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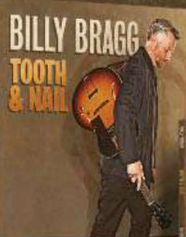
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Top Trogg: Reg Presley RIP

WHEN TOWARDS THE end of 1974, The Troggs announce their latest comeback single will be a cover of The Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations", it's an occasion for much mocking laughter in the offices of what used to be *Melody Maker*. Dapper assistant editor Michael Watts, who fancies himself as a bit of a wag, wonders to no-one's great amusement if they should have renamed it "Good Vibrators", such is the band's reputation for a certain sauciness. I'm reminded of this because of the sad recent news of the death of their lead singer, Reg Presley.

The Troggs then as now are most famous, of course, for their almost cartoonishly lubricious 1966 version of "Wild Thing", which if nothing else certainly put the ocarina on the musical map. When Hendrix subsequently revisits the song, he turns it into something orgiastic. By contrast, The Troggs' take on it was somehow sniggering, a quick cloakroom wank rather than the ecstatic fuck of Jimi's iteration. They go on to have a succession of similarly suggestive hits, but are never taken especially seriously. They are often regarded in fact as a bit of a joke. This is in part explained by them coming from Andover and not making much of an attempt to disguise their broad West Country accents, which in the opinion of sophisticated toffs like the aforementioned Watts makes them sound like ill-educated yokels. I wonder, however, when I meet Reg, just as "Good Vibrations" is released, how much it perhaps suits Presley to play up to the part of the vaguely gormless bumpkin.

Whatever, he turns out to be very funny. He's come up to London it turns out on one of those new-fangled high-speed trains, an experience that's left him somewhat breathless. "My word, those things don't 'arf go fast," he says, in wonderment, as if previous journeys to the capital have been made by horse-drawn coach, highwaymen a potential menace, and stop-overs at inns along the way where Reg, like some bucolic country squire in an episode of *Poldark*, would have enjoyed a flagon or two of local mead, followed by venison pie, a brace of grouse and the amorous attentions of a bawdy serving wench. "We didn't try to immertate in any way whatso'er the original," Reg says of The Troggs' re-working of "Good Vibrations". "We wanted to make it diff'rent, loik, which were difficult with a number loik that. It's very thought out, as it were. It took three months to record, y'know." What, your version? "Oooo-er, no! Not ours! The original," Reg wheezes, like an asthmatic having a turn. "We knocked ours off after an afternoon in the pub."

The Troggs' last big hit had been "Love Is All Around" in 1967. They could badly do with another one now. "I wrote quite a few hits," Presley says. "So we've always had a bit of money coming in [his royalties will go through the roof when Wet Wet Wet's 1994 cover of "Love Is All Around" spends 15 weeks at No 1]. But the money's starting to dwindle now and I'd love to have some to invest in the stage act."

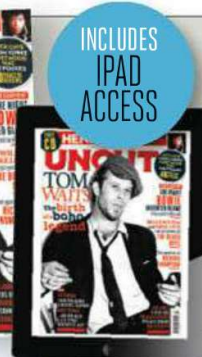
What would he spend it on? "Lights," he says, making it sound as if until now The Troggs had appeared only on stages illuminated by large candles and a couple of bicycle lamps. "I think they'd definitely be a help," he goes on, looking forward no doubt to a future in which perhaps for the first time the band will be able to see each other onstage. "People expect a bit of a show when you've had a few hits, even if they can't remember what they were until you play them and even then you can see 'arf the crowd thought some other bugger did them."

For more on Reg Presley, see pages 6-7.

Marjorie

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring BILL CALLAHAN | HÜSKER DÜ | BOBBY WHITLOCK | THE MEN



'You make everything groovy...'

REG PRESLEY

1941-2013

Hampshire brickie, UFO connoisseur, one true wild thing... A rock'n'roll legend remembered, by the man who christened him 'Presley', KEITH ALTHAM

ONE DAY IN 1965, while I was working at *NME*, I received a phone call from Larry Page, who had just fallen out with The Kinks and was looking for a new band to manage. "I've discovered another band in Andover," Page told me. "I've named the guitarist Britton, which is nice and butch. The drummer, Ronnie Bond, I've named after James, and I'm leaving the bass player with his real name of Pete Staples, as it sounds quite macho. But I have a problem with the vocalist, Reginald Maurice Ball. What do you suggest?"

"Oh, call him Presley," I suggested flippantly. And so it was that, after seeing the new lineup listed in the *NME*'s Alleycat column that week, Reg phoned Page to enquire nervously if he'd been sacked: who was this new bloke Presley?

I first saw the embryonic Troggs, at their manager's invitation, in a small hall in Kingston-upon-Thames in 1965. When my wife Maggie and I met them in Page's flat before the show, they all stood up when she entered the room. I couldn't help feeling that this slightly roly-poly and friendly figure, who sounded like Walter Gabriel, and his well-mannered group were not exactly bristling with attitude.

Later, though, I watched The Troggs perform to three girls and a dog in the club, and discovered that onstage they had a thunderous sound that propelled Presley to become one of the most loved and unlikely rock stars of the '60s. Later, they would be hailed as godfathers of garage rock and punk, be venerated by songsmiths like REM, and earn the ecstatic praise of Lester Bangs, who dubbed their music "holy"

and, no doubt chemically assisted, wrote that they were comparable to Marcel Proust (Reg thought Marcel Proust was a French mime artist). That night, they were playing an eclectic mix of "Louie Louie", Chuck Berry's "Jaguar And Thunderbird", Geno Washington's "Hi Hi Hazel" and "Ride Your Pony", some of which turned up later on their first album, *From Nowhere* – The Troggs (1966). Reg became a lifelong friend, and I wrote the effusive sleeve notes to the follow-up LP, *Trogglodynite*, although I failed to see any of Proust's deep philosophical truths behind his lyrics like, "I'll buy you an island out in the sea" (where

all the best islands are situated), or "My lady owns an oil well/Just one look and you can tell."

The band sounded good and solid onstage, but Reg still struck me as too polite to be the mean and moody rock star he was doing his best to imitate. That changed with the powerchords that announced their version of "Wild Thing". Reg summoned up a threatening vocal to do justice to Chip Taylor's song: if you didn't know him, it could be construed as dirty and dangerous.

Onstage, he'd occupy a space somewhere between Ozzy Osbourne and a Wurzel

Reg Presley, left, and The Troggs, with Sidney Brent, owner of London's Take 6 boutique, Wardour Street, May 27, 1966

➤ In May 1966, "Wild Thing" entered the *NME* charts at No 24, and Ronnie Bond cycled over to where Presley was working in Andover. "I were halfway up a ladder doing some brick work on a chimney," he remembered, "and I threw down my trowel and told the lads to share out my tools. I never went back." Soon, "Wild Thing" would climb to No 2; by July, it was No 1 in America.

My gift of Reg's surname became something of an albatross for him over the years. Paul McCartney teasingly referred to him as "Reg Trogg" whenever they met, while Mick Jagger left more than one message on the *NME* switchboard that "Reg Parsley from The Clogs" had rung for me.

Presley was responsible for plenty of comedy himself, most notoriously the "Troggs Tapes", that elevated a recording studio argument into a music business legend and, for a while, threatened to be a more potent band legacy than The Troggs' frequently visceral and brilliant music. A chance meeting with Bob Dylan in a recording studio added to the legend, as Presley sat on a stool with his bass guitar in an adjoining studio.

"How long have you been playing bass, Reg?" asked Dylan.

"All fucking afternoon," responded Presley, exasperated.

Presley's Hampshire burr could also lead to a few misunderstandings over his interest in extra-terrestrial phenomena. A few years ago, he seemed to ask me what I would think if he were to open a hole under the "sinks".

"Something blocking the sink, Reg?" I enquired politely.



"Noooo, not the sink – the bastard Sphinx," he grimaced. Presley had apparently found an archaeologist who'd tapped into the Sphinx's paw with an audio hammer in Egypt and discovered a hollowed-out chamber containing a flying saucer. Presley had concluded the expedition to locate the UFO would require funding and, as he knew I had a close working relationship with Sting (The Troggs played at his wedding to Trudie Styler), perhaps I'd like to approach him for a few quid?

Although "Wild Thing" was a hymn to rugged sexuality, and later hits like "I Can't Control Myself", "Night Of The Long Grass", "Any Way That You Want Me" and "Give It To Me" implied something similar, Presley was mostly saucy rather than predatory. He often looked more comfortable performing gentler self-penned hits like "With A Girl Like You" and "Love Is All Around" (a No 5 hit in 1967, that would make Presley a cool million 27 years later, when Wet Wet Wet's cover stayed at No 1 in the UK for 15 weeks), even though he could ham it up when it came to heavy metal like the best of them. Onstage, he could occupy a space somewhere between Ozzy Osbourne and a Wurzel. As a consequence, it was often easy to think of Presley as something of a country bumpkin – until you met him and discovered his street savvy, enthusiasm, inquisitive nature and good-humoured intent, plus the infectious laugh that ensured you wound up laughing with him and not at him. I never heard him say a bad word about anyone. He was a generous and kind-hearted soul.

Now, he has hopefully found the answers he was always searching for. The truth is out there somewhere with him and his flying saucers, corn circles and abductees, wagging his finger at us sceptics and cackling, "Oi told you so – oi told you the bastards were out here – you big prannies..."

REX FEATURES



TOP OF THE BILL

THE SMOG WHISPERER

How a tenacious new filmmaker got under the skin of BILL CALLAHAN...

OVER HIS 24-year recording career, William Rahr Callahan has gone from making dissonant lo-fi albums to become one of the most elegant, idiosyncratic voices in Americana. With 2007's *Woke On A Whaleheart*, he dropped the name Smog to work as Bill Callahan, a gesture understandably, but mistakenly, interpreted as a move toward a more autobiographical approach. If there's been one constant over the past two decades, it's that Callahan doesn't reveal too much in songs or interviews, which (speaking from experience) can be slightly harrowing. Surely you could think of easier subjects for your debut documentary; not Hanly Banks, a young Texas-born, New York-based filmmaker who has just self-released *Apocalypse: A Bill Callahan Tour Film* with the help of fan-funding solicited through the Kickstarter website. How do you get such a private person to agree to this intrusion? "I sent a 20-word email to him through [his label] Drag City," she tells *Uncut*. Simple. Callahan agreed, and Banks arrived in Phoenix, Arizona, in June 2011 to follow the tour for his last LP, *Apocalypse*, over a fortnight in two spells. Banks' approach may prove instructive.

"I'd read one feature about him, and seen him perform once," she recalls. "Other than that, I was only operating under the knowledge of the songs. Reading that one article made me kind of sick to my stomach, so I just decided to stop while I was ahead – I made a point to blindfold myself to extraneous information in a situation where it was my discovery that mattered." The film opens with Callahan reading from an article about himself: "The *New York Times* says..."

The *New York Times* says..." The wry repetition becomes funny, and could be taken as a remark on the futility of trying to impose a narrative on his work, though self-referential is hardly his style.

Nor Banks'; her role is only perceptible in the awed shots of vast, rural America through the van window, and in how her self-described "terrible" interview style elicited Callahan into making quite lovely statements on his relationship with music. "A lot of [the interviews were] just him by himself speaking into a mic with a list of my handwritten questions," admits Banks. "Working alone rings true to him."

"I think when I'm performing live it's just the realest me there is," Callahan says at one point. Fittingly, the majority of the film shows him performing, mostly songs from *Apocalypse*, though touching, personal moments abound. "Lately, my favourite part is where he adjusts his mic stand just before playing 'Say Valley Maker'," says Banks. "He's wondering aloud why it took him until the end of his set to do that. Talk about a metaphor."

Prior to that moment, Callahan's voice plays over footage of him soundchecking at a festival. "What's happening in my life, or I overhear a conversation, or something about a friend, or something I read; those things show me what I'm thinking. They tell me what I am at that moment. That's

something that I'm constantly trying to define, and that's why I make a record, because that says it." By eschewing the tide of narrative, Banks' film lets Callahan's truth bob to the surface. **LAURA SNAPES**

A DVD of *Apocalypse: A Bill Callahan Tour Film* will be released on Drag City later this year

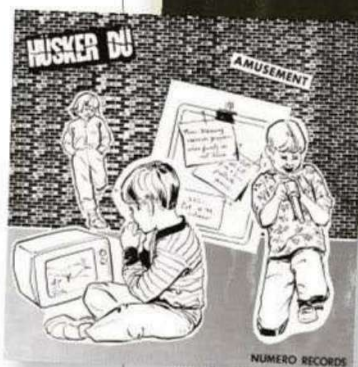


Land Speed Record Store!

Hüsker Dü's earliest manoeuvres uncovered. More to come, hopefully...

IF YOU WERE one of the few people in Minneapolis to feel the first stirrings of punk rock in the mid-1970s, you would have been going to see the Suicide Commandos and The Flamin' Oh's. And the place you would have been going to see them, the Midwest's first node on the emerging US punk rock underground network, was a repurposed former steak restaurant called The Longhorn. It was here, loading in their equipment early in 1979, that Terry Katzman first met Hüsker Dü, a new band who had impressed him on the local scene. Katzman, a Minneapolis record store guy and early punk rock evangelist, helped Grant Hart move some kit, and enthused about their band. Hart said, "Why don't you come and meet our guitar player, Bob [Mould]?" and an enduring friendship was born. In 1987, shortly before the band left for their disastrous final tour, they played Terry's wedding reception. "Luckily my wife was a fan," he says. "Though not as big a fan as me..."

Katzman became the band's soundman, later forming Reflex Records to put out the first Hüsker Dü single, 1980's "Statues"/"Amusement", a 45 which is now being reissued for Record Store Day (with previously unreleased demos "Writer's Cramp" and "Let's Go Die") by Numero Group. It's the kind of high-quality archival release that the band's early catalogue richly warrants, but which a mixture of legal complication and bitter personal disagreement has hitherto prevented. Terry has spent five years trying to put something



Hüsker Dü: (l-r) Bob Mould, Grant Hart and Greg Norton

other but I see eye to eye with all of them, which has helped with this project."

The Numero release captures a flavour of Hüsker Dü as a group moving fast both stylistically and physically. 1979 tracks like "Writer's Cramp" find the band in a mode they returned to later, vibrant guitar pop. By the time of the fractionally later "Statues", however, the band are doing what Bob Mould described to me last year as an "almost Factory Records kind of thing".

"I liked their ability to combine real pop elements with a harder-driving abrasive outlook, plus their focus on speed," says Terry. "It wasn't like it was later, but they were still a pretty quick band. It was a developmental time. Their sound hadn't crystallised yet."

As Terry remembers it, the first 18 months of

together. "I have strong relationships with them," he says. "They might not see eye to eye with each

Hüsker Dü's work were spent, developmentally speaking, "in hyperdrive", a period which culminated in their return to Minneapolis in August 1981 after a confidence-building trek around the country. The band's rapid first set on their return to town comprised their debut album, 1982's *Land Speed Record*. Among his 100 hours of live Dü tapes from 1979-1983, Terry also has the second set, and would love to help issue a definitive document of both. Another moot project would twin a CD of demos with a disc of rarities – the 25 songs the band played live but never recorded. Even the glacial speed of legal negotiations can't dampen Terry's enthusiasm for this period of Hüsker Dü's transformation: "Nobody could touch them. For a while that was their mission – to see how many songs they could play in 35 minutes." **JOHN ROBINSON**

"Amusement", "Statues", "Writer's Cramp" and "Let's Go Die" are released in a double 7" pack by Numero Group on Record Store Day, April 20

AND ON ARRANGING... **RICHARD HEWSON**

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ Most famous for his string arrangements on The Beatles' "Let It Be" and "The Long And Winding Road", Richard Hewson started out with the orchestration for Antonioni's *Blow-Up* soundtrack, then various projects for Apple: Mary Hopkin's "Those Were The Days", James Taylor's first LP, the aforementioned Beatles songs. Around the same time he also did a string arr. for Nick Drake's "Magic". Influenced by the success of Hot Butter's "Popcorn" bubblegum synth

instrumental, he wrote and – for the most part – recorded the RAH Band's 1977 hit "The Crunch" in his bedroom in Putney. He would have another hit in 1985 with the jazz-funk-tinged "Clouds Across The Moon".

KEY SESSIONS: The Beatles' "Let It Be" and "The Long And Winding Road", Mary Hopkin's "Those Were The Days", Fleetwood Mac's *Mystery To Me*, Supertramp's *Crisis? What Crisis?*, Kiki Dee's "I've Got The Music In Me", Cliff Richard's "Devil Woman". **PHIL KIRK**



From *Blow-Up* to jazz-funk... the versatile Richard Hewson

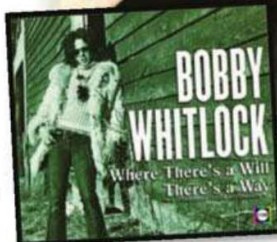
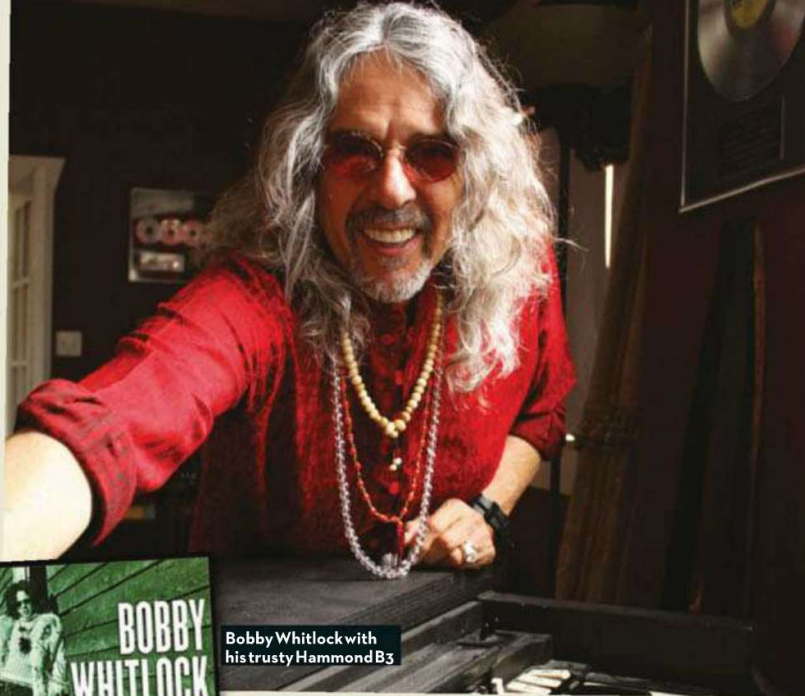
If Not For You...

BOBBY WHITLOCK, Clapton and Harrison's keyboardist of choice, finally returns to the spotlight...

PLENTY MIGHT RECOGNISE Bobby Whitlock as a crucial member of Derek & The Dominos, as the keyboardist-guitarist-singer who's all over George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*. Far fewer, though, know the couple of solo records Whitlock made right after those classics, again in the company of Harrison, Eric Clapton and several Dominos. They'll finally get their due on this spring's *Light In The Attic* comp, *Where There's A Will There's A Way*, which puts both '72 albums onto one CD.

If the mixture of rock, soul, gospel, blues and country is reminiscent of *Layla*, there's a good reason. "My first record would have been Derek & The Dominos with me singing all the lead, had [*Dominos* bassist] Carl Radle been able to get on a plane when he said he was going to," points out Whitlock. "He got tied up with Leon [Russell]. The Dominos, had they stayed together, would've gone that direction."

And what was that direction? "I've heard that all my career," he laughs from his Austin, Texas horse farm. "Every direction. I mean, the *Layla* album, it went everywhere. But it was right down the middle of the road the whole time it was going everywhere." The remake of "Tell The Truth", on Whitlock's *Raw Velvet*, naturally echoes the hardest-rocking Dominos tunes, though those who loved his "Thorn Tree In The Garden" on *Layla* will find plenty of the pretty, folksy ballads



Bobby Whitlock with his trusty Hammond B3

he acknowledges "were my strong point".

It could have been far different had he followed Atlantic producers Tom Dowd and Jerry Wexler's plan "to do it with NY musicians. I wouldn't even get to play on my own record!" Instead Whitlock cut his self-titled debut with contributions by Harrison, Clapton, Radle, Delaney & Bonnie, Jim Gordon, Klaus Voormann, Bobby Keys and Jim Price. "Atlantic rejected it, of course," he says. "So I

bought my contract back from 'em, paid for it out of my own pocket."

Still performing with his wife CoCo Carmel and gratified by the acclaim for his recent cathartic autobiography, Whitlock takes the records' belated CD debut in philosophical stride. Back in the early '70s, he feels, "They should have just released both of those records as a double, but they didn't. Nobody saw that they completed a picture of an era. George, Eric, Delaney & Bonnie et al – those two records link them all together." **RICHIE UNTERBERGER**

FOUR ESSENTIAL BOBBY WHITLOCK TRACKS

Thorn Tree In The Garden

from **Derek & The Dominos' *Layla*** 1970
After the anguish of *Layla*'s title song, this poignant Whitlock soul-folk ballad brings the album to a close on a similarly lovelorn grace note.

Let It Down

from **George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*** 1970
A wistful heavy rocker, changed from slow to midtempo with a wailing chorus (sung by Bobby, Harrison/Clapton) at Whitlock's suggestion.

Back Home In England

from **Bobby Whitlock** 1972
Another of Whitlock's "pretty songs" (as he calls them), sung with searing passion and with mournful horns that could've come straight from an *All Things Must Pass* arrangement.

Where There's A Will There's A Way

from **Delaney & Bonnie's *On Tour With Eric Clapton*** 1970
Whitlock co-wrote and played keys on this rabble-rousing blue-eyed soul duet, remade for his solo debut.

A QUICK ONE

➤ Another *Uncut* Music Guide hits UK shops on March 14. This one (No 14!) is dedicated to **The Smiths** and features the usual mix of archive *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and forensic new reviews by the *Uncut* team. Plus, we've tackled every **Morrissey** solo album and made a comprehensive survey of **Johnny Marr**'s post-Smiths career.

➤ More good stuff has been announced for the **End Of The Road** festival (Aug 30-Sept 1, Larmer Tree Gardens, Dorset). David Byrne & St Vincent join Belle & Sebastian and Sigur Rós as headliners. Also newly confirmed: Mark Mulcahy, Caitlin Rose, Efterklang, Jens Lekman and the fantastic Matthew E White.

➤ More Bowie, anyone? How about a BBC2 doc in May, provisionally titled *Five Years*, focusing on the Dame's activities in 1971, 1975, 1977, 1980 and 1983? Or maybe Parlophone's 40th anniversary remaster of *Aladdin Sane*, out April 15?

➤ **Bruce Springsteen's** next album might plausibly be a country project. "A while back, I cut a country record and put it aside," he told *grammy.com*. "I returned to it a couple of months ago and thought, 'What am I going to do next?'" His long-promised autobiography remains a work-in-progress, though: "There doesn't seem to be an urgency to return to it at the moment."

➤ Visit uncut.co.uk for more news, plus regular blogs, reviews and more or less seminal *Uncut* archive features.

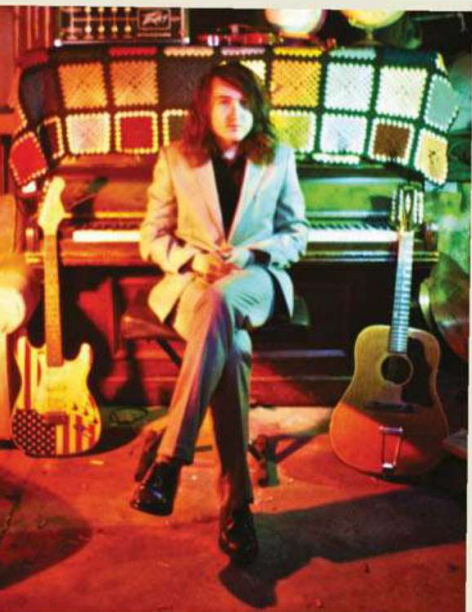
UNCUT AT THE GREAT ESCAPE

Confirmed for Brighton: **PHOSPHORESCENT**, **MIKAL CRONIN**, **WOODS**, **ALLAH-LAS**...

It's that time of year again. Between May 16 and 18, *Uncut's* operational focus shifts to Brighton, where we'll be curating a stage at the extravaganza of new music that is The Great Escape Festival. This year, our selection of performers will include Matthew Houck's marvellous **PHOSPHORESCENT** (interviewed by the editor on page 22); two talented accomplices of Ty Segall,

MIKAL CRONIN (pictured left) and **WHITE FENCE**; underground psych legends **WOODS**; chiming LA revivalists **ALLAH-LAS**; and Michigan's answer to the Fleet Foxes, **LORD HURON**. Not bad, eh?

The Great Escape takes place at venues across Brighton, May 16-18. Early Bird tickets for the whole festival cost £45. More info: www.escapegreat.com





WE'RE NEW HERE

THE MEN

Recommended this month: Brooklyn's ever-evolving, ever-expanding band of country spacepunks

SINCE RELEASING 2011's *Leave Home*, a riotous mix of punk and space rock, Brooklyn's The Men have undergone a dramatic transformation. It began with 2012's *Open Your Heart*, which introduced country, doo-wop and surf into the band's music, and continues with their latest album, *New Moon*, a sort of psychedelic country set that starts with piano and acoustic guitar on the jangly, Big Star-like "Open The Door".

"It is a pretty large departure," admits guitarist Nick Chiericozzi. "That song is a new introduction as we're a different band now. Ben [Greenberg] and Kevin [Faulkner] joined and we all write together, so that changes the dynamic. We were thinking about The Beach Boys and some sing-songy Neil Young stuff, and going for a come-on-in, check-it-out vibe. The rest of the LP goes through the full spectrum of emotions."

Indeed it does, as the album moves through country-blues ("Half Angel Half Light"), sludge rock ("I Saw Her Face"), winsome country ("High And Lonesome"), Stooges thrash metal ("The Brass"), swampy CCR choogle ("Birdsong") and Boredoms-style monster jam ("Supermoon") while maintaining a downhome (but very loud) atmosphere, due to relaxed production and front-porch harmonies. "We rented a house upstate in Big Indian and I threw every instrument I own in the van," says Chiericozzi. "We put the eight-track

upstairs, and that became the centre of operations."

The album was produced by Greenberg, who joined as full-time bassist along with Faulkner, the band's photographer and lap steel player. "Being outside the city with no cellphone access was good," says Greenberg of their Big Indian stint. "There was freedom but also limitations, so if something broke we just had to deal with it. The beauty of the situation is that it puts so many things out of your hands. It's about balancing the freedom and riding roughneck at the same time. It was very loose but we also worked 20-hour days for two weeks."

This balance between being comfortable, but not

so comfortable they stagnate, has ensured The Men retain their edge even as they evolve ("We printed the lyrics sheet in this one for the first time," notes Chiericozzi proudly). The journey from hardcore to harmony is one taken by others in the past – The Replacements are one comparison, but more apt might be the Meat Puppets – and The Men are happy to acknowledge their debts. Musical references abound in their lyrics, titles and melodies, but playfully and always with creative intent. "That comes from the fact most things have been done before," admits Chiericozzi. "Sure, we rip stuff off, but we also want to hear everyone's personalities and contributions, and we hope there's a sound in there that is unique, as well." **PETER WATTS**

I'M YOUR FAN

"They remind me of the energy NY bands had when Sonic Youth started out. Totally fierce... rocking out." **Lee Ranaldo**



ROYAL MALES... How to buy The Men



LEAVE HOME

SACRED BONES, 2011
Deliriously in-your-grill heavy rocker, combining sludge and space rock with deft nods to Spacemen 3, the Ramones and Sonic Youth.

8/10



OPEN YOUR HEART

SACRED BONES, 2012
A shift in tempo, as country influences start to come out ("Candy") and the aggressive hardcore is tempered by a cheerier outlook.

8/10



NEW MOON

SACRED BONES, 2013
Beautifully eclectic but consistent in sound and spirit, *New Moon* sees The Men take on two new members and further mix cosmic country with punk, sludge, spacerock and more.

8/10

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

MIKAL CRONIN

MCII MERGE

As Ty Segall takes a well-earned breather, his bassist steps back into the spotlight with a bunch of sun-kissed garage pop songs every bit as good.

RETRIBUTION GOSPEL CHOIR

3 CHAPERONE

The flipside of Low's *The Invisible Way*. Alan Sparhawk initiates two mighty 20-minute jams, including a seismic joust with Nels Cline.

KURT VILE

Wakin' On A Pretty Daze

MATADOR

"There was a time in my life when they thought I was all talk..." Vile ups the languid braggadocio and insidious loops on an outstanding fifth album.



HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

HAW PARADISE OF BACHELORS

North Carolina's prolific MC Taylor further hones his soulful, creative take on American musical traditions. His best yet, possibly.

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE

Born In The USA

YOUTUBE KEY WORDS: NEIL YOUNG BORN

Neil covers Broooooce, with Nils Lofgren on synth. *Uncut* eats itself.

UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS

Mind Control RISE ABOVE

Heroically galumphing stoner rock, much in the vein of early Sabbath and Queens Of The Stone Age.

THE KNIFE

Shaking The Habitual RABID

Sprawling gothic fantasia from Stockholm. Includes incredibly-tooled techno-pop, and about 20 minutes of ambient hum.

COLIN STETSON

New History Warfare Vol 3: To See More

Light CONSTELLATION

The rad saxophonist from Bon Iver returns, with his fearsome foghorn blasts this time augmented by Justin Vernon.

LIBRARY OF SANDS

Wavy Heat WILD SAGES

A clutch of new releases from cosmic outlier NayNay Shineywater, ex-Brightblack Morning Light, crowned by this drone cassette featuring Colm Ó Cíosóig of MBV.

GIBBY HAYNES

Paul's Not Home THIRD MAN

Superbly juvenile ramalam from Jack White and the Butthole Surfers frontman. Gibby Haynes is 55 years old.

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

Van Dyke Parks

Interview: Peter Watts

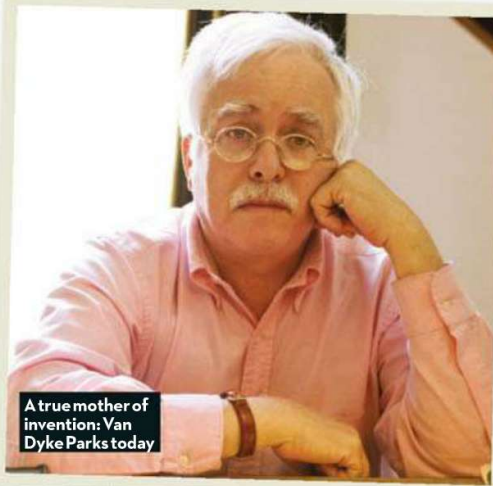
Photograph: Getty Images

The dapper songwriter, arranger and Beach Boys collaborator discusses *Smile*, pocket squares, *Twin Peaks* and why he turned down an offer to join The Byrds

W

ith his distinguished Southern drawl and neat moustache, Van Dyke Parks can appear more like a gentleman Confederate officer than a venerated musician who has worked with Joanna Newsom, Tim Buckley, Randy Newman, Richard Thompson, Rufus Wainwright and, of course, Skrillex.

Although he boasts one of the greatest contact books in music, Parks is still best known for his work with The Beach Boys. In 1966, Brian Wilson asked Parks – a child actor and trained musician – to write lyrics for *Smile*. And as well as his own albums, like 1967's *Song Cycle*, there's the other stuff – children's books, soundtracks, music videos, acting... "I have days off, but I swear to you I am unsettled," he admits. "I like to work all the time, on music." Despite that, he's happy to spend an hour on a hot day in California answering questions from fans and peers. "Listen to the wisdom of a fool," he laughs. "Let's do this."



A true mother of invention: Van Dyke Parks today

incredible sense of power because I knew who did it.

If "Surf's Up" isn't the greatest song you've been involved in, what is?

Jamie Goulding, *High Wycombe*

My God, I cannot do that. I can't answer that. I think I'm doing my best work now. I celebrate "Surf's Up" because so many people interpreted it favourably, but I don't subscribe to that song, it's not the nature of my beast. But that song has persuasive power and there's a lot of heart. It was tremendous work for two very young fellows. Many people listened to that song and if it made kindness contagious, it hit the mark.

STAR QUESTION



Your inventive and beautiful arrangements are the stuff of legend. Do you have a preference, arranging and composing, or writing lyrics?

Jonathan Wilson
Absolutely arranging. It is a less abstract process. I love both of those arenas but lyric writing will offer a man of great certainty the ability to paint himself into a corner. It always feels life-threatening. I approach an album as a life-defining moment and I have to be careful because it's like throwing raw meat to the dogs. It's a humiliating, generous, sacrificial gesture. You want to do something beautiful that will not inspire animosity but levity and enlightenment.

Do you still get royalties from Disney for arranging "The Bare Necessities?"

Sarah, Portland

When I get my royalty cheques I always ask my wife, "Are you sticking with me?" And she'll say, "I'm sticking." And then I tell her, "\$2.78." I did *The Jungle Book* in 1963. I was frightened to death. I stood on the podium and the film was projected on a huge screen in this giant room. A voice came out of this cavernous control room and asked "Are you in the mood?" I didn't know what he was saying or who he was saying it to. It was frightening but it wasn't a complicated arrangement. It changed my life. I'll never forget taking that cheque with Mickey Mouse on it to the bank. The teller laughed. She didn't know how significant it was to me.

How is composing a piece of score different from writing a song, if it is? And should your pocket square match your socks or your tie?

Joe Henry

Joe is one of the dapperest scenesters that I've ever met, he is always meticulously assembled. I've always

liked to triangulate vectors, so they play against each other. I'm talking about socks, handkerchief and tie and if the result resembles a Haitian postcard, it still makes a statement. His question about song versus score, well, a good score is sometimes best when it's felt and not heard, but takes the same powers of invention. Jerry Goldsmith said, "When you score a man galloping across the screen, you score the mind of the man not the hooves of the horse." Sometimes it's valuable for a score not to be heard, while a song has to be heard.

Is it true you have a brief cameo in *Twin Peaks*?

Rob Irving, *Dundee*

I've never understood that. I was hired to do a small part as an attorney. The director, Graeme Clifford, called and asked me to do it. I wasn't doing anything else that day, so I said yes. I don't watch television but I knew that people wanted to know who killed Laura Palmer. I was walking down the street with this script and I had this

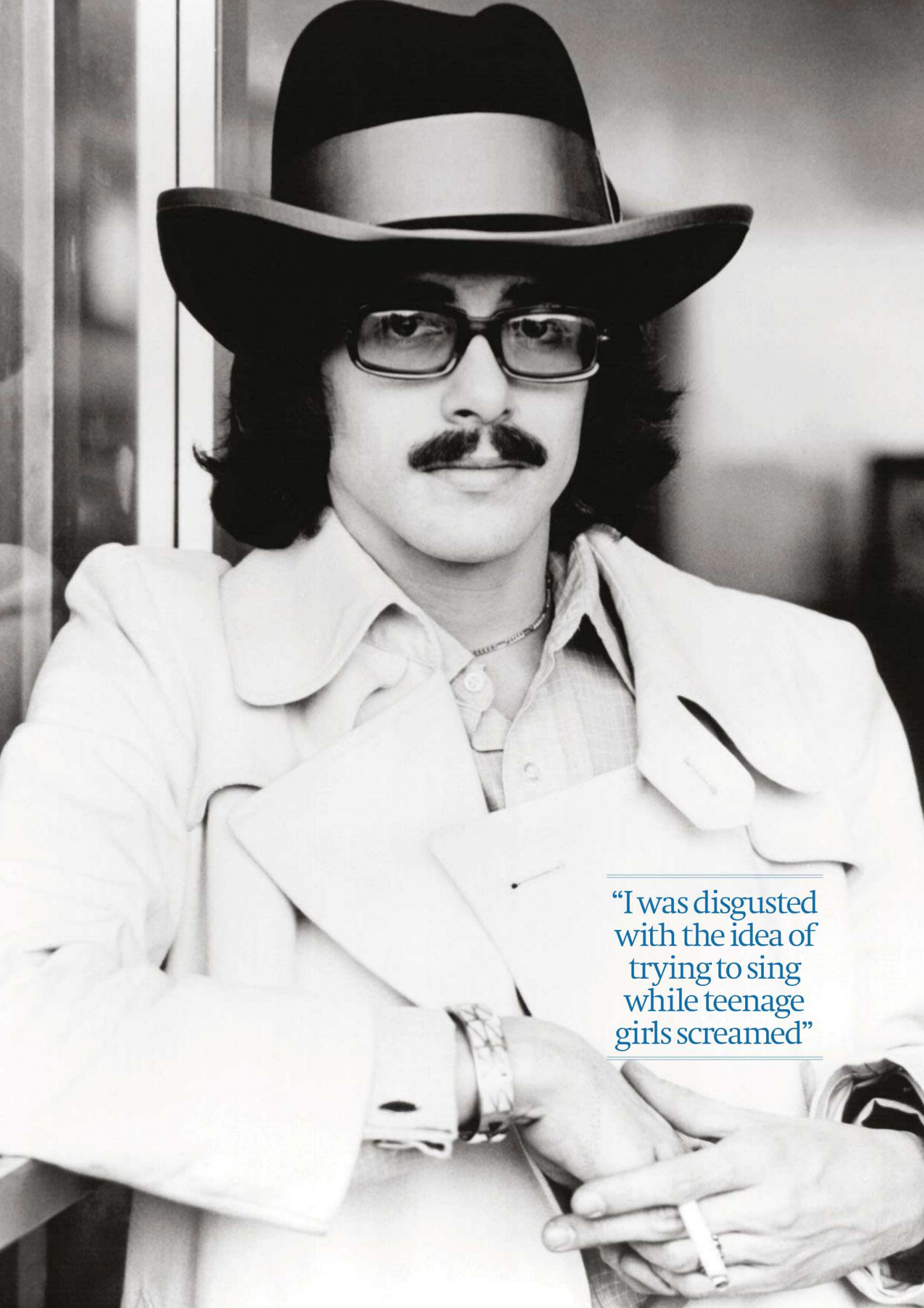
STAR QUESTION



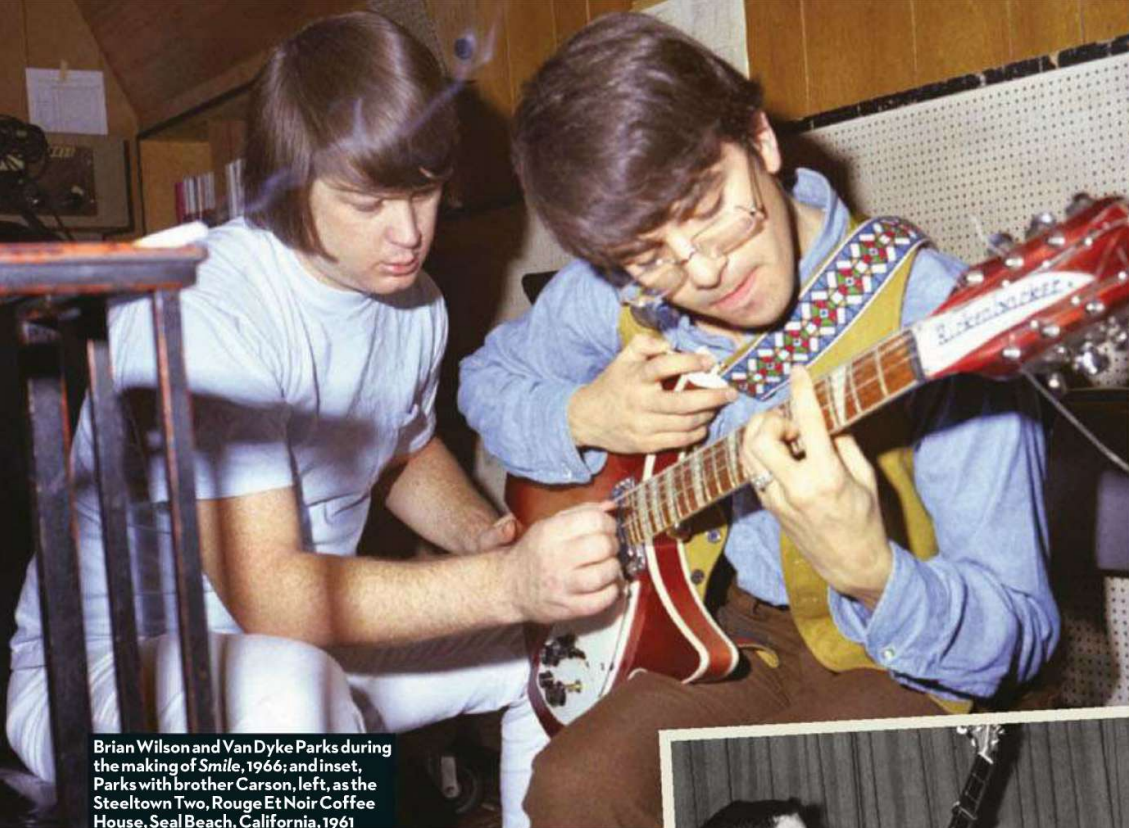
Here's a challenge: Van Dyke, have you written an opera? And if not, I dare you to. It's something I would love to see and hear.

Rufus Wainwright

Well, I don't know what that term means. There is a difference between 'opera', 'operetta' and 'Broadway trash' but I don't really know what that is. I accept the challenge, but if 'opera' means playing to an audience that represents just one per cent of our population, then I'm not interested. I don't want to play to the tux set, I want to play to the street. Opera has a stigma that needs to be dealt with, but I feel I'm getting there.



“I was disgusted
with the idea of
trying to sing
while teenage
girls screamed”



Brian Wilson and Van Dyke Parks during the making of *Smile*, 1966; and inset, Parks with brother Carson, left, as the Steeltown Two, Rouge Et Noir Coffee House, Seal Beach, California, 1961

STAR QUESTION



What was it like playing music with your brothers when you were kids?

Eliza Carthy

I was the youngest of four. I played clarinet, the next played coronet, the next played French horn and the eldest played double-barrel euphonium. We played together in the parlour and music was everywhere. Many hymns take me back there, low church, Methodist tunes, I have an undiminished connection to those musical experiences. Eliza's family have this encyclopaedic knowledge of folk. Martin Carthy, Eliza's father, stayed a week at my house once and I didn't play a note I was so frightened. Then on the day he left, I played a piece and waited. Ten minutes later he came down and asked me what it was. I got him! But I'm intimidated by the scope and grandeur of what they bring, the physicality of old rhythms from a pre-industrial age.

Why did you turn down The Byrds when they asked you to join in 1966?

Isabel Servat, Hendon

I was disgusted with the idea of trying to sing while teenage girls screamed. I knew the group was going places, but it wasn't for me. I'd quit the Mothers Of Invention before that. I didn't want to be clapped at. But to disagree isn't to disrespect, and I respect The Byrds and I respect every one of The Beach Boys. I just didn't want to be in a group and perform. I wanted to learn in the studio. I was interested in recorded

music. That's why I didn't go on the road and get laid.

Can you talk a little bit about your formal training?

Bill Frisell

When I was nine I joined the Columbus Boys Choir and that immersed me in music. But I had that at home, watching my parents dancing to Fats Waller. That was as instructive as anything I was taught. But my formative education began in 1952. I learned how to breathe, how not to be the centre of attention. I wept over the piano. I went from first-chair clarinet when my feet couldn't hit the floor to *La Bohème* at the Metropolitan Opera. I played a street urchin. I've been in music my whole life, and ended up in what is



What was it like playing piano for Ramblin' Jack Elliott near the whorehouses of

Winnemucca, Nevada?

Tom Russell

It was so refreshing for me to play for Ramblin' Jack. I like rusty nails and that's what he is. He's at the peak of his powers at, what, 81. I went to one of his cowboy poetry gatherings in Utah. It was surreal. Jack was determined I'd wear a hat. In Texas they say of a charlatan he's "all hat, no cattle", so my motto was "no hat, no bull" and that's how I got on with those cowboys. He's a hero to them.

Your 1975 album *Clang Of The Yankee Reaper* was advertised as "the damndest thing I've ever heard". What's the damndest thing you've ever heard?

Hitch Edwards, Kentucky

The damndest thing I ever heard was when I first stood in front of two speakers and heard a train go from left to right. That thing called stereo sound, that technical device, I fell in love with stereo. I started mixing my product in quadraphonic because I thought the automobile industry would use it. I square stereo. 🎧

"I'll never be in the Hall Of Fame, nor am I with the one per cent — I'm a maverick, unbranded"

considered a lowbrow biz, but I've never felt in either world. I'm never going to be in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, nor am I with the one per cent. I'm a maverick, unbranded. I've always made my living doing things beneath the dignity of others.

