to front," he says. "And I think bandmembers agree that there's a definable point – from [1975's] *Landed* – where their albums start to lack excitement and spark. It's where the band get a multi-track tape machine and they stop interacting with each other."

"With Cyclopean, we've got everyone playing together, improvising and composing at once. And Burnt and I have gone through these lengthy improvisations and edited them into shape, like Holger [Czukay] used to do. In some ways we've tried to recreate the excitement of that early Can stuff."

JOHN LEWIS

Cyclopean's first EP is released on February 4 on Mute



Acoustic terror:
touring partners
Chapman and Moore

'Has anyone told you your roadie looks like Thurston Moore?'

Fully-qualified survivors! MICHAEL CHAPMAN and THURSTON MOORE take to the road together

PONDERING THE PROSPECT of a whole week of being driven around England by singer-songwriter-cum-guitar alchemist Michael Chapman as the two tour together this February, Thurston Moore goes into raptures. "We'll listen to the road, the wind. Ourselves, nothing," he tells *Uncut*. "I love England, especially in January – the brutal reality of

howling cold and the delicious warmth of any indoor fire and a lager spilling sensually from the lip of a pint. I want this."

Moore, 54, and Chapman, 72, might once have seemed an odd pairing, but with Chapman moving further into guitar improv space with the John Fahey-inspired *The Resurrection And Revenge Of The Clayton Peacock* (2011) and one-

chord wonderland *Pachyderm* (2012), and Moore indulging his love for acoustic sounds on 2011's *Demolished Thoughts*, their orbits have been moving closer together.

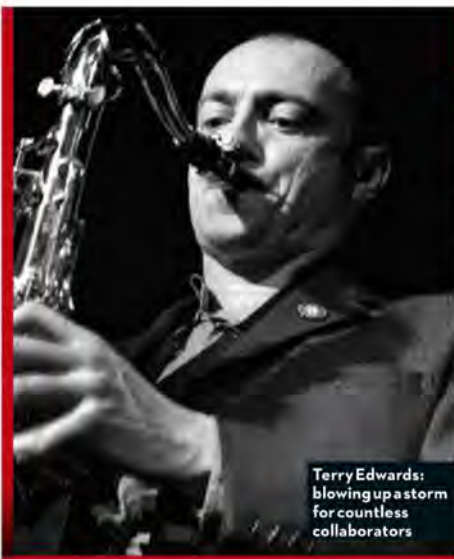
The pair first met nearly 10 years ago, when Chapman played with the late Jack Rose near Moore's home in Massachusetts. "I had a clutch of his LPs but I was most interested in having him sign a mid-'70s-era picture sleeve 7" from Spain that I had found there," remembers Moore. "I figured he'd be taken aback and impressed, with at least a 'Whoa! Where'd you get that?'" But he barely raised an eyebrow. Mr Cool."

Moore has since put up Chapman on his trips to the East Coast, released *...Clayton Peacock* on his Ecstatic Peace label and even provided technical support, as Chapman tells *Uncut*: "People would say to me: 'Has anyone told you your roadie looks a bit like Thurston Moore?'"

Aye, well, that's because he is Thurston Moore." Chapman and Moore have played and recorded together before, but this will be their first tour, and the veteran guitar-slinger is looking forward to a new audience. Once championed by John Peel, his first solo albums – *Rainmaker* (1969) and *Fully Qualified Survivor* (1970) – were recently recirculated to much acclaim by Light In The Attic, and the Yorkshireman is finding himself fêted as a lost voice. "It must be the slowest breakthrough ever," he harrumphs. "It took me 40 years to be discovered." The tour setlist is a blank for the moment, with both men planning solo sets, then a joint effort. "I'm writing some new songs on 12-string for this tour – whether they'll be in any ready-to-go shape I don't know," says Moore (whose debut with new band Chelsea Light Moving is out on March 4). "I'll rip through some things off my last coupla solo joints, and I may improvise some acoustic/electric noise and improv, I don't know."

"I will bring him up to the farm and we will try and work it out from there," Chapman adds. "How did we discover our styles were compatible? We never did. We are going to have to work that out." **JIM WIRTH**

Michael Chapman and Thurston Moore's Acoustic Fire Music tour kicks off at the Purcell Rooms in London's Southbank Centre on Feb 1, and takes in Norwich Arts Centre (2), Hebden Bridge Trades Club (3), Hull Adelphi (4), Preston New Continental (5), Manchester Band On The Wall (6), Birmingham Glee Club (7) and Bristol Colston Hall (8)



Terry Edwards:
blowing up a storm
for countless
collaborators

AND ON BRASS... TERRY EDWARDS

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ A founding member of early '80s punk-funk group The Higsons (led by *The Fast Show*'s Charlie Higson), brass player Terry Edwards has concentrated on session work while playing with Butterfield 8, Gallon Drunk and Lydia Lunch (as Big Sexy Noise). He has also released records with his own group The Scapegoats, recorded some inspired cover version EPs (The Jesus And Mary Chain, The Fall, Miles Davis and The Cure) and a 2010 solo album, *Clichés*, inspired by the



Alex Chilton LP of the same name. "You and me, Terry – we're standing in the doorway between the mainstream and avant-garde. And it's a very good place to be," Julian Cope told him in 2010. Terry is at present playing live with The Blockheads.

KEY SESSIONS: The tireless Edwards has appeared on records by the Mary Chain, Nick Cave, Julian Cope, The Creatures, Lush, PJ Harvey, Robyn Hitchcock, Madness, Glen Matlock, Spiritualized, Tindersticks, and countless others.

A QUICK ONE

➤ Sad news to begin: Wilko Johnson has been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. According to manager Robert Hoy, "He is in good spirits, is not yet suffering any physical effects and can expect to enjoy at least another few months of reasonable health and activity." A new CD and farewell tour of the UK are planned.

➤ Folk label Topic has just embarked on The Great Big Digital Archive Project, putting great tranches of its catalogue online. 84 albums have been reissued so far, including work by Shirley & Dolly Collins, Dick Gaughan, Davy Graham and AL Lloyd. More are promised monthly through 2013.

➤ A valuable bit of pre-punk archaeology from New York's Sing Sing label: a reissue of the solitary album by TV Smith's pre-Adverts band, Sleaze. Only 50 copies were pressed in 1975, and few evidently got much further than Torquay.

➤ A quick Beatles-related round-up... George Harrison's widow Olivia has refused permission for a statue of the Beatle to be built in Henley-on-Thames... On March 20, Sky Arts Playhouse screen Snodgrass, which envisages how John Lennon would've turned out had he quit the band before "Love Me Do". Ian Hart plays Lennon, the script is by David Quantick, and ex-Boo Radley Martin Carr contributes music... Finally, *Uncut's Ultimate Music Guide* on The Beatles is out now, featuring amazing, lost interviews from the *NME* and *Melody Maker* vaults.

EBET ROBERTS/RED PEARLS; KATJA RUGE



Rich and Chris Robinson: "We're like Noel and Liam... it's not an act"

ROCK BACK IN ANGER!

It's a bear! It's a leviathan! It's THE BLACK CROWES, back together! CHRIS ROBINSON tells all...

WHEN *UNCUT* SPOKE to the guiding spirit of the Chris Robinson Brotherhood last year, talk eventually and inevitably turned to The Black Crowes. "They're important to me, but it's best not to wake the bear when it's hibernating," said Robinson. "Maybe down the line it will happen again."

The bear, it seems, is now beginning to stir. A few festival appearances in 2011 notwithstanding, the Crowes have been in mothballs since their 20th-anniversary celebrations ended in 2010, but in March they reconvene for a six-week tour, beginning in Manchester and ending in May in New Orleans. Why now? "It's been over two years and there's no real anxiety or trepidation," says Robinson on the line from California. "We can just go out and celebrate this music, which is important to all of us."

Having fallen apart initially in 2001, when they reunited in 2005 The Black Crowes consciously became a more fluid entity; a freedom for members to pursue other projects was built into the structure of the band. "I learned a lot in that respect from being immersed in the Grateful Dead

family," says Robinson. "If you can get in and out of it without hitching your ride to this great leviathan, it definitely brings more joy."

Even so, Robinson concedes that by 2010 everyone in the Crowes "was starting to get torn and frayed again". Since they first appeared with *Shake Your Money Maker* in 1990, the group dynamic has been defined by the fractious relationship between Chris and his younger brother, the band's guitarist and co-writer, Rich. Robinson concedes that The Black Crowes will always be "a precarious perch. Rich and I are like Noel and Liam. It's not an act!" So while a double live album – *Wiser For The Time*, recorded in New York in 2010 and available to download and on vinyl – is being released to coincide with the tour, there has been no new material since *Before The Frost... Until The Freeze* in 2009. That may or may not change. Robinson views the tour as an "experiment to see how we all get along. Rich and I aren't in a place in our lives where we're going to sit in a room and write an album's worth of songs. We don't want to bite off too much. Before we can look at The Black Crowes as a band that's

ready to make a new record, we just have to see about us."

Whatever happens with the Crowes, there will be lots of CRB activity in the next 12 months. In the studio "right now" working on their next album, due early in 2014, Robinson promises something "very heady; we have more time to play around with it in a production sense." There will also be a DVD and – "word on the street" – some highly anticipated UK dates to follow.

Like CRB, The Black Crowes these days operate somewhere above the slipstream of the mainstream record industry. Robinson wouldn't have it any other way. "If we'd watered it down would we be more popular? Who cares! Twenty-three years later, to even be able to come to the UK and have people want to be a part of it – that's the victory."

GRAEME THOMSON

The British leg of The Black Crowes' reunion tour begins at Manchester Academy on March 24, then moves on to Birmingham O2 Academy (25), Glasgow O2 Academy (27) and London HMV Forum (29 & 30)



From the porch
to the Grammys:
John Fullbright

I'M NEW HERE

JOHN FULLBRIGHT

Recommended this month: an Oklahoman farmboy joining the dots between Woody Guthrie and Townes Van Zandt

THE SPECTRE OF Woody Guthrie looms inescapably over any folk-leaning musician in Oklahoma, especially those from his rural birthplace of Okemah. Which means that 24-year-old songwriter John Fullbright, raised on an 80-acre farm nearby, is better qualified than most to assess its direct impact. "I get those comparisons wherever I go," he says in his dry drawl, "and I'm not opposed to it because I'm a Woody fan. Growing up here is like living next door to a neighbour you don't know anything about."

Fullbright's songs, as evinced on scintillating debut *From The Ground Up*, are instead more akin to those of his heroes Townes Van Zandt and Mickey Newbury, existential narratives built from the bones of blues, folk and country. There's also more than a hint of fellow Oklahomans Jimmy Webb and Leon Russell in his clever craftsmanship and stylistic sweep. Webb is already a big devotee and Austin producer Gurf Morlix has likened Fullbright's writing to "pre-famous Dylan before he left Minnesota for New York." *From The Ground Up* has now earned Fullbright a Grammy nomination for Best Americana Album, while one of its songs, "Moving", recently won the prestigious ASCAP Foundation Lyric Award.

Yet, despite the pull of the wider world, Fullbright remains very much rooted in Oklahoma soil. The cover of *From The Ground Up* shows him on the front porch of the farmhouse where both he and his father grew up. Every song on it was written there. "This house where I live is pretty old and kinda falling apart," he explains. "Things don't last very long out here. The

weather's brutal and there's not exactly generations of people to upkeep these little farms. Eventually they all just kinda dry up and blow away with the rest of it. So at this point in my life it's a privilege to stick around a while longer and take a good look before it's gone."

Fullbright started out playing county shows and fairgrounds at high school, but it wasn't until he took up a regular stint at Oklahoma City folk club The Blue Door that his art began to fly. His first gig there was in April 2008. "It was sort of a lightning rod of

songwriting in Oklahoma. I was terrified, sitting before people who can hear every scared breath that comes out of your lungs. If you don't have something to say then it's very obvious, so it helps whip you into shape." So impressed was owner Greg Johnson that he asked to become Fullbright's manager, overseeing the following year's *Live At The Blue Door*, which set new sales records at WoodyFest, the annual folk shindig in honour of Oklahoma's most famous son.

"You don't write so you can blend in, you write because you have something to say," Fullbright reasons. "Townes [Van Zandt] was the guy who really sold that to me. It was like throwing gas on a flame. He showed that you could change people if you took the time to learn the craft of songwriting. When

I put pen to paper I want it to last a long time. And if I'm really lucky it's going to last longer than me."

ROB HUGHES

John Fullbright's From The Ground Up is released in the UK on Blue Dirt Records/Thirty Tigers on March 11

I'M YOUR FAN

"In a very short time John Fullbright will be a household name in American music."

Jimmy Webb



THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

DAVID BOWIE

Where Are We Now? ISO/RCA

Of course, the Dame's stately and surprising return has to be No 1 in our playlist. Can *The Next Day* be as satisfying?

PURLING HISS

Water On Mars DRAG CITY

In which the Philly lo-fi artisans acquaint themselves with a studio, and emerge sounding like the reincarnation of "Wagon"-era Dinosaur Jr.

WILLIAM TYLER

Impossible Truth MERGE

Lambchop's guitar prodigy releases a second solo album of widescreen psychedelic folk instrumentals.

PULP

After You DOWNLOAD ONLY

The month's second auspicious, unexpected art-rock comeback, a rejected 2001 disco tune, newly produced by James Murphy.

CHELSEA LIGHT MOVING

Chelsea Light Moving MATADOR

Thurston Moore unveils his wiry, exploratory new avant-punk band. Sounds quite like Sonic Youth, reassuringly.

PHOSPHORESCENT

Muchacho

DEAD OCEANS

The sixth album from Matthew Houck, his most expansive yet: great Rolling Thunder vibes and, perhaps, the potential for a Bon Iver-like crossover?



LUBOMYR MELNYK

Corollaries ERASED TAPES

From Ukraine, the fastest piano player in the world - a Rasputinesque new pin-up boy for the post-classical scene.

KURT VILE & THE VIOLATORS

The Hunchback EP TESTOSTERONES

Neat reissue of a 2009 EP, augmented with six live tracks from Atlanta 2011. The version of "Freak Train" featuring Bradford "Deerhunter" Cox is a riot.

FOUR TET

0181 TEXT

Forward-thinking electronica maven Kieran Hebden sneaks out a free album of late-20th-Century tracks. Not exactly dated-sounding, as you might imagine.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Delta Swamp Rock Vol 2 SOUL JAZZ

Any excuse to play "Freebird", though the rest of this Southern rock, country and soul comp is excellent, too.

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

THE HEART OF SATURDAY NIGHT

Your guide to this month's free CD

FREE
CD!

1 NIGHT BEDS

Ramona

Winston Yellen rented Johnny Cash's old homestead outside Nashville to write his band's debut, a terrific collection of keening Americana, out of Bon Iver territory. This burnished gem is the second track on Night Beds' Dead Oceans album, *Country Sleep*.

2 RICHARD THOMPSON

Stony Ground

Veteran folkie turns garage rocker? Even Thompson admits he was surprised by how "in your face" he sounds on new album, *Electric*. On this clattering track, the record's core guitar-bass-drums trio is augmented by funky Hammond riffs, producer Buddy Miller on second guitar and Siobhan Maher Kennedy's backing vocals.

3 VILLAGERS

Nothing Arrived

Plangent piano rolls, epic synth strings and fractured euphoria from the expansive, lyrical follow-up to 2010's Mercury-shortlisted/Ivor Novello-winning debut from Conor O'Brien and his Irish cohorts.

4 THE MOHAWK LODGE

Howling At The Moon

Now resident in Berlin, Ryder Havdale and his ever-shifting



Caitlin Rose

Canadian collective headily mix a splash of Springsteen with Gun Club rage and the vigour of The Hold Steady on the opening track from the band's fourth album, *Damaged Goods*.

5 MATTHEW E WHITE

Will You Love Me

Echoes of Joe South's "Games People Play" and a touch of Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers To Cross" in White's hushed vision of blue-eyed soul, which made the 29-year-old's debut, *Big Inner*, our first Album Of The Month of 2013.

6 CAITLIN ROSE

No One To Call

Old-fashioned country bar-room swagger and the croon of a honky-tonk queen are given a robust contemporary edge on the opening track of *The Stand-In*, the second album from one of the brightest and best of Nashville's new generation.



7 LORD HURON

Time To Run

Epic folk-pop from Michigan's Ben Schneider, who used to camp out by Lake Huron as a boy. Here he channels the melodic bounce of Paul Simon via a cavernous production that dreams of Phil Spector and Shadow Morton.

8 ARBOURETUM

The Promise

Monolithic riffing, an elliptical melody and an unravelling guitar solo, as you'd expect from Dave Heumann's psych-folk-rockers. But there's something different going on, too, with a more streamlined tension to this track from the band's fifth album, *Coming Out Of The Fog*.

9 FRONTIER RUCKUS

Junk-Drawer Sorrow

Rustic banjos and plaintive twang are juxtaposed tellingly with a piquant tale of suburban hyper-reality on one of the stand-out tracks from *Eternity Of Dimming*, the third album (but first to get a release in the UK) from Matthew Milia and his Detroit quartet.

10 WOODEN WAND

Southern Colorado Song

Bleak, gothic beauty from the prolific James Jackson Toth on a song that relives the bizarre tale of the 2011 cross-country crime spree by Lee Grace Dougherty and her two brothers, which ended in a shoot-out after a 100mph car chase.

11 KARL BARTOS

Atomium

The former Kraftwerk man doesn't stray far from the kosmische motherlode with the weightless

pop melody, Vocoder new-speak and techno rhythms on this taster from his first album in nine years, *Off The Record*.

12 STEVE ADEY

Laughing

Recorded in an Edinburgh church, Adey's brooding baritone is leavened by the heavenly voice of Helena MacGilp on this haunting track from his first album since 2006's *All Things Real*.

13 PURLING HISS

Mercury Retrograde

Philly fuzz-rockers Mile Polizze's previous recordings as Purling Hiss were recorded in solitude. His first album with the two musicians who accompany him live is rammed with no end of accessible tunes full of garage ferocity, such as this.

14 MARC CARROLL

The Fool Disguised In Beggar's Clothes

The Dublin-born troubadour wears his Dylan influences with pride (his cover of "Gates Of Eden" was even streamed on Bob's official website). This rasping tale, from his first album with full band, channels latter-era Zim with reverb-heavy, Lanois-inspired production.

15 ENDLESS BOOGIE

Taking Out The Trash

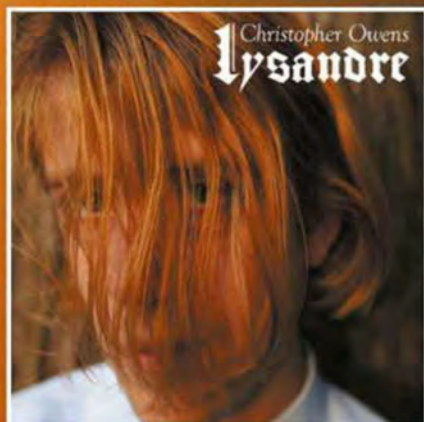
No better way to rock to closure than with the raucous New York quartet, descriptively named after a John Lee Hooker LP. The way the guitars double speed and hit overdrive somewhere around 4.30 has to be one of our favourite moments of the year so far.

JOSH ANDERSON



Villagers' Conor O'Brien

Christopher Owens **Lysandre**



"Lysandre is a composite love story as old as the hills, but this retelling is surprisingly refreshing" Observer CD of The Week

"Extraordinarily catchy concept album" Evening Standard CD of The Week ★★★★★

"Prodigiously talented... a triumphant solo debut" Q Magazine ★★★★★

"The man's bid for a place in the pantheon of gifted and fascinating greats is still on course" BBC

"Beautiful... his voice sounds more Elliot Smith like than ever" Sunday Time Culture

Guardian ★★★★★ Uncut ★★★★★ Mojo ★★★★★ The Telegraph ★★★★★

The Fly ★★★★★ The Sun ★★★★★ Mail On Sunday ★★★★★

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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Sinéad O'Connor

Interview: John Lewis

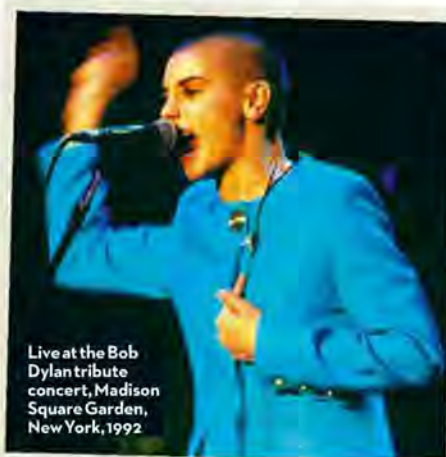
Photograph: Barry McCall

The outspoken Irish singer recalls her violent exchange with Prince, oils up for John Grant and tweets Pope Benedict about her excommunication...

"I

F THERE'S ONE thing I've learned over the last year, it's to keep my love life to myself," says Sinéad O'Connor. She's referring to a surreal series of events just over a year ago, which culminated in a very public courtship and a marriage in Las Vegas to her fourth husband. "It started off with three articles I wrote [for the *Irish Independent*] about wanting to find a boyfriend," she says. "They were funny, but the way they were reported made me sound like a mental case..."

After a "minor breakdown", O'Connor is back touring with an "unplugged" band. She's also given up Twitter ("lawyers and trolls are all over it, it's not rock'n'roll anymore"), is taking guitar lessons ("I wanna play like Big Mama Thornton") and still reading voraciously about theology. Over a long interview she's refreshingly unguarded and hilariously coarse: a 7,000-word transcript includes 62 fucks, 38 shits and a dozen cunts.



Live at the Bob Dylan tribute concert, Madison Square Garden, New York, 1992

sound, and it was making me want to vomit. So, when Kris helped me offstage, I was trying to suppress the urge to vomit over him... a bit of a headfuck. And I still remember dear old Booker T – who's now a great friend – on the piano, getting ready to play the Dylan song. But my version involved whispering it, and the noise was too loud. So I just shouted the lyrics to Bob Marley's "War" instead. Willie Nelson was waiting backstage. He's a very funny character, who'd previously trained me how to transport weed across county lines! He'd also asked me to record a version of Peter Gabriel's "Don't Give Up" the next day. So when Kris led me offstage, Willie came up and whispered: "You're still coming in the studio tomorrow, right?" Ha ha! And we went off and had a split.

STAR QUESTION



You've always been effortlessly fucking cool, man. How do you manage that?

Liam Gallagher
Oh, that's sweet.

I've never seen myself as cool, but I'm flattered. Actually, Liam's brother Noel once asked me to marry him, just before he married Meg Mathews. He won't remember, as he was off his face at a festival in Amsterdam. I am so glad to hear from Liam because I, as a mammy, am not happy that him and his brother aren't getting along well, and their poor mammy must be very upset. Tell Liam I love him and his brother and I'd like them to get on with each other. Do it for mammy's sake, yer feckers!

More than two decades ago you raised the scandal of child abuse being covered up within the Catholic Church. It would appear you've now been vindicated. Has

anyone apologised to you about this? Peter, Uppsala, Sweden

Well, I'm the last person who needs an apology. There are thousands of victims who need apologies first. For the representatives of Jesus Christ to stand up and say lies in the presence of the Holy Spirit, lies about the rape of small boys and girls, is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is unforgivable. I get sick of all these rock stars – like Bono – thanking God for their Grammys, but when there's a pitched battle for the honour of God, there's tumbleweed. Apparently, I've been excommunicated by the Catholic Church, but the only place you find this is in *L'Osservatore Romano*, their newspaper which no other fucker reads. I want my excommunication in the form of a certificate! I've been tweeting Pope Benedict about this. Give me something to show my grandkids!

Why have protest songs dropped out of the repertoire for new acts?

Matt Elliott, Auckland, NZ

Part of it died with the murder of

John Lennon. The conspiracy theorist in me thinks Lennon was shot as he showed how dangerous pop music could be. But, nowadays, I lay the blame with the likes of Louis Walsh, Simon Cowell and Cheryl Cole. All that lot need to be taken to court for crimes against music. You rarely hear people say: "I wanna be a musician." It's all, "I wanna be famous." Because fuckers like Cowell are showing people how to worship fame and money. You don't get famous on *X Factor* unless you're a great cocksucker. And that means you don't stick your head above the parapet and sing protest songs.

At the Dylan 30th anniversary tribute concert in 1992, you were booed offstage for making an anti-Vatican statement, and seemed quite shattered as you were led offstage by Kris Kristofferson. What happened backstage right after that?

Fred Wolno, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Half the audience were cheering, half were booing, which is a strange sound. I'm highly affected by

STAR QUESTION



If you could go back in time to see any artist perform, who would it be, where and when?

Justin Adams

Aw, Justin is the best guitarist I've ever shared a stage with! And, as he'll understand, I'd like to go and see Chuck Berry perform a gig he did for the BBC in London in 1972. There's footage on YouTube, and it's the best gig I've ever seen. I thought, this guy is an absolute angel, I have to go and thank him. Actually, I tried to meet him recently, it was all arranged and he didn't show up, 'cos the poor guy is kind of old and he forgot. But I got to give him a painting I made for him. He's still playing gigs once a month in St Louis at the age of 87!



“You don’t get
famous on
X Factor unless
you’re a great
cocksucker”



Performing *The Wall* with Roger Waters in Berlin, 1990. Inset right: Saturday Night Live, 1992

STAR QUESTION



Just curious, if you're really "Mrs John Grant", how come you been whoring around with all them other slack-jawed

troglodytes? John Grant

Ha! I guested on John's album and he asked how I'd like to be credited, and we decided on "Mrs John Grant". Sadly, John is gay. If he wasn't, I'd lap him up. I've tried to talk him out of being gay, but he's not having it. John and I are the best of friends, and we are the male and female equivalent of each other, it's the weirdest thing. An extraordinarily talented musician and songwriter, and genuinely like a brother to me. And he likes to be insulting to any man I'm whoring around with but, sadly, I have the wrong equipment for John. I'm here, John, I'm all oiled up and ready for you. I even look like a boy.

You took part in the 1991 production of *The Wall* in Berlin. What was Roger Waters like?

Alex Reardon, Risca, South Wales I cannot bear Roger Waters, and I'll tell you why. Hundreds of thousands of people spent a week's wages, if not nearly a month's, for what's billed as a live show. The day before, they rehearsed all the lights and the explosions and pyrotechnics and all the wankdom you wouldn't need if you had confidence in the music. They tell us that they're recording the soundcheck, just so they can practise again later with the lights. So the next day, I go on stage to sing live – and this happened to a

number of artists – and my mic is not working. And on comes a playback of yesterday's recording. So I'm forced to stand there and mime. I don't like lying to an audience so, as soon as I got offstage, I saw Roger and chased the cunt to beat the shit out of him. He was quite agile, as I remember.

What did you know of Prince's music before you recorded "Nothing Compares 2 U" and did you ever meet him?

Simon Banwell, Berlin, Germany I loved his music, but I had absolutely no idea or expectation that that single would be such a big hit, not at all. Did I ever meet



the appeal of Rastafarianism? Dan Ellis, Cambridge

I must correct you – it's Rastafari, not Rastafarianism. It's not a religion, it's an anti-religious movement with no "isms", one that believes in the presence of a living God. I'm a bit of a sponge regarding religion, I soak up the useful bits of everything, but Rastafari has helped focus me as a human being and as an artist. I also love the fact

"Tell Liam and Noel I'd like them to get on with each other. Do it for mammy's sake, yer feckers!"

Prince? I did and, again, we didn't like each other. At all. Ha ha! I'm not going to go into it, but we detest each other, even more than me and Roger Waters. It got violent too, which is why I can't go into it, but it is a very funny story. I'll tell it when I'm an old lady and I write my book.

For someone who has been so critical of belief systems, what is

that they see music as a priesthood. There are a lot of myths about Rastafari. It's not, in my experience, anti-female. Yes, there are silly beliefs. I laugh at the homophobic aspect of it. I confront Rastas when they're being homophobic, but I also just laugh and point out how silly they are. There are silly beliefs within all cultures and organisations, but if we were to reject something because some

aspects are laughable, then we'd reject everything, including ourselves. Parts of me are ridiculous, but I don't reject myself!

STAR QUESTION



What was Nellee Hooper like to work with?

Yannis, Foals

For some reason, which is totally unreasonable on

both our halves, we just didn't warm to each other. It's often hard for two very shy people to bond, creatively. He's a nice guy, and I felt bad about it. We weren't left alone in the studio, just me and him,

which I now realise is crucial for any creative partnership to work. We just did that one song – "Nothing Compares 2 U" – and never worked together again. I loved his stuff with Soul II Soul and Massive Attack and all that, and I would have liked to have done more stuff with him in that territory.

Have you read Anthony Kiedis' *Scar Tissue*, and what's your take on his chapter on you?

Brad Voegel, San Diego, California, USA

Ah, dear old Anthony from the Chili Peppers, or Walter Mitty as I call him.

He claims there was some romance between us. Which is absolutely untrue. I hung out with the guy for a few weeks. He thinks he's God's gift to women, and I think he had it in his head that I fancied him, which I utterly didn't. One day, Jake, my son, who was then about three, was very ill, and Anthony gave us a lift to hospital. Which was very kind of him. Then, inside the hospital, Anthony made a bit of a pass at me. I thought it a bit inappropriate to grope me given that I was distressed and upset about my son, and I did lose my fucking head at him. And, as for his claims that he kissed me, it must have been some other bald bitch, 'cos it certainly wasn't me. I'd have to wash my mouth out A LOT if I did anything like that, for fuck's sake! ☹

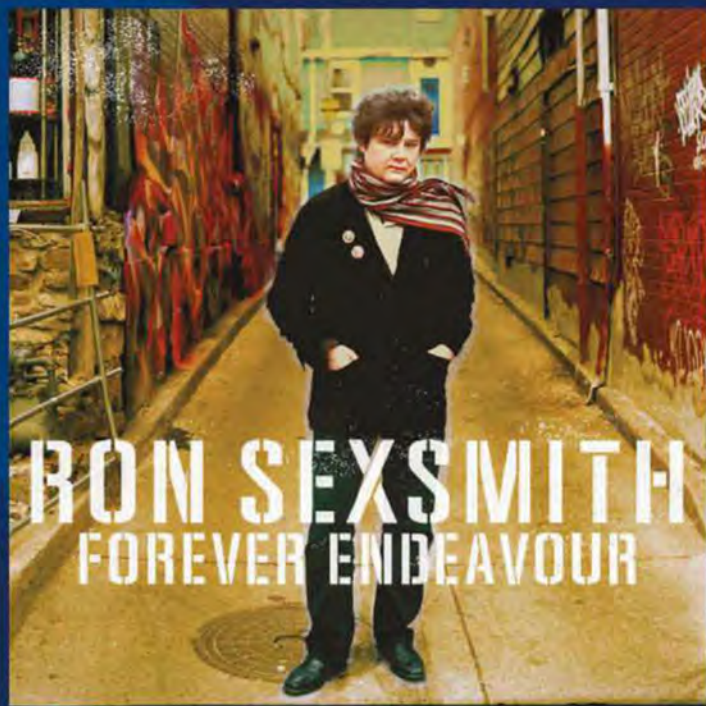
Sinéad releases a new single, "*4th And Vine*", on January 28, 2013; she also plays three London dates – LSO St Luke's on January 17, Royal Albert Hall's Elgar Room on February 15 and the Barbican Hall on March 27



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

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Hendrix with engineer
Eddie Kramer (back left)
and studio manager Jim
Marron in the control room
of the unfinished Electric
Lady Studios, June 17, 1970



HOW IS JIMI HENDRIX STILL RELEASING NEW ALBUMS, 42 YEARS AFTER HE DIED? UNRAVELLED: THE COMPLICATED BUSINESS OF A MAESTRO'S AFTERLIFE

Words: John Robinson

Photo: Fred W McDarrah/Getty Images

JANIE HENDRIX, WHO safeguards the Jimi Hendrix estate as the CEO of a company called Experience Hendrix LLC, tells a story that illustrates her special connection to her amazingly talented step-brother. It concerns a piece of fried chicken. On one of the occasions that she saw The Jimi Hendrix Experience play, she went backstage to visit Jimi, just as the artist catering arrived. While Hendrix chatted to his recently discovered sibling (he the psychedelic superstar; she the six-year-old child), his entourage of associates, crew and hangers-on descended on the food, leaving the guitarist empty-handed.

"I watched people scarf down all this chicken in his dressing room, and he didn't even get a piece," remembers Janie today. "We

made a promise to each other. He said he would always take care of me. And I said to him, 'When I grow up, I will take care of you' – and that felt like a cosmic promise. We've sacrificed a lot in our own lives to make sure he is taken care of."

Along with her partners in Experience Hendrix (notably longstanding Hendrix engineer Eddie Kramer and archivist John McDermott), that is what, since 1995, she has attempted to do – take care, if not of Hendrix himself, then of Hendrix's legacy. Experience Hendrix has supervised conventional album reissues of the slender, but magnificent catalogue of music Hendrix released in his lifetime. There have been DVDs and live albums. A boxset (*West Coast Seattle Boy*) aimed to offer a glimpse of the pre-fame

Hendrix, while his many unreleased studio recordings have been mined for releases like 2010's popular *Valleys Of Neptune* and the forthcoming *People, Hell And Angels*. In fairness, not all the releases have been as tacky as the *Live In Ottawa* fan pack (a boxset containing a T-shirt, a badge set and an iPod skin), but at times you have to wonder if Hendrix is being accorded the singular disrespect of having been exploited not only in his lifetime by his management, but exploited long after his death, by his family. If, in fact, someone else is still getting his piece of chicken.

THE JIMI HENDRIX archive, says Janie Hendrix, is only the size of a studio apartment, but is a very well-organised space. It's a temperature-controlled vault, and in it you'll find shelves, stacked floor to 12-ft-high ceiling with audio and audio-visual material. Preserving extant tapes and securing the recorded Hendrix studio canon is one of Experience Hendrix's major aims. Another has been to offer to the market new releases that serve as thematic chapters in Hendrix's musical biography. For live material where the audio quality might not support a headline release, Experience Hendrix has created Dagger Records, which releases "official bootlegs". For John McDermott, an Experience Hendrix producer and defensive batsman for the enterprise, it's all about transparency, authenticity and context. "That's always been our goal," he says. "We try to allow fans, as we are fans ourselves, to have the best understanding they can of what Jimi was doing with a particular concert, or demo."

After some years of litigation, Experience Hendrix (then headed by Hendrix's father, Al, who died in 2002) gained the rights to the Jimi Hendrix catalogue in 1995. Since then, they have been engaged on securing the Hendrix brand and making Hendrix's unreleased music a relevant force in the music marketplace.

In this, they clearly feel as if they have been on a mission to right old wrongs, undoing musical injustices done in Jimi's name – most notably by the producer Alan Douglas. Douglas, a divisive but unquestionably hip music business lifer, produced several Hendrix albums, beginning with *Crash Landing* in 1975, on which he corrected playing mistakes, overdubbed and added to the recorded music to serve the material – behaved, in fact, very much as record producers are wont to do. *Blues*, meanwhile, a 1994 Douglas-produced compilation showcasing Hendrix as a blues player, became a platinum album.

To mend these and other wrongdoings, the company has claimed to behave as they imagine Jimi might: leaving unfinished those tracks that were unfinished (although *Valleys Of Neptune* featured songs overdubbed in 1987 by Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell) and by presenting things as they were, unmolested (although they altered artwork for a re-release of *Electric Ladyland* on the grounds that Hendrix himself disliked the original "naked women" sleeve).

An impartial party might gently submit that Experience Hendrix have not in fact found a progressive way forward for the musical estate, but substituted one brand of editorialising for their own. They don't see the irony. Janie Hendrix: "My dad would say, 'I own this – and until someone else owns it, which they never will, I will be making these decisions about it.' I feel what we do, we do for Jimi's legacy. The fans want to hear the music and if people feel a certain way, it's because they have other agendas."

You work on your agenda. Experience Hendrix LLC, meanwhile, will get on with making the



Janie and Jimi Hendrix in Seattle, February 12, 1968

"JIMI SAID HE'D ALWAYS TAKE CARE OF ME. I SAID, 'WHEN I GROW UP, I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.' IT FELT LIKE A COSMIC PROMISE"

JANIE HENDRIX

curious decisions, of which there have been a few. A Gibson-made Hendrix "signature" guitar was cancelled in 2009 amid widespread ridicule (Hendrix rarely played a Gibson; and anyway, this was to have been a model that didn't exist in his lifetime). Their new releases, governed by their "leave well alone" policy, mean that they are reduced to offering deep fans alternative versions and mixes of tracks they will be familiar with already, with not much to entice the newcomer. Their album covers seem to have been designed by an intern, using Adobe Acid Flashback. In 2012, meanwhile, the company withheld permission to use Hendrix music in

a forthcoming, classy-looking biopic, *All Is By My Side*, starring OutKast's André 3000. The brand's behaviour seems on the one hand indecisive, and on the other, unbelievably heavy-handed. All round, it has led to an online profile for the Hendrix Estate that's almost uniformly negative, with Janie very much the target for the criticism. Some of this is simply moronic and offensive. Some of it is balanced but faintly damning (one representative Amazon review of *Valleys Of Neptune* reads: "only the very greedy would keep producing 'new' albums like this – these are demos and jams").

So is there a plan? Are Experience Hendrix's releases actively weakening Hendrix's reputation rather than strengthening it?

John McDermott: "Part of the work we've tried to do is to reset the posthumous landscape. I think that fans realise there is a difference between something like *Are You Experienced* and *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*, where we're



Hendrix at the Isle Of Wight festival, 1970

OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCE

The posthumous Hendrix studio catalogue

THE CRY OF LOVE

(REPRISE, 1971)

Sonically somewhere between *Electric Ladyland*'s power-psych and the politicised R'n'B made by the Band Of Gypsies, no-one was disappointed by Hendrix's first Top 3 posthumous album. As befits someone who spent a lot of time there, this is studio music, driven by thrilling multi-layered guitar rather than especially strong melodies. It's funky, it's trippy, and the tracks were all pretty much finished at the time Hendrix died.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Freedom", "Ezy Rider"

(8/10)

RAINBOW BRIDGE ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

(REPRISE, 1971)

The confusing title did this no favours; it was assumed to be live recordings from the concert briefly featured in Hendrix's unwatchable Hawaiian motion picture folly *Rainbow Bridge*. In fact, it continues to mine the strong funky psych that made up *The Cry Of Love*. The great conservation anthem "Earth Blues" even features the Ronettes (minus Ronnie) on backing vocals.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Roomful Of Mirrors"; "Pali Gap"

(7/10)

WAR HEROES

(REPRISE, 1972)

The cupboard, full for so long, began looking a little bereft on this third release. Includes a humorous jam on "Peter Gunn", which served as Kramer's tacit announcement to management and record company that the barrel had now finally been scraped clean - at least for the time being. The better tracks still contain some screaming Hendrix playing.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Stepping Stone"; "Izabella", a pairing released as a single in 1970

(6/10)

LOOSE ENDS

(POLYDOR, 1974)

Not a misleadingly titled collection. Eddie Kramer had tired of searching for usable Jimi Hendrix material - this was compiled by engineer John Jansen, working pseudonymously as "Alex Trevor". Plenty of larks (there's fairly amusing studio chat), but this is far from a substantial release.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Drifter's Escape"; the Kramer stereo mix of "The Stars That Play With Laughing Sam's Dice", which is mental.

(4/10)



CRASH LANDING

(REPRISE, 1975)

The first Alan Douglas production. From "Somewhere" (which appears in a new "authentic" version on *People, Hell And Angels*) he wiped original musicians including Stephen Stills (bass). He also wiped musicians from a group called The Cherry People from the title track, replacing them with people who could play in time. Showcases Jimi's sheer heaviosity and funky soul.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Peace In Mississippi"; "Message To Love"

(7/10)

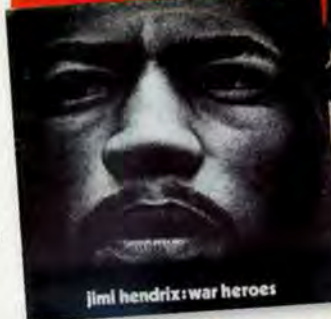
MIDNIGHT LIGHTNING

(REPRISE, 1975)

This collection hangs together less well than its predecessor, although the likes of "Gypsy Boy" have a hypnotic quality similar to, of all things, "Death Of A Disco Dancer" by The Smiths. "Machine Gun" in a studio incarnation is interesting, but lacks the menace of the essential live versions.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Gypsy Boy"; "Machine Gun"

(6/10)



NINE TO THE UNIVERSE

(REPRISE, 1980)

This selection from some of the many jams that Hendrix led in 1969 and 1970 is less than riveting, but bears traces of the jazz circles Jimi was moving in - though not of his fabled jam with John McLaughlin. Miles Davis' bass player Dave Holland puts in solid work on "Young/Hendrix", a driving piece on which Jimi is backed by keys player Larry Young.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Young/Hendrix"; the cover's nice...

(4/10)

CONTINUES OVER →

OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCE

...continued

VOODOO SOUP

(MCA, 1995)

Douglas' last Hendrix production, and a very fine one. Rather than claim to be a reconstruction of Hendrix's last project, *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*, this uses many of the tracks, but frames them in an entirely different way than Hendrix suggested he himself might deploy them. The result? A collection that satisfies the cosmic, hard-rocking and soulful elements. You can tell how good it is by the fact that Janie Hendrix still mentions it disparagingly. **HIGHLIGHTS:** "Room Full Of Mirrors"; "Angel"

(8/10)

FIRST RAYS OF THE NEW RISING SUN

(MCA, 1997)

The first project by the new administration, to recompile the material from the first three albums into one collection, much as Voodoo Soup had done. Does, however,

include "Izabella" (which VS did not), whose prominent, eerie backing vocals mark an evolution of the *Band Of Gypsies* sound. A very good album indeed.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Room Full Of Mirrors"; "Izabella"

(8/10)

VALLEYS OF NEPTUNE

(SONY MUSIC, 2010)

Rather misleadingly referred to as a "missing link" Experience album when it came out, *Valleys* isn't bad, but it's nothing like as coherent as that makes it sound. Some fine playing from the *Cry Of Love* lineup (Billy Cox/Hendrix/Mitch Mitchell), but alternative versions of "Sunshine Of Your Love", "Fire", "Red House" and "Stone Free", aren't particularly compelling when stacked up against the more familiar versions.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Valleys Of Neptune"

(6/10)

PEOPLE, HELL AND ANGELS

(SONY MUSIC, 2013)

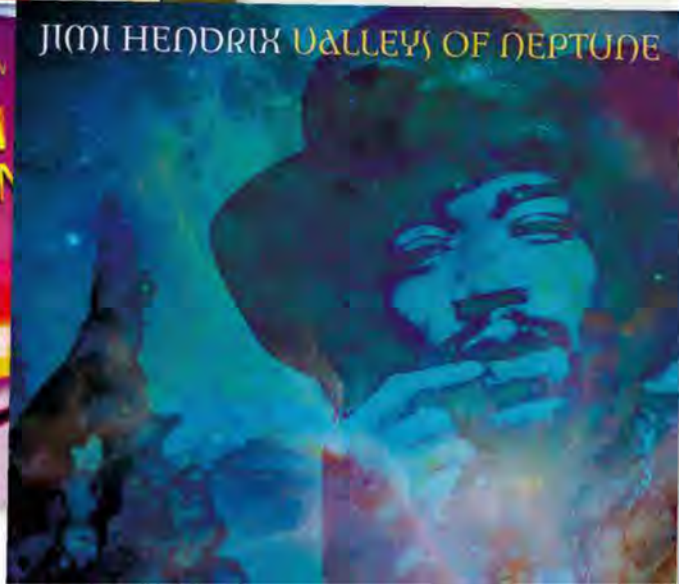
Telling that this features an "Experience"-era image (military jacket; curled hair) on the cover. It's almost as if Experience Hendrix are trying to give the impression that these are lost Jimi Hendrix Experience recordings,

not late demos, remastered.

One for the guitar shop people, mainly: this is a release with lots of soloing, but not many actual songs. Painstakingly restores performances that were wiped by Alan Douglas on earlier releases for being not very good. "Authentic", yes - but does rather prove his point.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Mojo Man" by the Ghetto Fighters, on which JH guests.

(6/10)



Backstage at the Love And Peace Festival on the Isle of Fehmarn, his final official concert appearance, September 6, 1970

saying, 'He didn't live to finish this, but this is as best an approximation as we can make.' We feel it gives you a better understanding of what Jimi may have done."

WHAT JIMI MAY or may not have done, we cannot know. What one can say decisively, however, is that the tragedy of Jimi Hendrix's death in September 1970 created an immediate thirst for product, establishing a precedent for the unsatisfactory "posthumous landscape" of Hendrix releases McDermott speaks of. Front and centre in building this landscape was Eddie Kramer. Under what Kramer today insists was heavy pressure from external forces ("there was management, there was record company..."), he and Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell set about compiling *The Cry Of Love*, a collection of tracks Hendrix had been working on at the time of his death, recorded between December 1969 and summer 1970. Two subsequent "vault" LPs followed. By the time of the fourth posthumous album, *Loose Ends* (1974), Kramer had quit the project, the quality of the material had tailed off, and the album was rejected by Warner/Reprise in the US (though it came out in the UK).

It was then that Warner Brothers called Alan Douglas. A record producer and friend of Miles Davis, he had been at the centre of a social circle that included Hendrix, and in late 1969, he began to informally assist him with his recording. Because Douglas had paid for the sessions, the tapes were in his own library at the New York Record Plant, not Hendrix's own strip-mined archive. "I said [to Warners], 'send me some money and I'll investigate,'" Douglas told me in 2009. "And that's where the new original material came from."

What followed were releases of some controversy.

Whereas we now expect our "archive" rock material to be warts'n'all, Douglas was after making-headline releases, not Disc 2 extras. So between 1975-80, he set about making a commercially successful silk purse from the extant recorded sow's ear: retaining Jimi's guitar and vocals but using 1970s session musicians to overdub unsatisfactory parts. In a post-hip-hop world, it doesn't sound too frightening a notion, but for Experience Hendrix it is anathema, and they define themselves by opposition to it.

"Alan didn't look at those tapes in the way we have," says Janie. "The jewels that were there. The old administration didn't see the value in them, and fortunately for us they didn't, as now fans get to hear something curated to be released. We make sure the music is authentically correct. We don't bring in other artists to overdub if a track isn't up to par, in some people's eyes. We keep it as authentic as it can be."



With Billy Cox and Mitch Mitchell on the Isle of Fehmarn, September 1970, and below inset, Eddie Kramer, Janie Hendrix and John McDermott in the studio, L.A., 2010

IT IS NO COINCIDENCE that much of the posthumous Hendrix work released (from any source) is a little sketchy. Although there are snippets of unreleased studio work from the original Hendrix, Mitchell, Redding lineup of The Jimi Hendrix Experience, the majority of the posthumous work comes from a period when the guitarist was in a state of flux: with his music, with his band, and his career. It was, excitingly, a time of musical change, in which after the 1968 release of *Electric Ladyland* Hendrix tried to broaden his musical palette by using new musicians. Conversely, his store of songs and ideas, amassed over years, was, after a hugely prolific period, considerably depleted. "Where do you go from there?" asks Alan Douglas. "All the records came out within 18 months. It left him in a kind of empty place. He had to start creating something that got him off in another direction."

What followed, to frequently mind-bending lengths, was studio jamming. Extensive woodshedding served to induct musicians like Billy Cox. Some served to reconnect him with old friends, like another army buddy, Larry Lee. Much was to work up new material, some just for fun. All the while, tape rolled.

"There were 1500 hours of tapes of him when he died," Hendrix's close friend Deering Howe told me in 2009. "He would go for hours and hours and get stoned. They'd do one eight-bar section for two nights."

Though philosophically opposed in life, both Douglas and Kramer essentially agree that in the last 18 months of his life, Hendrix was struggling for a way forward. "Part of that struggle was very necessary and worked to his advantage," says Eddie Kramer. "As there's a simplicity to it and a funkiness, a grittiness which was part of that new direction."

Hendrix undoubtedly had some kind of larger plan, even if he was not able to see it realised completely in his lifetime – many of the best 1969/1970 recordings, for example, were to have comprised an album called *First*



"THERE'S ENOUGH JIMI HENDRIX MUSIC TO LISTEN TO ALREADY – ALL YOU NEED ARE THOSE FIRST FOUR ALBUMS" ALAN DOUGLAS

Rays Of The New Rising Sun. Without the guiding hand of a producer like Chas Chandler, however, the fact remains that nothing was definitively completed.

Eddie Kramer counters that it's easy to be wise after the event, but also tantalisingly suggests that after much experimentation, Hendrix might have been on the point of repairing his relationship with Chandler and moving back to a more formal way of working. "Before Jimi died, in 1970, he sought Chas' counsel," he says. "I think he wanted to put back the old team. He'd learned from the experimentation and realised he needed Chas – but he had to come to that realisation himself."

FOR EXPERIENCE HENDRIX, the mission goes on. With the relief of a man who has recently spent time restoring inadequate musicians to mixes from which he removed them (under Jimi's direction) 40 years ago, Eddie Kramer suggests that new releases derived from studio recordings are probably now at an end. John McDermott enthuses about the odd journeys the company has made to secure new Hendrix material from unlikely sources. Janie, meanwhile, seems satisfied that she is doing things authentically, and better than the "old administration". Ironically, it is probably a representative of this old administration who best understands that a definitive, "authentic" posthumous discography will always elude Jimi Hendrix.

While we've been flattered by the museum-quality presentation of the Beatles and Pink Floyd catalogues, the disorder of the Hendrix catalogue is a fitting, if sideways testament to his mercurial brilliance and the disorder of his affairs in life. "There's enough Hendrix music to listen to already – all you need are those first four albums," says Alan Douglas. "It is what it is. I don't think anyone can straighten it out. Because it was all improvised, it was never in any order to begin with." ☪

People, Hell And Angels is out on March 4 on Sony Music



No Jacket Required

Born in the grain silos of Louisville, MY MORNING JACKET's cosmic, reverberant take on country-rock has made them one of the finest bands of the 21st Century. Now, their inspirational frontman and "moving wall of energy" JIM JAMES has made a solo album. "I'm proud," he says. "I've never sucked anybody's dick or fucked people over to get ahead..."

Jim James takes a rare breather in his home studio, Louisville, Kentucky, December 21, 2012

Story: Sharon O'Connell

Photos: Jo McCaughey

IT'S A BITTERLY cold winter's day in Louisville, Kentucky, and the sun is struggling to shine. When it does, sharp yellow light floods through the picture window of Jim James' lounge room-cum-studio, pooling on the centerpiece – a vast, '80s recording console that once belonged to Dan Fogelberg. Over it looms a real bison head, a prop from a video shoot. The space – part gear geek's dream, part play den – is a riot of bric-à-brac, instruments and (mostly) vintage recording equipment. Mobiles, soft toys, Balinese wood carvings, second-hand religious pictures, wool tapestries, plants and posters from the local zoo compete for attention with assorted guitars and preamps and open cupboard shelves heaped with effects pedals. An old upright Steinway, a Wurlitzer and Ace Tone and Hammond electric organs are ranged around the kitchen doorway, a selection of handsome ancient amps stashed underneath them. This big, busy room – in a low-slung ranch house in the Seneca Park area – is the centre of Jim James' creative universe.