How did *Song Cycle* come to cost so much and was it worth it?

Alan Hill, Lancs

It didn't cost so much, not compared

to "Good Vibrations", which cost \$64,000. That's one single. That was a lot of meditating in the Bentley. The fact *Song Cycle* cost more than ZZ Top is there were more people playing. I put that money into an orchestra and Warner Bros complained they'd lost money, but I opened the gate for people to overproduce their own records. I made every mistake that could be made but I learnt from it. I'm very pleased with *Song Cycle*. I'm

delighted with its abstraction. If you complete something on that scope at the age of 24, I take my hat off to you. Was it worth it? Without doubt.

How do you feel about the most recent incarnation of *Smile*?

Matt Lisle, South Croydon

I'm happy that there is a commercial use of the songs. I'm happy they finally ate some crow. It did very well as an audio event. The only thing left

is for it to be filmic but I have no plans to do anything with Brian.

Why did Frank Zappa call you Pinocchio?

Charles Davies, Maine

Well, Pinocchio went off with the bad guys and got in trouble. Zappa had a nickname for everybody. But I couldn't take the lysergic, ah, the intensity of the situation. The music was highly inventive and Frank was immensely gifted.

How did you end up working with dubstep star Skrillex?

Roberto, Bari

I did a session for Skrillex. It was with over 50 people. I loved it. All I know is he phoned me and I said,

"I'm sorry, I have no idea who you are." He said he was in Belgium and had just played for 350,000 people. I YouTubed him and saw a man onstage pouring beer into a laptop while a huge crowd had an erection, and jumped in the moshpit. I thought, 'My God, I don't understand what is happening here', so I said I'd do it. He said, 'Mr Parks, we will destroy the world,' and I thought, 'Hey man, my ship has come in.'

THE NEW MUSIC

Your guide to this month's free CD

FREE
CD!



1 PHOSPHORESCENT Song For Zula

Tremulous mystery from Matthew Houck's sixth album under the Phosphorescent flag, all dreamy synths, pedal steel and baroque violins on a tune with a haunting, classical pedigree – Vivaldi or Pachelbel's 'Canon', perhaps?

2 JOHN FULLBRIGHT Jericho

Hailing from Woody Guthrie's hometown, the 24-year-old Okie's gravelly, modern-day iterations of the troubadour tradition earned his debut a Grammy nomination as best Americana album last month. He blows a howling harmonica, too.

3 LOW Plastic Cup

Beguiling minimalism on the opening track from Low's 10th album, an accusatory tale of drug tests and pissing in plastic cups (*pace* Lance Armstrong?), given an understated gravitas by producer Jeff Tweedy.

4 HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER I've Got A Name For The Newborn Child

Domestic dreams, meek and mild, and hopes of deliverance from the darkness from the prolific MC Taylor, taken from the follow-up to 2011's *Poor Moon*. (He doesn't tell us, but he named his own son Elijah, in case you were wondering.)



5 JIM JAMES I Didn't Know Til Now

Textured layers of echoing keyboards and swirling loops are coupled with a weirdly wonderful and crackling retro cocktail-jazz coda from the My Morning Jacket frontman, who heads into unexpected new territory on his solo debut.

6 EDWYN COLLINS In The Now

An urgent, driving celebration of being alive from the former Orange Juice singer, the vital signs underpinned by the pounding of Sex Pistols drummer Paul Cook. After nearly losing his life to a brain haemorrhage a few years back, why wouldn't he?

7 MOUNT MORIAH White Sands

Leaving behind their post-punk and black metal backgrounds, guitarist Jenks Miller, and Heather McEntire – who sounds deliciously like a wilder, younger Dolly Parton – head for the hills

and the new/old weird America on a standout track from the second MM album.

8 BILLY BRAGG No One Knows Nothing Anymore

A bucolic-sounding Bragg returns to the Americana/roots sound of '98's *Mermaid Avenue*. Recorded live without overdubs and produced by Joe Henry, Bon Iver's Greg Leisz adds lilting pedal steel.

9 HARPER SIMON Bonnie Brae

Paul's lad (although "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was still in the charts when he was born so he's now a greying fortysomething) shows it's in the genes but sounds more like his own man than his old man on a fizzing pop-rock gem from his second album, *Division Street*.

10 CHRISTOPHER OWENS A Broken Heart

Romantic devastation and exquisitely sculpted chamber-folk-pop – just a taster of the 29-minute song cycle, *Lysandre*, that constitutes Owens' first solo album after walking away last year from his role as the frontman of Girls.

11 THE DEPARTED WITH CODY CANADA Cold Hard Fact

"Cold Hard Fact" is classic Southern roots-rock that climaxes in delirious Allman Brothers/Lynyrd Skynyrd-style guitar duelling from Cody Canada and Seth James over Steve Littleton's surging organ stanzas. Find it on the Texan quintet's second album, *Adventus*.

12 ANDERS PARKER Falling Snow

The only instrumental on this month's CD – but as lyrical an evocation of wintry stillness as was ever conjured. From the Vermont-based guitarist's overlooked 2010 solo album, *Cross Latitudes*, released now for the first time in Europe and the UK.

13 THE HOLYDRUG COUPLE Counting Sailboats

Dazed, halcyon guitars and superior paisley pop from the self-produced debut by the Chilean psych-rock couple, Ives Sepúlveda and Manuel Parra, brought to the world by NY's transcendently cool Sacred Bones label.

14 THALIA ZEDEK BAND Walk Away

Viola-nuanced melancholy and ghosts who won't let you be on the brimming opening track from the first album in five years from the veteran Boston rocker and former Live Skull/Come singer.

15 ETHAN JOHNS Don't Reach Too Far

Analogue authenticity and a raunchy "Gloria"-quoting garage riff, as the in-demand producer (Laura Marling/Ryan Adams/Kings Of Leon) steps out from behind his mixing desk to introduce himself.

16 CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN Northern California Girls

"There ain't nobody like me out there," David Lowery sings as we close with a track from the fine, long-overdue first LP in nine years from CVB – inspired, he says, by the band's "fake hippy/surfer side".



Matthew Houck aka Phosphorescent



Wilko at home in
Westcliff-on-Sea,
February 4, 2013

OIL CITY REQUIEM

In December 2012, the mighty WILKO JOHNSON was diagnosed with terminal cancer of the pancreas. This month, he embarks on an emotional last tour of the UK. First, though, he reunites with *Uncut* Editor Allan Jones, an early champion of Dr Feelgood, to talk of Canvey Island, his remarkable old band, and even the future. “When we left the hospital, I felt elated. I’m a miserable so-and-so — feeling like this was *unusual*...”

IF YOU CATCH the train out of London from Fenchurch St station, Westcliff is nearly at the end of the line. This seems appropriate, because so is Wilko Johnson, who we are here today to meet. Last month, it was announced the former Dr Feelgood guitarist had been diagnosed with terminal cancer of the pancreas. He had refused chemotherapy and therefore been given less than a year to live, during which time he would record a last album and health permitting play a farewell tour. On hearing this news, the memories of fans who saw the band in their incendiary early prime may likely have turned to those legendary nights in 1973, when the Feelgoods first tore up London’s pub rock scene, mad dog R’n’B monsters who thrillingly established a reputation as the most exciting British rock’n’roll band since the ’60s club heyday of The Who and The Rolling Stones.

This was a time when the woeful indulgences of prog-rock prevailed. The Feelgoods by contrast were lean and frighteningly intense, their music raw and feral. Wilko’s guitar was central to their sound — carnal blues riffs, essayed with slashing ferocity, frenetic choppy chords and no solos to speak of, the songs too short for pointless virtuosity. They looked fantastic, too — sharp-suited, crop-haired, like people you might see at the shoulder of some gangland godfather. They blew a gaping hole in the day’s musical fabric, through which a few years later the punk hordes would pour, partly inspired by their example. Their 1976 live album, *Stupidity*, made them briefly the biggest band in the UK, but it was almost all over for the original lineup. During fractious sessions for its follow-up, *Sneakin’ Suspicion*, Wilko fell out with vocalist Lee Brilleaux, John B Sparks and drummer John Martin (universally known as The Big Figure) and walked out of the band. The Feelgoods continued without him and, with replacement guitarist John ‘Gypie’ Mayo, had their biggest hit with 1979’s “Milk And Alcohol”, produced by Nick Lowe.

TIMELINE

1947 Born John Peter Wilkinson on Canvey Island, on July 12
1968 Meets singer Lee Brilleaux
1970 Travels to India and Afghanistan
1971 Dr Feelgood form
1974 Debut LP *Down By The Jetty* released
1976 Live album *Stupidity* reaches No 1 in the UK chart
1977 Wilko leaves Dr Feelgood. He forms The Solid Senders
1980 Joins Ian Dury & The Blockheads
1981 Goes solo
1994 Lee Brilleaux dies
2004 Wilko’s wife of 37 years, Irene, dies of cancer
2010 Julien Temple’s rock doc *Oil City Confidential* is released; Wilko acts in *Game Of Thrones*
2012 Autobiography *Looking Back At Me* published; diagnosed with inoperable cancer of the pancreas
2013 March tour announced

Wilko’s solo career was less illustrious. Following a spell with Ian Dury’s Blockheads, he for many years made a steady if unspectacular living on the club circuit here and in Europe, a somewhat overlooked figure. The Feelgoods, too, for just as long, seemed to be forgotten, their vital early role in the punk insurrection that followed largely ignored. Julien Temple’s *Oil City Confidential* redressed the balance somewhat, Wilko the film’s eccentric star turn, surely a national treasure in the making. Last year’s overdue *All Through The City* 4CD box, meanwhile, was a startling reminder of what the band had been, which at their best was pretty much as good as it gets. Wilko’s career simultaneously had taken a wonderfully unexpected turn when he was cast as a grim-faced executioner in HBO’s *Game Of Thrones*.

And now, he’s dying. But not so fast that he can’t find time for one last interview with *Uncut*, in which over a couple of hours he looks back with fondness and some regret at his time with the Feelgoods, their days of glory and eventual falling out, and facing up to the illness that will claim him.

UNCUT: When was your cancer actually diagnosed?

WILKO JOHNSON: Just before Christmas. My son, who was over from Manila, noticed I was pissing blood. I would have ignored it, but my son took me into the A&E, forced me to go actually. They examined me and said, “You’ve got this mass in your stomach,” which I’d been aware of for some time, but I’d just ignored it. I first noticed it last summer. I thought it might have something to do with the fact that after being teetotal all my life, in my dotage, I’ve taken up drinking. We had a night out and I started drinking absinthe, quite a bit of it. In the morning, I could feel the lump again and I’m like “What’s this? I know. It’s my liver.” Years ago, when I was in India, I had hepatitis and I was told I should never drink again. Of course, it had nothing to do with that.

Anyway, they did these tests. Shortly after that they did a biopsy, which is an experience I wouldn’t want to go through again. It’s a bit freaky. Then, we went in just

HOW TO BUY

10 ESSENTIAL WILKO TRACKS

DR FEELGOOD

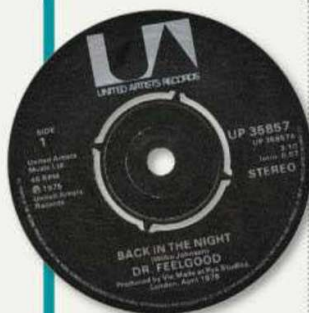
"ALL THROUGH THE CITY"
(*DOWN BY THE JETTY*, 1975)

From the Feelgoods' debut album, a powerful introduction to the oil refineries and landscape of Canvey – "Stand and watch the towers burning at the break of the day".

DR FEELGOOD

"BACK IN THE NIGHT"
(*MALPRACTICE*, 1975)

Contains one of Wilko's definitive machine-gun riffs. The single version was apparently recorded with little help from the rest of the band.



DR FEELGOOD

"ROXETTE"
(*STUPIDITY*, 1976)

Blistering live take of a *Down By The Jetty* highlight. A typical Feelgoods yarn about an untrustworthy woman, driven by Wilko's restless guitar.

DR FEELGOOD

"SNEAKIN' SUSPICION"
(*SNEAKIN' SUSPICION*, 1977)

US producer Bert de Coteaux glosses up the band's sound. Fortunately, he can't clean up this grubby slice of Canvey noir.

WILKO JOHNSON'S SOLID SENDERS

"DR DUPREE"
(*SOLID SENDERS*, 1979)
Originally sketched out

Dr. Feelgood



Down By The Jetty

for the Feelgoods, this developed into a reggae song about sinking ships and exotic strangers for new band the Solid Senders.

IAN DURY & THE BLOCKHEADS

"I WANT TO BE STRAIGHT"
(*LAUGHTER*, 1980)
Arguably the best track from Wilko's time in the Blockheads' rhythm section; their first single together.

WILKO JOHNSON

"ICE ON THE MOTORWAY"
(*ICE ON THE MOTORWAY*, 1981)
Edgy, intense title track of Wilko's solo debut.

WILKO JOHNSON

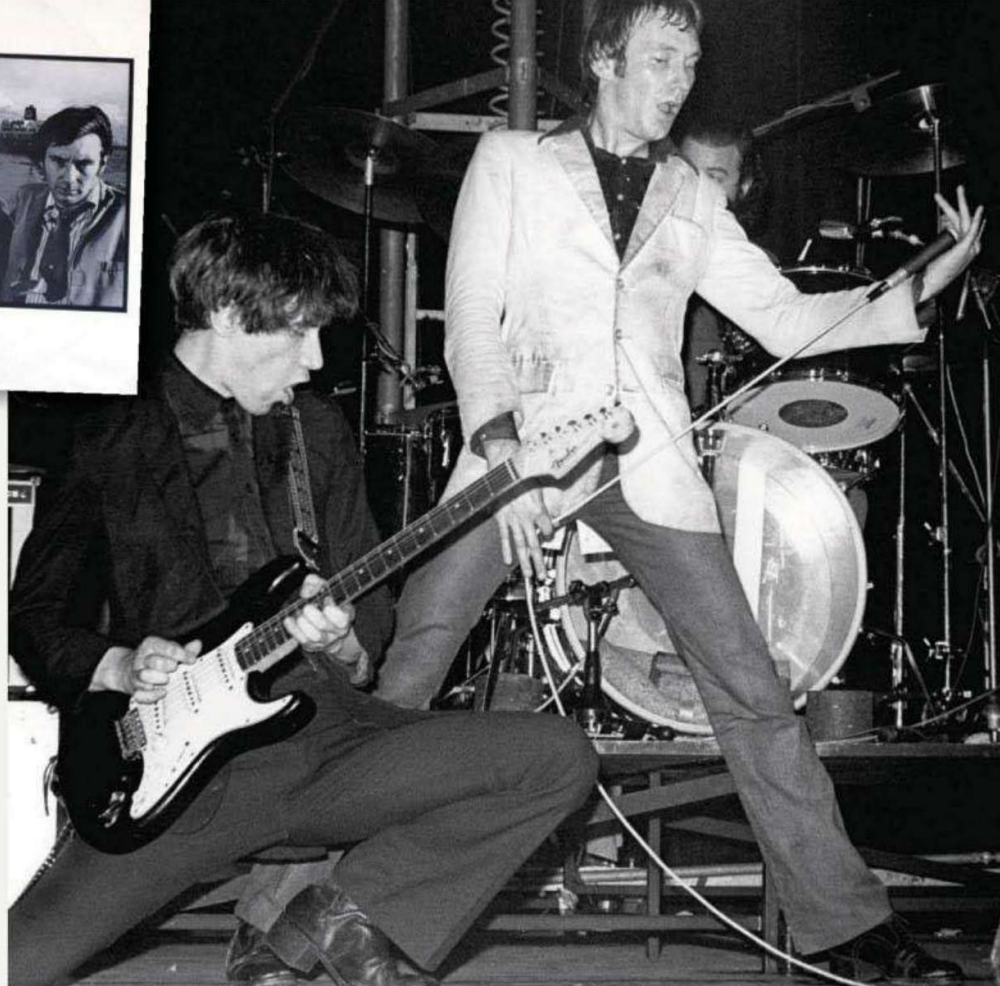
"BARBED WIRE BLUES"
(*BARBED WIRE BLUES*, 1988)
First fruits of sessions featuring new, regular band – including Blockheads bassist Norman Watt-Roy, whose dextrous funk grooves shine here.

WILKO JOHNSON

"SOME KIND OF HERO"
(*GOING BACK HOME*, 1998)
Wilko's lyrical luck with women is not looking up on his last album of original songs to date. This one has "footprints around her window".

WILKO JOHNSON

"PARADISE"
(*THE BEST OF WILKO JOHNSON VOL 1*, 2010)
Tribute to his wife, Irene, originally recorded by the Feelgoods. This version, updated in 2004 after her death, is predictably moving: "My tears are falling, I ain't ashamed."



→ before Christmas for the results. In the meantime, we all had a go at the diagnosis. The consensus was that it was a cyst, and they'd just cut it out. So when we went in for the results, I wasn't expecting them to say it was cancer. But the doctor said, "This mass in your stomach. It's cancer and it's inoperable." My son cracked up. I was absolutely calm. I just nodded. I went "OK."

When we left the hospital, I felt elated. That's the word. You never know what your reaction is going to be and at the best of times I'm a miserable so-and-so. I've suffered from depression all of my life since my teens. So feeling like this was a bit unusual, but this elation remained all day and was still there when I woke up the next day. I realised there's nothing to be hung up about, because the past, the present, the future: it doesn't mean anything. So this elevation of spirit remained. You walk down the street just tingling, man, and you feel so alive. You notice every little thing – every bird against the sunlight, everything – and just feel absolute calm. At times it amounted to euphoria.

Were you surprised at your reaction? Yes, totally. It's been over a month now. Normally I don't keep a feeling, especially a good feeling, for more than a few hours. Usually, I find something to mess it up. But it's remained. It's like you've been given the ability to exist in the moment you're in, without bothering

about the taxman, or anything. You realise what a marvellous thing it is to be alive. When the illness hits me, I don't think I'll be quite so jolly, as I'm a complete wimp when it comes to illness. But right now, I'm feeling fine. And I'm hoping this feeling will last a while longer.

Canvey Island looms large in your life and also in the legend of the Feelgoods.

What was it like growing up there? You need a movie to tell the Canvey story. It's a place that keeps on changing. When I was a lad, it was more or less rural. Canvey Island is reclaimed marshland. It was constructed in the 17th Century. They got Dutch engineers across, 'cos they're good at draining land. They built a seawall around it and made this island. Oh, it was mysterious then. It was all unmade roads. People were living in shacks and railway carriages. There were a few proper houses, but it was a bit of a shanty town. When I went to the grammar school up here in Westcliff, 'cos there isn't a grammar school on Canvey Island, I met people who didn't dare to go down to Canvey Island. They used to say, "Goodness knows what kind of chainsaw massacres take place down there." In fact, it was a nice place. There was a disastrous flood in 1953, which is one of my first memories... looking out of the back window and seeing the sea where there used to be field. There were waves rolling up to our back door.

"The doctor said 'It's cancer and it's inoperable. My son cracked up. I was absolutely calm. I nodded and went 'OK'"



FAMOUS FAN

PAUL WELLER ON WILKO JOHNSON

“FOR ME, WILKO was the first guitar hero of the '70s. Post-Bolan and Bowie, Britain was a real wasteland, musically. There were all those faded-denim, post-prog stadium bands, and the US rock thing. The Feelgoods cut right through all that. Hearing *Down By The Jetty* for the first time, at the age of 17, was just what I wanted. I borrowed the LP off a mate and kept hold of it as long as I could. Then I went and bought my own.

“I totally related to Wilko's guitar style and his personality onstage. Between him and Lee [Brilleaux] they were such a great team. I don't think I'd ever heard anyone play like Wilko before. You could liken his playing to someone like Bo Diddley, but Wilko is unique, a one-off.

“He is also a great songwriter as well, especially on all those early tunes from *Down By The Jetty* and *Malpractice*. I thought they were very special songs. They kept the style of all those American



blues and R'n'B tunes, but had an English angle and energy. I only saw the Feelgoods once. That was at Guildford Civic, probably

in '75. My defining memory of that night was the opening bars... Wilko did a scissor kick and went straight into 'She Does It Right'. I remember thinking, 'Yeah, that's a fucking great moment!' And they never let up, the whole gig was like that. I went through my Wilko period shortly after, writing in that style. I took elements of his playing, that chopiness, into The Jam.

“What was it like finally meeting him? He's just Wilko, isn't he? Playing with him a few years ago [Johnson joined Weller on stage at 2010's *Belsonic* festival for 'From The Floorboards Up'] was fucking amazing, a real moment for me.

“Wilko may not be as famous as some other guitarists, but he's right up there. And there are a lot of people who'll say the same. I can hear Wilko in lots of places. It's some legacy.” **ROB HUGHES**



Left: onstage with Lee Brilleaux in the Feelgoods' heyday. Top: the original lineup (Brilleaux, John B Sparks, Wilko and John 'The Big Figure' Martin). Above: Wilko with Ian Dury & The Blockheads, 1981

Was there a music scene on Canvey when you were growing up?

No. Like any small town, you'd go down the local youth club, and there would be half a dozen bands practising. But the real scene was in Southend. There were a couple of very good clubs and there were two great groups, The Paramounts, with Gary Brooker and Robin Trower, and Mickey Jupp's band, my favourites, The Orioles. Mickey Jupp could sing like Elmore James and his guitarist Mo Whitham remains one of the best I've seen. I used to go along there and plonk myself in front of Mo and hope I could maybe learn something. That was where the music scene was.

By the time the Feelgoods got going there was a series of yacht clubs along the river, and you could get gigs there. There were youth clubs, the occasional wedding, but you couldn't call it a music scene. The Orioles and The Paramounts were into American rhythm and blues. First of all there was The Rolling Stones. Everything about them was exciting, the music they played, the way they looked, and you knew your parents hated them. In the aftermath of the Stones making their mark, the retail shops in Britain become full of blues material – Johnny Otis and the like – you're flicking through the racks of records, loads of them. You thought they'd go on forever. It just seemed magical.

How serious were you about music as a career? I've never, ever been serious about music as a career. I got into it completely by accident. When I was about 18, I had quite a good R'n'B band. I also had a jug-band. We'd go down the seaford, wait for the pubs to come out and we'd play some songs. “You Are My Sunshine” or “Irene, Goodnight”. One time we were playing and three boys came up. We were 18 and they were about 14 – a big gap when you're that age. But the leader of these boys, he was so intense. This was Lee Brilleaux. I saw him occasionally over the next two or three years when I'd come back from university. Then I went to Kathmandu and when I came back, I was living on this housing estate and thinking, ‘Well, it's own up time, I need a proper job or something.’ My mother got me a job as a teacher. Around that time, I'm walking down the street, and who's this coming the other way, but Lee Brilleaux. He was a

WILKO AT NIGHT

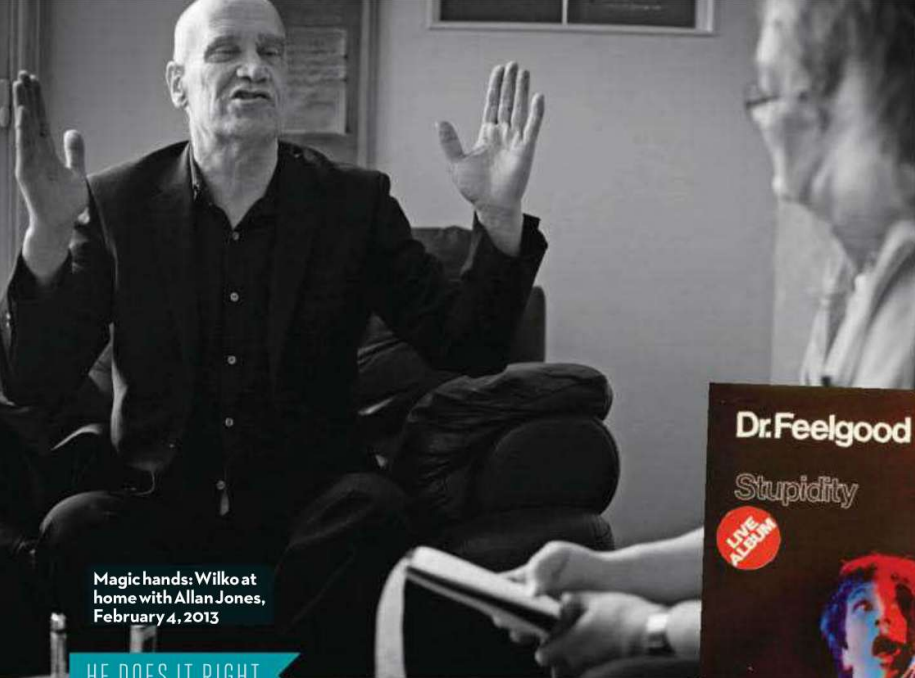
“I'm putting Wilko forward for the great job, on the sad day when Patrick Moore passes away, of presenting *The Sky At Night*,” Julien Temple announced while preparing *Oil City Confidential* in 2009. “And he could play guitar while serenading the stars.” Indeed, a Facebook petition was set up after to get Wilko the *Sky At Night* gig. Wilko's fascination with astronomy began by looking at the southern stars while lying stoned on his hotel roof on a 1980 Blockheads Aussie tour. Later, he built what Temple described as “a huge phallic dome” containing a 14-inch telescope on his Southend roof. Wilko appeared on Jarvis Cocker's BBC6 Music show talking about the stars. “I could maybe do *The Sky At Night* one time,” he wrote in his autobiography, *Looking Back At Me*. **NICK HASTED**

solicitor's clerk, and he had a sharp haircut and sideburns and was wearing a pinstriped suit. I thought, ‘He don't half look mean.’ I looked like a sloppy hippy. I go “How's your band?” He goes, “The guitar player's left and we're looking for a new one.” I'm thinking, ‘I wonder if he's going to ask me to join.’ But he didn't. Later that day Sparko comes knocking and says, “Will you join our band?” I just went, “YES!” It started there, and for two years, it was just a local band.

We got a regular gig at a disco on Canvey Island – every Thursday night. The best one was called the Esplanade down Southend. It was 10p to get in, and the band got all the 10ps. I knew Lee was a star. I had a lot of belief in him. The whole Dr Feelgood thing developed around him. This style of music we wanted to play, it was not fashionable. So we were somewhat scorned by local bands, but we carried on doing our thing. That went on for a few years. Occasionally we'd spend an afternoon around someone's house learning a few new numbers, but that was about it. We never rehearsed, or discussed what we had to look like or what we were going to do. It all grew naturally out of who we were.

We were all such great friends then and had so many good times. It did get ugly in the end. There was terrible animosity. We ended up in a position where they were all drinking a lot, and I wasn't drinking at all. Which is not as flippant as it sounds, 'cos when you're on the road you'll be in your room and they'll be in the bar. And who are they talking about? Let me think. I was growing apart from them. I tried very hard to involve Lee in the songwriting as he was a very witty guy, but it never happened. So I was doing the songs and they never realised how hard that was. They didn't know about the beating of your head against the wall the night before trying to think of it. If you've had a bit of success, obviously, your next thing has to be better. It's a bloody strain. If you are the only one doing it, it worries you. It did make me pretty intolerable at times. I can't blame it all on them.

Before it all started to come apart, things happened for you very fast when you first came to London. Yeah. We found out about this London pub rock thing, which was a term I hated, and we were quite keen to get in on



Magic hands: Wilko at home with Allan Jones, February 4, 2013



HE DOES IT RIGHT

THE BARD OF CANVEY ISLAND

Wilko is a poet and artist, too...

“Lee was the most dynamically Canveyite,” says Julien Temple, “the one who ran away to go there. But Wilko is the poet of Canvey Island.” Wilko turned the Thames estuary into a place of mystery and wonder in many of his songs, writing about the floods, the oil fires and the eccentric population. The narrator of the pulpy “Sneakin’ Suspicion”, for instance, finds himself at “Midnight on the river/In the light of the flames/I’m staring at the water/And I’m trying to fit a number to a name.” Indeed, Wilko harboured teenage dreams to be a writer: “If I don’t make it as a poet by the time I’m 21, I’ll slit my throat,” he said. At Newcastle University, he “apprenticed” himself to poet Tony Harrison. He also took up art – great acid-inspired paintings – but abandoned it for rock’n’roll. His lyrics at least retained some of his poetic ambitions, the refinery of Canvey immortalised as “a tower of babylon”, Wilko and his future-wife Irene “in the long grass side by side/Where the big ships go gliding by/Skylark singing in the sun.” **NICK HASTED**

→ it. The first London gig was a bit of a letdown – filling in for Ducks Deluxe or someone and not many people came. But quite soon we were playing The Kensington on a Saturday, The Lord Nelson on a Thursday, and occasionally The Hope & Anchor and Dingwalls, and after that it happened very fast. We’d come from nowhere and some of these bands had been around for ages, but it was us things started happening for. It wasn’t a surprise to me that we became popular quickly. There was no-one else like us. No-one sounded like us, no-one looked like us.

How important was the way you looked?

What a band looks like is always important. But again, it wasn’t something we thought about too much. Lee always dressed like that, very sharp. Also we found you could go down York Road market and buy a suit for 30 bob. It really worked for us, because people could identify with us. You didn’t have to dress up in a cape or a pair of tights to see Dr Feelgood. It wasn’t like going to see Kiss. We had a really strong connection to our audience because of the way we looked and also through the songs.

At the time there was a lot of stuff about hobgoblins, rubbish really, that had nothing to do with anything. My first inspiration was blues, but I realised I couldn’t write songs about freight trains or chain gangs. There weren’t any on Canvey. So I tried to keep it all in Essex, to get the landscape, the oil refineries into the songs. Lee brought frustration and pent-up anger to them. That’s what connected us to punk. If we’d stayed together, we’d have fitted in perfectly with punk. In fact, we’d have walked all over punk. But by then it was all blowing up in our faces. People were more interested in the Pistols and The Clash. They weren’t interested in this band splitting up because of some obscure row. And in the excitement surrounding punk, we were forgotten.

We’d had a No 1 with *Stupidity*, which was a live album. I fought the record company over the way it should sound. In those days – and this is true – if you bought a live album, the only thing live about it would probably be the bass drum. The record company were putting pressure on [producer] Vic Maile to replace every snare drum beat. I refused to do any overdubs. This conflict went on almost until it was eyeball to eyeball. I said, “I’m doing it this way and that’s that.” And so we did. Fortunately it worked out.

Because I had this big success with *Stupidity*, maybe the band thought I was taking over. I’m sure that had something

to do with what happened next, which was basically them plotting to get me out. Before we went to Rockfield to cut the fourth LP, Lee and I went to Atlanta to meet Bert de Coteaux who was going to produce. We had three days together. We were friends again, hanging out. But as soon as we got to Rockfield, it was clear they wanted me out. Suddenly, there was a real animosity. Lee was one of the greatest people I’ve ever known. But at the end, there was a lot of bad feeling. It got nastier and nastier. I was completely isolated from the band. And then one day, I was out.

Did you feel bitter about the way you were treated?

I didn’t want to be bitter about Dr Feelgood because it was the greatest thing in my life. I was confused. I didn’t know whether to carry on, in fact. But I’d been in the music business for five years then and it’s a pretty good business to be in. So I thought, ‘Well, I’m going to have to try to carry on.’ But I attracted the worst people in the world around me and we carried on and ruined it. The whole business did no good to either side. They lost it and I didn’t have it. I’m quite good at what I do, and I was

holding my own. Then Ian Dury invited me to join the Blockheads. Ian was great – one unusual person. I did really like him. Also I found him to be the most offensive person I’ve ever met. Dear, oh dear, that guy could be so offensive. A lot of my time was taken up by smoothing over frightful situations that had arisen when Ian had one too many.

Did you keep up with the Feelgoods? The albums they did with Nick Lowe, for instance? No. Whenever I took interest, I wished I hadn’t. Everything was crap.

Did you ever make a reconciliation with Lee? No, I didn’t. We met on a couple of occasions, by accident, and we’d end up looking at our shoes going “All right...” When he was dying, my brother went to see him and he expressed a wish to see me. So I said, “They’ve got to send someone over to take me. I’m not going to go knock on

his door.” Nobody ever did. There were two occasions when the band nearly got back together in the year after the split that didn’t work out. One of them very nearly did. I was up in town and a mate of mine came in and said “Guess who I’ve been talking to?” I said, “Is it Lee Brilleaux?” He said, “I had a long talk with him and he’d like you back in the band. He really, really would.” I said “Would he?” ‘cos I was thinking the same thing. A few months later, this guy said, “I’ve gone so far as to make an arrangement for you to meet in The Ship in Wardour St, tomorrow afternoon.” Then I met this girl, and spent 48 hours with her. So I never met Lee and never really spoke to him again. That’s just the way things happen.

What are your plans for the next few months? We’re playing some dates in France that were scheduled before I was diagnosed and we’re doing an album. Because of my current circumstances, it’s going to be a quick one. No time for all that fiddling about with them knobs. We’ll just bloody record it. When we come back from France, we’ll be doing the UK farewell tour, which, obviously I hope I’ll be fit enough to do. I’m not going onstage ill. I don’t want people to see me like that. But I’ve got every reason to hope I’ll be fit to do those dates. If I can, it would be a consummation devoutly to be wished. I’ll be happy then. ☺

Wilko Johnson tours the UK in March. Thanks go to Joe Uchill

David Bowie

The Next Day

**The New Album
11.03.13**



"Shit seems to get weird every few years. That's when I write..." Matthew Houck in front of Queensboro Bridge, New York, 2013

Matthew Houck's quietly brilliant career fronting PHOSPHORESCENT has taken him from Alabama to Brooklyn and encompassed cosmic outlaw country, Crazy Horse jams, electronic washes and an ambition to match *Astral Weeks*. Now, after a ruined relationship, a restorative trip to Mexico and a stint in Hendrix's old studio, he might just have made his masterpiece...

Story: Allan Jones

Photos: Pieter M. Van Hattem

WHEN AT THE BEGINNING OF LAST year his life in New York started to unravel, Matthew Houck, still vaguely traumatised by nearly two years touring behind Phosphorescent's breakthrough album, *Here's To Taking It Easy*, did what so many before him have done, finding themselves standing in the rubble of love gone wrong. He took flight, fled the sour scene of unbidden heartache.

"It was a Sunday, about three in the morning. I was just a hot mess," he says. "I'd been thinking for a couple of days that I might need to actually leave town. I was in a relationship that was clearly at its end. That's never an easy time. Anyway, I felt a need to remove myself from my life, the scene I was in. Take a deep breath, you know, and just go. I went online and there was a flight from New York to Mexico, leaving in three hours. I took it."

He fetched up in Tulum, 80 miles south of Cancún on the east coast of the Yucatán Peninsula, a small resort popular with hippies, backpackers and the occasional celebrity, famous for its Mayan ruins and the Casa Magna, the former holiday home of Columbian drug baron, Pablo Escobar. This was where Houck started to write the songs that form the core of the new Phosphorescent album, *Muchacho*.

"I stayed in a cabaña on the beach," he recalls. "There was no running water and the power went off at 8pm. At night you had to work or whatever by candlelight until the electricity came on again in the morning. There were some hippies there and a lot of people who'd just checked out of their lives, like me. I wasn't really talking to anyone, to be honest. I was looking for solitude. I needed to be on my own to do the work that needed to be done."

"I'm not normally good at routines," he goes on. "I'm not what you'd called a disciplined songwriter. I can start a song really easy. I mean, give me a couple of minutes with an instrument and I can probably have a pretty good tune worked up real quick. But I often tend to leave them at that point, unfinished. When I was in Mexico, for the first time I forced myself to write, to sit there and actually finish songs and that's what I'd do. I'd write that second or third verse, wrap up that chorus."

"The only music I'd written since coming off tour was weird ambient pieces, nothing like the last album at all, and that's a direction I thought I'd go

GLOW YOUR OWN WAY

→ in on the new record, which was beginning to feel so different I actually thought of maybe putting Phosphorescent on hold and releasing the record under another name. But in Mexico, I started writing on top of those ambient pieces, and the songs started coming. The first one that came as a complete song was 'Muchacho's Tune', and that was when everything clicked for me. Everything came from that one song, the first song. The entire album followed. All these ideas that were just floating around, just out of reach, started actually to become finished songs. All of a sudden, I had nine of them."

And they were presumably inspired by recent turmoil? "Yes, I think so," he says. "The songs are always inspired by the circumstances I find myself in at any given time. It's like the catalyst for me sitting down and hammering out songs has pretty much always been when there's some kind of turmoil in my life. It's maybe a coping mechanism, something I turn to for comfort at times when shit gets weird and shit seems to get weird every few years, you know? That's when I write."

So this was an album born from crisis? "Aren't they all?" he says, laughing again.

YOU HAVE SEEN PICTURES OF HIM in which he has something of the look of a desert ascetic, a fuzzy hippy mystic prone to peyote visions, a great deal of staring into diminishing space and conversations with cooing seraphim. Today, though, he just looks fucked. "Band practice," he says by way of explanation. "One thing led to another and didn't stop there."

It's a Sunday afternoon towards the end of January. New York's light is already paling. Houck meets *Uncut* at Electric Lady, the studio built by Jimi Hendrix at 52 West 8th Street, in Greenwich Village, where Houck came to mix three of the tracks for *Muchacho*. There are portraits of Jimi on the walls of the stairwell leading down from a somewhat scruffy ground floor reception area, accessed directly from the street through a door you have to use a shoulder to open, Jimi in his braided military tunic, a stoned hussar. There are psychedelic

PIETER M. VAN HATTUM: GETTY IMAGES

"A song isn't a diary... I haven't made a Joni Mitchell record"

MATTHEW HOUCK



'I CALL THEM WHEN I NEED THEM, A BIT LIKE NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE...'

Matthew Houck on the band who aren't a band

"Phosphorescent has never been a band. I mean, I have a great group of musicians I tour with and they're amazing players, phenomenal. But except when we're on the road, we don't operate like a group. When I need them, I give them a call. It's maybe like Neil Young and Crazy Horse, to that extent. The way this record worked, none of it was done live. I did the basic tracks and had 24 hours when they'd come in and they played to the tracks I had ready, as they were needed.

"I did one record where I played everything and I think it suffered as a result. I think I'd be a fool at this point to play all the parts on a record when I know some of the best musicians alive. Believe me, if I could make it work more conventionally I would. I mean, these are really good people. We all love each other.

"But I have to work in a certain way, and sometimes I need to not have a lot of people around. I may be difficult to work with. I don't know. I'm super-picky, that's for sure. And I have

to be in control. There's never any question about who makes the final decisions. I enjoy losing myself in the studio. I can stay in there for days on my own. To the extent it gets things done, I don't mind the solitude. I'm not sure if it's healthy, as you can get so immersed. The separation between engaging the world on a sane level and making art of any kind can be pretty profound, which is weird, as any art is an attempt at communication. I think if I knew a different way of making records, I'd probably try it."

murals by Lance Jost on the walls of the long corridor that leads to the studio where Hendrix recorded and once held court. The room we are standing in feels spacious, though it's not large. Various instruments are scattered, although not untidily, around its curved perimeter. The atmosphere here is lulling. Hush prevails.

There's another studio upstairs, where someone is currently recording, no-one's sure who. Their session means Houck can't show me as planned the vintage desk he used to mix the tracks he brought here and no doubt explain its many intricacies. I try manfully to hide my disappointment and perk up noticeably when a drink is suggested.

We walk some distance to the East Village, across Broadway and Lafayette Street and down Great Jones Street, to the Bowery Hotel, into whose murky opulence we enter rather expecting to be turned away. The lobby and lounge through which we walk to the bar are low-ceilinged, sturdy beams above us, wood-panelling on the walls, thick ornamental carpets and rugs throughout. In bygone times, you can imagine it as a regular haunt for bootleggers, the occasional gangster and people otherwise perched unsteadily on the legal rim of things, their money made from not always legitimate activities.

Drinks are duly ordered and Houck is soon being served Johnnie Walker Black, on the rocks, in a glass big enough to hold a fair amount of the bottle the whiskey was poured from. The beer Matthew has ordered as a chaser seems highly irrelevant. A woman sitting nearby with hair that looks like the stuffing pouring out of a toy

lion torn open by a laughing cat is talking in a voice that sounds like a chainsaw howling through teak, shrill chums providing a caterwauling chorus. I'm relieved when the shrieking coven ups and leaves in a swirl of scarves, drapes and wraps, leaving behind them a trail of perfume that makes me cough like a Tommy in a Flanders trench, choking on mustard gas.

At least now, thankfully, I can hear Houck, whose voice is for the most part pitched not much higher than a whisper. He's telling me, I can now be sure, about growing up in a place called Toney, in northwestern Alabama.

"It had a population of 600 people," he says. "It was real small. It's not even really a place.

It's just a piece of land. There's no town as such. I don't know how growing up there affected me or shaped my personality. I had nothing to compare it to. I'd never been anywhere else. It's where I lived. As far as I knew, it was no different to anyplace else. I didn't grow up feeling especially isolated, although I guess that's what we were. I don't know if I'd be any different if I was from somewhere else."

When he mentions that his grandfather was a preacher, I'm just about to pursue a connection to songs on early Phosphorescent albums – I'm thinking of the eerie rapture of something like "My Dove, My Lamb" or the congregational sing-along of "Last Of The Hand-Me-Downs", the Pentecostal horns that pepper his records – when he heads me off, with another laugh.

"This wasn't like something out of Flannery O'Connor or *There Will Be Blood*," he says. "There were no rattlesnakes or speaking in tongues. It was definitely not a Southern revivalist church thing at all. There was none of that hysteria. It was much more straitlaced, pious. Very respectful and the hymns were beautiful. That's the connection, the hymnal quality. That's certainly a part of a lot of my music. I've always loved that hymn-like stuff."

By the age of eight, he'd moved with his family to the larger Alabama city of Huntsville, in the Tennessee River Valley. Music became a central focus of his teenage life, the usual stuff on the radio that anyone his age would have listened to, mostly hard rock and mainstream country, although he

would develop a taste for the harder outlaw country of Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings. Nirvana were an early inspiration and you can distinctly hear echoes of their signature thrum on a track like “You” from *Hipolit*, the self-released album Houck put out under the name Fillup Shack in 2000, although perhaps more typical of his music at the time is a song like “Down Roads”, which is reminiscent of Village-era Bob Dylan and sounds like it was recorded on someone’s back porch.

He was living by then in Athens, GA. Local label Warm put out a second album, *A Hundred Times Or More*. Its often rickety country-folk recalled Will Oldham, whose influence prevailed on 2005’s *Aw Come Aw Wry*, released by the Ohio-based Misra label, which also on stand-out tracks like “Joe Tex, These Taming Blues” introduced Stax horns to the mix and further embraced elements of gospel and Southern soul. When Misra label manager Phil Waldorf left to launch Dead Oceans in 2007, Houck was one of his first signings. “I’ve known Matthew for nearly a decade,” Waldorf tells *Uncut*. “It was a relationship I wanted to continue when we formed Dead Oceans. He’s making important, timeless albums, the kind of records that fans of great songwriters cherish forever. That’s why we want to be involved with someone like him.”

HOUCK’S DEBUT FOR DEAD OCEANS was 2007’s astonishing *Pride*, on which he played everything himself, as well as producing and mixing the thing. It was also the third album Houck put out as Phosphorescent, a name that sounds not lightly chosen. “It wasn’t,” he says. “I decided on the name specifically because of the idea of something being able to burn and produce light without combusting itself, without burning itself out and the fact that it self-perpetuates and never goes out.”

On *Pride*, Houck found more clearly than ever before his own artistic voice – or voices, at those moments where his multi-tracked vocals create a truly cosmic soundscape on psychedelic hymns like the nine-minute “My Dove, My Lamb” and the ravishing “Cocaine Lights”. There are miasmic sonic expeditions on *Pride*, as out there at times as Tim Buckley’s *Starsailor*. His fanbase was by now as devoted as mujahideen. What a shock to them Houck’s next record must’ve been. 2009’s *To Willie* was an album of Willie Nelson covers, inspired by *To Lefty From Willie*, Nelson’s 1977 tribute to Lefty Frizzell. For the album, he enlisted members of a crack bar band called Virgin Forest, who in various permutations have been with him since, Crazy Horse to his Neil Young, The Band to his Dylan. *To Willie* was a fabulous country rock album and less the career digression it seemed to some to be. Its follow-up was 2010’s swaggering *Here’s To Taking It Easy*, an album that evoked memories of ’70s Stones and Dylan, with echoes too of Neil Young on the smouldering guitar epic “Los Angeles”, which sounded like something that could have been recorded for *On The Beach* or *Zuma*. *Here’s To Taking It Easy* gave brilliant voice to Houck’s growing authority as a songwriter, arranger, producer and a singer with the vulnerable bravado of vintage



LIGHT FANTASTIC...