It's where the singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer works on his deeply soulful and spacey, acid-etched country-rock songs for *My Morning Jacket*. It's where he hunkers down with other musicians (the day before *Uncut* visits, James had finished a week's session with Galaxie 500's Dean Wareham, whose solo album he is recording) and where he laid down his own solo debut, *Regions Of Light And Sound Of God*. But it's not just his home studio, with its drum room in the basement, which is the hub of James' musical world. It's Louisville itself. The River City has helped shape the man and his music, not only by providing a creatively stimulating environment in which *My Morning Jacket* – and James' previous band, *Month Of Sundays* – could develop, but also because one of the venues that serendipity turned up is directly responsible for MMJ's distinctive, heavily reverbed sound. Only two of their seven studio albums have been recorded elsewhere, and apart from a brief spell at university in Lexington, James has never opted to leave his hometown.

In a column written last year for a local magazine, he said of Louisville, "I have always felt extremely fortunate and proud to have been born here, and I cherish that as part of my earthly identity." Unusually affectionate, given that most of us can't wait to quit the place we grew up in for somewhere – anywhere – more exciting. "I did go through that phase, too," admits James, who's a welcoming and good-humoured host. "I definitely wanted to get out when I was in high school. I was like, 'I want to get the hell away from here and go make it somewhere', but I got really fortunate to travel all over the world, and I've been gone such a lot that whenever I came back to Louisville, I was always really glad to see my family and my friends. And the community here is just so amazing. I feel like I'll always live here, just because I want to be a part of my family. I have twin sisters and a brother, and my sisters have a lot of kids now. Plus, I've got friends I've known since fourth grade and we're all still really close. I value that, and it's given me something to carry with me wherever I go."

PATRICK HALLAHAN AND Dave Givan are two such friends. James, now 34, has known them since he was nine years old and a pupil at St Martha Catholic Elementary School. Hallahan, who shares James' birthday, is MMJ's drummer. Givan is a bandmate from *Month Of Sundays* (later, *Mont De Sundua*), formed when they were in their mid-teens, and he drums on much of

James' new solo album. He and James also co-host *Sir Microcosm*, a weekly one-hour show on local radio station WFPK, that runs the gamut from Howlin' Wolf to Vera Lynn. It was Givan's parents who first gave the teenagers a space to mess around in, even before Month Of Sundays formed. "I was always lucky that Dave's parents were there and so willing to let us practise in their garage," James admits, "because the parents of other people in our friend group didn't want us playing in their basement all night. I don't blame them – I wouldn't, either. But Dave's parents were really cool and just let us have the run of the place when we were about 13 or 14. We didn't have any money and we didn't really have any other place to go. That's kind of a problem in Louisville – you either rehearse in someone's house or you find some storage shed somewhere. There's not a lot of rehearsal space, as such."

Instruments came from generous and encouraging families, usually at Christmas. "I'd just beg all year long," laughs James. "Luckily, my parents were really sweet and got me my first acoustic guitar. My uncle bought me my first electric guitar, which was a Fender Squier Stratocaster copy. He owns a company that makes business paperwork and so I worked for him, paying it off. It was back in the day when printer paper was perforated and came in a long sheet, so I had to rip the individual sheets and tear the sides off. They were super-cheap guitars because nobody had any money, but I still have them all and I love them. We did all kinds of covers in those days, but REM's 'Losing My Religion' was the first song we ever tried to play together."

Month Of Sundays was born in 1994 out of a mix of frustration, alienation and dedication, into an unwelcoming local scene. As James remembers it, "We loved Mötley Crüe, Pantera

"I always remember studios feeling like a doctor's office... sterile"

JIM JAMES

and Sepultura, but those bands weren't cool on the Louisville hardcore scene. That was just about Steve Albini and the Chicago scene, Slint and post-rock, Endpoint... we wanted to play our own music, which was heavy and crazy, and we had our own palette of sounds. But people thought we were just dorks and did not like us. We created what we called our 'freak scene', which was great for us, but it was kind of frustrating because nobody else cared. We'd play a show and our friends would watch us, then they'd play and we'd be watching them. Meanwhile, across town is a sold-out hardcore show, where people are losing their minds."

David Pajo, of Louisville's fêted post-rock progenitors Slint, is 10 years older than James, but swimming



My Morning Jacket, 2004: Danny Cash, Patrick Hallahan, Carl Broemel, Jim James, and Tom Blankenship

JO MCCAUGHY; SAM ERICKSON



JJ'S COATS OF MANY COLOURS

The other projects James tries on outside of My Morning Jacket

WOODY GUTHRIE COMMEMORATION

Released in 2012 to mark the 100th anniversary of Guthrie's birth, *New Multitudes* was shaped by Jay Farrar at the behest of Guthrie's daughter Nora, and provided new music for the lyrics of some of her father's earliest songs, written when he lived in LA. Alongside his partner in Gob Iron, Anders Parker, Farrar brought on board James (under his Yim Yames alias) and Monsters Of Folk live drummer Will Johnson (also of Centro-matic and South San Gabriel). After visiting the

Guthrie archives, James opted to write music for the lyrics of "Hoping Machine" and "Talking Empty Bed Blues".

PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND

This 50-year-old New Orleans institution with a shifting lineup is dedicated to spreading the gospel of the city's jazz tradition. Jim James has sung with them many times and MMJ and PHJB have played together often, most recently at a Hurricane Sandy benefit in New Jersey in early January. Both bands appeared in Danny Clinch's movie *Louisiana Fairyale*, which features a performance at New

Orleans' historic Preservation Hall. James is currently producing PHJB's next record.

DEAR COMPANION

The work of fellow Kentuckians Ben Sollee (who plays cello on James' new solo record) and Daniel Martin Moore, this 2010 album was recorded in aid of Appalachian Voices, an organisation dedicated to ending the devastation wrought on the region's environment and communities by MTR (Mountaintop Removal) mining. James both featured on and produced the album.

against the local musical tide was key for him, too. "I feel like Louisville shaped me completely," he claims. "It made me who I am and I'm still friends with the like-minded people I found when I was younger – Will Oldham and his brothers, and the other Slint guys. If it wasn't for them, I don't know what I'd be doing. There was a unity to it," Pajo adds. "I've talked to people who've been on the Louisville punk scene since the '70s and nobody can explain why Louisville, of all cities, had a good, innovative music scene. It wasn't competitive, but if you sounded like another band, you were considered a dumb ass. Having your own sound was something to be proud of – and the weirder, the better."

This proud flying of the freak flag is central to Jim James' and MMJ's development. No great surprise, perhaps – "Keep Louisville weird" seems to be a popular bumper and shop-window sticker here. "I just love making something different," the singer explains, "and that's always been the thing with this band. Every step of the way, somebody's always telling me, 'You can't put that much reverb on your vocals. You can't record in a barn; it'll sound like shit.' That's why I love being in this house, because it's not intended to be a studio."

Said barn is part of the Shelbyville farm owned by the grandparents of James' cousin, former MMJ guitarist John Quaid. Along with some empty grain silos and a three-car garage with an apartment on top, which they set up as a control room, it became Cadillac Studios for the recording of the band's first three albums, including 2003's peerless *It Still Moves*. MMJ turned the natural reverb of the disused barn and silos to their advantage, slathering it generously over James' vocals to create their trademark sound. "John's grandparents were so generous to have us out there," the singer says. "They were always supportive and encouraging and would come and see us play – they were really great. I just love finding places that have a good energy to them. Luckily, that farm was presented to us, and the energy out there was amazing."

JAMES HIMSELF SEEMS to have energy in spades. Outside of his MMJ commitments, Monsters of Folk membership (alongside Conor Oberst, Mike Mogis and M Ward) and solo work, he's a tirelessly enthusiastic collaborator, who's performed live and recorded with New Orleans' esteemed Preservation Hall Jazz Band, worked on an album drawing attention to the devastation caused by coal mining in the Appalachians, and featured on last year's Woody Guthrie tribute LP, *New Multitudes*. That's aside from his production work for other bands, alliances with acts as diverse as The Roots and The Flaming Lips, MMJ's frequent charity appearances (most recently, they headlined a Hurricane Sandy benefit concert in New Jersey) and ongoing support of their local music community. The day after our home visit, *Uncut* is invited to the recording of a special edition of 'Probably Not', a podcast made by some of James' friends in a studio his buddy, engineering "co-pilot" and "a super-innovative genius of sound", Kevin Ratterman built. It's three days until Christmas, but James still makes time to suit-up and join in an entertainingly absurd panel game, and to play one song solo – a haunting take on Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Home For Christmas".

It was Jay Farrar who steered the Woody Guthrie project and invited James to participate. The singer-songwriter, guitarist and Uncle Tupelo and Son Volt veteran remembers the first time they met, at a Gram Parsons tribute in LA in 2004. "He walked up to me wearing a Nudie suit, and started talking to me as if we'd known each other for years," Farrar laughs. "There was no introduction at all – I think he was trying to talk me into wearing a Nudie suit, too. Jim's a moving wall of energy," he adds. "Basically, all anyone else can do is play along with that energy. He's one of my favourite people in the musical world. He's great because he's one way onstage and quite different offstage. A lot of people in music think they're onstage all the time and Jim's the



Here be Monsters (Of Folk): (l-r) Conor Oberst, Mike Mogis, M Ward and James

BUYERS' GUIDE TO JIM JAMES



THE TENNESSEE FIRE

(Darla, 1999)

A batch of James' solo songs, realised by a full band under the new MMJ handle. Recorded on a four-track in a studio set up on the Shelbyville farm owned by John Quaid's grandparents, and self-produced.

7/10



EVIL URGES

(ATO/RCA, 2008)

Also recorded in NYC, this time with Joe Chiccarelli, and an attempt to tap into the city's attitude and restless energy. "Highly Suspicious" is the shocker – equal parts Prince and Cameo. "A very, very frustrating record to make," James admits.

6/10



AT DAWN

(Darla, 2001)

A keyboardist (Danny Cash) arrives to broaden MMJ's sound, which explores the full potential of the natural reverb of the farm's empty barn and grain silos. Songs are heavier, rockier and more epic.

7/10



MONSTERS OF FOLK

(Rough Trade, 2009)

James joins Conor Oberst, Mike Mogis and M Ward for their alt.folk/country-soul first. The supergroup reconvened at the start of 2012 for a second recording session (this time with Will Johnson), with a follow-up LP in mind, but no talk of a release date yet.

7/10



IT STILL MOVES

(ATO/RCA, 2003)

MMJ's third down-on-the-farm recording, it arguably defines the band's distillation of classic, countrified rock (The Band, Neil Young) and dreamily poignant psychedelia (The Beach Boys).

8/10



CIRCITAL

(ATO/RCA, 2011)

My Morning Jacket return to the place where they first started out – Louisville, Kentucky – as the title of the album suggests. Recorded live in a studio that the band set up in a church gymnasium, it packs their familiar warm, emotional wallop.

8/10



Z

(ATO/RCA, 2005)

The first album following the departure of Danny Cash and John Quaid. MMJ decamp to a hi-tech studio in New York to work with UK uber-producer John Leckie, resulting in a new sheen and extra blast power.

6/10



REGIONS OF LIGHT AND SOUND OF GOD

(ATO/RCA, 2013)

James' solo debut is more spacious than MMJ fare, and far less heavy on the reverb, with a deep soulfulness and spirituality. There are echoes of Marvin Gaye and Curtis Mayfield, plus notes of modern R&B and experimental electronics.

8/10

"I GOT SUPREME DÉJÀ VU"

JIM JAMES on the inspiration for his solo album

IT WAS *GODS' Man* by Lynd Ward that provided the springboard for James' debut solo album. This "novel in woodcuts" was published in 1929, in the very week the US stock market crashed, and is a cautionary illustration of the literal and spiritual journey of an artist as he struggles against poverty, corruption, injustice and temptation. He finds redemption through his wife and newborn child, only to be reclaimed by dark forces and finally fall to his death.

Respected album

cover artist Gary Burden (responsible for the last two MMJ LPs and the solo record) gave James an original copy of the book. "When I first held it in my hands," the singer recalls, "I got supreme déjà vu. And when I looked through it, I started having a really strong emotional reaction to it." Burden owns the film rights to *Gods' Man* and suggested James write the score. A movie may or may not be made, but the result was *Regions Of Light And Sound Of God*. Of parallels between the graphic

novel and his own life, James reckons, "I don't feel that I've ever sold my soul to the devil. I feel very comfortable with my artistic choices in life and proud that I've never sucked anybody's dick or fucked people over to get ahead, but you see that all the time in the music and movie worlds. You see people ruthlessly slitting throats or selling their souls in every way, so that concept has always been fascinating to me."



antithesis of that. He's got a great sense of humour and an exploratory musical sensibility."

It's that sensibility which draws James to unusual creative spaces, like the church gymnasium in Louisville where MMJ recorded 2011's *Circuital*. Kevin Ratterman first saw it while visiting a bandmate who had an art studio there, and he approached the church about recording in the gymnasium. "It was super-old, with beautiful wood floors and tiled ceilings," James enthuses. "When I saw it, I thought, 'Oh, my God, I have to record here.'" It's the same sensibility that encouraged him to concentrate on the very different songs he began writing as MMJ, when his Month Of Sundays cohorts began to lose interest and momentum, and which also made him believe from the outset that no-one could produce MMJ records as well as the band could themselves. They just learned as they went. "We had a few professional recording experiences with Month Of Sundays – well, as professional as you could get in Louisville in the '90s," the singer smiles, "and I always remember studios feeling like a doctor's office. You go into this fucking sterile environment and everybody wants everything to be all clean and crisp. And professional studios like to remind you what's been done there before, so there's all these gold records on the wall. If I'm in a room and know that Prince recorded *Purple Rain* here, I'm like, 'What the fuck am I doing in this room?' Plus, I don't want my record to sound like somebody else's. When you record in a room no-one else has recorded in, nobody else's record is going to sound like yours."

"I wanted to make the solo record for no reason other than joy"

JIM JAMES

I'm always in here working, and that just kind of grew into the solo record," he says. "It came from me having an idea and wanting to work on it myself, for no reason other than joy." A solo full-length apparently issues no challenge to the rest of MMJ. "We've always encouraged one another to do our own thing and that's been very helpful for the band – everybody's always super-busy. For all of us, that's only enhanced the love. It reinforces the connectedness that's so tight. It's hard to find that with just anybody, because it's been built through time and shared experience."

Joy, love, energy, connectedness – they may sound like self-help buzzwords, but for James they seem to be both compass and creative spur. Drummer Will Johnson, who's worked with him in the Monsters Of Folk and on the Woody Guthrie tribute LP, was smitten early on. "I remember exactly where I was the first time I heard My Morning Jacket," he claims. "I was going through a divorce and things were really, really rocky for me. I was in Rubber Gloves rehearsal studios in Denton, where we were loading in for South San Gabriel practice and my bandmate Scott put on *At Dawn*. I remember thinking, 'Man, I don't think I'll ever forget how I feel right now.' It was just one of those records that connected with me spiritually and emotionally from the very first notes."

"The phrase 'force of nature' is thrown around casually by a lot of people, but Jim really is. That spirit is the reason he's been able to connect with so many people through his music. Jim's energy is unstoppable and contagious, and it's extremely positive. It's assertive and very focused and undying, and that's the thing that makes him so inspiring. He's a shepherd, of sorts." ☺

Regions Of Light And Sound Of God is reviewed on page 70

THAT SAID, MMJ plan to record their next album away from Louisville. But the warmly intimate *Regions Of Light And Sound Of God* is very much a product of James' domestic environment. "When I'm not on the road,

WONDERFUL, GLORIOUS



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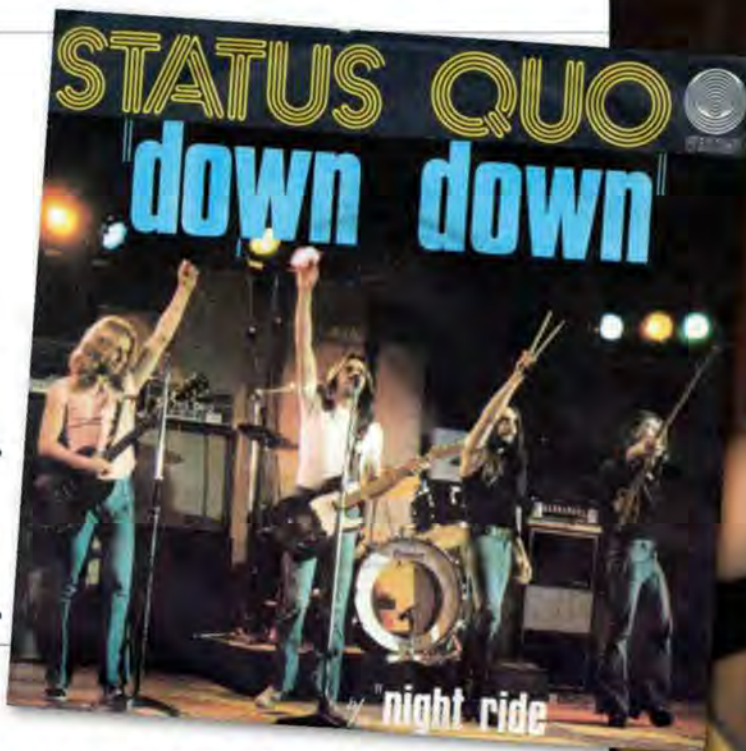
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Down Down

STATUS QUO



The denim-clad, 'boogie-shuffle' giants' 1974 hit endures: "We were the most uncool band in the world, yet the coolest DJ in the world was saying nice things about us..."

“W

EDO 'DOWN Down' quite late on in the set," explains Rick Parfitt, of Status Quo's only No 1 hit. "You've got to be committed to that song, because it

can't be played half-heartedly. We have a short break just before it, and I take a few deep breaths. You've got to be right on your game to make 'Down Down' sound like it should."

Hurting along at 180 beats per minute, "Down Down" is the high-water mark of the Quo's bulldozing brand of rock'n'roll. After a transatlantic hit with 1967's psychedelic pop single "Pictures Of Matchstick Men", the band began to work up a new sound: the 12-bar boogie "shuffle". While neither prog nor glam, their denim clothes and driving rock'n'roll attracted a crowd catered for by few other bands prior to punk. "There was us, Mott The Hoople and Slade," Parfitt recalls.

"Down Down" was their fourth consecutive Top 10 hit. It remained a favourite of one early fan. "We were the most uncool band in the world, and yet the coolest DJ in the world was saying nice things about us," explains the song's co-writer and tour manager Bob Young. "When John Peel died and they found that box of favourite seven-inch singles that he kept, and 'Down Down' was among them, that really meant a lot to us."

The lineup that recorded "Down Down" eventually broke up: drummer John Coghlan and Lancaster were gone by 1985. Francis Rossi and Parfitt persevered with different lineups, but have recently reunited with Coghlan and Lancaster for a sold-out UK tour. Rossi considers Quo's enduring appeal. "Lots of people love to knock us," he admits, "and lots of people think they can do the Quo thing, but they can't.

Because they don't believe it like we do." **NICK HASTED**

BOB YOUNG: Francis and I started writing it just before the first American tour in 1973. But we really got into it over there in LA. I remember starting it in the motel room, and recording it on a cassette. I've still got that recording of us talking about it, and trying to work out how it was coming together. And then we continued throughout the American tour, and then worked on it when we got back to England.

FRANCIS ROSSI: The motel was on Sunset and La Brea. Rick was out messing about with birds, and we got most of the melody sorted, then we did the lyrics at a house I used to live in at that time.

YOUNG: All the key elements were there of the song. The main riffs were in there. The lyrics basically started out as "daa-dah-da-da-da", until one of us said, "What fits?" "Down, down."

ROSSI: I remember doing the verses, and we kept coming up to the chorus going, it needs to be something. We'd done some stuff for years with Tyrannosaurus Rex, as they were – it's funny, 'til he worked with us, Bolan was not doing boogie or anything like it. And he had that [histrionic Bolan vocal] "dabery-do, dowery-dohh" sound. So Bob said, "Down down" then. "Sounds fucking great, makes no sense whatever.

KEY PLAYERS



Francis Rossi
Vocals, guitar



Rick Parfitt
Guitar



Alan Lancaster
Bass



John Coghlan
Drums



Bob Young
Co-writer

YOUNG: The key elements were locked in in the very early stages. All of Francis' intro was on that cassette, and the little breaks when it stops then comes back in.

ROSSI: That was one of the things that John Peel thought was fucking amazing – you just think they're finished, and they go a bit further. It's mathematical music. There's

four bars there, another four, and if you're half-way musical, you'll think the chorus is coming now – and we'll go five bars. Or seven. That's the case with "Down Down" – it goes two or three times longer than it should. I believe a lot of that came between myself and Alan Lancaster. I realised recently that we both liked Del Shannon when we were younger, and so a certain quirkiness comes from '50s references, and certain classical stuff that we heard.

ALAN LANCASTER: Rick came up to me and said, "Francis has got this fantastic riff, he's got the next single." Rick recognised it as a hit before he'd even heard the song. He thought the intro

Denim dons: (l-r) Rick Parfitt, John Coghlan, Alan Lancaster, Francis Rossi



alone was going to cut it. It was very, very simple, but very fast.

ROSSI: "Down Down" had been out years, and I suddenly realised the intro's the intro to "Pictures Of Matchstick Men". I'd nicked my own song.

RICK PARFITT: We recorded it in IBC Studios in Portland Place. We felt very comfortable there. We would go from the control room down the steps to this mass of amplifiers and drumkits. It was like sitting in the middle of a wall of sound. Everybody was up for it, we were all raring to go. There's a picture of us somewhere, looking really rough, long hair and the jeans are all ripped, we've got fags in our mouths. It was camaraderie. It was the birth of this feeling we were getting of just how good we were.

ROSSI: The Chinese embassy was just up the road – sometimes we couldn't record because

this morse code, dot-dash thing was coming through the amps.

PARFITT: We were either wonga'd or pissed when we recorded "Down Down", as we usually were in those days. I'm pretty sure it was one, two in the morning when we got the take. We were sat in a circle, in the middle of the studio with the amps round us, and in those days we weren't so paranoid about gating everything off because of overspill between microphones. We wanted to hear it as it was.

LANCASTER: It's three beats per second almost, 180 bpm. That long intro of Francis' sets up a tempo itself. He needs to play it at a certain speed to give a ring to it – fast. But when the band come in it's – [makes rapid machine-gun rhythm]. It sounds as if it's

slow when Francis starts, but when we come in it's that speed. So you had to really grit your teeth and get into it. It needs a lot of power on the drums and bass. A lot of energy went into that.

When I listened to it recently, it's faster than I thought, when I tapped out those 180 bpm. It doesn't sound that fast on record, but it is.

JOHN COGHLAN: It's the four to the bar on the hi-hat that makes it feel quite held-back.

PARFITT: Volume was of paramount importance in those days. So we used to crank the amps right up, all around us.

ROSSI: Rick feels he can't do it unless it's excruciatingly loud.

LANCASTER: We were there around that time, lights dimmed, getting into the zone, and suddenly we looked up, and we saw this guy in his dressing-gown standing there. He'd somehow got into the studio. He said, "Do you know how loud that is?" That was a surprise.

ROSSI: Yeah, his wife was dying. Probably he's dead now as well. We were in the middle of a take, and there he was stood next to me, and everybody stopped. And I said, "Well, fuck off then!" And I shouldn't have said that, his wife was dying.

LANCASTER: First time I've heard about a wife dying, I don't think that's true. If his wife was dying, we'd apologise. But Rick got up and gave him a blast! It was just right, and then

"The intro's from
'...Matchstick
Men'. I'd nicked
my own song!"

FRANCIS ROSSI

Blue Oyster Cult

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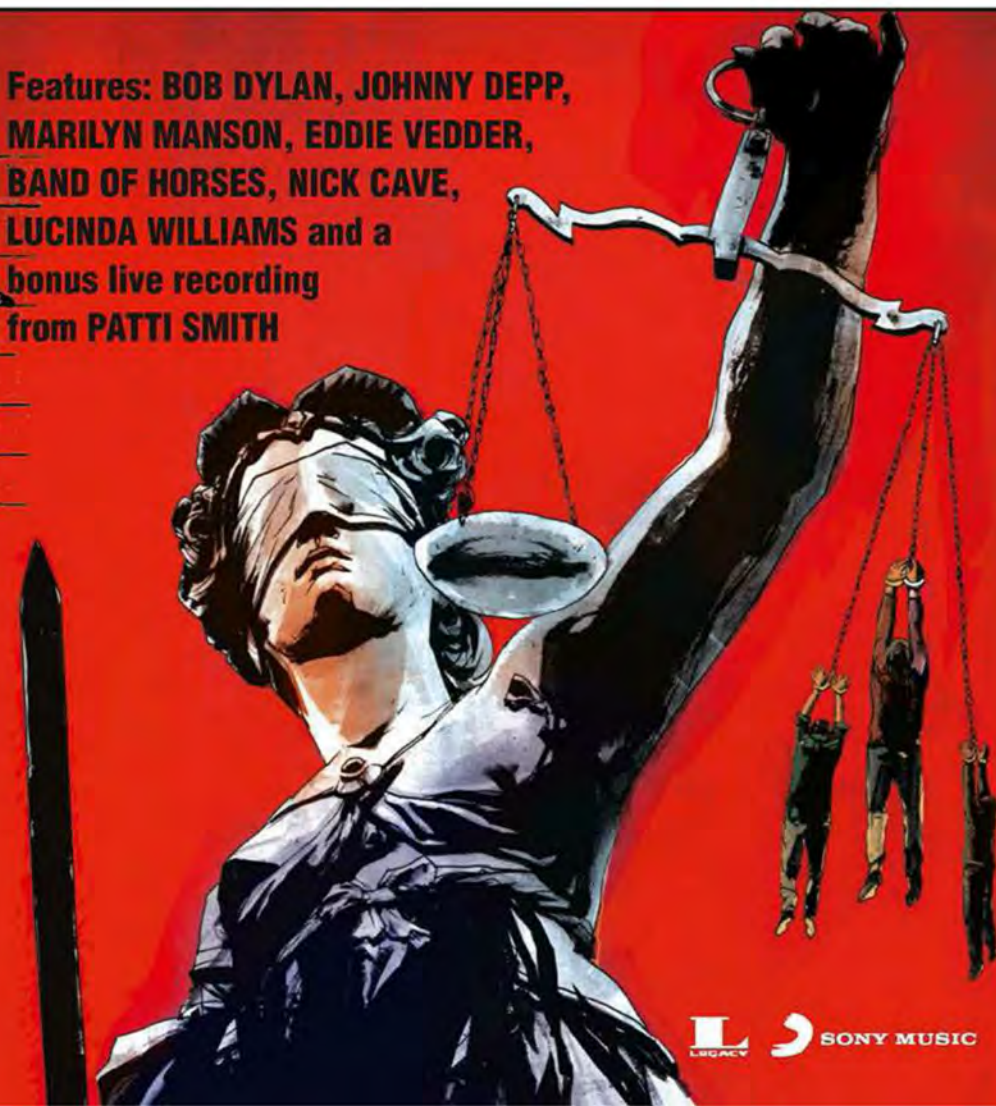
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SONY MUSIC

Story: Graeme Thomson

Photo: Ed Caraeff/Getty Images

Midnight Lullaby

“Who the hell is *HE*?...” In March 1973, TOM WAITS released his first album and began his odd, crepuscular journey to stardom. Forty years on, *Uncut* pieces together the untold story of *Closing Time*, with the help of Waits’ closest collaborators. How did an aspiring beatnik from San Diego learn his art in the dive bars, diners and flophouses of old LA? “It wasn’t calculated,” says producer Jerry Yester, “he just wasn’t that kind of guy.”

Tom Waits
Los Angeles,
August, 1972



S

OMEWHERE IN THE TEN MILES BETWEEN Silver Lake and Burbank on the east side of Los Angeles, Tom Waits has lost his bearings. Aiming for the house of Jerry Yester, formerly of the Modern Folk Quartet and The Lovin' Spoonful, and the man designated to produce the young singer-songwriter's debut album, Waits has instead rolled up outside a used car dealership.



"I got this call," says Yester, who does a pretty mean Waits impression. "'Well now Jerry, I'm in front of this place called, uh, lemme see, Autos Imports...' Eventually he found the house, I had my Baby Grand there, I set up a tape recorder and we recorded everything for the first album.

In the middle of the first song my wife, who

was scrubbing the tub, threw down her rag and came to listen to him. It was amazing. I still have that tape. It's so special. He didn't fit into anything that was going on, that was the great thing about him. He made his own little niche."

It was early 1972, and Yester remembers asking himself the same question people have asked of Tom Waits ever since: "Who the hell is he? You couldn't quite nail him down, what he was and where he was coming from. There was a bit of Kerouac, the beatnik thing, Tin Pan Alley, Lord Buckley. It wasn't like he sat down and said, 'Let me see, what kind of image do I want?' It was all instinctive, from the inside. No one was doing what he was doing."

For those now well accustomed to the Waitsian world of one-eyed dwarves, three-legged tangos and twisted blues, his debut album *Closing Time*, released early in 1973, seems almost shocking in its sincere simplicity. There is no clanking chain gang rhythms, no gravel-voiced, bug-eyed theatrics, no wise-cracking raps, lop-sided shanties or drunken saloon songs. This is as close as Waits will ever get to being a conventional

West Coast singer-songwriter: warm, heartfelt, vulnerable, a little hokey and sentimental at times. And yet even at this embryonic stage, he *still* sounded utterly unique.

Bonnie Raitt, who moved back to LA in 1973 to make *Takin' My Time* with Lowell George, recalls Jackson Browne tipping her off about the new kid on the block. "Tom's first album had just come out and there was a buzz around him among those of us hanging out in the Troubadour," she says.

"In the local musicians' circles he was already becoming legendary. He was so original and unexpected, and so authentic early on. He was writing such beautiful lyrics and harking back to an era of classic, great melodies – his appreciation of that style of music knocked us all out. And then he had the persona on top of that. It was amazing to think he came from San Diego!"

SITUATED 120 MILES south of Los Angeles, San Diego may seem an unlikely breeding ground for dusty mavericks, yet Waits lived in the city and its satellites – National City, Chula Vista – with his mother after his parent's divorce in 1960. It was here he began his apprenticeship. *Closing Time* may have been recorded in Los Angeles, but in many respects it's a fond homage to long San Diego nights spent making music into the wee small hours. The cover photograph depicts Waits slumped at a battered piano, beer and smokes close at hand, the clock set a touch after 3.20am. It not only captures the after hours melancholy of a Sinatra torch song, but also the origins of Waits as a working musician. "When he made his first album, put that photo on the cover and called it *Closing Time*, to me that was a total nod to that whole scene and how he gained his chops," says his friend and fellow San Diego musician Ray Bierl. "When the clubs closed for the evening and people were cleaning up, getting paid, he'd be at the piano practising."

Aged 21 in 1971, Waits had started actively engaging with

STEP RIGHT UP

"THE TOUGH GUY..."

Who was Waits' first manager, HERB COHEN?

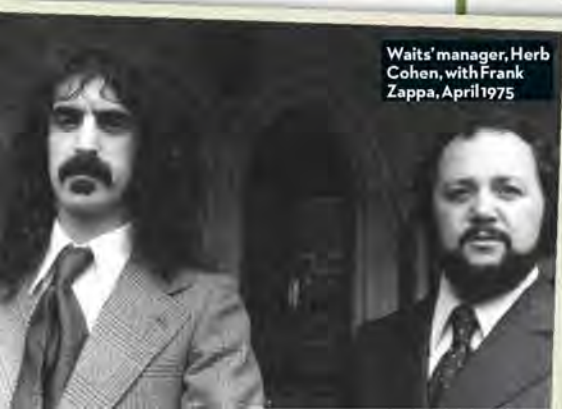
"I WANTED A BIG bruiser, the tough guy in the neighbourhood," said

Waits. "And I got it." A hard-nosed south Bronxer, Waits' first manager moved to California in 1952, graduating from running coffee bars to promoting concerts for Pete Seeger and Odetta. By the '70s his management roster included Waits, Tim Buckley, Alice Cooper, Linda Ronstadt, Lenny Bruce and Frank Zappa, with whom he formed the Straight/Bizarre label, responsible for releasing Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*. As with Zappa, Cohen's relationship with Waits ended in litigation in the early '80s amid creative disputes and accusations of financial irregularities. Even so, general manager Robert Duffey emphasises Cohen's importance in Waits' early evolution

away from his singer-songwriter roots.

"Herb convinced him to use not only more musicians, but props onstage," says Duffey. "Herb was constantly talking to him about the visual aspect of what he did." Herb Cohen died in 2010 aged 77.

Waits' manager, Herb Cohen, with Frank Zappa, April 1975



Tom Waits, Los Angeles, August 1972, in an outtake from the *Closing Time* album shoot

WAITSWORLD

Key influences on early Tom



BING CROSBY: "I wasn't thrilled by Blue Cheer," said Waits, "so I found an alternative, even if it was Bing Crosby." His love of pre-war American pop, evident on his early records and encompassing Crosby, Perry Como, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Sinatra and George Gershwin, stemmed from his parents' collection of 78s.



LORD BUCKLEY: The '50s underground comic, whose satirical hep-cat monologues, comical scat singing and "hipsemantic" translations of Shakespeare - "Hipsters, flipsters and finger-poppin' daddies: knock me your lobes" - is proto-Waits.



THE BEATS: Waits borrowed much of his boho style and creative substance from the group of writers (including Kerouac, Burroughs, Corso and Ferlinghetti) who mapped out an alternative culture in the '50s. His early work is peppered with direct references and general nods, while he credited the 1957 LP by Kerouac/Allen with giving "me the idea to do some spoken pieces myself".



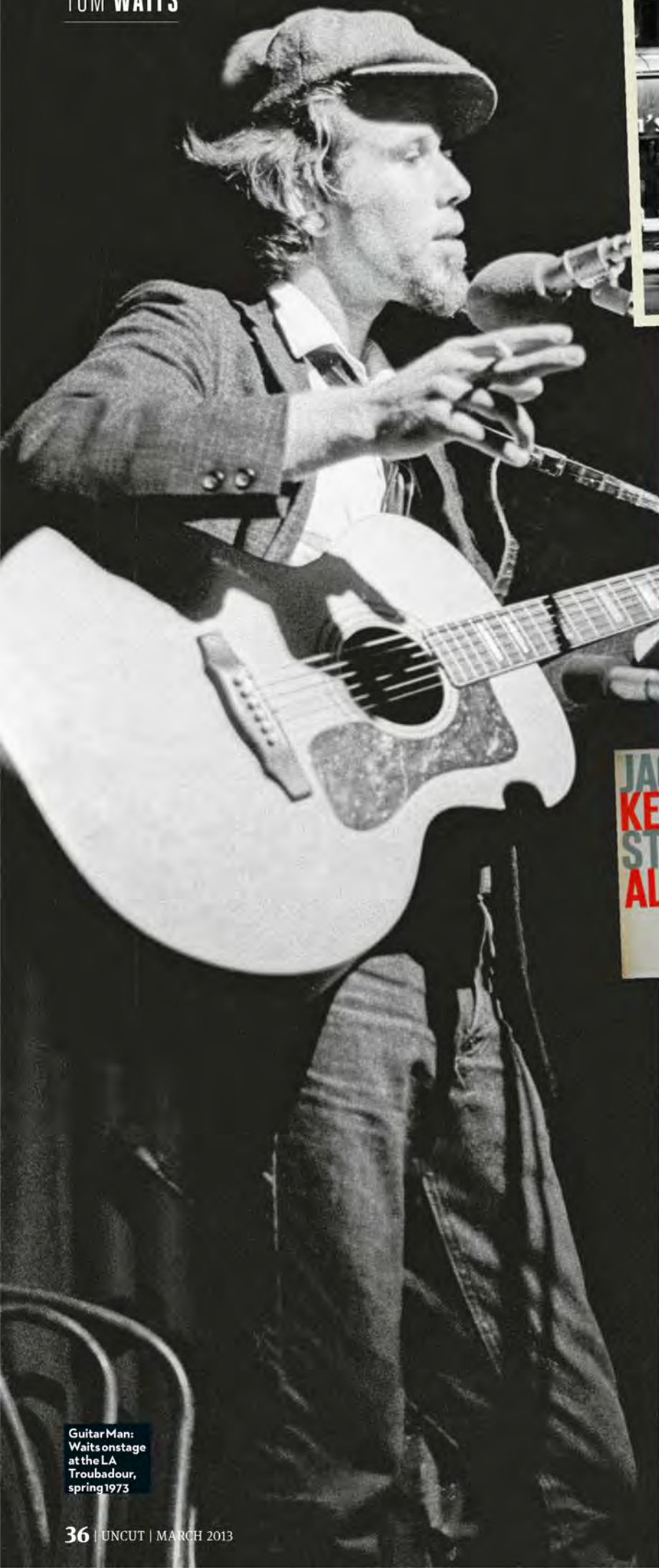
EDWARD HOPPER: The American painter's *Nighthawks* (1942) inspired the title and cover image of Waits' *Nighthawks At The Diner* (1975), while Hopper's scenes of late-night urban loneliness are evoked throughout *Closing Time*.



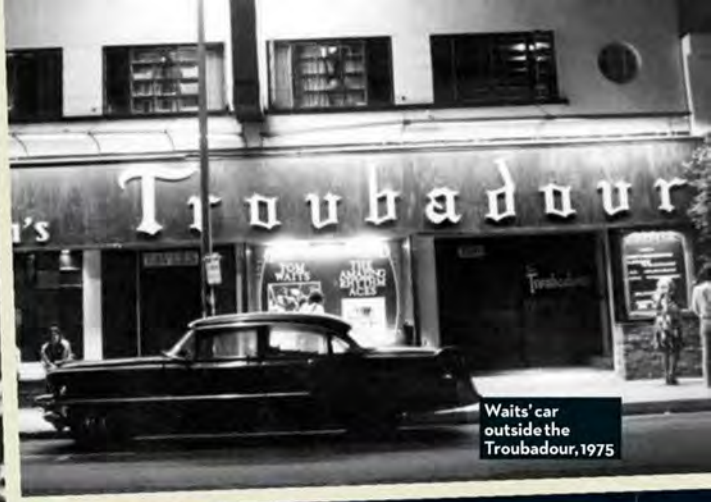
STEPHEN FOSTER: The 19th-Century American songwriter wrote "Oh! Susanna", "My Old Kentucky Home" and many more standards. The richly rhetorical folk element in Waits' early music was influenced by his love of Foster's songs.



KEN NORDINE: "Word Jazz" exponent of the '50s and '60s who fused Beat poetry and storytelling over the cool jazz of Chico Hamilton. Waits later collaborated with him.



Guitar Man:
Waits onstage
at the LA
Troubadour,
spring 1973



Waits' car
outside the
Troubadour, 1975

JOIN THE CLUB

HARDCORE TROUBADOUR

The venue that made Tom Waits

OPENED IN 1957 and still going strong, Doug Weston's West Hollywood club was umbilically linked to LA's early '70s singer-songwriter scene. It provided a communal living room for the city's musical community, a place where James Taylor, David Crosby, Jackson Browne or Carole King could mingle with each other and industry moguls, and where folk, rock, blues and country merged. Making a round trip of 250 miles to play, the young Waits knew how important the club was for his career. "You arrive at 10 in the morning and wait all day," he said. "They let the first several people in line perform that night. When you finally get up there, you're allowed four songs. You can blow it all in 15 minutes. I was scared shitless."



→ the small but eclectic local music scene the year before. He gravitated towards the Heritage club in Mission Beach, first as a customer, then as a doorman, then performer. "He wasn't particularly a name on that scene," says Shep Cooke, another San Diego buddy who played guitar on *Closing Time*. "He lived in Chula Vista and we

hooked up every couple of months at a little bar on the beach and a place called In The Alley. He was more of a cabaret type, I was more of a folk type. He mostly did his own stuff."

His "stuff" was a ragbag of the past and present. Among the country parodies ("Looks Like I'm Up Shit Creek Again"), bawdy blues ("Ice Cream Man") and late-night jazzbo ruminations ("Midnight Lullaby") were several songs more closely aligned to the West Coast zeitgeist. You could certainly hear why the Eagles would shortly cover "Ol' '55". There were also trace elements of Dylan, whom Waits revered, in "Rosie" and "Old Shoes (And Picture Postcards)", but in general Waits skipped past the sounds of the '60s and drew the greatest inspiration from a very different America. A brief authored piece in *Omaha Rainbow* magazine from 1974 offers a surprisingly undistorted account of where he was coming from at the beginning of the 1970s. As his favourite writers he lists Jack Kerouac, Charles Bukowski, Michael C Ford, Robert Webb, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Larry McMurtry, Harper Lee and John Rechy. Primarily, the Beats, bohos and bums.

"One of the records that Tom loved was a 10-inch LP of Steve Allen ad-libbing piano over Kerouac reading his poetry," says Cooke. "Pretty interesting stuff!" Finger-snappin' raps like "Diamonds On My Windshield" came directly from his fascination with the City Lights bookstore,



Ragged glory: Waits in the Eagle Rock area of Los Angeles, February 14, 1972

TOM'S WILD YEARS

THE EARLY YEARS DEMOS

THOUGH WAITS has an impressive record when it comes to litigation, he couldn't prevent his 1971 demos being released as *The Early Years Vol. I and II* in the '90s. The 26 tracks – solo and sparsely accompanied – confirm that the songs which appeared on the first three albums were already fully formed, while the unreleased tracks are fascinating. “Had Me A Girl” is clearly intended to crack up live audiences, but the sidelining of “Blue Skies” is baffling. “We had so many calls from advertising agencies and Tom just wasn't interested at all,” says Robert Duffey. “That was one of his most brilliant songs.” There is also the first appearance of Frank, in “Frank's Song”.



Kerouac and Ferlinghetti. “We were too young to be real beatniks but we were more beatnik than hippy back in 1971 and '72,” Cooke continues. “It wasn't a scene. It was pretty underground.” While working as a doorman at the Heritage, Waits became a minor celebrity for his sub-Beats shtick. “Often on a slow night there would be more people outside hanging out with Tom than inside watching the acts,” says Bierl. “He was practising rhymes: ‘Car goes by/Looks like it's feeling high/On the fly...’ Keeping loose.”

He fused this – at the time – unfashionable revival of the '50s counter-culture with the traditional sound of pop standards from the '20s and '30s. Waits had learned to play piano as a teenager but it was the tuition he got around this time from a friend, Francis Thumm, which “helped Tom develop this rich, chordal, early American pop style,” says Bierl. “When he started pulling the piano chops together, that's when you started to think, ‘Boy...’” It helped his writing outgrow a mid-'60s obsession with Dylan and become more directly influenced by writers and singers from very different traditions, among them Mose Allison, Thelonious Monk, Randy Newman, Bing Crosby, George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Frank Sinatra and Ray Charles. For Bonnie Raitt “the sound he created in his head even back then was – I wouldn't say anything as defining as retro – but classic.”

As well as his songwriting chops, Waits honed his gifts as a performer at the Heritage. He was a good mimic: he could do a great Ray Charles and a version of

“Are You Lonesome Tonight?” which served as both Elvis tribute and parody. “I don't think you would have said here's a guy really going places, but you did say here's a guy who is really interesting,” says Bierl. “He kinda stood out, the seeds of his persona were already there, though it would develop. He had a great sense of humour and you got a sense of integrity right off the bat that he still has.” Raitt, who toured with Waits a little later, recalls that onstage “he was astonishing, his rapport with the audience and where he went and his musical sophistication. There was no-one like him. Plus he was hilarious.”

“He was quite folkie. It was almost unrecognisable as ‘Tom Waits’ at this point”

ROBERT DUFFEY

THE TROUBADOUR ON Santa Monica Boulevard was the hub of the burgeoning early '70s singer-songwriter scene. In 1971 Waits began making regular trips to LA by Greyhound bus to play the club's Monday night open-mic spots. He would leave at dawn and arrive at nine or 10 in the morning, queue up for most of the day to secure a 20-minute spot the same night, play – “scared

shitless,” he later confessed – then head back home.

On any given night the Troubadour would be filled with the industry's leading artists, agents and executives. Deceptively ambitious, Waits was actively chasing a break, and it arrived in June 1971 in the form of Herb Cohen (see panel p38), who managed Zappa, Beefheart and Linda Ronstadt. Cohen died in 2010 but his general manager at the time, Robert Duffey, was with him the night they first laid eyes and ears on Waits. “He did a set that was kind of Dylanish, is

the only way I can describe it," says Duffey. "He did some of his songs and a couple of covers. He was only on for a short time and he didn't sound anything like he sounds now. He was quite folksy. It was almost unrecognisable as 'Tom Waits' at this point."

His tendency to be more "folksy" in LA may have been a pragmatic recognition that it wouldn't hurt to bend a little with the prevailing winds. While Duffey acknowledges that Waits was "very good, very captivating" as a performer, Cohen primarily coveted him as a songwriter, signing him to a publishing deal with his Third Story company as well as a management contract. "It was always about the songs with Herb, and Tom's songs were just brilliant," says Duffey. "It was like, 'Wow! Where did this guy come from?' He really was exceptional."

The deal gave Waits a vital sense of validation. Back in San Diego, Bieri recalls giving him a ride home one night and Waits telling him that he "was going to throw himself into this. He was going to go for the gold ring, so to speak. He told me later that if he hadn't gotten that contract it would have put him over the edge. He really gave it all he had, he didn't leave anything behind."

For the rest of 1971 and into '72 Waits continued to travel between San Diego and Los Angeles, playing hoot nights at the Troubadour and writing prolifically in one of the small

"We had great respect for him, though I could never understand a word he said!"

ROB STONE

rooms in Cohen's office, where Zappa would often be rehearsing next door. "Writing was a very solitary activity for him," says Cooke. He recorded numerous demos of his songs at "a little studio in Bel Air" for Duffey to shop around. Before he ever met Waits, Yester recalls his former Lovin' Spoonful bandmate Joe Butler telling him about demos of "Grapefruit Moon" and "Martha". Twenty years later these early sketches were released, against

Waits' wishes, as *The Early Years*. Back in 1971 no-one was quite so keen. "A lot of record companies passed on him," says Duffey. "They would ask me, 'Is this real? I mean, what is this?' Eventually we got Geffen to take a chance on him." David Geffen and his partner Elliot Roberts had recently set up Asylum Records. With Jackson Browne, Judee Sill and Joni Mitchell on the roster, the label prided itself on its artistic empathy, viewing Waits' uniqueness as a positive point of difference rather than a negative. "We had great respect for him, though I could never understand a word he said!" says Ron Stone, who worked in management at Asylum.

Cohen scheduled the album sessions for the early summer of 1972, hiring Yester, whom he had managed in the Modern Folk Quartet and used as a producer for his other acts, including Tim Buckley. It was Yester who assembled the core band of John Seiter on drums, Bill Plummer on stand-up bass, Peter Klimes on guitar, Delbert Bennett on trumpet and Waits on piano. He planned to record during the night at Sunset Sound but "the only thing they had available was 10am till 6pm. Oh shit! The first couple of days were a little groggy, but we got into it. Tom was like, 'Man, this is like a proper job! I've got a night off, I can go to the movies!'"

This band of night owls thus found themselves working office hours for ten days while recording the quintessential late-night record. Opener "Ol' '55" is the closest *Closing Time* gets to a UV ray, and even then the "sun's coming up" only because he's leaving his girl's place after a night to



WEE SMALL HOURS

"THE MUSIC SUGGESTED IT ALL..."

Designer CAL SCHENKEL on the cover of *Closing Time*

We all used to hang out after hours on Fridays. We'd wind up at Herb's office and maybe go out to a local bar and have a couple of drinks, and to a great extent the cover is what Tom was like on a Friday night after the bar closed. It was quite subdued, nothing wild! Tom was pretty secure in his ideas about his persona and how he wanted to be seen. The music suggested the atmosphere of it all, so it was just a question of how we would accomplish that. We shot it with [photographer] Ed Caraeff in my living room, in a dark corner. I had a piano I'd picked up for 25 bucks. It was definitely just a prop, you couldn't really play it! There was just a couple of people involved and it came out real nice, simple and direct. The whole concept was kind of a Sinatra feel. It seemed very natural."

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remember. From thereon the mood is indigo and the action takes place firmly after hours: bars are emptying or closing, streets are filled with moons, memories and "a lazy old tom cat on a midnight spree". "Midnight Lullaby" is both typical and self-explanatory, Bennett's mournful trumpet spinning out into the darkness. "Virginia Avenue" takes a late-night prowling along Waits' loping piano line, Plummer's taut bass and Klimes' searing blues licks. "Rosie" was written, according to Yester, back in San Diego in response to "a wistful crush" Waits had on the folk singer Rosalie Sorrels. "I Hope That I Don't Fall In Love With You" is a last-orders vignette which puts the listener right next to Waits and the object of his slightly sozzled affections. "You can see the pub, man!" says John Seiter. "You can see the stools and you can see the girl. Oh, it's fabulous. He was a great songwriter. The pictures, the visuals out of his lyrics were just amazing."

The heartstopping piano ballad "Martha" was the most impressive example of Waits' ability to write way beyond his years. Singing as Old Tom Frost, he becomes an elderly man wistfully calling his lover of 40 years ago. Full of tenderness and regret, in 1972 "Martha" thrillingly countered the prevailing trend for solipsistic self-expression. Yester talks about Waits even then being "ageless", while Bieri says that "he always had that older guy thing going on. When Tom was in junior high he liked to walk around with a cane, and go over to his friend's house and play all their dad's records. I remember playing *Closing Time* to [Bruce] Utah Phillips in 1973 and he said, 'How old is this guy? How can he be writing songs like "Martha"? What an imagination!'" The



WAITS VARIATIONS

CLOSING TIME COVERS

The artists who have tried their hand at songs from Waits' debut

fractured "Lonely", performed solo, crosses over from the album's default setting of mild melancholy into something more profoundly painful. Even in the early days, says Bierl, "we didn't talk very much about personal stuff. He was a great guy, very funny, but there was a certain reserve. A lot of artists have that dual thing: they're very private, independent types but still have the need to relate to audiences. He definitely had that."

Early in 1972 Waits had finally moved to LA, renting a tiny apartment in Silver Lake which he shared with Bobi Thomas, an old high-school friend who had become his girlfriend. At home he tended to read voraciously. Otherwise he hung out in diners and dive bars, his social life revolving primarily around pool, cigarettes and alcohol. "We'd go sit in the car and drink a six-pack of beer," says Yester. "He really enjoyed that. And we played a lot of pool. There was a place over in Burbank, 50c an hour for these great old tables covered with cigarette burns in this funky little bar. Man, we loved playing pool and drinking beer."

Waits' parents were both teachers and his background was staunchly middle-class. The extent to which he was now consciously playing a role he had written himself into is open to almost endless conjecture. Bonnie Raitt, who toured with Waits shortly after the release of *Closing Time*, recalls that after arriving in a new town "he would take a bus to the skid row areas and sit in the lobby of some flophouse hotel all night. Before a gig and afterwards, too. Doing research!"

Yester is adamant that "it wasn't calculated, he just wasn't that kind of guy. I don't think I've met a performer



"MARTHA" TIM BUCKLEY (SEFRONIA, 1973)

A busier, beefier reading, with overcooked strings and Buckley's ethereal voice struggling slightly to match Waits' gravitas. "Tim was a Waits fan," says Robert Duffey. "He got what Tom was."



"OL' '55" EAGLES (ON THE BORDER, 1974)

Heavy on the harmonies and pedal steel, Waits' ragged anthem becomes a polished slice of commercial country-rock. "The Eagles made 'Ol' '55' really antiseptic, y'know," he grumbled in '75.



"ICE CREAM MAN" SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS (BLACK MUSIC FOR WHITE PEOPLE, 1991)

The bluesman breezes through a cool, clicking, subdued version of *Closing*

Time's most raucous moment, living up to his name only towards the end.