BUYERS' GUIDE TO MATTHEW HOUCK

HIPOLIT

SELF-RELEASED, 2000



Houck was still going under the name Fillup

Shack when he self-released this low-key set of delicate but fairly conventional folk tunes. Highlight is the country lament “Down Roads”.

6/10

A HUNDRED TIMES OR MORE

WARM, 2003



Still a vulnerable affair, Houck also wields that lonesome crack in his voice a little more brazenly on his first LP as Phosphorescent. Hints of the future can be heard on tunes like the rambling, harmonic drone, “Last Of The Hand-Me-Downs”.

6/10

AW COME AW WRY

MISRA, 2005



Here Houck expands his range considerably,

adding rock rhythms as well as pedal steel to the mix on songs like the febrile “Joe Tex, These Taming Blues” and the typically repentant “South (Of America)”.

7/10

PRIDE

DEAD OCEANS, 2007



This stunning cocoon of an album fuses soul, country, folk and hymns with cosmic spirituals and ethereal soundscapes, epitomised by the incredible ode to awe and trepidation, “Wolves”.

9/10

TO WILLIE

DEAD OCEANS, 2009



A new direction, as Houck hooks up with a band to revisit the Willie Nelson songbook, reinterpreting gems like “Too Sick To Pray” and “I Gotta Get Drunk” with a swagger rarely seen to date.

8/10

HERE'S TO TAKING IT EASY

DEAD OCEANS, 2010



Houck stuck with the band from *To Willie* and cut loose

on this confident affair, utilising his finest arrangements to explore golden age '70s country rock rhythms on swirling epics like the outstanding “The Mermaid Parade” and epic “Los Angeles”.

9/10

MUCHACHO

DEAD OCEANS, 2013



More of the above, although with synthesisers

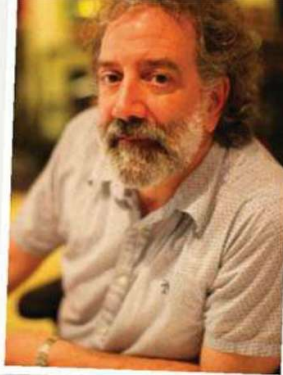
and drum machines adding to the rich palette this time around. Houck wrote much of the album in Mexico after fleeing a domestic crisis, and the Mariachi horns give a further melancholy twist to his usual forlorn and apologetic tales of feckless masculinity.

8/10

PETER WATTS

'I WAS SHIVERING. IT WAS SO INTENSE...'

Kurt Vile, Drive-By Truckers and Hold Steady producer JOHN AGNELLO on working with Matthew Houck



“Matthew had spent months working on his record, recording most of it himself. He had a bunch of awesome tracks, but he needed someone to help him put everything together. He felt with a lot of the tracks he had, there was too much stuff going on at the same time, so it was really about sorting out what the focus of the LP was...”

“The first song we mixed was ‘Muchacho’s Tune’. I had a day left over from a project I was working on and he came in and we just mixed for one day. That was two or three weeks before we got into the whole

record. That was the first full song I heard from the album. And I felt that was really lyrical – ‘I fix myself up to come and be with you’ is the big delivery line, and for me that tightens up the whole lyric. ‘Like the waves upon the sand, like the shepherd to the lamb... I’ve been fucked up and I’ve been a fool.’ Nothing is throwaway, there’s such emotion in what he writes.

‘Muchacho’s Tune’ is one of my favourites, as is ‘A Charm/A Blade’ and ‘Song For Zula’, the last one he finished.

“I’d look at the lyrics as I was mixing them. As I was going through the lyrics for ‘Zula’, I was

shivering, it was so intense. I totally wanted to know what the songs were about.

“Thematically, I think the record is all about loss and starting again, and it’s a lot about relationships, so when you hear him sing these lyrics with that emotion he sings with, his voice cracking, his extra ad libs, it’s so great. He’s such a great singer. We had a great time. You meet someone and you realise immediately they’re just vital people, Kurt Vile is like that. So is Matthew. It’s a real pleasure working with guys like him and Kurt, guys who are doing such wonderful music.”

Weeks. Scott Stapleton and Ricky Ray Jackson from his touring band provide spectacular piano and pedal steel parts and Bobby Hawk’s fiddle is often sensationally deployed. Houck’s voice soars, rising on thermal drafts. The lyrics typically are hallucinatory, visionary, by turns specific and oblique, like extracts from half-remembered dreams, endlessly revealing. Even as they appear to be giving nothing away, they tell you somehow everything. Houck baulks, though, visibly bristles, in fact, at the thought they will be taken as wholly autobiographical.

“They are first and foremost songs,” he says. “There’s a craft to songwriting and I think I’ve worked at it hard and long enough to be pretty good at it on occasions. You’re not just offering up the details of your life and what’s happening in it, like the pages of a diary or something. I mean, I haven’t just made a Joni Mitchell record.”

To what extent, though, do your songs feed off the specific traumas of your own life? “I’m always hesitant about going too deeply into this,” he says, a little uncomfortably. “Yes, there are specific events that were the catalyst for this record. But that doesn’t mean those events are the lifeblood of the songs. The songs and music exist independently of the things that may have given life to them. And while a certain amount of trauma was the catalyst for the album, trauma isn’t the record’s overarching theme. It was equally born out of ecstatic joy, my own failings and just the dumb shit I’ve done.

“There’s also a healthy dose of fiction in there,” he continues. “That shouldn’t be overlooked. I was reading an old interview with Warren Zevon and he made the point that songwriters are judged differently to other artists, filmmakers and novelists, for instance. It’s like there’s a different set of critical criteria. Songwriters are scrutinised in a different way. As a songwriter you end up being totally identified with your songs and what they say. You’re almost expected to write only about the things that happen to you, as if that will somehow make the songs somehow more ‘true’. It’s like everything you write has to be confessional, based on the specifics of your life. I’ve always wanted, and want still, to enjoy greater freedom as a writer than that.

“I think it was [American poet] Wallace Stevens who said something like the deeper you go into the personal, somehow the more universal all of a sudden something will become. The other argument is, open something up vaguely and that’s where the universality is. I don’t know which is most true. When I’m being specific in a song, I’m hyper-aware of what I’m doing it and it scares me. I don’t like to do that. But sometimes you have to. There’s no other way. But then you end up with a reputation for brooding and introversion or whatever and that’s who people start to think you are. They

can’t separate you from the songs.

“I was talking to someone about ‘A New Anhedonia’, from the new record,” he says. “And I explained that ‘anhedonia’ means the lack of being able to experience pleasure in things that should be pleasurable, losing the ability to take pleasure in something that was innately pleasurable or had been previously. All of a sudden things you would normally lean on hard to get out of a funk, all of a sudden those things disappear. The song asks what is there left when all these things fall away? What have you got? What are you left with? Sometimes it’s not much.”

“And he said, ‘But on the cover of the album [a rather racy shot of Houck in what looks like a hotel room with a couple of scantily clad beauties on the bed behind him] you’re laughing!’ That I looked happy in the picture was confusing to him. But I am usually happy. I’m not a wreck of humanity. I could see how you could think that if you had only some of the songs to go on, but they’re just part of the picture. He couldn’t understand the song came from a place I was in when I wrote it,” Houck goes on. “But I came back, you know?”

Muchacho is out on Dead Oceans on March 18

→ Gram Parsons. If it wasn’t exactly Houck’s *Born To Run*, it brought him even more lavish praise than *Pride* and his healthiest sales to date. He toured the arse off the album over the following two years. What kind of shape was he in when the touring was over?

“Not the best,” he says, not laughing now. “Whatever your best intentions, you fall into certain behavioural traps. That’s just the way it goes. It’s really not a lifestyle I’d particularly endorse or recommend. It’s not a healthy way of living and it does have repercussions, to say the least, on your well-being and the well-being of people around you. The kind of routine you get locked into breeds a mental laziness I don’t like. You get to a point where you just have to numb your mind. You have to shut down your mind, learn to function at a lower frequency, at least until showtime, which is the highlight of your day, or should be. I’m not complaining. I knew what I was signing up for, but it can be very confining. You’re just getting through the days, the weeks, the months. It’s a very frustrating way to live. At the end of all that touring behind *Here’s To Taking It Easy*, the last thing I wanted to do was just come back and crank out another record like that. I wasn’t real sure what I was going to do next, but I certainly wasn’t expecting it to be anything like the record I ended up making. I didn’t expect this record to come out the way it has at all. I really didn’t see it coming.”

BUT NOW IT’S HERE, AN ALBUM, as Matthew Houck describes it, of reckoning and redemption, about walking out of darkness into light. For a record that took eventual shape from bleak beginnings, *Muchacho* sounds often euphoric, giddily resplendent. Musically, it’s the most expansive album Houck’s yet made. The cunninglingual swirl of Mariachi horns melts into hazy clouds of synthesisers, strings cascade, at least once making you think of *Astral*

“The album was born out of joy, failings and the dumb shit I’ve done”

MATTHEW HOUCK

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Christine

THE HOUSE OF LOVE

This woozy ode to teenage heartbreak, inspired by the Velvet and Roxy, made Guy Chadwick and his young gunslingers late-'80s indie saviours. "I knew it was something special..."

T

HE HOUSE OF LOVE were a strange union between thirtysomething Guy Chadwick – a seen-it-all songwriter who'd already spent a decade in failed groups – and the youthful

vigour of his accomplices, particularly guitarist Terry Bickers. Signing to Alan McGee's Creation label in 1987 at the urging of McGee's then-wife, the band released a pair of singles – "Shine On" and "Real Animal" – before unveiling "Christine". With its hypnotic drones, layers of guitar reverb and blissful vocal harmonies – and influences ranging from The Velvet Underground to Roxy Music and The Beach Boys – "Christine" helped establish The House Of Love as one of the defining guitar bands of the late 1980s. But within a couple of years, the band lost their momentum. There was an overcooked second album – the product of a deal brokered with Fontana by McGee. Meanwhile, the band's drug intake got out of hand and, in 1989, Bickers quit amid rumours of nervous breakdowns or a suicide attempt. The band struggled on for a few more albums, before eventually splitting up in 1993. In 2003, The House Of Love reunited, with Bickers reinstated in the lineup. Today, "Christine" is very much a staple of the band's live set. "It was the first proper, focused pop song I'd written," explains Guy Chadwick. "As soon as I'd finished it, I knew it was something special."

JOHN LEWIS

GUY CHADWICK: I had spent most of the '80s in various failed bands. The songs were good, but I didn't really like the sound we were making. I wanted to make music inspired by the '60s – The Velvet Underground, The Doors, The Beatles – and it didn't help that I hated music in the mid-

'80s! There was one band called Reverb & Barbed which later turned into The Kingdoms, who ended up signing a two-single deal with RCA. After one single that didn't do anything, we were dropped. It was then that I decided I had to really work out what I wanted to do.

TERRY BICKERS: I was influenced by post-punk: John McGeoch in Magazine, Wire, Television, Echo And The Bunnymen, Siouxsie. And I was a big Police fan – I loved Andy Summers' use of the volume pedal!

CHADWICK: I used to record my demos in a flat in Finchley Road, near West Hampstead tube. It belonged to a friend with whom I was in a group. We stopped working together but he kindly let me use his stuff: bass guitar, drum machine, keyboards, four-track. I spent ages recording these quite detailed demos of several songs – including "Christine" – in that period between The Kingdoms and The House Of Love. I also felt the need to work with new musicians, so I advertised in the *Melody Maker*...

BICKERS: I answered Guy's advert and met him at his flat in Allingham Street, Islington, where he played me a cassette of this demo he'd been working on. "Christine" was almost all in place, and had a strong mood and a real atmosphere. Guy had the buzz-saw guitar riff,

KEY PLAYERS



Guy Chadwick
Songwriter,
vocals, guitar



Terry Bickers
Guitar, backing
vocals



Chris Groothuizen
Bass



Pete Evans
Drums



Pat Collier
Engineer, mixing



Peter Scammell
Video director

eighth-note bassline, and a drum machine. There was also a guitar line, a kind of solo, which needed development.

CHRIS GROOTHUIZEN:

I was living in the squat next door to Terry's in Camberwell, and heard him playing the demo to "Christine" at a party. I thought it was great and started a conversation with him. We were both into similar stuff: Bunnymen, Banshees, Cure, early REM.

The demo was more atmospheric and synth-based than what we ended up with, but still very good. When we started rehearsing I was still struggling to learn the bass – I remember Terry having to gesture me at the end of each eight-bar phrase, reminding me to change pattern!

PETE EVANS: I was in Reverb & Barbed with Guy, in about 1983, but kept in touch with him while he was in The Kingdoms. I remember him working very hard on those demos, and we all



Acrowd House:
(l-r) Chris Groothuizen,
Andrea Heukamp, Terry
Bickers (front), Pete
Evans, Guy Chadwick

used them as a template. If my drums sound very metallic and hypnotic, it's because I'm trying to copy the drum machine!

BICKERS: Guy was about 10 years older than me, and introduced me to The Velvet Underground. That fed into where we were at the time, even our look – the polo neck jumpers and black jeans and so on.

EVANS: We used a lot of hypnotic, Velvets-style repetition. Early versions of “Christine” were about eight minutes long! I think it was Alan McGee who encouraged us to edit.

BICKERS: I was playing a red CMI semi-acoustic, which looked like a Gretsch. Still play it now! I played it through a Fender Dual Showman in a cabinet I built with my stepfather. There were

lots of pedals; an MXR Distortion Plus, an MXR compressor and an Ibanez DM digital delay rack unit which had loads of cigarette burns on the top. That distinctive, wobbly “House Of Love

sound” came from a solid-state pedal, the Boss Chorus Ensemble.

CHADWICK: My guitar looked similar to Terry's, but it was an Epiphone. I played it through a great big Space Echo Chorus unit, as big as a shoebox. We'd divide the guitar parts between us, but I don't think we were ever precious. Terry was usually more inspired and came up with more interesting sounds.

BICKERS: The Beach Boys-style backing vocals were there from the very start, from the earliest rehearsals. We got very perfectionist when we got to the studio.

PAT COLLIER: We recorded it at my studio, Greenhouse, near Old Street in London. It was the main studio where Alan brought the Creation

bands. I worked with the Mary Chain, the Primals, Swervedriver, all that lot.

EVANS: With “Christine” I played to a click track but then stopped when it came to the guitar

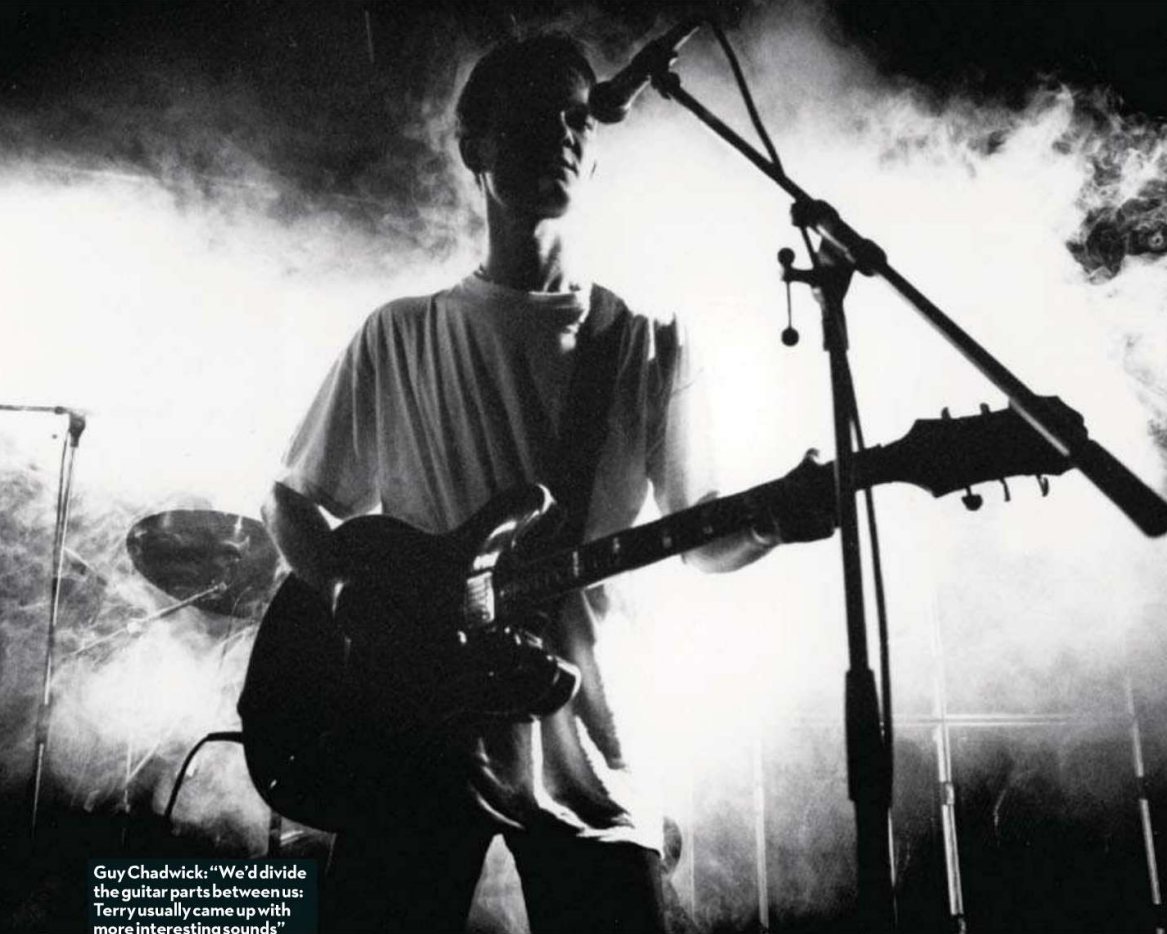
“They'd drive you
mad layering
guitars, but it made
sense in the end...”

PAT COLLIER

break that comes in about halfway through. Then it gets a bit freer. We did that a lot.

COLLIER: They were all exceptionally good musicians. With “Christine”, like most of their songs, they started by all playing live through the song. We'd isolate the bass and drums, which got locked down pretty quickly. Then we'd spend bloody ages as Guy and Terry fiddled around playing and re-playing and layering the guitars. They'd get radically different guitar sounds and use adjectives – “make it wobbly”, “use that jazz sound” – that only they'd understand. They have the most back-to-front way of working – they'll often start in the middle of the song and work backwards, they'll pile up layers of guitars and vocals and use up all 24 tracks on tape, and they'd drive you mad. But it all made sense in the end.

CHADWICK: It took a long time to mix “Christine”. The fundamental thing is that it has a constant, two-note guitar riff, set against a constantly moving bass riff. You had to be able to hear that. Alan McGee did a mix and described it as “chainsaw hoovermatic” – he drenched it in reverb and it sounded rubbish. Then we tried it, then someone else tried it. Eventually one of Pat's engineers, Iain O'Higgins, got it right. ➔



Guy Chadwick: "We'd divide the guitar parts between us: Terry usually came up with more interesting sounds"

➔ **GROOTHUIZEN:** Alan would only pay for another mix if we did it in some graveyard slot. So this poor guy Iain did it from about midnight until five in the morning. I remember Iain falling asleep on the mixing desk, his hand stretched out on a fader...

COLLIER: I came in that morning and they all looked like zombies. I played it and said, 'That's perfect.' They decided to add more vocals. They were obsessed with backing vocals! Andrea [Heukamp] was particularly good on the vocals.

CHADWICK: The riff and chord progression, if I'm honest, come from Roxy Music's "Over You" – I remember driving one day and hearing it in my head. I think the name "Christine" was the first word that came into my head when I started singing alone. The probable inspiration was a girl called Christine I'd been out with as a teenager – the first person who broke my heart. She'd had a kid not long after we split up, with someone else, so that probably inspired "*and the baby cries*".

BICKERS: I love the line: "*Still walking in me/ Still talking in me*". It suggests optimism, the idea of something being kept alive. It's as much about music as anything.

CHADWICK: A lot of my songs are about how I feel about music. I think that's true of lots of songwriters. "*The whole world drags us down*",

FACT FILE

- **Written by** Guy Chadwick
- **Produced by** The House Of Love
- **Engineered by** Pat Collier
- **Mixed by** Pat Collier and Iain O'Higgins
- **Recorded at** Greenhouse Studios, Old Street, London
- **Released** April 1988
- **Did not chart**

my favourite line in it, is about how difficult things are when you're a struggling artist. That's a killer!

GROOTHUIZEN: Andrea's backing vocals were a key component to the way Guy wrote and structured his songs. It changed when she left, musically and personally.

EVANS: It was a shame Andrea left. She was homesick for Germany, and I think she wanted to play bass, not guitar. There was always tension – at the first rehearsal I remember

seeing her outside, crying. Everyone in the band was friendly, but we were never really friends.

GROOTHUIZEN: When Andrea left it definitely became more... blokeish. A bit wilder.

CHADWICK: Were drugs involved? Not in the studio, not while we were on Creation. The drugs came in when we started touring, it was not healthy. I find it a little bit annoying that Alan McGee rather romanticises that side of things.

BICKERS: The drink and drugs got worse when we'd signed to a major label, and were expected to deliver singles to order. It's the hackneyed story of bands, they start to have some success and it all goes pear-shaped.

CHADWICK: "Christine", like the entire first album, was incredibly cheap to make. Compare it to the second album – where we spent six very expensive weeks at Abbey Road on sessions that

were dumped, as well as £130,000 on sessions with Stephen Hague that were never used. Shocking! The first album cost peanuts: around £250 or £300 a day for five days recording and four days mixing. So the whole LP cost less than three grand. The video for "Christine" cost nothing – it was a favour from an old friend, Peter Scammell.

PETER SCAMMELL: I'd just set up a video company called State, with Anton Corbijn. Guy was an old mate and he came to visit me in this Dean Street office and played me a tape of "Christine", which I loved. The videos I'd been working on, for Erasure, Lenny Kravitz, Bryan Ferry, The Banshees and The Creatures, used lots of fast cutting. I wanted to do the opposite – long, lingering, photographic images.

CHADWICK: I loved the video! I had this idea we could be in Val Doonican jumpers, with acoustic guitars on stools.

SCAMMELL: I did it as a

favour. I only had six rolls of 8mm film, and we shot it in a photographic studio in Covent Garden used by Guy's girlfriend – now wife – Suzie Gibbons, who also did their sleeves. I didn't want to do an orthodox shoot with a drumkit. I thought posing the band with acoustics made them look more fragile, a contrast to this mash of distorted guitars. I possibly overdid the out-of-focus thing! I wanted it to take off when the guitar break kicks in, so we filmed a couple kissing. I think that was Pete and his girlfriend. We turned the cameras sideways and played it in slow motion, it looked more sexually suggestive and voyeuristic.

GROOTHUIZEN: We were asked to perform on the *South Bank Show* awards. That was a real accolade, usually meant for bands at the pinnacle of their career, not bands who'd just started!

EVANS: I remember having my make-up done next to Melvyn Bragg! The afternoon rehearsal went really well. Unfortunately, for the evening performance, in front of the audience, the roadie forgot to plug in Terry's guitar, so it sounded terrible, like a damp squib. Fortunately, they'd recorded our earlier version, and broadcast that.

GROOTHUIZEN: I think the later music we did, on Fontana, doesn't really stand up as well, but "Christine" sounds tremendous to this day, especially considering the budget.

CHADWICK: "Christine" was never a hit but it still has a huge resonance. We always play it live – if we didn't, the crowd would bloody kill us! 🎸

*The House Of Love release their new LP, **She Paints Words In Red**, through Cherry Red on March 25*

TIMELINE

1984 Guy Chadwick splits up The Kingdoms
1985 Chadwick starts to record a series of demos, including "Christine", "Destroy The Heart" and "Real Animal"

1986 Chadwick places advert in *Melody Maker*, forms The House Of Love
January 1987 The group sign to Creation after "bombarding" Alan McGee with

copies of the band's first demos
May 1987 House Of Love release debut single "Shine On"
July 1987 Release second single "Real Animal"

October 1987 Compilation of early singles and B-sides, aka 'The German Album', released on Creation/
November 1987 Record "Christine" in

Greenhouse Studios. Andrea Heukamp leaves the band
April 1988 "Christine" released
June 1988 *The House Of Love* album is released



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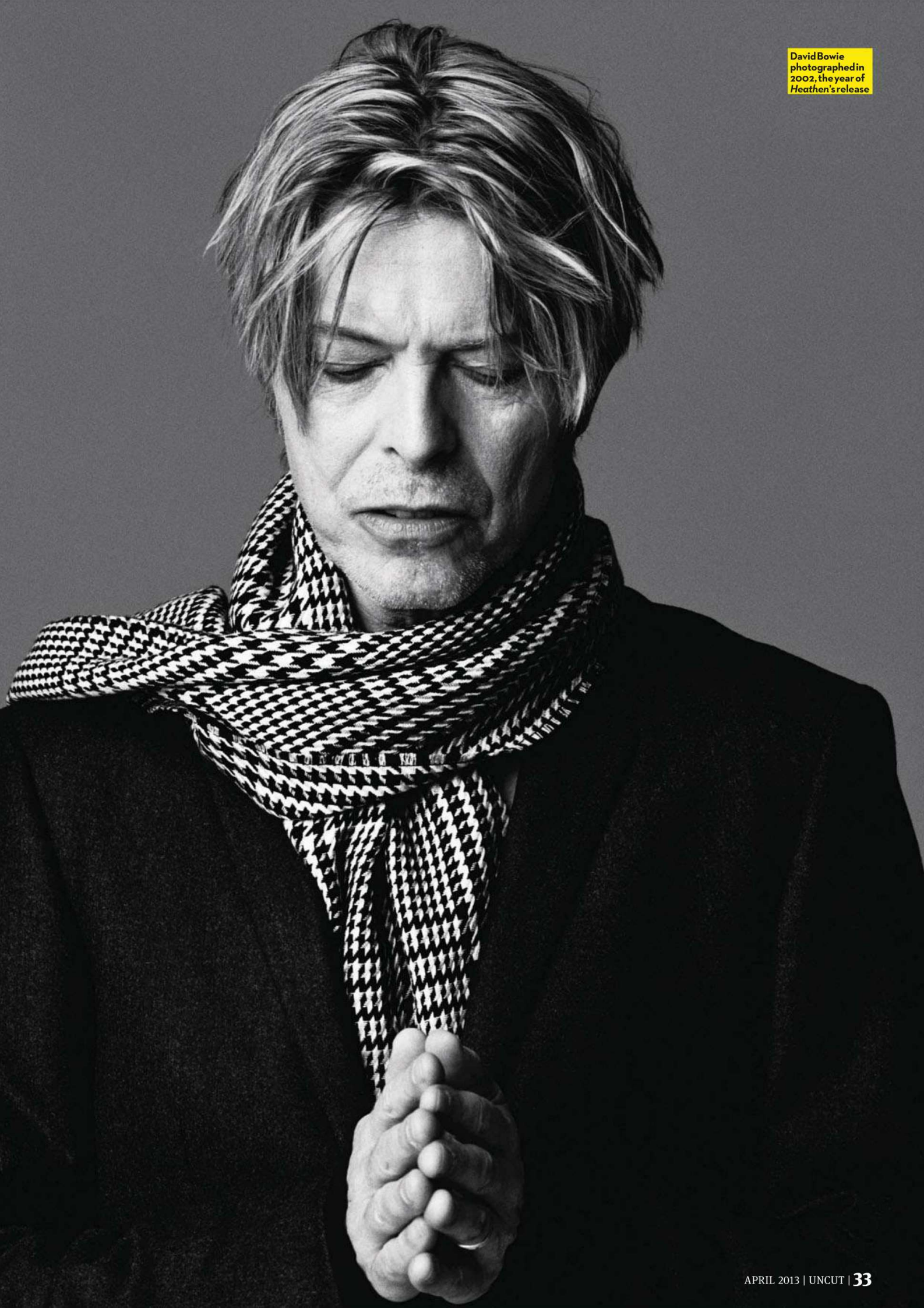


Why has he come back?
Because he has plenty to say,
and new ways of saying it.
Because he couldn't keep
silent any longer...

Religious dissidents and juvenile delinquents, Greenwich Village and Potsdamer Platz, doomed soldiers and vacuous celebrities... To mark the auspicious arrival of DAVID BOWIE's 24th album, David Cavanagh files the epic, definitive review of *The Next Day*. Plus: we talk to Bowie's key collaborators this time round, and discover he's been surprisingly busy since 2003.

Photo: © Masayoshi Sukita

David Bowie
photographed in
2002, the year of
Heathen's release



THIS IS HOW IT ENDED. The crowd booed and catcalled. Bowie reeled away in pain. When he returned to the microphone, his voice had a bitter rasp. “Yeah, let’s do that again all fuckin’ night! Where *are* you, creep? Yeah, I guess it’s easier to get lost in the crowd, you bastard.” Reports of the incident swept the internet: a lollipop had been thrown by a fan in an audience in Oslo, hitting Bowie straight in the eye. It rivalled the Lord’s Prayer at Wembley as the most bizarre event of his performing life. A week later, in Prague, Bowie complained of chest pains. A trapped nerve in his shoulder, they said, but within 48 hours he suffered a heart attack at a festival in Germany. It was June 25, 2004. The rest of the tour was cancelled as Bowie underwent emergency surgery on a blocked artery. After the operation came the shutdown, the withdrawal. No albums, no tours, merely rumours of ill health and retirement. Five years became six, and eight became nine, and the world accepted that Bowie’s remarkable career in music was over.

This is how it starts. The crowd are baying for blood. A man is chased through the streets and dragged to a river on the back of a cart. Dead bodies pile up on the shore. There’s a “purple-headed priest” whom everyone is terrified of. Are we listening to the fate of one of the Tudor heretics? Or a dissident of the Catholic Church in John Wycliffe’s time? Perhaps the action takes place in an even earlier century, like the 11th, where the priests, omnipotent and supposedly omniscient, “*can’t get enough of that Domesday song*”. Bowie comes to a climactic line and lets fly with a roar that almost strips the skin from his mouth: “*They know God exists FOR THE DEVIL TOLD THEM SO!*”

Drums pound. Guitars slash. Bowie is tortured and left to writhe in a “*hollow tree*”. Death is approaching, but when? Barely conscious, he watches the shadows lengthen as the day dawns and dims. “*And the next day, and the next day, and the next...*”

It’s 2013. David Bowie has re-entered the building.

JANUARY 8 WAS a Tuesday. We awoke to headlines that made us rub our sleepy eyes in disbelief. Bowie had stolen in like a thief in the night, uploading a new single on his 66th birthday (“Where Are We Now?”) and announcing the March release of an album (*The Next Day*) that had been recorded in conditions of Freemason-esque secrecy. “Where Are We Now?”, an elegy to Berlin and Iggy Pop, was the sound of an ageing Bowie, a frail Bowie scouring his memory for video

footage of his past. The song was comparable to two of his finest latter-day ballads, “The Loneliest Guy” and “Thursday’s Child”, but was sadder than either because you could hear that he was struggling to sing.

Bowie’s singing is magisterial, spanning an actorly range of voices with consummate ease...

WHO’S WHO

STERLING CAMPBELL (DRUMS)

Joined Bowie’s band in 1992 and served until the end of 2004’s *Reality* tour.

“Two and a half years ago

David took myself, Gerry Leonard and Tony [Visconti] and found some rinky-dink studio to keep it low-key. He was trying out a bunch of ideas and we weren’t even sure if it was going to be a record. I’ve been playing with David since *Black Tie White Noise*, so it wasn’t like there was this crazy new approach. But David would be in the room playing with us, which doesn’t happen a lot. Even the drums bleeding into his mic became almost part of the concept. The special stuff is David’s songwriting, he’s always got a sense of adventure. When we were playing these songs they just had working titles. Then David started switching things, so I don’t really know what I’m playing on. It’s like, ‘I don’t know if it’s gonna be a boy or a girl!’”



But a magician must perform to deceive in order to lay his trick. “Where Are We Now?” was a classic case of misdirection. Bowie “wanted to sound vulnerable”, revealed co-producer Tony Visconti, his relief exploding like a cork from a bottle now that he was finally free to discuss the project. *The Next Day*, Visconti stressed, was an album of “blistering rock” and we were unlikely to glean too many clues from the single. But by the simple expedient of identifying a handful of Berlin landmarks, Bowie ensured that the public would be primed to expect melancholia, old haunts, fading memories and bygone. They’d be tantalised by the prospect of this legendarily enigmatic man looking back over his 66 years in a mood of regret (or maybe pride) and phrasing his mortality in verses of honesty and disclosure. The public is about to get the shock of its life.

One of the album’s characters is 22. Another is 17. Another could be as young as 14. Far from concerning itself with Bowie’s demise, two songs openly wish death on others. If Bowie was granting interviews, which he isn’t, there are four songs that he’d be quizzed about by every journalist in every city. One of them is so provocative that when *The Next Day* goes on sale in Hollywood, A-list celebrities will start texting each other in a panic. Bowie’s singing on the album is magisterial, spanning an actorly range of voices with such consummate ease that other singers will be left wondering how he does it. There are some criticisms, of course; it’s not a flawless masterpiece and it loses its way badly in the middle. But its aggression and intelligence demand our unconditional attention. The lyrics are fascinating. There’s



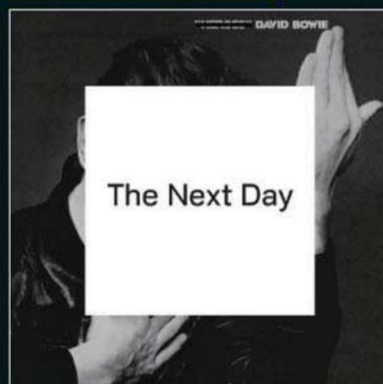
Bowie in The Magic Shop, NYC, 2012

more language to engage with than on any Bowie album, arguably, since *Outside* – quite an achievement as *Outside* was virtually a novel. Bowie's lyrics, in fact, provide the answer to the question Why Has He Come Back? He's come back, clearly, because he has plenty to say, and new ways of saying it, and couldn't keep silent any longer.

ALOUD DISCHARGE FROM the drums (whoomph!) and we're in. Harsh guitars dominate the early proceedings. This is the title track and it's super-intense. This is music that wants to get us in a headlock and throw us around the room. We hear a Public Enemy siren squeal and the first words on a Bowie album in 10 years are: “‘Look into my eyes,’ he tells her/‘I’m going to say goodbye,’ he says, yeah.” Bowie’s punching out the lyrics with the same insistent rhythm that he used in “Repetition” (on *Lodger*), but much fiercer, emphasising key words with a teeth-bared shout. He takes us on a tour of the alleys, shows us the disease-ridden townspeople, introduces the “purple-headed priest” and holds us spellbound as the song races headlong towards the gallows.

After that thrilling entrance, “Dirty Boys” is an abrupt detour. It has a wonky rhythm that grinds and grimaces. A frazzled guitar (Earl Slick) makes some splintery “Fashion”-esque outbursts, but the sparse ambience is closer to Iggy Pop’s *The Idiot* than to *Scary Monsters*. A baritone saxophone enters with a lurch, almost comically, as though playing along to a film about a man with a pronounced limp. Bowie sings in a peculiarly chewy voice, if you can imagine him sucking a gobstopper ➔

THE NEXT DAY



7/10

Release date: March 11

Label: RCA (UK), Iso/Columbia (US)

Formats: CD, deluxe CD (with three bonus tracks), iTunes, double vinyl

Produced by: David Bowie and Tony Visconti

Recorded at: The Magic Shop and Human, New York City

Musicians: David Bowie (vocals, acoustic guitar, keyboards, string arrangements), Gerry Leonard (guitar), David Torn (guitar), Earl Slick (guitar), Gail Ann Dorsey (bass, bk vocals), Tony Levin (bass), Zachary Alford (drums), Sterling Campbell (drums), Steve Elson (baritone sax, contrabass clarinet), Antoine Silverman, Maxim Moston, Hiroko Taguchi, Anja Wood (strings), Henry Hey (piano), Tony Visconti (guitar, bass, recorder, string arrangements), Janice Pendarvis (bk vocals)

Miscellaneous:

- There are no cover versions on the album, but “How Does The Grass Grow?” uses an ‘interpolation’ of The Shadows’ 1960 hit “Apache”
- If *The Next Day* reaches No 1 in the UK, it will be Bowie’s first chart-topping album since *Black Tie White Noise* in 1993
- “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)” will be the second single, out February 26

→ while trying to impersonate Edward Fox. “*I will buy you feather hat/I will steal a cricket bat/Smash some windows, make a noise/We will run with dirty boys.*” They’re a gang. A bunch of violent kids whose “*die is cast*”, who “*have no choice*”. There’s something jagged about the language that smacks of *A Clockwork Orange*, and Bowie’s stylised voice seems like an extra device to validate the hoodlums’ behaviour as literary, rather than mindless, destruction. We leave them to their nightly ritual.

A primary characteristic of *The Next Day* is the way in which it catapults us from one scenario to another, often across continents and centuries, requiring us to readjust and get our bearings. If the first song was set in the Middle Ages, and the second in some imaginary North London, the third, “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)”, takes us to Hollywood and New York where the parties and premieres are strictly invite-only. It’s sure to be one of the most talked-about songs on the album.

It begins with swishy confidence, busily arranged to bolster a disappointingly plain chord progression. There are three guitars (Bowie, Gerry Leonard, David Torn), a baritone sax and contrabass clarinet (both played by Steve Elson, a veteran of *Let’s Dance* and *Tonight*), a recorder (Visconti), a four-piece string section and two female backing singers. A snappy vocal hook is heard from time to time, giving the song a Style Council pop-soul tinge. The lyrics make a few punning connections between stars in the sky and stars in the movies, and then, without warning, Bowie goes on the attack.

Fame, he once commented, puts you there where things are hollow. Many songwriters of his vintage have railed at the ersatz celebrity of reality TV and *The X Factor*, but Bowie sounds like he’s going after the big guns, not the small fry. “*The stars are never far away... They watch us from behind their shades... We see Jack and Brad from behind their tinted windows... The stars are never sleeping... Dead ones and the living.*” This is *Stepford Wives* territory: celebrities with no lights on inside, menacing, robotic, inhuman. Bowie, losing

WHO’S WHO

TONY VISCONTI (PRODUCER)

“If people are looking for classic Bowie they’ll find it on this album,” Tony Visconti told *Billboard* when news first broke of *The Next Day*. “If they’re looking for innovative Bowie, new directions, they’re going to find that on this album too.” He went on to herald the record as “extremely strong and beautiful”, adding that “you could tell from the beginning that the songs were stunning, even in primitive form.”

Visconti, of course, was Bowie’s go-to producer during his classic ’70s years, before rejoining him for *Heathen* and *Reality* in the early 2000s. Since then he’s been highly active. Most notably as producer of the Manic Street Preachers’ *Lifeblood* (2004), Morrissey’s *Ringleader Of The Tormentors* (2006) and a pair of albums by Alejandro Escovedo, *Real Animal* and *Street Songs Of Love*.



patience with them, portrays them as a shamed, scared tribe huddling together in tight packs, bonded by paranoia, with radiant smiles but vacant eyes, and with – get this – “*child wives*” in tow. “*We will never be rid of these stars, but I hope they live forever,*” he concludes with derision. If it had been written by Brett Anderson, “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)” would have minimal impact. Coming from Bowie, a celebrity at the absolute pinnacle of the pecking order, it’s an extraordinary declaration of contempt for a society of untouchables. Many of them will strain to catch every nuance of “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)” while asking themselves if Bowie – one of their own – has coldly despised them all along.

THE TORRENT OF Bowie headlines on January 8 amounted to a campaign that no advertising company’s budget could have bought. Inevitably, interest in Bowie will have been reawakened right across the age spectrum, including tens of thousands, at a conservative estimate, who haven’t bought a Bowie album in many years. These people will flock to *The Next Day* and digest it in isolation. For them it will be an album without backstory or context. But it can also be seen – *should* also be seen – as the third album in a sequence that got under way at the start of the millennium.

Rekindling his relationship with producer Visconti after 20 years, Bowie released two albums – *Heathen* (2002) and *Reality* (2003) – that have quietly assumed the grandeur, if not the commercial status, of late-period classics. Though they have their differences, *Heathen* and *Reality* share a seriousness, a love of texture and an ambiguity of expression that allows multiple meanings to be read into them. In *Heathen*’s case, it came to be seen as Bowie’s response to September 11. For *Reality*, substitute the Iraq War. Bowie has a way of composing lyrics in non-linear

TONY VISCONTI: REDFERN

Ground control room: Tony Visconti, Bowie and engineer Brian Thorn at New York’s The Magic Shop studio recording *The Next Day*





Cappeople:
Bowie in 2012

fragments, but with manifest emotion within those fragments, so that the finished song seems to apply both to him and to mankind as a whole. He's anxious. It's an anxious world. He feels alone. The world is a lonely place.

The Next Day has that geopolitical portentousness that *Heathen* and *Reality* had, without specifying nations or leaders. Many of its characters are helpless or hopeless, either out of reach or out of their depth. Something has angered Bowie to the point of slamming down his fist. He's reminiscent of Peter Finch's distraught newscaster in *Network*: "I don't have to tell you things are bad. Everybody knows things are bad." Finch ends his broadcast, you'll remember, by urging Americans to get up from their armchairs, throw open their windows and shout: "I'm as mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!"

So along with the clanging guitars, a grim trepidation courses through *The Next Day*, like the frozen urban tundra that formed the landscape of Anthony Moore's brilliant post-punk LP *Flying Doesn't Help*. In more chilling moments one can detect the footprints of Scott Walker. It doesn't have to tell us things are bad. We know things are bad. It cannot be said to have a unity of theme (Bowie may one day inform us to the contrary) and it lacks a unity of genre, but *The Next Day* can perhaps lay claim to something more intangible: a unity of climate. As much as it's all-new and shiny, it does sound like *Heathen* and *Reality*'s natural successor.

WERE RESUME. TRACK four: "Love Is Lost". Bowie holds his hands down on a keyboard, producing dramatic chords. Zachary Alford (who played drums on *Earthling*) inserts an idiomatic "Ashes To Ashes" catch in the beat. Gerry Leonard's bluesy guitar fills have a touch of Stevie Ray Vaughan on *Let's Dance*. A glam-rock refrain ("say hello, hello") takes us even further back.

"Love Is Lost" is about an emotionally disturbed 22-year-old woman. She's alone and awake in "the hour of dread", "the darkest hour". It crosses the mind for an instant that Bowie might have devised a character through which to explore some dread of his own (is this going to be a song about dying?), but the lyrics become brutal and personalised as he adds more detail. "Your country's new, your friends are new/Your house and even your eyes are new/Your maid is new, and your accent too/But your fear



Bowie, with Gail Ann Dorsey, headlining the Isle Of Wight Festival, June 13, 2004

WHO'S WHO

ZACHARY ALFORD

(DRUMS)

With a CV that includes Springsteen, the Manic Street Preachers and The B-52's, Alford last played with Bowie on 1997's *Earthling*.

"We all played live, so it was very organically played. And David was just happy as a clam. He was keen to keep the momentum going, because that's what he feeds off. The album is reminiscent of his early records in some ways. If you listen to *The Man Who Sold The World* and "God Knows I'm Good", they're evocative of folk or country. We had a couple of tunes that were country. But it's a new millennium record, he's not trying to make it sound like his old stuff. Although there was one song from the *Lodger* sessions. The working title was 'Born In A UFO'. My jaw dropped when he played it, because I could hear [drummer] Dennis Davis in there. My hunch is it's now called 'Dancing Out In Space'. On one song I changed the beat and David said, 'I like that!' and went in a new direction. He said, 'I'm going to change the lyrics. It was originally going to be about prostitutes at the Vatican!'"

GAIL ANN DORSEY

(BASS)

Bowie's live bassist of choice since 1995, up to and including the *Reality* tour, and key player on 1997's *Earthling*.

"I played fretless bass for the first time on this record. It was all done in a totally old-fashioned way, with everybody in the room together, laying down at least the basic tracks. I also went back later to do backing vocals and some lines that David and I sang together ["If You Can See Me"]. The song I'm playing fretless on is pretty spectacular because it's in this ridiculous time signature. It's 7/5 or something, a strange looping, limping time signature that's really very cool. The rest are a real mix, with different moods and textures. They're different from anything else that's going on in the music world. The main thing I noticed about David was that he seemed really comfortable in his own skin. There's nothing to prove anymore. So he had a kind of relaxed, total confidence, just enjoying the process of making the music. I don't think I've ever seen him this settled."