"GRAPEFRUIT MOON" NANCY GRIFFITH (RUBY'S TORCH, 2006)

Waits' first great orchestral ballad was handpicked by Griffith for her lush torch songs covers project, and fits the brief to a T.



"LONELY" BAT FOR LASHES (TWO SUNS SPECIAL EDITION, 2009)

A transformative live version from 2007, full of drama and sweeping electronic textures. This is early Waits by way of Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love*.

Tim Buckley:
"He got what
Tom was..."



I WAS THERE!

Tom Waits at the Record Plant, Los Angeles, July 1975

"WHEN HE HIT the radar in 1973, the disheveled Tom Waits orbited LA's soft-rock/singer-songwriter scene without being part of it. I didn't get what he was going for until July '75, when I watched Waits cut his third album in front of a live audience at the Record Plant's big tracking room, which



had been transformed into a mood-lit bistro for the occasion. The performance he gave, accompanied by an ace jazz band and the clinking of ice cubes, was a revelation – a throwback to a time long passed and a taste of something unprecedented. As much as Bruce Springsteen, Waits came off as a true original, creating and inhabiting a three-dimensional character at once theatrical and authentic, as he wisecracked like a vaudeville comic, spewed jazzbo poetry like Lord Buckley, and sang in a voice that vacillated between the gutter and the heavens. That evening on West Third Street, laying down much of *Nighthawks At The Diner*, Waits made a convincing case for himself as our generation's Dean Martin. I thought then that, like Dino, he should have his own primetime variety show – or at the very least, a Vegas lounge act."

BUD SCOPPA



An outtake from the recording sessions for *Nighthawks At The Diner*, the Record Plant, LA, 1975

who was so much coming from the inside." For Raitt, contrived or not, "he inhabited it. There was never any aspect of Tom's persona and music that I questioned."

"It was real – definitely," says Duffey. "Tom would prefer to stay in some fleabag hotel than a Marriott. He just felt more comfortable. Actually, I can remember being really quite surprised when it hit me that this is really him – this isn't a put on, this is the real Tom Waits. What he wrote about was his life." Later in the '70s Waits embraced the skid row lifestyle a little too convincingly, but he was "very together during *Closing Time*," says Yester. While Seiter got "a strong sense that he wasn't writing these songs off of someone else's experiences", he adds that "he wasn't out of it. He wasn't foggy at all, he was very creative and soulful at all times."

Waits had never played live or recorded with a full band before and had barely been in a studio, yet he was clear about what he wanted. Friendly and laidback, he was already intransigent about his art. "He knew exactly who and what he was and why he was doing this music," says Duffey.

"He heard it all in his head," agrees Yester. "I want a stand-up bass, and I want a trumpet in there, and, uhhhh, a guitar..." My job was simply to let everyone hear what was going on, not to tell him what to do or point him in any directions. No-one could get in his head – and if they did they would fuck it up. He liked those guys, and they fit him like a glove for that record. It was really productive, it fell together really well. Everyone was into it, really awake and happening. There was a lot of camaraderie."

The first couple of days at Sunset Sound were spent learning the songs. "Tom would play 'em down, we worked them out, and that was it," says Seiter. "It was pretty simple for us. All his tunes were so comfortable." The drummer was so enamoured with 'Ol' '55' that he insisted on adding a harmony vocal. "I couldn't help myself, I had to sing along with him – I just busted out! I forced myself onto that song. The same with 'Rosie', but he was cool with it. He allowed us our input. He wasn't stone cold against anything you might bring up that was worth a shit. He was very good that way."

Almost everything was recorded live. "A lot of one-take stuff," says Shep Cooke, who came in to reprise those folky

San Diego nights on "I Hope That I Don't Fall In Love With You" and "Old Shoes (And Picture Postcards)". Cooke hung out while some of the other songs were recorded. "When he did 'Martha' he just sat down at the piano and sang the song in one take, and there was literally not a dry eye in the house. It just grabbed everybody." The addition of a cello and a "choir" of voices to "Martha", and particularly the overdubbed strings on the aching "Grapefruit Moon", were the only major production flourishes. Yester recalls, "I said, 'I really hear a string quartet', and he said, 'Ahhh God, strings, I dunno, man...' So I said, 'Let's try it and if you don't like it we'll dump it.' So we did it and he loved it. He started using strings a lot after that."



Closing Time guitarist Shep Cooke and drummer John Seiter

There were moments during the sessions when it became apparent that Waits wasn't quite the careworn veteran of the big city that he sometimes seemed. Yester recalls him getting "studio-itis" one day during mixing at Wally Heider's studio in Hollywood. "So he went out for a walk on Cahuenga Boulevard and went to a bar. He came back white as a sheet, really shaken, and said 'I just came on to a guy...' He had encountered a transsexual or transvestite in the bar who was *really* convincing. 'I thought I was doing great...' He'd been up from San Diego less than a year, and still wasn't quite accustomed to all the ins and outs of how weird Hollywood had gotten." One other occasion, out driving with Shep Cooke, he was arrested on an outstanding jaywalking warrant. "He went off with the police and I went back to the studio to see if anyone had any money," says Cooke. "They didn't, so I drove home, got money from my mother, went down to the station and bailed Tom out of jail about three hours later. He was playing at the Troubadour that night."

For Seiter, making *Closing Time* "was unalloyed pleasure, I didn't want the LP to be over." The closing instrumental title track, featuring Tony Terran on trumpet and Arni Egilsson on bass, was the last song recorded at a hastily assembled session which Yester regards as one of the most memorable of his entire career. "We were in the big room at Western Recorders, where Sinatra recorded, a beautiful recording space. Two takes. Magical. It was one of those times in a studio that was so special no-one wanted to leave. We all hung around for a few hours after the damn thing was recorded: 'Let's hear it again!' That's rare. It ended the album so perfectly. That was the capper, and the last thing we did."

"A VICARIOUS THRILL..."

NIGHTHAWK TALES

Melody Maker's Steve Lake meets Waits in New York, 1975

THIS IS AN old diner on the funky end of 8th Avenue, hung with grease-stained cardboard plaques that say things like "Hamburg + french fries + coleslaw = 95c". Tom Waits feels at home. Impossibly crumpled, three-sizes-too-big, dark grey suit, collar liberally sprinkled with dandruff, torn T-shirt decorated with axle-grease thumbprints and a flat cap. Bloodshot eyes, hollow cheeks and a wispy goatee.

His new LP is called *Nighthawks At The Diner*. To get the necessary nightclub atmosphere, Tom moved tables and chairs into his favourite studio, opened a bar and invited his friends along. "I've always found it awkward to adjust to the studio - that knowledge that you've got the same facilities as any other artist at your disposal. You can go in and make a great album or you can go in and suck raw eggs.

"If I can't find a melody to hang the words on to, I just don't worry about it. I do it anyway, without music. I got a thing on my upcoming album called 'Spare Parts', which is a thing I wrote but in the final analysis it's a solo effort, it's something you do by yourself and nobody can really tell anybody else how to do it.

"It starts off as a vicarious sort of thrill. Through somebody else's work you get the feeling that you could do something like that, but then later you find out how very difficult it actually is to do something meaningful."

We can't avoid talking about Kerouac. "I'm interested in the style mainly. Before I found Kerouac I was kinda groping for something to hang on to, stylistically. I was kinda lost in the '60s. Knowing I wanted to do something creative, not knowing how or where to do it." Waits remained immune to the celebrated San Francisco music explosion. "I thought it was a waste of time, I knew it was going to consume itself pretty rapidly. I was more interested in the early beginnings of that scene than I was in its progress. I didn't go to San Francisco until the whole love and flowers bit was all over, and when I did go I was looking for the City Lights bookstore and the ghost of Jack Kerouac.

"Writing is a much more easy business to discuss," he croaks, "than to actually get down and do it yourself. You can talk for days about how you write or where you write or how you like the room or what you write about."



Natural home: Waits in the coffee shop at Dukes Place Motel, Hollywood, 1975

THE FIRST TOM Waits album was released by Asylum on March 20, 1973. To promote *Closing Time* he headed out into the remnants of Kerouac's America with a three-piece band, opening for everyone from Zappa to Charlie Rich. Within months, "Martha" had been recorded by Tim Buckley and "Ol' 55" covered by a new Asylum band called the Eagles, yet it would be some years before Waits started making a significant impact. "Nothing really happened until well after *Closing Time*," says Duffey. "We were surprised. We thought the LP was going to come out and it was just going to go crazy, but people weren't sure about it. They weren't even sure where to put it. We'd go into record stores on the road and he would always be in the wrong section, with Eydie Gormé and those kind of people. That was tough."

Critics were similarly confused. *Closing Time* attracted generally good reviews, including one in *Rolling Stone* that compared Waits to Randy Newman and Loudon Wainwright III while expressing uncertainty about whether this guy was a parody or for real. At some point in the 40 years since, Waits side-stepped the issue by becoming, in the words of Bonnie Raitt, "his own entire genre".

Closing Time forms only a small part of that long, eccentric narrative, though it does so beautifully, with disarming openness. For some it is a mere teaser for the riches to come; for others it is the last time Waits offered a glimpse of the man behind the curtain. "It's his best album by far," says Cooke. "He actually sings. That rough Satchmo thing he did later was not the real Tom that I knew. Later I was like, 'Who



"No-one could get in his head in the studio - if they did, they would fuck it up"

JERRY YESTER

are you and what have you done with Tom Waits!" A few years after *Closing Time*, Waits intimated that Yester had pushed him into making a more conventional record than he wanted; the producer disagrees. "When Tom came to my house that first day he had pretty much picked the material he wanted. He recorded all of it at my house, with one or two extras. It held together perfectly for me, I never questioned the material. Remember, he was still coming out of a folksy period down in San Diego..."

He quickly turned away from those roots. On the 1974 follow-up, *The Heart Of Saturday Night*, Waits already sounds looser, more jived up, retrieving raps such as "Diamonds On My Windshield" from his 1971 demos and employing a new band and a new producer, Bones Howe. "Bones had a great grasp of jazz musicians in LA and Tom definitely wanted to go in a jazzier direction," says Yester, who continued working with Waits as a string arranger until the early '80s, by which time he had become much more recognisably the off-piste one-man genre he remains today.

Now 63, Waits has travelled a long way from those long, late nights in San Diego and the young man "dreamin' to the twilight", but not so far that you can't trace the road back. "Tom was - and is - a very smart man," says Yester. "*Closing Time* showed him he could go anywhere with his music. And he did." ☺

'77-'11 - a new photobook by Anton Corbijn and Tom Waits - will be released on May 8 by publisher Schirmer-Mosel

Vic Godard, shot by Harry Papadopoulos, who has a book of photos out in April on Birlinn Publishing and an exhibition at the McManus Gallery, Dundee from May 2. Both are called *What Presence! The Rock Photography Of Harry Papadopoulos*



Story: Alastair McKay

Portrait: Harry Papadopoulos

Is Vic There?

Edwyn Collins calls VIC GODARD “the finest composer of his generation”. Godard’s band, SUBWAY SECT, were punk’s brilliant misfits, Clash compadres who wanted to dress like puritans. As Godard goes back to work under the auspices of Collins, *Uncut* salutes one of Britain’s outsider geniuses: a neglected hero of new wave, a radical crooner and, for the past 30 years, a career postman...

VIC GODARD PEERS through his horn-rimmed glasses and reads aloud from a well-thumbed copy of *The Complete Prose Tales Of Alexandr Sergeyevitch Pushkin*. It’s a short story called “Egyptian Nights”, about a poet in St Petersburg visited by an Italian improvisatore, an artist able to compose songs at will. Which bit does Godard read? To be honest, with the noise being made by his band, it’s hard to tell. It’s like a garage band jamming while a Dansette plays “The Gift” by The Velvet Underground.

Meanwhile, the audience at The Boston Arms in North London in late 2012 looks on impassively. Perhaps some have come to see a punk revival show by a veteran of The Clash’s White Riot tour. Certainly, their curiosity will be sated by brilliant, chaotic versions of songs by Godard’s former band, the Subway Sect – “Parallel Lines”, “Nobody’s Scared” and – best of all – “Ambition”, which welds existential ambivalence to a glorious driving melody. At 55, Godard is wiry and energetic in cargo pants and untucked shirt. Tonight, his band is The Sexual Objects, led by Davy Henderson, ex The Fire Engines and The Nectarine No 9. Henderson first encountered Godard as a 16-year-old, when he saw the Subway Sect at the Edinburgh Playhouse in 1977.

“It was a monochromatic image of otherworldliness,” remembers Henderson later, “but rooted completely in the now. Vic was ripping up bits of paper. It reminds me of subsequently reading about Hugo Ball and his first Dada performance in 1916. It was like he was tearing up what he was singing. I didn’t know anything about the

Subway Sect. It was as if they just landed from nowhere.”

Godard (real name Victor Napper) is one of the great nearly men of punk, an improvisatore with the knack of abandoning the zeitgeist just before it becomes apparent. As well as being one of the lasting inspirations from punk’s

I'M YOUR FAN

Edwyn Collins:

“I first saw Vic in Edinburgh in 1977 at the Playhouse. The Clash were there, The Jam and the Buzzcocks and the Subway Sect and The Slits. I was 17 and the Subway Sect were mesmerising. Rob, the guitarist, couldn’t play, the bass player couldn’t play, and the drum player, hmmm, debatable, but so what? I liked the position the Subway Sect took. It was exciting and unusual. From the beginning of Orange Juice, I wanted to associate myself with that strand of punk rock.

first wave, he embraced easy-listening, fashioning himself as a new wave Tony Bennett in the early 1980s. He was there during the subsequent jazz revival. Yet by mismanagement, ill-fortune and design, he consistently managed to sidestep commercial success. The records were lost, delayed or abandoned. The band was sacked, or Godard was. But still, the influence of his angular, literary pop looms large, not least on Postcard Records and bands like Primal Scream and The Jesus And Mary Chain. A documentary on Godard, *Derailed Sense*, is due this year. According to Edwyn Collins, Godard is “the finest composer of his generation”. Irvine Welsh, meanwhile, describes Godard as “one of the greatest music talents we have”. So what happened? “I’m always out of synch,” Godard tells *Uncut* with a wry laugh. “That’s what I’m all about. Not just in music. I’m out of synch in all forms of existence.”

GODARD GREW UP in Barnes, in South-West London, and his earliest musical dabbings involved writing lyrics and fitting them to existing songs at the local youth club on a Sunday night. School friend

Rob Symmons was learning acoustic guitar, and he and Godard used to travel uptown in search of R’n’B shows.

“It was hard to get any records,” remembers Godard. “In 1975, we had this shop, Bizarre Records, on Praed Street. That’s where we used to go, to get The 13th Floor



Symmons, Packham, Godard and Myers at Rehearsal Rehearsals, London, 1976

➤ Elevators, The Velvet Underground. We used to send off for stuff as well, like Television's first single, 'Little Johnny Jewel'. I'd never heard anything like that in my life. It was fantastic."

Everything changed when Godard and Symmons walked past The Marquee on February 12, 1976, when an appearance by the Sex Pistols degenerated into a riot. "We arrived when all the kerfuffle was going on and that's what attracted us," says Godard. "It happened in the doorway, you saw chairs being thrown. From then on, we went to every Pistols gig we could."

Inspired, Godard, Symmons, Paul Myers (bass) and Paul Packham (drums) formed the first lineup of Subway Sect. A few weeks later, they were approached by Malcolm McLaren at a Ramones/Talking Heads show at the Roundhouse. Symmons had made a Subway Sect T-shirt, which caught the eye of the Pistols' manager. Recalls Godard, "He said: 'Oh, you've got a group?' Yes, we lied. We practised round the corner from his shop, so he said he'd come and see us. He wasn't impressed. We were abysmal. But we did have the lyrics. I suppose that's what made him persevere. We weren't singing about any rubbish. He said, 'You might be able to do it, it depends how dedicated you are.'"

McLaren paid for a week's rehearsal, and at the end of it, the Subway Sect had just about learned four songs. They also found themselves added to the bill of the now legendary 100 Club Punk Special on September 20, 1976, alongside the Pistols, The Clash and Siouxsie & The Banshees.

Bassist Paul Myers remembers "how nervous we

"Once we had my mum's lamp and settee onstage. Cans were flying across the settee..."

VIC GODARD



were. I'd only picked up a bass about a month before. We went up to do our first number, and within 10 seconds they stopped us. People talk about punk bands not being able to play, but these people were musicians. I remember Steve Jones and Mick Jones saying, 'You're totally out of tune.' We didn't even realise then that the guitar and the bass needed to be in tune. They came up and tuned our guitars."

All the same, Clash manager Bernard Rhodes offered them a slot on the May 1977 White Riot tour, alongside The Clash, Buzzcocks, The Slits and The Jam. "We only had four songs," admits Godard. "So Bernard said: 'What you need to do before the tour is keep doing gigs, and every time you do gigs, do more songs.' We did three more for the next gig, which was an absolute disaster. From that moment it was obvious that the drummer [Packham] was going to leave. He was a great bloke, but he didn't like being humiliated on the stage."

Packham's departure began the first of many lineup changes. He was replaced by Mark Laff, a more proficient player. "He was light years ahead of us," admits Godard. "But it didn't help, because his style of drumming was the opposite of what beginners need to play along to. Keith Moon was his idol. We needed someone like Charlie Watts to let us learn how to do these songs."

Before the end of the tour, Laff got a better offer. "He joined Generation X on the last date, in Dunstable," says Godard. "It was a great gig, though. We knew he was leaving and we were very resentful, so we went to the roadies, and said, 'Look, we're gonna set up this thing where Mark's drum kit explodes and he thinks it's on fire.' So at a particular point in a song they set this dry ice off, and he was lost in a cloud, and they started pushing him out of the way. We brought on Palmolive [of The Slits] from behind a curtain and carried on with her. Then The Slits came on and we did this mad version of 'Sister Ray', with The Slits and The Prefects. The crowd went bananas!"

THE EARLY YEARS of Subway Sect are shaped, perhaps misshaped, by the group's strained relationship with their manager. Godard says Subway Sect always had a suspicion that Rhodes saved his best ideas for The Clash. But he may also have performed a service by ignoring some of Subway Sect's more outlandish thoughts. There was the time they suggested replacing their grey garb with Puritan costumes. "The Clash had a much better image than us," admits Godard. "We thought we were too drab, what could we do that would have a bit more of an impact? What we came up with was those big white shirts with a point down the front,

BUYING VIC

Your guide to the best of Godard on CD



A RETROSPECTIVE 1977-81

ROUGH TRADE, 1984

This set comes closest to

capturing the angular poetry of the early Sect. It also illustrates Godard's rapid journey from existential punk - "Nobody's Scared" - to Left Bank crooner, on "Stop That Girl". For a broader summary of Godard's career try *Twenty Odd Years* (Motion, 1999) and *Singles Anthology* (Motion, 2005).

9/10



WHAT'S THE MATTER, BOY?

ODDBALL, 1980

For their debut, Godard

abandoned punk discord for a poppy, swinging production. Purists may balk, but the undemanding arrangements expose the subtlety of the songs. Highlights include a spry "Split Up The Money" and a skiffly version of the classic "Stool Pigeon", which betrays the influence of Television.

8/10



THE END OF THE SURREY PEOPLE

POSTCARD, 1993

Includes

Vic's rousing tribute, "Johnny Thunders", the glorious riffing of "Nullify My Reputation (I'm Gonna)", and the spry soul-pop of "Won't Turn Back". The highlight is the title track, which marries Godard's underdog sneer with wiry slide guitar. Vinyl re-release coming soon on AED.

8/10



WE COME AS ALIENS

OVERGROUND, 2010

A glorious combination

of ringing guitars and soul choruses, with Vic addressing Post Office reform on "Back In The Community" and contriving to rhyme "call me daft" with "Géricault's raft" on "Music Of A Werewolf".

7/10



In tune (just about)... Subway Sect at the 100 Club Punk Special, September 20, 1976; and right, in their early '80s guise



Vic Godard And The Subway Sect

POLO-FIDELITY

"THE NORTHERN SOUL SET"

How a bootleg of a Subway Sect gig helped shaped Postcard Records

SUBWAY SECT's appearance on the White Riot tour had a huge influence on the shape of punk in Scotland, particularly on Postcard Records. Further inspiration came in March, 1980, when Postcard boss Alan Horne and Orange Juice drummer Steven Daly attended a Subway Sect show in Camden.

"I was in London with Horne," says Daly, "and noticed that Vic and co were playing the Music Machine with the past-their-sell-by-date Banshees. Horne took a mono Sony boombox into the venue and recorded the show. Vic's band wore polos and chinos. That was an important statement at the time: if you weren't

going to fall for that goth shite you'd better find some kind of opposing look and sound."

"We had really bright Fred Perrys," continues Godard. "But fake ones we got at the market. The music didn't go down well with the audience. They thought it was an in-joke."

The "Northern Soul set", as Horne's tape became known, can be found online, and though the fidelity isn't high, you can detect its relationship to the Postcard sound. Orange Juice borrowed Godard's "Holiday Hymn", and Horne repaid the favour by releasing Godard's *End Of The Surrey People* on the revived Postcard label.

a buckle belt, doublets and hose and those shoes with a big brass buckle on the front, and a pointy hat. We told Bernie about this and he just laughed."

Then there was their idea for "a static ballet, where you moved to specific positions for different parts of the song, with a white cross on the stage. Rob's idea was that instead of having a cross, you'd just glue the shoes to the stage. We actually did a gig in 1978, where we had a standard lamp, a settee, and a coffee table, and people making tea with us on stage. But the audience didn't take to it. All these cans were flying across the settee... haha. It was my mum's settee and standard lamp. They ended up on the front cover of [March 1978 debut single] 'Nobody's Scared'."

Later that year, when Subway Sect supported Buzzcocks on an autumn tour, Rhodes did attend to the group's image: "He bought us these V-neck jumpers. He thought I was being overshadowed by our guitarist, Johnny Britton. He was quite a flashy individual onstage. I was really reserved. So Bernie thought the group should wear red V-necks, but I would wear a white one, to signify I was distinct. But we set fire to them, so they had a burnt hole where the heart was!"

"Vic certainly gave the impression of being his own man," remembers Buzzcocks drummer John Maher. "You weren't going to get rock'n'roll moves. He wasn't a frontman in the conventional sense, but that worked in his favour. Imagewise, they were a refreshing change from the identikit punk bands that cropped up from '77 onwards. It's like their image was based on having no image. No Mohicans or bin bags. Vic used to wear suede slip-on shoes and cardigans!"

"It wasn't a performance with us," insists Paul Myers. "A lot of the stuff, like Vic having his house key round his neck, he's so forgetful that that's what he had to do. Vic used to read the lyrics off paper, which is odd because he has a photographic memory."

Despite the success of the Sect's second single, November 1978's "Ambition", Rhodes dumped, or chose not to collect, recordings made for the group's proposed debut album. "It didn't really get scrapped," explains Godard. "It just never went onto the stage where you mix it. It gathered dust on the shelves of the studio. Nobody knows what happened to the tape. It probably got used for something like a Dennis Bovell album. They did that in those days. Tape was expensive."

Instead, the debut album by Vic Godard & The Subway Sect arrived in December, 1980. *What's The Matter, Boy?* had been two years in the making, during which time the band themselves had been replaced by Rhodes with a soul outfit called the Black Arabs – who'd played on *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* album – and a rhythm section consisting of former Clash drummer Terry Chimes and his brother, John. Clash soundman Mickey Foote produced. "Bernard put together



the musicians to record the songs that maybe he didn't think had been done justice," says Godard. "But by then, I wasn't going to do the songs in that style, either. I was changing the songs to reflect the fact we now had the Black Arabs doing harmonies, and congas, and a really good rhythm section."

Godard hated the sound of the record. "I thought it was dire. I had so little control in the actual mixing and production of it. The only time I got any control was one day they went for lunch, and I didn't. I stayed in the studio and did a mix of one of the songs that was exactly how I wanted it to sound. I thought, 'That sounds fantastic!' Then when they came back from lunch they said, 'That's terrible, Vic. Terrible.'" As the '80s progressed, Godard's tastes shifted further towards jazz. The 1981 single, "Stop That Girl", came from material Godard wrote for the Black Arabs to take on tour supporting Dexys Midnight Runners. Meanwhile,





Vic Godard in East Sheen, London, April 1986

the latest version of Subway Sect – Rob Marche, Dave Collard, Chris Bostock, Sean McLusky – took up a Thursday night residency at Soho's Club Left, founded on a promise of "cool, bop and swing".

"The jazzy thing developed into a great scene – we had a great time," says Godard. The lineup recorded *Songs For Sale* (1982) – an album of 1940s-style jazz numbers which featured Godard on the cover dressed in a tuxedo and bowtie – before things turned sour. After a tour supporting Altered Images, it was Godard's turn to be sacked by his own band, who went on to form JoBoxers. "They were ambitious and they could see that I wasn't," admits Godard. "And they wanted to do music that wasn't jazz, that was more punchy."

Godard persevered, however. In 1984, he recorded the album *T.R.O.U.B.L.E.* at the prestigious, expensive London studio, Olympic, with Working Week, Jumping Jive and Shakatak's backing singers. "That sat on the shelves, unmixed for about two and a half years," Godard explains. "Then Geoff Travis rang me up and said I want to get this out now, on Rough Trade. I lost interest after that album, because it was so awful. I couldn't believe how awful it was. They spent a lot of money on it, but they didn't spend anything on mixing it. Luckily, Geoff Travis, years later, gave me the master tapes and that's how I did *In T.R.O.U.B.L.E. Again* (1998). I got rid of all the crap vocals and did them again at Edwyn's. Then I was really happy with it. It's what happens – making a real mess of things, then years later putting it right."

THE CONSTANT WRANGLING took its toll. In the mid-'80s, Godard retired from music, taking on a job as a postman, a job he still does today. "Even at the Post Office, I'm totally out of synch. I don't do the job that any one person would do. I'm not in one town – I'm all over the shop, without actually knowing until the morning where I'm going. That's why I love it there – it's a total adventure."

His return to music was prompted by reading Chris Salewicz's obituary for Johnny Thunders in 1991. Godard penned the anthemic tribute "Johnny Thunders", which came out on the Rough Trade Singles Club in 1992. It was followed by *The End Of The Surrey People* (1993), much of which was recorded, Joe Meek-style, in Edwyn Collins' London flat. Collins added guitar, and some of the debonair

SECT SENSE

VIC ON FILM

Godard flicks coming to screens soon...

THE SECT'S EARLY career is largely undocumented on film, save for a brief clip in Wolfgang Pild's 1977 *Punk In London*.

But lately, Godard has attracted the attention of several filmmakers, including Graham Bendel, whose "aesthetically lo-fi anti-documentary", *Derailed Sense*, was due to screen at the 2012 Raindance Festival before being pulled, following a dispute between Godard and the director. Godard insists the film will come out soon, citing concerns about the quality of the music. Bendel is more cautious. "There are cuts being asked for. I certainly won't put it out in an incomplete state. But we have begun trying to compromise on something we're both happy with." Bendel says he is "puzzled" by Godard's objections. "No-one has made a feature about Subway Sect before so, understandably, he's been a bit freaked out by the experience."

Two other mini-documentaries are underway. Martyn Smith filmed recent VICism events, including Godard's collaboration with ex-Orange Juice guitarist James Kirk. Godard's trip to Catalonia to work with the group Mates Mates was documented by Lluís Huedo for a project called *Vic → Vic*. In the film, Vic visits the town of Vic in Catalonia, does a Spanish post round, and dresses up as Salvador Dalí.

Derailed Sense



Godard and The Sexual Objects perform at London's Boston Arms, December 7, 2012



playfulness of late Orange Juice, and the band includes Primal Scream keyboardist Martin Duffy, Amazulu's Claire Kenny, and Sex Pistols drummer, Paul Cook. Meanwhile, Godard's Post Office colleague, Paul "Wiz" Baker – who helped coax him out of retirement – also played.

"Bedroom recordings were always my favourite," confirms Godard. "It's the most enjoyable way of doing things." Collins agrees: "That was a brilliant time working on that record. Vic'd come in the afternoons with lots of ideas, go down to the bookies and study the form, come back and write some more songs."

Godard still had little appetite for being in a group, but eased his way back by playing guitar in The Long Decline along with Alternative TV's Mark Perry. He also played with The Bitter Springs, who doubled as the Subway Sect when Godard needed a band, filling in for over eight years until Godard reconstituted his own group. The Springs also recorded an EP of songs from *Blackpool* – Godard's skiffly soundtrack to Irvine Welsh's ill-fated 2002 musical. "Vic's a genius songwriter," considers Welsh. "It was a privilege to work with him, his songs were by far the strongest element of the show. His styles vary from dark rock'n'roll to pure beautiful pop. Visionaries like Edwyn and Davy will always want to work with Vic – he's very much a kindred spirit."

Latterly, Godard has begun to curate his back catalogue, in an attempt to salvage some of the projects that got away. On *1978 Now*, he reworked the songs from the Subway Sect's "lost" first album and he is currently working on *1979 Now* at Edwyn Collins' studio, recreating a Northern Soul set which proved influential on Postcard [see panel, p45]. Paul Cook now acts as his de facto musical director. Original bass player Paul Myers is back.

"It feels a lot better than the '70s," explains Myers. "One thing is constant. I had no money in the '70s, and playing with Vic now I've got no money either. The thing about Vic – he's not pushy or ambitious for himself. I thought all along, 'I'm playing with a fantastic songwriter that hasn't got the accolades he deserves.' I always picture Vic as a tennis player, like John McEnroe – he's got so many shots, he comes up to the net and he can't think of the shot to play. He's so talented. Maybe he's too talented."

"I rate Vic as highly as I rate Tom Verlaine," says Douglas MacIntyre of The Sexual Objects and Creeping Bent Records, whose efforts have done much to rehabilitate Godard's reputation. "To me Vic is the greatest talent that came out of the punk movement in terms of his lyrics, the aesthetic, things that are under the radar. And I guess because he never made the right record, that made it more elusive, more mysterious."

It has been a long, confusing trek, and Godard seems happy to keep following his impulses, no matter where they take him. Looking back on the 35 years of mishaps that have kept him in the underground, he remains sanguine. "We just went with what happened," he says with a wry smile. "I get pummelled around by what the forces dictate." ☪

Vic Godard's single, *Caught In Midstream/You Bring Out The Demon In Me*, is out now on AED Records

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CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

The Beach Boys

BRIAN WILSON, MIKE LOVE and BRUCE JOHNSTON recall 50 years of endless disharmony. "I was a bit nervous to be around the guys after such a long time..."



LOS ANGELES, 1962

BRIAN WILSON: We took off real fast on our career and that is a very sentimental picture for me to see. Because it was before I had my right hairdo. And before Mike went bald.

MIKE LOVE: This is the "Surfin' Safari" sleeve, dressed in our Pendleton shirts. We identified the surfers of Southern California had a certain dress, so we dressed that way. Surf bands surfed figuratively as well as literally – it was a state of mind.



LOS ANGELES, 1963

WILSON: I look sensitive and young. That's when we really started going. Was it stressful to be writing and recording so much? Well, I was young and adventurous and creative, so I learned very fast how to produce records, because I listened to Phil Spector's.

LOVE: The call to production and creativity was so strong with [Brian]. It'd be a bit much to think that anybody could withstand that pace, and not have it take some sort of a toll.



LONDON, 1964

WILSON: I took a video camera to London. I remember taking pictures at Piccadilly Circus. I thought it was a very nice town, very different. That was the first time I'd been abroad.

LOVE: This makes me think of my cousin Brian and I singing Four Freshmen songs with a young lady we met over there. I've always loved England. I spent time in Brighton, and in 1965 I bought a 1948 MG. I also had a Jaguar and a Rolls-Royce. Darn dandyish...



SAN DIEGO ZOO, 1966

WILSON: *Pet Sounds*. I did feel like I was peaking at songwriting. "Good Vibrations" was that year. My collaborator Tony Asher and I both thought, "God, we're really into this." Did it seem like there was no limit to what I could do? Yeah. That's how it felt, back in 1966.

LOVE: I was in India at the Maharishi's place, and Paul McCartney told me, "Mike, you really oughta take more care with your album covers!"



PACIFIC OCEAN, 1976

WILSON: I was scared to go on that yacht. They were saying, "Come on, Brian, you can do it." I weighed 250. It wasn't the best time of my life.

LOVE: That brings back some memories, all right [laughs]. Brian was under the care of the notorious Gene Landy. We welcomed Brian back creatively, whenever it was plausible.

BRUCE JOHNSTON: Bruce Johnston is not in that picture, thank God, because some of those guys discovered drugs, and that's not my thing.

LOS ANGELES, 1985

WILSON: Before this, The Beach Boys had told me at the end of 1982 they didn't need my services. That hurt my feelings.

LOVE: This is after Dennis [Wilson] passed away in 1983. Obviously that was a drag, he was my cousin. The thing is, Dennis was out of control with his addictions. I remember thinking it was kind of miraculous he lasted as long as he did. An accident waiting to happen? Yeah, unfortunately.



LOS ANGELES, 1988

WILSON: I was with Dr Landy, and he suggested that I try to make a solo album. And this picture actually doesn't look like me at all. My eyes look half-shut. Doesn't look natural? Right. I have mixed feelings about Dr Landy. In some ways he was quite a slave driver.

LOVE: Landy got Brian's weight under control, and more productive. There's a lot of bad things about Landy, but that was a good thing.

JOHNSTON: Brian looks like the guy who invented health. Lovely.



HOLLYWOOD, 1990

LOVE: "Kokomo" had just become our first No 1 after a real long while – "Good Vibrations" was the most recent, in '66, and then 22 years later, just like clockwork! It was fantastic to achieve that again. We invited Brian to sing on "Kokomo", but Gene Landy would have had to have been the producer and co-writer. Terry Melcher thought he'd done pretty well in the production arena, and we'd written it with John Phillips. Landy was intrusive in that way.

VENICE BEACH, LOS ANGELES, 1995

LOVE: It was just a fun thing to be on *Baywatch Nights*. It was fun interacting with David Hasselhoff.

WILSON: Is that Carl [second left]? Carl died three years after that. It was devastating to me, but I got over it.

JOHNSTON: Horrible picture of Brian. It looks like we made him be in it. I'm smiling in the *Baywatch* jacket. And Carl's somewhere between Roy Orbison and Johnny Cash, being a loyal, good sport.



MALIBU, 2012

LOVE: Brian has his ways of doing things, and so do I. By agreement we came together, but the 50th anniversary was always the term to it – anno, meaning "year"...

JOHNSTON: The best show of the tour was the Royal Albert Hall. I felt like other voices were singing, I had no control. It was like a miracle.

WILSON: I was a bit nervous to be around the guys after such a long time. I didn't mind when Mike went on without us, as I had my solo career. I wanna record some of the songs on *The Beach Boys Love You* and do them onstage, in my solo career – if I ever do something again.

The Beach Boys: Live In Concert 50th Anniversary Tour DVD is out now

'People like to connect with their traditions. The echoes go back and back and back...'

Story:
Andy Gill

On a rainy day in Southern California, the matchless RICHARD THOMPSON takes stock of five decades in music. From Fairport Convention's first adventures to his outstanding new *Electric* set, via surf-shanties, folk-funk and bittersweet home thoughts from abroad... "They tell me even my happiest songs are tinged with sadness — I can't win, really!"

DON'T BELIEVE whichever lying bastard it was who sang about it never raining in Southern California. It's overcast, grey and drizzly as Richard Thompson and I stroll along a windswept, deserted Venice Beach in search of lunch. Los Angeles, he tells me, has 329 guaranteed days of sunshine each year, and I've managed to hit that tiny envelope when it not only doesn't shine, but actually teems with rain.

He's full of useful information like that. Despite its proximity to upscale, tony Marina Del Rey, the southern end of Venice Beach where I'm billeted, he informs me, used to be the haunt of Vietnam-vet junkies and gangs, a hot-spot of crime and sleaze. Just what I needed to hear, I think. But then, Richard Thompson has always had an eye for the maggot in the salad. His songs tend towards the melancholy, if not the downright tragic, and he's made something of a speciality of the darker impulses that drive us: betrayal, revenge, defeat, despair, that kind of thing. Which helps make his love songs, such as the widely covered "Dimming Of The Day", all the more emotionally acute.

Long established as one of the driving forces behind the '60s folk-rock boom through his work with Fairport Convention, and subsequently as a duo with his then-wife Linda, Thompson is a quintessentially British artist, his songwriting rooted in Albion's phrase and fable, and his virtuoso guitar technique likewise eschewing the American blues influence that drove most of his peers, in favour of native folk modes. Yet he's resided the past three decades in Los Angeles, a short distance up the coast in Santa Monica, from where he keeps a weather eye on Blighty through the media. Despite this, his work has remained stubbornly immune to American influences — his new album, *Electric*, still has a salty Anglo tang about it, and the only place name-checked in a title is Salford.

UNCUT: Your new album is called *Electric*. That's a very blunt title.

RICHARD THOMPSON: Yes, very blunt. You probably think I had something to do with it. Which I didn't. That was the record company. I think they wanted to make some sort of statement about the music, about who I am, I suppose. It's fine with me, I'm happy with it. But I can't admit to somebody else's idea.

RICHARD THOMPSON CV

- **April 3, 1949** Born, Notting Hill Gate, London
- **1967** Founder member of Fairport Convention
- **1969** *Liege & Lief* released
- **1972** Marries Linda Pettifer; releases first solo album, *Henry The Human Fly*
- **1973** Records first Richard & Linda LP, *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*
- **1974** Converts to Sufism, goes to East Anglian commune
- **1977** Leaves commune, reconnects with music biz
- **1982** Final Richard & Linda Thompson LP, *Shoot Out The Lights*. The couple separate
- **1983** Re-commences solo career with *Hand Of Kindness*
- **1985** Marries Nancy Covey, moves to California
- **1991** Releases *Rumor And Sigh*, his most commercially successful album
- **1999** Releases *Mock Tudor*, his last album for a major label
- **2002** Instigates '1000 Years Of Popular Music' project
- **2007** Releases the self-financed *Sweet Warrior* to widespread acclaim
- **2011** Receives OBE in New Year's Honours list
- **2013** Releases *Electric*





"HE DOESN'T PLAY SAFE..."

Buddy Miller on working with Richard Thompson

ELECTRIC WAS RECORDED at the Nashville home studio of Buddy Miller, an old-school, analogue operator who demurs even at the notion of his home being a studio.

"I wouldn't call it a studio, but there's a lot of nice old gear in my house," says Miller. "It's an old house in Nashville, and you can gaze out of the window at the birds. Richard can name all of these birds, he's a bird-watcher – so he can play a guitar solo and watch a bird at the same time. The other side of the coin is that the birds are really loud, and they make their way onto the record. So you just take the good with the bad."

Miller played rhythm guitar on some tracks, but found it a daunting prospect working with one of his heroes.

"The first time I played with Richard, I looked towards him and just stopped, because I realised, 'Man, most of what I was gonna play, I ripped off from you!'"

Thompson's strength as a guitarist, Miller says, is his imagination.

"His greatest quality is allowing himself to go way out on a limb. Maybe that's not an aspect of his playing so much as it's just Richard's character. He doesn't play it safe. That's what's exciting about it. You wonder, 'How's he going to get out of this one?' But he always does."

Why did you choose to record with Buddy Miller?

I really liked the things he'd done in his home studio: the Solomon Burke record, the Emmylou thing, Shawn Colvin, and he seems very adaptable in recording situations. I just thought it would be a relaxed and productive environment to work in, which it turned out to be: we recorded very quickly, I think we did the bulk of 16 tracks in four days, which is almost illegally fast. This was basically just my trio: myself and Michael Jerome on drums, Taras Prodaniuk on bass. And if we needed a second guitar on a song, Buddy would sit in with us. Everything recorded to 16-track analogue, which is great. Lots of ancient microphones around the place. It's the first time I've done the full analogue thing in a while.

What are the pros and cons of recording an album yourself and licensing it to a label, as opposed to signing to a label?

I've done that for the last four or five records. It means that you own the production company, and you control everything: you record it the way you want it, you get the artwork the way you want it, and you offer it to a label. Also, it reverts to you afterwards: five or ten years on, you get the whole thing back, which is fantastic. In the old days, that didn't happen at all.

So you still don't own some of your own back catalogue?

I own nothing. None of it. Although there's a test case now saying that everything should revert after 30 years – though that's publishing, as well as recording rights, that should become your property. If that succeeds, watch out for the avalanche of applicants, including me.

What was the first song you ever wrote? And the first song you were satisfied with?

I had a few misfirings before I got things right. The first songs I wrote that got recorded were on the first Fairport album,



Teen Convention: Fairport at the Saville Theatre, London, October 1, 1967; (l-r) Judy Dyble, Simon Nicol, Martin Lamble, Ashley Hutchings, Richard Thompson



"Liege & Lief seemed more radical than David Bowie or Led Zeppelin"

RICHARD THOMPSON

and they were all co-writes. I couldn't tell you which came first of those. But "Meet On The Ledge" was only about the fifth song I ever wrote.

As a songwriter, you seem to have a keen ear for the darker emotional hues, for betrayal and resentment and melancholy and so on.

Why is that? Does it have to do with the fact that you're learning from British traditional music?

I think that's absolutely a factor, yes. My father was a Scot in exile, and thus more Scottish than the Scots, and we had shelves of Rabbin Burns books, and piles of Jimmy Shand records – it was Sunday afternoon teatime of the soul, there'd be nothing else to do except your homework, and you don't

want to do your homework, so I'd pull books off the shelves and read them, things like my grandfather's book of Border ballads, the ballads of Walter Scott, the songs of Robert Burns – without thinking that this was something I might apply later in life, though I suppose it was going in somewhere.

So what's the happiest song that you've ever written?

People tell me that even my happiest songs are tinged with sadness, so I can't win, really! I think of a song like "I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight" as being



With Sandy Denny, 1969

Santa Monica,
November 2012



fairly upbeat and up-tempo, as it's intended to be, but there's something about the delivery, or something, that doesn't quite cut it with people. Having said that, "...Bright Lights" is in four movies at the moment, which is quite strange.

Does being an American resident give you greater clarity when considering things English in song?

I go back to England a lot, so I get the immersion side of it; then I get the perspective side of it when I'm away. I think it's important, at least once in your life, to get out of your environment and go somewhere else, and realise that perhaps the place you grew up in isn't quite as important as you thought it was. But to be a writer you do need to have a consistent voice, and mine's still very British, and never American. I don't feel like I'll ever write a surf song. Perhaps a surf shanty?

When you start writing a song, do you always have a fair idea how it's going to end, or do the characters sometimes develop a life of their own and take it in another direction, as some authors claim?

Yes, but with a song it doesn't take as long as a novel. The characters aren't going quite as far or as deep. Sometimes you know the end of the song and have to work out the rest of it, so you're working backwards. Some songs start in the middle – you see a scene, and then have to figure out if there's a consequence, or a prequel. But often, you start a song and you almost want it to surprise you, to take you somewhere you haven't been before.



In Fairport, was there a "Eureka!" moment when you realised there was something unique about what you were doing?

We were aware of it, we were self-aware that we were covering new territory. I think that Ashley Hutchings had the original idea, that we should be doing something that was more true to our own roots and our own experiences. And when we had our crash, and our drummer [Martin Lamble] was killed, we realised that this was a watershed moment for us,

TEST FLIGHT

"IT WAS AN ECCENTRIC RECORD..."

Richard on his 1972 solodebut, *Henry The Human Fly*



AFTER QUITTING Fairport Convention in the early '70s, Thompson recorded *Henry The Human Fly*, an attempt to extend Fairport's folk-rock innovations into a form of rock'n'roll rooted in traditional folk modes. Punters, perhaps put off by the creepy fly-head mask that Thompson sported on the sleeve, failed to respond, and it became the worst-selling album in the entire history of Warner Brothers.

"Even at the time, I was aware that it was an eccentric record, but I thought, 'What

the hell, I'm an eccentric person, so I'll make an eccentric record,'" explains Thompson. "I didn't even tell my label I was going in the studio. I went in and recorded it, and sent them the bill! I thought, 'They're never going to go for this record, so I'll do it and send them the bill and see if they notice.' And it was cheap enough that they just thought, 'Oh, it's Thompson expressing himself, we'll cover the £2,000, or whatever it is.' These were the days when £15,000 would get you a pretty good record, so a couple of grand was fairly invisible."



Richard & Linda perform "A Heart Needs A Home" on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, March 1975

ANIMAL MAGIC

BEAR NECESSITIES!

Thompson working with Werner Herzog

IN 2005 RICHARD Thompson got to work with one of his heroes, visionary German director Werner Herzog, on *Grizzly Man*, the acclaimed documentary about bear enthusiast Timothy Treadwell. "He's fantastic," enthuses Thompson. "I was very excited to work with Herzog, because I'm a huge fan. Werner has come up with some of the great images in cinema history. And he chooses music



very carefully for his films – often he might have just one piece in the whole thing. *Grizzly Man* was an unusual piece of music, because it was improvised, pretty much. We weren't allowed to play to the picture, Werner wanted each piece to stand on its own merits, so we'd look at the cue, time it, then go back to the studio and remember the emotional shape of the scene."



The "fantastic" Werner Herzog

You're a bit like the British Neil Young, in that there's an equilibrium between the acoustic and electric sides of your art, and also between you as a songwriter and as a guitarist. Do you ever feel you may be short-changing one side?

I'd love to play electric more live, because it's expensive to take a band out on the road, and I can't always afford to do it. To earn a living and pay the rent I have to play solo. Which has been great, and I've really learned a lot about musical communication and creating an atmosphere with the audience, so I'm not sorry that it's happened, but I'd certainly like to redress the balance a little bit. I'm gonna be mostly electric next year, which is great.

You're unusual among English guitarists of your generation in not being rooted in the blues. What was feeding into your style that was so different?

It's probably more folksy, much more based in British tradition, and Celtic music. In Celtic music you still get bent notes, and the scales overlap with the blues scales – English, Scottish and Irish music all use the same pentatonic scale that you hear in the blues, so it relates. I'm probably just using more of those old traditional British scales to base it on. I also listen to a lot of classical music as well, particularly 20th-Century classical music, from Ravel and Debussy onwards, up to the weird stuff, so some of that creeps into the playing.

And would I be right in thinking that it's not necessarily guitars that have influenced you? I hear pipes in there, especially.

Yes, absolutely. I use a lot of drones, and that is derived from Scottish and Irish piping. And traditional fiddle-playing, too: a lot of the ornaments I use are traditional fiddle ornaments.

If you were to appear on *Desert Island Discs*, I imagine your luxury item would be a guitar, but which guitar?

Well, if you're on a desert island, perhaps you'd get one of those Kevlar guitars – they're totally stable in any situation. A friend of mine took one to the South Pole, and recorded an album there on it. And in a desert island situation, with all that salt air and damp, you'd need something very stable.

And of course, if someone shoots or throws a dagger at you, it would protect you.

That's true. And you could use it as a paddle, if you built a raft.

Let's talk about a few of the new songs. "Stuck On The Treadmill" has a very odd rhythm, fluid but funky.

Funky, that's the word. We think it's a new genre, funk-folk, or maybe folk-funk. Bootsie Collins meets Judy Collins! It's a slightly unusual chord sequence, and it's one of those working-man songs, times are hard and it's reflecting the unemployment situation, and even if you have a job, how tough it is to get a decent wage out of it.

"Good Things Happen To Bad People" – do you have specific examples of this?

I do. But it depends on whether you believe in karma, that at some point in this life or the afterlife you're going to get it in the neck for your misdeeds. Because Stalin and Hitler didn't quite get enough back in their lifetimes; there must be a balance somewhere, we hope! It's not so much a philosophical statement as a song about jealousy. Of course, I myself do not have a jealous bone in my body.

that if we had to rebuild the band, we should start with a project; so the *Liege & Lief* album was our project, that this would be all traditional music. And 40 years later, I'm still writing music that's based on a British root. At the time it seemed really radical, more radical than David Bowie or Led Zeppelin, it really seemed like the most revolutionary thing we could do. And at the same time, we realised that it wasn't going to make us incredibly popular, or rich!

I can remember hearing "A Sailor's Life" and thinking, 'Oh, this is different, this has something nobody else has done.' I was surprised to learn it was a first take. Did you know you'd caught lightning in a bottle when you did it?

Yes, the nice moment in recording is when you go into the control room to hear a playback and it sounds way better than you remember playing it. The playback of that just sounded huge, and interesting. It was one of the first times that we had ever played with Dave Swarbrick, and you can hear he and I feeling each other out: we can tell it's in D, but we're not sure if it's major or minor, so we're going backwards and forwards between them, seeing which one works, or just avoiding them completely and keeping it modal for long periods. It's a very fortunate piece of music. We thought, 'That's it, there's no point in doing another take.'

Was it a wrench leaving Fairport? I know you still stayed in the same house with them...

Only because I was homeless! Yes, it was really difficult – these were my friends. It was a bit like being in the army: you're thrown together for long periods of time, you go through hell together, so you do develop a real camaraderie. But I'd been doing it for five years, ever since I was at school, and I felt that I had to have more space, really, to develop as a writer and develop ideas, without having to be in a band context.

beyond Michelle Obama, another level entirely, so she's sort of the inspiration for that.

"Another Small Thing In Her Favour" sounds like a standard to me... it could be another "Dimming Of The Day".

Oh, that would be nice. "Another Small Thing..." is a leaving song: she's leaving him, and he still loves her and is trying to forgive her. It's endless forgiveness on one side, while on the other, she's already gone, she's out of there.

What do you think of the new folk resurgence? People like the Mumfords and Ed Sheeran and Jake Bugg...

I think it's great. The more so-called folk music that comes into the mainstream, I think the better it is for music in general. There shouldn't be a disconnect between the two. I think people always like to connect with their traditions: as the world becomes smaller and we seem to be one race of humanity, I think people are really going to want to identify themselves more. They'll say, "Yes, I'm part of this global generation where we talk to each other over the internet, but this is how we dress where I come from, this is our traditional music, this is our traditional food." People will always want to be distinct in some way. And they'll always want to sing the old songs, because there's something about singing a song that's 200 or 300 years old that just gets to you. It gets you in a deep place, it has resonance. The echoes are going back and back and back. 

Electric is reviewed on page 77

The Fairport Convention Festival, Cropredy, August 14, 2009

"My Enemy" – do you think our enemies define us as much as our friends?

I think so, definitely. They say, beware of who your friends are, because you will be like them, and to take that even further, take a look at who your enemies are, because you'll be unlike them, differentiated from them. That's based on my own experience – I can't tell you any names, obviously, but there are people who for some reason just have it in for you, and will expend a lot of energy trying to do you down.

"Sally B" – is that about someone poor people could aspire to?

Yes. I met this woman at a fundraiser and thought, my God, this woman is terrifying – she's beautiful, she's quite eloquent, and really stupid. Eloquent but ignorant. I found out that she could be president of the United States in about eight years' time: beyond Sarah Palin,

"I don't feel like I'll ever write a surf song. Perhaps a surf shanty?"