David Bowie and band at Madison Square Garden, October 1996: (l-r) Zach Alford, Reeves Gabrels, Bowie, Gail Ann Dorsey and Mike Garson

JIMMY KING; RETNA; GETTY IMAGES

WHO'S WHO

EARL SLICK

(GUITAR)

Bowie's on-off lead guitarist since 1974's *Diamond Dogs* tour.

“When you’ve been working with somebody that long, even when you haven’t seen them for a while, you fall back into the routine in a heartbeat. The first thing that me, David, Sterling Campbell and Tony Visconti did was cut three brand new tracks from scratch. One is a mid-tempo cool thing, then we did a couple of rockers. I overdubbed ‘Set The World On Fire’ later. The key to any rock record, especially one of David’s, is spontaneity. I’d get a take on a song straight away, whether it reminded me of *Station To Station* or *Scary Monsters* or whatever. From a guitar point of view there were a few songs that just hit me and David, that needed a kind of Keith Richards rhythm. I ended up just doing what came naturally and it worked. The whole thing was so secret that Gerry Leonard didn’t even tell me he’d been in before me, and we’d had coffee together a number of times. I said to him: ‘You bastard!’ But we all understood that’s how it was. That’s David’s call. After 40 years of working with the guy, you have to respect that.”



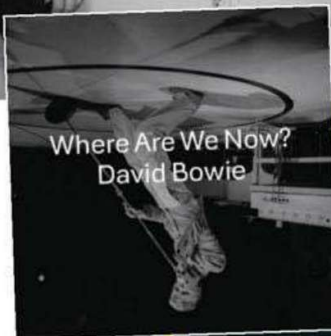
Bowie with artists Jacqueline Humphries (the other face of the doll in the “Where Are We Now?” video) and Tony Oursler (the video’s director)

→ is as old as the world.” Another radiant starlet whose smile masks a secret despair? Whoever she is, her mind is disintegrating as she stares at her superficial construct, her plastic lie. Bowie ends the song with anguished cries of “Oh, what have you done?”

The single, “Where Are We Now?”, arrives next, all Potsdamer Platz and elegance, decelerating the album’s heartbeat and slowing its blood to a trickle. *The Next Day* has become a sombre study of unhappy people depleted of energy. The teenage boy in “Valentine’s Day” is not unhappy, but he’s deeply troubled. He has fantasies about ruling humanity with a jackboot. He has an “icy heart”. He looks harmless with his “tiny face” and “scrawny hands”, but we do fear the worst. The musical references are to the past: a Ziggy-style vocal and a whiff of Lou Reed’s “Satellite Of Love” (from *Transformer*), which Bowie co-produced. But Valentine doesn’t live in London in 1972. More like Colorado or Ohio right now. Something’s about to happen. Valentine is poised to act. The song has unspoken premonitions of a Columbine massacre.

Bowie and Gail Ann Dorsey duet on “If You Can See Me”, a bewildering piledriver of a track. Counting the beat is impossible in its outlandish time signature. Performed and sung at the edge of hysteria, it’s as frantic as the industrial cacophonies on *Earthling*, with some voice gimmickry that speeds Bowie up to gnome-like pitch. “If You Can See Me” is an experiment in pushing everything, including us, to the limit. The verses are couched in abstracts. Blue shoes. A red dress. A ladder. A crossroads. “Meet me across the river.” Children swarm like “thousands of bugs” towards a beacon on a hill. In one of the album’s most exquisite passages, Bowie lowers his voice to a lordly baritone and croons: “Now, you could say I’ve got a gift of sorts/Veneer of rear windows and swinging doors/A love of violence, a dread of sighs.” But children don’t swarm of their own volition. The beacon on the hill is anything but a place of safety. When the lordly voice reappears, there’s an unstable edge to it, the shrillness of megalomania. The character is unmistakably a monster. “I will take your lands and all that lays beneath... I will slaughter your kinds who descend from belief... I am the spirit of greed.”

A medieval despot? Or did Bowie have someone more modern in mind? And is everyone on *The Next Day* going to turn out to be violent and insane?



Where Are We Now?
David Bowie

WHO'S WHO

TONY OURSLER

Video director of “Where Are We Now?”

“AT FIRST I wondered if I’d be able to live up to a project like this, given the gravity of the situation, the surprise of coming back after ten years of silence. But I listened very carefully to what David was saying and he already had this crystallised, fully articulated image for the video in his head. There were a few things that we teased out together, so it’s a kind of overlapping collaboration that gave birth in my workshop. Those dolls you see – those doppelganger electronic effigies – are a trope I’ve been using in my work since the early ‘90s. David used those in ‘97 for his 50th birthday party at Madison Square Garden, which was the first time we really did anything together. So he took me to his studio, where he had them out of storage, and said: ‘Let’s just use these.’ It was wonderful to see the birth of this song riding in on some kind of electronic magic carpet in my crazy studio.”

FOR REASONS BEST known to Bowie, the album has a tendency towards bland songtitles that reveal nothing of the turbulent worlds inside. “I’d Rather Be High” is about a 17-year-old soldier flown to Cairo to join his regiment. They have received orders from “generals full of shit”. The soldier has sympathy for his enemy (“I’d rather be dead, or out of my head, than training these guns on those men in the sand”). He worries about going crazy and dreams of home. “I’d rather smoke and phone my ex/Be pleading for some teenage sex.” Zachary Alford adds to the authenticity by thrapping out a military drum pattern behind Gerry Leonard’s guitar, but “I’d Rather Be High” could do with some of the melodic unpredictability of “Never Get Old” (from *Reality*), which it faintly resembles. As it is, there’s no transcendence, no lift-off. “I’d Rather Be High” grumbles about generals, shoots and leaves. →

The teenage boy in “Valentine’s Day” is troubled. He has fantasies about ruling humanity with a jackboot



BOWIE'S 'QUIET' 10 YEARS

Since the *Reality* tour of 2003-'04, Bowie has cut right down on his musical output. Though he's been far more active than you might think...

2004: Duets with Australian songwriter Butterfly Boucher on a new version of "Changes" for DreamWorks flick, *Shrek 2*

2005: Records vocals for "(She Can) Do That", co-written with Brian Transeau, for film *Stealth*

September 2005: Performs "Life On Mars", with Mike Garson on keys, at the Fashion Rocks Awards at Radio City Music Hall in New York. Arcade Fire then back Bowie on "Five Years" and "Wake Up". A week later they perform "Queen Bitch" and "Wake Up" at CMJ Summerstage in Central Park

2005: Sings on Kashmir's "The Cynic", from the Danish alt-rockers' *No Balance Palace* LP

January 2006: Attends the New York opening of a Lou Reed photography exhibition at the Gallery at Hermès

2006: Credited as executive producer on doc, *Scott Walker: 30 Century Man*

2006: Sings backing on TV On The Radio's "Province", from *Return To Cookie Mountain*

2006: Plays Nikola Tesla in Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige*, with Christian Bale

May 2006: Guests with David Gilmour at the Albert Hall for "Arnold Layne" and "Comfortably Numb"

September 2006: Appears as himself on *Extras*, serenading Ricky Gervais' character with "Chubby Little Loser"

November 2006: His last live performance to date, joining Alicia Keys at New York benefit show, the Black Ball. Bowie sings

"Wild Is the Wind" and "Fantastic Voyage" and duets with Keys on "Changes"

April 2007: Attends the *Vanity Fair* Tribeca Film Festival Party in New York

April 2007: Bowie is among the guests as Lou Reed accepts the George Arents Pioneer Medal, at Syracuse University

2007: Voices villain Maltazard in Luc Besson's animated film *Arthur And The Invisibles*

May 2007: Curates the 10-day High Line Festival in New York

2008: Voices Lord Royal Highness in *SpongeBob's Atlantis SquarePantis*

2008: Plays a supporting role in Austin Chick's *August*, with Josh Hartnett and Rip Torn

2008: Features on "Falling Down" and "Fannin Street", two songs from *Anywhere I Lay My Head*, Scarlett Johansson's album of Tom Waits covers

January 2009: Attends the premiere of son Duncan Jones' directorial debut, *Moon*, at the Sundance Festival in Utah

April 2009: Joins Duncan for the New York premiere

2009: Cameos as the subject of the male lead's hero worship in musical comedy *Bandslam*

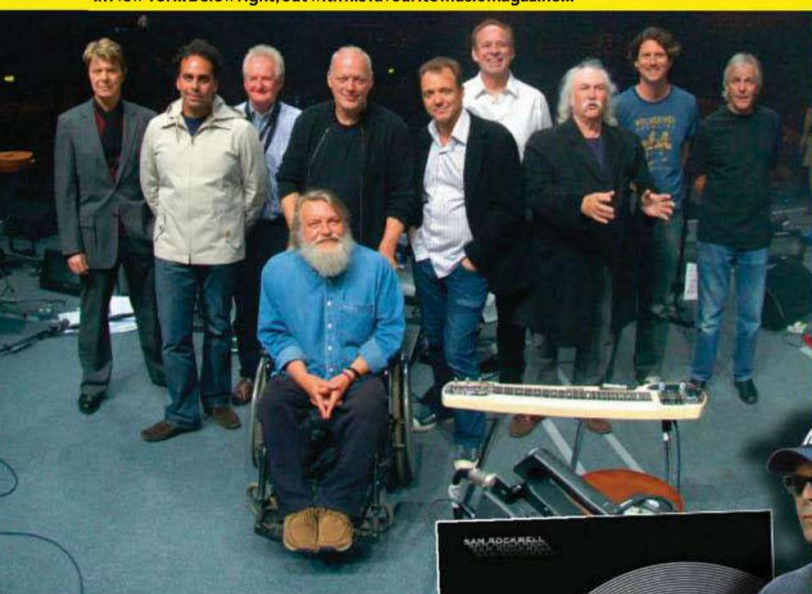
January 2010: Releases live album and DVD *A Reality Tour*, recorded in Dublin in Nov 2003

June 2010: Attends the late Les Paul's '95th birthday bash' at New York's Iridium Jazz Club

June 2010: Goes to the CFDA Fashion Awards at the Lincoln Center, NY, with wife Iman

April 2011: Bowie and Iman attend the DKMS' 5th Annual Gala: Linked Against Leukemia, honouring Rihanna and Michael Clinton, at Cipriani Wall Street, NY

Top: Bowie as Nikola Tesla in *The Prestige* (2006). Above, with Arcade Fire at Fashion Rocks, 2005. Below, at the Syd Barrett tribute with Dave Gilmour, Robert Wyatt, Phil Manzanera, David Crosby and Richard Wright. Bottom, Bowie at Lou Reed's photography exhibition in New York. Below right, out with his favourite music magazine...





WHO'S WHO

GERRY LEONARD

(GUITAR)

Dublin-born guitarist, Bowie's musical director on *Reality* tour

“I acted as band leader through the *Reality* tour, so it kind of clicked back into place when we did these sessions. We’d all huddle around the piano and David would play a rough demo that he’d either made at home or that we’d done back in November 2010. Then we’d all go to our stations and work on sounds and ideas. The sessions all moved really quickly, but were never rushed. David likes to work hard in short bursts and get it done. At times we were tracking a song and he was writing lyrics at the same time. It was almost distracting. One time he called me back in: ‘Just trust me and bring a favourite guitar.’ He and Tony had sourced a ’70s Marshall stack from a picture of a rehearsal room back in the Mick Ronson days. It’s always so satisfying to play electric guitar with David. He’s the only singer I ever worked with who asks me to play louder: ‘Sounds great, Gerry! Can you turn it up?’”

➔ “Boss Of Me”, co-written by Bowie and Leonard, is a feisty mid-tempo track like “Dirty Boys” with more of the colours filled in. Again, Steve Elson’s baritone sax is prominent and the backing vocalists return. All the same, it’s one of the least interesting songs on the album, with some crude changes as if ill-fitting pieces of unrelated songs had been clomped together as a compromise. There’s also a naggingly subliminal association with Peter Gabriel’s “Sledgehammer”, which it could’ve done without. The charmless punchline (“Who’d have thought a smalltown girl like you would be the boss of me?”) might have graced a Mick Jagger solo album, if it were lucky, but is an incongruous piece of misogyny here. “Dancing Out In Space”, which follows, is equally inconsequential. A bouncy pop tune that revives the classic Supremes beat (“You Can’t Hurry Love”) which inspired Bowie and Iggy’s “Lust For Life”, “Dancing Out In Space” has twinkle-star keyboards and wears a mid-’80s party frock. It’s conceivable that it wants to be “Let’s Go Crazy” by Prince – when it grows up, anyway – but the lyrics are trite and it’s hard to care about a sugar-candy throwaway after the action-packed 25 minutes before it. Who puts a trailer in the middle of a film? Getting *The Next Day*’s psychological measure is tricky enough without being waylaid by a song whose chorus sounds like Darts singing about the boy from New York City.

The album is slipping away. But before we know it, we’re back in wartime. “How Does The Grass Grow?” fades in like Robert Fripp’s looped army of guitars on Fripp & Eno’s *No Pussyfooting*, a nice illusion since Fripp doesn’t actually play on the album. A soldier is writing a letter to his sweetheart back home. He urges her to go to a graveyard near some steps (“That’s where we made our tryst”), a line that recalls Wilfred Owen. We remember from our Bowie biographies that a grandfather, Jimmy Burns, fought in the First World War. “The 3rd Hussars were sent to France and a week later rode into the battle at Mons,” Peter and Leni Gillman write in *Alias David Bowie*. By winter 1914, the Hussars were “stricken with frostbite, the horses up to their hocks in mud”. Sure enough, the song’s chorus goes: “Where do the boys lie?/ Mud, mud, mud!/ How does the grass grow?/ Blood, blood, blood.”

A metallic riposte after the Motown interlude, “How Does The Grass Grow?” has a compassionate anti-war message, but is undermined by a curious Bowie-Dorsey vocal part that imitates the twangy melody of The Shadows’ “Apache”. Bowie may have been seeking a Joe Meek-ian otherworldliness, and so used a tune from 1960, but the “Apache” motif takes only two listens to become irritating. Three and it becomes a serious issue. Much more appealing is a transition midway through in which the musicians relax and Bowie sings romantically in a “Wild Is The Wind” style.

The next track is the heaviest on the album. “(You Will) Set The World On Fire” stomps in with a staccato riff like early Van Halen or Rainbow’s “Since You Been Gone”. It features a strikingly eccentric Bowie vocal – think of a barmy aristocrat whom the family keeps locked in the attic – which instantly puts us in mind of



The many faces of Bowie: (clockwise from this shot) the spiky *Earthling* look, the *Heathens* sophistication and *Reality*’s smart-casual guise

A piano is tinkled as two lovers stroll. Then the lyrics get a bit nasty. Then they get very nasty...



“Look Back In Anger” (*Lodger*). But we need to go back as far as *Hunky Dory*, and a strange young man with a voice like sand and glue, to pinpoint the location of “(You Will) Set The World On Fire”. It’s midnight in the Village – Greenwich Village in the early ’60s. Candles are lit in a nightclub. There are hints of furtiveness and concealment. “You say too much”.

Kennedy is mentioned, and Dave Van Ronk and Bobby (Zimmerman) and there’s a “Joan” whose surname may be Baez. A young singer is hoping to break out of the Village and make her name. The pummeling chorus taunts and sneers about “magazines”. Earl Slick pulls off a bravura solo. “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire,” said St Catherine of Siena (1347-80).

The penultimate track, “You Feel So Lonely You Could Die”, is a ballad with a string arrangement that brings vivid flashbacks of the Ziggy era. “Rock ’N’ Roll Suicide” looms unmistakably into view, as does Lou Reed’s “Perfect Day”. A piano is tinkled sweetly as two lovers stroll through a park. Then the lyrics get a little bit nasty. Then they get very nasty indeed. “I’m going to tell the things you’ve done.” The lovers have separated, and now one of them is hellbent on exposure, incrimination, the apportioning of blame. Bowie launches into a devastating indictment of a person he once loved, singing like a wondrous union of himself, Piaf and Morrissey. The song will have everyone speculating. Is he writing in character? Or is the target real? Bowie sounds consumed with pain. “I want to see you clearly before you close the door/A room of bloody history/You made sure of that.” He twists the knife. “I can see you as a corpse... I can read you like a book!” And now the sexual jealousy: “I can feel you falling/ I hear you moaning in your room/Oh, see if I care! Oh, please, please, make it soon!” It’s mighty, mighty stuff. When it’s over, you want to rise to your feet, cry ‘bravo!’ and fling bouquets at the stage.

A BUYERS' GUIDE

LATE-PERIOD BOWIE

Six albums you might have missed

**THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA**
(ARISTA, 1993)

Bowie had married Iman. Tin Machine had folded. *Black Tie White Noise*, co-produced

8/10

with Nile Rodgers, had topped the British charts in April 1993. Then a real surprise later that year: *The Buddha Of Suburbia*, commissioned to accompany a BBC2 adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's novel. Not strictly a soundtrack, *Buddha...* was a return to the restlessly experimental Bowie of *Low* and *"Heroes"*. There were avant-garde loops, dark ambiances, weird jazz, Mike Garson piano frenzies and deeply odd instrumentals. The poignant title track (a more conventional song) looked back to Bowie's South London adolescence: *"vicious but ready to learn"*.

**OUTSIDE**

(ARISTA, 1995)

A 75-minute concept album reuniting Bowie with Brian Eno, who co-wrote and co-produced. *Outside*

9/10

(sometimes written as '1. Outside') was a detective story about a girl's death. Its murky narrative was cut up by a special computer programme – the 'random' Bowie was back with a vengeance – and similar methods applied to the music, which customised harsh hip-hop beats, violently distorted guitars (Reeves Gabrels), Garson's off-message piano and all manner of Eno treatments. "The Hearts Filthy Lesson" was heard in 1995's most disturbing thriller, *Seven*, while David Lynch used "I'm Deranged" in *Lost Highway*. That's the kind of company *Outside* keeps.

**EARTHLING**

(BMG, 1997)

Released a month after Bowie's 50th birthday, *Earthling* was a controversial move into drum'n'bass,

7/10

influenced by Photek and others. Bowie was accused of dilettantism (ironic, since he'd always had magpie tendencies) and of being too old to understand the drum'n'bass culture. But there was another influence on *Earthling*: The Prodigy. Bowie, in the unlikely role of a twisted firestarter, was almost submerged by the juddering breakbeats, the bass bombs and Gabrels' squealing guitars. Yet the songs somehow held their own: "Little Wonder" and "Telling

Lies" had distinctive Bowie melodies, and "Seven Years In Tibet" was a belter.

**'HOURS...'**

(VIRGIN, 1999)

Abandoning electronica's cutting edge, Bowie made an album dominated by ballads. Gabrels,

6/10

never the most restrained of guitarists, behaved impeccably. The music was melodic and unthreatening, yet Bowie's lyrics were anything but calm. Many wondered what exactly he was trying to say: he seemed fearful and uneasy. After a leisurely first half ("Thursday's Child", "Survive", "If I'm Dreaming My Life") *'Hours...* toughens up and shows a wilder side ("What's Really Happening?", "The Pretty Things Are Going To Hell"), but it was, and remains, a lowly ranked album in his catalogue.

**HEATHEN**

(ISO/COLUMBIA, 2002)

Bowie had intended to release an album called 'Toy', a mix of new material and old songs from 1964-71. A change

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of plan led to *Heathen*, co-produced by Tony Visconti who'd last worked with Bowie in 1980. Keeping two tracks from 'Toy' ("Afraid" and "Uncle Floyd", retitled "Slip Away"), *Heathen* added seven new songs and three covers: "Cactus" (Pixies), "I've Been Waiting For You" (Neil Young) and "I Took A Trip On A Gemini Spaceship" (Legendary Stardust Cowboy). Out of these implausibly diverse elements grew an album of angst and atmosphere, massive in scope – and a huge Bowie statement. 'Toy', officially unreleased, was leaked online in 2011.

**REALITY**

(ISO/COLUMBIA, 2003)

A keen Dandy Warhols fan, Bowie reached into his pop locker and surprised anyone expecting a Sturm und

8/10

Drang follow-up to *Heathen*. *Reality* was almost beat group music, with glorious tunes ("New Killer Star", "Never Get Old") and a commercial sound. But heavyweight themes lurked beneath the shiny surface. "She'll Drive The Big Car" was about a spiritually unfulfilled woman committing suicide. "Fall Dog Bombs The Moon" was about George W Bush and Dick Cheney. Old friend Lou Reed hailed the haunting ballad "The Loneliest Guy" as one of his greatest ever lyrics.

Nightmares pervade the final track, "Heat". A sinister synthesiser buzzes in a low drone. A bass guitar snarls like a guard dog. Someone is having upsetting visions. A dead dog trapped between the rocks. The water can't flow because the dog is wedged tight. "My father ran the prison/I can only love you by hating him more/That's not the truth/It's too big a word." Bowie is muscling in on Scott Walker's terrain here – both vocally and lyrically – and when the eerie violins start to screech, "Heat" can no longer hide its palpable debt to Walker's "The Electrician" (1978), a song that Bowie has long admired. Walker was writing about the horrors of electric shock torture in a South American police station. Bowie's homage, sadly, is too woolly to be convincing. It's a deflating sensation to see him end *The Next Day* with a song so brazenly in thrall to a better one.

Visconti has claimed that 29 tracks were recorded, which augurs well for another album in due course. Three bonus cuts from the sessions are included on *The Next Day*'s deluxe edition. They're worth hearing. "So She" is a charming frolic through a Serge Gainsbourg '60s pop paintbox, with lush strings and a glockenspiel melody that Stereolab would be delighted with. "Plan" is a short, unfriendly instrumental. "I'll Take You There", the best of the bonuses, is a driving rocker loaded with hooks and a terrifically catchy chorus ("What will be my name in the USA?/Who will I become in the USA?"). Hypothetically, it would have maximum singalong interactive potential for a suitably pumped-up audience. Realistically, nobody knows if Bowie's going to perform live again.

So it didn't turn out to be an album of ruminations, reveries and ghosts. The theories about *The Next Day*'s title invoking Beckett and *Macbeth* proved unfounded. The passing of the days – endless days, blank days – has always been present in Bowie's work, from "All The Madmen" to "Buddha Of Suburbia", and it remains so. The days can look after themselves. The characters that we are, however, seem to be gaining frightening momentum as we hurtle towards the collisions that await us. Bowie has given us that much to ponder, and more besides, as he withdraws once again. **U**

The CHANGES Collection, by David Bowie & Masayoshi Sukita, their signed series of archival grade artist prints from www.genesis-publications.com; Tel: +44 (0) 1483 540 970; Price £1,900. For more on Bowie, see March 2 issue of NME



“I refuse to be nice”

Story: Jaan Uhelszki

Photo: Henry Diltz

Introducing the lesser-spotted **STEPHEN STILLS**. Neil Young’s “soul brother”, and a gentleman with “a taste for the posh”, who can, admittedly be “cranky, but a lot of it’s a put-on”. As a boxset of his momentous career emerges, Stills sets many records straight. Like: how did CSN really get together?

SITUATED ON ONE of LA’s more notorious stretches of road, half a mile down from Jack Nicholson’s stucco house and just east of the digs where Lennon lived during his 18-month ‘Lost Weekend’, is Stephen Stills’ Grange house. Set behind a deceptively primitive looking wooden fence, with a street lamp that seems purloined from *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*, you’ll find a discreet electric gate. Beyond that, a long graded road drops down into a small valley, and suddenly a large stone storybook house appears out of the fine grey mist. A piece of white paper taped to one of the front door’s windows threatens, “Take Off Dirty Boots by order of the Momagement!” It’s clear who’s in charge here: Stills’ wife of 15 years, Kristen Hathoway, whom he met when she was managing a recording studio.

A housekeeper lets me in, but not before inspecting my footwear. Satisfied, she leads me through the sprawling single-storey house, past interlocking rooms and a sunken lounge to a large dining room, leaving me in front of a long, polished oak table. I take a seat at one of the intricately carved chairs, festooned with small acorns, the sign of eternal life. A good symbol for a man who recently beat prostate cancer.

Everything about Stills’ home whispers gentility and understatement. There is little evidence of his history in Buffalo Springfield, CSNY or Manassas here. There are no

gongs or guitars on display. While there are a few photos of Stills onstage, they’re outnumbered by pictures of his family. The only concession to what Stills does is a stack of black and white images from the cover of his upcoming career-retrospective boxset, *Carry On*, signed with his distinctive double S signature, mimicking the shape of a guitar.

“I’m sorry if I’ve kept you,” the 68-year-old says. “I have Pilates three times a week, and I hate to miss it.” That, and weighing himself four times a day allowed Stills to shed over 40lbs before Buffalo Springfield’s 2011 reunion tour. Today, he’s even slimmer. His eyes are icy blue, his hair a dirty blond, his smile devilish and knowing. But the thing you notice most is that he’s an unrepentant raconteur. Spend 10 minutes with Stills, outfitted in his pea coat and perfectly cut trousers, his ready laugh and quick wit, and you’ll see what Hendrix, Clapton, McCartney and countless others were drawn to.

UNCUT: Looking at the finished box, did that make you see how accomplished you were when you were young?

STEPHEN STILLS: Well, I had schooling. I had classical training so I kind of knew what I was about.

Were you always so brutally confident? Actually, I was incredibly self-conscious and shy. Bashful is the great word for me.

➔ Where did you learn so much about music?

When I was about five or six my family went to Louisiana and one of the first things we did was go to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. Back then, it was perfectly OK for a five-year-old white boy to go and sit on the side of the street and watch the Zulu parade go by. It's the night parade of all the Indian tribes two days before Mardi Gras. I watched the whole thing and it absorbed into my DNA. To the marrow. At three, I had tap lessons and I can still send my little feet scraping across the floor and finding rhythm. I've always had a sense of a pocket, a groove, a rhythm, that's driven quite a few drummers and other musicians crazy. I tend to say, "Will you just quit rushing?"

You started as a drummer? Yeah, I was a drummer first.

In [producer] Arif Mardin's book, he talks about your keen sense of rhythm. He stole my heart. He was such a master, the kindest, gentlest. He was one beautiful man.

Despite your reputation for being kind of a hard ass, you seem to bring out the best in people. I can be cranky, but a lot of it's a put-on. My father was really a sarcastic son-of-a-bitch. My sense of humour is based around that and needling. Going to military school, being on teams and in bands, you're needling each other all the time. Some people are put off by that and some people think that's good guys-manship.

Do you deserve any of your reputation? I'd rather not be conscious of it as otherwise it's unnatural and false and I'm just another poser even though I can get caught out being demanding. Sometimes I get frustrated and say, "Will you please do what I ask?" I can get a little cross. But to quote Arnold Palmer, "I refuse not to be nice." The older I get, the more dedicated I am to that. If I do have a flash of temper, I feel horrible about it later.

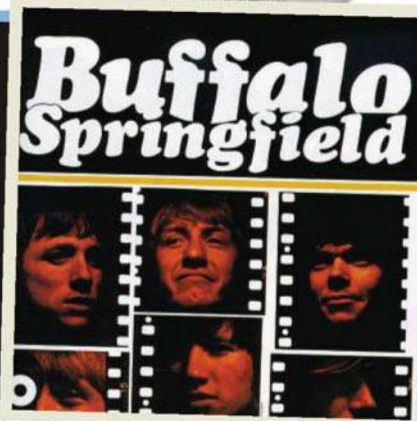
What did you learn about yourself from working on the boxset? All I'd done was move house for my entire life. I went to five different high schools and two boarding schools, and three other schools. I was the perpetual stranger, so that's what I wrote about on that first song, "Travelin'". But the fingerpicking was there. On that tape



Long may he run: Stephen Stills in 2013

"Neil Young is my brother. It's like we bonded so deep..."

STEPHEN STILLS



the fingerpicking emerges whole. That's exactly the way I play now. I had only learned the guitar a year and a half before – before that I played drums. Somebody had a baritone uke and that was the first thing I played. When my family lived in Costa Rica, there was nothing to do at night. I had a guitar so after I'd finish homework, I'd go in the bathroom to get away from my sisters fighting with each other, and I'd play guitar until my hands were falling off.

Does it amaze you that you could pick up so much back then? I had this jackhammer

thumb. I've got carpal now, so it's not as strong as it used to be. There's an "ow" moment where I first pick up a guitar and I have to brace myself for it, then it sort of settles in.

You've got a bigger range than most people with your thumb... Well, maybe everybody except Jimi Hendrix.

Are you really the outsider you often insist you are? There's a certain element that seeks to remind me I'm not.

Did you have a sense you were making history in the Springfield at the time? No. I was preparing to.

My favourite story about you is when you were in LA driving with Richie Furay and across the road you see a black hearse with Canadian plates and immediately know that it has to be Neil Young and Bruce Palmer. Yeah, I see the Ontario licence plate. Wait, that's a hearse from Ontario. I know who that is. "Get around this guy, let me out the car." I screamed. I jumped out, tapped the window and said, "Neil, it's me."

Was he surprised? No, he wasn't. But that's Neil. I said, "I was looking all over for you." He said, "This is how dorky we were. We went to 77 Sunset Strip [TV show]." That was part of the attraction. We're both kinda dorky.

Did you know how extraordinary Buffalo Springfield was? Looking back, would you have done anything differently? I knew we were doing something special when Bruce was there. Everything slowed down and we were The Rolling Stones. We cooked like blazes. When Bruce was gone, Dewey [Martin] would get all amped-up. Dewey was a baseball-playing Nashville guy who took these pills. So we got to the studio and we were very excited, and everything was sped up so fast that it sounded like an all-insect orchestra. When we walked in to do our [2011] reunion, Neil and Richie were singing "Go And Say Goodbye" at the original speed, and it was like they were leaping up and down like insects. I went, "Stop right there. I cannot listen to that. Take that record. Put it into the thing in ProTools that lets you make it go slower without changing key. They have that now, don't they? Yes, they do. It's easy." Then I said, "I will come back and practise that song when you have done that." Of everything I detest about digital, the fact you can do that and put it back on a piece of tape, is like magic.

Buffalo Springfield were my Beatles. What were they to you? Well, not *that* of course. We never made any money. I had a Ferrari and a cabin in Topanga, and I managed to get my little sister into Stanford.

Didn't you have a Bentley, too? I still do. I've got a different Bentley now, but they loom large in my legend. I get the most understated one I can 'cos I want the very fast living room. It's posh. I am posh, I will admit it. I've got a taste for the posh.

I can see that by your jacket. Well, it's a Tom Ford. I suffer for my good taste sometimes.

RUCKUS'N'ROLL

"I SAW A WHOLE BATTALION OF COPS..."

Stills on the November 1966 LA demo that inspired "For What It's Worth"

"The way I saw it, the riot on Sunset Strip was really a funeral for a bar. Pandora's Box was where you started and ended each evening. It was on the island in the middle of Crescent Heights, they were going to have to bulldoze it so they could make the big shopping mall and change the street. I was living in Topanga Canyon, and a friend and I went over on Laurel Canyon to go clubbing. When we came over the Canyon and came down that straightaway into Sunset, we saw a whole battalion of cops lined up on one side of the street. They were in full Macedonian battle array, and there were all kids hanging on the other side. The only other time I'd seen this had been in one of the attempts to overthrow the Somoza government in Nicaragua. I said, a) 'Turn the fuck around and go back to Topanga. We do not want to be anywhere near here. This could go south so far, so fast about, over nothing.' And, b) 'I need a guitar.'"

"WE WERE VERY CLOSE..."

Stills recalls his friendship with Jimi Hendrix

After they both performed at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, Hendrix went to Stills' beach house along with Buddy Miles. "I wished I had had a tape recorder running that day," Stills sighs. "Me, Jimi and Buddy Miles went out there and we played through the night, into the dawn. That's how I really became a guitar player." While Hendrix played on Stills' debut solo album, and they often spoke about recording an album together, very little exists from the sessions that they did together - although one track "No-Name Jam", appears on *Carry On*. "The only tapes I have of Jimi and I are just all rubbish. They were rolling tape but we were just wandering around, searching for something to play. "We were very close. We were very brother-like. But getting together was a pain in the ass because there was always this mob scene. But we would make room for each other. There is a picture of Jimi and me at the studio and I'm teaching him 'Woodstock', who I was going to teach that arrangement to first."



Lounge music... Buffalo Springfield, 1967: (l-r) Bruce Palmer, Stephen Stills, Neil Young, Dewey Martin, Richie Furay

Did you always know how to dress? Well, yeah. You go to military school, you're going to learn how to turn out. My dad was a pretty stylish guy. I gravitated to friends who knew how to dress and when I'm in a proper store with a proper guy, I actually get into getting fitted.

So the rest of us were just hippies and you were dressing well. Well, just look at how McCartney dressed in *Help!*.

You've been sober for quite a long time. Do you miss drinking? I don't like it anymore. I don't like being hammered. I'll have a drink. I quit for 10 years and I was craving a steak with a marbled fat, and it's like you need a mojito with that. It's the best thing you can do to your arteries before you eat something like that because it's got citrus in it and it'll make everything go right through.

Do you miss the drugs? I've seen the pictures. They're ugly. Giving up pot for me was really easy. I would be driving and Crosby would do shit like before we'd be going into a business meeting. He would light up this stultifying shit, and I'd say, "We're going to a business meeting, are you nuts?" They would do it anyway, and I couldn't get out of the room or away far enough away from it, so I would go in and my mind is going so fast, I can't speak. So we just watched seven million dollars fly out the window because we're too stupid to micromanage something that's actually important. I don't hold anything against him, all he did was do what he always does. Once, I was going to the airport to pick up someone and I was at Crosby's, and I got in the car and I was on the freeway, and then I wasn't on the freeway. And I do not get lost.

That's like your metaphor, you don't get lost. I don't get lost. You can throw me in town and I'll just look at the trees and be still for a minute and I know where I am.

It's funny that being still should be important to a man called Stills. I thought it had to do with a whiskey still... coming from a family of drunks. Hearing Judy [Collins]'s stories recently about her father's drinking. I didn't know about any of that. I was so oblivious, so smitten.

You were really smitten, given the number of songs you wrote about her. Were you like Romeo and Juliet? We got out before we got to that point. We didn't let them get us. There was a lot of brother and sister to us, too.

Can we talk a little about another important union, The Stills-Young Band? What was that like for the two of you?

It was the most fun we had forever. But the band was not preconditioned to act like Crazy Horse and play whatever, and change the set every night. We didn't have time to learn enough songs, and some were more complicated than three chords, so Neil got bored. The band was a little stiff and there were too many of them. That's the short answer. I thought the cover [*Long May You Run*] was the best cover we ever did, it was hilarious. It was great fun to get Neil down to Miami. He immediately bought an old trumpy yacht and learned how to drive it, complete with driving into the dock.

I think he likes Florida because it reminds him of some of the better times with his mom. They used to go to Florida and we were probably about 20 miles apart several times in our lives, when we were little boys.

Would you say of everyone in CSNY, you two were the closest? By about five miles. Neil and I are soul brothers, no matter what craziness he does. I think it's probably because we both have a taste of autism. Graham's my brother, but Neil is really my brother. It's like we bonded so deep that he's actually going to be pissed if I don't call him soon.

You portray women so beautifully in songs. Oh, my goodness. I've never been told that before. That's like little goose bumps. I grew up with two sisters and I have the loveliest, smartest women around me, and they're not game players. Game players are quickly driven out.

Did you always know you had a good voice? Yeah. They put you in the front centre of the choir, that's a clue.

Do you feel musicians are wired differently to the rest of us? It's trying to express why do we have music? Or art? Because we need something beyond words to communicate the profound. Language isn't sufficient, but visual art and music have the ability to communicate the profound. You can do it in a phrase and a glance, because it's got the whole body involved and speaks to the whole body, because sound is analogue. The universe is analogue. It's manipulation of cells and molecules. So when you're struck by that, the thought combined with the mode of the chord, it touches your emotion and you feel what was said and all that led up to that key ➔



10 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT STEPHEN STILLS...

1 Stills persuaded Eric Clapton to guest on his debut album in return for showing him how he got his acoustic guitar sound. "I said, 'Deal!' We did that and then we played 'Tequila' all night long."

2 One of Stills' teenage bands, The Continentals, included future Eagle, Don Felder.

3 Stills gave Chris Hillman a rare 1939 Lloyd Loar Gibson mandolin when he joined Manassas.

4 Stills has covered four Neil Young songs. "New Mama" (Stills, 1975), "The Loner" (Illegal Stills, 1976) and "Only Love Can Break Your Heart" (Right By You, 1984). 2013's *Can't Get Enough*, recorded with Barry Goldberg and Kenny Shepherd, will include an instrumental of "Rockin' In The Free World".

5 Stills' first solo album, released in 1970, featured a purple polka dot giraffe on the cover. It was thought to be a message — reportedly to Rita Coolidge. To this day, Stills refuses to reveal the truth.

6 While living in the UK, Stills owned two thoroughbreds, Major Change and Crazy Horse.

7 Stills wrote CSN's "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" on shirt cardboard, explaining that "I used cardboard shirt-



blocking, you know those things from the cleaners — 'cause they were harder to lose than pieces of paper and they didn't crumple up. I could line them up on music stands and they'd stand up."

8 When Stills moved to Colorado in 1972 he became a Rocky Mountain rescue volunteer and an auxiliary fireman.

9 In 1966, Stills auditioned for The Monkees but couldn't come to an agreement with the show's producers. The contract for the show required him to assign his music publishing rights to Screen Gems, which he refused to do.

10 Stills' 1979 version of "Cherokee" was the first digitally recorded rock song.



Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young at London's Wembley Stadium, September 14, 1974

"You want me to sing in front of Joni Mitchell?! I mean, she was the hot number..."

STEPHEN STILLS

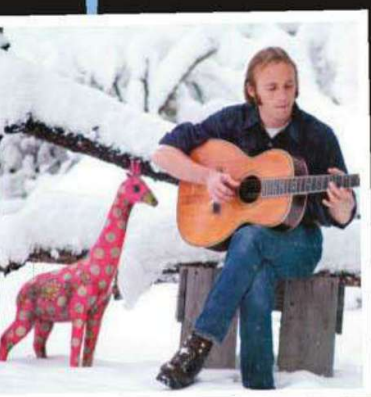
word, that key moment, that key syllable that makes it — what was the silly word we had back then? — grok.

The legendary guitar battles you've often had with Neil onstage bring out the best in you both. Were you ever encouraged by others to take each other on, or are you both just naturally combative? They were never guitar wars. They're civil conversations, not arguments. We work out our emotions and we might grimace at each other. It's like playing cowboys and Indians. But that's as close as we get, but it's not mean. Music that's mean has a name. Punk rock.

Did you ever feel uncomfortable revealing so much of yourself in your love songs? No. I'm a little like Taylor Swift in that regard. Wear your heart on your sleeve, then just write about it. Fuck 'em.

There seems to be some controversy about how you, Crosby and Nash got together. You always say it was Cass Elliot's house. Crosby and Nash say it was at Joni Mitchell's. David and Graham have convinced themselves of an entirely different story, but the only one that rings true is my recollection. The first time we sang together was at Cass'. We showed off at Joni's two days later. I'd never have sung with a stranger [Nash], whom I thought had one of the most unique voices around. I would have never done that in front of Joni because Joni was like a goddess and goddesses make me weak in the knees. What happened was Cass walked up to me the day after the Hollies show at the Roxy or the Whisky — I can't remember which — and said, "You know that stuff you and David [Crosby] have been playing around with. Do you think you might like a third voice?" I said, "If it was just the right one, and if it was smarter than both of us." She said, "When David calls you and tells you to come to my house, just do it." David and I were already working together. Neil had quit [Buffalo Springfield], David has been fired from The Byrds and we were alone, so we would sing together.

So what happened when David called? I agreed to meet him. I knocked at the door and Cass opened it and David's standing behind her. There's a long corridor that leads to a sitting room. There's a den off to the left, and through the den you can see the pool, and there's John Sebastian sitting in what he called his mogul chair, which was like one of those silly Styrofoam beach chairs. He's just having a wonderful California day. Standing in the far living room is this guy in his Teddy boy outfit with an Edwardian vest. It's Graham





Stills rehearsing with Manassas at his home in Elstead, Surrey, March 4, 1972

Nash. I said to myself, "Wow, Cass. You said third voice. I didn't think you meant that." So we talked a bit, and then Cass says, "Why don't you sing those things you've been doing?" I look around – 'cos her chairs were overstuffed and hard to sit and sing in. So I look around the corner and there's a kitchen that's nicely put together and below that a full stairway. It's a nice space and here's this big alcove with a gorgeous table, so I take my guitar and I said, "We'll do it here." I go to the far end of the table so I'm back in the corner and David is next to me on my left.

Do you remember what you sang? Yeah, the two of us begin to sing "You Don't Have To Cry" and Graham is pacing between the railing of the little balcony over the kitchen, and then he said, "Do that again." We sang it again. Then Graham said, "One more time." We sang it again, because it only has one verse, so we repeated it twice. Then he chimed in with that voice, and we knew, at the instant, that our lives were never going to be the same. I gradually got it out of him that his band wanted to do an album of Dylan covers and he'd written all these songs they were turning up their noses at it. Then I found out he's fallen head over heels for Joni and they are now an item. A few days after, [Mitchell's manager]

Stills, the country squire, with Peter Sellers and Johnny, Brookfield's gardener



STILLS' COUNTRY LIFE

"YOU MUST VISIT!"

How Stills ended up living in the UK

Stills came to Britain on the invitation of Linda McCartney: "Linda was an old friend of mine from New York, and called me saying, 'You must visit' and dragged me over. Paul and I bonded immediately; it was like we'd known each other all our lives. We started playing, and we both said, 'This is terrific. Here you take the guitar, I'll take the bass. No, you take the guitar...' We were going a million miles a minute."

Stills also became friends with Ringo Starr, who – credited as 'Richie' – played on two tracks on *Stephen Stills*. In 1970,

Stills bought Brookfield House, Starr's 16th-Century mansion in Elstead, Surrey that had previously belonged to Peter Sellers. "I had the most wonderful bursts of creativity there," says Stills. One of those bursts resulted in 'Johnny's Garden', about the resident gardener, who was reportedly the inspiration for Chauncey, Sellers' character in *Being There*. Stills loved Brookfield, engraving "with our love, we could save the world if they only knew" from Harrison's "Within You Without You" on one of the stone walls.

Elliot Roberts called and said I should go to Joni's house because David and Graham are there. "You want me to sing and play all this stuff in front of her?" "Well, yes," said Elliot. I thought, at least I can look at her. Maybe she'll sing for me. I mean, she was the hot number. And I truly have the weak-in-the-knees form of guy-dom, where it's "Oh my God, I can't speak." So I'd never have sung for the first time in front of Joni Mitchell.

I love that you knew your life was never going to be the same. Well, it's just that sound. Everything was perfect. My husky, deep thing, David's voice, Graham's thing. I related to Graham. He'd learned all the things I had about the studio and making records and we were fans of the same stuff. I just chose not to go on the sailing trip that made David and Graham so close, as Captain Crosby would not acknowledge that I actually knew how to sail. Suffice to say, on each of those trips one of the crewmen ended up taking Crosby by the hair and banging him against the mainmast.

After the Springfield got so close to becoming stars, you had another chance with CSN. How do the bands compare? They were apples and oranges. First of all, the Springfield never got recorded [properly] as Bruce kept getting deported, because these assholes taking 15 per cent wouldn't go to the trouble to get him a goddamn Green Card.

But were you surprised that opportunity knocked twice in your life? And then I kicked the door in. It was that or law school and I couldn't have stood that. Or go back to my roots with Navy school. I would have ended up on the wrong side of everything. So fate intervened and also my own willpower.

It seems like you have always been on the road. Why do you think that is? Curiosity, and wanting to be there.

Did you always feel you knew where you were going? I didn't know where I was going, but I knew where not to go.

It's funny how the songs reflect the life. The themes in your life certainly show up in your songs. From "Travelin'" to "Thoroughfare Gap". Yeah. It ain't how far you travel, it's the ride. 🐾

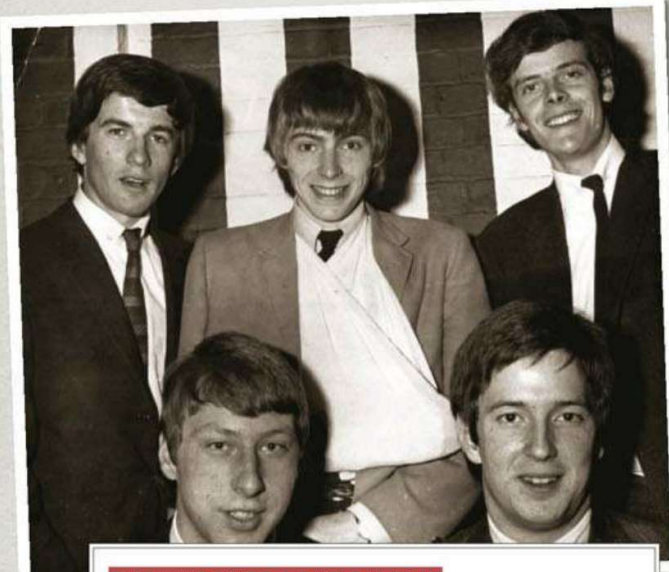
Carry On is released through Rhino on March 26



CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

The Yardbirds

JIM McCARTY and CHRIS DREJA explain how the train's kept a-rollin' for 50 years. "Jimmy was a typical session musician. Jeff was spontaneous..."



THE MARQUEE, LONDON, 1965

JIM McCARTY [*back left*]: Keith [Relf] was a bit frail and gullible. He broke his hand 'cos Hollies singer Alan Clarke bet him he couldn't break some pieces of wood with karate. Eric [Clapton, *front right*] looks quite happy, but I don't think he was by then. Eric wanted us to be faithful to the blues, and to do what he said. He was quite hard to know. **CHRIS DREJA** [*front left*]: Eric and I were close, we shared a small bedsit. We bonded over blues, clothes and humour.



LONDON, 1965

McCARTY: There'd been a quote from Lord Ted Willis calling the group "a cheap candy-floss substitute for culture". Giorgio [Gomelsky] our manager made us turn up at his house. He made us tea and sandwiches. At least we got a rider... **DREJA**: Clapton's GI Joe look wasn't intentional. The great secret was that he was illegitimate and his mother had married a Canadian GI, who he visited once a year. They made him get his hair cut before they'd let him on the base.



NEW YORK, 1965

McCARTY: Jeff [Beck, *front right*] was totally different to Eric. He looks stylish there, but he was used to working on cars, so he was covered in grease. But he was much brighter than he appeared. He was a more creative guitarist than Eric, a lot wider musically, and it suited us. **DREJA**: Jeff was a very quiet man who lived in a shithole in Clapham with his first wife, and played guitar in the van the whole time. That's how he spoke.



NEW YORK, 1966

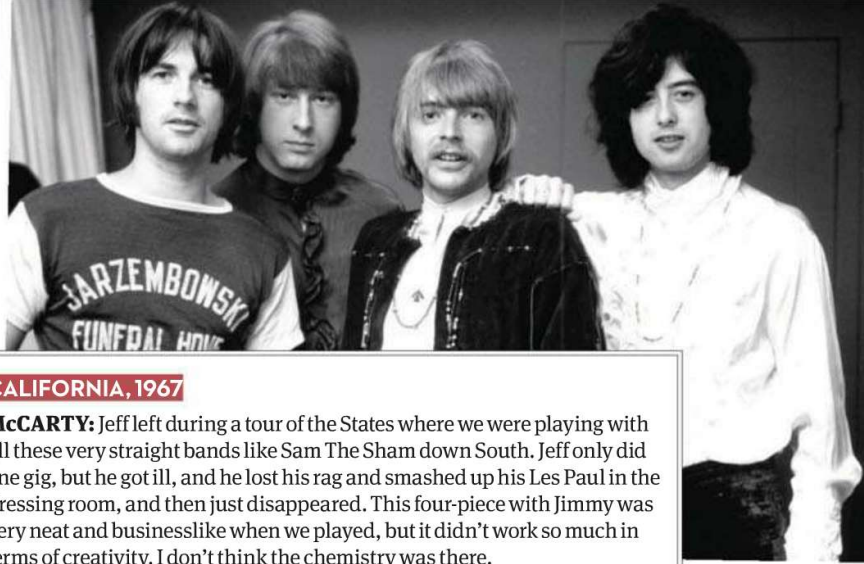
McCARTY: A party to introduce Jimmy [Page, *right*], initially on bass, when Paul [Samwell-Smith] left, which was very odd. Paul was very snobbish about even being in the music business. I remember being round his house in Hampstead, and he said, "We have these dinner parties, and I feel really embarrassed..." I think Warhol [*centre*] gatecrashed this party. **DREJA**: We used to hang out at Max's Kansas City café. Andy used to just turn up with his entourage and "groove the scene".



LONDON, 1966

McCARTY: The five-piece with Jimmy and Jeff. Jimmy had to have everything worked out, he was a typical session musician. Jeff was spontaneous. But after one of the few gigs that did work, the Stones were on next and they were embarrassed to come out.

DREJA: Little did Jimmy know that Jeff would break out of his reclusiveness at this point and go, "Don't you know I'm the fucking guv'nor?" For one single, "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago", it was sublime.



CALIFORNIA, 1967

McCARTY: Jeff left during a tour of the States where we were playing with all these very straight bands like Sam The Sham down South. Jeff only did one gig, but he got ill, and he lost his rag and smashed up his Les Paul in the dressing room, and then just disappeared. This four-piece with Jimmy was very neat and businesslike when we played, but it didn't work so much in terms of creativity. I don't think the chemistry was there.



WORLD'S END, KING'S ROAD, LONDON, 1967

DREJA: With our new manager Peter Grant. He wouldn't get down the chimney, would he?

McCARTY: You did feel safe with him around. You'd hear stories about what he'd done to people, but he was always very nice to me.

DREJA: Once, in Canada in a snowstorm, this Mafia guy pulled a gun on us. And good old Peter pushed him with his considerable paunch all the way down the bus and out the door. They were all friends after that.



THE MARQUEE, LONDON, 1983

McCARTY: Some agent had asked Chris and Paul and myself if we wanted to play at The Marquee's 25th Anniversary. Chris and I had done a couple of gigs in Spain as The Yardbirds, and we worked with a harmonica player, Mark Feltham from Nine Below Zero [second left], and John Knightsbridge [right] on guitar.

DREJA: It was a wonderful night. My girlfriend, who'd always seen me as a serious photographer, was gobsmacked when she saw me leering about onstage.



WALDORF-ASTORIA, NEW YORK, 1992

McCARTY: The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. I've got this one on my wall. I don't think The Yardbirds were really respected, especially in Europe, and it was a real honour. Do we still run into Jimmy and Jeff? Very occasionally, at weddings, funerals and Yardbirds gigs. They both turned up playing air guitar one night.

DREJA: The Americans have an Academy Of Dogsitters and so on, but I can't say it wasn't nice to get that recognition.



LONDON, 2000s

DREJA: Jim and I reformed The Yardbirds in 1995. But since my stroke last year, I can't play any more.

McCARTY: It's very odd playing without Chris. And the three other guys are much younger, and it's like they're on a different world. I thought it would be nice after 50 years to go back to where we started, Twickenham, and just do a club gig. Does it feel a nice way to round things off? Yeah, it does, actually.

The Yardbirds' 50th Anniversary concert is at St George's Suite, Twickenham Stadium on March 15





Sax of talent: Fela Kuti
at The Shrine club,
Lagos, Nigeria, 1978

BLACK PRESIDENT OF THE RASCAL REPUBLIC! GENIUS INVENTOR OF AFROBEAT! FREEDOM FIGHTER, POLITICAL PRISONER, PRODIGIOUS WEED SMOKER AND HUSBAND TO 27 WIVES! **THE LEGEND OF FELA KUTI!** "HE WAS A TORNADO OF A MAN..."

THERE IS such a thing as a good time and place to be buried alive, a freezing January night in North London isn't it. Yet here we were, a crowd of maybe 150 of us huddled outside The Town & Country Club in early 1984 as a half-naked man in a trance was lowered into the cold clay of a shallow grave, a man who 30 minutes ago we had witnessed apparently having his throat cut onstage by Professor Hindu, the 'spiritual guru' of Africa's most famous musician, Fela Anikulapo Kuti. Fela himself was among the crowd, wrapped against the cold in an extravagant fur coat. Hindu, on the other hand, wore just his underpants and a pair of smart Italian shoes.

Three days later, we returned for the resurrection, astonished as the same limp body was slowly dug out from the frozen ground and carried inside to be re-animated by Professor Hindu's incantations and unceremonious kicks. Beforehand, Hindu had entertained us by producing watches from thin air and slicing his tongue. Sleight of hand conjuring tricks – but the burial and resurrection were something else. I ran into the resurrected man later in the

Story: Neil Spencer

Photo: Adrian Boot/
urbanimage.tv

gents' toilet, still red-eyed and caked in mud, puffing on a cigarette. Behind him, a yard-long spool of bloody toilet paper testified that however it had been done, the trick hadn't been a pleasant experience. Such was the

colourful, sometimes alarming world of Fela Anikulapo Kuti, already a cause célèbre though the extremes of his life with Professor Hindu – the trances, séances and chicken sacrifices – would not become apparent until later, while a 20-month prison sentence on trumped-up money-smuggling charges lay less than a year ahead.

Fifteen years after his death on August 2, 1997, Fela remains a complex, charismatic legend. Fearless opponent of political corruption, champion of the dispossessed, prodigious weed smoker, a polygamist who married his 27 "queens" in a single ceremony, self-proclaimed president of his own "Rascal Republic", flamboyant performer and inspired bandleader... Fela had many roles, not least as creator of his own musical genre, Afrobeat.

Today, Fela's standing is higher than at any time during his life. There's been a stage musical, *Fela!*, and he's soon to be the subject of both a documentary and a biopic. This month sees the first stage in a heavily annotated re-release of his extensive back catalogue.

"He was a tornado of a man," says Rikki Stein, who co-managed the star for the last 15 years of Fela's life. "He liked to play, eat, get high and have sex, he loved irony, humour and stories, but he was also highly principled and tremendously courageous. He put his balls on the line on a daily basis."

**"HE COULD WELL HAVE BECOME
THE PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA"
GINGER BAKER**

→ **T**HE ROLE OF unruly populist rebel was an unlikely destiny for Fela. His father was an Anglican pastor and headmaster, his mother a nationalist aristocrat and campaigner for women's rights. Fela Ransome-Kuti was meant to be a doctor, like his two brothers, and in 1958, aged 19, he was sent to study in England. Instead, Fela enrolled in the Trinity College Of Music, where he learned keyboards, trumpet and classical music – he later cited Handel as his favourite musician.

Fela's life in early 1960s London was far from his riotous, libertarian existence a decade later. He married Remi Taylor in 1960 and had three children, Yeni, Femi and Sola. Along with other expats, he played jazz and highlife around the capital's R'n'B clubs, where he befriended future collaborator Ginger Baker. "Fela used to come down to the all-nighters in The Flamingo," remembers Baker today. "He was playing trumpet. That's when we got to know him. He was crazy! But a very likeable fella. He was a very good friend of mine."

In 1963, Fela returned home to a job at Nigeria's national radio station, NBC, that soon fizzled out. Fela was more interested in his band, Koola Lobitos, for whom he had recruited a phenomenal young drummer, Tony Allen. "Fela wasn't really the bandleader," says Baker. "I mean, it was his band, but the actual bandleader was Tony Allen, who used to tune everybody up and organise everything."

The band's success was limited – increasingly, West Africa was under the spell of Latin and soul, especially James Brown. In 1969, he accepted an invitation to tour America with Koola Lobitos. In Los Angeles, Fela met Black Power activist Sandra Smith (later Sandra Izadore), who "gave me the education I wanted," Fela said later. "She was the one who opened my eyes... She talked to me about politics, history... I heard things I'd never heard before about Africa."

Inspired by Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver and the "black and proud" mood of soul music, Fela perceived the process of neo-colonial control that held sway back home. "Being African didn't mean anything to me until later in my life," he said in the mid-1980s. "We weren't

MAKING OF FELA

"NO VISA, NO WORK PERMIT! NO SHIT!"

Fela and his band in the USA

IN 1969, FELA and the Koola Lobitos embarked on an extensive tour of America. Whatever hopes they had for the tour evaporated quickly. The promoter hadn't obtained the correct work permits for all the band. "No bread, no shit, nothing! Now we're illegal immigrant motherfuckers," Fela recalled later. The band drove across country, looking for shows, finally ending up in Los Angeles. Eventually, the band fell in with future *Starsky & Hutch* actor Bernie Hamilton – brother of jazz drummer Chico – who booked them at his club, Citadel de Haiti on Sunset Boulevard. Speaking to *LA Weekly*, Fela's lover and mentor Sandra Izadore remembers, "It was a great club, just no clientele, so [Bernie] hired Fela to come in, and he paid him under the table. In a little bit of no time, that club was packed... *Hair* was playing across the street. The cast would come over and hang out at Bernie's place after they did their show. It was such a revolutionary time." The Citadel shows attracted high-profile African-Americans like Melvin Van Peebles, Esther Phillips and Jim Brown. On one night off, Fela reportedly got into a fight with Frank Sinatra. Eventually, in debt and under threat of legal action, the band were forced to leave the US. "When he went back to Nigeria, he was a changed person," remembers Izadore.



even allowed to speak our own languages in school. They called it 'vernacular', as if only English was the real tongue."

Fela also discovered the psychedelic soul of Sly, Hendrix and The Temptations. He had started calling his music Afrobeat back in 1967, but now it had evolved into a radical fusion of Ghanaian highlife, Nigerian juju and pared-down American funk, all streamed through Fela's increasingly pan-African perspective.

Returning to Lagos, Fela opened a club, The Afro-Spot, in the suburb of Yaba, and renamed his band Nigeria 70, then Africa 70. In 1970, James Brown played Lagos' Onikan Stadium. Fela attended the show, only to find Brown's band checking him out later at The Afro-Spot.

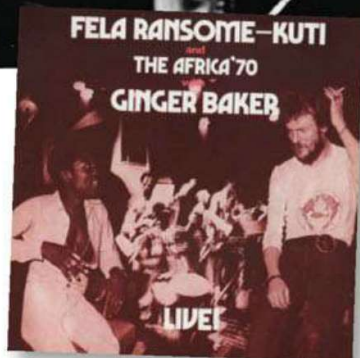
"They had a James Brown rhythm section, plus eight percussionists, doing the African rhythm thing," recalled Brown's musical director Dave Matthews. "You couldn't sit down, it was so infectious. It was an amazing experience."

Today, Tony Allen remembers Brown's "musicians came to our club to see us every night after their show. People like Boots were writing down my patterns. I didn't mind, it was flattering. But the truth is that James Brown's band learnt more from African musicians than African musicians learnt from them."

THE EARLY '70S witnessed Fela's transformation into a West African superstar. On a series of hit albums like 1971's *Why Black Man Dey Suffer* and 1973's *Afrodisiac*, his music developed a brash, urgent power, bristling with thunderous horn sections, sinuous solos and call-and-response vocals, their scabrous lyrics delivered in pidgin English to cast his message wide. The Afro-Spot, renamed The Shrine and relocated to another part of Lagos called Surulere, became a destination experience, its giddy all-night sessions shrouded in weed smoke, while onstage the band played for hours accompanied by dancers.

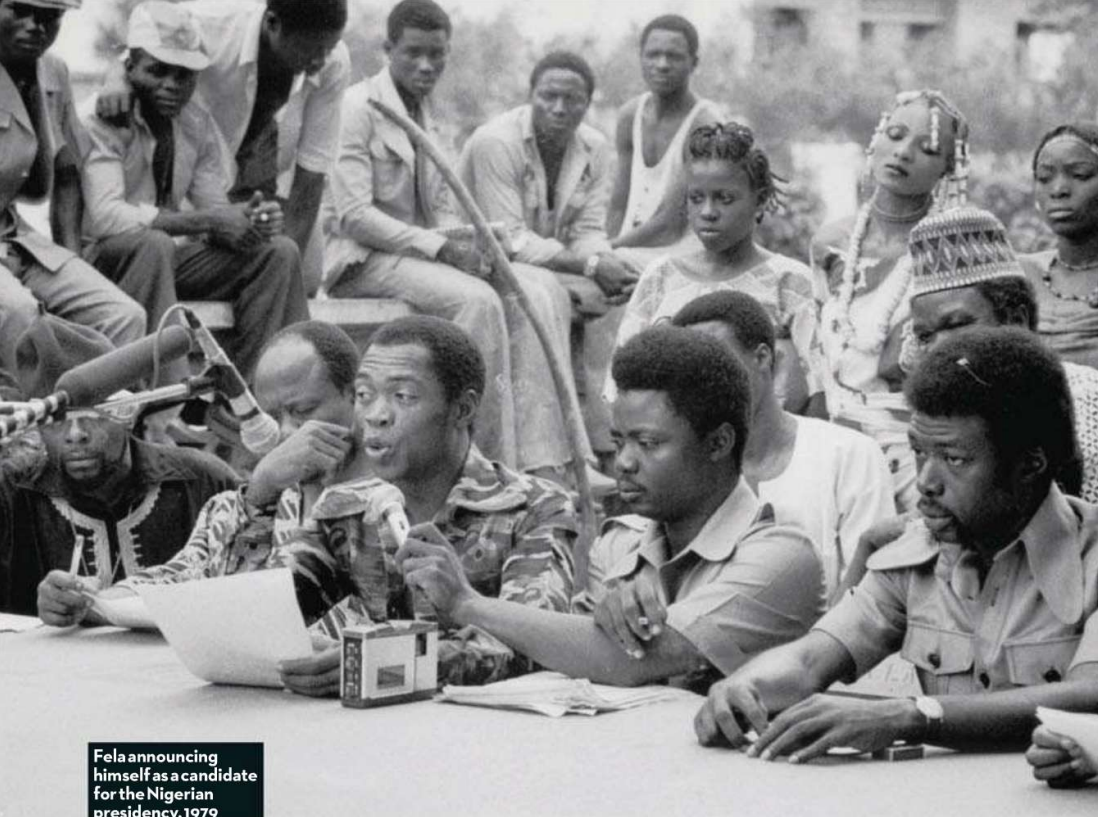
From the early '70s onwards, Fela's lifestyle and political attitudes presented an increasing challenge to the Nigerian authorities. His advocacy of free sex and 'Nigerian National Grass' (widely consumed but highly illegal) became a media scandal, as did his home – a sprawling compound close to The Shrine where he held court to a retinue of friends, musicians, dissidents and hangers-on.

"He did have some friends in high places," admits Rikki Stein. "He used to have me hold a brown paper bag full of cash that he'd give away to worthy causes. One night when we had run out of money he drove us to a large upper crust



ECHOES/REDFERNS





Fela announcing himself as a candidate for the Nigerian presidency, 1979

house – he drove very fast and never gave way to other cars – and was handed a vacuum-packed block of notes by a guy who was a senator, clearly delighted to help him out.”

“The authorities found it hard to close down Fela because he was of their class,” notes novelist Diran Adebayo. “Plus he was reclaiming an African heritage, which was widely popular.”

Not everyone found the scene to their taste. The late Mac Tontoh, a founding member of London-based Afro-rock pioneers Osibisa, had known Fela since the late 1960s. He was shocked when he visited Fela’s compound in 1973. “We were hearing in London that Fela had 10 cars, a swimming pool and women, as if it’s some great place. When we came there we saw broken cars and a girl pissing at the edge of the



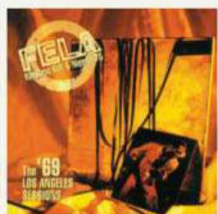
people, everybody smoking dope. The government were severely worried about Fela, because he was so popular. If he’d have played his cards right, he could well have become the President of Nigeria. We called him the Black President.”

The authorities’ harassment of Fela grew worse. His compound was raided twice in April 1974. Sixty riot police armed with tear gas and axes arrested and beat Fela, leaving him hospitalised. His release from prison was accompanied by a crowd of thousands, and he played The Shrine that night with his head bandaged and his arm in a sling. He also changed his name from Ransome-Kuti, which he denounced as his ‘slave name’ (Ransome had been a missionary friend of his grandfather), to ‘Anikulapo’, meaning ‘one who holds death in his pouch’.

JANET GRIFFITH

HOW TO BUY

THE AFROBEAT GOES ON The choice cuts from Fela Kuti’s mighty catalogue



KOOLA LOBITOS '69 LA SESSIONS

(KNITTING FACTORY, 1993)

Before and after Fela’s ‘Black Power’ conversion in the US. The Lobitos’ jazzy highlife mutates into the psych-funk and proto-Afrobeat of the LA sessions.

7/10



GENTLEMAN/CONFUSION

(KNITTING FACTORY, 1973/74)

Afrobeat arrives on “Gentleman”, castigating Africans apeing western dress (“him go sweat/him go smell like shit”). “Confusion”, all swirls of electric piano and Tony Allen’s mighty drum patterns, is a futuristic suite over two vinyl sides.

9/10



ZOMBIE

(KNITTING FACTORY, 1976)

“Go and kill! Go and die!” Fela’s taunt at the dumb obedience of the Nigerian military became a massively popular street chant – but brought terrible vengeance from the army. It’s still a killer slice of Afrobeat.

9/10

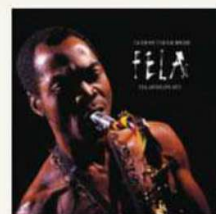


SORROW TEARS AND BLOOD/OPPOSITE PEOPLE

(KNITTING FACTORY, 1977)

The sleek groove of “Sorrow” leads into one of Fela’s greatest protest songs, initially inspired by the 1976 Soweto uprising. “Opposite People” has the band cooking at their James Brown funkier, and jazzier.

10/10



TEACHER DON'T TEACH ME NONSENSE

(KNITTING FACTORY, 1986)

Fela resisted outside producers (Bill Laswell delivered a stinker on *Army Arrangement*), but Benin’s Wally Badarou mixed spontaneity with an uncharacteristically clean sound. “Just Like That” stands out.

8/10



UNDERGROUND SYSTEM

(KNITTING FACTORY, 1992)

Fela’s swansong was defiant to the last. The breakneck title track, a castigation of Africa’s corrupt elite, also manages elegance. “Confusion Break Bones” sounds weary, though, as if Fela, by now sick, was wondering, “How often must I say this?”

8/10

BAND ON THE RUN

WHEN MACCA MET FELA

Confrontations and robbery in Lagos

IN 1973, PAUL McCartney decided to make *Band On The Run* in Nigeria. A fan after being introduced to Fela's music by Ginger Baker, McCartney discovered EMI had a studio in Lagos. Paul and Linda flew to Lagos with Wings guitarist Denny Laine and engineer Geoff Emerick. There, they found the city



under martial law, and dilapidated studios with "half the equipment hanging off the wall".

Worse was to come. The McCartneys were robbed at knifepoint, losing their cameras, jewellery and cassettes of work in progress. On the plus side, the McCartneys saw Fela play at The Afro-Spot – "The best band I've ever seen," said McCartney – but even this turned sour when Fela denounced McCartney's visit as an attempt to "steal the black man's music" and showed up at the studio to confront him. An uneasy accommodation between the two stars was reached, and Macca's plans to hire some of Fela's musicians, without their boss' permission, were dropped. *Band On The Run* duly emerged, and McCartney's admiration for Afrobeat remained undiminished. "It's incredible music down there," he said. "I think it will come to the fore."

➔ *Zombie* was the tipping point for the military junta led by General Obasanjo – a former classmate of Fela. On February 18, 1977, around 1,000 soldiers stormed Fela's compound – now named the Kalakuta Republic and surrounded by an electrified fence. Cars were set on fire, men beaten with rifle butts and women raped, while Fela's 77-year-old mother, Funmilayo, was thrown from an upstairs window – she never fully recovered and died the following year. The house was burned to the ground, along with the in-house studio and its equipment. Fela and his brother Beko, who ran a free clinic there, were both beaten savagely.

Fela's daughter Yeni, a teenager at the time, recalls "my brother Femi and sister Sola would stop at Fela's house on their way home from school, and they told us about the soldiers. My uncle tried to drive my mother and us there but it took hours. We thought it had been a normal raid. What we saw was so bad my mother started to scream. The house had been burnt to the ground and people were walking with their hands in the air, soldiers everywhere..."

One of Fela's responses was to marry his 27 'Queens', an act of polygamy he claimed was part of African tradition and that by marrying them he was protecting his wives against charges they were prostitutes. With typical contrariness, he divorced them in 1986, saying no man should own a woman's body. Yeni has ambiguous feelings about it. "I learnt at an early age that men were polygamous, so I just accepted it. As a kid, it was fun having so many stepmothers, though now, at 49, I wonder how my mother Remi, born and raised in England, really felt."

FELA AND HIS entourage moved into exile in Ghana, but soon found themselves expelled and returned to Nigeria, where Fela planned to start his own party and run for President. The funds were going to come via a lucrative gig at the 1979 Berlin Jazz Festival, a rumour that prompted the defection of most of his band, including Tony Allen. "I couldn't stand the bullshit anymore," says the drummer today. "I couldn't stand the hangers-on, the politics, the

violence – I'm a musician, I didn't sign up for that."

Fela recruited a new band and more insurrectionary LPs followed – 1980's *Coffin For Head Of State* and *ITT (International Thief Thief)*. He also turned his attentions to an international audience, although the logistics of moving a huge entourage around the world proved problematic.

"There were between 30 and 70 people at any one time,"

says Rikki Stein, who co-managed Fela from the early '80s onwards. "Fela was banned from every major hotel in Europe. It was partly the aftershow parties, the weed, people naked in the corridors, but they'd forget they'd left baths running, they'd iron clothes on expensive bedspreads. Fela would show up in the lobby of a five-star hotel wearing nothing but his habitual Speedos. Still, we never missed a plane. I'm proud of that. Fela was a hard taskmaster but he had to be, they were such a bunch of ragamuffins. He would fine people wages – 'Two days motherfucker!' – he called it his Ice Cream Fund. He wasn't a great payer, though he could also be very generous."

Fela's international reputation led to an offer of a \$1m deal with Motown, who were setting up an African division, a deal Fela delayed until the spring of 1985 "because my spirits told me so". A month before he was due to sign, Motown's hierarchy changed and the deal was scrapped. "Maybe the spirits knew something," reflects Stein.

A more serious blow came when Fela was busted on currency-smuggling charges on the eve of a 1984 tour. "I'd taken out £3,000 for him in London," says Stein, "which he declared in Nigeria, but when he left they

denied he'd done so. It was a conspiracy, they wanted him."

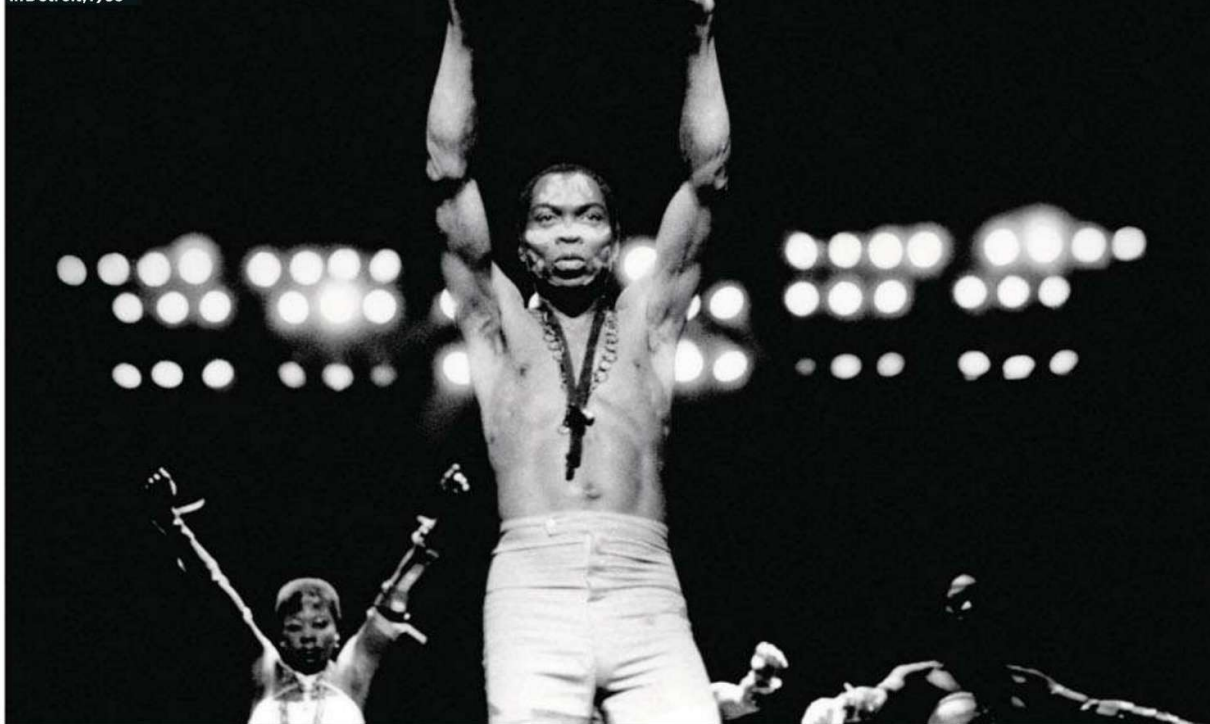
Fela served 20 months of a five-year sentence, his plight as 'a political prisoner' championed by Amnesty, though his release owed more to internal Nigerian politics. The records continued to arrive, though Fela's refusal to play any of his hits drove record companies to distraction. "Once he'd recorded something he'd never play it live," explains Stein. "He'd develop a song at rehearsals at The Shrine in front of the faithful and record it once he got tired of it."

The Nigerian authorities continued with their persecution



"I COULDN'T STAND THE HANGERS-ON, THE POLITICS, THE VIOLENCE – I'M A MUSICIAN"
TONY ALLEN

Conquering the US: Fela onstage in Detroit, 1986





and in 1993 the singer was accused of murder and received a beating so severe that Fela himself thought it was a death sentence. "He was in pain a lot of the time," reckons Stein. "He used to have to line up his body in order to play the sax."

FELA'S DECLINE OVER the last few years of his life was a sad affair. He turned from politics to spiritual pursuits, to the concern of some who distrusted the influence of Professor Hindu. There were tales of trances and spirit visions within the Kuti compound. After Fela was jailed in early 1993, the fight seemed to go out of him. Even that didn't stop the regime of General Abacha from threatening him with jail in April 1997 for his weed-smoking – though the sight of an emaciated Fela handcuffed in court brought a public outcry that led to his release. He died four months later from an AIDS-related illness, aged 58. His funeral cortege, leading to his resting place near the Kalakuta Republic, was lined with an estimated million mourners.

Today, the former outlaw is honoured, his old compound transformed into the Kalakuta Museum. But restoration of Fela's recorded legacy is still ongoing. Many master tapes were lost in the 1977 raid; others vanished. The process has taken years, often requiring painstaking transfer from vinyl. "It was five minutes' worth of music a day," says Stein, who remains one of the guardians of Fela's flame, along with his sons Femi and Seun, whose band features many of his father's players. Asked for a memory of his father, Seun talks about "my father's eccentricity" but chooses to remember him "in a Godlike state" at the end of his life. "He had been through so much," he says. "He was a man of knowledge."

"They beat him with rifle butts, they beat that guy so badly, but they never stopped him," says Stein. "I admired his courage." 🗣️

The Best Of The Black President 2 is released on March 4 by Knitting Factory; the complete works of Fela Kuti will be released between March and September

FELA KUTI SUPERSTAR

FELA ON STAGE AND SCREEN

Kuti might be gone, but his story lives on

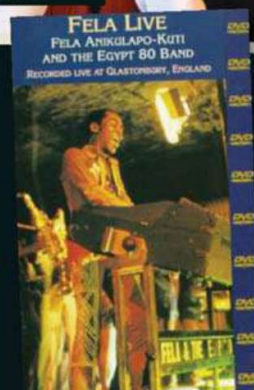
SINCE ITS LAUNCH Off-Broadway in 2008, the musical *Fela!* has become an international phenomenon. Mounted by an unlikely trio of Fela fans, choreographer Bill T Jones, writer Jim Lewis and oil trader Steve Hendel, and co-produced by Jay-Z and Will Smith, the show blitzed New York before crossing the Atlantic to Europe and making a star of its lead, Sahr Ngaujah.

In 2011, the musical finally reached Lagos, playing first, symbolically, at The Shrine before moving to stadium shows on Victoria Island. "We took Fela home," said his old manager Rikki Stein, "though it took moving 80 people and 40 tons of equipment to do so." This year, *Fela!* reaches Moscow.

In its wake comes Oscar-winner Alex Gibney's doc, while Steve McQueen will direct a biopic starring Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Fela tried to make his own cine-autobiography, *Black President*, but much of the footage and soundtrack was lost during the 1970s. Outside documentaries were realised, however. *Fela In Concert* captures an all-night 1981 show in Paris, albeit with murky visuals and audio. Better is 1982's *Music Is The Weapon*, an hour-long profile that includes interviews and footage from Lagos. Then there's *Fela Live! Fela Anikulapo Kuti And The Egypt 80 Band*, a record of 1984's Glastonbury performance.

The latter is also included on a BBC Arena doc from the same year where Fela talks about his brutalisation at the hands of the army, and shows off his scars. A moment!



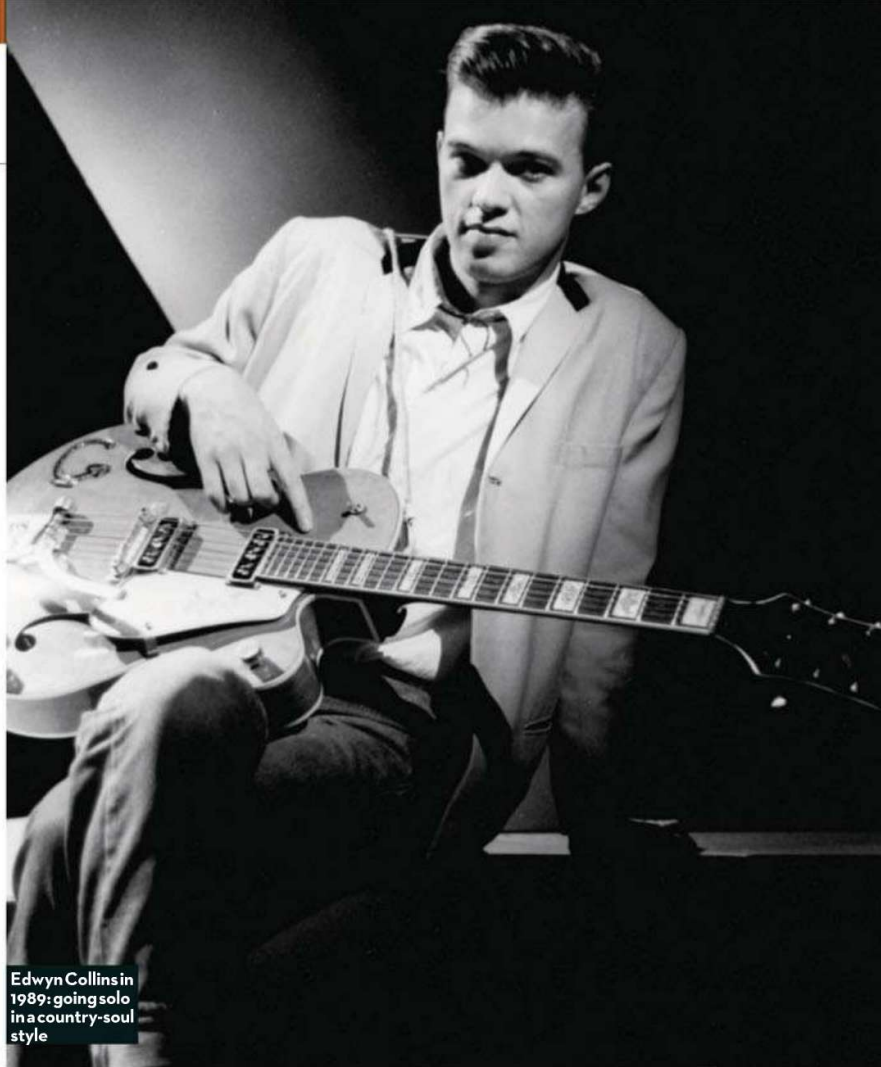
ALBUM BY ALBUM

Edwyn Collins

The Orange Juice frontman picks his 'awkward indie' peaks

IN THE EARLY 1980s, Orange Juice and Postcard Records symbolised all that was great about the first wave of indie pop. They mixed punk energy with a love of disco to make quirky, beautiful pop music. But they managed only one hit, and the solo career of Edwyn Collins seemed to be going the same way – credibility, but little success – until he released “A Girl Like You”, a global hit in 1994. In 2005, he suffered a serious stroke, but comeback album *Losing Sleep* was among his most successful, and his career is thriving again. As his new album celebrates “31 years of rock’n’roll”, Edwyn is in reflective mood. “Orange Juice were aiming to be the awkward indie group that makes it into the charts,” he says. “That was really too difficult. But nowadays I’m cool with everything – who cares about the charts?!”

Edwyn Collins in 1989: going solo in a country-soul style



ORANGE JUICE OSTRICH CHURCHYARD

POSTCARD, 1992

Released after the fact during the revival of Postcard Records, and

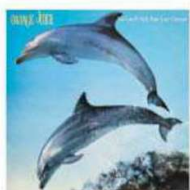
misleadingly described as Orange Juice's “Unreleased First Album”.

It's billed as the unreleased first Orange Juice album, but they were really demos, done at the Hellfire Club in Glasgow, run by Davy Henderson, not Davy of the Fire Engines. It was done on a four-track, but I listened to it and I thought, ‘Before we can put this out as a record it needs tarding up.’ It was unlistenable in its original form, so I changed it to eight-track. And here's a secret – Martin Duffy of Primal Scream played some organ, which I mixed in.

When Orange Juice started out, our ambition was to keep things simple, and keep the essence of the thing alive. The Postcard time was exciting. But let's imagine the scenario, shall we? Those were funny times. In those days, very good things often ended up in tragedy. There were a lot of insecurities. We seemed like brash, confident young men, but we weren't, especially me and [guitarist] James Kirk. James is shy. I was shy, too, but not like James was. [Drummer] Steven Daly did the organising. We were all difficult, but sometimes [bassist] David McClymont and I didn't get on. Sometimes we did.

At the time, there was a lot of discussion about what direction we should be going in. We really didn't know what was for the best, what we should do with the label, whether we should be involved with majors, whether we hated Rough Trade.

Bands are complicated creatures.



ORANGE JUICE YOU CAN'T HIDE YOUR LOVE FOREVER

POLYDOR, 1982

Major-label debut alienates some fans, and

fails to produce hit single, despite novelty cover version.

There was a lot of clashing of egos and a distance between how we actually were, and what we imagined we were. Steven was clear – it was no more indie for him. He wanted to be on a major. James Kirk was easy-osey. I can't remember what David thought – maybe he wanted to stick with the indie thing and see what happened. I wasn't sure. There was a lot of argy-bargy. But it was good, because Steven organised a tape-lease deal, which meant Polydor didn't own the record and we had more control. But it also meant we had a lot less dosh to play with. It was an indie compromise. Maybe that made Polydor a bit half-hearted. There's always somebody that's a priority in a record company, and we were never really it. I remember Lloyd Cole signed to Polydor, and that was it for us. Not his fault – Lloyd's a nice guy!

The producer was Adam Kidron. He was good. I don't think Steven liked what he did – the girl harmonies. But it's fine. We really wanted a hit. Covering Al Green's “L.O.V.E. Love” was an attempt at that. I don't like my vocal. It's too high for me. We wanted the credibility and the charts back then – it was always a conflict. Then the album came out and got a bad review in the *NME*. A bad review in the *NME*! I refused to get on the tourbus I was so depressed!



ORANGE JUICE RIP IT UP

POLYDOR, 1982

Kirk and Daly are replaced by Malcolm Ross and Zeke Manyika, bad reviews ensue, followed

by that elusive hit.

What the group needed was an adult figure to hold it together. Ian Cranna, the manager, wasn't it. We were capable of being quite childish. James was brilliant, but he was struggling with being in a group. I wanted to get on. So the next thing you know, here's Zeke, and Malcolm has left Josef K and is in the group. I was ripping up the old Orange Juice and starting anew.

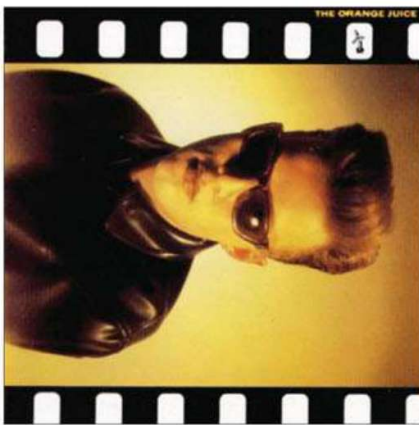
The *Rip It Up* album backlash was quite significant. I felt our career had imploded. But the album is fine. “Rip It Up”, the single – oh, wonderful! But even then, making hits and playing that game – I was rubbish at it. We got loads of girls coming to our shows and they were all squealing, because I was a pop star, and I went onstage and said “pack it in!” I was a complete wanker!

People did get the charts and credibility, but for Orange Juice it seemed difficult. I was always conflicted about it. But the look was good. My clothes were all from second-hand shops, or Paddy's Market in Glasgow – there was so much to be plundered. You could assemble a look for peanuts, if you were prepared to put the effort in. Two stripy T-shirts, one on the top of the other, for “Rip it Up”. I ripped it off from The Factory, Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga. I bought my Davy Crockett hat in Edinburgh for £20, which was a lot of money in those days. And shorts with a shirt and tie on the cover of “L.O.V.E. Love” – that was a dangerous look all right.



Orange Juice in 1982:
(l-r) Malcolm Ross,
Zeke Manyika,
Collins and David
McClymont

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



ORANGE JUICE THE ORANGE JUICE

POLYDOR, 1984

Edwyn teams up with producer Dennis Bovell for a glorious LP that marks the end of Orange Juice, and sets the template for his solo career. Dennis Bovell had a huge influence on that record. Phil Thornally did "What Presence?!" and Will Gosling made a contribution to begin with. The rest was done at Studio 80, in Southwark, London, with Dennis. He'd done some mixes around *Rip it Up*, and worked on the "Texas Fever" EP. He went through all of the bust-ups, and then we went down to his studio. It was lovely. There were a lot of his friends hanging about, but it was really just me and him. Zeke was there for a wee while to put his drum parts down. Clare Kenny did some great bass, and Bovell plays bass all over it. He plays piano, he does vocals. It's

more like my first solo album. Of all the Orange Juice albums, it's my favourite because it's the one I had most control over. And I'm more confident about my singing. My voice is better. On *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever*, it's a joke. I can't listen to it. Some people love it. I don't. I am quite insecure about my voice, but on *The Orange Juice* I'm much happier. Maybe it's because I have a man's voice. Previously, I had a boy's voice. Or a girl's.

It's a great record, but Polydor just couldn't wait to be shot of me. Typically, as I knew they wanted rid, I went in and demanded TV advertising. They looked at me as if I was bonkers. So we blew the last of the Orange Juice money on TV ads, which was insane. We'd done a video for "What Presence?!" with Derek Jarman. He had a great producer called Sarah Radclyffe, who went on to make lots of great films. So we went to her for the ad, and she took over. Nic Roeg's son, Luc, who worked on "What Presence?!" and his brother Nic Jr directed this advert. So we had a load of ads on Channel 4, just to bang the final nail in the coffin. The advert says: 'The fantastic new album from Orange Juice', and then Zeke goes: 'which includes the flop singles' – and there's a bit on the screen going 'flop... flop... flop' – "Lean Period", "What Presence?!" ... 'That went down a storm, as you can imagine.

Musically, that record is more like my solo records. There's the Northern Soul idea, "I Guess I'm Just A Little Too Sensitive" – it's soul and my voice mixed together. You're always going to have a funky bit in there when you're working with Bovell. It was a turbulent time, as per usual, as I'd just parted with the group, but I was in a great streak of songwriting.



HOPE AND DESPAIR

DEMON, 1989

After a five-year hiatus Collins makes his solo debut, a crafted album rich in country

and soul influences...

My first solo record, and I like it a lot. It's me experimenting, with Dennis Bovell on bass and Dave Ruffy on drums. But I'm indisputably the boss!

It was torture getting that album made. After Orange Juice finished it was very difficult. I don't know why, because I was really at the peak of my game. Maybe because I had alienated so many people, I couldn't get a record deal. I had a reputation. I had a slightly mocking attitude towards the music business, which is possibly at the back of this.

There were a few difficult years. I was playing The Town & Country Club and filling it, and still not able to get a deal. But by the time we got to recording in Cologne, for a small German label called Werk, who had a beautiful studio, I had the record all ready to go. So I went over and polished it off in short order, and they licensed it to Demon here.

The time in the studio in Cologne was very happy. The record did well, by my standards. It made money. Maybe there was more of a country influence at that time.

There are songs like "Let Me Put My Arms Around You", which is pure country music. Grace [Edwyn's wife and manager] made me listen to a lot of country records back then, and we used to go the Wembley country festival. I saw Willie Nelson there. This was before alt.country.