RICHARD THOMPSON

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RICHARD THOMPSON: THE SOLO YEARS

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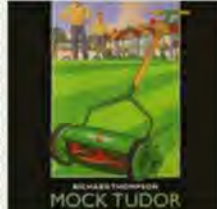
ACROSS A CROWDED ROOM
POLYDOR, 1985
Thompson's last album with Joe Boyd as producer, and his last recorded in England, notable for its use of a saxophone and crumhorn section. Includes the bitter "She Twists The Knife Again".
6/10



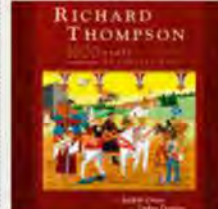
RUMOR AND SIGH
CAPITOL, 1991
With producer Mitchell Froom a simpático foil, his second for Capitol proved Thompson's most commercially successful. Includes the self-deprecating tribute "Don't Sit On My Jimmy Shands" and "1952 Vincent Black Lightning", which has become a much-covered bluegrass staple.
8/10



MIRROR BLUE
CAPITOL, 1994
Thompson's fourth outing with Froom, notable for its daring deconstruction of the rock rhythm section. "King Of Bohemia" and "Beeswing", a pair of tributes to keepers of the counter-cultural light of freedom: the latter subsequently furnished the name of Thompson's own label.
8/10



MOCK TUDOR
CAPITOL, 1999
His final album for Capitol found Thompson excavating memories of British suburbia and mining some of his most bitterly bleak material, including "Hard On Me" and "Bathsheba Smiles".
8/10



1000 YEARS OF POPULAR MUSIC
BEESWING, 2003
Does what it says on the sleeve: Thompson's idiosyncratic versions of a millennium of hits, from "Sumer Is Iccumen In" to "Oops!... I Did It Again", by way of Purcell, Gilbert & Sullivan, Bjorn & Benny and Lennon-McCartney. Brilliantly eclectic and original.
8/10



SWEET WARRIOR
PROPER, 2007
Probably Thompson's best of the century so far, *Sweet Warrior* is a masterclass of closely observed conflict. Standouts include "Guns Are The Tongues", a terrorist matriarch's seduction of a youth into martyrdom, and "Dad's Gonna Kill Me", the tale of a hapless GI stuck in the sandy hell of Iraq.
10/10

ALBUM BY ALBUM

Chris Thomas

The versatile producer on his career highs, from the Fabs to the Pistols

THERE ARE MORE well-known producers than Chris Thomas, but few can equal his incredible run of albums since he began working at George Martin's AIR Studios in the late '60s. He's produced key albums by The Beatles, Pink Floyd, Roxy Music, the Sex Pistols, the Pretenders, Pete Townshend and Pulp, as well as Elton John, Procol Harum, Wings and INXS. And, as a trained violinist and pianist, he's also done session work for the likes of Brian Eno, Chicory Tip, Nico and George Harrison. "The best albums are ones packed with hit singles," he tells us. "And my job is to turn as many of a band's songs into potential singles. You tighten their writing, create colour, work on the solos or middle eights. If someone's written a Top 20 song, my job is to make it a Top 5 song."



Chris Thomas' most famous clients: The Beatles, recording in 1968

THE BEATLES THE BEATLES

APPLE, 1968

Aged 21, Thomas starts working for George Martin's Associated Independent Recording

(AIR). After three months of sitting in on sessions, he is asked to cover for George Martin, a few weeks into 'The White Album'.

The Beatles were a bit prickly at first, not talking to me and instead addressing the engineer, Ken Scott. But, after a shaky start, they started to trust me. I'd sat in on early sessions for the album and they'd been working very slowly until then – grinding out one song a week – but we managed to bash out about six songs – "Helter Skelter", "Glass Onion", "Happiness Is A Warm Gun", "Piggies", "I Will" and "Birthday" – in 12 days. I also played piano on "Long Long Long", harpsichord on "Piggies" and wrote the sax arrangement for "Savoy Truffle", which took me ages. Never again! I'll never forget playing Mellotron on "...Bungalow Bill", live with the rest of The Beatles. Extraordinary! Increasingly, they worked separately. As the album neared completion, I was working with George on "Savoy Truffle" in Number Two while Paul did "Why Don't We Do It In The Road?" on his own in Number One, and John and George Martin did "Revolution 9" somewhere else. I remember George [Harrison] playing me "Something", which he'd just written, telling me he was going to give it to Jackie Lomax! I said, you're mad, you've got to record it! I got to know Paul well later, but at the time I got on very well with John and George. George gave me a lovely Gibson guitar – then asked for it back about six years later, ha ha!



JOHN CALE PARIS 1919

REPRISE, 1973

Cale enlists most of Little Feat as his backing band, plus Wilton Felder from The Crusaders on

bass, for this focused, song-based collection, his third as a solo artist.

I'd just produced a big orchestral album with Procol Harum and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, which was a big Top 5 hit in America. John Cale, coming from that classical background, was interested in it and sought me out. John was working in LA as an A&R man for Warners. *Paris 1919* was an unusual album for him, in that it's very song-based – maybe John needs a bit of structure! Lowell George walked out halfway through, but the musicians on that record were extraordinary. There were some lovely little accidents on that LP. The band were recording "Antarctica Starts Here" and I went to the loo, walking through the studio, and noticed John was whispering a guide vocal for Wilton and Richie [Hayward, drums]. I said, "Just keep that, it sounds brilliant!"

John is an astonishingly accomplished musician. On the title track, it was my idea to put an orchestra on it, one that followed his piano part. He said, what kind of thing do you suggest? Mahler would do it this way, while Wagner would do this... Ha ha! I helped a bit on the arrangement for "The Endless Plain Of Fortune", but John could just breeze through them himself. That's where musicianship helps. On reflection I'd have kept "Macbeth" off the finished album – it doesn't really fit.



ROXY MUSIC FOR YOUR PLEASURE

ISLAND, 1973

Roxy originally wanted John Cale to produce their second album, but

Cale recommends they try Chris Thomas at AIR Studios at London's Oxford Circus.

Roxy didn't seem like a band, just five very amusing dandies. Very witty. First track we did was "Do The Strand" – they came in at 7pm and we'd finished it by midnight. All done virtually live, apart from Phil [Manzanera]'s guitar. The rest of the album wasn't that easy, though!

"In Every Dream Home A Heartache" was a weird one. Bryan didn't lay down any vocals for that, it was just an instrumental. He said he wanted the end to be "psychedelic", so we just put some phase on it, ha ha. Then he comes in and sings this mad lyric about an inflatable doll! Unbelievable! The next album, *Stranded*, he did that all the way through. Eight backing tracks, just drums, bass and Bryan's keyboard at first – then he'd come in and do these remarkable vocals.

On the title track, I remember Eno helped me set up this loop for the echoes towards the end. People assume that Eno would have been very hands-on with production, because he went on to be a great producer, but he had no more say than Andy or Phil back then. It was very much Ferry's show. To be honest, I didn't notice any tension between Eno and Ferry at all – I think that may have come more with the subsequent tour, when Eno was getting a lot more attention than Ferry.



Rottensession: the Sex Pistols in London's Wessex Studio, during their time recording with Thomas

THE UNCUT CLASSIC

NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS

HERE'S THE

SEX PISTOLS

SEX PISTOLS NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS. HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS

VIRGIN, 1977

After turning down Malcolm McLaren's offer to produce the New York Dolls, Thomas horrifies his muso friends by working with the infamous wreckers of civilisation.

I saw them at Islington Screen On The Green: I went with my mate Chris Spedding, the one musician who championed them then. I wasn't that impressed, but when I heard the demos I thought they had the potential to be like The Who, a great British rock band, one drummer, one bass, one guitar, one amazing singer.

The first session, doing "Anarchy In The UK", was difficult. John had been left out of the loop – he didn't know I'd replaced Dave Goodman

as producer. So he screamed out this terrible vocal, and I told him I couldn't understand a word. He just snorted: "Well, you're the one with the track record, you sort it out!" So, deep breath... I said, "OK, fancy going down the pub?" Ha ha! Three Guinnesses later, we were back in the studio and it started to work.

The guitars are very orchestrated. After Glen [Matlock] left, Steve [Jones] would overdub the bass, playing the root note under the chord. So every chord was a massive harmonic sequence – root, octave, fifth, octave, third, fifth, octave. Which makes it very pure. Because of an ear infection when I was 14, I'm partially deaf in one ear. So I hate stereo records with, say, guitar on one channel and piano on the other. I specialise in "mono deluxe". So I'd doubletrack the guitar, put it through an Eventide Harmonizer – which doubletracks it, slightly out of sync, one in each channel. We'd overlay guitars like that, until it sounded massive.

One night we went drinking near Wessex Studios, on Green Lanes [north London] – me, John, [engineer] Bill Price and my girlfriend Mika [Kato], from the Sadistic Mika Band. John said, "The guys on that table are going to have us." When we left, about 11 guys kicked us to the floor. I saw one with a curved sword, about 10 inches long, and they took turns to stab us. I've still got the shirt with a cut down the back. I managed to get under a car to protect myself, but Bill got a bit of a kicking. John got cut badly – we took him to hospital, and he had an altercation with the ward sister, ha ha. The police didn't want to know, neither did the pub landlord – I suspect he must have been in on it.



PRETENDERS PRETENDERS

REAL/WEA/SIRE, 1979

Thomas first met Chrissie Hynde while producing Chris Spedding's 1977 album

Hurt. Three years later, she asked him to produce her own record...

She wanted to do a solo album, and I suggested she form a band and write her own songs. When she asked me to do the album, I was sick of recording studios, having spent a year with Wings, but said, "OK, let's do a four-day week, start at noon, finish at eight." And sometimes I'd have to break while working on Pete Townshend's *Empty Glass*. So we did it in short bursts over the course of eight months. It was frustrating for them, but it meant Chrissie kept coming in with a fresh supply of brilliant new songs, like "Lovers Of Today".

I helped with the middle-eight on "Kid", playing keyboards. I also remember the original demo of "Brass In Pocket" being very slow. It took a lot of work to get them to speed it up. I wanted a kind of Al Green swagger, with Al Jackson on drums. Someone reminded me recently that I also played keyboards on that – a kind of Stevie Wonder-style clavinet under the guitar. Was Chrissie attracted to destructive men? What, you mean Sid [Vicious], Nick [Kent], Johnny [Thunders], Jimmy [Honeyman-Scott], Pete Farndon... She was pretty destructive herself in those days. Amazing when she got pissed. She was nuts! But very good value.



Pulp in 1995:
"Jarvis is very
much the
main man"



PETE TOWNSHEND ALL THE BEST COWBOYS HAVE CHINESE EYES

ATCO, 1982

Thomas worked on old friend Townshend's 1980 solo debut, *Empty Glass*, before returning for the follow-up.

I've known Pete since I was a teenager. I grew up in Perivale, just down the road from Ealing Art College, where Pete studied, and saw him play in The High Numbers and The Detours. Pete even wrote and produced an early single for my R'n'B band, The Second Thoughts, although it was never released. He loved the Pistols, and I'd previously got him involved in "Rockestra", a track on Wings' *Back To The Egg*.

By the time we started *Chinese Eyes* in 1981, he was really in a bad way, with all the drug and alcohol issues. Those sessions were very, very hard work. We took a five-month break and came back to it and he was a different person.

The problem with that album is that he'd booked a lot of people and wanted to do it live. That's not a problem if you're well-rehearsed, but this was really quite chaotic. I can understand why Pete still loves it, because songs like "Slit Skirts" are great. But I found it too schizophrenic, I'm not sure it hung together as an album. Maybe that's just that the experience wasn't cohesive – I'll have to go and listen to it, maybe it's more cohesive than I remember!



PULP DIFFERENT CLASS

ISLAND, 1995

First, Pulp sent Thomas a demo of "Common People", then invited

him to see them play the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in the Christmas of 1994.

I was impressed they'd erected a huge onstage staircase, like the kind Shirley Bassey would use on *Morecambe & Wise*. Jarvis made an entrance for every song on the stairs! I thought: this guy is a nut. I've got to work with them!

"Common People" took about eight days of hard work. On the last night, Jarvis suddenly told me it wasn't right, he wanted it to sound like "Mr Blue Sky", and played me the ELO track. I said, "This is half the tempo!" So I reversed the bass drum part, and he said, "That's right." Then he decided to put an acoustic guitar on it! We put it through the vocal mic, with the compressor ready to burst, and it worked. It's the whip that cracks the track along.

We met a couple of months later, and Jarvis had written about seven amazing songs in a 36-hour period, including "I Spy" and "Disco 2000". Just an explosion of creativity. And we finished the rest of the album quite quickly. *This Is Hardcore* was more difficult – it took about a year. But the title track is astonishing, epic and very complicated, one of the best things Jarvis ever wrote.

Jarvis is very much the main person. He gets credited for the words, but never solely for the music. He writes every damn note!

"I remember saying to Paul McCartney, 'Come on, you're the guy who sang "I'm Down", just do it like that!'"



PAUL MCCARTNEY RUN DEVIL RUN

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1999

Thirty years on from *Abbey Road*, and two

decades on from the final Wings album, Thomas resumes his partnership with Paul McCartney on this back-to-basics covers album.

Back To The Egg was hard work – no LP benefits from spending that much time on it! But this was completely different. Paul said he wanted it like the old days – turn up to the studio at 10am, bang out a load of songs, get back home for tea. Two or three days, max. And that's very much how it was.

Way back in 1969, I remember producing "Oh! Darling" on *Abbey Road*, and Paul saying that his voice wasn't up to it. I was saying, come on, you're the guy who sang "I'm Down", just do it like that! And he did. What I loved about *Run Devil Run* was that he managed to sing like that on every single track. I've never heard him sound better.

It was great to work with Mick Green, from Johnny Kidd & The Pirates, who died not long after this – we did some overdubs afterwards. The one track I spent a bit of time on was "No Other Baby". I saw that as a potential hit, a kind of slow-burning Chris Isaak-style ballad. But, to be honest, a producer doesn't have a lot to do on this kind of record – I think Paul just wanted a sounding board!



DAVID GILMOUR ON AN ISLAND

EMI/COLUMBIA, 2006

After mixing *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and

The Division Bell, Thomas resumes his long association with Pink Floyd.

On *Dark Side*, Floyd legend has it that I was umpire in some huge dispute between David and Roger [Waters] – with Roger wanting it dry, David wanting it echoey – but I don't remember that at all. It's possible that David was more sympathetic to some of my suggestions, like asking them to double up the guitar on "Money", which possibly led him to ask me to mix [1994's] *The Division Bell* and also finish this album.

It's a wonderful record, and I loved working on it. They'd already been writing and recording for about a year, quite casually, before I got involved – I think it was Phil Manzanera who actually got me on board. It was very much an acoustic record. The title track was just fantastic, but the early versions were very short. I felt that it was begging for a couple of those trademark Gilmour guitar solos to give it more heft. I took it from a two-minute song to a five-and-a-half-minute track. David's solos are always worked quite intensely, to the point that they're not actually solos, they're almost like fully formed compositions, that are integrated into the songwriting structure – you really notice that on songs like "Take A Breath" and "Smile". ☺

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CAPTURED TRACKS LP / CD

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"Released on 18th Feb. Belfast 4 piece Girls Names' 2nd album The New Life is the sound of a band on the fringes striving to forge their own path, purposefully out of step - and time - with their surroundings.



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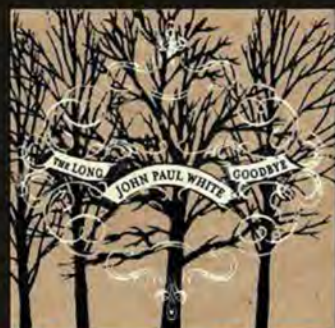


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SAM JONES



TRACKLIST

- 1 We No Who U R
- 2 Wide Lovely Eyes
- 3 Water's Edge
- 4 Jubilee Street
- 5 Mermaids
- 6 We Real Cool
- 7 Finishing Jubilee Street
- 8 Higgs Boson Blues
- 9 Push The Sky Away

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Push The Sky Away

MUTE

Revitalised by Grinderman, Cave and band return with an aquatic, slow-moving work of hushed beauty. *By Andy Gill*

9/10

OVER THE PAST decade or so, Nick Cave has been juggling quite a few balls, work-wise, somehow managing not to drop them. Having long ago augmented his core business as singer-songwriter with a creditable sideline as author, he's lately become rather more involved with film, creating soundtracks with Warren Ellis for movies such as *The Road* and *The Assassination of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford*, and charting various villainies in brutal style in his scripts for the John Hillcoat films *The Proposition* and *Lawless*.

He's not, however, so much a Renaissance Man as

a protean talent: rather than finding limitless new ways to interpret the world, Cave's able to realise a fairly narrow range of themes in diverse ways, recontextualising his fascinations – notably with the visceral trinity of religion, sex and violence – to fit different media. Cave's restlessness has affected his music, too, leading him to bifurcate his musical endeavours between The Bad Seeds and the more lubricious, erotically tortured Grinderman, two bands heading in quite different directions despite sharing effectively the same personnel.

That disparity becomes even more pronounced with *Push The Sky Away*, a record



New Albums

whose thoughtful tone and drifting, becalmed manner have very little to do with rock'n'roll and much more to do with the sonic colouration explored by Cave and Ellis in their soundtracks. Ellis is clearly the musical driving force here, particularly now that Mick Harvey has departed the band. His string and keyboard loops hang over the songs like mist, haunting the action with a deep, contemplative melancholy; and freed from the imperative of carrying guitar riffs, the drums and percussion of Thomas Wydler and Jim Sclavunos are able to explore more intimate, subtle rhythms, allowing the songs to find their own pulses, rather than urging them to more explosive efforts.

The effect is transformative: for all the comparative lack of overt activity, there is a much greater expressivity about the songs on *Push The Sky Away*, even when nothing seems to be happening. It's as if the new approach were better able to reveal the emotional currents working beneath the songs' surfaces, rather than be preoccupied with the surface activity. This works wonders with Cave's songs, as by his own admission he's more of a voyeuristic, narrative songwriter than an emotional miner: here, the music fills in the unwritten emotional content lurking behind his observations.

The tone is set by the opening "We No Who U R", on which simple organ, bass and drum figures create a sombre, acquiescent mood akin to Leonard Cohen's *I'm Your Man*, with detail provided by a fragile flute and occasional understated keening noise. Cave's delivery likewise has something of Cohen's undemonstrative, worldly sagacity, turning the titular threat into a Zen acceptance of one's essential nature.

"Wide Lovely Eyes" then heralds a sequence of songs with a watery theme, the most striking of which is "Water's Edge". Over restless, throbbing bass, hints of piano chords and string loops shift in and out, swelling and subsiding like waves lapping the shoreline, as Cave sits in his study, observing from his window the courtship rituals and youthful erotic play of boys and girls on the beach, "their legs wide to the world like bibles open", occasionally interrupting his reverie with the repeated portent, "But you grow old, and you grow cold."

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: La Fabrique, South of France
Produced by: Nick Launay
Personnel: Nick Cave (vocals, piano, Fender Rhodes, backing vocals), Warren Ellis (violin, viola, flute, tenor guitar, synthesiser, loops, Fender Rhodes, backing vocals), Martyn Casey (bass), Thomas Wydler (drums), Jim Sclavunos (percussion), Conway Savage (vocals)



Not yet gone to seed: (l-r) Martyn P Casey, Warren Ellis, Nick Cave, Jim Sclavunos, Thomas Wydler

This sense of tainted, enervated eros continues into "Jubilee Street", a portrait of a red-light district from the aspect of a punter ambivalently caught between shame and elation, at one point "pushing my wheel of love up Jubilee Street" with "a ten-ton catastrophe on a sixty-pound chain", yet by the end of the song decked out in tie and tails, with "a foetus on a leash", an image that pivots uneasily between parenthood and something much more queasily disturbing. It's the first track to feature guitar, just a simple cycling figure, but it's Ellis' wistful,

weeping violin that's the dominant element here, particularly during the epiphanic transformation as the song reaches its climax.

In "Mermaids", the young seaside frolickers have become mermaids, sunning themselves out on rocks over a gentle lilt of vibes and guitar, with a keening violin phrase yearning at the edge of the song. Cave is prompted to muse upon myth and belief – if one believes in God, why not in mermaids too, or in 72 virgins on a chain? The nature of belief is the motor behind "We Real Cool" too, as over an

THE PATH TO PUSH THE SKY AWAY



THE LORRAINE MOTEL

It's where Martin Luther King was assassinated, a Memphis motel now transformed into the Civil Rights Museum. Downstairs, there's the bus on which Rosa Parks sat her ground; upstairs, there's a mark on the balcony where Dr King was standing. His room has been left as it was that fateful morning, with his breakfast tray still on the bed.

JUBILEE STREET

It's a generic red-light district, mistakenly named after one in Nick's current hometown of Brighton. "It was a street which I was under the impression passed for a red-light street in Brighton," he explains, "but it's actually the one that has the library in it. Shows where my life is these days! It sounded good, though, so it just stayed that way in the end."

WIKIPEDIA

"What I like about Wikipedia," says Nick, "is that everyone seems to have the same weight in terms of cultural importance: I'm talking about that with the references to Martin Luther King and Hannah Montana in 'Higgs Boson Blues' – I'm not sure, but doesn't Hannah Montana's website receive more hits than Martin Luther King's? 'Gangnam Style' just went over a billion, right?"

VOYEURISM

For Nick Cave, everything comes via the eyes. "I know that for some of my musician friends it's completely different and they tend to hear the world in some way, but I've always kind of seen it, really. It's why I find it difficult writing those songs that aren't visual, those songs which are just describing a feeling. I've never been able to do that, they just don't resonate with me."



SAM JONES

Q&A

Nick Cave on his new, watery influences, and the pleasures of recording with “no fucking script meetings”

THERE SEEMS TO be a general watery theme to the new album.

Yeah, there's a watery theme; but it's kind of like, I look out my window and look at the sea, and a lot of those songs were written sitting at that window looking out, so there's a kind of theme that connects a lot of those songs that has to do with a little piece of water I can see from my window. Down at the water's edge.

The music has a wave-like quality to it, too. It seems to lap.

I don't think we went in there intending that – I didn't use the word 'lap', it might have been misunderstood, apart from anything. But there was a need to stay away from those classic Bad Seeds ballads, to do something that moved more in that way, more linear and atmospheric.

Each song pushes the next on, like a wave.

That was very much the way the record was composed lyrically: certain themes, similar things seen from different perspectives, all interconnected. Part of that is just the way that I write, because I sit down and write all the songs together at the same time. But there was very much an attempt to preserve that beautiful idea of one song being linked to another one, that the order of songs has some kind of importance.

How did you set about making the album?

We had no plan about what that record would be like until we got in the studio, in terms of the way it would be performed, the tone of the songs – that was something that had to do with living together for three weeks in this farmhouse in the south of France, and recording there. We had no interruptions from anybody – no fucking script meetings or all the other stuff that I'm involved in. That had a lot to do with the relaxed, un-histrionic feel of the performances. There was a point, about five or six days in, after we'd pretty much recorded everything, we sat down and listened to it, and suddenly it kind of made itself known to us what kind of a record it was, and we were all blown away by it.

There's been a shift in the Bad Seeds sound which I presume is mainly to do with the departure of Mick Harvey: you've gone from predominantly guitar sounds to predominantly keyboard and string sounds.

We were intending to get a friend, George Vjestica, to play guitar on the album, but we started putting stuff down without everybody there, and when we listened back, it was great that way. Suddenly when there was no guitar, there was all this beautiful space. Everything just drifts, and the vocal can relax and feel the space around it. We were able to sit back and say, 'Do we need percussion on this song? Do we need guitar?', and make decisions early on like that.

A lot of the songs are very observational, even voyeuristic – as with the older man watching teenagers' courtship rituals in “Water's Edge”.

I would say that a lot of Bad Seeds stuff is voyeuristic anyway, much of what is written about is standing back and observing. That's the whole idea of narrative songs, in a way, that they're voyeuristic by nature; and certainly, some of these songs – “Wide Lovely Eyes”, “Water's Edge”, even “Higgs Boson Blues” – are about these events playing

out in front of the writer's eyes. So these songs are as much about writing songs as they are about anything else. They're certainly voyeuristic in nature, and that's really what I am anyway.

There's clearly a massive difference between The Bad Seeds and Grinderman, which is intriguing since it's effectively the same people involved.

Now Mick [Harvey] has gone, it's pretty much the same, yeah. But one gives the other a licence to exist, on some level: do Grinderman for a while, and you crave to do something else. But it's this extra-curricular stuff that keeps The Bad Seeds alive, and that's the thing I'm mostly concerned with. It's 15 albums or whatever, and we're not supposed to be making interesting or credible records at this point in our career. We feel a little bit proud about that. **INTERVIEW: ANDY GILL**

“15 albums in or whatever, we're not supposed to be making interesting or credible records...”

ominous bass throb, piano and sad strings, his ruminations shift from facts knowable through their intimacy – family things – to the untestable prognostications of astrophysics: “*Sirius is 8.6 light years away, Arcturus is 37/The past is the past, and it's here to stay*”, before ending on another spike of ambivalence with the observation, “*Wikipedia is heaven, when you don't want to remember no more.*”

The religio-scientific ruminations reach their apogee in the album's longest track, “Higgs Boson Blues”, where over quietly strummed guitar and rolling tom-toms, Cave's focus shifts between locations and characters – himself in Switzerland, Martin Luther King shot in Memphis, Miley Cyrus floating in a pool in California – as he surveys what he's subsequently described to me as “great spiritual catastrophes”. The writer himself also appears, Martin Amis-like, in “Finishing Jubilee Street”, an account of a dream he had shortly after writing the song in question. Again, it's the hazy, unstable nature of belief and information that drives the song, Cave's waking anxieties triggered by his dream-time marriage to a child bride.

There's something deeply satisfying about the way the songs fit together as an album, their sequence strengthened both by the homogenous tone of the music, with its air of wistful melancholy, and by the way each song seems to push the next one forward, in an unimposing but implacable wave-like succession, to the closing title-track, with its soft but stolid assertion of self-belief in the face of uncertainty. It may not be the most heroic of acts, but sometimes endurance is as good as it gets.



TRACKLIST

- 1 The Right Thing Right
- 2 I Want The Heartbeat
- 3 European Me
- 4 Upstarts
- 5 Lockdown
- 6 The Messenger
- 7 Generate! Generate!
- 8 Say Demesne
- 9 Sun & Moon
- 10 The Crack Up
- 11 New Town Velocity
- 12 Word Starts Attack

JOHNNY MARR

The Messenger

WARNERBROS

The solo debut by the Smiths guitar ace is a joyous return to the sound of his greatest triumphs. *By Garry Mulholland*

7/10

PLACED BANG IN the middle of *The Messenger* is a song that explains a great deal about Johnny Marr. "Generate! Generate!" is, in its author's own words, "a song in praise of hyperactivity". The hyperactivity in question is Marr's own, borne out by the song's stark contrast between a chanting, marching, almost laddish verse and a dreamy Smithsian chorus.

It even risks an intellectual pun: "*Cogito ergo dumb*", from cogito ergo sum, the original Latin version of philosopher René Descartes' "I think, therefore I am." Marr paints himself as a man oscillating wildly between thought and action: "*Sensations jacked my thinking... I can't get behind a one-track mind*". Which, if nothing else, explains Marr's restlessly eclectic, permanently transient CV.

Q&A

Johnny Marr

Finally, 30 years into an illustrious career, a Johnny Marr solo album. Why now? I've wanted to, but I haven't had the time. I've been in an American group [Modest Mouse], a UK group [The Cribs] and did a movie soundtrack [*Inception*] as well. Also, the songs called for it. I've moved back to Manchester after many years in Portland, Oregon and I wanted to make a record that sounded like the bands I was in before The Smiths. This is a record I might have made when I was a kid.

Is there a concept behind *The Messenger*?

There is. A lot of the album is about cities and buildings and people and how our

environment shapes our attitudes. There's a lot to be said for singing from the heart, but on this record I'm singing from the mind. On one or two songs I'm singing about my mind. "Generate! Generate!" is a song in praise of hyperactivity. "Word Starts Attack" is about pixel power and the effect that digital communication is having on us – how screens have replaced faces and hearts. "The Right Things Right" is about understanding that I'm a target for commercialism and town planning and other powerful forces, but, like every 15 or 16-year-old worth their salt, I can still say, "Fuck you", and empower myself.

This album sounds more like The Smiths than any music

you've made since 1987. Do you agree?

I do. I don't go out of my way to not sound like me anymore. There were times when I didn't wanna do that. But if you listen to "Slow Emotion Replay" by The The or "Sexuality" by Billy Bragg you'll hear that the sound associated with me does turn up on other people's records.

Would you ever write an autobiography?

I would and will. I've been asked to do so many times. The reason I haven't yet is because it would take me away from making records. But I'd like to do it because I've met a lot of interesting people along the way. It's been a fascinating journey, all in all.

INTERVIEW: GARRY MULHOLLAND

Over the last decade, Marr has, among many other shorter, sharper projects, made his one-and-only album, 2003's *Boomslang*, with his own band The Healers, become a full-time member of both Modest Mouse and The Cribs, and popped up on the soundtrack of Christopher Nolan's *Inception*. Throughout this time Marr lived in Portland, Oregon, and it seems that the decision to move back to Manchester and the decision to finally make an album under his own name are more than coincidence. *The Messenger* is Marr's attempt to relocate his roots in order to express his deep dissatisfaction with the rubbishness of modern life. Not a surprising angle for a smart, left-leaning nearly-50 rock'n'roller to take perhaps. What is more surprising – and happily so – is that much of Marr's debut solo album sounds like The Smiths.

Of course, Marr can neither sing nor write lyrics like Morrissey. But many of the tunes here bear a comforting familiarity, the sonic palette is resolutely rock-meets-indie with an ever-present melodic lilt, and, best of all, the guitars acoustically jangle and electrically rage and soar in a way that can only be described as trademark Johnny Marr.

The Messenger's other singular quality is that it's an album that gets better as it goes along, almost as if Marr arranged the running order to reveal his own creative confidence gradually returning. Opener "The Right Things Right" sets the thematic tone, as Marr's staccato lyric strives to find a path through the din of modern capitalism. But it's an underwhelming verse saved by an earworm chorus, and the following "I Want The Heartbeat" does that angular, robotic thing that rockers often do when they want to moan about the dehumanising effects of technology.

Things properly get going on third track "European Me", a sort of "Safe European

Home" for both asylum seekers and exiled guitar icons which crosses "Rusholme Ruffians" with Felt's "Penelope Tree", and sees Marr's almost Lloyd Cole-esque vocal merge with the sweet backing trills of daughter Sonny on the truly lovely chorus. Somewhat anonymous verses washed away by fantastic refrains is a recurring motif throughout.

From there, "Upstarts", the title track, the definitively Smithsian "New Town Velocity" and the dystopian Franz Ferdinandisms of "Word Starts Attack" match "European Me" and define the best of this persuasive, questioning record. The highlight, though, is a fascinating anomaly in light of Marr's statement that *The Messenger* is an album that he might have made if The Smiths had never happened. "The Crack Up" is a cracking retro-'80s pop song, where the synths share centre-stage with the guitars, the rhythm prowls, and something special emerges from the contrast between the eerily youthful calm of Marr's croon and the sinister feel of the dark melody and fretful, cut-up lyric about misused (or abused?) teenage models. The only thing in Marr's back catalogue that hints at a similar

aesthetic is his work with Matt Johnson over twenty years ago.

The Messenger isn't an album that will blow any non-believers away. It is old-fashioned, in many ways, and its message of humanity being bullied by an alliance of corporate greed and digital distraction is gently conveyed and often oblique. But, even if none of Marr's concerns engage you, there is one thing above all that makes *The Messenger* worth 45 minutes of anyone's time. It features the guitarist from The Smiths playing guitar like the guitarist from The Smiths. And that remains one of the very best noises on Earth.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Johnny Marr and James Doviak
Recorded in: Clear in Manchester, Ozone in Berlin
Personnel: Johnny Marr (vocals, guitars, keys), Doviak (keys), Jack Mitchell (drums), Iwan Gronow (bass), Max James (bass), Sonny Marr (backing vocals)

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

- p66 ATOMS FOR PEACE
- p68 CAITLIN ROSE
- p71 JIM JAMES
- p73 ETHAN JOHNS
- p74 EELS
- p76 PICTISH TRAIL
- p77 RICHARD THOMPSON
- p78 ENDLESS BOOGIE
- p79 WOODEN WAND



A\$AP ROCKY

Long.Live.A\$AP
RCA

Excellent first fruit from that \$3m deal
"This is boom bap mixed with new rap," announces A\$AP Rocky during his debut album

proper, but this is actually a rare moment of selling himself short. Production-wise this album is startling in its breadth, drawing on woozy cloud rap, the minimal 'ratchet' craze and even getting Skrillex to craft a glorious empty-calorie banger. Lyrically, A\$AP cleaves too closely to the holy trinity of "pussy, money, weed" he defines on "PMW" to be truly exciting, but his technical prowess is thrilling in its time-signature hopping, and he takes on both a Drakeian croon and a pitchshifted Houston drawl in addition to the braggadocio of his main flow.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



THE ASPHODELLS

Ruled By Passion Destroyed By Lust
ROTTERS GOLF CLUB

Screamadelica producer gets his groove back
Always the same, always

different, Andrew Weatherall might be a towering presence in contemporary music but he keeps a reassuringly low profile. The Asphodels is the latest project to slink out of his Shoreditch studio and finds Weatherall moving on from the no-frills rock'n'roll of *A Pox On The Pioneers* to knock out an album of sinuous Krautrock and rumbling dub with his youthful apprentice Timothy J Fairplay, no mean producer himself. Fairplay's love of Belgian new beat and old acid house – tracks his boss was likely involved with first time round – shapes one of the most enjoyable Weatherall records since *Sabres Of Paradise*.

PIERS MARTIN

Supergroup,
notsupergroup:
Atoms For Peace,
Orpheum Theatre,
LA, October 4, 2009



ATOMS FOR PEACE

Amok

XL

It's *The King Of Limbs* with beats! And tunes!
Thom Yorke's "supergroup" achieve an instant chemistry, says Sam Richards



9/10

IF NIRVANA KILLED stadium rock, then Radiohead nailed its coffin shut, ensuring that never again would our stages be stalked by strutting snake-oil salesmen in sock-stuffed codpieces. Yet anyone attending *The King Of Limbs* tour last year may have noticed

the occasional creeping concession to hoary arena rock tradition: Giant screens! Over-the-head handclaps! Twin drummers! Waistcoats and fedoras! And now, by 'eck, their singer's gone and formed a supergroup.

Thom Yorke would doubtless disown the sullied "supergroup" tag, pointing to the fact that Atoms For Peace initially came together to realise his 2006 solo album *The Eraser* in a live context, a task for which he merely recruited the best musicians available at the time. However, when those musicians happen to include the bassist from the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the guy who replaced

Bill Berry in REM, you can understand the heightened anticipation. As well as Flea and Joey Waronker, Atoms For Peace also features Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich and David Byrne's Brazilian-born percussionist Mauro Refosco – though ultimately *Amok* still feels very much like a Thom Yorke record, as opposed to a forced fusion of Radiohead, the Chili Peppers and Brazilian forró. Which is probably for the best.

Recorded in a three-day flurry at the end of the group's 2010 American tour, Yorke would play the band a "wonky" beat from his laptop and they'd attempt to recreate and embellish it. The results were then refined by Yorke and Godrich over the course of the following two years, to the point where it's often now difficult to discern when the musicians are mimicking the machine and vice versa. This seamless synthesis of sinew and silicon is crucial to the album's slippery feel; there's a pleasing fluidity and crooked funkiness to the arrangements that Yorke sometimes struggled to achieve on *The Eraser*.

Serial supergrouper Flea proves to be a limber and sympathetic foil, as comfortable with the scuttling Afrobeat of "Before Your Very Eyes" as

he is with the lolloping, fractured, Burial-esque two-step shuffle of the title track. The restless recalibration of "Reverse Running"'s crisp drum track is evidence of Yorke's ongoing love-in with Four Tet's Kieran Hebden, before the song is anchored by a warm, simple bassline. "Judge, Jury And Executioner" is comparatively minimal, yet equally inventive: written in 7/8 time – an old Radiohead trick also employed on "2+2=5" – its rhythm track consists solely of morse code taps and viciously gated handclaps that begin to sound disconcertingly like whipcracks.

That voice, once a shrieking harbinger of doom, is a more subtle instrument these days. Almost every audible phrase sounds like a sweetly sinister threat – "sooner or later"; "you don't get away so easily"; "you got me into this mess, so you get me out" – while on "Default", Yorke assumes the role of a repentant debauchee, unable to break the habits of a lifetime, even to secure his own happiness: "I laugh now, but later's not so easy/The will is strong but the flesh is weak". It's a stunning song, Yorke's rueful vocal wafting over an antsy, drum'n'bass-derived beat and a needling, "Idiotique"-style synth riff.

It's tempting to suggest that this is the album Radiohead should have made instead of the coy, cryptic *The King Of Limbs*. Ultimately, *Amok* doesn't carry itself with quite the same grace or gravitas, but it's leaner and decidedly meaner, hitching those familiar Yorke tics to a series of bracing beats that have more to do with his latter-day role as a patron of British electronica than the past histories of any of the album's other participants. You could argue that it's Radiohead who currently function more like a supergroup, comprising five members of increasingly diverse tastes, all contributing ideas on an equal footing. Conversely, Atoms For Peace are a team of skilled journeymen falling in behind an enigmatic guru and his ominous yet often curiously groovy vision.



ATLAS GENIUS When It Was Now

WARNER BROS.
Aussie newcomers make effective use of their shared DNA. The three Jeffrey brothers (plus an unrelated keyboardist)

7/10

out of Adelaide boast similar strengths as other sibling bands – specifically, the streamlined, aggressive pop of their countrymen INXS, along with Kings Of Leon's rhythmic acuity and use of space. Keith Jeffrey's slurred vocals recall those of Caleb Followill, while drummer Michael and bassist Steven play with muscle and impressive restraint. The performances are ahead of the songwriting at this early stage, but the loping "Trojans", the rip-roaring "Electric" and the Police-like "Centred On You" engagingly introduce Atlas Genius' genetically taut sound.

BUD SCOPPA



STEVE AZAR Delta Soul Volume One

RIDE

Fifth album from Mississippi-born songwriter. After a spell in Nashville where Reba McEntire

7/10

covered his songs and Morgan Freeman turned up in the video of his hit "Waitin' On Joe", Azar heads back down the blues highway on a set that hymns his Southern origins. Songs such as "Highway 61", "Flatlands" and "Indianola" – some grittily reworked from previous albums – constitute a Delta suite that encompasses ballads, blues and boogie. Slide guitar, moody Hammond B3 and a general funkiness with influences from Little Milton and Albert King to Leon Russell and Muscle Shoals make you wonder what he was doing in the mainstream country charts. Roll on Volume Two.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



BEATMARK Howls Of Joy

AMPLE PLAY

Joyous debut album from Parisian Creationists. No bonus points for spotting the influences of this Parisian four-

7/10

piece. The guitars are fuzzy, the drums Rover Assorted, the vocals soar and swoop in flat harmonies which echo as if recorded in a concrete garage. Yes, it's that tight-trousered Creation sound, *Nuggets* via East Kilbride, with an extra layer of exoticism coming from the fact that the English (or, to be more precise, American) vocals sound faintly French. With so much contrivance in the mix, it seems odd to describe BeatMark as innocent, but songs such as "Purple Glow" and "Am I Five" have such undimmed verve that it's hard not to be charmed.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



BIG BOI Vicious Lies And Dangerous Rumors

DEF JAM

Second solo outing from OutKast's more prolific half

7/10

André 3000's recent output has been limited

to guest verses and razor commercials, so it's left to Antwan "Big Boi" Patton to fly the flag for Stankonia. *Vicious Lies* is an exuberant mishmash, marked by an intriguing choice of musical collaborators (Little Dragon, Wavves, electro-pop duo Phantogram). It often feels like a pop album with rap elements rather than the other way around – a tad Ronson-esque, perhaps – although Big Boi can still work up a verbal lather, boasting that "my cerebellum get way deeper than all those other fellas". It's not as scintillating as we've come to expect from the Outkast camp, but plenty of fun nonetheless.

SAM RICHARDS

HOW TO BUY... OLD TIMEY

'Psych-Appalachia' and revenant blues



DANIEL BACHMAN Seven Pines

TOMPKINS SQUARE, 2012

Bachman is a Virginian youngster who calls his music 'psychedelic Appalachia'. A fine

set that sits between old timey and guitar soli, *Seven Pines*' most winning trait is a seriously hallucinatory, up-close recording – you'll get lost in the reverb and overtones. Bachman's playing is eloquent, and the way he sends old melodies singing across the strings is a joy.

7/10



FRANK FAIRFIELD Out In The Open West

TOMPKINS SQUARE, 2011

Arch traditionalist and 78 collector Fairfield

came straight out of California, character fully formed. But step beyond the 'method actor' vibes, and Fairfield's a prodigious talent, at ease with road songs, breakdowns and beautifully paced banjo instrumentals, like album highlight, "The Winding Spring".

7/10



CHARLIE PARR Keep Your Hands On The Plow

HOUSE OF MERCY, 2011

With a guest cast including members of Low, this is a charming set of heartbreaking melancholy and revenant blues. The grain of Parr's voice is never less than moving, and on songs like "Gospel Plow", you can hear why his collaborations with the Black Twig Pickers made perfect sense.

8/10

JON DALE



THE BIG CATS The Ancient Art Of Leaving: Two Parts

MAX

Part-time Arkansas band delivers an LP of timeless immediacy. In the '90s, The Big Cats achieved local-hero

8/10

status in Little Rock while remaining utterly obscure everywhere else. In recent years they've scattered, Jason White working as Green Day's touring guitarist since 2000, while singer/guitarist Burt Taggart runs local indie Max, which released the first part of this two-LP series in 2011. Despite rarely playing together, the quartet powers through its Big Star-redolent brand of power pop like a well-oiled machine. The killer tracks come in waves of crisply contoured clangour: "I Can See Land", with its pneumatic riffage and shimmering harmonies, the Lennonesque "Mr Memory", the majestic "I'm In Sound".

BUD SCOPPA



THE BITTER SPRINGS

Everyone's Cup Of Tea

HARVEY

Teddington pot luck assortment

8/10

A full-time role as a British Jacques Brel never having come up, Simon Rivers has spent decades working for the Post Office while coughing up witty, wounding records with Last Party and The Bitter Springs. This 2CD-sprawling post-operative trauma is cheerier than 2001's extraordinary *Suburban Crimes Of Every Happiness*, but Go-Kart Mozart ghouls will appreciate the darkness that underlies these cautionary tales of dog sex ("My Life As A Dog In A Pigsty") and appearing on Jeremy Kyle ("TV Tears"). "Good guys come last, that suits me fine," shrugs Rivers on "And Even Now", lost in the post, but indubitably stamped with greatness.

JIM WIRTH



BLACK TWIG PICKERS

Rough Carpenters

THRILL JOCKEY

Porch-songs and old-timey melodies, sung from VA

7/10

Southwest Virginia's Black Twig Pickers have a complex relationship with tradition – they play things relatively straight, but they also have an umbilical to the deep drones of their host outfit, Pelt. If these groups share anything more than membership, it's their limber playing, which in this instance avoids the more wooden moves of many revivalists. With *Rough Carpenters*, the Pickers are deeply respectful of the revenant forms they're extending, but the music is never leaden. These powerful performances gift their traditional melodies to the air, with a group sound that's as majestic as it is rooted in the soil.

JON DALE

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



CAITLIN ROSE

The Stand-In

NAMES

Captivating second album from the uncrowned queen of new Nashville

The past few years have seen the resurgence of a particular strain of American female artist, the kind that first thrived in Nashville in the late '50s and early '60s. The likes of Lydia Loveless and Lera Lynn have set about reclaiming the untamed spirit of country, girls birthed in post-punk who found parallels in the raw declarations of Patsy, Loretta and their ilk. Best of this new breed is Caitlin Rose, whose 2010 debut *Own Side Now* suggested the arrival of an uncommonly assured talent.

9/10

Follow-up *The Stand-In* has everything that made its predecessor special – big voice, expertly crafted tunes, clever backings, a deft mix of stridency and restraint – but is definitely a step up. The contrasts in mood serve to heighten the drama in these beguiling songs about taking flight and lives in flux. Nashville producers Jordan Lehning and Skylar Wilson, plus fellow bandmates in roots-rock combo The Deep Vibration, provide the charged settings. Though it's Rose's vocals that give *The Stand-In* its vitality, be it defiant ("No One To Call") or crestfallen and tender ("Pink Champagne"; "Only A Clown", the latter one of two co-writes with The Jayhawks' Gary Louris).

The Deep Vibration's own "I Was Cruel" is recast here as a delicate banjo-led piece lined with pedal steel. The other cover, a gorgeous version of The Felice Brothers' "Dallas", finds Rose simultaneously gentle and impassioned, counting down the miles from one town to another.

As a measure of her fuller scope, Rose takes the fetid "When I'm Gone" into Southern soul territory, while "Old Numbers" is an unexpected burst of ragtime jazz. In its dramatic sweep and vocal reach, *The Stand-In* feels like one of those timeless records that Owen Bradley used to make over at Decca. As such, it's one of the first truly great Americana albums of 2013. **ROB HUGHES**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

➤ After the post-Christmas lull, 2013's new release schedule is gathering pace. **Josh Ritter** issues his sixth album proper *The Beast In Its Tracks* in March, informed by the

break-up of his marriage to fellow songwriter Dawn Landes. "Far from the grand, sweeping feel of the songs on [2010's] *So Runs The World Away*," he says, "these new songs felt like rocks in the shoe, hard little nuggets of whatever they were, be it spite, remorse, or happiness." On a more contented domestic note, Austin husband-and-wife duo Kelly Willis and Bruce Robison unleash *Cheater's Game* under the name **The Bruce And Kelly**

Show. The album includes covers of Don Williams and Robert Earl Keen. Also due before the summer is **Gurf Morlix's** *Gurf Morlix Finds The Present Tense*, the first LP in four years from the Austin producer and sometime Lucinda Williams backing instrumentalist. While fellow Austinite, and Robert Plant collaborator, **Patty Griffin**, will release *American Kid*, her first all-original solo offering since 2007's *Children Running Through*. Lambchop member **William Tyler**, whose credits also include Bonnie 'Prince' Billy and Silver Jews, has been making a name for himself as a solo guitar maestro in recent times. *Impossible Truth* is his second album, recorded in Nashville with sometime 'Choppers Mark Nevers and Scott Martin. Tyler calls it "my '70s singer-songwriter record, it just doesn't have any words". **ROB HUGHES**



BLUE HAWAII

Untogether

ARBUTUS

Ethereal electro-pop from the home of Grimes and Purity Ring

Blue Hawaii is the lovechild of Raphaelle Standell-Preston,

7/10

frontwoman of Montreal indie-pop outfit Braid, and Arbutus Records co-founder Alex Cowan. Comparisons can be drawn with the music of Arbutus' prodigal daughter Grimes, but Blue Hawaii are more about atmosphere than impact, with the production clearly influenced by Cowan's time in Germany studying at the university of Kompakt. Lyrically, *Untogether* deals eloquently with mid-twenties anxieties, alluding subtly to the status of the couple's own relationship; "In Two", a compelling duel between voice and machine, neatly encapsulates the bittersweet dynamic of a long-distance relationship. **SAM RICHARDS**



BODUF SONGS

Burnt Up On Re-Entry

SOUTHERN

The sound of one man moaning

Mat Sweet's Boduf Songs has released four albums on the Kranky

4/10

label, all filled with thin, watery acoustic folk music. But Sweet's changed his game (not to mention his record label) on *Burnt Up On Re-Entry*, switching from remedial folk to a kind of remedial emo-psych-rock, where dunderheaded riffs meet go-nowhere spurts of electronics, while ponderous guitar shadows equally ponderous keys. Toward the end things get quite a bit better – "Maggot Ending" mines the same rich seam of underplayed melancholia as Bark Psychosis or Codeine, adding some much-needed levity to the album – but it's too little, too late. **JON DALE**



CHANNEL D

Mosaic Of Disarray

PROPER

Musical film director swaps cameras for guitar

As the director of the *Classic Albums* series, Nick de Grunwald has

6/10

spent years analysing what goes into the making of a great record. It would be too much to expect his own musical debut to reach such exalted levels, but just enough has rubbed-off by osmosis to make for a creditable career change. His dark baritone has an attractive, natural story-telling quality like a British answer to Mink DeVille or Garland Jeffreys and he's absorbed a fine understanding of the technicalities of composition, from the electro-bop of "Politics" to the bucolic acoustics of "Lazy Day" via the Garcia tribute "Kick The Bucket". **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**



DINOS CHAPMAN
Luftbomber
THE VINYL FACTORY

7/10
Murky gurgling from the elder Chapman Brother. Though pushing 50, Dinos Chapman and

his brother Jake are still very much the naughty schoolboys of British art. In keeping with his physical output, Dinos' first significant foray into electronic music is a sinister and hallucinogenic take on what could charitably be termed outsider techno – he prefers “schlampige musik”, or sloppy music. On the contrary, what strikes you is how accomplished his productions sound: there are passages of scruffy minimalism to rival Actress, and moments of sugary elation in “He Has No Method” and “Sun Lounge”. Frankly, the most shocking thing about *Luftbomber* is how tasteful it is.

PIERS MARTIN



MICHAEL CHAPMAN
Pachyderm
BLAST FIRST PETITE

8/10
Continuing the astonishing reinvention of the Yorkshire folk artist *Pachyderm* is a

continuous 25-minute minimalist guitar piece, a succession of minute variations on a slowly (un)picked open-tuned chord. Chapman's instrument sounds rich and woody here, and each repeated motif is tweaked with a different effect, such as a swirling phaser or a fluttering tremolo. Side Two is a remix of the track by Rob Antony, a young neighbour of Chapman's. He subjects the original to a low-level but penetrating electronic filtration, bringing out the dronal elements and dabbling in the odd rhythmic pulsation. Refreshing to find the 72-year-old Chapman so open to contemporary sounds.

ROB YOUNG



GARY CLARK JR
Blak And Blu
WARNER BROTHERS

8/10
New blues hero justifies the hype Clark's status as the most talked-about young guitar-slinger of his generation was

confirmed when he joined the Stones on stage during their 50th anniversary concerts. The black 28-year-old Texan seemed un-awed and his major-label debut exudes a similarly assured self-confidence. The influences may be obvious as he channels blues-rock aristocracy (Duane Allman on “Ain't Messin' Around”, Hendrix on “When My Train Pulls In” and SRV on “Numb”) and throws in some Memphis soul and Marvin Gaye moods. Yet, like Frank Ocean's *Channel Orange*, the result is a fresh and invigoratingly modern take on black music and as far removed from a musical history lesson as you can get.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



**LLOYD COLE/
HANS-JOACHIM
ROEDELIOUS**
Selected Studies
Vol 1
BUREAU B

6/10
English songwriter meets ex-Cluster man in the ether...

Recorded by shuttling music across the channel via the internet, *Selected Studies Vol 1* is a good snapshot of Roedelius' modus operandi, while giving a greater insight into Cole's predilection for electronics, after 2001's *Plastic Wood*'s solo instrumental excursions. Roedelius is the very definition of the plus ça change artist, which is fine if you have a creative thumbprint as elegant as his. Not all of *Studies* gels – “Tangolargo”'s gaseous MIDI tones sound like a TV ident gone wrong – but there are some beautiful, somnambulant melodies here, peaking with “HIQS”, a truly blissful shiver of electronica.

JON DALE

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Gary
Clark Jr



➤ Gary Clark Jr may appear to have risen from nowhere to become the hottest young guitar-slinger in America. But at 28, the reality is rather different. He spent a decade paying his dues on the fertile club scene in Austin, Texas before a showcase at Eric Clapton's “Crossroads” festival in 2010 earned him a major label deal and a celebrity status that recently culminated in him jamming with the Stones. “Playing with them felt like a bridge in time connecting not only the past into the future,” he tells *Uncut*, “but back to the origins of rock'n'roll and its father, the blues.”