Collins: "The music business had taught me I needed to be in control of making records"

"Songs are about capturing a mood, strange and spontaneous... they're easier these days, I feel fluent"



LOSING SLEEP

HEAVENLY, 2010

After suffering a stroke in 2005, Collins makes a remarkable recovery, and a triumphant return.

Two weeks before leaving hospital, I wrote a song, "I'm Searching For The Truth". Grace said to me, "Is this the beginning of your next record?" and I said "Yes." This is always going to be a very special record to me. It was made quickly. It was a busy time. I'd put *Home Again* out, which was recorded before my stroke, mixed after. And then there was my first attempt to play live. Then the first step was to get back in the studio, get my brain ready to mix, able to have an opinion.

At that time it was firsts, firsts, firsts. I did a show, then a tour. It was a while before I started to think about recording songs. It took me a while to

get back into writing songs, and then it suddenly came. "Searching For The Truth" was the first one I wrote, and then "Losing Sleep".

It's a Northern Soul idea – I played simple glockenspiel – a vibraphone, it's called.

Drawing in pencil and crayon was like therapy for me. But songs are different. Songs are about capturing a mood, something strange and spontaneous. My writing style now is about

getting the ideas down on a dictation machine. I feel songs are about capturing the essence... anyway, they're harder work than sketching birds and animals and insects. Songs are harder to pin down. But they're easier nowadays. I feel fluent.



UNDERSTATED

AED, 2013

Northern soul, rock'n'roll, a Velvets pastiche – Edwyn's back!

I naturally tend towards being upbeat, though the first song I wrote for this record was a slow one, "Down The Line". Maybe I'm an upbeat person. Grace always has to tell me to do something a bit more mid-paced to give the album character. I tend to do stompers and swingers and racing songs. "Forsooth" is a homage to The Velvet Underground. Paul [Cook]'s drums are Maureen Tucker. Grace didn't like the words. She was going mental. Sometimes, because of my dysphasia, I can get stuck in a groove. The same references come up. The same phrases. When it comes to lyrics, it's an extra barrier. It's a challenge to get past that tendency to repetition. But "Down The Line" has good words. "Too Bad (That's Sad)" is not great. The way I write words has changed a lot. Before my stroke, the verse and chorus was easy. After my stroke, the choruses are good enough, but the verses take a long time to find the right meaning. I used to do wordplay for my own satisfaction. I had to satisfy myself I was the cleverest of the cleverest. Before my stroke, I played with lyrics, after my stroke, it's direct. To the point. Oh, and on "31 Years" I played Memphis guitar at the beginning, banging on the neck, Memphis chords, so I'm happy. I'm back on the guitar! 🎸

GORGEOUS GEORGE

SETANTA, 1994

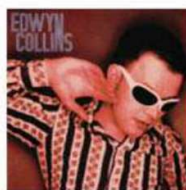
Out of the blue, a worldwide hit, with the glorious "A Girl Like You"...



The music business had taught me I needed to be in control of making records. If I had to put my hand out and ask permission, that was never going to be viable. So I decided I had to have my own studio. I started thinking about that in 1990. By '94, I had a studio, sharing with this guy, Mark Thompson, in Ally Pally. But I was getting evicted. I had six weeks to make the record. But I was raring to go. There's only one song I wrote in the studio, and that was "A Girl Like You". I remember the fuzz solo and the vibraphones, and my voice. To me, it's three notes, like Northern Soul, mixed with me.

I was chasing that record all round the world for a year and a half. There was no politics. It was my record. I owned it. Keith Cullen of Setanta didn't like it, because it was too poppy for an indie label. The phones didn't stop ringing. The floor was papered with faxes. It was pandemonium, in a good way. You had to keep going and you could never catch up. But the record was still out there going crazy. There was nothing we could do to stop it.

The record wasn't a hit here the first time I put it out, and it came galloping back. I finished recording one day, and we packed up the next. The studio went into storage until I found West Heath.



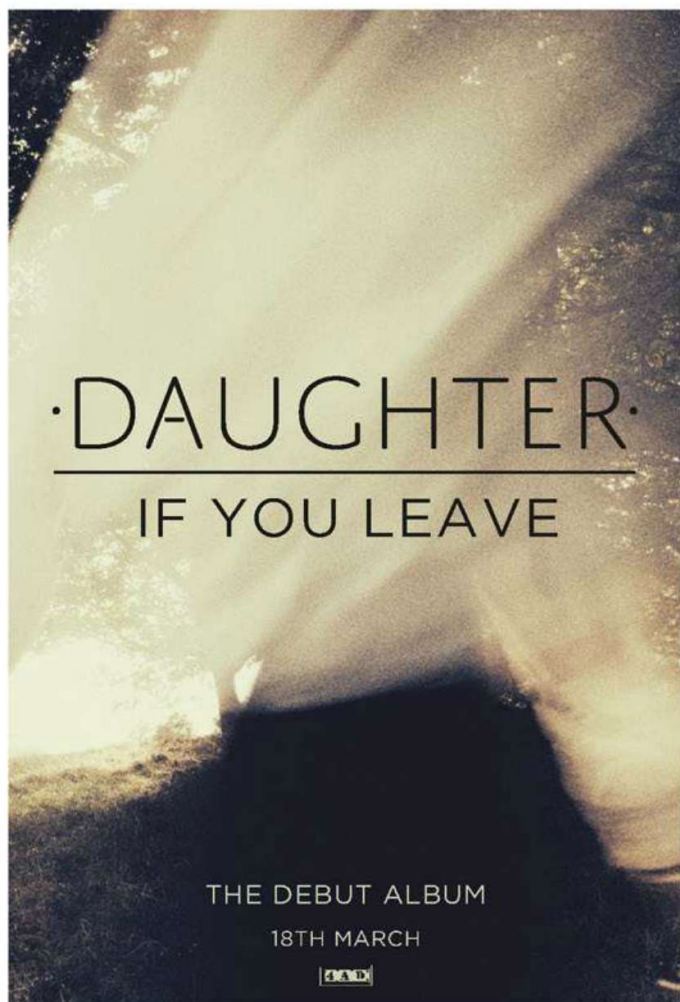
I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU

SETANTA, 1997

Back to normal – a playful album full of hits that weren't...

I asked my son Will which should be the single and he said "Magic Piper Of Love". It got to 32. It was funny, we rode that wave back to the way it always is, which is not quite making it. That album's got "Keep On Burning" on it. Why would that not be a hit when "A Girl Like You" is? But that was fine – I decided to concentrate on West Heath, the studio. I was obsessing on recorded sound and its history, and techniques. *I'm Not Following You* has the AED logo on the sleeve. We were having all sorts of ideas. After the hard work of "A Girl Like You", here I was, in my lovely studio, plenty of time, no money worries. It was glorious, I was able to indulge myself. AED was one of the things that came out of it. The track-sheets for the studio have always had AED printed on them – it means Analogue Enhanced Digital. I was working with boffins back then, and there's a company called EAR, which stands for Esoteric Audio Research. When it came to naming my label, that was the obvious thing.

Mark E Smith is on that record. What can I say? Actually, he was all right. On "Seventies Night" he completely improvised. It had pages of lyrics that were amazing, he went on for 10 minutes. So it was a lot of editing. He made a couple of helpful remarks. He'd say, "You what?!" Later, he said: "I'll cut your hands off." Steady on mate!



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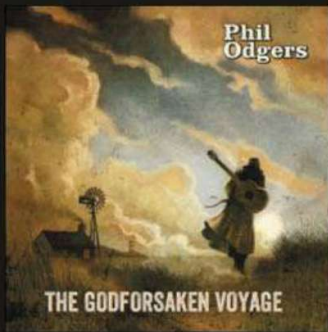
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BLANK REALM

GO EASY
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

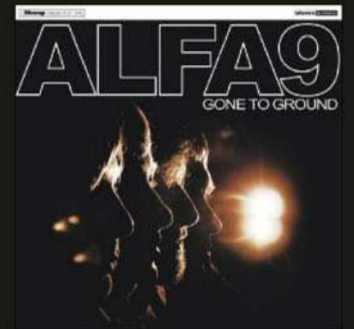
Blank Realm blend the bluesy waltz of Royal Trux with the punk desperation of Joy Division and the superfuzzed psych of the Flaming Lips.



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ALFA 9

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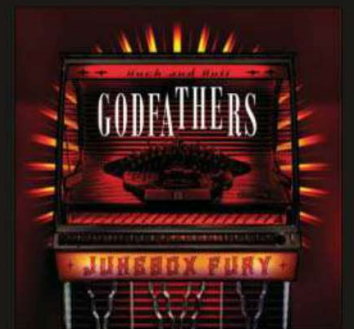


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New albums

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ZORAN ORLIC



TRACKLIST

- 1 Plastic Cup
- 2 Amethyst
- 3 So Blue
- 4 Holy Ghost
- 5 Waiting
- 6 Clarence White
- 7 Four Score
- 8 Just Make It Stop
- 9 Mother
- 10 On My Own
- 11 To Our Knees

LOW The Invisible Way

SUBPOP

More raw beauty from the Duluth veterans, heightened by lashings of piano and Jeff Tweedy... *By Graeme Thomson*

8/10

ACCORDING TO THEIR singer and guitarist Alan Sparhawk, Low decided to ask Jeff Tweedy to produce their 10th album after visiting Wilco's Chicago recording complex, The Loft, and hearing tracks from the forthcoming Mavis Staples album. Sparhawk remembers the sound he heard that day as "simple, raw and intimate", and there are far worse ways to describe *The Invisible Way*. Anchored in a unifying stillness and sonic simplicity which, even by Low's austere standards, errs toward the spartan, in its own quiet way it's as confrontational as anything the Duluth trio have ever done.

Since their 1994 debut, *I Could Live In Hope*, Low – Sparhawk, his wife Mimi Parker and, latterly,

bassist Steve Garrington – have made a powerful weapon out of fervent understatement, but during that time there have been several exploratory detours. For all that it largely conformed to the band's slow-burning ethos, their last album, 2011's *C'Mon*, had relatively plush accoutrements: keyboards, lap steel, strings, banjo, guest vocalists. Its predecessor, meanwhile, 2007's glitchy *Drums And Guns*, was Low at their most scattered, overloaded and oblique. Six years on, Sparhawk describes that record as an "experiment in having no direction".

The Invisible Way travels to the other extreme. This is a tight-knit collection of songs exploring varying shades of silence. Rather





Low get reflective: (l-r) Steve Garrington, Mimi Parker and Alan Sparhawk

than a retreat back to first principles, the sparseness feels like a new destination in itself, as though they've had to work and work to finally find the conviction to let this amount of space inform their music. It brings its own drama. The lowering "Amethyst", dark and thick as molasses, is barely there at all, but is far from inert; the air around these songs thrums with tension.

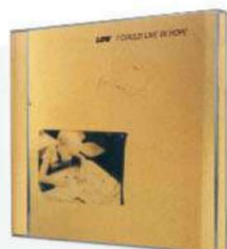
It's hard to think of any Low album that has

floated quite so far above specifics of time or place. Although some of *The Invisible Way* resembles past works – particularly the more hushed corners of *C'Mon*, such as "\$20" or "Done" – it contains barely any hint of the band's formative post-rock or slowcore aesthetic, nor of the kind of twinkling prettiness of something like "Try To Sleep". The textures here are classic and overwhelmingly organic. Electric guitars are largely absent, save

for a smattering of silvery shards and stately baritone twangs. "On My Own" is the album's sole instance of the weather turning truly squally, and even that begins with a soft spring in its step before breaking down midway through into a lurching blizzard of angry, overloaded guitars. The only other things that could be considered vaguely flighty are "Just Make It Stop", a pounding, Spector-meets-Velvet Underground almost-pop

HOW TO BUY... LOW

The best albums from the Duluth masters



I Could Live In Hope

VERNON YARD, 1994

Minimal right down to its 11 single-word titles, their Kramer-produced debut owes an obvious debt to Galaxie 500 and Red House Painters, yet these hazy funeral marches and pared-down laments make for a remarkable and haunting introduction.

8/10

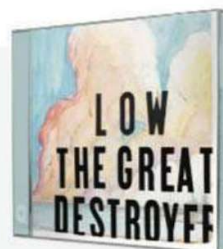


Things We Lost In The Fire

KRANKY, 2001

Classic fifth album, produced by Steve Albini, on which Low embrace a greater sonic expansiveness via piano, horns and samplers. The result is perhaps their most compelling collection, with "Like A Forest" and "In Metal" providing new glimmers of optimism.

8/10



The Great Destroyer

SUB POP, 2005

An uneven record, perhaps, but almost every incarnation of Low is represented: folksy, poppy, indie, tribal, glacial, but most of all noisy, as the band and Flaming Lips/Mogwai producer Dave Fridmann pepper their customary austerity with frenzied guitar attacks.

8/10



C'Mon

SUB POP, 2011

Recorded in the same Duluth church as 2002's *Trust*, this elegant and emotionally rich record seems like the logical destination of past Low albums while pointing towards *The Invisible Way*. Includes the insistent "Nothing But Heart" and "Witches", featuring Nels Cline. GT

9/10

song, and “So Blue”, one of those Low tracks that employs rigorous repetition to spiral towards a thrumming climax, pounding up and up over a Mo Tuckeresque primal heartbeat and resounding piano chords.

In such a carefully calibrated sonic landscape the slightest of touches make a real impact; the amount of piano on the record is certainly significant. It is used not to provide prettifying background colour but as a deep, dramatically percussive counterpoint to songs such as “Waiting”, where whole seconds pass between each booming note while Parker and Sparhawk sing about suicide and promise that “*the truth can hide sometimes right behind the sorrow*”. Like “Just Make It Stop” – with its tumbling hysteria and lines about being “*close to the edge/At the end of my rope*” – it’s the sort of Low song that makes you fleetingly fear for both the state of their minds and the state of their marriage.

The fact that Parker sings five of eleven tracks (as opposed to the usual one or two) is *The Invisible Way*’s other obvious point of departure, and one of its great strengths. There are shades of Patti Smith at her purest on the stunning “Holy Ghost”, perhaps the closest Low have ever come to down-the-line country-gospel, which suits a lyric where religious fervour burns slow. On “So Blue” and “Four Score” she adds ghostly harmony, high and sweet, to her own lead vocal, to mesmerising affect.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: The Loft, Chicago, autumn 2012

Produced by: Jeff Tweedy

Personnel: Alan Sparhawk (vocals, guitars), Mimi Parker (vocals, drums, piano), Steve Garrington (bass, keys)

“*cup the King held every night as he cried*”. This is history depicted as one long absurdist essay in misunderstanding.

Elsewhere there are several customary intimations of faith. Both Sparhawk and Parker are Mormons, and “Four Score” – beyond its title, with its Biblical intimations – has the quiet, dignified weight of an old hymn where many are “*lost and forsaken, but none forgotten*”. On “Mother”, a gently undulating nursery rhyme, Sparhawk moves from the deeply personal – “*you thought I’d be a daughter but didn’t mind*” – to an imagined day of universal resurrection “*when every child and mother will return*”.

Sung beautifully by Parker, the closing “To Our Knees” is a testament to a spiritual love that has been tested to extremes and yet still found to be true. A perfectly cut gem, it provides the album with an exhausted but stunningly beautiful conclusion.

“Clarence White” proves to be a more agitated examination of similar themes. A dark, bluesy gospel, the stomps, handclaps and big, bassy piano chords punctuate a fraught narrative which includes a walk-on part for Charlton Heston and the “*destroying angels*” of Cecil B DeMille’s *Ten Commandments*. Written after a recent flood that tore through Duluth, it is a song not about the late, great Byrds guitarist but about religious terror and the avenging power of the elements.

“*You think it’s pretty, but I am a raging river*,” sings Sparhawk. It is the album’s most impassioned vocal performance, high and hair-raising. It is also a line that encapsulates the strange, unsettling beauty of the entire Low oeuvre, and this record in particular.

Still waters, running dark and deep.



Q&A

Alan Sparhawk on the new album, Mimi Parker’s singing and working with Jeff Tweedy

WHY DID YOU want to work with Jeff Tweedy?
Wilco have been real friendly with Low, and they invited us to stop in

at their rehearsal space in Chicago. Jeff was working on Mavis Staples’ record and he played us some tracks. Right away it was, ‘Wow!’ It was real raw and simple, yet they were getting these amazing sounds. I asked if he’d be interested and a few days later we put it on the calendar. Him being a writer and singer who has made a lot of records, there was common ground and it meant we could work on subtle details right away. We’d done our homework and he was abreast of that.

Even by comparison to other Low records, *The Invisible Way* is incredibly sparse.

Jeff ended up being kind of the anchor for that aesthetic. There were times – times of weakness! – when I thought we should add another guitar or other things, but Jeff was like, “No, no, let’s see if it will hold together.” We went in pretty tight with our songs. We realised there was only going to be two or three things going on in each song, and the hope was to have a unifying sound. Jeff did quite a bit of cheerleading for that.

Why does Mimi sing more this time?

Low is on high alert for Mimi to sing songs! She started writing more this time. We probably came closest to convincing her to do a whole record of her singing. We might yet pull that off. There are probably a lot of fans who won’t admit it to my face but who would rather hear Mimi singing than me and I’m fine with that.

The other big thing is all that piano.

Yeah. At first I was a bit cautious, because it’s so weighed down by history and association. The key was that instead of saying, “OK, let’s add

some pretty piano at the end”, we wanted to let it be almost everything, then we’d add guitars or drums or whatever. The piano can be a powerful tool if you dive into the voicings and the way you use chords. The dynamics are really interesting.

Some of the words hint at real turmoil. Do you and Mimi ever startle each other with what you write?

We only discuss it when we have to. There is some mutual recognition of the fragility of that part of writing a song, and sometimes bringing someone else in at the wrong stage to make comments can shut it down. I want to impress her, so usually I only play something that isn’t quite done if I’m sure it’s got what it takes already. She’s pretty private as well – now and then she’ll ask for some help with lyrics, but she’s a little nervous about it. Isn’t that a weird thing? I’ve known her since she was nine, yet that moment when you let lyrics out of the gate is such a fragile, insecure one. In many

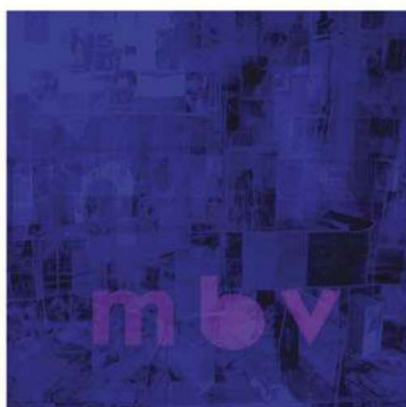
ways we are the most dangerous people to present each other’s ideas to, because the better you know someone the harder on them you can be.

“Clarence White” – it’s not really about Clarence White, is it?

Well, it wasn’t like I decided to write a song about Clarence White. It started with random phrases, and then I couldn’t really come

up with anything better. I like that writer-listener game, when you evoke names and people ponder the significance. The second verse is about a storm we had this summer in Duluth. The land up and away from the lake took on all this water and drained into Lake Superior, right across the city. It tore out a few roads. It’s also about *The Ten Commandments*, they’d show it every Easter on TV when I was growing up and I used to find it terrifying! **INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON**

“There were times of weakness where I thought we should add another guitar – Jeff Tweedy said ‘No!’”



MY BLOODY VALENTINE

mbv

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

No surprises, but a whole lotta gorgeous noise. *By Rob Young*

8/10

ARRIVING IN THE week the skeleton of Richard III was identified, receiving *mbv* is similarly akin to coming face to face with history. Dug up and painstakingly reconstructed, we know that in its own time, this entity, My Bloody Valentine, valiantly vanquished its shoegazing foes, was king of its domain, but was brought down, as all things must be, by its own folly – retreating to a tent and indulging its vainglorious fantasies. Now, in a more technological age, it can be reconstructed with pinpoint accuracy: the dead can come to life before your eyes.

If *Psychocandy* opened the indie feedback gates in the mid-1980s, with bubblegum pop slathered in a sickly noisette, it was MBV who took a blowtorch to the Reids' aspic of Spector/Stones references, smelting verse/chorus structures into

an orgasmic slew of vinegary chord shifts and burnt-sugar distortion. *Loveless* remains a singularity from that interim epoch, post-punk and post-Smiths, pre-Oasis. Nevertheless, there have been so many pretenders to this particular throne emerging in the vacuum since 1991, that you forget how completely they owned it.

Four years ago, I stood in front of an outdoor stage at a Northern European festival as MBV pounded out their back catalogue. After an hour, I had to walk away, and that had nothing to do with the volume. There was something deeply depressing, claustrophobic even, about these four adults in their late forties still trying to inhabit the phobias, sexual obsessions and suicide bids of their post-adolescent selves. The 'void' at the centre of "You Made Me Realise" was just that – grey, dead and a whole bunch of no fun

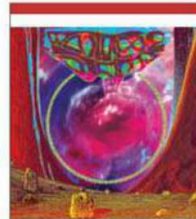
TRACKLIST

- 1 she found now
- 2 only tomorrow
- 3 who sees you
- 4 is this and yes
- 5 if i am
- 6 new you
- 7 in another way
- 8 nothing is
- 9 wonder 2

AtoZ

COMING UP
THIS MONTH...

- p66 SUEDE**
- p68 EMMYLOU HARRIS**
- p70 JOHN GRANT**
- p73 THE KNIFE**
- p75 EDWYN COLLINS**
- p76 CHELSEA LIGHT MOVING**
- p77 TERRY REID**
- p78 THE STROKES**
- p80 BILLY BRAGG**



ALIEN BALLROOM Zero Pac AD AGITATED

**Searing Scouse
psychedelia from
the band formerly
known as Koolaid**

7/10

It's heartening to discover that bonkers psych-rock boogie bands still exist on the west coast of England as well as on the west coast of America. This vinyl-only LP is marginally less demented than Alien Ballroom's previous work under the Koolaid (Global Tyranny) banner – "Banks Of The Dee" is a gently mouldering folk song – although generally it's transmitted from beneath a layer of sludge so thick that you'll be checking for tar on the needle. "Hogs Are Coming" is the bleary battlecry of a stoned biker gang, while the lobotomised lumber of "Forty Ton Rock" makes The Stooges sound like the Swingle Singers.

SAM RICHARDS



ELLEN ALLIEN LISm BPITCH CONTROL

**Choreography
soundtrack from
versatile Berliner**
Ellen Allien has made driving techno and electronica for more

6/10

than a decade, folding in guitars for a fresh New Order-y pop sound on her last album. Now the guitars take on a very different, Earth-like slowness in this 45-minute piece of music originally written for a dance performance at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Her repetitive riff in the early section teeters on the ponderous, and some of the electronic production is mere promotional muzak – but there are stunning passages here, like the woodpigeon flute loop that opens the record, or the sudden shift from post-bop jazz to Vangelis stateliness on the 20-minute mark.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

(especially when there are now entire concerts or CDs which sound the same). I'm not sure we'll ever really know the full sequence of events that have allowed *mbv* to appear, though it's clear that '22 years in the making' is exaggerated.

Instead, it's the work of a more mature quartet fanning the embers of the fire they abandoned more than two decades ago. An alternative view might call this lapsing back into old habits. The sum total of which is: if you're looking for progress, you'll be disappointed. On the upside, although much of *mbv* could have been recorded a fortnight after *Loveless* was released, it rarely sounds retro. The sonic distinguishing marks are so pronounced, they appear to have arrived, vacuum-packed, via some audio-temporal wormhole.

Everything about the presentation of *mbv* is lower case, from the typeface and titling to the DIY, mail order-only availability. But Kevin Shields' musical authorship – seemingly undimmed by his more restrained soundtrack work – keeps their music in headline caps. Colm Ó Cíosóig's clattery drums – swallowed by samplers on *Loveless* – are more prominent too, contributing to a more spacious stereo picture. "she found now", "only tomorrow" (ghosted with a melodeon) and "who sees you" make a brilliant opening sequence, with all the beloved MBV ingredients: Shields' sheets of curdled tremolo-guitar underlaying his overdubbed, shrieking lead lines; the vocal

sirocco billowing from his and Bilinda Butcher's mouths; Debbie Googe's sticky tar-pit basslines.

Then come the variations: "is this and yes" swaps the guitars for delicate leaves of electric organ; while the closest they come to following through on the more techno-fied routes suggested by the "Glider" EP comes on the brontosaurian hip-hop of "new you" and the glorious controlled feedback of "in another way". But the album's back end, where the group try to force their signature sound into slightly different tubes, is the least successful. The jackhammer industrial beats and repetitive power chords of "nothing is" end up spiralling into the ground. And the phased breakbeats of "wonder 2" sound like the kind of junglist crossover that seemed cool in 1996, but now seems as kitschily archaic as a lion's paw carved into the base of a chair leg.

Overall, then, *mbv* is more of a time capsule than a box of surprises, but the contents have survived in immaculate condition. If My Bloody Valentine haven't ventured very far from their comfort zone, it's hard to imagine a more gorgeously distressed set of songs flowing from any other source this year. And just like *Loveless*, this album is a world of sound unto itself which you can crawl inside and shelter in: an emotional bonfire to warm a generation through another recession.



SUEDE

Bloodsports

SUEDE LTD/WARNER

Not quite back to their storming, Britpop peak – but the signs are encouraging. *By Sharon O'Connell*



7/10

AFTER SUCH A fall, it seemed impossible. That Suede – generally acknowledged to have launched Britpop in 1992 with debut single “The Drowners”, a brilliantly brash, slo-mo amalgam of early Bowie and The Smiths – might somehow

scramble back up the cliff face and make another record was surely blue-sky thinking of the most desperately hopeful kind. The band, who parted ways in November of 2003, had had a rocky run of it.

Their last album, 2002’s *A New Morning*, had signalled a fresh start for the newly clean Brett Anderson – who’d spent 18 months in the grip of crack cocaine addiction, his muse deserting him by degrees – and a reboot for a band that had watched the zeitgeist slipping out of focus and all but their most devout fans withdrawing. As it turned out, the “new morning” was more a final dusk. Protracted recording sessions didn’t help, but the main problem was a war on two fronts: an uncertain embrace of acoustic songcraft, and electric tracks where their eccentricities became tired tropes.

There was a lot to prove, then, when Suede reunited in 2010 for the Teenage Cancer Trust shows. If not exactly a triumphant return to their majestic prime, this one-off was a reminder that that prime was indeed quite something (they were, after all, *Melody Maker* cover stars before they’d released their first single), and it suggested that Suede’s tank might not be empty yet. It also served as a reintroduction, paving the way for – could it really happen? – a new Suede album. Anderson announced exactly that in September of 2012, just

over a year after first mentioning the possibility of a sixth studio LP with the qualification that “nothing would see the light of day unless I was really, really excited about it.” *Bloodsports* presumably fills that brief.

Produced by Ed Buller, who worked on their first three LPs and tagged by Anderson as “a cross between bits of *Dog Man Star* and bits of *Coming Up*”, it prompts a sigh of relief, if not wild cheering. Suede were caught between a rock and a hard place; while acutely aware of what made them great, they were not only sensibly unwilling, but also unable to replicate that youthful, amped-up glory (Anderson is now 44). *A New Morning*, however, proved the folly of reinvention. *Bloodsports*, then, is a recalibration. If it has any parallel, it’s in the Manic Street Preachers’ *Everything Must Go*, a punched-up, hook-heavy set more about overall impact than detail and a calculated counter to their previous record. Anderson claims it’s “about the endless carnal game of love” and it tracks the path of a relationship from infatuation through estrangement to break-up. Accordingly, much of it has a widescreen, (melo)dramatic wallop and none of the songs serve Suede’s comeback too shabbily. “For The Strangers”, “Sabotage” and “It Starts And Ends With You” are unremarkable

hybrids of consensual, grown-up rock that drag their heels in terms of contemporaneity (U2, Keane, The Killers) but they push the big-picture buttons effectively enough. Lyrics, though, are still a sticking point. Anderson has long since dropped his Cockney affectations, and he’s no longer seduced by the breath-taking modernity of cigarettes, neon and magazines, but he still struggles with poetic resonance. Analogies are uniformly limited to one thing being “like” another and some metaphors

simply don’t ring true. Does any telephone really emit “a brittle sigh”, as is described in “What Are You Not Telling Me”?

There’s a territory-reclaiming triffecta, though, that pushes Suede through. “Barriers” is a powerful opening salvo, its clarion sweeps of guitar underpinned by Blondie’s turbo-charged rhythms and pumped up with ’80s cliff-top dynamics. The darkly insistent “Snowblind” easily matches it, as does “Hit Me”, an irresistible, glammed-up stomp that hints at “Sweet Child O’ Mine” and is bound to do the indie-disco business

from Brighton to Wick.

Bloodsports may not be quite as “furious” as Anderson has claimed, but Suede’s renewed charge is obvious. It’s a creditable step back into the ring after years on the ropes.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Sarm Studios, London and ICP, Brussels
Produced by: Ed Buller
Personnel: Brett Anderson (vocals), Richard Oakes (guitars), Mat Osman (bass), Simon Gilbert (drums), Neil Codling (synthesisers)

Q&A

Brett Anderson



Did you feel like there was a lot at stake with *Bloodsports*?

There was a huge amount. What was at stake was rescuing the reputation of Suede, really. We probably shouldn’t have released that last album; we did the thing we’d always said we’d avoid – releasing a record just to go on tour. It wasn’t released with the joy and passion with which records should be released.

What were you aiming at sonically with this LP?

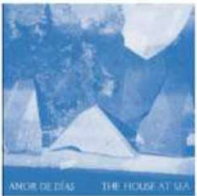
We were trying to find that sweet spot between feeling like Suede and feeling fresh, which is a

really interesting point on the spectrum. I don’t think there’s any point in coming back and trying to reinvent the band, and I wanted it to sound identifiably like a Suede record. But I didn’t want it to sound like self-parody or pastiche.

Was there ever a point where you thought Suede were done for good?

There was a point about midway through the new record where it wasn’t really coming together like I wanted it to. I did toy with the idea of saying, “Let’s not do this, and I’ll carry on making solo records.” But that was to do with trying to re-establish the band chemistry. We almost approached this like we were a new band. We didn’t want to have this bullshit complacent attitude: “We’re Suede and whatever we do is going to sound great.”

INTERVIEW: SHARON O’CONNELL



AMOR DE DÍAS The House At Sea

MERGE

Mood music for dusk in solitude

On their second album together, The Clientele's Alasdair MacLean and Pipa's Lupe Núñez-

8/10

Fernández paint a series of aural still-lives using the wispy watercolour brush strokes of bossa nova. Singing separately while interlocking their Spanish guitars, the partners deftly sustain a mood of languor through a dozen tracks of varying tone and texture. These range from "The House At Sea" and "Jean's Waving", which possess the genteel romanticism of The Clientele, and "Same Old Night", a dead ringer for Chad & Jeremy circa '65, to "Days", which mounts a samba rhythm atop 4/4 rock drumming, and "Viento Del Mar", a tactile dreamscape pitting Núñez-Fernández's silky whisper against gnarls of fuzzed-out guitars.

BUD SCOPPA



AUTECHRE

Exai

WARP

Glitch veterans tool up for double-album adventure

There was a worry back in the mid-noughties that Autechre might

8/10

disappear into arid digital abstraction, but they've gently swerved back towards rhythm – their own unstable version of it, of course. Like Mark Fell, they're at their best when vibrating 4/4 beats off their axis to leave savage funk, like something you might find on a nightmarishly difficult level of the *Just Dance* videogame. This two-hour epic very occasionally rests on its laurels by using sounds from past palettes, but is characteristically rich and adventurous, taking in smeared boom-bap and loping Flying Lotus psych alongside the PhD techno and breaks.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



AUTRE NE VEUT

Anxiety

MEXICAN SUMMER

Leftfield R&B auteur smartens up

The self-titled 2010 debut from Brooklyn's Arthur Ashin posited him as a sort of midpoint between

7/10

Ne-Yo and Ariel Pink, deconstructing the modern R&B crooner and reassembling him along outsider-pop lines. *Anxiety*, is anything but lo-fi, though. Released on his former flatmate Daniel 'Oneohtrix Point Never' Lopatin's Software imprint, "Play By Play" and "Ego Free Sex Free" drop Ashin's Prince-like croon amid lush, hyper-produced backdrops of twinkling keyboard and digi-drums. Ashin is no straightforward loverman – on "Counting", not that you'd guess it, he's anticipating the death of his grandmother – but *Anxiety*'s blend of heaviness and gloss is unexpectedly affecting.

LOUIS PATTISON



DEVENDRA BANHART

Mala

NONESUCH

Freak folk gets an electronic makeover

Recorded on a vintage Tascam recorder, the eighth album by the

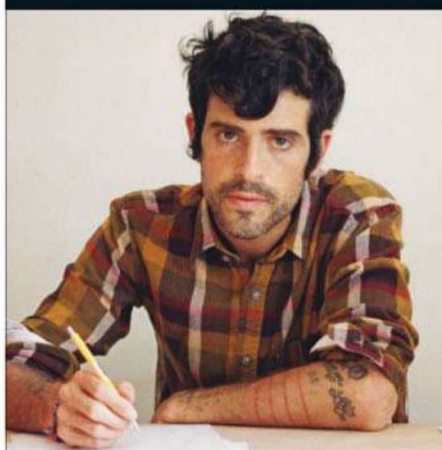
8/10

Venezuelan-American kookster is a thrillingly inventive blend of alt.rock, fingerpicking folk, Latin flavours and – new this – electronic pop, the latter most startlingly showcased on "Your Fine Petting Duck" which nonchalantly segues from '50s-style doo-wop to a sweaty Teutonic dance number. Elsewhere the mood veers between menace – "I can't keep myself from evil", Banhart intones in "Taurobolium" – and a goofy mischief best demonstrated on the track "Never Seen Such Good Things" in which he remarks: "If we ever make sweet love again, I'm sure that it will be quite disgusting."

FIONA STURGES

REVELATIONS

Devendra Banhart's reinvention



► "Unpopular pop" is how the Venezuelan-American singer Devendra Banhart describes what he does. "A lot of people see me as a folk artist, this barefoot hippy guy, and I'm happy to be included in that section in a record store, but I don't think it applies anymore. The criteria would be acoustic guitar and singing, and there's not a lot of that on this record."

It's true that *Mala*, Banhart's eighth LP, comes with an expansive musical palette, drawing on samba, reggae, psych soul and, most unexpectedly, dance and synth-pop. "There are sounds that I never expected to find in there," he reflects. "I created a studio right behind the apartment I was renting in L.A., and soundproofed it myself. I didn't do a great job because we ended up accidentally recording birdsong. So these seemingly digital sounds are organic in origin; what sounds like a synth is actually a bird."

Banhart's lyrics can be equally surprising. "Your Fine Petting Duck" finds him warning off an ex looking to reunite with him by reminding her how badly he behaved. "In reality I've never had a girl say 'I'll take you back,'" Banhart says. "Rarely is a song autobiographical for me. I think straightforward love songs have been done. I want to look at the dark side, to celebrate the mess."

FIONA STURGES



BLANCHE BLANCHE BLANCHE

Wooden Ball

NNA TAPES

Alien pop insanity from Vermont duo

It's easy to mock Brattleboro, Vermont's

6/10

Zach Phillips and Sarah Smith: this is their eighth album since 2010, which buries the comparatively mainstream, Fiery Furnaces-meets-Ariel Pink burble of 2012's *Wink With Both Eyes* beneath gnashing analogue synthesisers last heard on Oingo Boingo's "Only A Lad". Chastising hipsters on "TED Talks" is a bit rich when it sounds like toddlers loose in the Moog showroom, but for every bout of exasperating silliness, they ply charming, cryptic ragtime ditties that recall The Magnetic Fields, and pervert pop vocal interplay with aplomb. They could probably be brilliant, but it's unlikely they want to be.

LAURA SNAPES



BLANK REALM

Go Easy

FIRE

Australians psych-rocking with the best of them

This Aussie four-piece – three siblings, Daniel, Luke and Sarah Spencer,

8/10

plus Luke Walsh – have been around for a while, but *Go Easy* is their biggest statement yet. A cracking selection of scuzzy, fuzzy, psych-rock songs that recall Royal Trux and Sonic Youth, *Go Easy* alternates between gonzo skronk-rock ("Acting Strange", in which Sarah boasts "Guess I've been acting kind of strange" against a curtain of feedback, fuzz and two-note guitar solos) and the more gentle but seemingly never-ending "Cleaning Up My Mess". There's also room for experimental oddities like the percussion-filled "The Crackle Part 2" and Fall-style ravers like "Pendulum Swing".

PETER WATTS



CHARLES BRADLEY

Victim Of Love

DAPTONE

Sixtysomething soul man on screamingly good form

Bradley's 2011 debut album

7/10

No Time For Dreaming was the kind of old-school testifying and retro grooves one might expect from a man who'd previously worked as a James Brown impersonator. *Victim Of Love* again mines rich seams of bygone soul, but on a slightly broader canvas. "You Put The Flame On It" fizzles and finger-snaps like the best of Sam & Dave, "Where Do We Go From Here" takes its cue from *Super Fly*-era Curtis Mayfield, and "Confusion" detours into George Clinton space funk. A couple of the more freeform screamers may be a holler too far for some ears, but there's no denying the passion and power of Bradley's formidable lungs.

TERRY STAUNTON

AMERICANA



EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL *Old Yellow Moon* NONESUCH

BEST
OF THE
MONTH

8/10

A collaboration at once overdue, and worth the wait

This album has been an unrealised ambition for Harris and Crowell since 1974, when Harris was choosing tracks for her solo debut, *Pieces Of The Sky*. The producer overseeing *Pieces...*, Brian Ahern, played Harris a track by budding Texan songwriter Rodney Crowell. It was called "Bluebird Wine", and it became the album opener. "Bluebird Wine" is also the eighth track on the Brian Ahern-produced *Old Yellow Moon*. It's not quite as purchasers of *Pieces...* will remember it. Crowell has taken the lead vocal back and tinkered

with the lyrics, turning the sloshed youthful idlers depicted in the original into more purposeful, middle-aged workaholics. This revision is one of the more obvious manifestations of a theme that percolates gently throughout *Old Yellow Moon*, of attempting to apply the lessons learnt to the time there is left. *Old Yellow Moon* is not, however, a sombre anticipation of mortality akin to the *American Recordings* series of Crowell's one-time father-in-law Johnny Cash. The general tone of *Old Yellow Moon* is of faintly rueful happiness at being here, doing this. The opening track, the subtly swinging "Hanging Up My Heart", first appeared on the Crowell-produced cash-in album Sissy Spacek made after her turn as Loretta Lynn in *Coalminer's Daughter*. The original is an iteration of a well-worn country template: the too-many-times-bitten Romeo/Juliet announcing that they can't be bothered anymore. In these two well-weathered voices – a compliment – it sounds like relief at having grown too old for all that nonsense. Similar redemption is wrung from a stately version of Allen Reynolds' "Dreaming My Dreams"; Crowell's "Here We Are" executes the same sort of metamorphosis. This first appeared on George Jones' 1979 duets album *My Very Special Guests*, sung by Jones and Harris, a weary waltz of on/off lovers who've resigned themselves to a semi-grateful collapse into each other's arms. The *Old Yellow Moon* version is recalibrated as a slightly gloating acknowledgement of the terrible disadvantage suffered by the young: they don't have any old friends. **ANDREW MUELLER**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Some tasty new releases on the horizon. April sees **Steve Earle** (left), aided by both The Dukes and Duchesses, issue *The Low Highway* on New West. A "road record" co-produced

by longtime cohort Ray Kennedy, three of the songs were originally written for Earle-starring HBO drama, *Treme*. Also due that month is the much-anticipated third album from Uncut-endorsed LA quartet, **Dawes**. *Stories Don't End* is the first release on the band's own HUB label and a preview of two new tunes, including lead-off single "From A Window Seat", is on dawestheband.com.

Meanwhile, on the back of last year's George'n'Tammy-invoking minor classic *How Do You Plead?*, real-life partners

Michael Weston King and Lou Dalglish return as **My Darling Clementine**. Provisionally titled *Unhappily Ever After*, the follow-up was recorded in Sheffield with Richard Hawley producer Colin Elliot, with Hawley's band providing the backing. The duo tour the UK with Ricky Ross in April.

Guesting on My Darling Clementine's LP is Texas' Jewish cowboy **Kinky Friedman**, who also launches in-concert LP *Live From Woodstock* and visits these shores in April as part of 'Kinky Friedman's Bi-Polar World Tour'. Expect a healthy plug too for his new book *Roll Me Up And Smoke Me When I'm Gone*, co-written by Willie Nelson. And there's still time to catch the wonderful **Caitlin Rose** on her UK tour to promote *The Stand-In*. The first week in March sees her play Manchester, Glasgow and London, including an in-store at Rough Trade East.

ROB HUGHES



CITY REIGN *Another Step* CAR BOOT RECORDS

Cocky Manc quartet carry on where Oasis left off

This Mancunian four-piece have not looked far for their influences,

5/10

filling their debut album with swaggering Oasis-like anthems that drip youthful confidence. They're named, loosely, after a Ryan Adams song but while some of Adams' introspection surfaces on "Ahead Of Ideas", a soul-searcher that ends in a whiplash of strings and cacophonous guitars, this is supremely self-confident stuff. Guitars are the key instrument, whether wielded brutally on "Out In The Cold" or choppy on "Making Plans", but the heart-tugging strings and soaring vocals of "Retaliate" show the band have a nose for the sort of emotional balladry that could bring real success.

PETER WATTS



CLINIC *Free Reign II* DOMINO

Liverpool psych-punks get a hallucinogenic overhaul

Late last year, Clinic released their seventh album, *Free Reign*,

7/10

a stew of tranced-out rock, psychedelia and outsider jazz that, while sounding an awful lot like Clinic, did little to advance their sound. Its more intriguing moments were mixed by Daniel Lopatin, aka synth guru Oneohtrix Point Never – and it turns out they were just tasters of a freakier alternate mix, released in full here. Ade Blackburn's clenched-teeth vox and the ticking drums remain intact, but everything else is set aswirl, drenched in echo ("See-Saw II") or zonked out to a foggy blur ("Sun And The Moon II"). A band that long ago perfected their sound, such collaborations rather suit them.

LOUIS PATTISON



MIKE COOLEY *The Fool On Every Corner* COOLEY

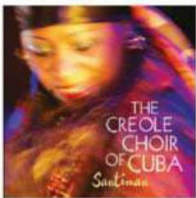
Guns-and-whiskey-drenched live set from Drive-By Truckers

As one of two, maybe three, principal songwriters in the

7/10

Drive-By Truckers going back to their founding, Mike Cooley has hardly proven prolific. But the songs he has written – heart-thumping, Southern-fried character sketches – always pack a wallop, as with "Loaded Gun In The Closet" on the group's breakthrough *Decoration Day*. *The Fool On Every Corner* is his first tentative step into the solo realm, a cadre of his finest DBTs compositions recast in an intimate, finger-picking acoustic setting. Adopting a bluesy drawl, merged with a bit of Lefty Frizzell twang, Cooley gets at the heart and grit of subtly shaded dramatic narratives like "Pulaski" and "Carl Perkins Cadillac". Bob Seger and Charlie Rich bits are thrown in for fun.

LUKE TORN



THE CREOLE CHOIR OF CUBA
Santiman
REAL WORLD

Polyglot passions from the Buena Vista socialism club

8/10

A kaleidoscopic explosion of musical and linguistic ingredients – Haitian Creole, French, Spanish, African and Caribbean – this remarkable state-sponsored choir earned huge acclaim with their ravishing debut UK release *Tande-La* in 2010. The members are all descended from Haitian immigrants forcibly brought to Cuba as slaves, or who fled subsequent invasions and dictators, a heritage reflected in this exotic new collection of Haitian freedom songs. Bookended by soaring, celestial female voices, there are moments of deep melancholy, like the sombre spiritual “Balaida De Annaise”. But the general mood is defiantly upbeat, as on “Simbi”, where African-style party grooves meet Havana juke-joint swagger.

STEPHEN DALTON



DAKOTA SUITE
An Almost Silent Life
GLITTERHOUSE

Womb-like missives from loosely configured, Leeds-based troupe
Those listeners already familiar with the

7/10

recorded work of mainstay Chris Hooson won't be alarmed to find that *An Almost Silent Life* very much follows in the usual tradition of Dakota Suite, the collective he's been fronting since the late '90s. That is, an intense set of sad-slow meditations that morph from soft acoustic guitar and piano settings to a distinct brand of hushed chamber music. It's the kind of approach that makes Tindersticks sound like a bunch of Club 30 reps, but compositions like “Last Flare From A Desperate Shipwreck” prove that Hooson has an unerring gift for turning personal despair into quiet rapture.