“Without the Stones,” he continues, “it's difficult to imagine this artform would have ever been realised in such a huge way.”

His own eclectic blues-rock-funk-R&B realisation has its roots in a parental record collection that ranged from BB King to The Jackson Five. When he first picked up a guitar, Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan were particular influences. “But no-one else can do it like them,” he says. “I love to tip my hat to those guys, but I grew up with synthesisers and hip-hop, R&B, modern rock. That's influenced the way I play. I'm just enjoying my ride and being who I am.”

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



CONCRETE KNIVES
Be Your Own King
BELLA UNION

7/10
Norman invaders' funky musique concrète Malcolm McLaren's *Duck Rock* reimagined

by bored French indie kids too lazy to skip, Concrete Knives' debut album betrays an idiosyncratic command of English, but the Caen fivesome largely dispense with language and let the treble dials do the talking. Whooping her way through this medium-cool frugging music, which nods to Vampire Weekend highlife and Tom Tom Club nursery bop, Morgane Colas is as much cheerleader as vocalist: “Greyhound Racing” is all “na na na”, “Wild Gunman” all “whoah-whoah”s, but the roller-disco gallop of “Wallpaper” epitomises *Be Your Own King*'s catwalk sang-froid and quiet joie de vivre.

JIM WIRTH



THE COURTEENERS
Anna
V2

5/10
Manc indie-rockers discover dance After the bombast of *St Jude* and the self-consciously serious

Falcon, The Courteeners' third album promises to open a new chapter sonically for Liam Fray's indie-rockers. What that means is they've discovered dance music and introduced a hint of electrofunk to their sound, as on the undulating “Lose Control”, or the dancefloor thump of “Push Yourself”. Other than the limp “Money”, they pull these off pretty well – they're certainly more memorable than bog-standard guitar anthem “Welcome To The Rave”, but Fray seems happiest belting out string-laden tearjerker “Marquee”, which provides the best platform for his voice, lyrics and self-confidence.

PETER WATTS



DARKSTAR
News From Nowhere
WARP

6/10
Glum trio's wishy-washy synthpop Darkstar's debut of trenchcoat electronica raised enough eyebrows

to secure the London act a deal with Warp, but the issue that affected *North* – the lack of tunes – has yet to be fully resolved on their colourful follow-up, *News From Nowhere*. Recording in rural Yorkshire with Wild Beasts producer Richard Formby has resulted in a lush new psychedellic sheen that nudges them closer to James Blake and Animal Collective. Synths crumble romantically around James Buttery's curdled vocals on “A Day's Pay For a Day's Work” and “You Don't Need A Weatherman”, but the bucolic reverie can't mask the suspicion that something vital is missing.

PIERS MARTIN



NATALY DAWN
How I Knew Her
NONESUCH

Fine, eclectic debut from US singer
Dawn is half of indie duo Pomplamoose, who have numerous fans on

7/10

YouTube and MySpace and a discography that largely consists of digital releases. This solo album is produced by Dawn's Pomplamoose partner Jack Conte and is dominated by her fine, Jolie Holland-style whimsical vocals, backed by gorgeous arrangements from the multi-instrumentalist band (mandolins, banjos and upright bass are all wielded with intent). The band put real heft behind Dawn's voice, from the beautiful, acoustic, plaintive "Why Did You Marry", the soulful "Please Don't Scream", swinging, jazzy "Still A Believer" and the excellent R&B of "Even Steven".

PETER WATTS



DARWIN DEEZ
Songs For Imaginative People
LUCKY NUMBER

Quirk-popster's impressive self-produced second
One of 2010's more winningly insistent

8/10

earworms was "Constellations", an alt-pop confection spun by singer, songwriter and producer Darwin Deez. As his self-titled debut showed, the North Carolinian oddball was way ahead of the "intelli-pop" curve that delivered Alt-J and Django Django in the UK. Deez's second album ups the wonky'n'witty ante without sacrificing heart or tunes. Pavement, Soul Coughing, Paul Simon, Prince, The Breeders... it's hard to tell where Deez is coming from, which is much of his record's appeal. The sunburned and twanging "No Love" and liquefied clatter of "All In The Wrist" are highlights.

SHARON O'CONNELL



THE DEPARTED
Adventus
BLUE ROSE

Storming second album from
Cody Canada's Red Dirt Rockers

8/10

Following last year's feet-finding debut album, *This Is Indian Land*, the Texan quintet have developed into an immaculately road-toughened, hard-rocking ensemble. They prime the Southern funk of the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd to a resolute edge on "Demons". Gospel-ised piledriver "Better Get Right" shows the devil doesn't have all the best tunes but confirms that The Departed have more than a few. Organist Steve Littleton is a constant presence between the guitar conflagrations of Cody Canada and Seth James – all three working to a delirious peak on "Cold Hard Fact".

GAVIN MARTIN



DEVLIN
A Moving Picture
ISLAND

Rising grime lord offers all of Essex outside for a fight
Building on the gold-selling success of his 2010 debut, the "Essex

5/10

Eminem" James Devlin adds orchestral strings and cinematic melodrama to his hard-edged urban rhymes on this cluttered second album. He also musters a crowded guestlist, from old partners in grime like Labrinth and Wretch 32 to dubstep diva Katy B. But while the Dagenham rapper's musical ambition is commendable, his obsession with proving his own street-level authenticity ultimately becomes unwittingly hilarious: "my backyard is too rough for Titchmarsh." In addition, Ed Sheeran's execrable duet on "All Along The Watchtower" is probably the worst cover version ever recorded.

STEPHEN DALTON



REVELATIONS
Roger Eno's neighbourly concern

➤ While the more famous, cosmopolitan Eno brother has just dropped a new Warp, his younger sibling has quietly unveiled a new project rooted in his Suffolk home county.

Since working on 1983's *Apollo*, Roger has been exploring the ambient/folk/compositional interzone. His latest project commemorates Ted Sheldrake, a retired farm labourer and amateur songwriter who died in 2012. A one-man folk tradition, Sheldrake plied his music in pubs, village dances and horse fairs. "He was my neighbour," Eno explains, "and his outlook was that of one that didn't live in the commercial world. He had no truck with commercial fashion, so all of his thoughts are on truisms."

Eno admired the "open, uncontrived and heartbreakingly poignant" quality of songs like "All In A Garden Green" and "Moon Waltz", and coaxed Sheldrake into a recording studio. "The first thing I had to tell him was that he wasn't going to get an electric shock," he says of the 90-year-old's session. "He seemed concerned about the amount of plugs and electricity in a small room." Ted sang his material, while Eno added instruments along with local characters 'Stumpy' Willis and friends. It ends with a recording of Ted's self-composed funeral music.

ROB YOUNG



DOMENICO
Cine Privé
PLUG RESEARCH

Balmy offering from Brazilian minstrel
Ten years ago, Rio's Domenico Lancellotti revitalised modern

6/10

samba with his experimental +2 group, earning him the inevitable hook-up with Beck and releases on David Byrne's Luaka Bop. *Cine Privé* suggests he's eased his foot off the gas as he focuses on solo stardom, opting for a breezy indie-samba confection reminiscent, at its most daring, on "Su Di Te", of late-'90s Stereolab. Having broken new ground in the past, Lancellotti now treads more familiar territory, toying with soft psych and exotica on "Os Pinguinhos" and "Receta". No surprise at all to hear Beastie Boys cohorts Money Mark and Mario Caldato Jr adding to the pastel haze.

PIERS MARTIN



MIKE DOUGHTY
The Flip Is Another Honey
SNACK BAR

Novelty meets homage on irreverent indie-folk covers set

6/10

Relying mostly on acoustic guitar, piano and percussion, former Soul Coughing frontman Doughty pays skewed homage to some favourite tracks on this unorthodox covers collection. The material ranges from Randy Newman to Cheap Trick, Thin Lizzy to Stephen Sondheim. Some are straight covers, such as John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads". Others, like obscure Stone Roses track "Tightrope", are deconstructed into Beck-style saloon-bar raps. The quality zigzags, but Doughty maintains an agreeably impish spirit – notably on "Sit Down, You're Rocking The Boat", from *Guys And Dolls*, which climaxes in a howling punk meltdown.

STEPHEN DALTON



ROGER ENO
Ted Sheldrake
BACKWATER

Bittersweet tribute to the 'last of the natural poets'

6/10

Roger Eno's late neighbour, a retired farm labourer, never set foot outside East Anglia in all of 91 years. *Ted Sheldrake* is Eno's collaborative tribute to the wisdom, character and music of this Suffolk thoroughbred. Eno's restrained piano and electronics arrangements are augmented by pub ambience, field recordings and accordion, while Sheldrake, and friend Arthur 'Stumpy' Willis, sings his own songs based on his life, occasionally recalling Robert Wyatt. Sheldrake witnessed the old ways disintegrating: 50-man harvests reduced to two tractors. Eno's portrait poignantly captures the plain-speaking romanticism of a clear-sighted countryman.

ROB YOUNG

JIM JAMES

Regions Of Light And Sound Of God

V2

MMJ man goes it alone with an eclectic, intricate LP. By Peter Watts



8/10

HYPNOTIC, PSYCHEDELIC, SOULFUL and ragged, My Morning Jacket are one of the most distinctive bands to come out of the American rock underground in the past decade. Much of that is down to frontman Jim

James, who has a gorgeous but flexible voice and writes tunes that veer from country to space rock to reggae while retaining MMJ's absorbing, reverberating sonic palette. Although the band aren't the most productive around – 2011's *Circuitry* was only their second album since 2005's excellent *Z* – James has spent the past four years quietly beaver away on his own solo project. The result is a lovingly recorded scrap of splendour and beauty that takes some of the more interesting elements of MMJ and runs with them in a series of unexpected directions. "I wanted it to sound like the past of the future," James told *Uncut*. "Like you are in the year 4037 and you found this record, which was made in the year 3078."

It begins, tellingly, with a pseudo-retro crackle of vinyl and a surreptitious, almost modest, drum roll. The brilliant "State Of The Art (A.E.I.O.U)" slowly builds from a simple piano-and-voice ballad into a claustrophobic funk work-out reminiscent of Spiritualized or 1970s Brian Eno (British influences infiltrate *Regions Of Light...* despite MMJ being the most American of bands). MMJ are noted for their swirling layers of sound and there are layers here, too, but more precise, more considered, placed by an almost visible single hand rather than an opaque 10-legged sound machine lost deep inside the moment.

As James adds fresh instruments with each verse, "State Of The Art" grows ever more complex, but on top of all is James' voice. This is a wise move: his vocals can get buried in the maelstrom of MMJ but here they remain clean and clear, beautifully illustrating "Know Til Now", which fuses loops and keyboards to a song with a coda like an old jazzy acetate. It's like a Tom Waits tune that has been scrubbed and softened while remaining deliciously oddball, with a wonderful, tangible, texture. The record has a unified atmosphere, the result of James producing the album himself, recording at home and playing almost every instrument.

"Know Til Now" is one of four songs inspired by *Gods' Man*, a graphic novel by Lynd Ward from 1929 that uses wordless wood engravings. The book is both about love and a Faustian pact, and it is the former part with which James identified when he read it in 2008, shortly after he injured himself falling off the stage – the



SLEEVE NOTES

protagonist of the book hurts himself falling down a cliff. "Dear One", with squelching bass and '80s drums, is a euphoric love song that reflects the book's central affair as does the following "A New Life", which provides the best showcase of James' voice, as confident and dramatic as a young Brett Anderson on a stunning song that marries a Bowie-style ballad with a Johnny Cash backbeat, sprinkled with MMJ pyrotechnics.

Intricate, delicate instrumental "Exploding" offers a bridge into the second half of the album, which begins with a twitter of birdsong and a cascading cherry blossom of keyboards on the regretful, religion-referencing "Of The Mother Again". Next is "Actress", a bittersweet lament that typifies the album's

Recorded at: Home, and mixed at The Fun Home in Louisville, Kentucky
Produced by: Jim James
Personnel: All instruments played by Jim James except drums by Dave Givan and five-piece strings

adventurous spirit, combining austere strings with slinky beats and domineering vocals. From there, it's back to *Gods' Man* and "All Is Forgiven", a sinister, sonorous theme for the novel's devil-like figure. Saturated by organ and heavy metal chords, it's the first piece James wrote inspired by the book and it hangs ominously in the dead air. Perhaps mindful of offering a chirpier denouement, the album closes with the Beatles-

esque "God's Love To Deliver", in which James harmonises with himself over simple strumming, almost gets lost in a stew of samples, before ending with a buzz and a hum that lingers in the ear long after this strange, beautiful album has played its final note.

Q&A

Jim James

What did you do here that you couldn't do with MMJ?

It's not a matter of what I could or could not do, because MMJ is a very free place, it was rather that this was a chance for me to spread my wings and enjoy playing instruments I don't normally play in MMJ, but still enjoy a great deal. It also was a chance for me to make a record on my own terms and in my own time, by myself at home.

What was the influence of Lynd Ward's *Gods' Man* on the album?

I began the album as a score to *Gods' Man*. I feel I have never compromised my soul to the devil so I feel good about that, but there were some more literal parts to the story – injury, love blossoming out of despair, recovery – that I identified with and had a super-surreal déjà-vu impact on me. I felt I knew the book from a former life back when it came out.

The album has terrific texture, does that come from the production process?

Production and soundscape are very important to me. Gear choices and then deciding where things fall along the space-time continuum – these are very important. I'm just as interested in mic-ing and fucking with the piano as I am in simply playing it. *INTERVIEW: PETER WATTS*



FOALS *Holy Fire* WARNER MUSIC

Step into the big leagues for once-bookish quintet After loosening and spreading out the springloaded funk

7/10

of their first album, *Antidotes*, onto their second, *Total Life Forever*, Foals trailed album three with "Inhaler", an unprecedentedly ferocious rock song. It's a bit of a red herring, though, as aside from the equally tempestuous "Providence", *Holy Fire* doesn't quite unfurl its devil horns – "Late Night" has a moody disco strut, and "My Number" is as perkily taut as their earliest work. But the production heft from Flood and Alan Moulder (U2, Nine Inch Nails), as well as the shameless but satisfying amount of delayed guitar, means that it all has serious stadium credentials.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



FLUME *Flume* TRANSGRESSIVE

Hybrid electronic first from Aussie newcomer In 2012, the continual mutation of electronica gathered pace, but if one dominant trend

6/10

emerged, it was the welding of neo-house and cosmic glitch to contemporary hip-hop and R&B. New wonderkind on the block is Sydney-based producer Harley Streten, whose dreamily nostalgic, glo-fi interpretation recalls Toro Y Moi and Washed Out, rather than, say, Coooly G or Frank Ocean. His debut brims with promise, best realised by "On Top" and the Art Of Noise update "Ezra" – which makes its descent into cookie-cutter, female vocal-centric synth pop doubly disappointing. There's much to admire here, but Flume needs to fix on his identity. Still, time is on the 21-year-old's side.

SHARON O'CONNELL



JOHN FOXX AND THE MATHS *Evidence* METAMATIC

Synth pioneer refuses to grow old Counting collaborations, compilations and live albums, *Evidence* is John

8/10

Foxx's 46th album. So Lancashire's cult hero of dystopian electronica might be forgiven for running out of ways to make synth-pop alienation sound fresh and relevant. But his partnership with young producer Bengie has seen Foxx release his best music since the glory days of early Ultravox and debut album *Metamatic*, and *Evidence* is even more brimful of sci-fi sensuality than last year's *The Shape Of Things*. Highlights include the dark house of Matthew Dear collaboration "Talk (Beneath Your Dreams)" and two centre-piece excursions with Brighton electro maverick Gazelle Twin.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



FUZZY LIGHTS *Rule Of Twelfths* LITTE RED RABBIT

Cambridge folk-noise merchants mess with our heads The rule of twelfths is a formula used by sailors to predict tidal

7/10

patterns, even though, given the volatility of weather systems, such precision can't always be applied. Quiet precision is frequently swept aside on the third album from the collective led by husband-and-wife duo Rachel and Xavier Watkins, a work that sweetly lulls the listener with delicate folk numbers before ambushing them with surging orchestral noise. It's this contrast between light and shade, soft and loud, on songs such as "The Hour" and "Restless", that makes *Rule Of Twelfths* so effective, even if it flags slightly towards the end.

FIONA STURGES

HOW TO BUY... MARK KOZELEK Top cuts by the ex-Red House Painter



SUN KIL MOON *Ghosts Of The Great Highway*

CALDO VERDE/
JETSET, 2003
Red House Painters split after releasing *Old Ramon* in 2001.

Kozelek's return proper as Sun Kil Moon is his most majestic achievement – the more so for its subtlety. *Ghosts* is a consummately sequenced, enveloping collection capturing Kozelek's obsession with classic boxing figures, and deserved comparisons to early 1970s-period Neil Young.

8/10



RED HOUSE PAINTERS *Red House Painters (Rollercoaster)*

4AD, 1993
If there's a complaint to level at RHP, it's

that their records overstayed their welcome at times – and *Rollercoaster* (as the self-titled LP became known) is the longest of all, at around 80 minutes. But it contains Kozelek's single masterpiece – "Katy Song", a heartbroken eight-minute piece about his first love, who died while Kozelek was completing *Ghosts*.

8/10



DESERTSHORE *Drawing Of Threes*

CALDO VERDE, 2011
A welcome return to the burnished shimmer of *Ghosts* for anyone less into

his recent Spanish guitar-influenced records. Desertshore is RHP guitarist Phil Carney's band, though with Kozelek on vocals, it's as close a reunion as we're likely to get, for now.

8/10

LAURA SNAPES



JOE GIDEON & THE SHARK *Freakish* BRONZE RAT

Likeably eccentric second from sibling blues-punk duo

7/10

Joe and Viva Gideon, both former members of

Bikini Atoll, return with a second LP that builds on the promise of their 2009 debut, *Harum Scarum*. There's more than a hint of Nick Cave in Joe Gideon's world-weary, semi-spoken drawl, intermittently backed by his sister Viva's velvety vocals, and in his preoccupations which veer between comic and grotesque. The album brims with bizarre tales of snakekeepers, bogus priests and peculiar happenings on the Underground. "The Insignificant Bullet", a deranged transatlantic adventure set against chugging guitars, is particularly effective, showing the Gideons at their most wickedly inventive.

FIONA STURGES



PETRA HADEN *Petra Goes To The Movies* ANTI-

Oddball singer hums classic film themes. Better than it sounds

7/10

The daughter of iconic jazz bassist Charlie

Haden is an eccentric and restlessly collaborative violinist and singer, best known for her epic a cappella re-reading of *The Who Sell Out*. This is a similar project, in which she reworks 16 film themes. The least interesting tracks are songs with lyrics (from *Tootsie* and *Bagdad Café*), where she is accompanied by guitar or piano, but the bulk of the themes (Barry's *Goldfinger*, Morricone's *Cinema Paradiso*, etc) are sung wordlessly, a cappella, with a multi-tracked choir humming the arrangements. The effect is initially comic but soon becomes utterly mesmeric.

JOHN LEWIS



ED HARCOURT *Back Into The Woods* CCCLX

Elegant sixth album from underrated national treasure

8/10

"I'm the man that time forgot," Ed Harcourt

concedes wistfully on his latest release, bluntly – if inadvertently – reminding us of his Mercury nomination a dozen years ago. He's remained below the radar since, but his talent remains unquestionable, even when drawing on a six-hour, piano-dominated Abbey Road session. "Hey Little Bruiser" is an artful tribute to his young daughter with guest violin from wife Gita Harcourt – most likely the object of the confessional "The Pretty Girls" – while "The Murmur In My Heart" highlights what Jeff Buckley's "Hallelujah" might have been without the histrionics. Time ought to be kinder.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



KEATON HENSON
Birthdays
OAK TEN

Acclaimed singer-songwriter adds some bulk to his beauty

7/10

This follow-up to last year's impressive debut,

Dear, is no less musically intense or lyrically unflinching, but now Henson's quavering anxiety has flesh on its bones. The key components remain his voice – think Antony Hegarty ratcheted up an octave – and spare, reverbed guitar, but horns, strings and some notable guests, including Jesca Hoop and Band Of Horses, add texture when all the wavering and weeping becomes a little too much. "Kronos" and "Don't Swim" offer some welcome crunch, "The Best Today" is elegant pop, and there's even a note of hard-won optimism courtesy of piano-led finale "In The Morning".

GRAEME THOMSON



THE HOLYDRUG COUPLE
Noctuary
SACRED BONES

Chilean duo dealing in superior paisley pop

8/10

The Holydrug Couple are the second band to be plucked from Santiago's

apparently burgeoning psych-rock scene by New York label Sacred Bones. Once you've worn out your copies of the Tame Impala and Melody's Echo Chamber albums, *Noctuary* should be your next port of call. It mines the same rich seam of dazed, halcyon guitar pop as Kevin Parker's various projects, liberally smeared with mildly discombobulating effects that are all the more impressive given that the album is entirely self-recorded and -produced. Ives Sepúlveda's vocals can be a little puny, but the music is full of clever twists and suddenly blossoming choruses.

SAM RICHARDS



THE JAMES HUNTER SIX
Minute By Minute
DECCA

First in five years from Van-approved Essex Soul man

7/10

Grammy-nominated for 2006's *People Gonna*

Talk, Hunter's teamed with Daptone mastermind Gabriel Roth for this new major-label outing. The seamlessly authentic sound fits his raw and lusty vocalising, and the impressively tailored swagger 'n swing of his band, to a tee. From the mid-'60s James Brown groove of "Chicken Switch" to the Coasters-vamping "Look Out", through to the Caribbean lilt of "Let The Monkey Ride", Hunter's effortless assimilation of sources is encyclopaedic. But there's nothing by rote about his phrasing or inflections, the warmth of character in his voice insuring surefooted tunes come with emotional payback a-plenty.

GAVIN MARTIN



ICEAGE
You're Nothing
MATADOR

Second album of apocalyptic punk rock from breakout Danes

8/10

Still in their teens when debut album *New Brigade* became an underground cause célèbre in 2010, Copenhagen's Iceage reinvigorated punk rock by dragging it back into the dark. *You're Nothing* builds on its formula, 12 tracks of metallic guitars and martial drums that feel both chaotic and tightly corralled: sometimes sprawling discordantly, other times turning on a Kroner. White-knuckle anthemicism is order of the day, and vocalist Elias Bender Rønnenfelt seems to have grown into his skin; a commanding presence, whether wailing of "pressure, pressure" on the charging "Ecstasy", or taking an accusatory tone on the piano-accompanied "Morals".

LOUIS PATTISON



INC.
No World
4AD

Slick debut from Beck, Elton and Cee Lo's former sidemen

7/10

Daniel and Andrew Aged represent the acme of the current trend for blending R&B swagger with indie introspection. Facilitated by their crack session muso chops, *No World* is a neat fusion of D'Angelo and The xx, although much like the latter's recent *Coexist*, it's a guarded affair, drawing from the same muted palette of emotions throughout (the sombre swingbeat of "Trust (Hell Below)" is about as animated as it gets here). Still, Inc.'s touch can be exquisite at times: songs such as "The Place" and "Careful" are the kind of sensual, organic, modern soul tracks you wish Prince was still making.

SAM RICHARDS



JOSÉ JAMES
No Beginning No End
BLUE NOTE

Jazz vocalist blurs boundaries on new label debut

7/10

Feted in US jazz circles, José James' music owes

as much to R&B, while the 33-year-old is also a Nick Drake fan. This fourth album, made without a contract before Blue Note snapped it up, finds his D'Angelo-like croon set to low-key funk grooves and Sly Stone-esque horn jabs. At times the pace crawls, but James' supple, intimate vocals are engaging, and the sonic palette shimmers inventively, notably on "Sword & Gun", a duet with the Moroccan singer Hindi Zahra. The string quartet featured on the bitter-sweet "Tomorrow" is a nod to Drake; more such daring would help James' cause.

NEIL SPENCER



ETHAN JOHNS
If Not Now, Then When?
THREE CROWS MUSIC

Top producer takes Laura Marling's dare, and introduces himself as an artist

8/10

All the signifiers of Ethan Johns' productions, from Laura Marling and Ray LaMontagne to Ryan Adams and Kings Of Leon, are vividly present on his first album: the detailed analogue sound, arrangements in which every note counts, and real-time immediacy. Emerging fully formed as a writer and singer, Johns locates his aesthetic in traditional idioms, ripping through a John Lee Hooker-style rave-up ("Morning Blues"), updating protest-era Dylan ("Eden"), and cranking out vintage raunch (the "Gloria"-quoting "Don't Reach Too Far"). The results are so convincing, the only question is what took him so long?

BUD SCOPPA



BASSEKOU KOUYATE AND NGONI BA
Jama Ko
OUT HERE

Brilliant third album from Mali's new mainman

9/10

After years backing others on his banjo-like ngoni, Kouyate turned bandleader on 2006's *Segu Blue* – and won a BBC World Music 'album of the year' award. The pulsating turbulence of his latest reflects the political turmoil in which it was made, just as Islamist fundamentalists were over-running parts of Mali and imposing a Taliban-style ban on music. The result is an urgent mix of African blues and funk, seething with anger and sadness, and with Kouyate's electrified ngoni cranked up to the max. Taj Mahal and producer Howard Berman assist in fashioning a creative triumph out of Mali's darkest hour.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



MARK KOZELEK
Like Rats/ Live At Phoenix Public House, Melbourne
CALDO VERDE

Sun Kil Moon man's creative purge

5/10

6/10

Not for Mark Kozelek the posthumous rarities collection: by May, he will have released five records in 12 months. However, these two releases might turn a drip-feed into a relative market flood: unlike his single-artist covers LPs, *Like Rats* features Yes, Bad Brains and Bruno Mars, proving Kozelek could turn his wry tone to any old thing and make it lovely. More intriguing is *...Melbourne*, where he chats with the crowd and plays with the looseness that set *Among The Leaves* apart. But is it enough? Sadly, it's starting to feel like Kozelek has begun to trade rarities for diminishing returns.

LAURA SNAPES

EELS Wonderful, Glorious

E WORKS/VAGRANT

Eels' 10th album lives up to its fate-tempting title.

By Andrew Mueller



8/10

THOSE FAMILIAR with Eels' catalogue of consumptive, cockeyed balladry will read the title of this, Eels' 10th studio album, as leadenly ironic – the sort of “Wonderful, glorious” you might mutter to yourself, perhaps upon seeing a bomber shedding its

payload (in fact, the album's cover image). An assumption that the contents of *Wonderful, Glorious* will tend towards the melancholic would not be erroneous, but it would be – as ever, where Eels are concerned – only partially correct.

Wonderful, Glorious ends nearly three years of silence following a fecund period around the turn of the decade in which Eels released the tremendous *Hombre Lobo/End Times/Tomorrow Morning* trilogy in little more than 12 months. Though those three albums were conceived as a suite relating a self-contained story – falling in love, falling out of it, figuring how to go on subsequently – they were not notably incongruous with anything Eels had done before. Or, it turns out, since – *Wonderful, Glorious* is another Eels album full of songs which are essentially attempts by E to talk himself into facing the day. Which is to say, of course, that *Wonderful, Glorious* is another Eels album.

It's also a reminder of how difficult it is to imagine having too many of those. For a writer who essentially has only one theme – that we are doomed, and this is ridiculous, but we might as well make the best of it – E finds an abundance of angles from which to address it. The opening track, the weirdly funky “Bombs Away”, could be heard as a statement of “I Will Survive”-variety defiance, or read as the spidery treatise some vengeful maniac posts to his local newspaper shortly before taking up position in a clocktower with a rifle (“I’ll no longer keep my mouth shut/Bombs away, gonna shake the house”).

The mad as hell/not gonna take it anymore theme is revisited regularly throughout *Wonderful, Glorious*. “Don’t mess with me/I’m up for the fight,” cautions “Kinda Fuzzy” over queasy glam guitars and keyboards that resemble the incidental music of a detective series. “I’m hurting bad/And fighting mad,” declares “On The Ropes”, an almost-country tune arranged around a pretty and understated riff. “Battle stations, gotta man your guns now,” orders “Stick Together”, a gruff instruction that recalls the more recent works of Tom Waits in both its frenetic percussion and distinctly Marc Ribot-ish guitars.

The question of the reason for all this purposeful loin-girding and up-saddling is answered in installments towards the end of *Wonderful, Glorious* with a sequence of E's characteristically backhanded devotionals (Eels, lest we forget, kicked off one of the great love songs of the late 20th-Century, “PS You Rock My World” with “I was at a funeral, the day I realised/I wanted to spend my



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: E
Recorded at: The Compound, Los Feliz
Personnel: E (vocals, guitar), The Chet (guitar), P-Boo (guitar), Kool G Murder (bass), Knuckles (drums)

life with you.”) “You’re My Friend” and “I Am Building A Shrine” manage to make a virtue of a sentimentality that verges audaciously on outright sappiness. The closing title track fossicks, like most of *Wonderful, Glorious* – and most of Eels' catalogue – for redemption in the overlap between optimism and fatalism (“Every night you spent shrouded in darkness,” decides E, “has led you to this moment in the light/It’s all right.”)

Wonderful, Glorious sounds, throughout, overwhelmingly like an Eels album – not the statement of the obvious it may appear, but an

observation of how little difference the continually shifting group personnel ever makes to Eels' music.

This consistency, after all these years since “Novocaine For The Soul”, has to be admired as testament to the robustness of E's vision – as does his dogged fealty to his preferred subject, of hope in spite of it all (“Peach Blossom”, literally an urge to smell the flowers, is a clear highlight, suggesting a Temptations song sung by a *Lust For Life*-era Iggy Pop).

So *Wonderful, Glorious* is yet another Eels album about desire and death – but what else is there?

Q&A

Mark Everett

How ambiguous or otherwise is the title? It's really not meant to be at all, though the plane dropping bombs on the cover may make it seem that way. There's nothing ironic about it at all, to me. The reasons the bombs are dropping is that we've all somehow got to navigate our way through life, and it's not easy for any of us.

There's a recurring theme on the album of struggling to find a reason to get out of bed... Right. And today it happened to be: so I could talk to Uncut.

Did you have a specific agenda when you started writing/recording?

What's unique about this album is that it's the only time I've ever gone into making a record with no plan – the plan was to have no plan. I had nothing written. I just wanted to get the band in a room and see what happened. I think that's also reflected in the lyrics – I was scared about it, which is why there's so much about fighting your way out of a corner. But we got lucky. Five guys in a room all firing on all cylinders.

How do you decide which Eels personnel are invited to play on a new Eels album?

I had an epiphany towards the end of the last tour I did with these guys – I realised they had been able to pull everything I suspected they might not be able to. So I thought: why don't we all get together and write some music? It's definitely more fun than sitting in the basement and recording yourself. It turns out I like fun.

INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER



K-X-P II MELODIC

Finnish quartet treat Krautrock to a malevolent makeover While Finland's K-X-P were hardly short of motorik grooves on their

8/10

debut, its follow-up is a more diverse, if equally fierce, affair reminiscent of *Zombie* in an ugly mood. Written in Berlin by main man Timo Kaukolampi, its twin drummer assault provides the backbone for 12 dark, noisy tracks blessed with unexpected details, from opener "Ydolem"'s brass introduction to the highly adrenalised stomp of "Magnetic North". There are also a kaleidoscopic host of vintage analogue effects, choirs, walls of guitar and epic keyboard melodies, plus hypnotic vocals from Annie, repaying Kaukolampi for work among her songwriters.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



SHELBY LYNNE Revelation Road EVERSO

Self-released album with bonus live disc In a breathy voice that lies somewhere between Dusty Springfield and

8/10

Bobbie Gentry, Lynne's gothic Southern past haunts these songs, most potently on the murderous "Heaven's Only Days Down The Road", a cathartic memory of the fateful Alabama night when her father shot her mother and then himself. The rest of the album is a similarly evocative, if less gruesome, ode to her roots in a stripped-down Southern-country-soul style redolent of Iris DeMent's 2012 comeback, *Sing The Delta*. A live disc also included here features intimate acoustic takes of songs new and old, including several from '99's career highlight *I Am....*

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



DAWN MCCARTHY & BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY What The Brothers Sang DOMINO

7/10

Everly Brothers re-worked, Bonnie

'Prince' Billy transformed

Hot on the heels of their terrific seasonal recording of "Christmas Eve Can Kill You", Will Oldham, aka Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, and Faun Fables' Dawn McCarthy reunite for a full-length album of Everly Brothers covers, replete with country hues and wonderfully cosy harmonies. While there's a wistfulness and desolation at the heart of "What Am I Living For" and "It's All Over", the most peculiar aspect here is the sound of Oldham shaking off his customary moroseness in "Poems, Prayers and Promises" and "Milk Train" and positively radiating joie de vivre.

FIONA STURGES



MONOSWEZI The Village RIVERBOAT

Introducing the Norway-Mozambique jazz/folk axis Norwegian jazzer Hallvard Godal bagged a government grant to

7/10

spend a year in Mozambique, forming this fusion group on his return. Their minimalist approach mixes gentle jazz pulses with the looping chime of Zimbabwean mbira (thumb piano) and assorted clanks and bells. Godal blows sinuous melody lines on sax and clarinet while rising Zimbabwean star Hope Masike supplies mesmeric mbira and, on tracks like "Ndinewe", some stratospheric vocal acrobatics. The songs are all traditional but are given a cool Scandinavian edge and, on tracks such as "Kalahari" and "Mapfunde", eerie, desert-influenced atmospheres.

NEIL SPENCER

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Night Beds



➤ Colorado's Winston Yellen, aka Night Beds, never planned a career in music. "I never had a plan at all," he reflects. "I was just drifting. I dropped out of college and for a while I was living out of my car in southern California and doing odd jobs." After five months on the road Yellen decided to move to Nashville and work on some songs. *Country Sleep*, a beguilingly sparse country-soul album, was recorded in a small rented house in the middle of nowhere outside Nashville. "It was one of several pre-Civil War guesthouses I found on Craigslist but it had something. It was only once I was there that I found it had belonged to June and Johnny Cash. It was pretty intimidating but also pretty cool." Yellen maintains that much of his time was spent "figuring out how the hell you make an album. I'm very much an amateur when it comes to music and I never saw a time when anyone would get to hear my efforts. I mean, I'm working in a seriously non-hipster mode here. It's an older man's kind of music. But what the hell, I feel like an old man."

FIONA STURGES



TOM MORGAN Orange Syringe FIRE

First solo set from former Lemonheads wordsmith Aussie Morgan has fronted Smudge since 1991 and co-wrote *It's*

7/10

A Shame About Ray and *Come On Feel The Lemonheads* with Evan Dando. Yet it's not until now that the 42-year-old has chosen to make his debut solo album, inhabiting a gently jangling place somewhere between the bookish classicism of countrymen The Triffids and The Go-Betweens and the stolid Americana of a Buffalo Tom. The opening triptych of the mournfully droll "One True Love", the glistening "Best Thing For Baby" and the organ-driven "Taste For Blood" are especially fine, but Morgan's weak voice leaves you pining for Dando's burnished croon.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



NIGHT BEDS Country Sleep DEAD OCEANS

Heartache and loss from El Paso County If we need another guitar-wielding singer-songwriter with a tremulous voice

8/10

and a melancholy disposition, then he'd better be very good indeed. Luckily, there's something compelling about Colorado Springs' Winston Yellen, aka Night Beds, whose singing is a bit Justin Vernon and, on "Ramona", a bit Ryan Adams, and whose sparsely accompanied compositions come with a rare emotional depth. The atmosphere here fluctuates between gentle melancholy and abject devastation. *Country Sleep* will never get a party swinging, but if you're in the mood to have your heart ripped out, it does the job beautifully.

FIONA STURGES



THE NOVEMBER FIVE If You're Satisfied You Are Dead MONTAUK INDUSTRIES

Angry man rock with disarming undercurrents

7/10

Live shows around their native east London and beyond over the last couple of years suggested that The November Five were heavily in thrall to the venom and aggression of The Stooges and similar amped-up rock monsters. Their debut album, however, reveals a band capable of greater depth and subtlety; yes, "Helicopter" and "Cause I Told You So" leap out of the traps with all guitars blazing, but there's an art-rock twist to "Good Cop Bad Cop" that recalls Television, while singer Joe Cribbin locates his inner Ian McCulloch on the sinister "You Had Your Chance". An atmospheric opening salvo from a band with great promise.

TERRY STAUNTON



OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

Painting
COOKING VINYL

Dad's army repeats on again
"All around the games we could see the sun," sings Simon Fowler

5/10

on "The New Torch Song". "All around the games holding so much love." Denied the chance to eulogise a Woodstock or a Monterey by the unfair vagaries of history, Ocean Colour Scene find themselves – on their 10th studio album – writing a psychedelic love-in about the London Olympics. Still gauche and somewhat silly, the Moseley mods continue to rehash the first two Traffic albums expertly, but while the patient can applaud some United States Of America-style ring modulation on "Professor Perplex", colouring by numbers is still not art.

JIM WIRTH



CHRISTINE O'WMAN

Little Beast
GLITTERHOUSE

Dreamy Swedish folk experiments
Inevitably, first impressions of the third album by Swedish

7/10

multi-instrumentalist O'Woman are dominated by the presence of Mark Lanegan. But that's nothing to be ashamed of. The duet "Familiar Act" is glorious, with vocal interplay teetering atop the to-and-fro of a wheezy saw. "One Of The Folks" reframes "Blue Suede Shoes" as a dark nursery rhyme, with a tune assembled from a sample of heavy breathing. O'Woman's dreamy, sleepy voice adds a welcome dusting of sweetness, but she does veer toward the gothic (the death-lullaby "I'd Rather Die Than Play Dead"). She could, as she suggests, chill a sunny day.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



PICTISH TRAIL

Secret Soundz Vol 2
FENCE

Touching, eclectic set from Collective Chieftain
As a key mover in the Fife-based Fence Collective, Johnny

9/10

Lynch is indelibly associated with alt.folk, though his own music is playfully eclectic. Lynch acknowledges a debt to Beck; more the uncategorisable creativity than the sound, which marries dreamy melodies with fruit machine electronica recorded in the singer's caravan on the island of Eigg. Whatever, there's an emotional purity to these songs that's intoxicating; from "Wait Until" (inspired by the death of Lynch's mother) to the gorgeous electronic sunset of "I Will Pour It Down" – which illuminates the shadows between *Screamadelica* and *The Flaming Lips*.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



PISSED JEANS

Honeys
SUB POP

Scabrous and very funny fourth LP from angry Philadelphians
Pissed Jeans are a furious bunch of office-based punks who

7/10

periodically howl their pent-up disgust at the world's petty idiocies on fantastically brutal albums. Between the satanic gurgling bass that begins "Bathroom Laughter" and the screeching feedback that ends "Teenage Adult", come 12 pummelling songs of Black Flag-like thump, laced with bleak humour. "Chain Worker" seethes with sludgy self-hate, "Cathouse" rocks like a disgruntled Dirtbombs, while "Cafeteria Food" rages at office politics like a hardcore George Costanza. "You want to tell me I'm lazy/I'm just a laidback man," hollers Matt Korvette on "Romanticize Me". Who would dare argue?

PETER WATTS



POST WAR YEARS

Galapagos
CHESS CLUB

Bombastic fare from Mumfords' touring chums

6/10

Post War Years failed to make much of an impact with their self-released 2009 debut, although the recent success of Alt-J appears to have validated their brand of brainy English art-pop. The London-via-Leamington four-piece up the ante here with some (surprisingly effective) attempts to mate Arcade Fire with Ultravox on "The Bell". Melodies are earnestly anthemic, every song clamoring to offer a fresh juxtaposition of thrummed guitars and modish electronic bleeps. The group's ambition is admirable, but they come unstuck on the over-egged samba shuffle of "Lost Winter", while even Florence Welch might consider "Mellotron" to be a bit much.

SAM RICHARDS



RICK REDBEARD

No Selfish Heart
CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND

Superb solo alter-ego of The Phantom Band singer
Earthed in a mixture of simple Scottish folk textures, a left-of-centre

9/10

singer-songwriter sensibility and some old, elemental magic, Rick Anthony's solo side-project conjures up a soothing darkness, as ancient as the landscape it frequently hymns. Self-played, home-made and full of the grain of life, the lilting playfulness of "Now We're Dancing" is as typical as the brooding death-watch tick-tock of "Cold As Clay (The Grave)". Anthony's stately baritone, weathered like rock, slides into falsetto on the late-Lennon-esque "We All Float", but it's a beautiful rendition of the traditional "Kelvin Grove" which marks the crowning achievement of a glorious album.

GRAEME THOMSON



CARRIE RODRIGUEZ

Give Me All You Got
NINTH STREET OPUS

Chip Taylor-mentored Texan fiddler's fiery fifth solo album
Carrie Rodriguez's

8/10

journey, from classical ingénue to sharp-shooting Texan thoroughbred, is complete. Insouciant slurs and lived-in sensuality now lace her honey sweet tones and producer Lee Townsend frames the material around her live in the studio band. The spit'n'sawdust stomp of opener "Devil In Mind" serves notice of a confident rebirth, the fiddle and electric guitar-stoked "Cut Me Now" confirms it. Self-written confessional songs alive with hard-won experience ("Whiskey Runs Thicker Than Blood") predominate, but her pop sensibility is seamlessly integrated too ("Lake Harriet"). A well-rounded triumph.

GAVIN MARTIN



SALLY SHAPIRO

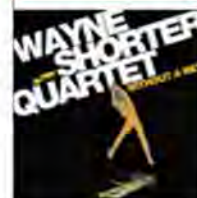
Somewhere Else
PAPER BAG

First LP in three years from stage-shunning singer
The massive popularity of Todd Terje's

6/10

"Inspector Norse" last year showed that Scandinavian disco and house still remain a potent, elegantly hedonistic force; with her second album, Swedish singer and one-time blog darling Sally Shapiro continues to revel in this cheesy yet faintly psychedelic sound. "If It Doesn't Rain" and "Starman" are Hi-NRG high camp, but her thin, cirrus-like voice and the milky production nicely undercut the pounding beats. Arguably, it could have done with more slow jams and twee numbers, like the flute-driven "What Can I Do", an alternate past where Sandy Denny survived to make delightful 1980s pop confectionary.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



WAYNE SHORTER QUARTET

Without A Net
BLUE NOTE

Legendary saxophonist revisits his canon
Like his old boss Miles

8/10

Davis, Shorter has long believed that every composition he writes is an endlessly malleable construct, a stage on a never-ending path. This live album features radically recast versions of two vintage Shorter compositions: a ruminative reading of "Orbits" (written for Miles in 1967) and a Steely Dan-ish take on "Plaza Real" (written for Weather Report in 1983). Elsewhere is a jerky version of "Flying Down To Rio" and some stunningly inventive improvisation, with pianist Danilo Pérez sounding like 10 excited monkeys jumping up and down on the keys. In a good way.

JOHN LEWIS



THE SOFT HILLS

Chromatisms

TAPETE

Stargazing psych from Seattle prodigy
Last year's *The Bird Is Coming Down To Earth* was a promising debut from the quartet

8/10

led by guitarist and vocalist Garrett Hobba. But this second album of dreamy, psych-tinged Big Rock is the real thing: a bold 10-track classic boasting a deftly modernised '70s-retro feel led by Hobba's clean young voice and dirty, Neil Young-meets-shoegaze guitar. Heavy on cosmic American ballads, and perfectly balancing sadness and optimism, it's a sound – fleshed out by Moog, lap-steel, sweet harmonies and an immersive wash of guitar textures – grand enough to carry both the stormy intensity of "Dear Mr Moonlight" and the erotic strut of "Sweet Louise".

GARRY MULHOLLAND



CHRIS STAMEY

Lovesick Blues

YEP ROC

Dreamy, baroque-psychedelic soundscapes from the godfather of Southern pop

8/10

Barely out from The dB's' fine comeback, last year's *Falling Off The Sky*, Chris Stamey's first true solo effort in some eight years comes off as deeply personal rumination, floating on shimmering, sepia-toned melodies and fever-dream lyrics that delve deep into life's crevices. The songs, musically dazzling with strings and fetching arrangements (especially "Astronomy" and the *Pepper*-ish title track), sometimes organise themselves into forceful hooks, as on "You n Me n XTC" (Andy Partridge also helped with mixing); others ("Occasional Shivers") are jazzier streams of consciousness clustering around love, loss, and alienation. Spectacular.

LUKE TORN



COLIN STETSON & MATS GUSTAFSSON

Stones

RUNE GRAMMOFON

Arctic Fire hornsman meets the sax Thing uptown
Colin Stetson and Mats

8/10

Gustafsson had barely met before they launched into this four-part double-sax duel onstage in Vancouver in 2011. But the encounter proved electric enough to merit this release, on which they goad and serenade each other, chasing the vibration from the screaming upper registers to trouser-shaking low-end. Stetson is Arctic Fire and Bon Iver's go-to saxophonist and has released solo music on Constellation; Gustafsson is Sweden's premier free-jazz reedsman, and the garage rock sensibility of his trio The Thing is sublimated here into a thrilling, surprisingly melodic dialogue.

ROB YOUNG



ALEXIS TAYLOR

Nayim From The Halfway Line

DOMINO

Experimental grooves from the Hot Chip man
The teddy-bear falsetto at the heart of Hot Chip's post-club shuffle, Alexis

5/10

Taylor has also pursued music-making outside said band, most notably alongside This Heat drummer Charles Hayward in the improv outfit About Group. *Nayim From The Halfway Line* is more in keeping with Hot Chip's electronic dance aesthetic, albeit with a cranky, homemade feel. There's a stiff funkiness to "Hot Squash", lolloping experimental electronics decorated with bluesy guitar licks, and the insistent house bounce of "You Want Me" is not without its charms. But these 30 minutes feel more like song-sketches for a new Hot Chip album than any bold new direction.

LOUIS PATTISON

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Unknown Mortal Orchestra



➤ Ruben Nielson, the songwriter behind Unknown Mortal Orchestra, started out with New Zealand punks The Mint Chicks before moving to Portland, Oregon. "I got sick of music, I thought there was maybe something more constructive I could do with my life," he says. But after collecting psych records, he couldn't find exactly what he wanted ("I really liked Captain Beefheart but there was no baroque pop element; I liked The Zombies and The Left Banke but there wasn't as much humour in it, and it wasn't as dark or aggressive as some of the more '60s garage-punk things") so he started making it himself. He loops drums into breakbeats, creating what sound like samples. "I want to create that stuff from scratch, rather than cratedig, but I really relate to that sound. It's a really cool way to make records, the way J Dilla made them; I think RZA's probably my main influence from the hip-hop world." The result is psychedelia that straddles the past and present. "I'm not trying specifically to be innovative; I'm not trying to be nostalgic either. I try to recreate that excitement of listening to records that I like, to recreate that as a fresh feeling."

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



RICHARD THOMPSON

Electric

PROPER

Folk-rock legend at the top of his game
Nigh on incapable of producing a substandard record,

9/10

with Richard Thompson it's all about gradations of excellence, and *Electric* is near the top of the scale. Produced by Buddy Miller, it's a vibrant set with a live feel, alternating between rowdy folk-rockers ("Stony Ground", "Stuck On The Treadmill", "Sally B") and some of Thompson's most poignant ballads, notably the majestic "Another Small Thing In Her Favour", and "The Snow Goose", on which Alison Krauss adds harmony. Between those two extremes are "Good Things Happen To Bad People" and "Where's Home?", two of Thompson's most enjoyably poppy confections in years.

GRAEME THOMSON



UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA

II

JAG JAGUWAR

Second LP from gifted US psychedelicist

9/10

Like Ariel Pink and Bradford Cox, UMO's Ruben Nielson sounds like he's got out his parents' records, dressed up in their clothes and is crooning into the wardrobe mirror. And like them, he avoids mere pastiche by the sheer force of his creative voice and songwriting – Cream, Richard Swift, Jimi Hendrix, Ducktails, 'The White Album' and other soulful psychedelia gets invoked, but Nielson parses these into unique structures and moods, looping his addictive melodies into what sound almost like lost J Dilla productions. The scratchy lo-fi production doubles the mystery, resulting in an album of sensual pleasures and magical power.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Reason To Believe - The Songs Of Tim Hardin

FULL TIME HOBBY

7/10

Acclaimed '60s songwriter revisited by indie fans

Mixing country, folk and jazz, the songs of Tim Hardin have always been well represented by artists far more successful than he ever was, among them Johnny Cash, Paul Weller, Rod Stewart and Robert Plant. Here they're given a further lease of life by less high-profile names. Mark Lanegan offers a faithful "Red Balloon", Smoke Fairies a heavy "If I Were A Carpenter", and Okkervil River a gorgeous "It'll Never Happen Again". Other highlights include The Phoenix Foundation's wintry "Don't Make Promises", Snorri Helgason's "Misty Roses" and The Sand Band's aching "Reason To Believe".

GRAEME THOMSON



ENDLESS BOOGIE

Long Island

NO QUARTER

Über-jams, the Civil War and a great leap forward. *By David Cavanagh*



8/10

EVOLVING OUT OF informal jam sessions in late-'90s Brooklyn, Endless Boogie have no image, no Wikipedia page, no careerist long-termism. Instead they have day jobs and a singer who's 58. At times their free-flowing heavy blues

zonk-outs are reminiscent of Green-Kirwan's Fleetwood Mac stretching out on "Rattlesnake Shake". Or their grooves can be slow and hypnotic, measured out in an Amon Düül metre. A short track (seven minutes rather than 16) will be comparable to ZZ Top, AC/DC or Teenage Head-era Flamin' Groovies. Not everything the Boogie do is endless.

Their LPs *Focus Level* (2008) and *Full House Head* (2010) juxtaposed head-trips, über-jams and lewd riffs that established rhythm guitarist Jesper Eklow as a true heir to Keith Richards. With hindsight, though, there was a danger of their albums becoming formulaic – particularly with regard to Paul Major's growling vocalisations – and this is something they seem to have been aware of. *Long Island* is the point where Endless Boogie learn new skills as producers, exploring different guitar and vocal textures and revealing a hidden interest in the power of words. The American Civil War seems to fascinate them, as do names from history. "The Montgomery Manuscript" (referencing a 17th-Century Ulster-Scots chronicle) is an abstruse census of Catherine's, Margarets and Olivias, ending with Major enunciating the name of Torbjörn Abelli, a Swedish musician who died in 2010.

"The Montgomery Manuscript" and "The Artemus Ward" – a (mis-spelt) general in the American War Of Independence – are deep, meditative pieces which Major narrates rather than sings. The effect of his rich, velvety voice reciting passages of text is quite stunning. "The Artemus Ward" begins with a "signalman" who's "gone wrong", which immediately summons up scary images from Dickens' famous ghost story, filmed by the BBC in the '70s. Then we're on a "night train to Wiscasset... lantern's broken", and General Sherman shows up with Vice President Aaron Burr, two men who almost certainly never met. It's like a Mercury Theatre broadcast with half the dialogue missing. "The Montgomery Manuscript", too, is fantastically bizarre, brooding away for 14 sinister minutes while Major intones name after name and a single piano note is struck again and again. Had Endless Boogie not been restricted to the 80-minute confines of a CD (which *Long Island* just about

squeezes into), "The Montgomery Manuscript" might have lasted indefinitely.

Most of the other tracks (there are eight in all) show smaller but still significant changes. "The Savageist", the 13-minute opener, is a one-chord jam that could have been recorded for *Focus Level* or *Full House Head* – except that Major, having exhausted his Beefheart-style gruntings, starts experimenting with the elasticity of his breathing, holding down long groans like Damo Suzuki. Every so often a noise like a didgeridoo is heard on the right. This is Jesper Eklow operating his wah-wah pedal. Eklow, the boogie in Endless Boogie, is the man whose demon right wrist propels the album's fabulously obnoxious stompers. "Imprecations", especially, is a surging sea of wah-wah and slide: imagine Johnny Winter's "I'm Yours And I'm Hers" remixed by Loop. Throughout the mammoth album, barely a minute is wasted as Endless Boogie superimpose wild guitars on even wilder ones ("Occult Banker") like Tony McPhee on The Groundhogs' *Split*, or go hellbent on punk glory ("General Admission").

At their age, Major and Eklow are unlikely to be dreaming of rock stardom, but *Long Island* deserves to find a large, appreciative audience. Instead of backing themselves into a corner and remaining an underground name to drop, Boogie have found an exit door into a universe where infinite collisions of music and language now seem feasible.

Q&A

Paul Major, aka Top Dollar



How did you make the album?

We started last February. Our tactic is to go into the studio and record for four or five hours, and then go through looking for interesting stuff. Everything evolves out of jams. The first track, "The Savageist", is entirely live in the studio.

You have an excellent new vocal style on songs such as "The Artemus Ward"...

We tried to go for some atmosphere. All those names, like William Tecumseh Sherman and

Aaron Burr, come from Jesper [Eklow, guitar], who's super-knowledgeable about the Civil War. There's the imagery of the signalman holding a lantern. Then you're on 14th Street in Manhattan in the late '70s. Figures from the Civil War pop up. We're bringing the ghosts of the past alive.

Jesper is one of the great riff writers and rhythm guitarists in rock'n'roll. It's incredible to think he wasn't discovered years ago.

Oh yeah! He'd been in bands before, but for the love of music, not with the ambition of 'we're gonna make it'. Jesper's the core, focus and direction of Endless Boogie. I was reading the Neil Young biography *Shakey*, where he's talking about Danny Whitten, and he says "You're lucky if you get one guy in your life like this." And for me, it's Jesper. *INTERVIEW: DAVID CAVANAGH*



VERONICA FALLS
Waiting For Something To Happen
BELLA UNION

7/10 Death-obsessed indie tykes make great leap forward

Kicking off your second album by copping the raga scales of Television's "Marquee Moon" smacks of hubris. But "Tell Me" sets the tone for this London quartet's successful attempt to break free of their 2011 debut's ungainly mix of gothic imagery and twee noise. *Waiting...* glides on Roxanne Clifford and Patrick Doyle's lead vocal duets, melodies that lie somewhere between classic girl-group, The Jesus And Mary Chain and the Pixies, and a classic indie-pop feel that recalls The Primitives or The Raveonettes at their best. It's a record packed with earworms and a deliciously deadpan charm.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



ROBERT VINCENT
Life In Easy Steps
DB INDUSTRIES

7/10 Ringing, hard-won debut from Liverpoolian songwriter

Embarked on a musical career aged 16, it's taken that long again for Robert Vincent to make his first album. However, false starts and failed bands have clearly helped teach him to construct a song with a listener-friendly chorus, while his lyrics, mostly about burned-out relationships, have the tang of authenticity. He wears his influences on his sleeve; "Burns" is a Neil Young waltz, "Riot's Cry" jangles like early Beatles and the title track rolls like Johnny Cash. If there are few musical surprises beyond a burst of Cajun on "The Passage", Pete Smith's skilful production ties things together neatly.

NEIL SPENCER



JOHN WHEELER
Un-American Gothic
COOKING VINYL

6/10 Hayseed Dixie leader flies solo

If Hayseed Dixie was essentially one great joke rolled out ad nauseam, this straight debut from their frontman is a welcome diversion. Instead of bluegrass parodies of AC/DC and Judas Priest, *Un-American Gothic* finds him in roots-rock mode, the songs largely driven by acoustic guitar or piano and shaded by fiddle and skiffly percussion. "Doomsday Dance" is an engaging burst of '50s-scented rockabilly, while the muted "Little Houses In A Row" recalls his rural Tennessee childhood. Not all of it works, least of all an innocuous cover of "The Eton Rifles", but there's enough to suggest this venture has more legs.

ROB HUGHES



WILD BELLE
Isles
COLUMBIA

5/10 Michigan's talented but twee world- and jazz-schooled siblings make their debut

Mainstay of Afrobeat collective Nomo, Eliot Bergman lets the lyrics and voice of younger sister Natalie predominate on their first family outing. On the surface the duo's organic and electronically engendered blend of balmy dub and tropical trip-hop has seductive lushness ("Keep You") and, on standout "Just Another Girl", a knack for memorable pop hooks. But manicured cuteness ("Shine"), trite melodies ("When It's Over") and a tendency to banal, genial navelgazing ("Twisted") leave an impression of carpet-bagging slackers contriving decorous but vapid Tourist Board pop.

GAVIN MARTIN

HOW TO BUY... WOODEN WAND

James Jackson Toth's magic cuts



WOODEN WAND & THE VANISHING VOICE
Gypsy Freedom
5 RUE CHRISTINE, 2006

With a mind to ramble in every sense, Wooden Wand's free-folk era saw Toth unleash a blizzard of glowing commune-drone CDs, with *Gypsy Freedom* the most sax-y of a rum bunch. Feedback-encrusted dirge "Dread Effigy", however, pinpoints a top writer floundering through the patchouli fug.

6/10



WAND
Born Bad
MAD MONK/PEOPLE IN A POSITION TO KNOW, 2009

"Hide my phone if I get drunk," slurs Toth on "Bad Form", epitomising *Born Bad*'s red-eye cocktail of teary and sneery. Ditched by his band and his wife mid-tour, he makes a nosedive for rock bottom with this mini-masterpiece, discovering inappropriate uses for baby-change facilities as well as a smartly self-lacerating voice as a lyricist.

8/10



WOODEN WAND & THE BRIARWOOD VIRGINS
Briarwood
MAD MONK/PEOPLE IN A POSITION TO KNOW, 2011

The tattoo on Toth's wrist reads "What would Neil Young do?", and he took a sidestep into amped-up Crazy Horse territory for *Briarwood*, finding some kind of down-home sense of belonging on "Winter In Kentucky", but retaining his acid tongue for mighty kiss-off "The DNR Waltz".

8/10

JIM WIRTH



WALT WILKINS
Plenty
RIDE

6/10 Mellow country-soul from Texan troubadour

A pair of cowboy boots adorns the album's front cover, and with his beard and bandana Walt Wilkins looks a little like he's auditioning for a Willie Nelson biopic. The visual clues are a fair indication of the songs inside, too – unhurried acoustic country rambles with twanging pedal steel and lyrics of yearning, homespun wisdom with titles such as "Hang On To Your Soul" and "Ain't It Just Like Love". Cliché-ridden? Perhaps. But clichés earn their spurs of familiarity by being ineffably true. And Wilkins certainly knows how to polish an honest truism until it gleams like it was newly minted.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



WOODEN WAND
Blood Oaths Of The New Blues
FIRE

8/10 Free-folk wanderer lays down his weary tune

A ramblin' man, James Jackson Toth has roamed the Southern states for a decade, while his footloose discography has spiralled into three figures. *Blood Oaths...*, however, sees the New Yorker long for – and luxuriate in – stability. Phil Ochs séance music with extra bongos, the first Wooden Wand record to feature the same basic band as its predecessor sees Toth yearn for the unlikely steadying presence of the late Coil co-conspirator on "Jhonn Balance", and ponder a "bank job in Bumfuck, Georgia" on the Smog-ishly moody "Southern Colorado Song". Increasingly straight, maybe, but Wooden Wand still possess a magic touch.

JIM WIRTH



WOODPIGEON
Thumbtacks And Glue
FIERCE PANDA

7/10 Light and shade from mercurial Canadians

The musical hallmark of chief Pigeon Mark Andrew Hamilton is sumptuous, harmony-heavy orchestral pop. It might skirt around the edges of twee – as on "As Read In The Pine Bluff Commercial" and "Little Wings", which features Joni Mitchell sound-alike Aimee-Jo Benoit and the spirit of Sufjan Stevens – but the follow-up to 2010's *Die Stadt Muzikanten* darkens and deepens as it unfolds. "Children Should Be Seen And Not Heard", built on a Wire-esque lopsided rhythm, is awkwardly epic, while "Edinburgh" and "Hermit" drift into one another to create a tumultuous but ultimately uplifting 10-minute suite of loneliness.

GRAEME THOMSON

RON SEXSMITH

Forever Endeavour

COOKING VINYL

Tender, string-soaked 12th from prolific Canuck songwriter. *By Neil Spencer*



7/10

AS A TEENAGER in smalltown Canada, Ron Sexsmith was known as 'The Human Jukebox', able to deliver the latest hit at a shout from the crowd. At times during his prolific career the singer has likewise seemed to want to please the public

rather than himself – with the drum loops and beats of *Retriever*, for example, or 2011's *Long Player Late Bloomer*, a stab at commercial breakthrough overseen by Metallica producer Bob Rock.

The latter effort worked, kind of. The album tickled the lower end of the charts while *Love Shines*, the documentary about its making, offered an insight into Sexsmith's shyness and musical fluency. He'll likely never be as elevated as his heroes – Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen, Ray Davies – but Sexsmith remains a treasure, a quality songwriter whose downbeat disposition seemingly precludes outbursts of unfettered joy, anger or recrimination. Instead come reflection, insight, and the flicker of redemption.

Forever Endeavour majors in all those qualities. With producer Mitchell Froom at the console, the record often recalls Sexsmith's first three albums, which Froom likewise polished, with the songs' acoustic root spiced with arrangements: strings here, woodwind there, an occasional Duane Eddy twang. Sexsmith's vocals remain unchanged, even at their strongest full of fragility, extra fragility if anything, reflecting the cloud of anxiety under which some of the songs were written in summer 2011, when a lump was discovered in the singer's throat. The subsequent health scare proved unfounded, but Sexsmith recalls "lying in bed wondering if this thing inside was going to get me".

The shadow of mortality lies over several numbers. "Deepens With Time" looks back to a childhood heritage that is rosy but nonetheless "leaves us scarred". "If Only Avenue" is a slow, rueful piece of hindsight, while "Snake Road" resolves not to return to "dark days when I couldn't keep my thoughts straight, couldn't keep my trousers on", a droll observation set to soul horns.

The most affecting consideration of an early exit comes with the lightest touch. Set to solo guitar picking, the three minutes of "Sneak Out The Back Door" sound deceptively jaunty, and shift sneakily from feeling "a pang of anxiety at the society gathering" to thinking that "when life is over", Ron would likewise exit the party with a minimum of fuss.

Not all of *Forever Endeavour* has the Reaper's watchful eye on it. "Me, Myself And Wine" is a happy-on-my-own piece with ragtime horns blowing lazily and a melody and delivery that might have come from The Kinks' *Muswell Hillbillies*. "Back Of My Hand", with its chiming

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced: Mitchell Froom
Recorded at Froom & Board Studios, LA
Personnel includes: Ron Sexsmith (guitar, vocals), Mitchell Froom (keyboards), Pete Thomas, Matt Chamberlain, Michael Urbano, Don Heffington (drums), Bob Cloud, Dave Farranger (bass), Greg Leisz (pedal steel)

guitars and ascending middle-eight, sounds like homage to another Sexsmith favourite, The Beatles. It starts unremarkably, as its composer takes "my thoughts out for a walk" before spiralling into the idea that God is looking down on humans like a kind of benign songwriter.

There is also a slew of love songs. "Nowhere Is", "Lost In Thought" and "She Does My Heart Good" are gentle, count-your-blessings affairs that ponder where their author might have ended up without his current better half. All are given dreamy stringed treatment by Froom, who seems to have been listening to a lot of Bacharach/David. "Blind Eye" opens with trembling violins and a yearning French horn before a scratch guitar helps settle its

empathic observations on the way of the world and the pain in which so many humans live.

The album's final flourish ties together the personal and the universal, shifting cleverly from wishing a partner sweet dreams to a pledge to shine in the light of morning while life still flows. It's a poetic piece that challenges its creator's quavering voice on the high notes and is all the more moving for it; a graceful end to a delicate, moving album.

Q&A

Ron Sexsmith

YOU'RE BACK WITH Mitchell Froom...

They don't make producers like him any more. He's about arrangements whereas a lot of producers are coming from the technical side. I haven't made such an orchestral album since my third.

It's quite a contrast to *Long Player*...

That was a little slick but commercially it's one of my most successful. I had songs I thought were hits and I felt my career was circling round the drain.

That seems harsh. You have made a dozen albums! You undervalue your output.

Not the songs, I'm always proud of them, but the actual albums tend to disappoint – I don't feel I've hit one out of the park so to speak.

Is there a difference between depression and being philosophical?

I got painted with that 'melancholia' brush early on, but I have always written uplifting and spiritual songs. That said, there is comfort in a sad song. I like those Depression-era songs like "Pennies From Heaven" that brought the nation together.

What are you reading?

I'm re-reading Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* in an old edition a friend gave me. It's one of his funniest books, especially the part where he visits America and you can see that a lot really hasn't changed. *INTERVIEW: NEIL SPENCER*





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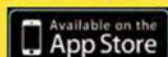


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REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



Kimono my house: (l-r) Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie



FLEETWOOD MAC

Rumours

RHINO

The game-changing '70s AOR blockbuster turns 35 with a super deluxe boxset. *By Piers Martin*

9/10

"TIMES WERE A lot crazier then – anything was possible. Budgets were not important

and doing drugs was the norm. In the mid-'70s there was a sense that you could do no wrong." So said an eyeliner'd Lindsey Buckingham, reminiscing in the 1997 *Classic Albums* documentary on the making of the ultimate classic album, Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*. Thirty-six years after its release – and with more than 40 million copies sold (so far) in at least 80 official international editions – you would imagine that every last drop, every demo, druggy anecdote and hazy recollection, has been squeezed out of one of the biggest records of all time, the eighth best-selling LP in history. You'd assume that anything worthwhile that could add to the enjoyment and understanding of *Rumours* must have surfaced by

now. For a start, Mac completists and even fairweather fans will already have the 2004 2CD reissue that came with a full set of rough mixes and outtakes from those fabled album sessions at the Record Plant in Sausalito, just north of San Francisco. Worryingly, that same disc is included in this "super-deluxe" 4CD+DVD+LP boxset – a package designed to celebrate the album's 35th anniversary but which actually turns up, as if stoned, the following year.

Like *Star Wars* or Snickers, there's never really a bad time to reissue *Rumours*. Sooner or later everyone finds a way in to it – or looks for a way out, if your parents raised you on *Rumours* and *Tusk* in the '80s. It's the evergreen baby boomer blockbuster that eased Bill Clinton into the White House and now finds itself a post-ironic hipster lifestyle accessory; Florence Welch, for

TRACKLIST

DISC ONE Rumours

- 1 Second Hand News
- 2 Dreams
- 3 Never Going Back Again
- 4 Don't Stop
- 5 Go Your Own Way
- 6 Songbird
- 7 The Chain
- 8 You Make Loving Fun
- 9 I Don't Want To Know
- 10 Oh Daddy
- 11 Gold Dust Woman
- 12 Silver Springs (B-side)

TRACKLIST (Continued)

DISC TWO

Live

- 1 Intro
- 2 Monday Morning (Nashville)
- 3 Dreams (Oklahoma)
- 4 Don't Stop (Oklahoma)
- 5 The Chain (Oklahoma)
- 6 Oh Daddy (Nashville)
- 7 Rhiannon (Tulsa-Oklahoma)
- 8 Never Going Back Again (Columbia)
- 9 Gold Dust Woman (Nashville)
- 10 World Turning (Oklahoma)
- 11 Go Your Own Way (Columbia)
- 12 Songbird (Nashville)

DISC THREE

Unreleased Recording Sessions

- 1 Second Hand News (acoustic, Lindsey vocal)
- 2 Dreams (Take 2) (vocal & keyboard)
- 3 Never Going Back (acoustic, LB/SN duet)
- 4 Go Your Own Way (early version/LB)
- 5 Songbird (1st recording)
- 6 Songbird (piano only, no vocal)
- 7 I Don't Want To Know (vocal, drums, bass)
- 8 Keep Me There (no vocal, instrumental)
- 9 The Chain (Stevie demo, acoustic)
- 10 Keep Me There (Christine vocal)
- 11 Gold Dust Woman (early version)
- 12 Oh Daddy (Christine vocal)
- 13 Silver Springs (alt)
- 14 Planets Of The Universe (acoustic w/piano)
- 15 Doesn't Anything Last (acoustic, LB/SN duet)
- 16 Never Going Back (no vocal, instrumental w/drums)

DISC FOUR

2004 Reissue Roughs & Outtakes

- 1 Second Hand News
- 2 Dreams
- 3 Brushes (Never Going Back Again)
- 4 Don't Stop
- 5 Go Your Own Way
- 6 Songbird
- 7 Silver Springs
- 8 You Make Loving Fun
- 9 Gold Dust Woman #1
- 10 Oh Daddy
- 11 Think About It
- 12 Early Demos
- 13 Never Going Back Again
- 14 Planets Of The Universe
- 15 Butter Cookie (Keep Me There)
- 16 Gold Dust Woman
- 17 Doesn't Anything Last
- 18 Mic The Screecher
- 19 For Duster (The Blues)

DVD The Rosebud Film

1977 film tour by Michael Collins

VINYL LP

SIDE 1

- 1 Second Hand News
- 2 Dreams
- 3 Never Going Back Again
- 4 Don't Stop
- 5 Go Your Own Way
- 6 Songbird

SIDE 2

- 1 The Chain
- 2 You Make Loving Fun
- 3 I Don't Want To Know
- 4 Oh Daddy
- 5 Gold Dust Woman



Steps to success: the Mac in 1976

one, is an eternal student of Stevie Nicks' cosmic witchcraft. Today, 45 years after they formed, Fleetwood Mac's twilight period—commencing with 2003's reunion for *Say You Will* and drifting through two further "reunions" for world tours, including one this year—has lasted far longer than the band's vital, late-'60s incarnation.

And it's all because *Rumours* is as near perfect an album as anyone will ever make, and its lurid backstory of emotional turmoil and narcotic excess, endlessly recounted in prurient detail, is never less than fascinating. Though short on wildly revelatory material, this boxset ties up a number of loose ends from 1976-'77, focusing on the period when the Mac set about recording the follow-up to '75's *Fleetwood Mac*, a surprise US No. 1 and the first album made by the group's new lineup after fate had parachuted in two young Californian dreamers, Buckingham and Nicks, in late '74 to rescue Mick Fleetwood's rudderless British blues outfit.

The chemistry between the five was immediately apparent. Now there were three distinctive songwriters in the group, Buckingham, Nicks and Christine McVie, who would also complement each other in harmony. Buckingham, the firebrand guitarist and craftsman, began to develop an intuitive musical partnership with McVie on piano that started with "World Turning" and led to them fleshing out McVie's *Rumours* cuts such as "You Make Loving Fun". His lover Nicks cast her spell with "Rhiannon" and "Landslide". John McVie and Fleetwood, solid but soft, glued it all together.

Flushed with cash and confidence after the success of *Fleetwood Mac*, they headed to the free'n'easy hippy town of Sausalito in February '76 to bed down in the new Record Plant studio, a dark, wooden, windowless den that for the next two months would amplify the band's precarious

emotional state. Though it worked wonders for the music, the longer they spent in each other's company, the more unstable the inter-band relationships became. Exacerbated by cocaine and booze and the sessions' no-limits atmosphere, the McVies' marriage crumbled as Christine fell for the band's lighting director, Buckingham and Nicks split, and Nicks began an affair with Fleetwood, whose own marriage was in trouble. Speaking to the BBC in 1989, Christine described it as a time of mellow drama: "Even though everything was going wrong around us, somehow the music was great." During the recording, she and Nicks rented separate apartments by the harbour, while the guys took over a house by the studio. "God help you, what went on in there," Fleetwood recalls.

Tasked with extracting the songs from this soap opera were producers Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat, who worked exhausting 18-hour days with Buckingham to get exactly what he wanted. And much credit to them for unearthing the treasure on Disc Three. Compared with the full-band outtakes of Disc Four, these unreleased demos reveal *Rumours* in its naked state and shed new light on the songs' progress. The evolution of "The Chain" can be traced from the chorus of a smoky Nicks acoustic ballad (called "The Chain") on to which is welded the second half of McVie's "Keep Me There", formerly a bluesy shuffle named "Butter Cookie" included on Disc Four. Another Nicks song, "Gold Dust Woman", starts life as a drowsy hoedown. Two tracks dated "2-4-76" show how driven Buckingham was in the studio: always a wonderfully natural player, he strums though "Second Hand News", working out the words to fit as he goes, and loveliest of all, perhaps the one true gem here, is a duet with Nicks on "Never Going Back Again" that he embellishes with a haunting solo. Throughout these sketches there's never a sense of five people breaking up with each

PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

I DO WANT TO KNOW:

Hidden Gems From The Rumours Vaults

THE CHAIN [STEVIE DEMO, ACOUSTIC]

"Stepped into the canyons of my loneliness/And I went about as far as I could go", sings Nicks on this smouldering acoustic number, presumably accompanied on guitar by the song's subject, her former beau Buckingham. In the final version of "The Chain" only the original's chorus would remain, skewered by that John McVie bassline.

KEEP ME THERE [CHRISTINE VOCAL]

"Baby, don't lock me up/And throw away the key": another soul-searcher, this time from Christine McVie who rolls out the Fender Rhodes for some tumbling blues before it's hijacked by the rest of the band to become the blistering second half of "The Chain", aka the theme to the BBC's Formula 1 coverage.

NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN

[ACOUSTIC, LB/SN DUET]

Stemming from a simple Buckingham instrumental called "Brushes" (included on Disc Four), this version finds the songwriter duet with his ex Nicks - odd, given that the optimistic lyrics concern his feelings for the woman who has just replaced Nicks in his life. Appears to use slide guitar for the topline to great effect.

SONGBIRD [LIVE, NASHVILLE]

Hairs rise as Christine plays the opening bars and the Nashville crowd cheers in recognition of Rumours' most tender song. The band would often close sets from this period with "Songbird", choosing to end on a reflective note with the one moment of tranquility from an otherwise quite crazy album.

other in sessions Nicks has described as "like being in the army".

In addition to Disc Two's live set culled from various dates on the '77 US tour, there's an eye-opening DVD of the seldom seen 30-minute documentary *The Rosebud Film*, commonly known online as *Rosebud*, the name of director Michael Collins' production company. Collins was something like the Mac's official cameraman during the Rumours era and shot stacks of footage onstage and off. Word has it he's currently putting the finishing touches to a longer Rumours film, having rescued the reels from his Santa Barbara home before it burned down in the 2008 wild fires. *Rosebud* captures the Mac lithe and hairy at an enormous outdoor show in Santa Barbara in May '76 tearing through "World Turning" and "I'm So Afraid" and contrasts this with grainy indoor footage of "Rhiannon" and "Go Your Own Way" performed on a sound stage as they rehearsed for a proposed UK promo trip that autumn. Best of all are the candid clips that punctuate the songs: "I'm a legend in my own mind," mumbles John McVie in one, while a radiant Nicks dissects the band's image thus: "Lindsey's all Chinese god in his kimono and I look like I'm going to a Halloween party, Christine looks like she's going to be confirmed in the Catholic church, Mick's going to a Renaissance fair and John's going to the beach."

A cute description of the five misfits on the verge of becoming the most famous band in the world. Having almost destroyed them, Rumours would change their lives forever. For all the baubles and padding presented with this definitive edition, the disc you'll turn to again and again is the one you've been playing all your life.



Q&A

Mick Fleetwood looks back on Rumours: "We had the full diablo of a soap opera unfolding..."

HEADING INTO THE Record Plant to start Rumours in early '76, did you have any inkling it would turn out the way it did?

I don't think we had an inkling of the effect the album would have in terms of sales but I do have memories that we felt we had done something we felt really great about. When we made the first album with Stevie and Lindsey ['75's *Fleetwood Mac*], it felt that something was happening that was incredibly synchronistic and flowing and not hard to do, and that reminded me of when me and Peter started Fleetwood Mac and had success with our first album ['68's *Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac*].

This time, we were all really involved in the music and we felt great about it, but I know we were all horribly emotionally dysfunctional and in many ways awfully unhappy, and so all of that came out in the diary that was Rumours. Even though a lot of them are construed as pop songs, they have a darkness to them. Those songs are literally a plea for love, and that became the legacy of Rumours. It was a chronicle of a moment in time for five people who were totally miserable in the romantic realm and yet incredibly happy and productive musically.

As the band's manager, what made you choose Sausalito to record in?

The problem for me, the mother hen, was that everyone was disintegrating, including my marriage. We were all literally breaking up at the same time, all five of us, and I thought, oh shit, if we stay in LA there's going to be people whispering in people's ears and we won't be focused. So I put my old sly fox hat on and thought, what are we gonna do to keep this bunch together, including me? And I thought, get them out of LA so there's no distractions. I was familiar with the Record Plant in LA, so I drove up to Sausalito and found the Record Plant there and thought, this is perfect. It's a little artsy, eclectic town, we can rent a house and we found the girls an apartment on the harbour. Me, John and

Lindsey and the road crew rented a house that was part of the Record Plant up in the hills. And I thought this is where we're gonna start this album in unbelievably potentially dysfunctional situations, especially for Lindsey and John - and Stevie and Christine. And then me and Jenny, my then-wife, separated - she was involved with a dear friend of mine. So we had the full diablo of a soap opera unfolding.

You were only in Sausalito for two months, but the stories have lasted a lifetime.

No doubt, heh heh. We were in Sausalito and then went to about four or five different studios to finish that album. It's as if we were in Alcoholics Anonymous: they call someone who's emotionally

upset, "Oh, you're just 'going geographical'." What that means is you're not solving the problem, you're putting it off. Jumping from studio to studio, we kept being distracted from the real problem, which was: we can't take this anymore. So we set up camp and went, OK, we'll re-focus, and we

got it done. But all of the original tracks were cut in Sausalito and then we ripped them to pieces, re-overdubbed. The original drum tracks I am pretty damn sure were all cut in Sausalito.

What would go on in the studio and house?

The whole social thing of our drug intake was drinking and cocaine. Pot smoking was just something we did. There was a lot of shenanigans going on, but it didn't destroy our work to my knowledge. Looking back, cocaine was a huge part of it and I probably took the lion's share of that, but we all partook. Quite frankly, and it's public knowledge, me and Stevie were probably the prime candidates in those days. We'd all stay up for four days working and then go to sleep for two days. It was silver paper on the windows. It was a bunch of fairly young people doing their thing. But having said that, it's so strange looking back and asking, "Was that music created in a drug stupor?" And you go no, we were just a bunch of young, crazy people having fun.

INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN

"We'd all stay up for four days working and then go to sleep for two days..."

upset, "Oh, you're just 'going geographical'." What that means is you're not solving the problem, you're putting it off. Jumping from studio to studio, we kept being distracted from the real problem, which was: we can't take this anymore. So we set up camp and went, OK, we'll re-focus, and we

got it done. But all of the original tracks were cut in Sausalito and then we ripped them to pieces, re-overdubbed. The original drum tracks I am pretty damn sure were all cut in Sausalito.

What would go on in the studio and house?

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INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN



TRACKLIST

DISC ONE

- 1 Arno Steffen - "Hörprobe"
- 2 Eno/Moebius/Roedelius - "Broken Head"
- 3 Phew - "Signal"
- 4 Eurythmics - "Le Sinistre"
- 5 Michael Rother - "Feuerland"
- 6 La Düsseldorf - "Silver Cloud"
- 7 Psychotic Tanks - "Let's Have A Party" [rare]
- 8 Moebius & Plank - "Conditionierer"
- 9 Moebius/Plank/Thompson - "Farmer Gabriel" [rare]
- 10 Moebius/Plank/Neumeier - "Pitch Control"
- 11 DAF - "Alles Ist Gut"
- 12 Neu! - "Leb Wohl!"

DISC TWO

- 1 Ibloss - "Drops"
- 2 Roedelius - "Regenmacher"
- 3 Streetmark - "Eleanor Rigby"
- 4 Neu! - "Negativland"
- 5 Psychotik Tanks - "Security Idiots"
- 6 DAF - "Was Ziehst Du An"
- 7 Moebius & Plank - "Automatic"
- 8 Fritz Müller - "Fritz Müller Traum"
- 9 Blue Point Underground - "Conny Plank" [rare]
- 10 Konrad Plank - "Weihnachtsong" [rare]

DISC THREE

[previously unreleased material]

- 1 Cluster & Eno - Jens-Uwe Beyer remix
- 2 Le Sinistre - Kreidler remix
- 3 Broken Head - Automat remix
- 4 Cluster & Eno - Walls remix
- 5 Eurythmics - Take Me To Your Heart remix
- 6 Feuerland - Justus Köhncke remix
- 7 Neu! - Eye remix

DISC FOUR

[previously unreleased material]

- Moebius/Plank/Steffen - live in Mexico, 1986



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Who's That Man: A Tribute To Conny Plank

GRÖNLAND

Four-CD boxset honours the great Krautrock producer and collaborator. *By Louis Pattison*

7/10

WHEN CONNY PLANK is credited as the man who produced the lion's share of great experimental German music between the years of 1969 and 1980, it may yet be selling him short. Plank, like but a few production greats - Joe Meek, George Martin, Phil Spector, Martin Hannett - wasn't just a talented studio hand: he was a collaborator, and sometimes, an architect. Krautrock as we know it would likely not exist without him.

A bear of a man from Hütschenhausen, West Germany, Plank began his career as soundman for an icon of the old Germany, fading Weimar starlet Marlene Dietrich. His enthusiasm for early electronic music drew him to Cologne's new music community, where he worked as assistant to

Stockhausen. But Plank soon tired of the classical avant-garde, which he deemed stuffy and lifeless. It was in the burgeoning West German musical counterculture that he would find those closer to his artistic temperament - emergent groups such as Kraftwerk, Neu!, and Cluster. Enamoured by the possibilities of sampling and multi-track recording, it was Plank's technical know-how that helped bring many of Krautrock's most revolutionary records into existence. He didn't make groups sound 'the Conny Plank way', or strive to capture their live sound. Instead, he explained his role as "a medium", and helped bands find ways to bring their ideas to life through a fusion of technology and frenzied experimentation. In an interview published in 1987, the year of his death from cancer,



Q&A

Dieter Moebius, Cluster



How was it to work with Conny?
With us, he was a collaborator – a co-musician, in a way. When he got his own

studio, he bought all kinds of new things that we couldn't afford – we could use his synthesisers, all the new gadgets. The studio was a big stall in a farmhouse – a stable, where pigs were kept. But he changed it totally. It didn't smell anymore! We would make tape loops, stretching tape all around the room, 20 metres long, and sample things from the radio.

But he was happy to remain in the background?

He was very modest. But he was also very sure of what he wanted to do. He recorded a lot of things that were not his kind of music, because he liked the people. But he could have produced U2 when they started out, and he didn't. I don't know why – perhaps he didn't like the guy...

A live show from Mexico in 1986 is included in the boxset. How did that tour come about?

We were invited by the Goethe-Institut, a German cultural organisation, who paid for it all. The word travelled fast, and the shows got bigger and bigger as we went. We played in some countries where rock'n'roll was not allowed – in Chile, for example, where Pinochet was terrorising his people. For some, it was like, finally – we can go to a rock show. It was Conny's last and only tour: for him, this was unique.

INTERVIEW: LOUIS PATTISON

he summed up his philosophy with admirable brevity: "Craziness is holy."

Such legacies can be difficult to summarise, although *Who's That Man* – a 4CD box honouring Plank's career – makes a noble attempt. There are inevitable, but still painful omissions. Plank worked with Ralph Hütter and Florian Schneider for five years, starting with the 1969 album *Tone Float* by the proto-Kraftwerk group, Organisation, and finishing with their first masterpiece, 1974's *Autobahn*. None of that, of course, appears here. Instead, the first two CDs are, while something of a curate's egg, at least faithful to the breadth of Plank's vision: a mix of canonical Krautrock cuts, collaborations, oddities and rarities seemingly chosen because they bear clear traces of the mad scientist's fingerprints.

The two Neu! tracks here speed out to the duo's polar reaches. "Negativland" builds from the hammer of pneumatic drills, Klaus Dinger's motorik drums circling Michael Rother's cosmic guitar in a fearful orbit. "Leb' Wohl", meanwhile, strikes a note of new age meditation, Dinger bidding a tearful *aufwiedersehen* over the gentle crash of waves. A number of collaborations with Cluster's Dieter Moebius showcases the pair's playful studiocraft – from the proto-techno of 1982's "Pitch Control", recorded with Guru Guru drummer Mani Neumeier, to "Farmer Gabriel", a bizarre tale of chicken slaughter narrated by The Red Krayola's

Mayo Thompson. One fan of Cluster's early work was Brian Eno, who travelled to Plank's studio in June 1977 to record with Moebius and Rodelius – and, one suspects, to pick up a few tricks in the process. Included here is "Broken Head", a surrealistic highlight from 1978's collaborative, *After The Heat*.

Less interesting are the proggy selections: the interminable 14 minutes of Bliss' jazzy, saxophone-heavy "Drops", and Streetmark's misfiring cover of "Eleanor Rigby". But Eurythmics' "Le Sinistre", originally a B-side to the group's 1981 single "Never Gonna Cry Again", cloaks Annie Lennox's voice in the sonic tropes of horror cinema, while two tracks by electro-industrial duo DAF suggest that for all Plank's association with Krautrock, he continued to innovate well into the post-punk '80s.

The third disc passes Plank productions over to a team of remixers, who with the honourable exception of Boredoms' Yamataka Eye – who turns in a psychedelic mangling of Neu!'s "Für Immer" – add little but height to the European Remix Mountain. The final disc unearths a performance by the trio of Plank, Moebius and Arno Steffen, recorded in Mexico, 1986. A strange soup of Arp and Oberheim synthesisers, blasts of trumpet, primitive techno and occasional enthusiastic yodelling, it is 80 minutes of pure invention, at times sublime and at times ridiculous. But, then, as Conny Plank might have put it, craziness is next to Godliness.



THE BLOW MONKEYS

Animal Magic
(reissue, 1986)
CHERRY RED

Schizophrenic, dance-fuelled ironic pop, with bonus mixes
Led by the suave Robert

Howard, aka Dr Robert, it wasn't always easy to pigeonhole The Blow Monkeys in their '80s heyday. The literate artiness at times suggested they were cut from the same cloth as Lloyd Cole & The Commotions (with whom they toured early in their career), but there was also an abundance of dance groove motifs that helped them appeal to the Soho R&B crowd of famed clubs like The Wag. "Digging Your Scene" was a case in point; a snappy rhythm-based track with ironic lyrics that landed them a Top 20 chart placing in the US. Dr Robert once described this, their second album, as "rubber funk", and it shares a few of the fleet-footed moves of, say, Orange Juice or Scritti Politti, most notably on the bounce of "Don't Be Scared Of Me" and "Forbidden Fruit". Vocally, the mannerisms take their lead from the more melodramatic end of the glam spectrum, Robert seemingly channelling Marc Bolan on "Aeroplane City Lovesong", but finding a more distinctive voice for himself on the ballad "Heaven Is A Place I'm Moving To".

EXTRAS: 16 demos, extended versions, dub and instrumental remixes. The debut, *Limping For A Generation*, is also reissued this month.

TERRY STAUNTON

BUZZCOCKS

Love Bites
(reissue, 1978)
EMI



Full of riches beyond the 45s

Rightly cherished as a top-notch singles band, Buzzcocks' long players

have had a tendency to be undervalued down the years. Released just six months after *Another Music In A Different Kitchen*, the band's second album already boasted a more accomplished sound and a greater sense of maturity. Beneath the surface of Pete Shelley's seemingly straightforward paens to romance gone wrong lay deeper questions of guilt and shame ("Ever Fallen In Love", "Just Lust") and awkward accusations ("Nothing Left"). It's not a one-man show, however, and the Steve Diggle-penned semi-acoustic "Love Is Life" takes a leaf out of the Ray Davies songbook, while the rhythm section of Steve Garvey and John Maher provide a solid backbone throughout. Martin Rushent's production presents the songs in richer, layered textures than the DIY punk of what had gone before, approximating a wall of sound on the crunchy "Real World" and the psych rock of "ESP", the latter with shades of what former frontman Howard Devoto would explore in Magazine.

EXTRAS: Almost the entire album in demo form, plus a 10-track live set from the Lesser Free Trade Hall. Equally bonus-packed reissues of *Another Music...* and *A Different Kind Of Tension* are out this month.

TERRY STAUNTON

MARK PILKINGTON

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



'The Fat Man': post-war pioneer Fats Domino in 1958



VARIOUS

Gumbo Ya Ya - The Cosimo Matassa Story Volume 2 PROPER

9/10

4CD box of N'Awlinz finest vintage, exhaustively annotated Cosimo Matassa is not a name much glorified in music history, but the tiny J&M Studios he built behind his North Rampart Street record shop in New Orleans in 1945 became one of the crucibles of post-war pop – it was here that locals like Dave Bartholomew, Fats Domino and Lloyd Price cut their pioneering sides. The site, now a laundromat, recently became an official Rock And Roll Landmark, while Matassa, now retired from music and the family grocery business, was inducted into the R'n'R Hall Of Fame.

Though not a producer, as studio owner and engineer Matassa presided over an astonishing parade of great records, especially after upgrading to new premises and a three-track machine in 1955. Arranged chronologically from then until 1961, this second volume of his 'story' far surpasses

the first. Here are classics by Domino and Little Richard – one of many out-of-towners who sought the 'New Orleans sound' – that helped define the era, along with break-outs like Frankie Ford's "Sea Cruise", and local delicacies like Huey Smith's "Don't You Just Know It" and Ernie K Doe's "A Certain Girl". Many have the Crescent City's lop-sided shuffle – a big influence in Jamaica – and rolling piano (the latter often courtesy of Allen Toussaint), but fiercely swinging horn sections are as evident on cuts like Charles Brown's "Educated Fool" and Bobby Marchant's "Rocking Behind The Iron Curtain".

Dr John, a regular in the house band, describes the Cosimo sound as "strong drums, heavy bass, light piano, heavy guitar, light horns, strong vocal... Cosimo would set the knobs for the session and rarely moved anything." Matassa's philosophy was simple: "I heard the musicians in the clubs and wanted to stay true to the original. I didn't try and shape the music, I just did my damndest not to mess it up." What seeps from the 112 cuts here is not just swing, finesse and funk but geniality – as The Showmen prophesied on their 1961 paean to the music – "It Will Stand".

NEIL SPENCER

I'M YOUR FAN

"He was a real hip engineer. He got the best sounds, all of the time"

DR JOHN



MICHAEL OGIS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

SOS JFK

(reissue, 2003)

FIRE

Short-lived but sure-footed folk project

8/10

After releasing Josephine Foster's *Blood*

Rushing LP earlier in the year, Fire reissues this 2003 record from her folk duo with Andy Bar, formed as Foster was leaving her opera schooling behind and Bar was honing his Latin-inflected fingerpicking – rather improbably given their delicacy, they ended up touring with Billy Corgan's Zwan. Foster's voice is a unique instrument, between Vashti Bunyan's bucolic naïveté and Joanna Newsom's crouched inquisitiveness; her trilling vibrato can start delighted, but turn on a dime into something rather more alarmed. On "Kindness Of Strangers" she picks her way carefully with singsong delivery, but on "The Lumberjack Song" she swoons around the melody, languorously meandering up and down her upper ranges. In the second half, drums and harps appear, as does a startling Nico-esque declamatory tone on "Lost Love". On the scintillating title track, air disasters and JFK get mangled by dreams, as strummed flourishes resonate through the strangeness. Like the play from which the duo took their name, this is a fascinating study of innocence and experience, of childlike wonder and thoroughly adult desire and confusion.

EXTRAS: None.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



KEVIN COYNE

Case History

(reissue, 1972)

TURPENTINE

Radical English songwriter's seldom-heard debut restored

8/10

Kevin Coyne's first solo album was only ever

briefly available before the singer signed up to Virgin. Released on John Peel's Dandelion, *Case History* arises out of Coyne's experience as a social therapist during the mid-'60s, and is touched with both the bleakness and the exhilaration of those times. Even this early, Coyne's empathy for the dispossessed, and his lifelong belief in the creative powers locked within insanity, formed the backbone of his output. "Mad Boy" and "Sand All Yellow" are brutal indictments of abusive treatment regimes, while his hectoring voice inhabits the inner world of the outcast in "Uggy's Song" ("Why should you want a man around looking like me?"). Some of these tracks betray his newfound fascination with Dylan and the bluesy modes favoured by his previous group Siren, while "My Message To The People" is rangy and discursive à la *Astral Weeks*. Grizzlier than Bolan, approaching a Beefheart snarl at times, Coyne's voice is urgent, unignorable. Properly remastered at last, *Case History* can take its place among the great singer-songwriter LPs of the early '70s.

EXTRAS: Nine bonus tracks, including the 8/10 "Cheat Me"/"Flowering Cherry"

single, bedroom demos and a searing alternative version of "Evil Island Home".

ROB YOUNG



THE CRIBS

Payola

WICHITA

Singles, faves and rarities from fraternal Wakefield trio

Regarded on their arrival in 2003 as a sort of Yorkshire yang to The

Libertines' London ying, The Cribs – siblings Gary, Ryan and Ross Jarman – have proven a rather more reliable proposition than their southern counterparts. Five albums, most recently last year's *In The Belly Of The Brazen Bull*, have confirmed their commitment to an uncomplicated strain of indie-rock, one characterised by loud guitars, plaintive Pavement melodies, and a touch of lo-fi scuzz. The first of *Payola*'s two discs confirms they could always write a single, "I'm A Realist" and "Hey Scenesters!" encapsulating their taste for misty-eyed romance and terrace-ready choruses. In large chunks like this, their paeans to teenage romance and life in the provinces feel like the stuff of fairly low horizons, although sometime bandmate Johnny Marr – yes, he of The Smiths, who joined the band between 2008 and 2011 – is on hand to spruce up the likes of "We Share The Same Skies" and the hitherto-unreleased "Leather Jacket Love Song" with sparkling guitar. The second disc, collecting B-sides and rarities, is best left for the completists, although a take on The Replacements' "Bastards Of Young" is dispatched with appealing brio.

EXTRAS: None.
LOUIS PATTISON



DION

Yo Frankie

(reissue, 1989)

ACE

The Wanderer back on his hometown block

At around the same time as Roy Orbison was undergoing a career

renaissance with a little help from Jeff Lynne, another '60s star was getting a leg-up from a famous British fan. *Yo Frankie* found Bronx boy Dion DiMucci reconnecting with his roots on a collection of well-drilled and largely autobiographical songs produced by Dave Edmunds, evoking his tough teenage years on "King Of The New York Streets" and leering at the neighbourhood honeys on "She's Alright With Me". Edmunds tapped in to the bluesier Dion of "The Wanderer" or "Ruby Baby", as opposed to the singer's softer teen heart-throb bygone hits, creating a wall of sound not far removed from that of another DiMucci fan, Bruce Springsteen. The Boss himself doesn't make an appearance, but there's lusty vocal support from Lou Reed and Paul Simon, the latter especially effective on "Written On A Subway Wall" (its title borrowing a line from Simon's own "The Sound Of Silence"). It's all uncomplicatedly anthemic, never more so than on the Diane Warren-penned AOR powerhouse "And The Night Stood Still", but it's a more reflective and confessional Dion on the tender cover of Tom Waits' "Serenade", the elder statesman in confident, commanding voice.

EXTRAS: None.
TERRY STAUNTON



JACK DOWNING

A Force That Cannot Be Named: The Jack Downing Anthology

RPM INTERNATIONAL

Excellent compilation of Sweden-based American songwriter

Jack Downing was a US troubadour who settled in Sweden in 1963 and set about introducing the Scandis to his singular take on Dylan and garage rock. Those influences featured on the single Downing released in 1966 with The Other Side, his hotchpotch band of Swedes, Brits and Yanks; one side a fuzz-drenched cover of "Like A Rolling Stone", the other a howling, organ-backed original called "Out My Light". Later, the band recorded *Now And Then*, an album of grizzled, garagey country rock that kicks off with Haggard's "Branded Man" and which is reissued on the second CD of this comp. *Now And Then* is a fun, tough album and features guest spots from Kris Kristofferson and Zal Yanovsky, who happened to be in Sweden, but Downing's best stuff is on the first CD. This rounds up his non-album work including pounding originals like "No Man's Land", "Pretty Miss Mike", "Belshazzar" and "Geronimo". Downing recorded nothing after 1974 and died in Sweden in 1990, falling from a drainpipe while trying to reclaim his passport from his locked apartment.

EXTRAS: All singles, B-sides, demos and 8/10 radio appearances, as well as 1970 album *Now And Then*. Extensive liner notes.
PETER WATTS



MILES DAVIS QUINTET

The Bootleg Series Vol 2: Live In Europe 1969

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Live documents from the birth of jazz-rock

8/10

output of the late '60s has been exhaustively mined in recent years but, as his surviving bandmates attest, his live work from this period has remained undocumented – until now. This boxset documents four separate European concerts – three on CD, one on DVD – recorded just prior to the 1969 release of *Bitches Brew*. They feature Miles' third great quintet, where longstanding, ever-quizzical saxophonist Wayne Shorter is joined by Chick Corea (playing fidgety clusters on a distorted Fender Rhodes), Dave Holland (still on double bass rather than electric) and Jack DeJohnette (who sounds like he's playing an extended drum solo throughout). This was a band that dressed in Brooks Bros suits a few months previously and, sonically, weren't ready for bell-bottoms just yet: versions of "Milestones" and "Round Midnight" suggest musicians clinging to the wreckage of hard bop. For all the stray premonitions of patchouli-scented funk-rock – particularly the Hendrix-fried versions of "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down" and "It's About That Time" – these are less jazz-rock meltdowns and more muscular free improv sessions, ones which suggest a very different direction from *Bitches Brew*.

JOHN LEWIS
EXTRAS: None.

HOW TO BUY...

DION

The DiMucci code



Dion CAPITOL, 1968

Moving away from his doo-wop and rock'n'roll roots, Dion's folk-rock makeover scored him a massive US hit with "Abraham, Martin And John", typical of

the album's subdued acoustics, embellished by understated strings. He draws on the likes of Dylan and Cohen, but equally impressive is his anti-war original, "He Looks A Lot Like Me".

8/10



Born To Be With You

PHIL SPECTOR RECORDS, 1975

All but disowned on release by its maker, unhappy with Phil Spector's dictatorial control over proceedings, this LP has

grown in stature. A dark collection of just eight songs, including introspective originals and a gloomy take on the hitherto happy-clappy "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands".

7/10



Bronx In Blue

RAZOR & TIE, 2005

The first of a trilogy of bluesy releases acting as a loose autobiography of Dion's NY

upbringing. Standards by Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf and Lightnin' Hopkins form the backbone, with Dion adding new lyrics to tell his own story.

8/10

TERRY STAUNTON



FAMILY

Once Upon A Time

SNAPPER

Enticing Family selection box

Roger Chapman has always maintained that despite regular lineup re-shuffles, Family were

basically a bunch of mates. Far more than the Faces, Family never had to accommodate any stars in their midst, certainly not the down-to-earth creative duo of singer Chapman and guitarist Charlie Whitney. Family's eight, consistently resourceful albums, from 1968's *Music In A Doll's House* to 1973's *It's Only A Movie* provide the core of this 14-disc set. Until now, Family's music has suffered from poor transfers to disc. For the most part using original master tapes, it's why fans will want this substantial boxset incorporating an exhaustive 72-page book. The remaining discs are rather less essential, though; a 1971 live concert already released in 2003, three superfluous replica singles and two disappointing discs of unreleased demos and outtakes drawn from *Anyway* onwards. It takes nothing away from Family's sheer brilliance. There was no more innovative group at the time; nobody bettered Family for imaginatively corralling pop, rock, folk, R'n'B and jazz. Family had no artifice, no pomposity, justifying John Peel's 1968 proclamation that they were "the best band in the world at the moment". It was a moment Family stretched to five years.

EXTRAS: None.
MICK HOUGHTON



THE GARBAGE & THE FLOWERS

Eyes Rind As If Beggars
(reissue, 1997)
FIRE/BO WEAVIL

7/10

More unfinished business from New Zealand fuzzbombs

Still going in Australia – tellingly, a recent outing was called *Stoned Rehearsal* – The Garbage & The Flowers have existed ever since songwriter Yuri Frusin and singer Helen Johnstone met as teenagers in the 1980s. Their output, however, has been anything but prolific, decades of Velvets- fixated meandering amounting to a far-flung archipelago of singles, cassettes and this 1997 vinyl-only melange of demos and wobbly live tapes, now fixed up into a 2CD extravaganza. Career-building may never have been their thing, but – like Rocket From The Tombs, The Screamers and Les Rallizes Dénudés – the Wellington outfit's wide-eyed, Bambi-legged music has bewitched lovers of the eavesdropped and unavailable. "Love Comes Slowly Now" suggests lateral connections to The Vaselines, but Grushin and Johnstone's real fetish here is for rewrites of "Heroin", hence the viola blazing through "Carousel" and "Nothing Going Down". Somewhere between insubstantial and ethereal, a beautiful rambling mess.

EXTRAS: A disc of even lower-fi versions plus their 1992 debut squall "Catnip" (in essence, The Jesus And Mary Chain on fire) and the radiant "Counting Stars".

JIM WIRTH



MARVIN GAYE

Trouble Man: 40th Anniversary Expanded Edition
IMS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CATALOGUE

7/10

Marvin reinvents the Blaxploitation soundtrack

The clunky crime movie ("he carries two guns: one to stop trouble, one to make trouble!") sunk like a stone, but Marvin's luscious soundtrack was a Top 20 hit, landing a Top 10 single and as many first-week sales as its predecessor, *What's Going On*. Gaye's vocal cords were not overly strained (he only sings on four tracks, two of them wordless scats) because his main role was as "writer". This essentially meant he hummed melodies or played rudimentary riffs on Stevie Wonder's Moog while accompanying the film rushes, which his band would then arrange. There are certainly plenty of Elmer Bernsteinisms and elegant baroque soul constructions, while the sleazily romantic tracks featuring saxophonist Trevor Lawrence resemble the contemporaneous smooth soul jazz on Creed Taylor's CTI label. It's certainly the classiest soundtrack in the Blaxploitation canon.

EXTRAS: An entire disc of 29 previously unreleased tracks from the sessions (including several superior versions of the much-sampled "'T' Plays It Cool"), and a hefty booklet which mixes tributes from the likes of Joni Mitchell, Cameron Crowe and Lenny Kravitz with a lengthy, well-informed piece by musicologist Andrew Flory.

JOHN LEWIS



FELA KUTI

The Best Of The Black President 2 - Deluxe Edition
KALAKUTA SUNRISE/KNITTING FACTORY

7/10

Reissue of a rare two-disc compilation

Do all Fela Kuti songs sound the same? They all tend to have that same rhythm (in which a 4/4 funk beat is plunked atop a 6/8 shuffle), are often in the same key (F minor, if you're interested), and usually roll on way past the ten-minute mark. And each is an immersive experience, a slow-burning treat featuring martial horn salutes, a metallic keyboard solo (played on a Hohner Pianet), a raspy tenor sax solo and some (occasionally angry) call-and-response vocals. However, the 12 tracks on this fine compilation are sufficiently different to keep you engaged throughout. There are a few orthodox favourites with which you may be familiar, like "Expensive Shit" (in which Fela recounts being busted for drug possession and swallowing his cannabis resin) and "Colonial Mentality" (an indictment of African dictators), but they sit alongside some oddball tracks. "Trouble Sleep Yanga Wake Am" is a jolly salsa, "Monkey Banana" spliffed up Afro-dub, "Sorrow, Tears And Blood" a slice of loping rasta-funk which attacks apartheid-era South Africa.

EXTRAS: Contains sleeve notes written by the Senegalese-American rapper Akon.

JOHN LEWIS



➤ "I was living in LA when I first heard The Birthday Party, but I was visiting New York and they happened to be playing – their first time in the city. I loved them, and the first time I met Rowland we clicked. I knew we'd do something together. He suggested covering 'Some Velvet Morning', which just felt perversely perfect. I feel like we skewered something there, it was so beautiful – tragic, but uplifting. I could never record it after that initial recording, because my voice started dropping. Come 1990 I was living in New Orleans. It was, to me, the perfect place to bring Rowland. His swamp blues so suited the city – a place so ripe with smell, sound, music and spirits. It was difficult, because he was already quite sick. I had to stroke each song out of him – he is one of the least prolific songwriters – but every song is so miraculous, what does it matter? His guitar-playing is so fucking mysterious. It's minimal, but you overdose on it. It's like Cognac, or a fine cocaine. There are very few people that have that minimal but precise sound. A lot of people try, but you cannot imitate Rowland S Howard."

LOUIS PATTISON



LYDIA LUNCH & ROWLAND S HOWARD

Shotgun Wedding
(reissue, 1991)
CHERRY RED

8/10

No-wave queen shackles up with the Birthday Party axe-slinger

Lydia Lunch first met guitarist Rowland S Howard when the latter played New York with The Birthday Party in the early '80s – "a blade-thin, black-clad vampire with a thousand-yard stare," she recalls in the sleeve notes to *Shotgun Wedding*. Their debut musical outing together came shortly after, a flesh-crawling take on Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra's "Some Velvet Morning", but the first full-length fruits of their partnership wouldn't appear until this excellent 1991 album. Recorded in Memphis with a hastily assembled backing band and JG Thirlwell in the production chair, it is a torrid and dark collection of originals and covers – Alice Cooper's "Black Juju", a brooding gothic-blues take on Led Zeppelin's "In My Time Of Dying" – that play up the pair's dark chemistry. Howard leaves the vocals to Lunch, but his guitar has a charismatic presence, prowling and growling on "Pigeon Town", swinging from rockabilly twang to grimy chugs as Lunch mutters dark incantations on "What Is Memory?".

EXTRAS: Out of print for years, this reissue adds "Some Velvet Morning" and five live tracks, including a cacophonous take on Lou Reed's "Oh Jim".

LOUIS PATTISON



TEENA MARIE

Beautiful

UNIVERSAL

Posthumous final LP from Lady Tee

When Teena Marie died around Christmas 2010, aged only 54, obituarists described her as

7/10

"Motown's first white artist", something Debbie Dean and R Dean Taylor might have disputed. But she was certainly one of the first white singers to really embed herself in the African-American R&B milieu; proving her chops on the gospel circuit, teaming up with Rick James and cutting some of the finest dance 12"s of the late '70s and '80s. Recorded at her Pasadena home studio, *Beautiful* has been posthumously curated by Teena's daughter Alia Rose, alongside producer and bassist Doug Grigsby. Alia actually sings backing vocals on a couple of tracks, including a dreamy cover of Curtis Mayfield's "Give Me Your Love", while the squelchy funk opener "Luv Letter" is dedicated to Alia's father (not Rick James, as often believed, but a Barbadian postman). James' daughter, Ty, can be heard singing in an affected British accent on "Rare Breed", an Auto-Tuned nod towards an Amerie/Rich Harrison-style go-go production. If some of Teena's mid-'80s belters betrayed an eagerness to over-emote, her technique here is more restrained, which suits her voyage into Indo-tinged soul ("The Perfect Feeling") and a few delicious slow-jamz.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS

JULIAN COPE

Saint Julian

ISLAND/UNIVERSAL

The arch druid goes POPTASTIC.

By John Lewis



7/10

WE ARE NOW used to Julian Cope as the drug-damaged, Krautrock-obsessed arch druid who pens weighty tomes on prehistoric monuments and makes arcane psych-rock albums for a bijou audience. *Saint Julian* is a reminder that English rock's

last great eccentric was once a *proper pop star*. Just over a quarter of a century ago, *Saint Julian* put him all over the place: on *Top Of The Pops*, on Jonathan Ross and Terry Wogan's chat shows, on Saturday-morning kids shows like *No. 73* and *Saturday Superstore*, while his high cheekbones were splashed all over the pages of *Smash Hits*, *Just Seventeen* and *Number One*.

Newly signed to his dream record label, Island, Cope cut his hair, donned his Hamburg Beatles biker leathers, clambered aboard his faintly ridiculous 10-foot-high "Yggdrasil" mic stand (complete with integral step ladder) and decided – in his own words – "to compete" on pop's battleground with the likes of Nick Berry, Sam Fox and Belouis Some.

Cope, along with a large section of his fanbase, is now rather dismissive of this period of his career, faintly ashamed to admit that he was "devastated" when the album's lead single, "World Shut Your Mouth", stalled at No 19 in the UK chart and its follow-up, "Trampoline", spent three weeks at No 31. When I last interviewed him he dismissed the LP as "patchy and largely rubbish" and appears not to be doing any promotion for its reissue. It's a pity, because most of it certainly holds up.

After two slightly self-indulgent attempts to mix psychedelic whimsy with Scott Walker-ish baroque pop – 1983's *World Shut Your Mouth* and 1984's *Fried* – *Saint Julian* was a shit-or-bust attempt to go to the pop jugular. Cope's template was Alice Cooper's early singles, and at least half the album succeed in capturing that essence. You can certainly hear that snotty, longhaired garage rock sound in the album's two lead singles, while the rabble-rousing "Pulsar", the yelping live favourite "Spacehopper" and the Sonics-referencing "Shot Down" all owe much to Detroit. Cope described "World Shut Your Mouth", with its Motown drumbeat and anthemic chorus, as somewhere between "Hang On Sloopy" and "I Love Rock 'N' Roll", and it probably trumps "Reward" as his finest three minutes – closely followed by "Trampoline".

Some of the album revisits other areas of Cope's career. The title track and the waltzing "A Crack In The Clouds" both hark back to the cleverly arranged orchestral pop of his 1983 post-Teardrops debut, "Sunshine Playroom", with Kate St John's cor anglais nestling alongside a lovely tangle of chords. The tracks that don't stand up so well are the ones that can be carbon-dated to 1987. The 6/8 shuffle of "Eve's Volcano" and the faux-gospel of "Planet Ride" are decent songs but both sound like Scritti Politti productions attempted on a low

budget, with tons of gated reverb on the snare, a kaleidoscope of processed guitars and even a hint of slap bass.

Nothing new has been unearthed from the vaults for Disc Two of this package, but we do get a pretty comprehensive collection of period ephemera. There are live versions of "Pulsar" and "Shot Down" (which showed up on flpsides) and a few inconsequential remixes, including the much-vaunted but rather useless Troublefunk mix of "World Shut Your Mouth", which was supposed to indulge Cope's fondness for DC go-go, but which sounds like any other drearily superfluous '80s 12" mix.

More interesting are the non-album songs. There are four tracks that were B-sides to various pressings of "World Shut Your Mouth", including a thoroughly thrashy and dissolute cover of The 13th Floor Elevators' "(I've Got) Levitation", a jaunty country-and-western track called "Umpteenth

TRACKLIST

- 1 Trampoline
- 2 Shot Down
- 3 Eve's Volcano
- 4 Spacehopper
- 5 Planet Ride
- 6 World Shut Your Mouth
- 7 Saint Julian
- 8 Pulsar
- 9 Screaming Secrets
- 10 A Crack In The Clouds

Unnatural Blues", a free-jazz odyssey called "Transportation" and a Ramones-ish run through Pere Ubu's "Non-Alignment Pact". There are three primeval punk oddities which made up the "Trampoline" EP: the stately, martial clarion call of "Disaster"; the cyclical, Can-like "Warwick The Kingmaker"; and the droney, organ-led "Mock Turtle". There's also a Morricone-ish instrumental called "Almost Beautiful", the B-side to "Eve's Volcano".

Listening to the album again, 25 years on, one can see how it may retrospectively ruin Cope impeccably honed psych-rock credibility. But that's the key to *Saint Julian*'s appeal – what it lacks in rockist credibility it more than makes up for in pop urgency. It shows that even an obscurantist cult messiah can benefit from the discipline of trying to write a hit single.

EXTRAS: Contemporary B-sides and a selection of live tracks.





MEDUSA First Step Beyond NUMERO GROUP

Lost epic of "sorcerer metal", recorded 1975
Intrepid reissue label
Numero Group have, to date, been best known for their 'Eccentric Soul'

7/10

series, exhuming lost and seldom-heard soul and funk for modern appreciation. The reissuing of Medusa's *First Step Beyond* marks the tapping of a new seam, however, for this mid-'70s Chicago outfit dealt in a quite different sound: an occult-inspired hard rock, in the vein of Black Sabbath, but, as *First Step Beyond* confirms, with far wiggier tendencies. The backstory's almost too perfect: rehearsals in "the Corycian Caverns", aka the drummer's basement; the original release delayed indefinitely after original label Pepperhead's owner went missing after a bad trip. Luckily, the music measures up. "Strangulation" recalls Amon Düül II's "Archangel Thunderbird" in its synthesis of proto-metal heaviness and rhythm section shimmy. "Transient Amplitude" commences as a "Paranoid"-style chugger, but stretches out to nine minutes, each stop-start triggering a new burst of soloing before a long, slow wind down. "Temptress", meanwhile, falls a whisker from a love song, with just a sliver of minor-key menace to keep things interesting. The rather limp "Feelings Of Indifference" proves they're best when they've got a groove going, but all of *First Step Beyond* is worthy of investigation.

EXTRAS: None.
LOUIS PATTISON



NEW ORDER Lost Sirens RHINO

Unknown treasures from Mancs' pre-divorce LP sessions
For some Factory purists, New Order's latest resurrection without

6/10

bassist Peter Hook is a travesty. But in truth, the Manc post-punk legends were already in creative decline when they recorded their 2005 swansong with Hook, the patchy *Waiting For The Sirens' Call*. It's hard to get too excited about this mini-album of leftovers from the same sessions, which seems almost certain to be the final New Order release featuring his signature cascading basslines. The sole previously released track, the blustery plodder "Hellbent", already confirmed these low expectations. And yet there are pleasant surprises here, from the sulky majesty and choppy JD guitars of "I'll Stay With You" to the supple tropical heartbreak ballad "Recoil", a distant cousin of "Guilty Partner" from the mighty *Technique*. Pointedly, Hook's melodic bass motifs figure prominently on both. The Italo-house piano stabs of "Sugarcane" also bring a jaunty Eurodisco attitude that was sadly lacking in the original, guitar-clogged album. The default formula here is still beefy lad-rock, pedestrian tunes and lyrical banalities. But there are enough positive signs to whet the appetite for New Order's next studio album, reportedly due sometime this year. Depleted, but not defeated.

EXTRAS: None.
STEPHEN DALTON



OVERHANG PARTY Complete Studio Recordings IMPORTANT

Welcome collection of half-remembered Japanese rock action
One of the lesser-known

7/10

groups to emerge from Japan in the '90s, Rinji Fukuoka's Overhang Party sometimes feel absolutely typical of the Japanese rock underground at the time, their debut album full of mournful rock songs, drowning in feedback and distortion, a moaning vocal drifting over the top, the songs often breaking open mid-way for a lethargically epic guitar solo. Sometimes, as with "Bass Oscillation", they buried any riffs so far down, it sounds like one massive, steamrolling pile of blurred noise, everything floating in the world of echo beloved of Japanese underground rock. But Overhang Party also changed their game a fair bit, with their second LP (named, with classicist logic, 2) featuring some beautiful Jefferson/Quicksilver worship, and third studio album 4 full of oddly regal-sounding piano-driven songs, like an alternate universe take on the Velvet's "All Tomorrow's Parties". It's great, even when the group drifts so far out of focus it's hard to pin down exactly where they're headed.

EXTRAS: Each album adds a previously unreleased track, and the final disc is dedicated to Overhang Party's unheard final studio recordings. Not entirely necessary, but still a good listen.
JON DALE



REVELATIONS The Red Rippers' Ed Bankston

When Ed Bankston returned from Vietnam, he returned to his first love, music, and found that his wartime experiences infected his writing. Playing to audiences of veterans, his Vietnam songs struck a chord. "As veterans, we all felt rejected. Our fathers

were the WWII generation, and they all came back and were hailed and fêted. We got the opposite reaction. Some people were openly hostile, but even among people that weren't, there was an attitude of: we don't want to hear about it, which kind of left us hanging."

As an engineer on an aircraft carrier, Bankston had no experience of the horrors of the jungle, though he did incorporate the experiences of other veterans on songs such as "Firefight", based on the memories of a Marine. "The album was less about that than about how unhappy we veterans were with how the whole thing turned out. We were just doing what veterans have always done. We didn't start the war - we weren't making any policies, we were just there doing the dirty work, just like soldiers have for thousands of years. I understand the American public was just tired of the whole thing, they wanted it to go away."

ALASTAIR MCKAY



KELLY JOE PHELPS Roll Away The Blues (The Very Best Of...) NASCENTE/DEMON

Fine two-CD retrospective of gifted modern bluesman

8/10

As the most singular interpreter of the blues tradition, Phelps has had scant competition since the demise of the late John Fahey. After setting aside jazz at age 32, he has forged his own brand of bruised, haunted music through intricate picking and dry-as-tumbleweed vocals. His dexterity can be almost oppressive - check his tour de force deconstruction of Lemon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" - but his muse is always present. Drawn from Phelps' five LPs and EP for Rykodisc, and from his 1994 small label debut, the other 27 cuts here give a judicious idea of his evolution. With *Shine Eyed Mister Zen* (1999) blues was overtaken by 'twisted folk' and songs like "Jimmy Rat", about chancers and losers, a theme continued on 2001's trio-based *Sky Like A Broken Clock*. 2003's *Slingshot Professionals* broadened into ensemble playing and poetic, cryptic lyrics ("real as Uncle Benzedrine, a last life wish"). Even Phelps seemed confused - 2005's *Tap The Red Cane Whirlwind* was a retreat to an intense solo live set. His undersung genius is still blazing; this is a smart introduction.

EXTRAS: Two unreleased Andy Kershaw session cuts, and "Hellhound On My Trail" with Zubot and Dawson.
NEIL SPENCER



THE RED RIPPERS Over There... And Over Here (reissue, 1983) PARADISE OF BACHELORS

Texas country-boogie, via Vietnam

7/10

The latest piece of archaeology by the Paradise Of Bachelors label is an extraordinary album of Viet Vet country boogie. First released in 1983, and sold through a small ad in *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine, it's the work of Vietnam veteran Edwin Bankston, who wrote the songs in the decade following his service aboard the aircraft carrier *Kittyhawk*. The ad read: "For a lot less than a box of ammo to sharpen your eye, you get an album that will nourish your heart and mind for years." Much of it is Waylon Jennings-style country boogie - "I'm a soldier of fortune, a hell for leather mercenary man" he sings on "Soldier Of Fortune" - but there are occasional 1980s period flourishes; on "Firefight", Bankston embellishes the chorus "here you are, and death is all around you" with a Chicory Tip-style riff. Bankston viewed the war as "a perfect storm of psychic wackiness", and if "Vietnam Blues" sounds like a Ry Cooder character piece, the song gains poignancy from the singer's investment in the subject and, perhaps, his awareness of his potential audience. When he sings about being a mercenary, the line "if you've got the money, I've got the time" can't help but pack a heavy punch.

EXTRAS: None.
ALASTAIR MCKAY

LORD HURON

LONESOME DREAMS

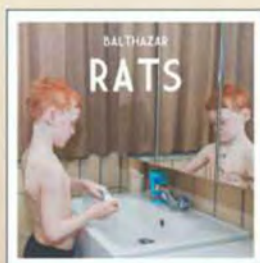


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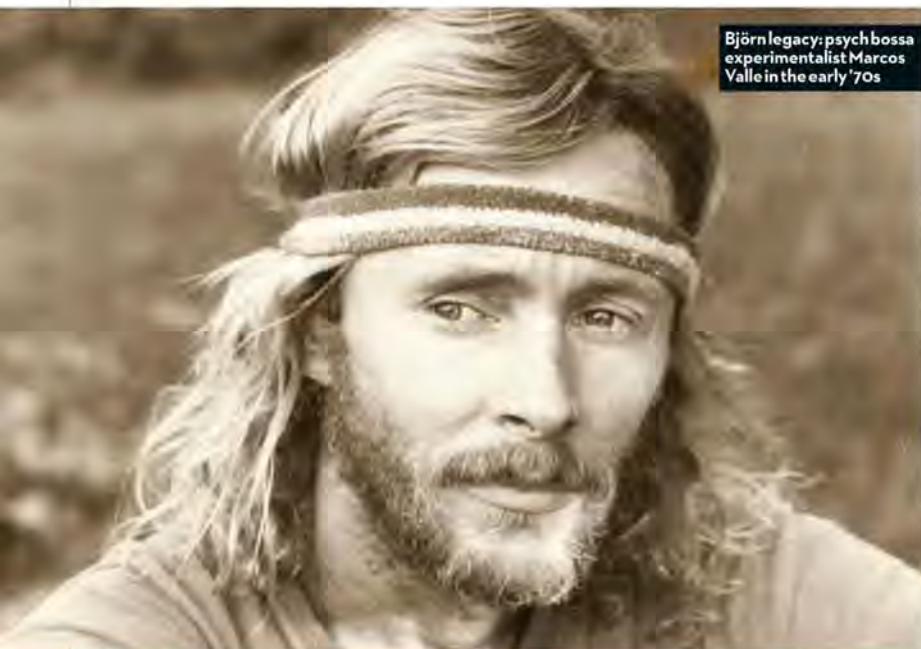
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Marcos Valle



Björn legacy: psychbossa experimentalist Marcos Valle in the early '70s

► WHILE HE WASN'T part of the Tropicalismo movement, the late '60s group of concrete poets, musicians and artists whose Pop Art exploded in the face of Brazil's military dictatorship, there are some pretty strong parallels to be made between that movement and Brazilian singer-songwriter Marcos Valle. From nascent bossa nova steps making the leap to barely concealed political commentary and subsequent censorship, met by a creative bravery that treated each subsequent album like a new jump into the void. While Valle had already had a number of big hits with his early bossa nova singles, by the early '70s he was working a furiously creative seam, chewing through genres, ideas, concepts and melodies at a wild rate, each song on each album a surprise, your ears turning corners unexpectedly every three minutes. It wasn't his furthest 'out' album, but 1970's **Marcos Valle** (7/10) **LIGHT IN THE ATTIC** has some great moments that catch you looking, like the breaking glass and bubbling water noises that disrupt the brash, bold arrangements at the head of "Pigmalião". Elsewhere, the moves are more subtle, but just as engaging – the wordless groove of "Freio Aerodinâmico" use compulsive vocal riffs to propel its melodies to the stratosphere. Valle followed this in 1971 with **Garra** (8/10) **LIGHT IN THE ATTIC**, his most overtly political

album. Co-writing with his brother Paulo Sergio, Valle cloaks politics with wordplay to skirt the military censors, though several original lyrics for the album were deemed inappropriate. But the title track's piercing critique of modern capital went unnoticed. *Garra* displays one of the Valle brothers' greatest skills – the iron fist of political

commentary gloved in the velvet sweetness of uplifting melody. It's not quite Marcos' greatest album, but it's the one you'll reach for most often. For 1972's **Vento Sul** (8/10) **LIGHT IN THE ATTIC**, Valle teamed up with prog/psych band O Terço, bringing psychedelia and rock to the fore, with a beautiful album whose spacey and drifting tenor is occasionally split open by wild edits and grooves, as on "Democustico". Borne of a bucolic time spent in Búzios, it has a totally invigorating grace and ease. Great, but the following year's **Previsão Do Tempo** (9/10) **LIGHT IN THE ATTIC** is the crowning achievement, recorded mostly with new Brazilian group Azimuth.

They bring an instigative funk to the album which gives even greater nuance to the political double-meanings and wordplay of the Valle brothers' songs. As a final statement before self-imposed exile (Marcos would live in the US between 1975 and 1980), you couldn't do better.

JON DALE



TO ROCOCO ROT

Rocket Road
1997-2001

CITY SLANG

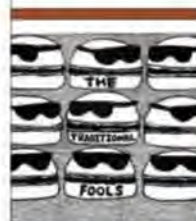
German electronica trio's finest run of LPs, upgraded and boxed

To Rococo Rot emerged in the mid-'90s, coming

out of German conceptual art practice but embracing a particularly fluid form of electronic music, with sub rosa patterns ticking away underneath some of the most gorgeous systems pop this side of Laurie Anderson or Kraftwerk. From 1997 to 2001, the trio released three albums, *Veiculo*, *The Amateur View* and their *Music Is A Hungry Ghost* collaboration with American turntablist I-Sound (aka Craig Willingham). Taken together, they're among the most compelling and listenable electronica albums of their time. They all have plenty to recommend – *Veiculo* is abstract and funkily brittle; *Hungry Ghost* is by turns inscrutable, motorik and melancholic – but *The Amateur View* is their masterpiece, with a sense of haziness that often has it reading like an essay on late-night driving. "Cars" and "Telema" are dignified, yet playful pop gems, melodies glittering like city lights through stained-glass windowpanes.

EXTRAS: An hour of previously unreleased material, which illuminates the working methods of this most meticulous group. Also included are several new remixes, from the likes of Four Tet and Mira Calix, which are less than edifying.

JON DALE



THE TRADITIONAL FOOLS

The Traditional Fools
(reissue, 2008)

TY SEGALL & MIKAL CRONIN

Reverse Shark Attack
(reissue, 2009)

IN THE RED

Before Ty was famous...

Ty Segall made a dent internationally last year with the triple whammy of *Twins*, *Slaughterhouse* and *Hair*. Even aged a modest 26, though, this West Coast garage-rock

prodigy has chalked up quite the back catalogue. *The Traditional Fools* is the sole long-player from Ty's sporadically active San Francisco trio. A scuzz-caked tribute to '80s surf-punk, Billy Childish and Red Kross, puerile titles like "Snot Rag" and a no-frills production job can't obscure the group's ear for rowdily enjoyable garage-punk formalism. *Reverse Shark Attack* starts off from a similar place, but paddles out to more unusual waters, combining the loose agenda of a jam with lashings of pedal abuse. But the pair manage to pull gems from the wreckage, like a cheerful mangling of Pink Floyd's "Take Up Thy Stethoscope And Walk"; and the 10-minute title track, which builds from dreamy balladeering to Dick Dale guitar heroics.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON



STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN AND DOUBLE TROUBLE

Texas Flood (reissue, 1983)

SONY

8/10 30th-anniversary expanded edition

of blues-rock landmark

The blues was already well on its way to becoming a heritage industry when Vaughan came bursting out of Texas in '83 with a debut that old blueshounds and young rock gunslingers alike recognised as heralding the arrival of a major new force. For the first time since the '60s, a generation of kids picking up guitars found something relevant in the blues again. Executive produced by veteran John Hammond, whose own blues pedigree dated back to recording Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday, Vaughan showed he was equally adept at classic Chicago guitar blues ("Pride And Joy"), storming R'n'B ("Love Struck Baby") and slow-burning jams (the title track), all delivered with a masterful rock'n'roll dynamic that owed its attack to the likes of Clapton and Hendrix. Claims that *Texas Flood* saved the blues from extinction are a tad exaggerated. But it reinvigorated the genre and paved the way for the likes of John Lee Hooker to enjoy a glorious sunset to their careers.

EXTRAS: A storming concert recorded in Philadelphia in '83 with songs from *Texas Flood* and a couple of Hendrix tributes, "Voodoo Child" and "Little Wing".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Change The Beat - The Celluloid Records Story 1980-1987

STRUT

9/10 Sensational celebration of pioneering label

Celluloid Records was the fruitful offspring of a Paris-based jazz-lover, Jean Karakos, and an adventurous American musician, Bill Laswell, who became the cosmopolitan label's house producer. The pair relished unexpected stylistic collisions like, say, The Clash backing rapper Futura 2000 on "Escapades Of Futura 2000", or the classic "World Destruction", a rap-rock marriage of John Lydon and Afrika Bambaataa. Celluloid explored electronica, post-rock, hip-hop, disco, world music and funk, and utilised artists from New York, France and Africa, including Nile Rodgers and Rusty Egan. The joy of this album, therefore, is the sense that anything goes, so you really don't know what will come next other than something thrilling with a beat. It could be Gallic electronic (Nini Rivolette, "Suis-Je Normale"), post-punk (Richard Hell & The Voidoids, "Destiny Street"), belting Moroccan post-disco (Sapho, "Carmel"), doomy Gallic-Yank hip-hop (Fab 5 Freddy, "Change The Beat") or even pre-Calexico widescreen Americana (Ginger Baker, "Dust To Dust").

EXTRAS: Sleeve notes contain rare photos and

new interviews with Karakos, Laswell, Lydon, Bambaataa and others. Digital album contains five extra tracks.

PETER WATTS



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Delta Swamp Rock Volume 2: More Sounds From The South 1968-75

SOUL JAZZ

8/10 Terrific comp mixing rock, country and soul

It's a curious fact that, while the American South is often painted as an outpost of white conservatism, its music has done more to integrate cultures than any other US region. This volume picks up where 2011's inaugural collection left off, drawing together a bunch of like-minded artists from the Confederacy who found common ground in the fertile crossways of country, gospel, R'n'B and swamp-rock. The strongest links are provided by Alabama's Muscle Shoals studio, crucible of legendary sessioners The Swampers, and Georgia's Capricorn Records, which provided a roof for The Allman Brothers, The Marshall Tucker Band and various offshoots. The sly funk-soul of Gregg Allman's "Midnight Rider" is a highlight, as is Lynyrd Skynyrd's majestic original version of "Free Bird", cut at Muscle Shoals in 1971 before they signed to MCA. Though perhaps the overriding joy of this set is the inclusion of lesser-known talents like soul boy Bobby Lance ("Somewhere In Between") and Allmans affiliates Cowboy ("Houston"), alongside Nashville session 'supergroup' Area Code 615, fuzzy prog-country types Captain Beyond, and a rollicking version of "Tennessee Stud", courtesy of Chet Atkins and Jerry Reed.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES



TOWNES VAN ZANDT

Sunshine Boy: The Unheard Studio Sessions & Demos 1971-1972

OMNIVORE

10/10 28 priceless tracks from the Texas poet's prime

Townes was a songwriter of such rare precision and power that one of his couplets towers over a pack of lesser songwriters' entire careers. Still, Van Zandt simply perplexed the music establishment in his day. It wasn't until friends gave him a boost in the 1980s with covers of "If I Needed You" and "Pancho & Lefty" that he got even a fraction of his due. *Sunshine Boy* springs from his creative prime - early '70s sessions for *High, Low And In Between* and *The Late Great Townes Van Zandt* - and pours forth dark, powerful versions of his best songs. Where the official takes were, arguably, oft-misproduced, this set hits a pure vein: Disc One features studio backing, but makes Van Zandt's deadly phrasing, between-the-lines intentions and unforgettable songs the spotlight. "You Are Not Needed Now", "Mr Mudd & Mr Gold", and the rollicking "White Freight Liner Blues", like almost everything here, are about as good as anything in this world gets. Disc Two is mostly acoustic and includes a "new" song ("Diamond Heel Blues") and a devastating cover of the Stones' "Dead Flowers" ("...and I won't forget to put roses on your tail," he deadpans).

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

COMING NEXT MONTH...



As I write, snow - or at least its greyer London cousin - is on the ground. In the release schedules at least, however, the days are getting longer and spring is in the air. What this means in real

terms is the impressively bright outlook of new albums on the way.

We're spoiled for choice, in fact. There's more lachrymose balladry from **John Grant**, a strong new one from **Low**, produced by Jeff Tweedy, and a new one also from erstwhile Beta Band man **Steve Mason**, filled with his own brand of dance-influenced slacker ire.

Devendra Banhart is back with shorter hair and a selection of softly-spoken but slightly hostile new songs - very much the thorns ordinarily kept well concealed by the flower child. There's an **Edwyn Collins** album, and a new one from **Depeche Mode**. Out the back, under the tarpaulin in the archive section, meanwhile, there's plenty of interest, too. There's a **Duane Allman** boxset, a box also for **Stephen Stills** and the start of a massive **Fela Kuti** reissue campaign. Lastly, there's

the latest **Jimi Hendrix** posthumous release, *People, Hell And Angels*, conclusive proof that for a genius, death is never the end.

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THIS MONTH: THE REPLACEMENTS, THE STONES AND ALAN LOMAX



GAME OF THRONES SEASON TWO

HBO HOME ENTERTAINMENT (DVD, BLU-RAY AND DIGITAL DOWNLOAD)

Fantasy saves the day for HBO. By Michael Bonner



9/10

THE LATE NOUGHTIES were a difficult time for HBO. Since launching *The Wire* in 2002, their profile had been dented by the failures of *Deadwood*, *Lucky Louie* and *John From Cincinnati*; the growth of rival networks and the critical success of *Mad Men*, which HBO had passed on, also proved unwelcome business. When HBO

unveiled their 2011 lineup, they were counting on *Boardwalk Empire* – with its Scorsese-directed pilot and sometime Soprano Steve Buscemi as its lead – as the show most likely to reclaim lost ground. As it turned out, the big news for HBO that year was – of all things – a fantasy series, with dragons, three-eyed crows and lurid guts-and-corsets melodrama.

The success of *Game Of Thrones* was perhaps not entirely unexpected. The series of books that it's based on – *A Song Of Ice And Fire*, by George RR Martin – have sold 15 million copies worldwide, at least guaranteeing HBO some kind of built-in audience. Fantasy, though, is a difficult thing to deliver convincingly on screen. However, the work done by David Benioff and Dan Weiss on the television adaptation of *Game Of Thrones* connected the show to some of HBO's more earthbound stablemates. While on a large scale *Game Of Thrones* is

about various warring dynasties fighting for control of a quasi-medieval world called Westeros, on a more intimate level the show it surprisingly most closely resembled in its first season was *The Sopranos*. Here was a patriarchal culture with a lord attempting to keep in check not only his unruly knights and family, but also be wary of infractions from rival Houses; much as Tony Soprano had to maintain discipline among his crews and also keep his eye on his rivals among the Five Families.

By the time Season Two of *Game Of Thrones* begins, three of the show's main characters are dead (in order of exit: crowned in molten gold, gored by a boar, beheaded). The death of King Robert Baratheon ignites the War of the Five Kings, which occupies much of the action in this second season. Levels of incest remain high, as does the nipple count. The death of Eddard Stark – the gruff Lord of Winterfell, gruffly played by the gruff Sean Bean, and the closest the show came to a 'main character' in Season One – allows for the repositioning of other characters. In particular, we see more of Tyrion Lannister (Peter Dinklage), the intelligent but unloved dwarf son of the powerful Warden of the West, Tywin Lannister – played imperiously by Charles Dance. Tyrion is a terrific character – scheming, witty, a lover of prostitutes and fine wines. His rise to power in Westeros' capital city, King's Landing, as the Hand to his awful nephew, King Joffrey, forms a major part of the season's arc. King's Landing is a nest of vipers – power-play,

court intrigue, more nipples – and Tyrion gives a remarkably good account of himself. In the show's disparate locations you'll find the rival claimants to Westeros' Iron Throne. Robb Stark, whose host are waging bloody war against the Lannisters in the North; Stannis Baratheon, who launches a naval assault against King's Landing; Daenerys Targaryen, leading her caravan across a far-off desert with three new-born dragons in tow. Meanwhile, up on the Wall, a massive structure that runs the width of Westeros, the men of the Night's Watch are preparing to face an army of wildlings – and worse, the White Walkers are returning, mysterious supernatural entities who command an army of the undead. Admittedly, not all of these arcs are delivered entirely satisfactory. The Daenerys storyline, particularly, doesn't feel like it progresses enough, as she and her entourage trudge thanklessly round, basically, the flat bits of Malta. Unusually for a network that has traded so successfully in memorable performances from men – James Gandolfini, Dominic West, Larry David – *Game Of Thrones* offers a number of strong roles for children. One of Season Two's most compelling arcs follows 11-year-old Arya Stark (Maisie Williams), who's seen her father beheaded in Season One and who now finds herself caught up in the messy horrors of war.

Rallying large casts in the service of complex storylines is a perilous business, although one that has clearly paid off here. Season Two grossed 10.4 million viewers per episode and collected 12 Emmy Award nominations. It was the most pirated programme of 2012. Its great achievement, though, was to step up and achieve a confidence beyond its already impressive first season. Critically, Season Two's cliffhanger – a grisly army of White Walkers bearing down on the Wall from the snowy northern wastes of Westeros – anticipates even higher creative risks to come.

EXTRAS: A well-judged set of commentaries, 7/10 Making Of's, documentaries, animated histories and interactive guides.



7/10

HIT SO HARD

PECCADILLO PICTURES

Hard-living Hole stickswoman survives grunge's 'inner circle'

Highly rated drummer Patty Schemel recalls being drunk for the first time aged 12, so Courtney Love's chaotic Hole was perhaps not the best band for her to have joined. This

documenting of her descent into heavy drug use and homelessness features extensive interviews with Schemel, her family and former bandmates, plus intimate archival footage of grunge's "inner circle". It's a survivor's tale that ends happily, and Schemel's matter-of-fact honesty rescues the film from voyeurism, but associated tragedies have inevitably left their mark.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL



8/10

THE KILLING TRILOGY

ARROW FILMS

Nordic Noir crime collection spins an enjoyable yarn

"Nordic Noir" existed before *The Killing*, latterly in the novels of Henning Mankell, where police officers solved grim cases with the insight their troubled emotional

lives had afforded them. As the collected series shows, things are often dark in *The Killing*, but the show's main invention is to write a traditional male detective character (dysfunctional relationships; brilliant mind) and have it played by a woman in a designer jumper. This doesn't reveal much on the rewatch, but it's an enjoyable yarn if you're not looking for more than that.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



7/10

LILYHAMMER

UNIVERSAL PICTURES UK

The Sopranos meets Northern Exposure, in Norway...

The character is called "Frank Tagliano", but *Lilyhammer*'s big draw is seeing Steven Van Zandt playing Tony Soprano's right-hand man, Silvio Dante,

again, in all but name. A New Jersey mobster who's ratted out his boss, he's chosen to begin his (not so) new life under witness protection in the Norwegian market town of Lillehammer, because he liked it on television during the 1994 Winter Olympics. Basically *The Sopranos* meets *Northern Exposure* – it's familiar, but watchable simply because Van Zandt makes such a charming thug.

EXTRAS: Outtakes.

5/10 DAMIEN LOVE



5/10

THE REPLACEMENTS

Color Me Obsessed: A Film About The Replacements

WHAT WERE WE THINKING

Fans yak about the 'Mats

Gorman Bechard's film is a labour of love – as is almost all pontificating about The Replacements, Minneapolis punk

pathfinders whose ill-deserved obscurity has contributed as much to their legend as their glorious records. However, with no input from the group, and not a note of their music, this boils down to two hours of people yakking about their favourite rock group – tough going even if the 'Mats are your No 1 rock group, as of course they should be.

EXTRAS: Deleted scenes, commentaries, 6/10 interviews, trailer.

ANDREW MUELLER



8/10

THE ROLLING STONES

Crossfire Hurricane

EAGLE ROCK

Mammoth history condensed – leaves you wanting more

Brett Morgan's doc assembles a stunning collage of clips, stitched together by the disembodied commentary of Jagger, Richards,

Watts, Wyman, Taylor and Wood, variously snarky, insightful and occasionally regretful. Frequently thrilling, sometimes hilarious, the only thing wrong is that there isn't more – it skips across the band's mammoth history like a stone over water, but the archive is so great you want to stop and sink into it.

EXTRAS: A brilliant 15 minutes of live footage from Germany in 1965; an interview with Morgan and Making Of.

DAMIEN LOVE



7/10

THE ERNEST TUBB SHOWS

Parts 1 & 2: Walking The Floor Over You

BEAR FAMILY

'60s country TV series co-hosted by a 'straight' Willie Nelson

With his craggy features and modest (flat) baritone, Ernest Tubb was an unlikely star, but his records endure

because of their lack of pretension. In 1965, 25 years after his first hit, he hosted a hokey country TV series which gave early airtime to reticent co-host Willie Nelson (smartly clad and short-haired). This period sits uncomfortably in the Nelson myth, but these two DVDs show that his talent was intact long before his rebel image emerged. Worth it for Tubb, too, though the hillbilly humour of Bun Wilson is grim.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



Village voice: Ramblin' Jack Elliott

BALLADS, BLUES & BLUEGRASS

MEDIA GENERATION



8/10

Unearthed time capsule: Greenwich Village 1961

FOR SUCH A fabled hotbed there's little footage of NY's vibrant folk scene at the dawn of the '60s, a world glimpsed mainly through photos and memoirs like Dylan's *Chronicles*. Give thanks, then, that Alan

Lomax threw a jam session at his West 4th St home, and filmed it in the hope the BBC would commission a series on the folk revival. The occasion for his semi-impromptu hootenanny was a series of concerts featuring Appalachian musicians Roscoe Holcomb, Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson, but Lomax also arranged for blues giants Memphis Slim and Willie Dixon to join the party, along with Village scenesters like Ramblin' Jack Elliott and The Greenbriar Boys.

Crammed into Lomax's apartment, swapping tunes and talking to Lomax, they make one fascinating crowd. The Village regulars are an earnest but affable bunch, hanging on every chord of the older Kentucky singers. Of the locals, Ramblin' Jack impresses with sheer chutzpah, a Jewish cowboy singing "Cocaine". Strangest is Peter La Farge, with his cod delivery, a handsome, troubled soul who would die a few years later, allegedly by his own hand. Across the room, Carla Rotolo, sister of Dylan's girlfriend Suze, gazes on. You half expect Bobby to breeze through the door, but despite the testimony of cameraman George Pickow, who in the 'Making Of' claims Dylan was "sat in the corner smoking pot and avoiding the camera", Little Hibbing's finest had barely arrived in town, a point made by Lost City Rambler John Simon, whose exposition of the event is illuminating and moving. The music of Willie Dixon and Memphis Slim makes an odd fit with the bluegrass and folk – these were architects of Chicago's gritty electric R'n'B – but Lomax saw US music as a broad church, and Willie and Slim had no problem devising an acoustic set for folk crowds on both sides of the Atlantic. Lomax proves an unexpectedly pugnacious presence, a reminder that he was an impresario and civil rights activist as well as "the man who recorded the world". His vision in making this rough but charming snapshot proved prescient.

EXTRAS: None.

NEIL SPENCER

Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Judd Apatow puts off growing up, Hitchcock gets Hollywoodised, Denzel Washington lands a plane on booze and coke, and Cronenberg Jr follows in his father's flesh-creeping footsteps

THIS IS 40 finds filmmaker Judd Apatow reconnecting with characters from his 2007 film, *Knocked Up*. Principally, married couple, Pete (Paul Rudd) and Debbie (Leslie Mann; Apatow's wife), who are both reaching 40 in varying states of denial. Pete runs a small record label – his sole signing are the reformed Graham Parker And The Rumour – while Debbie owns a boutique. They have two children, Sadie and Charlotte (Apatow's own daughters, Maude and Iris) and live in a bright, airy home in the LA suburbs. "We're at the point where everything we say annoys each other, it's a blast," Pete confesses. They are evasive. Pete sits in the toilet playing games on his iPad at any given opportunity. Debbie smokes cigarettes wearing rubber gloves and with her hair in a towel, to avoid smelling of smoke. Around them, there is other shit. An employee is stealing from Debbie's boutique, while Pete is doling out handouts to his father (a brilliantly blunt Albert Brooks). At their worst, these characters appear shallow and immature, and it's not entirely clear how they can afford a lifestyle that includes personal trainers, estate cars and original John Lennon art from their salaries (which in Pete's case is negligible). You could be forgiven for wondering how much this is, basically, Apatow and Mann's home life, mined for comedic potential. Certainly, the subject matter of *This Is 40* seems close to Apatow's own age and experience. One of the director's favoured tropes is the idea of prolonged adolescence; it's certainly telling that when Pete and Debbie finally get away from their kids for a weekend break, they choose to get stoned on hash cakes and stuff themselves on junk food. At close to two-and-a-half hours, it feels very long for a comedy, but it's hard to know what to cut. The film hangs together well, and even digressive cameos from members of Apatow's stock company like Jason Segel and Chris O'Dowd don't feel entirely gratuitous. But Apatow's focus is very much the plight of Pete and Debbie, and he smartly addresses issues about people who had children while relatively young who now wonder, as they reach a landmark age, what exactly it is that's holding them together.

► **Hitchcock** arrives, rather inconveniently, two months after the superior BBC/HBO



co-production *The Girl*, which cast Toby Jones as a deadpan, ruthless Hitch and Sienna Miller as Tippi Hedren, the blonde star of *The Birds* and *Marnie* who endured his abuse. *Hitchcock* takes place three years before the events in *The Girl*, and covers the shooting of *Psycho*. Instead of the predatory and vengeful Toby Jones, we have Anthony Hopkins lumbering around in a fat suit, pate shaved, facial prosthetics in place. He captures the director's rotund profile; but for some reason he sounds a lot like Michael Caine. Anthony Hopkins is at his best when playing Anthony Hopkins; he is not the kind of actor to immerse himself in a part or, as he is called upon here, to play a real person. In *The Girl*, Hitch's long-suffering wife Alma was played with a flinty stoicism by Imelda Staunton; here she is played by Helen Mirren, flirting with Danny Huston's rakish writer. This is the Hollywoodisation of

Hitchcock: a weightless, 'making of' story. Hitch wants to make *Psycho*; the studio want *North By Northwest II* instead. Hitch gambles the house; we know, of course, that he wins. So where's the drama? There's none of the chewy subtext, the sexual obsession, of *The Girl*; certainly, Hitch doesn't visit any lecherous intent on Scarlett Johansson's Janet Leigh. Most peculiarly, Hitchcock finds himself in fantasy sequences with Ed Gein, the serial killer who inspired *Psycho*'s Norman Bates.

► **Flight** Director Robert Zemeckis has made a solid, unshowy character drama built around a creditable central performance from Denzel Washington as Whip Whitaker – an alcoholic pilot who, still drunk and high from the night before, manages to land his aeroplane after a mechanical failure sends it into a 4,800ft dive.

Reviewed this month...



THIS IS 40
Director Judd Apatow
Starring Paul Rudd, Leslie Mann
Opens February 14
Certificate 15
8/10



HITCHCOCK
Director Sacha Gervasi
Starring Anthony Hopkins, Helen Mirren
Opens February 8
Certificate 12A
6/10



FLIGHT
Director Robert Zemeckis
Starring Denzel Washington, Kelly Reilly
Opens February 1
Certificate 15
7/10



TO THE WONDER
Director Terrence Malick
Starring Ben Affleck, Olga Kurylenko
Opens February 22
Certificate 12A
7/10



ANTIVIRAL
Director Brandon Cronenberg
Starring Caleb Landry Jones, Malcolm McDowell
Opens February 1
Certificate 18
6/10



This Is 40: (l-r) Iris Apatow, Maude Apatow, Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann

that latest line of coke racing round his bloodstream, or shivering as he pours bottles of spirits down the sink.

► **To The Wonder** "We climbed the steps to the Wonder," says Olga Kurylenko in whispered voiceover, as she and boyfriend Ben Affleck walk into the grounds of the monastery located on top of Mont Saint-Michel. Everything is bathed in a soft, blue-grey light as director Terrence Malick's camera follows the lovers walking through the grounds, Kurylenko gently running a hand across the top of a hedge of box trees, before they stop to marvel at a rose in bloom. As with Malick's previous film, *The Tree Of Life*, *To The Wonder* is unashamedly, unfashionably, a film about religion and love. Unlike its predecessor, though, *To The Wonder* is a small, intimate story – there are no dinosaurs here, no grand contemplation on the history of the universe. Instead, Malick's film follows Neil (Affleck) and Marina (Kurylenko) as they drift in and out of love, first in Paris and then in Malick's hometown of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, a place of wide-open skies, seemingly caught in endless summer twilight. Neil is practical, if remote; Marina is "a little dreamer". A second thread follows Javier Bardem's Father Quintana as he experiences a crisis of faith. The narrative – as slight as it is – drifts by in a series of loosely connected montages, as serene and graceful as you'd expect from Malick. This is an experimental art film, beautifully shot using natural light, with Malick's camera in a state of constant movement, catching scenes of natural beauty but also finding something to marvel at in more mundane events; Malick turns a trip to the local supermarket into cinematic rhapsody. *To The Wonder* isn't to everyone's tastes – if you didn't like *Tree Of Life*, don't trouble yourself here. At times, it veers towards self-parody. "Where are we when we're there?" asks one character in voiceover. "Stop being so serious," admonishes another, advice Malick himself could perhaps have done with.

► **Antiviral** takes place in a near-future where our obsession with celebrity has reached such extreme levels that companies harvest diseases from the famous and inject them for a hefty price into the star's most ardent fans. "A biological communion," explains Syd March (Caleb Landry Jones), a vampiric employee of the Lucas Clinic. Syd also trades on the black market, using his own body to smuggle germs out of work; a lucrative sideline, until he contracts a virus that killed a starlet. *Antiviral* feels in part like a stray cousin to Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* series – but the

most conspicuous debt belongs to debuting director Brandon Cronenberg's own father, David. In *Antiviral*'s idea of a man losing control of his own flesh, it echoes Cronenberg Senior's early body horrors. Brandon Cronenberg shoots in cold, antiseptic tones;

the soundtrack is mostly a minimal electronic rumble. Celebrity feels a little overplayed as a satirical target, though Cronenberg enjoys moments of gallows humour. "Are you aware we're still growing the cancer cells of a woman who died in the 1950s?" says a meat shop owner who sells steaks grown from the cells of dead stars. "The afterlife is getting extremely perverse."

Meanwhile, the welfare of a star's anus becomes a rolling news topic.

In Antiviral, the welfare of a celebrity's anus becomes a rolling news topic

The crash itself is amazing; a 10-minute nose dive, with Zemeckis barely moving his camera out of the cockpit. Whitaker emerges a hero – "you're a rock star" – before he is called to account. "Death demands responsibility," Don Cheadle's lawyer explains. "Six people died. Someone is to blame." *Flight* is essentially a study of an intelligent man living in denial. The film revolves entirely around Washington: sweaty, puffy, slow-eyed when down, very much The Man when the booze and the coke kick in. Zemeckis – who hasn't directed a live action film since 2000's *Cast Away* – shoots the film as straight as possible. But that's not to say it's without wit. There are cunning moral ambiguities here: could Whitaker have saved that plane if he *hadn't* been blasted on vodka and cocaine?

With a film so focused on his character, there is little room for those around him to breathe – although John Goodman gets some meaty scenes as Whitaker's drug dealer, who seems to be modelled on *The Big Lebowski*'s Dude. It's Washington's best work since *Training Day*: a damaged, defiant soul, strutting down hotel corridors with his aviator shades on,

Also out...

MOVIE 43

OPENS JANUARY 25
11 directors, 15 writers, 12 different storylines, a huge ensemble cast... And too many cooks?

BULLET TO THE HEAD

OPENS FEBRUARY 1
Uncut favourite Walter Hill returns to the big screen, directing his first film since 2002. Shame, then, it's a rather creaky old school actioner starring Sylvester Stallone.

CHAINED

OPENS FEBRUARY 1
Jennifer Lynch (David's daughter) does a serial killer thriller, with Vincent D'Onofrio as a mass murdering cabbie who takes on a young protégé.

HYDE PARK ON HUDSON

OPENS FEBRUARY 1
Bill Murray is FDR, having an affair while George VI visits him in New York. Starry drama, also features Olivia Coleman, Samuel West and Laura Linney.



Bill Murray in Hyde Park On Hudson

A LIAR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OPENS FEBRUARY 8
Based on Graham Chapman's book, the late Python's fictionalised life is fancifully told in Terry Gilliam-style animation; includes the voices of messrs Cleese, Palin and Jones. No Eric Idle, though.

NO

OPENS FEBRUARY 8
Gael García Bernal plays an advertising man working against General Pinochet. All refreshingly shot on lo-definition tape.

CLOUD ATLAS

OPENS FEBRUARY 22
Tom Tykwer and the Wachowskis tackle David Mitchell's ambitious novel, with less than convincing results. Tom Hanks leads.

A GOOD DAY TO DIE HARD

OPENS FEBRUARY 14
Bruce Willis heads to Russia for some more silly terrorist plot-foiling.

REIGN OF ASSASSINS

OPENS FEBRUARY 15
John Woo and Su Chao-Pin direct Michelle Yeoh as a Ming Dynasty assassin trying to leave the business. Surprise surprise, her plan doesn't quite work out.

HANSEL & GRETEL: WITCH-HUNTERS

OPENS FEBRUARY 22
Jeremy Renner and Gemma Arterton lead hyper-violent retelling of the Grimms' tale.

Live

ROCKING THE FREE WORLD



Jamathon! Featuring Mike Campbell (left), Jackson Browne (second left), Jonathan Wilson (centre), Bob Weir (third right) and Benmont Tench (far right)

JONATHAN WILSON & FRIENDS

THE TROUBADOUR, LOS ANGELES, DECEMBER 20, 2012

LA's new King Of The Canyons invites Bob Weir, Jackson Browne, the Heartbreakers and Jeff Lynne to jam with him. At length...

ONE OF THE MOST compelling things about Jonathan Wilson has always been the way he seems to effortlessly fix a kind of entente between 1970s LA scenesters and their 21st-Century descendants. For a select few, Wilson's Laurel Canyon Wednesday Night Jams became fabled affairs of open-ended musical interaction.

The Merry Minstrel Musical Circus: A Holiday Gathering & Goodwill Jamathon is an unprecedented public viewing of these phenomena, organised by Wilson – more than ever a multi-tasking pied piper – with an assist from Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell.

Long after the doors are scheduled to open on this relatively chilly evening, though, an unmoving line of ticket holders stretches westward on Santa Monica, around the corner and up Doheny Drive. We slide in with a couple of music biz friends and are whisked into the hallowed bar in the front of the club by the longtime security guy. As we enter, we discover the reason for the delay: Wilson is still rehearsing, working up a tune with Campbell, Jackson Browne and Bob Weir. The two Cali legends had been announced as additions to the bill a few days earlier, no doubt accounting for the still-swelling throng outside.

Moments after the sounds from the main room cease, Browne strolls into the bar and tells me, "It's just gonna be a long jam, really. It'll be a lot of

fun." We follow him into the main room, still empty of paying customers, and immediately catch the old-school communal vibe, as long-haired musicians and crew members wander about, looking like they're waiting to audition for the sequel to *Almost Famous*. The Troubadour is notorious for packing clubgoers sardine-like into the modest floor space, so we grab barstools before the venue is overrun.

Nearly an hour after the scheduled 8:30 set time, Campbell takes the stage with the side band he's dubbed The Dirty Knobs and launches into Robert Johnson's "Walking Blues". There's no MC, no introductions, and the hundreds squeezed between the stage and the main-room bar are slow to connect, more concerned about getting drinks and securing a few precious square inches of floor space. Campbell sings in a serviceable voice, and the musicians play skilfully as they stretch out songs from JJ Cale, the Dead and John Lennon, but they're generating little more drama than you'd find in a rehearsal room.

A few minutes later, Wilson appears with his band and opens, fittingly, with Happy Traum's "Trials Of Jonathan", giving it a country-rock bounce with a hint of rustic trippiness in the manner of Quicksilver Messenger Service. *Gentle Spirit*'s languid "Valley Of The Silver Moon" is next, but the crowd grow restless as the band meanders through an elongated instrumental excursion. Campbell and Benmont Tench join in

on "Moses Pain", a newer tune slated for Wilson's next album, with a surging, Bob Seger-like "Keep on ridin'" refrain. Standing at stage right, Leslie Stevens and Jenny O add backing vocals, looking like time-travelling hippy chicks. After a reverent cover of George Harrison's "Isn't It A Pity", the crowd roars as Weir takes the stage for a spirited version of "West LA Fadeaway", with Wilson adding voicebox guitar and the Deadheads singing along ecstatically.

Following a 15-minute intermission, Wilson, his band and the two female singers return for a run through another JJ Cale tune, "Call Me The Breeze", with Tal Wilkenfeld from Jeff Beck's band animatedly playing the bassline. Then another Lennon song, "Well Well Well", after which Jeff Lynne appears, unannounced, to sing the lead vocal on rollicking runs through Del Shannon's "Runaway" and Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven". Jackson replaces Lynne at centre stage and steps to the mic to quip, "The first time I ever said, 'Shut the fuck up' was right here in this spot." Wilson joins him on acoustic guitar and harmony vocals for "These Days", towering over his duet partner. When they finish, JW announces, "That's one of the best songs ever written." The band reappears for Browne's "Play It All Night Long", Campbell rejoining them on Warren Zevon's "Lawyers, Guns And Money". The mini-set climaxes with a jubilant "Take It Easy", Campbell picking expertly, Tench thickening the



sound with organ vamps and the girls providing the high harmonies on the choruses.

Weir returns and the crowd goes nuts even before the opening chords of "Bertha", which gives way to a shapeless, interminable (to my ears) "Dark Star". As Weir, Campbell and Wilson zone out on their guitars, my ears search for some semblance of shape or rhythm – but having slept through most of an all-night Dead set at the Fillmore East, I'm the odd man out here. Weir then leads the players into "Truckin'", the aroma of weed intensifies and "Livin' on reds, vitamin C and cocaine" gets the requisite whoop. A female barkeep in a Beachwood Canyon T-shirt gyrates through the song, getting a high-five from a customer. Jackson returns and Campbell switches to mandolin for a trio workup of "Friend Of The Devil". If it wasn't apparent before, it is now – the majority of these people are squeezed in here to get their Dead fix, not to revel in Wilson's old-school Canyon moves.

But for the musicians themselves, Wilson and his participatory approach are precisely what has brought them to the Troubadour, for a hermetic gathering of the tribe. Indeed, the players spend much of the night with their backs to the crowd, watching the fingers of their companions moving over the frets as they play. In essence, the performers are their own audience, the rest of us just eavesdropping on their improvisations. Wilson isn't a star, nor is he interested in becoming one; he's a ringleader, a conduit to what he's described as "blissed-out exploration", and tonight's show – or more accurately, tonight's jam – serves as a revealing window into his world.

The night culminates with everybody joining in on a sloppy, celebratory encore of "Get Back", "Deal" and "Goin' Down The Road Feeling Bad"; after four hours of Dead worship and Wilsonian democracy, goin' down the road sounds like an excellent idea.

BUD SCOPPA

SETLIST

- 1 **Walking Blues** (Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs)
- 2 **Humdinger/Easy Wind** (Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs)
- 3 **Blow Up My Stereo** (Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs)
- 4 **Working Class Hero/You've Got To Hide Your Love Away** (Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs)
- 5 **Trials Of Jonathan** (Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 6 **Valley Of The Silver Moon** (Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 7 **Moses Pain** (Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench)
- 8 **Isn't It A Pity** (Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 9 **West LA Fadeaway** (Bob Weir, Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 10 **Call Me The Breeze** (Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 11 **Well Well Well** (Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 12 **Runaway** (Jeff Lynne, Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 13 **Roll Over Beethoven** (Jeff Lynne, Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 14 **These Days** (Jackson Browne & Jonathan Wilson)
- 15 **Play It All Night Long** (Jackson Browne, Jonathan Wilson & Band)
- 16 **Lawyers, Guns & Money** (Jackson Browne, Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell)
- 17 **Take It Easy** (Jackson Browne, Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench)
- 18 **Bertha** (Bob Weir, Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench)
- 19 **Dark Star** (Bob Weir, Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench)
- 20 **Truckin'** (Bob Weir, Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench)
- 21 **Friend Of The Devil** (Bob Weir, Jonathan Wilson & Band, with Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench)

ENCORE:

- 22 **Get Back**
- 23 **Deal**
- 24 **Goin' Down The Road Feeling Bad**

Allah-Las

SHACKLEWELL ARMS, LONDON, DECEMBER 10, 2012

Reversing into tomorrow:
~~1965's~~ 2012's best new band

THE SCEPTICAL OPINION of the Allah-Las casts them as retro-fetishists in thrall to a musical past they are familiar with only by reputation and the records that have survived its passing. Much has been made of the fact that three of them once worked at Los Angeles vinyl emporium Amoeba Music, where they are often imagined lurking like members of an arcane cult in absorbed fixation over 45s by short-lived garage bands, groups who flared and quickly died, remembered only by the kind of people who form groups in their memory.

If there was no more to them, however, than a talent for painstaking replication, the only people here tonight for their UK debut would have been nostalgically inclined obsessives, connoisseurs of vintage reverb and students of arcane recording paraphernalia. It's a livelier crowd than that, though, for whom the Allah-Las' eponymous debut album is touched by a certain magic and some great songs that turn their retrospective musical inclinations into something conversely fresh, as if their career trajectory to date has been a case of reversing into tomorrow, from a starting point in, let's say, 1965 or 1966, a little ahead of a swing towards the fully blown psychedelic, the time of Love's "My Little Red Book" and the Stones' *Aftermath*, key reference points for the Allah-Las.

The album inevitably provides the rump of tonight's setlist, Miles Michaud's vocal on opener "Don't You Forget It" as cool, haughty and dismissive as the young Jagger, with Pedrum Siadatian's twanging guitar providing a suitably taunting counterpoint. "Tell Me (What's On Your Mind)" occupies similar territory, with added backbeat and booming bass. Its mocking lilt is at first almost innocuous, then darkly insidious. Album highlight "Busman's Holiday", with its ominous drum rumble, cymbal splashes and spiky guitar is more primal, and sounds at one point like it's going to end up as "Paint It, Black", which adds a welcome urgency to the otherwise stately drift of things.

ALLAN JONES



Allah-Las! Miles Michaud digs in

Staggering
genius: Shane
MacGowan



THE POGUES

O2 ARENA, LONDON, DECEMBER 20, 2012

The “greatest disasters ever to hit Irish music” turn 30. *Sláinte!*

IN THE TIME that it takes some people to fill in a tax return, Shane MacGowan manages to spark up a cigarette onstage. An act of punky defiance, or proof that the 55-year-old lost interest in the modern world long before the smoking ban came into force? For while he turns up immaculately suited – if a little wobbly – for this celebration of The Pogues’ 30th anniversary, MacGowan still radiates danger. Taking objection to something in the front row, he flicks a slow, stumbling V-sign to the crowd. A smiling, bovine Brian Wilson he isn’t.

The Pogues have traded on past glories since reforming in 2001, but as they rip through “The Body Of An American” and “The Sick Bed Of Cúchulainn” and rattle the bones of “Sally MacLennane”, living death clearly suits a band whose finest songs always existed in some long gone, non-specific ‘back when’.

In the early 1980s, expat nostalgia for Ireland fathomed new depths in MacGowan, hitherto a mediocre punk slugger with The Nipple Erectors. The Pogues (none of whose original members were born in Ireland) successfully crossbred Irish exiles’ laments with the other homesick music they found in London clubland: cajun, Greek taverna bouzouki, reggae, ska, rockabilly, Tex-Mex. However, for all the seasonal goodwill that they now engender, it is worth remembering that fusion once made MacGowan enemies.

Derided as a ‘plastic Paddy’ (he was born in Kent) and a closet posho (thanks to an ill-fated scholarship to Westminster), MacGowan’s irreverence and supposed pandering to boozy Irish stereotypes rattled cages. As recently as 1999, the late Tommy Makem (of Clancy Brothers fame) told *The Irish Post* that The Pogues were “the greatest

disaster ever to hit Irish music”.

That sense of rejection burns through The Pogues’ work, and while MacGowan’s creative career took its final coherent turn with the December 1987 release of “Fairytale Of New York” (oddball solo records notwithstanding), passion still burns in him as he throttles his microphone stand. Slurring and slouching, he barks through the set like a zombie Tony Bennett, but rarely skips a syllable of these dense, wordy songs, riding the gunshot rhythm of Andrew Ranken’s drumming as adeptly as a U-Roy or a Big Youth. Whatever lost loves and tap-room hard-luck stories inspired the likes of “A Rainy Night In Soho” and “The Broad Majestic Shannon”, they still get the fire burning in those mother-me eyes. As with that other London-Irish reggae nut with bad blood coursing through his veins, John Lydon, you can still sense the rage within him and the paradoxical urges to appease and

SETLIST

- 1 Streams Of Whiskey
- 2 If I Should Fall From Grace With God
- 3 The Broad Majestic Shannon
- 4 Greenland Whale Fisheries
- 5 A Pair Of Brown Eyes
- 6 Tuesday Morning
- 7 Kitty
- 8 The Sunnyside Of The Street
- 9 Thousands Are Sailing
- 10 Repeal Of The Licensing Laws
- 11 Lullaby Of London
- 12 The Body Of An American
- 13 Young Ned Of The Hill
- 14 Boys From The County Hell
- 15 Dirty Old Town
- 16 Bottle Of Smoke
- 17 The Sick Bed Of Cúchulainn
- ENCORE:
- 18 Sally MacLennane
- 19 A Rainy Night In Soho
- 20 The Irish Rover
- 21 Star Of The County Down
- 22 Poor Paddy
- 23 Fairytale Of New York (with Camille O’Sullivan)
- 24 Fiesta

appal (“Has anybody out there got gastroenteritis?” he slurs in a rare coherent aside).

The Pogues bludgeon “Fairytale Of New York” into submission, then slope off after a euphoric bash through “Fiesta” – the *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*-era Latino rhapsody that suggested their reach could extend far beyond the Old Country, and into the New World. As it is, they got no further than that mythical drunk tank. A tremendous live set may allow The Pogues to maintain cars big as bars, but MacGowan is still too grotty and ungrateful for cabaret. Stumbling, for sure, but still staggering – a used-up dog end that refuses to burn out.

JIM WIRTH

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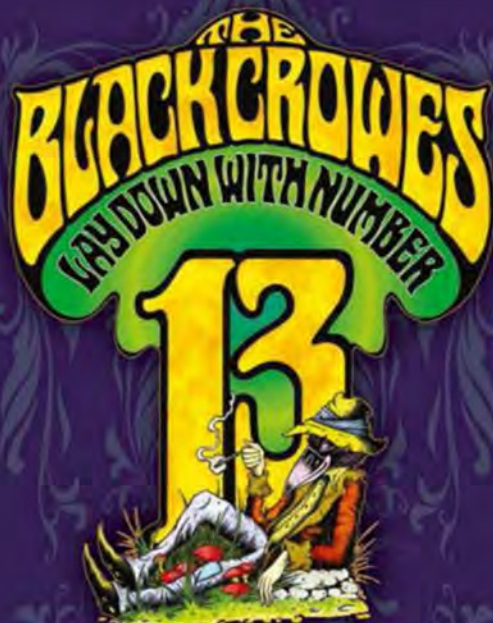
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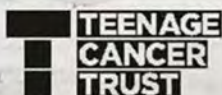
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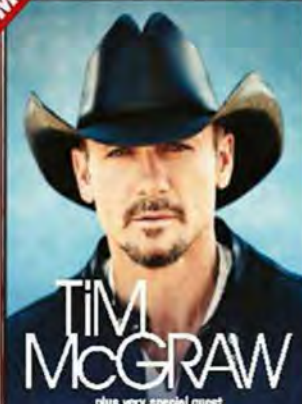


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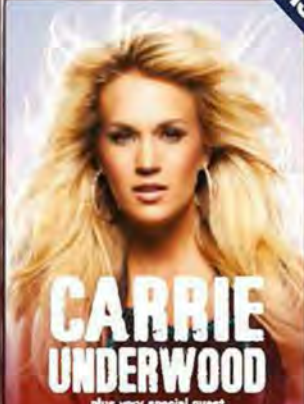
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www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk
8 St Albans
The Alban Arena
www.alban-arena.co.uk
9 Guildford G Live
www.glive.co.uk

9 Birmingham Town Hall
www.thsh.co.uk
10 Cardiff St Davids Hall
www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk

APRIL

5 Poole Lighthouse
www.pooleighthouse.co.uk
6 Bridport
The Electric Palace
www.electricpalace.org.uk
7 Plymouth Theatre Royal
www.theatreroyal.com

MARCH

6 Salisbury City Hall
www.cityhallsalisbury.org.uk

www.portisaacsfishermansfriends.com
www.ticketline.co.uk | www.gigantic.com | www.seetickets.com



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JOHN MURRY
WED 30 JAN
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TUE 7 FEB
JOHN WHEELER
MON 11 FEB
BITTER RUIN
ALFIE BERNARDI • JACK WISEMAN

THU 14 FEB
REA GARVEY
WED 20 FEB
NIGHT ENGINE
COVES

THU 21 FEB
EXIT CALM

THU 25 FEB
JIM LOCKEY &
THE SOLEMN SUN
WED 6 MAR
JOSH KURMA

THU 7 MAR
TRIXIE WHITLEY
FRI 8 MAR
THE DODGE BROTHERS
BILLY LUNN

SAT 16 MAR
CLAUDIA BRUCKEN
MON 18 MAR
ALEX GOOT

SAT 23 MAR
FRONTIER RUCKAS

WED 27 MAR
LISBEE STANTON
THU 28 MAR
ULRICH SCHNAUSS
MARCONI UNION

FRI 29 MAR
THE CRAZY WORLD OF
ARTHUR BROWN
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WED 17 APR
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TUES MAR 5 TH	ANML, BASINGSTOKE	anmlarts.org.uk	01256844244
WED MAR 6 TH	SUB89, READING	sub89.com	
THUR MAR 7 TH	CHEESE & GRAIN, FROME	cheeseandgrain.co.uk	01373 465420
FRI MAR 8 TH	ASSEMBLY, LEAMINGTON	leamingtonassembly.com	01926 311311
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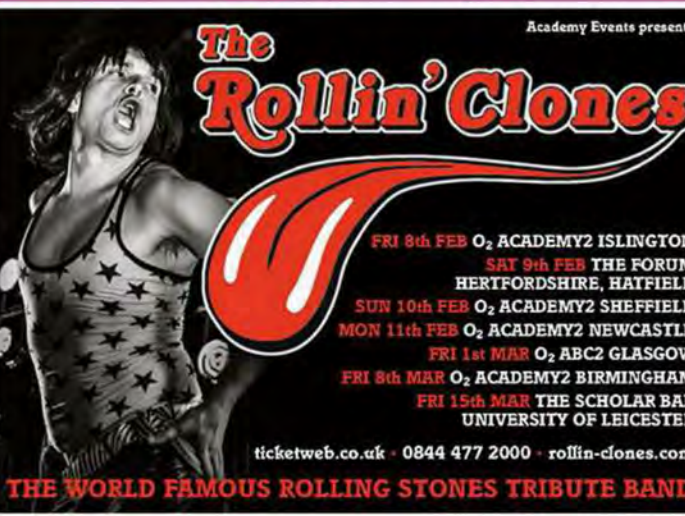


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17 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY2	0844 477 2000
18 LEEDS COCKPIT	0113 244 4600
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- 20 The Cellar Southampton 0238 071 0648
- 21 The Tunnels Bristol 0845 605 0255
- 22 O, Academy Oxford 0844 477 2000
- 23 The Picturedrome Holmfirth 0844 478 0898
- 24 The Deaf Institute Manchester 0161 832 1111
- 27 The Electric Circus Edinburgh 0844 478 0898
- 28 The Cluny Newcastle 0844 478 0898
- 29 Fibbers York 0844 478 0898
- 30 Arts Centre Norwich 0160 366 0352
- 31 Portland Arms Cambridge 0844 478 0898

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Sun 17 March
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Tues 19 March
SALE WATERSIDE ARTS CENTRE

Weds 20 March
SHEFFIELD MEMORIAL HALL

Tues 26 MARCH
STOCKTON ARC

Weds 27 March
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27 Apr Holmfirth Picturedrome

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Thurs 18 April - Manchester RNCM
Fri 19 April - Lincoln Drill Hall
Sat 20 April - Bromsgrove Artrix
Sun 21 April - Exeter Corn Exchange
Weds 24 April - Shrewsbury Theatre Severn
Thurs 25 April - Runcorn Brindley Theatre
Fri 26 April - Stamford Corn Exchange

Sat 27 April - Colne Muni
Sun 28 April - Gateshead Sage
Tues 30 April - Leeds City Varieties
Weds 1 May - London Union Chapel



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Sat 2 March
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MARCH 2013		16 WOLVERHAMPTON The Robin 2 02020 860 221
01 BRISTOL The Fleece 0117 303 3004		17 CARDIFF The Globe 0871 226 8288
02 EXETER Phoenix 01392 657 900		21 NORWICH The Waterfront 02020 505 050
03 LIVERPOOL O2 Academy 2 0844 477 2000		22 WHISTABLE East Quay 07924 335 784
07 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy 2 0844 477 2000		23 LONDON Islington Assembly Hall 0811 220 8288
08 GLASGOW Oran Mór 0844 477 2000		24 BRIGHTON Concorde 2 01273 912 311
09 EDINBURGH Liquid Rooms 0131 220 3234		25 COLCHESTER Arts Centre 02386 904 900
10 SHEFFIELD O2 Academy 2 0844 477 2000		29 LEEDS Brudenell Social Club 0871 220 8288
14 PORTSMOUTH Wedgewood Rooms 023 9386 3911		30 NOTTINGHAM Rock City 0871 220 8288
		31 COVENTRY Auditorium@Ricoh Arena 024 220 8288

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14 LONDON 100 CLUB 0844 671 8519	23 NEWCASTLE THE THINK TANK 0871 220 0260
15 WIMBORNE TIVOLI 01202 585 566	24 MANCHESTER RUBY LOUNGE 0844 671 8519
16 STURMINSTER THE EXCHANGE 01258 475 137	26 NORWICH WATERFRONT STUDIO 01603 506 050
17 OXFORD THE JERICO 0845 413 4444	27 WOLVERHAMPTON ROBIN 2 01902 401 211
19 CAMBRIDGE THE JUNCTION 01223 511 511	28 BRISTOL FLEECE 0117 929 9008
20 NOTTINGHAM BODEGA 0845 413 4444	29 PENZANCE ACORN 01726 679 500
21 LEEDS BRUDENELL 0844 671 8519	30 EXETER PHOENIX 01392 657 050
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THU 28 GLASGOW 02 ACADEMY 2

MAR
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SAT 2 YORK FIBBERS
SUN 3 MANCHESTER THE FACTORY

THU 7 SHEFFIELD 02 ACADEMY 2
FRI 8 NORWICH EPIC STUDIOS
SAT 9 LEICESTER SOUNDHOUSE
SUN 10 BIRMINGHAM 02 ACADEMY 2

THU 14 GLASTONBURY THE KING ARTHUR
FRI 15 EXETER THE PHOENIX
SAT 16 BRISTOL THE FLEECE

THU 21 OXFORD 02 ACADEMY 2
FRI 22 SWANSEA SIN CITY
SAT 23 NARBERTH QUEENS HALL

WED 27 LONDON JAZZ CAFÉ
FRI 29 HERTFORD THE FORUM
SAT 30 GUILDFORD THE BOILERROOM

APR
FRI 19 BRIGHTON THE HAUNT
SAT 20 CROYDON FAIRFIELD HALLS

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15 SALE The Waterside	0161 912 5616	01 BRIGHTON Concorde 2	01273 673 311	
16 LIVERPOOL O2 Academy 2	0844 477 2000	04 COLCHESTER Arts Centre	01206 500 900	
17 LEEDS City Varieties	0113 243 0808	05 NOTTINGHAM Rescue Rooms	0845 413 4444	
20 BATH Komedia	0845 293 8480	06 PICTUREDOME Holmfirth	0114 256 55 67	
21 BIRMINGHAM Town Hall	0121 345 0603	07 CLITHEROE The Grand	0871 220 0260	
22 EXETER Phoenix	01392 657 080	08 POCKLINGTON Arts Centre	01793 301 547	
23 FALMOUTH Pavilions	0871 220 0260	11 FOLKESTONE Quarterhouse	01303 858 500	
24 SOUTHAMPTON Brook	023 8055 5366	12 OXFORD O2 Academy 2	0844 477 2000	
27 CARDIFF The Globe	0871 220 0260	13 CAMBRIDGE The Junction	01223 511 511	
28 GLOUCESTER Guildhall	01452 503 050	14 LONDON		
		O2 Shepherds Bush Empire	0844 477 2000	

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- 6 March - Exeter
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- 7 March - Nottingham
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Books

BY ALLAN JONES

LIKE SO MANY of his great songs, Woody Guthrie's *House Of Earth* was inspired by the desperate plight of America's poor, especially the dirt farmers of the Great Plains and the Texas Panhandle, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. During that terrible time of devastating drought and displacement, known as the Dust Bowl, immense dust storms ravaged millions of acres of farmlands. Hundreds of thousands of people were made homeless, many of them migrating from the ruined state of Oklahoma – the 'Okies' of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes Of Wrath* – to California, where more often than not they ended up destitute, starving and defeated in sprawling shanty towns and refugee camps.

Some stayed put, stubborn Texans mostly, who refused to abandon the land they still called home, as desecrated as the Panhandle had become, due not only to the calamitous weather but also the agricultural conglomerates whose impact on the territory was as destructive as any cyclone, blizzard or crippling storm. These are the people whose hardy intransigence *House Of Earth* celebrates. Guthrie had shared their suffering, witnessed at first-hand what they had to endure to survive. In April 1935, he was living in the Texas town of Pampas when it was hit by a terrifying dust storm that left havoc and death in its wake. Two years later, the Panhandle was beset by an even more ferocious blizzard, in which dust and snow were mixed, that Guthrie and his family, freezing in a 25-dollar-a-month shack, were lucky to live through.

The latter event provoked Guthrie to write *House Of Earth*, which he finished in 1947, just as his health began to fail as the Huntington's disease that would finally kill him took grim hold. He mailed the finished manuscript to the filmmaker Irving Lerner, in whose archive it languished unpublished until its discovery last year in the Woody Guthrie collection at the University Of Tulsa, to which it had been donated by the Lerner estate, by author Douglas Brinkley and Johnny Depp, whose new imprint, Infinitum Nihil, now makes it available for the first time.

The book's belated publication is clearly a significant addition to the vast repertoire of songs, letters, journals, diaries and memoirs produced by the prolific Guthrie before illness overtook him, and while there is much to admire here, it has to be said that in many respects *House Of Earth* is a tough read. It's set in the "hard luck country" of the Texas Panhandle that Guthrie knew so well and is vividly evocative of that blasted terrain, where the book's two principal characters, tenant farmer Tike Hamlin and his pregnant wife Ella May, eke out a precarious existence. They dream of one day owning their own patch of land on which Tike will build his 'house of earth' – an adobe home, made of mud bricks baked in the sun – that will protect them from the hostile elements to which they are painfully vulnerable in the rickety old shack



Dust Bowl survivor: Woody Guthrie's book is finally published 65 years after completion

they currently rent, the wind searing through its rotting timbers.

The book has no more plot than this, which might frustrate anyone looking for a bit more of a conventional yarn. The narrative is confined to four long chapters, three of them set in the single room of Tike and Ella May's cabin, which they come to share with the book's only other character, a young midwife named Blanche. There's screeds of dialogue, rendered in a vernacular familiar from Guthrie's songs, a lot of it a rhetorical vehicle for the author's own views. For the socialist Guthrie, capitalism as much as calamitous weather was responsible for the ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl era. The gab is relentless and you sometimes wish Tike would simply put a sock in it and Guthrie had also played down somewhat Ella May's more simpering mutterings.

But what power the book has in its angry radicalism, the furious voice it raises on behalf of the impoverished, demeaned and woefully oppressed. At its best, *House Of Earth* is a rhapsodic hymn to the unyielding human spirit, which will not timidly accept defeat as a consequence of terrible circumstance. This for Guthrie is evidence of an uncomplicated noble heroism, the simple act of survival a triumph in itself over the forces massed against Tike and Ella May and the multitudes like them, from exploitative

landowners, the rapacious agricultural industry and venal bankers to the relentless howling wind.

➤ Sax player Bobby Keys has a lot of good stories to tell in *Every Night's A Saturday Night*, a rollicking autobiography that takes him from Lubbock, Texas, where in his local neighbourhood at the age of 12 he saw Buddy Holly playing at the opening of a gas station, an occasion that basically sealed his fate. After that, his life would be consumed by rock'n'roll. His CV is pretty mind-blowing – at 19 he played on Elvis Presley's "Return To Sender" and went on to play with Delaney & Bonnie, John Lennon, George Harrison, Ringo, Joe Cocker, Eric Clapton, Harry Nilsson and, of course, The Rolling Stones, about whom he is both circumspect and illuminating. Like a lot of people who found themselves in the Stones' orbit, the experience nearly did for him and, with a heroin habit that was slowly killing him, he walked out on their 1973 tour. He was shunned by the band for nearly 20 years. Keith Richards finally negotiated his full-time reinstatement as part of a larger power play with Mick Jagger. Keys' original party pal in the band before he fell in with Keith. To this day, however, Jagger, who has never truly forgiven him for his earlier desertion, barely speaks to him.

Best story? The one about Keith, Keith's breakfast, a golf ball and a gun.

Reviewed this month...



House Of Earth
Woody Guthrie
[Edited And Introduced By Douglas Brinkley And Johnny Depp]
FOURTH ESTATE
8/10



Every Night's A Saturday Night
Bobby Keys With Bill Ditehafer
OMNIBUS
7/10

OBITUARIES

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

Fontella Bass

Soul, jazz and gospel singer

1940-2012

THE SAGA OF Fontella Bass can be taken as a cautionary tale in the murky realm of the music business.

Strident soul classic "Rescue Me", co-written with Carl Smith and Raynard Miner, made No 4 in the US charts in late 1965 and just stalled outside the UK Top 10 as its international success spread. Yet within two years Bass had quit the Chess label, aggrieved at her omission from the song's credits, despite reassurances from manager Billy Davis that it would be rectified. "I had the first million-seller for Chess since Chuck Berry about 10 years before," she once complained. "Things were riding high for them, but when it came time to collect my first royalty cheque, I saw how little it was, tore it up and threw it back across the desk." Eventually, disillusioned

with it all, she moved to Paris with her husband, jazz legend Lester Bowie, in 1969.

Bass was destined to be a musician. The daughter of Clara Ward Singers regular Martha Bass, she began playing piano and singing gospel as a child in church in St Louis. By 21 she was hired by bandleader Oliver Sain as backing pianist for Little Milton, before bagging her own vocal spot in the show. Her earliest recordings were produced by Ike Turner and issued on Bobbin Records, after which she headed north to Chicago and signed to Chess.

She scored R'n'B hits with Bobby McClure on "You'll Miss Me (When I'm Gone)" and "Don't Mess Up A Good Thing" (later covered by Ry Cooder), before "Rescue Me", recorded in just three takes and with Minnie Riperton on backing vocals, brought her to worldwide attention. There followed another minor success in 1966 with "Recovery". In Paris, Bass cut two albums with the Art Ensemble Of Chicago and sometimes appeared on her husband's records.



Fontella Bass performing on *Ready Steady Go!*, 1966

Ray Collins

Mothers Of Invention vocalist

1936-2012

THE EXACT DETAILS of how Frank Zappa joined singer Ray Collins' R'n'B covers group The Soul Giants was a matter of debate. Collins claimed he enlisted him in 1964 after dismissing Ray Hunt, his guitar player. Zappa, meanwhile, claimed that Collins "punched [Hunt's] lights out". Whatever the truth, Zappa's enrolment had a seismic effect. By 1966 The Soul Giants had become The Mothers Of Invention, captained by Zappa and with Collins as lead vocalist on that year's satirical avant-rock debut, *Freak Out!*. He went on to feature on three more Mothers albums, finally quitting in 1968, by which time he was thoroughly disillusioned with their anarcho-comedic style. "I wanted to make beautiful music," he explained, somewhat exasperated, years later.



Ray Collins, late 1960s

"I was raised on Johnny Mathis and Nat King Cole."

John Wilkinson

Elvis Presley's rhythm guitarist

1945-2013

JOHN WILKINSON'S FIRST encounter with Elvis Presley was backstage at Springfield's Shrine Mosque in 1956, when the 10-year-old bluntly informed the King: "You can't play guitar worth a damn." Presley promptly passed him a six-string, upon which Wilkinson

peeled off a few tunes. "He said, 'You're pretty good,'" Wilkinson related years later. "And I said, 'I know.'" The experience stuck with Presley, who invited the guitarist to join his Taking Care Of Business Band after seeing him perform on TV in 1968. Wilkinson, already a veteran of The Kingston Trio and The New Christy Minstrels, played rhythm for Presley in over 1,200 shows and was a mainstay of the TCB band right up until Elvis' final gig in Indianapolis in June 1977. His many credits include 1973 TV spectacular *Aloha From Hawaii*.

Marva Whitney

Singer, James Brown's 'soul sister'

1944-2012

THE CAREER OF Marva Whitney was inescapably linked to that of mentor and sometime boss James Brown, who dubbed her "Soul Sister Number One". Under his stewardship, Whitney rose from vocalist in the James Brown Revue

to solo artist in her own right, albeit steered by Brown's forceful production methods. Clamorous 1968 single "Unwind Yourself" became her most well-known tune after being sampled by hip-hop guru DJ Mark The 45 King on 1987's "The 900 Number". Whitney began as singer with Kansas City R'n'B group Tommy & The Derbys, before turning down a tour with Bobby Bland to audition for Brown in 1967. She later described the recording of 1969 LP *It's My Thing*, led by the demanding Brown, as "hell".

Claude Nobs

Rock and jazz promoter

1936-2013

MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL founder Claude Nobs was the man immortalised in Deep Purple's "Smoke On The Water", which detailed the occasion in 1971 when the Montreux Casino burned down during a Frank Zappa gig. The lyric "Funky Claude was running in and

PATTI PAGE

Multi-million-selling US pop singer

1927-2013

FEW ARTISTS COMMANDED the pre-Elvis era with the authority of Patti Page. Mega-selling hits like "Tennessee Waltz", "With My Eyes Wide Open, I'm Dreaming" and "(How Much Is) That Doggie In The Window?" made her the most bankable female singer of the 1950s, at a time when popular song still happily revelled in its own innocence.

Her career was studded with landmarks. "Tennessee Waltz" was simultaneously top of the pop, country and R'n'B listings in 1950 and became an official state song of Tennessee. The tune, which hung around the charts for 30 weeks, went on to sell over 10 million copies, second only to Bing Crosby's "White Christmas". Two of her other three No 1 successes up to 1953, "I Went To Your Wedding" and "...Doggie In The Window?", stayed there for over eight weeks apiece. Page also became the

first singer to have TV shows on all three major US networks, the most celebrated being ABC's *The Patti Page Show*.

She began singing on local radio in Tulsa, Oklahoma, after finishing high school in 1945. Bandleader Jack Rael heard her voice on the airwaves and, immediately recognising her potential, became her manager. A tour with the Jimmy Joy Band wound up in Chicago, whereupon an introduction to Benny Goodman helped land Page a contract with Mercury Records.

The hits were still arriving even after The Beatles had swept in across the Atlantic. Between 1950 and '65, she had amassed no fewer than 15 million-selling singles. Page continued to record into her 60s, finally winning her first Grammy in 1999 for *Live At Carnegie Hall: The 50th Anniversary Concert*. In recent years she hosted a regular radio show on the Music Of Your Life network, where one of her guests was Jack White, who had covered Page's old hit "Conquest", a favourite of his, on the final White Stripes album, 2007's *Icky Thump*.



Patti Page in the late 40s

out/Pulling kids out the ground" was a reference to Nobs' heroics in rescuing several people cowering for cover. He first launched the festival in 1967 while working at the resort's tourism office, where he organised charity concerts. The annual event soon began attracting big names in the jazz field, later expanding to accommodate acts from the wider world of rock, pop and soul and pulling in crowds of over 200,000. In the '70s he was also employed at the Swiss HQ of Warner, Elektra and Atlantic Records.

STEVE PAUL

Rock manager, club owner

1941-2012

"I KNOW I could become President of the United States," Steve Paul once declared, "but I really don't need it." Such outward bravado, allied to bags of ambition and a keen sense of opportunism, served Paul well when he opened hip New York club, The Scene, in 1964. Initially an after-hours hangout for the likes of Sammy Davis Jr., Tennessee Williams and Andy Warhol, the venue truly took off when Paul relocated to Greenwich Village. There it hosted regular shows by The Doors, the Velvet and The Jimi Hendrix Experience, the latter making their US debut in June 1967. Paul branched into management a year later, negotiating a lucrative deal at CBS for Johnny Winter, who he oversaw until 1983, and releasing albums by Rick Derringer and David Johansen as head of Columbia's offshoot label, Blue Sky.



Lee Dorman, 1969

LEE DORMAN

Iron Butterfly bassist

1942-2012

THE BOOMING BASS riff of Iron Butterfly landmark "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida", a 17-minute proto-metal epic that dominated their 1968 album of the same name, was the work of Lee Dorman, who'd joined the San Diego rockers the previous year. The album went on to sell some 30 million copies, while the title song has since become a staple of classic rock radio. When the band split in 1971, Dorman cut three albums with prog-rock fusionists Captain Beyond.

LLOYD CHARMERS

Reggae and ska singer, producer

1938-2012

LLOYD 'CHARMERS' TYRELL was one of the more versatile figures in the Jamaican music scene. He began his singing career as a teenager in Kingston, cutting 45s for producers Duke Reid and Prince Buster, before co-founding vocal

trio The Uniques in 1967. Two years later he quit for a solo career and also formed his own Splash label, which enjoyed its biggest success when Charmers produced Ken Boothe's version of Bread's "Everything I Own" in 1974.

MIKE SCACCIA

Ministry guitarist

1965-2012

GUITARIST MIKE SCACCIA, who has died from a heart attack while performing onstage in Fort Worth, Texas, was a key component of both US thrash-metal outfit Rigor Mortis and industrial-rockers Ministry. He co-founded the former in 1983 and played on their eponymous 1988 debut for Capitol before joining Ministry on tour the following year. His mighty riffs were all over Ministry's 1992 album *Psalm 69*.... Scaccia reformed Rigor Mortis in 2005.

JIMMY McCRACKLIN

R'n'B singer, pianist and songwriter

1921-2012

JUMP-BLUES PURVEYOR Jimmy McCracklin notched up his breakthrough hit in 1957 with "The Walk", a buoyant slice of R'n'B that cracked the Billboard Top 10 and earned him a popular spot on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. Counting Bob Dylan among his fans, he had minor '60s successes with "Just Got To Know" and "Think", while the self-penned "Tramp" was covered by Otis

Redding, Carla Thomas and Lowell Fulson. He continued to perform and record well into his eighties.

TANDYN ALMER

Songwriter, West Coast scenester

1942-2013

INVENTOR OF A waterpipe bong called the Tandy Slave-Master and sometime author of 'fake' songbooks, Tandy Almer was one of the more eccentric figures on the West Coast scene. His biggest moment came in 1966, when harmony-pop combo The Association took his song "Along Comes Mary" into the US Top 10. He also wrote for Paper Fortress, The Garden Club and Sagittarius, while a friendship with Brian Wilson resulted in Beach Boys co-writes "Sail On, Sailor" and "Marcella".

FRANK BARSALONA

Rock touring agent

1938-2012

THE INCEPTION OF the modern touring model was largely down to New Yorker Frank Barsalona, whose Premier Talent agency, founded in 1964, encouraged acts to break away from outmoded package tours. He went on to represent Led Zeppelin, The Who, Springsteen and U2. "It was his unique vision that rock'n'roll was here to stay," said Springsteen guitarist Steve Van Zandt. "It wasn't just going to be about records, but about how good a band plays live."

ROB HUGHES

GETTY IMAGES

Feedback...

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FAMILY VALUED

Sometimes, a copy of *Uncut* comes through the letterbox containing interesting articles from cover to cover. The February 2013 magazine was one such, articles on Gram Parsons, Mick Ronson, a cracking cover CD and a reminder of the greatness of Family.

I was reminded of an advert in *Melody Maker*, in 1971 (after the departure of John Weider) announcing that a Name Band needed a bass player. My best friend Richard Wiseman (whatever happened to him?) and I popped along to a pub in Upper Street, Islington, where we discovered it was Family. Rick plugged his bass into an amp, Roger Chapman said, "Let's play a simple blues." Rick played a few bass notes, then, as the band joined him, decided that he would sing lead, too. Since I was facing the band, I could see how amused Roger was by this. They played a couple of songs, then we were thanked and left the pub. They chose John Wetton instead.

Have we ever had a piece about Fanny, possibly the first all-girl rock band? Or at least the first girl band I recall following around the UK!

David Miller, via email

...As I was making my cup of coffee this morning, for some reason, I thought of *Uncut*, and how Family have been given such little coverage since I took out my subscription some 10 years ago. Five minutes later, your magazine emerged through my door, complete with an excellent article on the band. The power of thought obviously works!!

Family always were, in my view, the most innovative band of their time, and indeed, albums such as *Bandstand*, *Fearless* and *Anyway*, even now stand up well against anything currently being released.

I must, though, take issue with your ratings. You award *Music In A Doll's House* a very high nine – while an extremely original album at the time of its release, sadly, ...*Doll's House* has not aged well, unlike *A Song For Me*, and the three aforementioned albums, which don't, in your article, rate so well.

Family were also a great live band. It is sad Charlie [Whitney] isn't involved in the reunion. Nevertheless, I would give my



The fearless Family: Roger Chapman (front row, centre) & co still stand up well

right hand for a ticket to any reunion gig!

Julian R Rowe, via email

GRAM FAN

I've just finished reading your Gram Parsons cover story in *Uncut* 189 [February 2013]. I can vividly remember the moment I learned of his death on September 19, 1973! Thanks for a great tribute to the man and his music. I've noted a minor error on page 48: "Sleepless Nights" was not recorded by the Flying Burrito Bros (even if it gave its title to a Burrito compilation album on A&M Records), but by Gram & Emmylou Harris during the sessions for *Grievous Angel*. Any Cosmic American Music fan who'd like to dip further into the GP legacy should invest in *The Complete Reprise Sessions*, a 3CD set with lots of rarities and alternate takes.

Jean-Pierre Morisset, Blois, France

THE MIGHTY 'WIND

Your review of Hawkwind's *Space Ritual* in Take 189 reminded me of the following. Southend Kursaal Ballroom, 1972: me and my mates, buoyed up on Mateus rosé and Whisky Mac walked into a fog of dope fumes and joss sticks. All over the ballroom groups of hairies

sat crossed-legged drinking and smoking weed. In the distance, the biggest PA ever was being given the once over by the roadies. We decided to get as close to the front as possible (mainly to get a good look at Stacia). None of us knew what to expect as the only other big gig we had been to was a school trip to see Genesis. With that one, brilliant as it was, I remember sitting cross-legged throughout. This was very, very different! Within seconds of the MC announcing the band, a repetitive rhythm started which never stopped for the whole night. Everyone got on their feet and one huge party began. Because the Kursaal had been a ballroom, the sprung floor started to act like a trampoline. At one point I am convinced 2,000 people were simultaneously airborne! The PA began to sway and the roadies spent the night preventing disaster.

For me, two things spoilt the night: Stacia didn't take her top off and I began to feel really sick during "Sonic Attack"! I ran for the loo, and missed a song or two. At the time I put it down to the dope fumes and heat (and maybe too much wine).

About three years ago, I watched a Hawkwind documentary in which Dik Mik explained how he and Del [Detmar] had found a frequency which made some people

in their audiences sick. If I could have punched him then, I would have! Back in '72, my credibility as someone who could hold their drink disappeared and I was ridiculed for weeks. That night still stands out as the best gig ever – relentless energy, loud and great fun.

K Fusher, via email

IT'S ONLY MUSIC HALL (BUT MICK LIKES IT)

I feel bound to take exception with Allan Jones' cheeky assertion that the checked trilby and matching bum-freezer jacket worn by Mick Jagger at the first O2 show were evocative of "a comic turn from the undercard of a music hall bill". How dare you, sir?!? "Undercard"? Surely not. If you ask me, Sir Mick's choice of attire and arse-wiggling stage antics suggest that he copied much of his shtick from the hugely popular likes of Arthur Askey and Max Wall – certified headliners both!

Clifford Brimley, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire

DJANGO UNPRAISED

Congratulations to Michael Bonner for his review of the latest Tarantino film. My favourite Tarantino film is *Jackie Brown* and I have always been amazed at the apparent universal acclaim that has greeted subsequent

Tarantino films, as though they were works of art, rather than the adolescent B-movies they actually are. So thanks for a much-needed injection of sanity into the subject.
Guy Cooper, via email

WISH FULFILLMENT

Great features last month on Yo La Tengo and Family, two of the most underrated and consistent bands in my 40 years of listening to contemporary music. I am looking forward to seeing both of them live in the next two months, too! If you can manage an article on Robyn Hitchcock or Nina Nastasia soon it will really be my year. By the way, although I haven't seen it reviewed, the new Pinback album is an early contender for recognition in your end of year review.

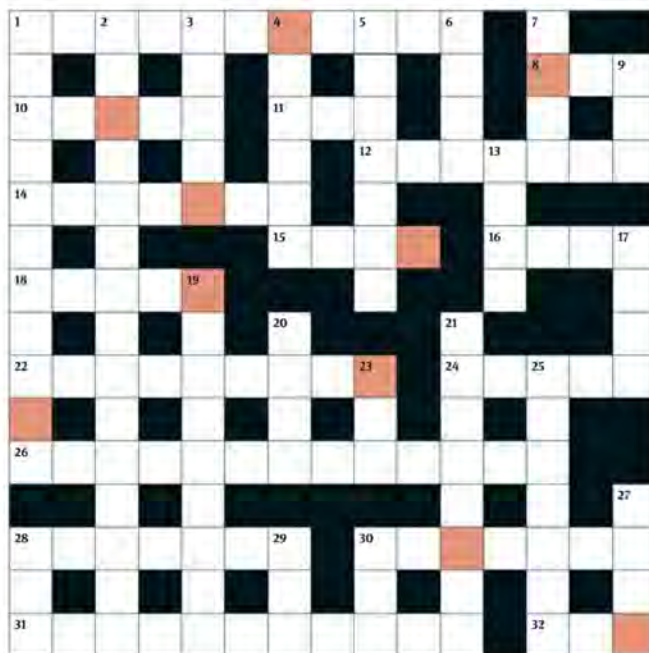
Gary Howchen, via email

GALLIC GENTIUS

I read a newspaper article a couple of months back about a sprightly Scottish novelist who had decamped to the Bourgogne and was bemoaning the fact her sprogs would have to grow up listening to “all this crap French music” and obviously expecting us all to cluck sympathetically and murmur, oooh yes, French music, awful that is... well, my album of last year is *Vers Les Lueurs* by Dominique A, and, of course, it’s French... I started listening to French music again two years or so ago when a message board acquaintance turned me on to Alain Bashung, who I’d never heard of: I defy anyone to listen to “La Nuit Je Mens” and not be blown off their feet by the voice, the tune, the stunning strings; while “Sur Un Trapèze” brought to mind Johnny Cash fronting The Cure. Anyway, that springboarded me into an obsession with this fascinating figure, though it was a bit on the late side, since he died at the age of only 61 in 2009 (I did show up, however, to pay my respects at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where the gate attendant was mildly stunned by my question for directions). From Bashung I explored the French scene further and found a lot of good stuff (Mickey 3D, Mademoiselle K, Miossec, Soan, Christophe, Gérard Manset, just to name a few).

Brightest of the lot, however, seems to me to be Dominique A, a sort of French Morrissey with his own Johnny Marr incorporated and a touch for melody and imagination that many artists would give their right hand for. And his last album, *Vers Les Lueurs*, is one of the best, I reckon. Check out the video of "Rendez-Nous La Lumière" on YouTube and see what you think!

Stuart Wilson. via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Tom Waits. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut March 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: February 27, 2013. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

19 **9D** Mars the performance of Led Zeppelin at a time when the O2 was choc-full (11-3)
8+18A Bill Nelson's old band look embarrassed about their sound (3-5)
10+11A Between both banks, he'd had a current account with Nick Drake (5-3)
12 Somehow make me loyal to an Arctic Monkey (7)
14 Pop group that 26 across failed an audition for (7)
15 Ex-Van der Graaf Generator man Peter Hammill has an album of re-written hits (4)
16+3D UK-born Lee turns up as Echo And The Bunnymen's replacement lead singer in late '80s (4-5)
18 (See 8 across)
22 Rolling Stones album that was their first to feature solely Jagger/Richard compositions (9)
24 (See 29 down)
26 Singer-songwriter with Buffalo Springfield and Manassas (7-6)
28+30A Could perhaps be old man lazing around with folk rock band formed in late '60s (7-7)
31A A worn record of ours by Marvin Gaye (4-3-2-2)
32 Use wrong record label for soul in US in early '60s (3)

CLUESDOWN

1 Cinema roles arranged for Florence And The Machine (11)

2 "Outside their lives go on much faster/Oh, we won't give in, we'll keep _____", Jethro Tull (6-2-3-4)
3 (See 16 across)
4 +27D Strange smell about this Elvis Costello recording (6-4)
5 +17D "I keep your picture upon the wall/It hides a nasty stain that's lying there", 1975 (2-3-2-4)
6 She had '80s hit with "99 Red Balloons" (4)
7 Jacques _____, Belgian singer-songwriter whose work inspired Scott Walker and David Bowie, among others (4)
9 (See 1 across)
13 Jefferson Airplane finish with a Faces man (4)
17 (See 5 down)
19 Real Thing remix of David Bowie album (9)
20 "If the _____ comes, they run and hide their heads/They might as well be dead", The Beatles (4)
21 (See 28 down)
23 A single from Björk's old group The Sugarcubes that was just bound to chart (3)
25 Orbital were not out of the teams making this album (2-5)
27 (See 4 down)
28 +21D Everyone collapsed when The Sound released this album in 1982 (3-4-4)
29 +24A Find some kind of existence with either a Stiff Little Fingers album or a Soul II Soul single (3-1-4)
30 Mercury Prize-nominated Natasha Khan, better known by stage name of _____ For Lashes (3)

ANSWERS: TAKE188

ACROSS
1 Psychedelic Pill, 9
Roulettes, 10 Miaow, 11+16D
MeatAnd Bone, 12 Beggin',
14+31D Grey Day, 15
Desperado, 17+35A Puff

Daddy, 19 Anna, 20+22 A Dub
War, 21 OMD, 25 UFO, 26 Eve,
27 Man, 30+31 A Iris Dement,
34 Log, 37 Set.

DOWN

1 Pyramids, 2 Your Arsenal,
3+8 DHuey Lewis, 4+36 A Do
The Clam, 5 Last Goodbye,

6Coming Up, 7ICan See For
Miles, 13Deja Vu, 18FM, 22
West, 24 Wired, 28+23A Night
Owl, 29Used, 32MrC, 33NWA

HIDDEN ANSWER

Compiled: Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

TAKE 190 | MARCH 2013

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COVER PHOTO: Kate Simon

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Ron Sexsmith

Buddy Holly was his “surrogate dad”. We guided him to Judee Sill. But who does the “white guy from Canada” really want to sound like?



The Dylan album that tends to get overlooked

New Morning

Bob Dylan 1970

This never seems to get as much attention as his other records, but it's always been my favourite, maybe because it was the first of his I bought. There are some lovely vignettes,

great story songs. I love the kind of scat singing he does on “If Dogs Run Free”, and “Sign On The Window” is one of his most beautiful pieces. There's a real looseness to the playing, as if the whole thing was made up on the spot.



The band that inspired me to write songs

Golden Hour Of The Kinks

The Kinks 1971

I first heard “All Day And All Of The Night” when I was 15 and it knocked my socks off, so I went to the store next day and found this. There was a whole series of *Golden Hour*...

albums which all had 20 tracks, more than the usual 12-track greatest hits of the time. I always wanted to be a singer, but after I heard things like “Autumn Almanac”, the way Ray Davies told stories, it ignited the songwriter in me.



The song that makes me want to time travel

It Doesn't Matter Anymore

Buddy Holly 1959

My dad moved out when I was two, but he left a box of 45s behind which me and my brothers used to fight over – I guess Buddy became my surrogate dad! I drove everyone

up the wall playing this one. I love the way his voice is high and sweet on the verses then deep and menacing on the bridge. If I could go back in time I'd love to be in the studio the night he cut this and about four others in one session.



The album that made me get a job

Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy

Elton John 1975

The first album I bought with my own money! My mom got me Elton's greatest hits and the sleeve listed where all the songs came from,

so it was a lot of records to investigate. I started mowing lawns to afford them. I'm not sure Elton gets the credit he deserves: the showman side has a habit of overshadowing what a great writer he is. It hurt him in a way it didn't hurt Bowie.



The singer who always makes me smile

Knillsson

Harry Nilsson 1977

Nilsson leads on from Elton for me, I gravitate towards those guys who were good with melodies. Even when Harry was writing sad songs, there was a sweetness

to them... they make you think life isn't so bad after all. He sounds like he's your friend. There's a charm to everything he did, but I especially love the strings on this and how his voice got deeper with age.



The song that reminds me of childhood friends

Lean On Me

Bill Withers 1972

When I was a kid, my best friend Terry lived across the street and we would spend a lot of time together playing records, and this song summed up the bond we had. It's really

simple, but I think it's one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever made, it sounds like it's being sung by a god. Bill Withers is probably the artist I wish I could sing like the most, but I'm stuck with being a white guy from Canada.



My most recent musical discovery

Think Well Of Me

Jack Teagarden 1962

I only heard about this guy a few years ago, on a documentary about songwriter Johnny Mercer. They called him the father of jazz

trombone, but he had a great voice, too. I think his skill on his instrument helped develop the laidback phrasing of his vocals, in a way similar to Chet Baker. Jack played with Louis Armstrong for years, but this is the last album he made before he died. It's astonishing.



The singer I got into through Uncut

Judee Sill

Judee Sill 1971

I have to thank your magazine for this one... it's where I first read about Judee Sill, and it was a real “where have you been all my life?” moment. Not only did she write the

songs but she arranged the strings, the whole thing was her vision. I think of her music as Brian Wilson melodies with William Blake lyrics. She was a very spiritual, poetic artist – it's such a shame she only made two albums.

Ron Sexsmith's new album, *Forever Endeavour*, is out on Feb 13 on Cooking Vinyl. He plays Belfast Limelight (February 20) and London Royal Albert Hall (March 7).

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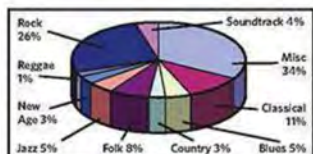
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The face behind the Brennan JB7

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