ROB HUGHES



DAUGHTER
If You Leave
4AD

Moody, post-modern shoegazers – minus bass player

6/10

Listening to the sweetly anguished whispering of Elena Tonra's intense confessionals, you can't help but wonder how she manages a trip to the corner shop, let alone steps up to the mic. From its stark, single-word song titles to its crepuscular, xx-styled atmospherics and keening, Guthrie-like guitars, this young trio's debut picks up the baton of bleak, post-dubstep songcraft and tiptoes confidently off with it. There's an unwelcome hint of Florence Welch's swollen emotionalism on “Tomorrow”, but the surging pop of “Touch” is more successful, while the skeletal beauty of “Smother” and a sweetly finger-picked “Shallows” point to a future brighter than Tonra's own outlook on love and life.

SHARON O'CONNELL



DEEP FOREST
Deep Africa
UNIVERSAL

French synth boffin seeks inspiration, finds little

5/10

Since he playfully blended electronica with the chants of African pygmies back in 1994, Eric Mouquet has turned to other folk traditions; Russian, South Seas and more. Here he works with a range of singers including Cameroon's Blick Bassy and SA chanteuse Zama Magadulela. Alas, while African music has sped on since the mid-'90s, Mouquet clings to his massive beats and vintage synths, a Genesis-derived tsunami that may work on his soundtracks but here simply swamps the vocalists. Wasis Diop exerts his baritone charms on “Wasis”, but most other singers are lost. Why bother with the French intermediary?

NEIL SPENCER

HOW TO BUY... DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS AND RELATED SOLO WORKS



DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
Decoration Day 2003

One might as easily pick *The Big To-Do* or *The Dirty South*, but there's no denying the epic sweep of *Decoration Day*, the DBTs' mind-boggling 2003 LP. From the manic, scrambled desperation of “Sink Hole”, Patterson Hood's forlorn account of a farmer losing the family farm, to Mike Cooley's chilling “Loaded Gun In The Closet”, title self-explanatory, *Decoration Day* is a country boy's *Exile On Main St.*

9/10



JASON ISBELL
Sirens Of The Ditch 2007

Only part of the DBTs for six years, Alabaman Isbell easily held his own with the talented Hood/

Cooley songwriting team (see *Decoration Day*'s title cut). He's since cut a trio of strong solo discs, but this one best showcases his range: punchy power-pop, swampy Southern R'n'B, country flavouring, luminous, late-night blues. “Dress Blues”, piercing the veil of war's human costs, is majestic heartbreak.

8/10



PATTERSON HOOD
Heat Lightning Rumbles in the Distance 2012

Quietly nuanced where the Truckers steamroll, wearily contemplative where the Truckers are brash, Hood's finest solo disc finds him questioning everything, in touch with his superlative storytelling muse via explorations of early-onset decay and regret. The spoken-word “(untold pretties)”, raining down imagistic personal ruminations, is sublime. “You can only carry hell around so long,” he sings.

9/10

LUKE TORN



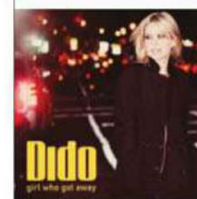
DEPTFORD GOTH
Life After Defo
MEROK

Laptop glumster's south bank showcase
Like a heartbroken Young Marble Giants busking in

7/10

a deserted underpass, the debut album from Suffolk-born auteur Daniel Woolhouse is very much of the xx school of half-starved bedsit minimalism. A one-time fine art student and classroom assistant, Deptford Goth's ghost R&B keens admirably in the direction of Bon Iver and Active Child, Woolhouse banshee-wailing his own Greek chorus through the ready-meal-for-one disco of “Union”, and constructing an exciting approximation of the veal-crate funk of The Blue Nile from life-support bleeps and cutlery on “Bronze Age” – rave from somewhere beyond the grave.

JIM WIRTH



DIDO
Girl Who Got Away
RCA

Frustratingly bland fourth album from Ms Armstrong

5/10

Dido's voice is the sonic equivalent of Quorn, bland enough to soak up whatever she's being marinated in. She works well with the more pungent flavours of guest producers, like Jeff Bhasker's Massive Attack-style drum loop on “Let Us Move On” (with rapper Kendrick Lamar as the Eminem de nos jour), or Greg Kurstin's icy electronic soundscape on “End Of Night”. Her folksy warble sometimes resembles Sinéad O'Connor (“No Freedom”) or Tracey Thorn (“Happy New Year”), but it would be nice to see Dido with more adventurous producers: especially given the paucity of big brother Rollo's spice rack.

JOHN LEWIS



MARY DILLON
North
BACK LANE

Member of Irish folk dynasty returns with tasteful solo debut album

7/10

A former member of the acclaimed Irish folk band Déanta and older sister to the better known Cara, Mary Dillon returns from a 15-year hiatus with 10 songs largely drawn from the traditional songbook. Her clear, sweet voice is immaculate and the stripped-back acoustic settings tasteful to a fault, but if the general air of flawlessness frequently tips over into glossy politeness, the highlights are nevertheless affecting and impressive: the tearful anti-war ballad “John Condon”, the lovelorn “Knockashee”, a haunting “Edward On Lough Erne Shore” and the closing, a cappella “Ard Ti Chuain”.

GRAEME THOMSON

JOHN GRANT

Pale Green Ghosts

BELLA UNION

Former Czar's emotionally raw second – Sinéad sings backing.

By Garry Mulholland



8/10

JOHN GRANT IS not a man of mystery. In the interviews around the release of his startling 2010 debut album *Queen Of Denmark*, the former leader of The Czars talked with bracing honesty about his homosexuality, his battle to overcome

addictions to booze and drugs, his flirtations with suicide. He told us his mordant love songs were about a guy named Charlie. Then Grant topped all that by using an appearance at last summer's MeltDown in London with friends Hercules And Love Affair to announce to a shocked audience that he is HIV-positive.

But *Pale Green Ghosts*, which takes its name from a song inspired by the Colorado drives young Grant would take to new wave clubs along a Denver to Boulder road lined by Russian olive trees, also betrays the confidence Grant has taken from the ecstatic reaction to the Midlake-produced *Queen Of Denmark*. Still, the album's a big ask: specifically, he's asking still relatively new fans to travel with him from bucolic Texas to his current creative base of Reykjavik and the quintessentially European electronica of GusGus' Biggi Veira, co-producer of these 11 emotionally raw new songs.

The lyrics are still dominated by witty, raging and self-immolating open letters to the chronically passive-aggressive Charlie, and the presence of Midlake rhythm section McKenzie Smith and Paul Alexander ensures that the album is roughly split between Grant's familiar, '70s John Lennon-meets-John Cale balladry and the kind of stark industrial electro-pop that Grant was travelling along that tree-lined road to dance to back in the '80s. Little did he imagine, as he danced to "Mandinka", that its maker Sinéad O'Connor would be providing backing vocals on his records 25 years later, as she does on three of the songs here.

The title track opens the album and introduces the listener to Grant's new direction, his burnished croon bathed in reverb over the burbling, stark and discreetly disco analogue synth backing, coming on somewhere between James Murphy and *Clues*-era Robert Palmer. It's a style that works perfectly on "Ernest Borgnine" where Grant addresses his health in self-lacerating verses ("Now what did you expect/ You spent your life on your knees") while the chorus echoes the debut album's "Sigourney Weaver"; a surreal juxtaposition and an escape into the melodramas and removed realities of the movies and actors Grant loves.

The most purely beautiful song, based largely on acoustic guitar but enhanced by a ghostly Moog solo, is "It Doesn't Matter To Him", where Grant confesses that, despite a life of music, friends, family and sobriety, the grief over lost love, the final knowledge that "I am invisible to him", invades every waking thought. But the song which, one suspects, is destined to be Grant's anthem is "GMF", another stately non-electronic ballad in which



SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:** Biggi Veira and John Grant with additional production by Aron Þor Arnarsson
Recorded at: Orgelsmiðjan Studio and Syrland Studio, Reykjavik; Elmwood Studio, Dallas; and Strongroom, London
Personnel includes:

John Grant (vocals, synth), Biggi Veira (synth), Sinéad O'Connor (bk vocals), Pétur Hallgrímsson (guitar), Jakob Smári Magnússon (bass) Arnar Ómarsson (drums), Aron Þor Arnarsson (percussion), Paul Alexander (bass), McKenzie Smith (drums), Guðmundur Pétursson/Smári Tarfur (acoustic guitar), Óskar Guðjónsson (sax), Chris Pemberton (piano)

Grant declares, in an irresistible, unforgettable chorus, that he is "the greatest motherfucker that you're ever gonna meet". It's a masterpiece of narcissism laced with bathos, as Grant digs up Richard Burton's corpse to play him in the inevitable movie, and concludes, as he analyses the reasons why he is not the king of the world, that "I should have practiced my scales/I should not be attracted to males".

The abrupt changes between lush vintage balladry and stark electro ensure that *Pale Green Ghosts* is not as instantly cohesive as *Queen Of Denmark*. But it is arguably more satisfying, in its artistic courage, its

refusal to meet expectations, and its willingness to paint a brand new picture of a gay demi-monde where the triumphs and tragedies have a deeper resonance than simple melodrama or camp.

It also lets us know that, whatever Grant does next, it will surprise and provoke because, even though its maker is 43 years old, he is only on the beginning of a journey to find himself, in his art as in his troubled, chaotic life. You never know, perhaps album three will find someone to accuse that isn't Charlie. The poor guy's ears must be burnt to a crisp by now.

Q&A

John Grant



Why so much synthesiser on *Pale Green Ghosts*? Because I love synths more than anything in the whole world. Is Vince Clarke the prime influence? Well, I listened the shit out of the two

Yazoo LPs when they came out. But I also love New Order, the Cabs, Chris & Cosey and Yello.

"Ernest Borgnine" is the one song where you directly address the fact you are HIV positive. Did you meet him? Yes, and I was delighted. He was Hollywood royalty. Amazing face and voice... one of the greatest US character actors. The verses deal with the fact I got HIV after I became

sober, so I felt like there was no excuse. To still go out and make this horrible mistake was like, "Did you have to add this to the fucking mess?"

The painful break-up songs concern the same ex-lover that you were singing about on *Queen Of Denmark*. But it seems like you're shouting at a brick wall... Yeah. His motto was that he didn't want to say things to hurt me so he didn't say anything. Which I found much more hurtful than being told to fuck off. It affected me so deeply as it was the first relationship I experienced after I got sober. It was raw for me because I couldn't just do a bunch of blow off some guy's hard cock.

In last month's *Uncut*, Sinéad O'Connor said that, if you ever decided to be straight, she was "oiled up and ready for you". Tempted? Ha! Absolutely. I would give it a whirl.

INTERVIEW: GARRY MULHOLLAND



DOBIE
We Will Not Harm You
BIG DADA

Classy breakbeat electronica with deep roots

7/10

A semi-legendary figure in London club music circles, Anthony "Dobie" Campbell has juggled a successful career as a skate-scene photographer with production and remix work for Soul II Soul, Björk, London Posse, Massive Attack and more. With a sleeve painting by Turner Prize-winner Chris Ofili, Campbell's first solo album in 15 years explores a broad spectrum of beat-driven electronica, from jazzy acid-bleep collages like "Stan Lee Is A Hero Of Mine" to the undulating metallic funk of "The Chant" and the burly techno-rock shudders of "Crunch Factor No 5". Lightly experimental and laced with playful wit, this is quality gear from a seasoned elder statesman.

STEPHEN DALTON



DOG BITE
Velvet Changes
CARPARK

Young Turks graduate revives early '90s indie

6/10

After early sample-based experiments, practicalities of work as Washed Out's touring keyboardist forced Phil Jones aka Dog Bite to write with his guitar. The murky results are sometimes frustrating: melancholic opener "Forever, Unite" seems weighed down by budget technology when it should soar, while the 4AD sparkle of "Paper Lungs" clashes with the song's detuned riffs, suggesting an artist struggling between lo-fi roots and more grandiose ambitions. "No Sharing", however, demonstrates an ear for dreamy art house acts like AR Kane, and fans of Kurt Vile's stoned demeanour and Guided By Voices' compact melodies will be rewarded for their perseverance.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



DOLDRUMS
Lesser Evil
SOUTTERAIN TRANSMISSIONS

Debut from Portishead-approved Montreal scenester

8/10

Recorded largely on a laptop borrowed from his high-profile pal Grimes, *Lesser Evil* proves that Eric "Airick" Woodhead's inventive take on Portishead's "Chase The Tear" (released as a B-side to the original) was no flash in the pan. His debut as Doldrums follows two EPs and is a joyous and colour-saturated, experi-pop affair bulging with ideas and driven by a frantic energy. Its unforced eccentricity reflects its maker's aim of "trying to get back to this naïve and pure, childish sensibility" and, although there are echoes here of Panda Bear and Björk – especially on "She Is The Wave" – they're not oppressive. Doldrums' frequently multi-tracked falsetto is the icing on an appealingly irregular cake.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MAXMILLION DUNBAR
House Of Woo
RVNG INTL

Hypersensual 21st-Century dance music to make NYC proud again

9/10

The fabulously named Maxmillion Dunbar is one half of Beautiful Swimmers, themselves part of a larger family of New York dance music innovators (including the L.I.E.S. label) who are taking their city's predilection for deep house, stripping out the generic brass sections, and injecting drama and sex. His solo record is as glossy as J-pop, colliding pan pipes and videogame blurts with beautifully slipshod kick drums in tracks that slip between UK garage, the white grooves of Junior Boys, the new age pastures of Oneohtrix Point Never and the cosmic funk of Theo Parrish – the result is digital psychedelia with eyedrop clarity.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

HOW TO BUY...
RVNG INTL
Nuggets from NY dance'n'psych label



JUSTINE D
Rvng Prsnts Mx5
2007

The first success from this leftfield label was their mix series, and this still-available contribution from dancefloor Zelig Justine D is a highlight. She creates a dream-logic journey across the city's underlit clubs, with unexpected figures like Robert Fripp and Crass swimming between industrial pop tracks, plus fragments of disco.

8/10



SUNARAW, MGEDDES, GENGRAS AND THE CONGOS
Icon Give Thank
2012

The Cali lo-fi psychers went to JA to jam with

The Congos for RVNG's fine collaboration series FRKWYS – the result is an LP of blunted majesty, muggy grooves aerated by The Congos' harmonies. Other FRKWYS collisions include Blues Control & Laraaji, ARP & Anthony Moore, and Julianna Barwick & Ikue Mori.

8/10



JULIA HOLTER
Ekstasis 2012

After releasing the impressionistic *Tragedy*, the LA-based songwriter moved to RVNG for *Ekstasis*, a looser mix of more

pop-focused material. Music-box innocence and clarity chafe against echoing, unmoored passages in a series of bedroom symphonies topped with Holter's opaque singing style. The record's success led to a reissue by Domino, who release her next album later this year.

7/10

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



FICTION
The Big Other
MOSHI MOSHI

London five-piece play spot the influence on pick'n'mix

7/10

Fiction's first album is comprised of a handful of sweet things shamelessly pilfered from the early '80s pop pick'n'mix. "Careful" and "Step Ahead" trade on the catchy eccentricity of XTC, "Museum" is *New Gold Dream* meets Lloyd Cole with an Afrobeat finish, while singer James Howard has the gulping gaucheness of Edwyn Collins. "Parting Gesture", meanwhile, could be Wild Beasts, with a touch of The Blue Nile in its precipitous bass swoop. It's almost heroically unoriginal, but if bright, rhythmically interesting indie-pop with a knowing '80s glaze is your bag, *The Big Other* delivers.

GRAEME THOMSON



FARMERS MARKET
Slav To The Rhythm
DIVISION

Norwegian prog-jazz meets Balkan modalism

8/10

Stian Carstensen is the crux in this long-running quintet, a wildcard multi-instrumentalist who tosses accordion, organ and pedal steel into the mix. He's ably supported by ex-Supersilent drummer Jarle Vespestad, on brutalist form here, and Bulgarian sax/clarinetist Trifon Trifonov. The title track's wheeling, progressive fusion – complete with slippery time changes – spills into outré sub-metal bombast. Nils-Olav Johansen's guitar is a little OTT at times, as if he's having a Television-style duel with himself, but the group's infectious eclecticism and heavy manners are a winning combination: these Farmers are not afraid to leave mud on their boots.

ROB YOUNG



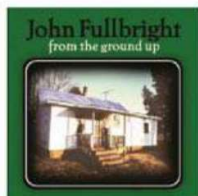
FÖLLAKZOID
II
SACRED BONES

Santiago psych band hope you like their Neu! direction

7/10

Chile is home to several of the world's most powerful telescopes, so perhaps it's no surprise that its citizens feel a little closer to the cosmos than most. Santiago's Föllakzoid – the name sounds as if it should be the German for 'asteroid', but isn't – are inveterate space-rockers; their record sleeves are adorned by images of dark nebulae and interstellar dust, although their musical telescope is tilted firmly in the direction of early-'70s West Germany. Föllakzoid's viscous Krautrock shtick may shirk the responsibility to seek out any genuinely new worlds, but it's certainly effective, especially when "Rivers" locks into a potent, locomotive groove.

SAM RICHARDS



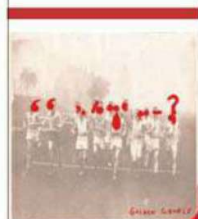
JOHN FULLBRIGHT
From The Ground Up
BLUE DIRT

Cut-throat articulation from an Americana newcomer

8/10

Although hailing from Woody Guthrie's hometown of Okemah, Oklahoma, 24-year-old Fullbright's immediate musical lineage is closer to two other Johns, Fogerty and Hiatt. *From The Ground Up* takes a heartland rock template and imbues it with tougher, weather-beaten elements asking big questions (religious motifs pepper the album), Fullbright's snarled vocals riding shotgun alongside incendiary guitar grooves on "Gawd Above" and "All The Time In The World". The caustic worldview of the piano-led "Fat Man" suggests a roadhouse Randy Newman, sinister narrations from the dark side of smalltown America heralding the arrival of a major talent.

TERRY STAUNTON



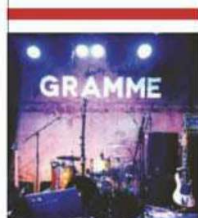
GOLDEN GRRRLS
Golden Grrrls
NIGHT SCHOOL

Sweet, scuzzy power-pop from Scotland

7/10

The Glaswegian power trio's debut is a fine thing of lo-fi harmonies, neat hooks and simple guitars, offering that classic Glasgow art-scene pop charm coated with a thin layer of fuzz and semi-tuneless vocals. "Paul Simon" is a fine example of what they are about, a Teenage Fanclub-like title attached to a sweetly lingering pseudo-shambolic guitar solo, tit-tat drums and three-part vocal harmonies. There's little here that veers from that template but it's largely done well, from the echoey "Think Of The Ways" to the finely-tuned pop gem "Take Your Time" and Smiths-y jangle of "Time Goes Slow".

PETER WATTS



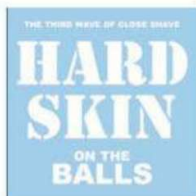
GRAMME
Fascination
TUMMY TOUCH

Long-delayed debut from original UK punk-funk revivalists

8/10

Gramme were ahead of the curve when they formed in the mid-'90s, but they split prematurely in 2000, just as James Murphy and friends were about to launch a major punk-funk revival. DJs like Trevor Jackson have continued to champion their cause, and now Gramme are picking up where they left off, with added Chicago house thrust. *Fascination* bears comparison with anything released on DFA during the early 2000s (or Factory during the early '80s for that matter), its rhythms as ferociously controlled as Sam Lynham's vocals are gloriously haywire. Gramme may find themselves out of time once again, but that's no reason to overlook this unexpected, exhilarating gem.

SAM RICHARDS



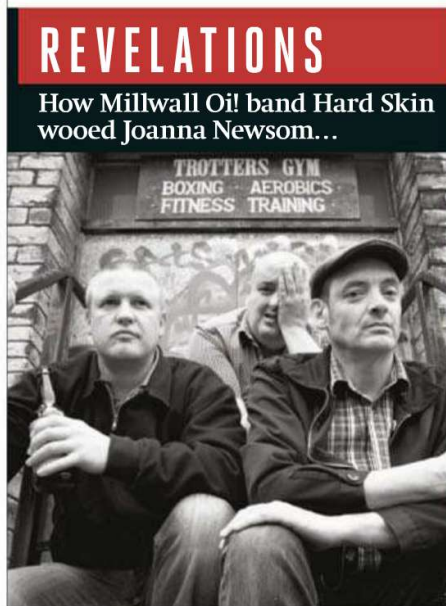
HARD SKIN
On The Balls/Why Do Birds Suddenly Appear
JT CLASSICS

The world's top Oi! band and the women who love them

8/10

On The Balls is the foul-mouthed but well-connected Hard Skin's third immaculate collection of Oi! pastiches (genius moments: "Another Terrace Anthem", "That's Bollocks Mate"). *Why Do Birds Suddenly Appear* is the same songs re-recorded with a variety of unlikely female singers: annoyed at a local loan shark, Joanna Newsom dusts off her Crombie to "sort the fucker out". Miki Berenyi from Lush bellows out a special constable as "a fucking fake PC". Beth Jeans Houghton looks forward to a confrontation with police at a Millwall game with the words "we're gonna do them cunts". Who fucking wants some?

JIM WIRTH



REVELATIONS
How Millwall Oi! band Hard Skin wooed Joanna Newsom...

➤ Hard Skin's first two records - *Hard Nuts And Hard Cunts* and *Same Meat Different Gravy* resurrected Oi!, a genre sullied by the extreme right. Nazi boneheads hate this mysterious South London band, but women love them, as the presence of several independent-minded ladies on their new one *Why Do Birds Suddenly Appear* attests.

But is sylvan harpie Joanna Newsom really a fan of the band? "Kin LOVES us," insists singer Johnny Takeaway.

So how did they persuade her to take part? "I didn't persuade anyone, mate," says co-conspirator Fat Bob. "They all came to us - know what I mean?" Johnny Takeaway adds: "Well, she owes us - let's say that. Giving the game away would be out of order." With 'c' and 'f' words flying around left, right and centre, did any of their lady guests complain about the bad language? "Some moaned there wasn't enough," says Fat Bob. So what is Oi!'s unique appeal for Hard Skin? "It's a way of life," says Fat Bob. "People into dubstep don't live the life 24 hours a day - most of them work as Twitter experts or in banks. Skinheads do real Oi! jobs like working on the fruit'n'veg stall or other stuff..."

JIM WIRTH



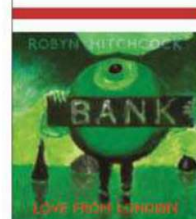
HATEM
Ultraviolet Catastrophe
MUSHROOM PILLOW

Spanish pranksters plunder the shoegazing classics

6/10

It's ironic that Madrid quartet Hola A Todo El Mundo should credit an apparently non-existent poet, Roy Tiger Milton, for their second album's lyrics, given their lack of fresh ideas elsewhere. *Ultraviolet Catastrophe*'s antecedents are clearly evident: the swirling effects of "To My Tender Love" lean heavily on Kevin Shields' glide guitar technique, while "I'll Return Over Gloria" offers pure M83 synth-rock. But, though derivative, their thievery is often executed with a confident swagger: "Youth Time, Least Bother & Friends" hints at Cocteau Twins given an unexpected chillwave gloss, and "You Know We Found Words" fondly recalls Electronic.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



ROBYN HITCHCOCK
Love From London
YEP ROC

The former Soft Boy's blissful sounds of the '60s

8/10

"Life is flowing through us like a river/Soon there won't be nothing left," sings Robyn Hitchcock on "Death And Love", but if that seems like a man who is feeling all of his 60 years, *Love From London* finds beauty and only beauty in the years ahead. Marvelling on his 19th solo album (including his work with the Egyptians and the Peter Buck-featured Venus 3) at how much love rather than how little time he might have left, Hitchcock whips up a monogamous rapture with "Be Still", "Strawberries Dress" and the fuzzed-up "I Love You". Like Bryan Ferry aglow after the best afternoon stroll of his life, stylish and uncharacteristically serene.

JIM WIRTH



KOEN HOLTAMP
Liquid Light Forms
BARGE

Yet more burbling synth-drizzle, albeit more stylish than most

7/10

In the wake of artists like Emeralds and Oneohtrix Point Never, the kosmiche/new age modular synthscape is now the fashion du jour for underground hipsterati. It's already a fairly limited and prescriptive aesthetic, so doing something new within those confines is tough. Holtkamp (perhaps better known as half of Mountains) may not be breaking new ground with *Liquid Light Forms*, but he has a much stronger compositional sense than the majority of his contemporaries, so even when things coast a little - as they do for much of the opening "Battenkill" - the endless ear-trickle of analogica is never short of texturally beguiling.

JONDALE



HURTS *Exile*

RCA

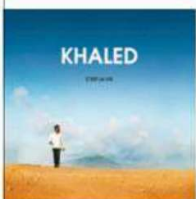
Highly bombastic second from gothic Manchester duo

A pristinely manicured, arched eyebrow saved Hurts' 2010 debut,

5/10

Happiness, from sounding like a gothic Savage Garden. How else to endure lyrics like, "Stay with me, Evelyn/Don't leave me with the medicine"? Sadly, torrid synthesiser and billowing melodrama make it impossible to see any wry glances cast by *Exile*. On the title track and "The Road", they sound impressively like Queen doing Depeche Mode's *Violator*, but schlock prevails, pierced by awkward attempts to update their '80s ballads with hip-hop beats ("Sandman") and revving EDM ("Blind"). What romance they once had has been traded for a masochistic air: The *50 Shades Of Grey* film just found its soundtrack, anyway.

LAURA SNAPES



KHALED *C'est La Vie*

WRASSE

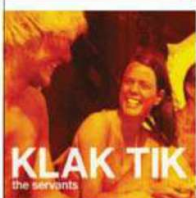
Algeria's 'king of rai' drowns in the mainstream

Popular across continental Europe, Khaled's Arabic pop has never found an

5/10

audience in the English-speaking world beyond the WOMAD hardcore. The cynical recruitment of producer RedOne (Lady Gaga/J.Lo) and faux-epic dance anthems with a global-house beat such as the title track aren't going to change that. Like K'Naan's 2010 World Cup theme song, "Wavin' Flag", *C'est La Vie* exudes a kind of ersatz feel-good 'internationalism' which the rest of the world seems to love but to which the Anglo/American market is intractably resistant. At his best, Khaled's soaring voice tags him as the Otis Redding of the Maghreb. But RedOne's bombastic production smothers any trace of soul.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



KLAK TIK *The Servants*

SAFETY FIRST

Anglo-Danish trio concoct lush pseudo-Balkan folk-pop in Wales

Fronted by superbly named Danish expat Søren Bonke (ex-6 Day Riot), this multi-

8/10

national London trio earned glowing reviews for the heart-stirring alt.folk shanties on their 2010 debut. Partly recorded in a Welsh village chapel, this mellifluous sequel confirms Bonke's command of dreamy, harmony-weaving vocals lightly clad in chamber-orchestra arrangements. Sufjan Stevens, Beirut and Jeff Buckley remain obviously ancestors, but Klak Tik lean towards playfully experimental terrain on "Fire Souls", with its mournfully mechanical shuffle, and "Landing Party", whose brash Balkan-brass fanfares implode into brooding self-doubt midway through. Lovely stuff and proof that pastoral reveries need not always be lightweight.

STEPHEN DALTON



THE KNIFE *Shaking The Habitual*

RABID/BRILLE/MUTE

Swedish siblings' dystopian techno makes a grab for the throat

9/10

Shaking The Habitual sounds like it was recorded

on the brink of a panic attack. Its 'political hymns' are laminated with sampled bedsprings and Olof Dreijer's hectic drum programming: "Full Of Fire" is a barrage of grotesque gamelan, ultraviolent electro and industrial-strength synths doused in acid colours. Karin Dreijer Andersson possesses one of the most distinctive Scandinavian voices since Björk: glottal babble on "Networking"; gender-ambiguous in the beatless "A Cherry On Top". It's no accident two feedback miniatures are named "Oryx" and "Crake", for – as in Margaret Atwood's dystopian fiction – this duo's songs are genetic pop mutations, scampering out of control.

ROB YOUNG



THE MALINGERERS *The Lonely Years*

FAT & BULBOUS

Western-flavoured country blues from the east of England

7/10

When looking for a hotbed of Americana-fuelled hoe-downs, East Anglia wouldn't be anywhere near the top of most tourists' list of destinations, but it's home to the rustic, ramshackle Malingerers. Taking their lead from The Band, via more folk/blues influences like Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie, brothers Kevin and Craig Murphy peddle tales of financial hardship ("The Optimist") and sleepless nights ("Drunken Angel"), the former's vocal growl underpinned by the latter's plaintive harmonica. The musical tones may be informed by the wide open spaces of the Southern US, but the lyrics offer a liberal helping of good old British cynicism.

TERRY STAUNTON



STEVE MASON *Monkey Minds In The Devil's Time*

DOUBLE SIX

Beta Band mainman finally makes his masterpiece

9/10

Eight years of personal and musical frustration

for Mason since The Beta Band split have been poured into *Monkey Minds...*, an album so full of ideas, political anger and great tunes that it resembles the classic album that The Beta Band promised but never quite made. Featuring nine sparse, stunning, bass-driven songs interspersed with eleven short, iPod-defying links, it sees Mason's sad, warm voice tapping into psychedelia, gospel, funk, dub, house and rap, and reaching a peak of anti-establishment fury on the anthemic "Fight Them Back" ("A fist, a boot and a baseball bat"). A soulful, adventurous, state-of-the-nation classic.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



MATMOS *The Marriage Of True Minds*

THRILL JOCKEY

American pop-concrète duo, busy reading your mind

7/10

Telepathy is the conceptual bait on which *The Marriage*

Of True Minds twitches, with Matmos' Drew Daniel attempting to project 'the concept of the new Matmos record' directly into the minds of participants in the group's Ganzfeld experiments. The resulting responses are the backbone of an album typically cryptic in outlook – techno, metal, sidereal electronics, Foley soundwork and clipped, dirty funk all pass by, your ears complicit in the growing confusion. Matmos' compositional nous places all of these pieces into 'forced cohesion', letting the constituent parts speak to and with each other, whether contiguous or not. Gloriously polyglot.

JONDALE



THE MEN *New Moon*

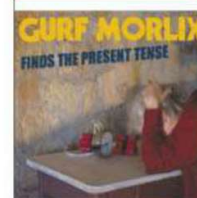
SACRED BONES

Tag-avoidance tactics employed again on noisy fourth

6/10

In contrast to their no-nonsense name, Brooklyn quartet The Men have always been difficult to pin down, having thrown a wild switcheroo with each of their three albums to date. Punk, post-hardcore, Krautrock, doo wop, country and surf rock have all served their purpose, and now *New Moon*, which shines no more light on their cheerfully messed-up aesthetic. It's a muscle-bound charge through recent(-ish) history (Hüsker Dü's poppier moments, Lee Ranaldo's songs for Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr) that makes you think you have it nailed, but the dusty Dylanisms of "Bird Song" and closing psychedelic freak-out "Supermoon" confuse the picture. Cohesion, The Men have clearly decided, is not their bag.

SHARON O'CONNELL



GURF MORLIX *Finds The Present Tense*

ROOTBALL

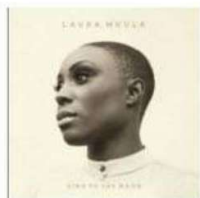
Sad bastard deluxe: Quirky Texas guitarist's eighth solo disc

8/10

Longtime guitarist to the stars (Lucinda Williams,

Warren Zevon), Gurf Morlix has quietly amassed a substantial solo career alongside myriad production and sideman duties. Morlix's follow-up to last year's heartfelt Blaze Foley tribute is a dark, dank country/blues song cycle – think a rootsier Tom Waits – inhabiting the shadows of pain and desperation. His pained semi-whisper winds through desire, suspicion and frustration – in other words, pure desolation – to get at one simple truth: we're all trapped like rats. "Bang Bang Bang", a prophetic meditation on guns hewing to some tangential *Basement Tapes* vibes, and the understated title track, particularly glow.

LUKE TORN



LAURA MVULA Sing To The Moon

RCA VICTOR

Elegant (if stiff) classical pop by Brit-nominated newcomer

The last soul record this ambitious was Janelle Monáe's 2010 opus, *The*

6/10

ArchAndroid. With its theatrical, sometimes brilliantly maximalist palette, Mvula's debut is almost as dazzling, but similarly lacking in human warmth – when it's said to explore "painful, deep" emotions. Kudos to the Birmingham composer's arranging skills; the Gershwin-ready palette of "Like The Morning Dew" and "Flying Without You" brings Mvula to life, eliciting wryness and elation in an otherwise serious vocal turn. The sparser moments are undoubtedly tender, but the reverential glow soon dims, and the clichéd cries of empowerment don't help. It sounds celestial, though Mvula's a touch stern.

LAURA SNAPES



KATE NASH Girl Talk

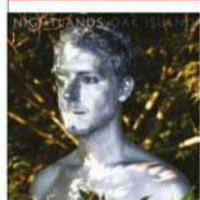
HAVE 10P

Chart-topping BRIT School hellion plumbs more hidden depths

8/10

Pigeonholed as Lily Allen 2.0 following 2007's No 1 success *Made Of Bricks*, Kate Nash was mauled for ditching the script for the follow-up, 2010's *My Best Friend Is You*, so it's to the 25-year-old's immense credit that *Girl Talk* is wilder and more ungainly still. "I change all the time, so give me space," she bellows on "Oh", summing up a record which veers between the riot grrl righteousness of "All Talk" and "Rap For Rejection" and dispatches from the Harrow wing of hell, like the a cappella closer "Lullaby For An Insomniac". Unvarnished and unpredictable, then, but in the grand Slits/Raincoats tradition, Nash is no-one's little girl.

JIM WIRTH



NIGHTLANDS Oak Island

SECRETLY CANADIAN

Golden memories from The War On Drugs' bassist

7/10

The War On Drugs' Adam Granduciel evidently likes to surround himself with talented songwriters. First there was Kurt Vile, and now there's David Hartley, whose latest album as Nightlands summons the ghosts of '70s AM radio to tell his story. His skilful redeployment of MOR signifiers – cod-Latin rhythms, funk-lite bass, radio jingle harmonies and flourishes of muted brass – aligns him with the likes of The High Llamas and Gayngs, although Hartley multitracks his vocals to the point where any suspicion of archness evaporates in a quasi-psychedelic haze. *Oak Island* does for Chicago what Panda Bear's *Person Pitch* did for The Beach Boys.

SAM RICHARDS



NIGHT WORKS Urban Heat Island

LOOSE LIPS

Former Metronomy man proves that recession can be beautiful

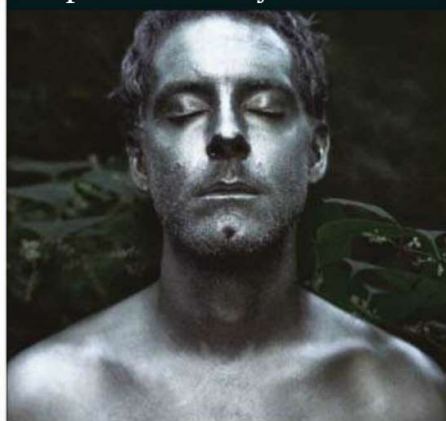
8/10

Gabriel Stebbing was Joseph Mount's right-hand man in Metronomy until 2009. His original project, *Your Twenties*, appears to have been abandoned in favour of *Night Works*, who take listeners on a melancholic journey through the credit crunch hangover soundtracked by a luscious rebooting of sophisticated '80s synth-pop. Stebbing's characters are nighties hedonists counting the cost of partying on credit, while his blend of analogue synths and 'real' instruments do their best to revive Thomas Dolby's creamy productions for Prefab Sprout. But, like Metronomy, *Night Works* successfully twist quirky old music into enticing new shapes.

GARRY MULHOLLAND

REVELATIONS

NIGHTLANDS (aka Dave Hartley) explains the "Philly vibe"



➤ From a distance, Philadelphia looks to be home to a thriving dude-rock scene orbiting around The War On Drugs – a band whose membership has included, at one time or another, Kurt Vile and Mike Zanghi of The Violators, Mike Polizzi of Birds Of Maya/Purling Hiss, and Dave Hartley, who releases his second solo album as Nightlands this month. According to Hartley, though, at ground level, things aren't so clear-cut.

"It's interesting that people from outside have started to talk about this 'Philly vibe', because you don't really think of it when you're here," he says. "There's a lot going on in Philadelphia, but it's a segregated scene. There could be a great band living a block away from you that you don't even know about."

Besides frontman Adam Granduciel, bassist Hartley is the longest-serving member of The War On Drugs, having been recruited circa 2005. "Adam and I used to work together at this housing company in West Philly. We'd go around old apartments that fraternity dudes lived in and remove all the trash. It was kind of a demeaning job, but we became friends and talked about music all the time. He gave me a CD-R and was like, 'I'm starting up this band, I'd love you to play bass.' And it's been an interesting journey from there."

SAM RICHARDS



PALMA VIOLETS 180

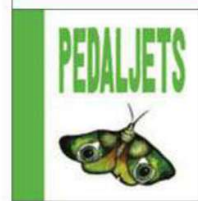
ROUGH TRADE

Confident punk-pop first; Pulp's Steve Mackey produces

6/10

The Libertines, Arctic Monkeys, The Vaccines and even The View have all had the "UK Strokes" epithet attached to them with varying degrees of accuracy and desperation, but for better or worse, London quartet Palma Violets might find it sticks. Their debut reveals a talent for taut, punkish, pivot-on-a-penny songs with the kind of clamorous energy that cemented their live reputation before they'd even recorded a note. "Best Of Friends" might be a raucous shout-along in the Vaccines vein and co-vocalist Sam Fryer manages a more than passable Julian Casablancas impersonation, but there's individualised smarts in their retroism, too, as the ringing melodrama of "Chicken Dippers" attests.

SHARON O'CONNELL



PEDALJETS What's In Between

ELECTRIC MOTH

First album in 24 years from Kansas City's answer to The Replacements

8/10

Pedaljets' 1988 debut *Today Today* was an undersung gem of pre-grunge US '80s rock. The band reconvened, with Phil Malinowski replacing original guitarist Phil Wade, in 2006. Their salvoes of high-powered melodic punk, laced with Beatles harmonies (the dazed and lovely "Some Kind Of One"), prove affirmative and energising with hard-won wisdom at the core. Embattled and combative on "Terra Nova", offering a masterclass in curdled sarcasm on the belligerent "Conversations", Mike Allmayer's brand of hand-dog dirty realism combines potency and killer riffs in equal measure. A belated but timely return.

GAVIN MARTIN



PHOSPHORESCENT Muchacho

DEAD OCEANS

Alabama songwriter confronts personal demons in a flurry of synth and pedal steel

8/10

Matthew Houck – aka Phosphorescent – has followed 2010's country-rock homage *Here's To Taking It Easy* with an equally magnificent beast, mixing country jams with claustrophobic electronica and mournful Mariachi horns to create a beautiful but discomforting album. "Ride On/Ride Out" boasts keyboard squalls and a lolling 808 drumbeat, while songs like the swaggering "A Charm/A Blade" exude a sort of schizophrenia, part euphoric escapism, part self-hating solipsism. "I've been fucked up, and I've been a fool," he admits in his artfully cracked and lonesome voice on "Muchacho's Tune", a simple ballad that most clearly outlines the album's theme of desperate redemption.

PETER WATTS

EDWYN COLLINS

Understated

AED

Less is infinitely more for the man who invented indie.

By Jim Wirth



7/10

"I HAVE BEEN a rover, I have walked alone," quavers Edwyn Collins, closing his second record since suffering two serious strokes in 2005 with an incongruous rendition of Rod McKuen's

"Love's Been Good To Me". It's the sort of last-orders warhorse that

the floppy-fringed Collins might have referenced obliquely in his Orange Juice pomp as he stalked the margins between the classic and the kitschy in a Davy Crockett hat. Here, though – backed by an acoustic guitar and what sounds like a Joe Meek theramin whine – he throws everything he has at it, battling to hold on as his voice cracks around the high notes. You're waiting for the twist – the wink and the knowing grin – and, as with the rest of *Understated*, there really isn't one.

Those bewitched by the playful Edwyn Collins of "You Can't Hide Your Love Forever" or the ironic subversions of his Britpop-era second wind might find *Understated* hard going. Musically, it is business as usual – out-on-the-floor, stack-heeled indie stompers all the way – but if 2010's stark *Losing Sleep* was a little on the abrupt side, this is more concise still.

Collins has recovered his vocabulary since his strokes (at one stage, his only four coherent phrases were "yes", "no", "Grace Maxwell" – the name of his wife and manager – and "the possibilities are endless") but has ruthlessly streamlined his songwriting lexicon. "My lyrics are now simple – backward, maybe," he said. "They used to be very flowery. Now they're direct and focused and repetitious and precise."

He can say that again, and if *Understated* is anything to go by, he will. For here is a record where economy – of language, of ideas – is a virtue. Having struggled for life, the simple act of being is mined relentlessly for subject matter, but amid Collins' drive to document simple, universal truths, the tiny flourishes illuminate the one-time draftsman's craftsmanship; the life-or-death double-entendre of "Dilemma"'s refrain, "that's me all over"; the deadpan Otis Redding lift of "I've got sunshine on a cloudy day" on "Baby Jean"; the syntactical twists that stretch "the question of what you do/What you see are integral to life in my point of view" over four lines in uptempo stomper "Carry On, Carry On".

What epiphanies that come, meanwhile, are elegantly undersold. He measures his pop career matter-of-factly on "31 Years" and acknowledges his teenage days as a graphic artist with the Glasgow Parks Department on the title track, breaking into what seems like a torrent of emotion by comparison on "Forsooth" – a classic Collins word if ever there was one – as he enjoys a lazy morning around the house. "I'm so happy to be alive," he repeats over a mesmeric Velvet Underground buzz, descending



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Edwyn Collins & Seb Lewsley

Recorded in: West Heath Studios, London

Personnel: Edwyn Collins (vocals), Barrie Cadogan (guitar, bass), James Walbourne (guitar, vocals), Carwyn Ellis (bass, guitar, keyboards), Sean Read (sax, piano, vocals), David Ruffy (drums), Paul Cook (drums)

into what comes close to a Van Morrison-circa-*Astral Weeks* rapture with the reiterated phrase "I feel alive and I feel reborn".

Given the brisk manner in which he documents his life elsewhere ("Back to life, back to hope," on the cheery "Too Bad (That's Sad)" – "to and fro, back to work" on the smoky "It's A Reason"), it's an unexpectedly cathartic moment, all the more so as he is not one given to gush. For all of his reputation as a jangly romantic – Jonathan Richman with the sappy swapped for savvy – Collins is

a supremely controlled writer, even his wordiest masterworks littered with pomposity-busting asides and obfuscatory single inverts.

Understated dispenses with all those frills and curlicues, and if it does not offer unbridled emotion, its quiet determination strikes a dramatic enough minor chord. "I've got music to see me through/I've got art to ease the pain," Collins explains on "Baby Jean", staking out the margins of his new territory once more. No longer so clever maybe, but indubitably wise.

Q&A

Edwyn Collins



You sound like a very positive person... a fair assessment?

It's fair, certainly. I wake up in a cheerful mood every day, because I have a great life. I'm lucky, I guess. I feel it.

Why "Understated"?

Words pop into my head, single words, then I try to bend them into a song. Understated, hmmm, let's see, an interesting idea. My career, perhaps? But no, I'm not at all understated! I'm a show-off.

"Forsooth" is extraordinary: can you talk us through it?

Obviously, it's a Velvets reference. But it's still all

mine. I like the chant feel to it. And ironically, "I feel alive, I feel reborn." As opposed to "Heroin..."

Has the process of writing songs changed since your stroke?

Oh yes. Lyrically, more direct and to the point. That's fine – I have no choice, and I like it. Music? I can only play a little now, but the notes and chords flow easily enough in my brain. My musician friends get my intent, no problem there. I sing them the parts, choose effects, arrange the instruments. We collaborate, it's brilliant.

"Love's Been Good To Me" is an odd choice of cover.

I used to sing it 10 years ago, acoustically. I love Rod McKuen, and the Sinatra version. It's just a beautiful song. Ten years ago, I loved to play it on the guitar, especially.

INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH

CHELSEA LIGHT MOVING

Chelsea Light Moving

MATADOR

Rock's poet-noise iconoclast debuts new underground supergroup. *By Jon Dale*



7/10

SONIC YOUTH MAY or may not have ended, but Thurston Moore doesn't seem to be pausing too long for bouts of reflection. He's always seemed like a tireless character and instigator, involved in multiple projects, meet-ups,

noise blowouts, record labels, curatorial projects, chapbook publications, and the past year or so has been little different. There's the teaching workshop gig (see panel below for more details). There are the ongoing noise/improv collaborations, including a recent duo with Chelsea Light Moving drummer John Moloney, Caught On Tape. There are the publishing houses: the Ecstatic Peace Library and its associated Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal, and the smaller poetry imprint, Flowers & Cream Press. And all this connects with his ongoing romance with New York: when asked about his connectedness with the lineage of 'New York School' poets and creatives, Moore admits, "with Chelsea Light Moving I feel like I want to have the words of the city fly from my fretboard and my teeth in a very direct and charged way."

Chelsea Light Moving also appear to be on the road a lot, floating from continent to continent. They are, in a very real sense, a working band. The individuals Moore has pulled together for Chelsea Light Moving all move in similar circles, part of that nebulous American underground that has housed the New Weird America, free-folk and neo-psychedelium. But the connective forces are even more blasted and open-ended, aesthetically or personnel-wise, than you'd expect. The group's ranks include Samara Lubelski (bass), who has released a handful of graceful baroque-pop albums, but also a gorgeous drone duo with Hototogisu's Marcia Bassett, *Sunday Night, Sunday Afternoon*; Keith Wood (guitar), who records beautiful acid-folk as Hush Arbors; and of course, the irrepressible Moloney, one of the heads of Sunburned Hand Of The Man.

Not too much of that agrarian weirdness has really worked its way into the 10 songs that make up the group's debut album, admittedly. Moore is pretty much whittling away at his peculiar vision of songcraft here; many of these songs are modular, piecing together constituent parts into odd Frankensteins of rock anti-anthems. And while *Chelsea Light Moving* is far from a simplistic repro of Sonic Youth's moves, it does sometimes illuminate what Moore brought to that particular equation: spindly, almost math-rock-y guitar interplay; melodic turns that meander down byways; broad-brush sweeps of heavy riffage; occasional bouts of clumsy out-of-tuneness; and a weirdly brutish pop heart, at times as willfully awkward yet compelling as Mayo Thompson of The Red Krayola. Sometimes,



SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Producer:** none, engineered by Justin Pizzoferrato
Recorded at: Sonelab, Easthampton, Massachusetts
Personnel: Thurston Moore (guitar and vocals), Samara Lubelski (bass guitar), Keith Wood (electric guitar), John Moloney (drums)

you can hear Moore exploring the songs as he goes, feeling out new terrain, sometimes stumbling and sometimes hitting the ace.

Unsurprisingly, it's not always successful: that modular approach goes seriously awry on "Alighted", where every twist and turn feels less agile and more forced than the last. But that doesn't happen too often. Chelsea Light Moving are generally a heads-down, fighting force, capable of swinging with a Mastodon's gait – "Groovy & Linda" is one of Moore's most satisfyingly Neanderthal songs yet (at least, until that ungainly "don't shoot" hardcore coda); "Burroughs" pounds the floor, with Moloney's primal thud corralling the group into pulling out some of their most rock-reverent moves; and "Mohawk" is gorgeous, with Moore

working his poetic tongue over a rumbling, Rhys Chatham-esque guitar pile-up.

Half way through "Empires Of Time", Moore sings, in his by now patented half-yowl/half-sigh, "We are the third eye of rock and roll/We are the third mind of rock and roll." Well, that's a little ambitious for a group on their first run, pulled together out of unlikely circumstances and yet to fully find their feet as a fully working entity. But *Chelsea Light Moving* suggests there's plenty of space to move around for Moore and his

cohorts. This new group is neither a redux of his Sonic Youth moves, nor a solo project with sidekicks. Awkward moments or not, this group moves as one. The next album might well be the ticket.

Q&A

Thurston Moore



Your music has always referenced textual culture, poetry, but *Chelsea Light Moving* seems to make this most explicit – "Frank O'Hara Hit", "Burroughs"... It may very

well be the fact that I've been on faculty at the Summer Writing Workshop at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University in Boulder Colorado the last few years. Burroughs taught there quite a bit and to be able to be in a place where he was active, a school founded on Buddhist principles of

engagement and founded by Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman, has allowed me to not only continue to investigate their world of alien America perspective but become spiritually immersed in their footsteps and fingerprints.

What other projects are you involved with now – I know there's a collaborative album with Moloney out on Feeding Tube... There are some other improv recordings being released – a very limited LP in benefit to Café OTO, that is a duo with me and reeds-maestro Alex Ward. And live recordings with Swedish free jazz sax demon Mats Gustafsson and, hopefully, an amazing session with prepared-guitar genius Bill Nace and jazz sax legend Joe McPhee that'll blow yr mind, and a guitar duo freakout with Nels Cline. And I'm set to record a duo CD with John Zorn soon! *JONDALE*



PVT
Homosapien
FELTE

Muscular, synth-pop fourth from Aussie shapeshifters

Australian trio PVT have had significant change thrust upon them; first, a name switch (from Pivot) enforced by a litigious US band, and now a label shift (from Warp). It's the kind of unsettling that would do for many bands, but PVT are nothing if not adaptable. *Homosapien* sees an intriguing reinvention via more conventional song structure, a focus on Richard Pike's versatile vocals and the use of vintage drum machines underpinning chilly synths. Not that they've ditched idiosyncrasy – PVT emerge as masters of the unlikely cut-and-shut, most notably with “Cold Romance” (Michael Hutchence fronts Kraftwerk) and “Casual Success” (The Cure cut with QOTSA – and cowbells). Fans may blench, but frankly, more fool them.

SHARON O'CONNELL

7/10



JOSH ROUSE
The Happiness Waltz
YEP ROCK

Delicate but confident country-soul ninth from tireless American expatriot

One of the most consistent songwriters around, Josh Rouse's ninth album is a return to the sound that made 2003's *1972* such a gem. Although Rouse has been based in Spain for eight years, there's little of the flamenco guitar that's featured on recent albums and he instead opts for a yearning, nostalgic 1970s-hued country haze and lyrics that reflect his primary concerns: family, home, songwriting. That's epitomised by gorgeous, pedal steel-flecked opener “Julie (Come Out Of The Rain)” and the beautiful, frail “Purple And Beige”, while the subtle “The Ocean” is typical of the album's understated maturity and charm.

PETER WATTS

7/10



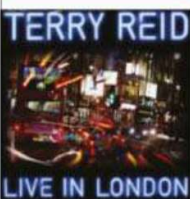
SECRET AFFAIR
Soho Dreams
I-SPY

Old-school mod moves with a few embellishments

Still sporting many of the sharp-suited musical threads from their beginnings as figureheads of the late '70s mod revival, the reformed Secret Affair nonetheless stretch themselves across a broader palette on *Soho Dreams*, with mixed results. “Walk Away” and “Turn Me On” will please the first-time-rounders who stomped along to “Time For Action”, while “In Our Time” enters the tougher rock arena of *Tommy*-era The Who and the horns of “Love's Unkind” dabble in Stax soul motifs. Less successful are the forays into Simple Minds-like grandeur, such as singer Ian Page's meandering ode to London nightlife on the title track.

TERRY STAUNTON

6/10



TERRY REID
Live In London
CADIZ

Barstool entertainment and philosophising from the great English singer

It's only recently that Reid has been treating

UK fans to the sort of intimate club shows he's been playing in his adopted American home for decades. Ronnie Scott's was the perfect setting in summer 2010 for this effectual career resumé taking in the early, brattish “Rich Kid Blues”, the dreamy funk of “River” and graceful “Seed Of Memory”. Reid's sympathetic London pick-up band, including pedal-steel maestro BJ Cole, simmer away nicely while Reid exercises almost disdainful control of proceedings with his cheery presence, mildly inebriated patter and that rich, lived-in voice which can still soar when it counts.

MICK HOUGHTON

7/10

HOW TO BUY... TERRY REID
The unsung hero of British vocalists



Super Lungs: The Complete Studio Recordings 1966-1968 EMI, 2004

Rounds up Jaywalkers flotsam and the Mickie Most-produced *Bang Bang*. You're Terry

Reid, and the immeasurably better Terry Reid where the boy's vocals positively explode on “Superlungs My Supergirl”, while the tender “July” and “Mayfly” display an emotional maturity beyond his years. It was a rare flop for Most who Reid unwisely fell out with over its unsanctioned release.

7/10

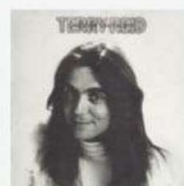


River ATLANTIC, 1973

Unable to record for two years until Ahmet Ertegun bought out his contract with Most, *River* blends the initial looser and funkier recordings

with resplendent guitarist David Lindley (until Jackson Browne poached him), alongside sparer, Latin-influenced songs like “River” itself. Should have been Reid's *Astral Weeks* but was mothballed instead.

8/10



Seed Of Memory

ABC, 1976

A shamefully unsung, graceful California rock classic made possible with help from fellow Brit-abroad, Graham Nash, a friend from the

Jaywalkers days. Reid's most poignant songs, notably “Brave Awakening”, “To Be Treated Right” and the title track rival Neil Young's *On The Beach* for strung-out catharsis. Sod's law struck again, the ABC label went bust along with Reid's stuttering career.

9/10

MICK HOUGHTON



HARPER SIMON
Division Street
PIAS

Melodic alt.rock second from Paul's son
If the folk-rock shtick of Simon's 2009 debut (helmed by veteran *Sounds Of Silence* producer Bob

Johnston) traded a little too heavily on family history, the fizzing alt.rock of the follow-up sounds like a determined effort to be his own man. Co-produced by Tom Rothrock (Beck/Elliott Smith) and assisted by various Strokes/Wilco/Bright Eyes alumni, his soft voice still betrays the paternal DNA, particularly on “Just Like St Teresa”, the album's gentlest song. But elsewhere, on standout tracks “Veteran's Parade” and “Dixie Cleopatra”, a gem-like pop melodicism reminiscent of Smith circa “Son Of Sam”/*Figure 8* is winningly augmented with layers of clanging guitars and droning synths.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

7/10



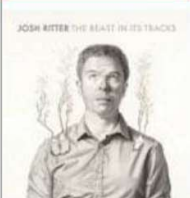
SOLUS 3
Corner Of The Dub
SOLUS3

Chamber prog group's Corner Of The World album remixed, thoroughly...

Stalking a slinky, unlikely path between improvisation, dub and modern classicism, Solus 3 are truly a law unto themselves. Here their second album gets a vigorous make-over from cutting-edge remixers. “Corner Of The World” gets two rootsy mixes from Ethio-reggae star Dub Colossus, “Unfold” has a well-named ‘Celestial Mix’ that majors on Julia Thornton's trilling harp and Krupa's yearning vocals. Krupa herself turns nine minutes of “Monster Mori” into an absorbing shape-shifter, “Porn Jam” goes atonal and Dr Das serves “Lollardy” in drum'n'bass fashion. A thriller.

NEIL SPENCER

8/10



JOSH RITTER
The Beast In Its Tracks
YEP ROCK

An unflinching diary of love lost from the acclaimed Idaho singer-songwriter

Josh Ritter's sixth album

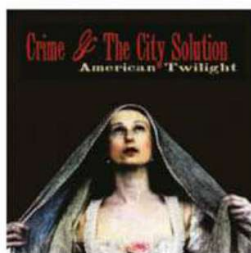
took shape in the year after his divorce, and he describes the songs as “rocks in the shoe, hard little nuggets of spite, remorse and happiness”. It's a bold and obviously personal collection of mood swings, from the rosy tint of longing “A Certain Light” (shades of the young Bob Dylan) to the anger of “Evil Eye”, from the forward-looking optimism of “Heart's Ease” to the vengeful “Bonfire”. Sparse instrumentation, with Ritter's deftly picked acoustic to the fore, keeps the focus on the lyrics, the post-mortem honesty of which amuse, astonish and occasionally unsettle.

TERRY STAUNTON

7/10

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



8/10

CRIME & THE CITY SOLUTION

American Twilight
MUTE

First new material in 20 years from post-punk doomsayers

Perhaps the most enduring document of Crime & The City Solution is to be found in Wim Wenders' 1987 film *Wings Of Desire*. A sombre fantasy in which angels watch over the inhabitants of West Berlin, it climaxes with the group – fronted by snakish vocalist Simon Bonney, his sideman the exceptional guitarist Rowland S Howard – perform their “Six Bells Chime” with a holy intensity. Formed in Sydney in 1977, Crime & The City Solution emerged from the same post-punk flux as The

Birthday Party. But never did they seem as at home as in Berlin, their apocalyptic punk-blues an eerily perfect fit for this city of decadence and division.

The third, Berlin-based incarnation of Crime disintegrated in 1991, a year after fourth album *Paradise Discotheque*. Bonney moved to LA, released two solo albums, and then... nothing.

Nothing until 2011, when a new lineup sprung from the ashes. Now operating out of Detroit, this incarnation brings together old hands, such as violinist Bronwyn Adams, with new, if familiar faces: drummer Jim White, also of the Dirty Three, and David Eugene Edwards, formerly of 16 Horsepower.

What is initially startling is how easily they whip up some of the old fire and brimstone. There is hurricane-force rock’n’roll (“Goddess”), apocalyptic Mariachi (“My Love Takes Me There”), Dionysian funk-rock (“Riven Man”). The gothic gospel of “Domina” is a reminder of Bonney’s exceptional, abject lyricism. “Billowing sails... incision of your nails... wheels on the skin...” he spouts, a preacher atop a decaying pulpit.

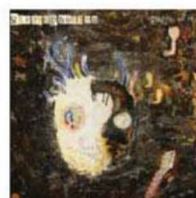
As the title suggests, this is a very American record. Perhaps as Berlin felt in the ‘80s, Detroit feels now: a city of division, albeit one with wounds inflicted by capitalism, not war. *American...* is seldom better than its title track, searing swamp-punk that recalls Grinderman in its diabolic abandon. Elegy for a civilisation in decay, live it’s accompanied by a slideshow of modern Detroit. Not a band tied to any one place, then. But expert at locating something holy in the rubble.

LOUIS PATTISON

I'M YOUR FAN

“Deep and dark. The good deep and dark – that you only get from being aged in an oak casket.”

TIM BURGESS



STEREOPHONICS

Graffiti On The Train

STYLUS

Reflective, adventurous eighth album from Welsh stalwarts

7/10

Perhaps stirred by reaction to 2009's *Keep Calm And Carry On*, his band's lowest-charting album, Kelly Jones has upped his game for this follow-up. The wanderlust of the title track and the melodically resplendent “Indian Summer” are fruits of Springsteen-schooled maturity, with David Arnold's strings adding lustre and allure. Jones' considerable composing, guitar and vocal strengths are marshalled effectively – igniting fiery rocker “Catacomb” and the doom-laden “In A Moment” with terse, thoughtful lines. Add the impressively soulful closing confessional “No-One's Perfect”, and the ‘phonics' long-banded “band of the people” status becomes much more than mere cliché.

GAVIN MARTIN



THE STROKES

Comedown Machine

ROUGH TRADE

1985 electropop action from Julian Casablancas and co

7/10

Having delivered a debut album that re-invented the wheel for guys in leather jackets, The Strokes have since spent their time making cautious steps outside their comfort zone. *Comedown Machine*, assuredly, is not another record like that. Instead, it attempts to meld guitars with ‘80s Europop much like Phoenix have done, to the extent that single “One Way Trigger” sounds like A-Ha. The experiment is often successful, the Penguin Café Orchestra rip “80s Comedown Machine” better than the out-and-out garage rockers. It's the downbeat “Welcome To Japan” though, that really recaptures the band's cooler-than-thou vibe. “I didn't really notice,” Casablancas drawls, “What kind of asshole drives a Lotus...”

JOHN ROBINSON



STORNOWAY

Tales From Terra Firma

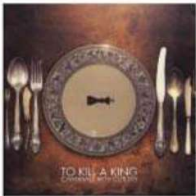
4AD

Not-so-difficult second from the acceptable face of Mumford-rock

7/10

Despite being nice middle-class Oxford boys peddling a sanitised simulacrum of Celtic-tinged folk-rock, Stornoway have so far eluded both the huge success and critical revulsion heaped on the Mumfords. Perhaps this is due to the fact that their surging rustic fantasias sound more natural, favouring freewheeling arrangements and layered harmonies over foot-stomping shanties. Awash with plump brass, grainy mandolin and fuzzy-warm electric piano, this solid second edges deeper into Fleet Foxes territory with the bittersweet lament “Farewell Appalachia” and the majestic banjo-plucking ballad “A Bigger Picture”. The double-edged curse of Mumford-sized fame may yet land upon them.

STEPHEN DALTON



TO KILL A KING Cannibals With Cutlery

CWC

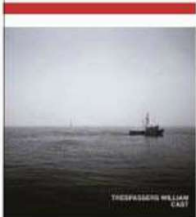
Orchestral rock-pop just misses the spot

Hamlet-referencing Londoners To Kill A King (not to be confused

with New Jersey noise merchants To Kill The King) are making a bid for the big time with their first full-length LP full of expansive, emotionally charged songs with huge, heart-swelling choruses. Well, that's the idea anyway. There's no doubting To Kill A King's musicianship, nor their potential to be absolutely massive, but singer Ralph Pelley's mid-Atlantic drawl is as irksome as the abundant lyrical truisms, as demonstrated on the title track in which he declares "*these are just fleeting moments, pick the ones you like and hold on*". A career as an agony uncle beckons.

FIONA STURGES

5/10



TRESPASERS WILLIAM

Cast

SAINT MARIE

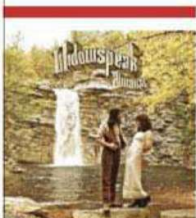
Seattle duo wave goodbye with classy retrospective

Disbanding in early 2012 after more than 15 years

together, Seattle shoegazing dream-folk duo Anna-Lynne Williams and Matt Brown commemorate their tidy divorce with this mop-up double-album of rare tracks and B-sides. The career-spanning first disc is the most agreeably diverse, from sublime weepie "Tomorrow On The Runway" to lysergic dronescape "Maybe A Sad Song" via the naked desolation of "Never You". Expanding the duo's 2009 swansong EP, "The Natural Order Of Things", the second disc features more sonic experimentation but fewer strong tunes, though the trip-hop requiem "Lives And Dies" and the avant-folk shuffle "Catch Not Break" still twang the heartstrings.

STEPHEN DALTON

6/10



WIDOWSPEAK

Almanac

CAPTURED TRACKS

Apocalyptic pleasantness from Brooklyn duo

Almanac is the second album from Molly Hamilton and Earl

Thomas, written last summer in a secluded barn in New York State's Hudson River Valley and composed as the pair contemplated the changing of the seasons and predictions about the end of the world. It's a quietly moody collection, linking the more contemplative end of shoegaze with the expansive soundscapes of Ennio Morricone, and all bound together by Hamilton's gauzy croon, somewhat reminiscent of Mazzy Star's Hope Sandoval. All of which is pleasantly dreamy for a while, but over the course of 40 minutes feels just a little insubstantial.

FIONA STURGES

6/10



WIRE

Change Becomes Us

PINK FLAG

Practice makes perfect for post-punk vets'

30-year-old song germs Wire signing to Harvest

in the late '70s was always weird: lean post-punks in the court of progressive folk and ponderous psychedelia. "Adore Your Island", a track on their 13th studio album, exemplifies this perfectly, with jumpy leaps between mellow verses and thrash choruses. Like most of the material here, it was left unfinished around 1980 and revived at recent sessions at Rockfield Studios. New guitarist Matthew Simms has refreshed Wire's sound; the acoustic chug of "& Much Besides" recalls the wacky space-rock of Fuxa. "Re-Invent Your Second Wheel"'s lyrics are strings of letters that may or may not be acronyms, making you strain to decipher an uncrackable code.

ROB YOUNG

8/10

WE'RE NEW HERE

Stornoway



They dress like Edwardian polar explorers, sport eccentric facial hair and sing landlocked sea shanties awash with wistful bucolic nostalgia. But do not confuse Oxford four-piece Stornoway with any other hugely successful folk-pop bands out there.

"We are not influenced by Mumford & Sons at all," says Stornoway's singer, guitarist and main songwriter Brian Briggs. "Overall we take it a blessing when people compare us because they are obviously riding such a huge wave at the moment. In my opinion we do something very different, but if we're getting carried along by it, I'm not going to complain."

In 2010, Stornoway staked a modest claim in the indie-folk goldrush with their fine debut album, *Beachcomber's Windswill*, released on the iconic 4AD label. Now they return with the fuller, richer, warmer sequel, *Tales From Terra Firma*, full of misty-eyed paeans to widescreen Americana and windswept Celtic landscapes. They may hail from Middle England, but Stornoway would sound very different if they were called "Swindon".

"I love being in wild places," Briggs explains. "My background before music was in wildlife conservation, and I have a strong affinity for the coast. Oxfordshire is about as tame and manicured as you can get, so there is definitely a sense of escapism in the songs." STEPHEN DALTON



THE WONDER STUFF

Oh No It's... The Wonder Stuff

IRL

Oh wow! Look at 'em now...

Seven years on from their last album, and

with singer Miles Hunt the sole remaining original member left in the lineup, the Stuffies have effortlessly reconnected with the smart-mouthed savvy pop rock of their purple period. Uptempo and catchy at every turn, they've rarely sounded so full of vigour, be it on the sneer and stomp of "Oh No!", the sweet folk sway of "Friendly Company", or the fiddle-fuelled trippy psych hues of "Right Side Of The Turf", despatching memorable singalongs with economy and wit. A second disc of enthusiastic covers of hits by fellow Midlanders (Dexys, Duran, Slade, etc) is an utterly charming bonus.

TERRY STAUNTON

8/10



YOUNG DREAMS

Between Places

MODULAR

California meets Scandinavia in '60s dream-pop homage

Young Dreams is a 12-strong collective of Bergen-based musicians

led by Matias Tellez (already an established solo artist in Norway) brazenly in thrall to The Beach Boys. Certainly, there's a distinct "Sloop John B" flavour to opener "Footprints", complete with warm and winsome harmonies, while the propulsive "Fog Of War" sounds like Brian Wilson remixed by The Future Sound Of London. What raises *Between Places* above simple pastiche are the electronic bursts, orchestral flourishes and surges of pounding drums that pepper the album, additions to the '60s-style Wall Of Sound template that are as compelling as they are unexpected.

FIONA STURGES

7/10



YOUR MOVE, RAINCLOUD

This Is What's Left Over From Nothing That's Happened

MOTIVE SOUND

A tender-hearted and charmingly amateur debut

Three years in the making, Samuel Francis Cain's debut calls upon the intelligently rambling sounds of Broken Social Scene, throwing in a little folk and post-rock for good measure. Recorded in a Lincolnshire barn, with Cain's plaintive wail recalling Norwegian cult hero Moddi, there are plenty of lo-fi moments: a child babbling through "Word Association"'s skeletal, acoustic lament, the field recordings of "Deltiology". "Bubbles" reveals a debt to mid-'90s US indie rock, but the wheezing accordion of "Not Realising How Blind That Was" and the poignant fiddle on "Open Return" ensure this remains pleasantly, eccentrically English.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

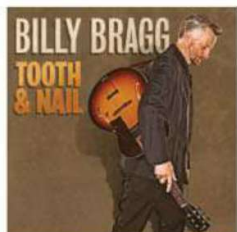
7/10

BILLY BRAGG

Tooth & Nail

COOKING VINYL

Great songs, Bill, but please sing in your own accent next time, suggests John Lewis



6/10

AROUND A DECADE ago, I interviewed the comedy writer and actor Stephen Merchant about his love of Billy Bragg. "The relationship between Tim and Dawn in *The Office* could have come straight out of a Billy Bragg lyric," said

Merchant. "What's brilliant about him is that he sings in such a personal voice, from such a specific geographical space, but he's able to make those specificities utterly universal."

It's why Bragg, like Merchant and Gervais' *The Office*, is a global brand. Bragg can sell out large theatres from Sacramento to Sydney by singing songs that are as English as warm bitter and milky tea. These are tightly plotted soap-operas; love songs set on drab council estates. The problem is that his new album – recorded in California with Americana producer Joe Henry and featuring some of LA's finest country rock musicians – is a bit like watching a beautifully scripted episode of the *American Office* in which all the parts are being played by British actors doing terrible American accents.

By some distance, the best track here is "Handyman Blues", a lovely, lazy, 16-bar blues shuffle in which Bragg mournfully admits to his partner that he can't put up a shelf or change a plug in the way his blue-collar father could ("I know it looks like I'm just reading the paper/But these ideas I'll turn to gold dust later/Cos I'm a writer not a decorator/I'm not your handyman"). For all the Americana clothing (particularly a neat bottleneck guitar accompaniment by Greg Leisz), it's sung in Bragg's own accent, and does what all great art does, which is to universalise the personal, to paint the world in a grain of sand. Other tracks feature songwriting and musical performances that are just as good, but all are marred by Bragg singing in an American accent.

Sometimes the accent shift is subtle, with Bragg just shaving off some of the harsher vowel sounds to fit in with the melody line. "No One Knows Nothing Anymore" is a mid-tempo country rock gem, while "Chasing Rainbows" is a tremendous ballad with more than a nod to Hank Williams' "Your Cheating Heart". Both discreetly negotiate the accent shift without interfering with the narrative – besides, in both cases you're too transfixed upon Leisz's heart-tugging pedal steel solo to notice. In other cases, great songs are all but ruined. "There Will Be A Reckoning" is a stirring, Springsteen-ish political tub-thumper, but from the moment he sings about "walking on the streets where I was born" in a terrible Delta drawl, you're reminded that the streets where Bragg was born were in Barking, not Baton Rouge. "Swallow My Pride" is a splendid Southern soul ballad in 6/8, but – from the moment Bragg pronounces "photo" as "pho-do" – you cringe.

For the most part, there's nothing wrong with the lyrics. "Do Unto Others" is a fine secular hymn,



SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at Joe Henry's home studio, Pasadena, California
Produced by Joe Henry
Personnel: Billy Bragg (vocals, acoustic guitar), Greg Leisz (guitars, mandolins, pedal steel), Patrick Warren (keys), Jay Bellerose (drums), David Piltch (double bass)

while "January Song" has some smart digs at the Tea Party ("politicians selling freedom/Bumper sticker 50 cents/Ask them what they wanna be free from/Answer don't make any sense") but, in both cases, the voice never convinces.

With each of these songs, you try hard to respect the narrative, but all you can hear is the ventriloquism. You'd like to hear them covered by Bragg's Stateside pals – some of these would sound fantastic if rendered by a Rosanne Cash, a Steve Earle, or a Jeff Tweedy – or, better still, you'd like to hear Bragg attempt them in

his own accent. Bragg says he wanted to avoid sounding like pastiche, but the paradox is that the harder he aims at country rock authenticity, the more inauthentic it sounds. Unlike, say, Steve Marriott or Paul Weller, he doesn't have the facility to switch seamlessly from guttural Estuary English into blue-eyed soul. His USP

is that beautifully blank Cockney honk, one that's helped to transform the grammar of British rock music as radically as John Lydon or Robert Wyatt. He needs to use it more.

Q&A

Billy Bragg



How did you hook up with Joe Henry? He's one of my favourite songwriters, I've known him for 25 years and I love all his recent albums with the likes of Bettye LaVette, Solomon Burke,

Allen Toussaint and Elvis Costello. In 2008, he asked me to take part in the Ruhrtriennale festival he runs in Germany, and I did a week of gigs with Rosanne Cash. He invited me to come and record. "We could get an album done in five days," he suggested. And we did. I've not recorded that fast since *Life's A Riot...* 30 years ago.

In feel and sound, it's very similar to *Mermaid Avenue*. Absolutely. I actually talked about doing *Mermaid Avenue* with Joe before deciding to do it with Wilco. I see this as a follow-up to *Mermaid Avenue*, which is fitting as I spent much of last year playing shows to celebrate Woody Guthrie's centenary. Playing his songs on an acoustic, the audience metaphorically leans in to listen to you. I wanted to do a whole record like that, rather than being the noisy bloke blasting away in the corner.

Why the American accent? I've done it quite a bit before. Here Joe really gave me the confidence to sing in that way. I think my voice has got better as I've got older and my range has got lower. I feel like I'm able to get the weight of the emotion in each song by singing in that mode, that accent. But yeah, it would be interesting to try them in Cockney... **INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS**

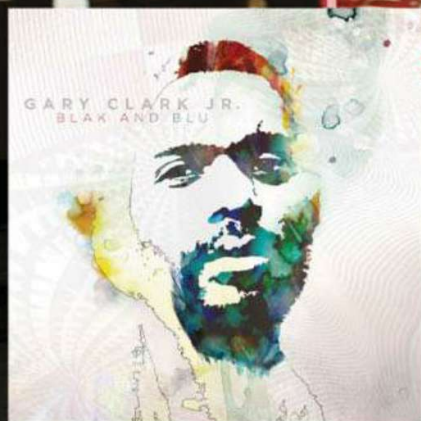
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SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

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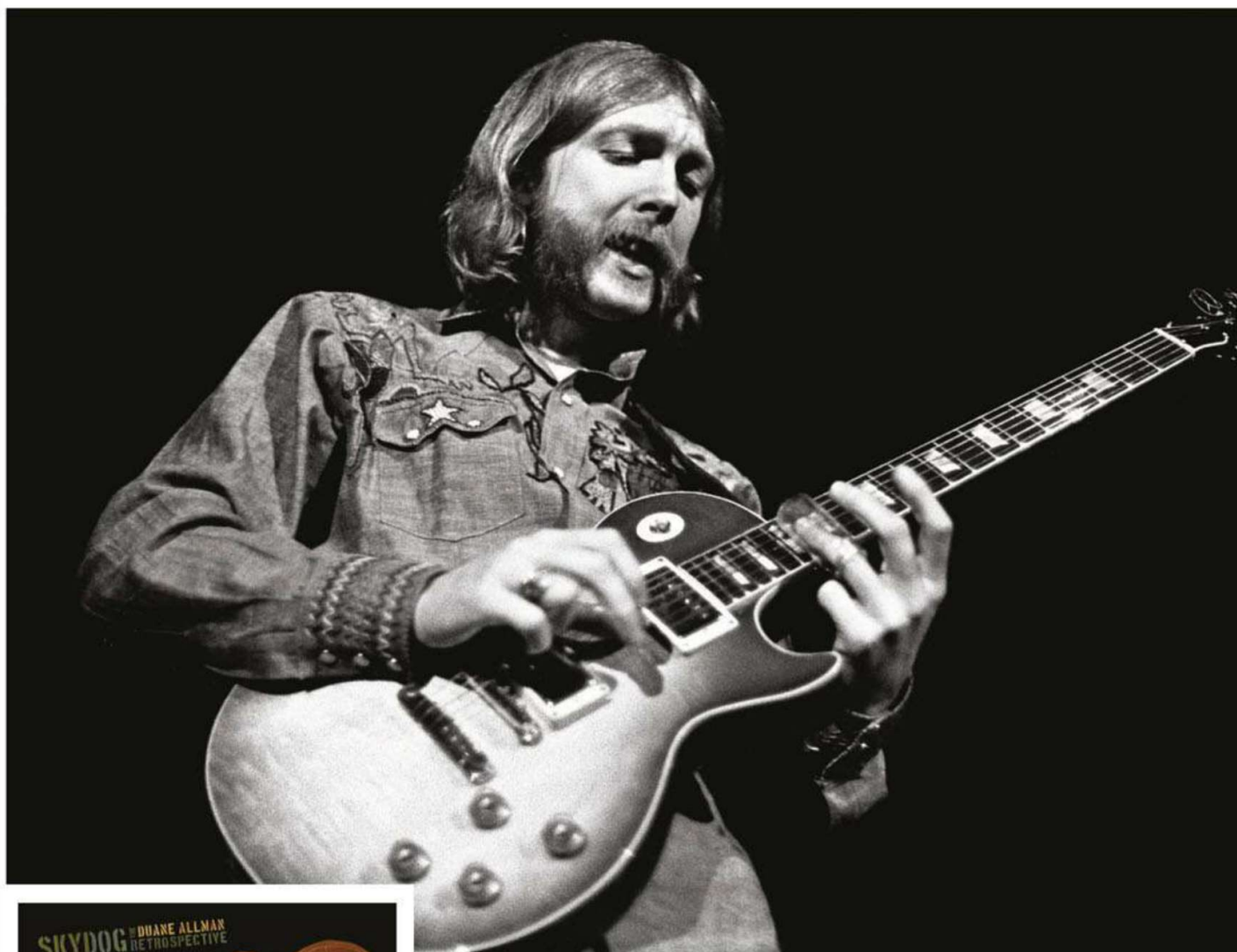
SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrappings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



JOHN GELMAN



DUANE ALLMAN

Skydog: The Duane Allman Retrospective

ROUNDER

The slide-guitar god and Southern rock avatar finally gets his due via a massive career overview. *By Bud Scoppa*

TRACKLIST

DISC ONE:

- 1-3 The Escorts
- 4-9 The Allman Joys
- 10-18 The Hour Glass
- 19-20 31st Of February
- 21-23 The Bleus

DISC TWO:

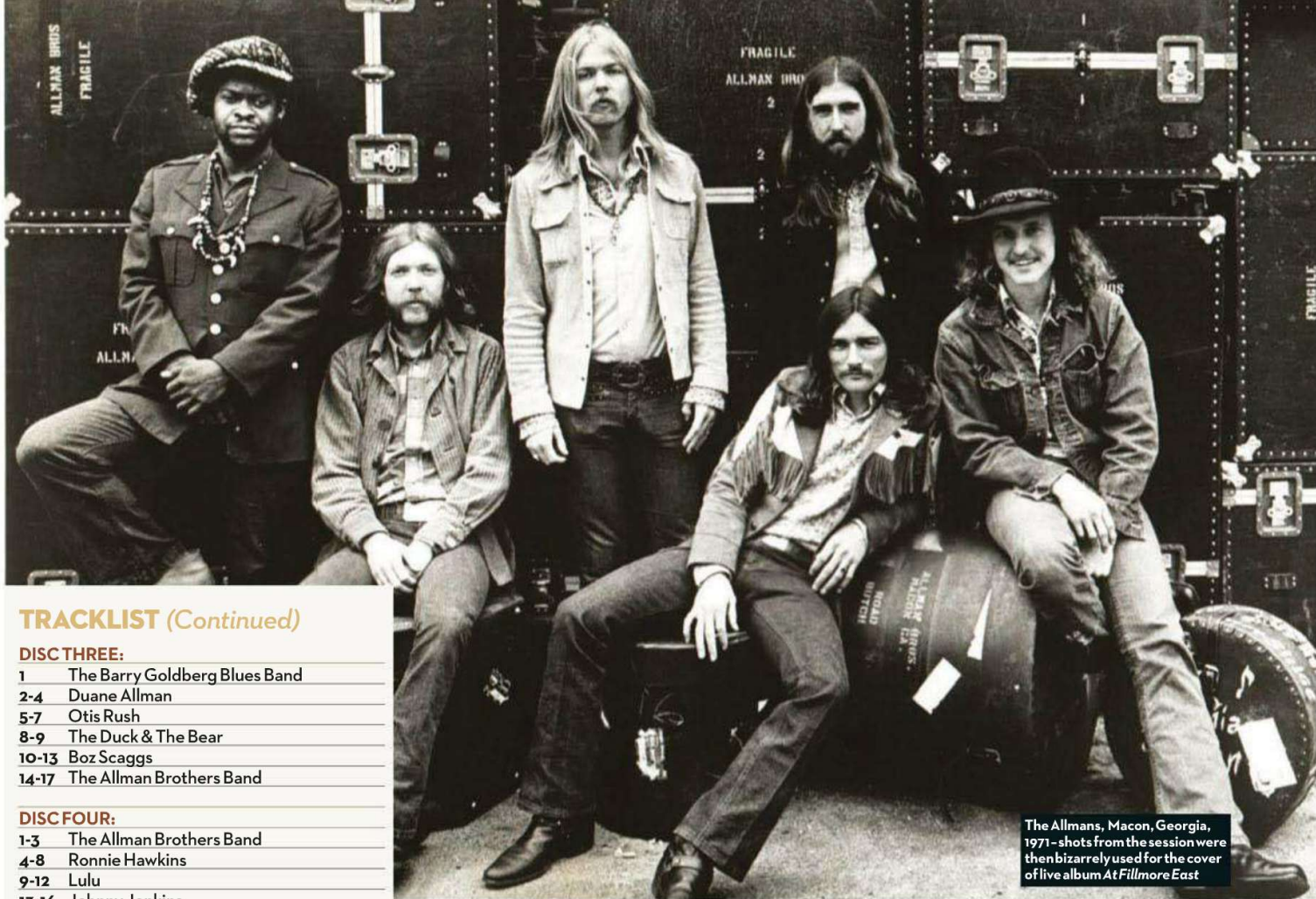
- 1-2 Clarence Carter
- 3-6 Wilson Pickett
- 7-8 Laura Lee
- 9 Spencer Wiggins
- 10-13 Arthur Conley
- 14 Willie Walker
- 15-16 The Lovelles
- 17-18 Aretha Franklin
- 19-21 Soul Survivors
- 22-25 King Curtis
- 26 The Sweet Inspirations

10/10 UNTIL NOW, NO guitar great's career has been as under-represented as has that of Duane Allman, who packed a lifetime's worth of music into seven intensive and wildly productive years. Previous efforts to compile Allman's body of work were stymied by lawsuits and massive licensing issues. It took the concerted efforts of Bill Levenson, who'd been forced to shelve an earlier attempt at a career overview while working at Universal Music in the mid-'90s, and Galadrielle Allman, Duane's only child, who's been on a lifelong mission to get to know her father through his music, to finally bring the long-delayed project to fruition.

To say the resulting seven-disc boxset – with 129 tracks, 33 of them either previously unreleased or

unissued on CD – has been worth the wait would be a gross understatement. *Skydog* is an addictive, endlessly captivating aural history of a towering figure in rock history, with each disc forming a distinct chapter in the sprawling narrative.

The first disc, which collects 23 of Duane and brother Gregg's initial efforts with the Escorts, which begat the Allman Joys, which in turn begat Hour Glass, spilling into brief forays with Butch Trucks' 31st Of February and long-forgotten group The Bleus, is a microcosm of the apprenticeships undertaken by so many musicians in the mid- to late '60s. After an initial infatuation with The Beatles, the siblings began to explore the blues and R'n'B, for which they shared a deep



The Allmans, Macon, Georgia, 1971—shots from the session were then bizarrely used for the cover of live album *At Fillmore East*

TRACKLIST (Continued)

DISC THREE:

- 1 The Barry Goldberg Blues Band
- 2-4 Duane Allman
- 5-7 Otis Rush
- 8-9 The Duck & The Bear
- 10-13 Boz Scaggs
- 14-17 The Allman Brothers Band

DISC FOUR:

- 1-3 The Allman Brothers Band
- 4-8 Ronnie Hawkins
- 9-12 Lulu
- 13-16 Johnny Jenkins
- 17-20 John Hammond
- 21-22 Doris Duke

DISC FIVE:

- 1 Eric Quince Tate: *Comin' Down* (demo version)
- 2-5 The Allman Brothers Band
- 6 Delaney & Bonnie & Friends
- 7 Laura Nyro: *Beads Of Sweat*
- 8 The Allman Brothers Band
- 9 Delaney & Bonnie & Friends
- 10-11 Ella Brown
- 12 Bobby Lance
- 13-16 Derek & The Dominos
- 17 Eric Clapton & Duane Allman

DISC SIX:

- 1-3 Sam Samudio
- 4-6 Ronnie Hawkins
- 7-8 Delaney & Bonnie & Friends
- 9-10 The Allman Brothers Band (live)
- 11 The Grateful Dead
- 12 The Allman Brothers Band (live)
- 13-15 Herbie Mann

DISC SEVEN:

- 1-3 Delaney & Bonnie & Friends (live)
- 4 The Allman Brothers Band (live)
- 5 Cowboy: *Please Be With Me*
- 6-10 The Allman Brothers Band

(Duane Allman plays on all tracks.)

→ affinity, with a fascinating side-trip into the psychedelic blues of the Jeff Beck-era Yardbirds, providing a key learning experience for Duane. They then made an early attempt at making commercial records, signing a deal with Liberty Records, which renamed them Hour Glass and forced them into confining stylistic contexts.

Even then, the brothers' soulfulness showed through – after two stiff albums, they headed to Muscle Shoals and essentially drew up the blueprint for the Allman Brothers Band with foreshadowing showcases like “BB King Medley” and Gregg’s “Been Gone Too Long”, only to be shot down by the label. After the stint with the 31st Of February, the brothers went their separate ways, Gregg exiled to the West Coast in an aborted attempt at a solo career, while Duane remained in Florida, playing every gig he could find, treading water.

Duane’s fortunes changed in the space of a single Wilson Pickett session in late 1968 at Rick Hall’s Fame Studio in Muscle Shoals, as the young interloper wowed Hall and the seasoned session players with his prodigious natural talent, erupting Vesuvius-like on a mind-blowing cover of “Hey Jude” after being pent up for so long in Hour Glass. Disc Two compiles Duane’s session work with Pickett, Clarence Carter, Arthur Conley, Aretha Franklin, the Soul Survivors, King Curtis and others, as Hall and Atlantic’s Jerry Wexler used him extensively in early ‘69, knowing

they’d discovered a prodigy with jaw-dropping chops and unlimited potential. Wexler thought enough of Duane to sign him to a solo deal, and three of his early efforts are compiled on Disc Three, which encompasses the spring and summer of 1969. But he was collaborative by

nature, and he apparently realised that quickly enough to abandon the project, return to Florida, and begin assembling the Allman Brothers Band with Muscle Shoals drummer Jai Johanny “Jaimo” Johanson, bassist Berry Oakley, Butch Trucks and guitarist Dickey Betts, summoning Gregg from L.A. to complete the lineup. But he also continued to do sessions to pay the rent while developing the band’s sound, an audaciously open-ended amalgam of blues, R’n’B, jazz and rock’n’roll.

If Duane was a magnetic presence to his fellow musicians in Muscle Shoals, Daytona Beach and New York, he remained unknown to the rest of the world until Atlantic’s September 1969 release of *Boz Scaggs*, recorded at Fame and containing the 13-minute blues epic “Loan Me A Dime”, with an extended performance from Duane so withering it stopped the critics in their tracks. Two months later, *The Allman Brothers Band* came out, unleashing the glorious tempest of “Whipping Post”, the prototypical harmonised guitar riffage of “Black Hearted Woman” and the crushed-velvet textures of “Dreams”. A month after that, the group blew the roof off the Fillmore East for the first time. And just like that, the train was roaring down the tracks, a runaway express bound for glory.

The next three discs, each capturing a few retrospectively precious months at a time, as 1969 emptied into 1970, find Duane and his simpático bandmates converting the masses on concert stages across the States with their enthralling, force-of-nature sets, their magisterial, all-business, no-bullshit stage presence a direct reflection of their leader, willowy and bent to his task, a blue-collar Michelangelo. You couldn’t take your eyes off him.

While the band was kicking back in Macon, enjoying the downtime, the tireless guitarist was showing up at sessions for everyone worth a damn from Ronnie Hawkins to Lulu, from Sam The Sham to Herbie Mann, changing the climate of every tracking room he entered. His abiding relationship with the knowing engineer/producer Tom Dowd led to *Idlewild South* and a few ecstatic



HIDDEN TREASURES

HIGH-FLYING 'DOG

The boxset's best moments

31ST OF FEBRUARY, MELISSA

(previously unreleased on CD) (Disc One)

In her notes to the boxset, Galadrielle marvels at "the strength and surprising tenderness of his playing, his raw honesty and joyfulness". Duane's slide guitar work on this original recording of Gregg's song with Butch Trucks' band from September 1968, recut by the ABB for *Eat A Peach* after Duane's death, perfectly captures these qualities.

WILSON PICKETT, HEY JUDE (Disc Two)

"Most people have to work their way in," session guitarist Jimmy Johnson told liner notes writer Scott Schinder about the pecking order at Fame. "When Duane did that date with Pickett, he was in. That's never happened before or since, and I don't think it ever will happen again. The players that had been playing lead, we just didn't use them anymore."

THE GRATEFUL DEAD, SUGAR MAGNOLIA

(live, previously unreleased) (Disc Six)

When Duane mixed it up with Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir on the Fillmore East stage in April 1971, it was a collision of fundamentally discrete improvisational impulses. Says Galadrielle, "The Dead's music had such a rambling, groovin' on down the road vibe to it, whereas the Allman Brothers' instrumental work was truly coming from a jazz tradition."

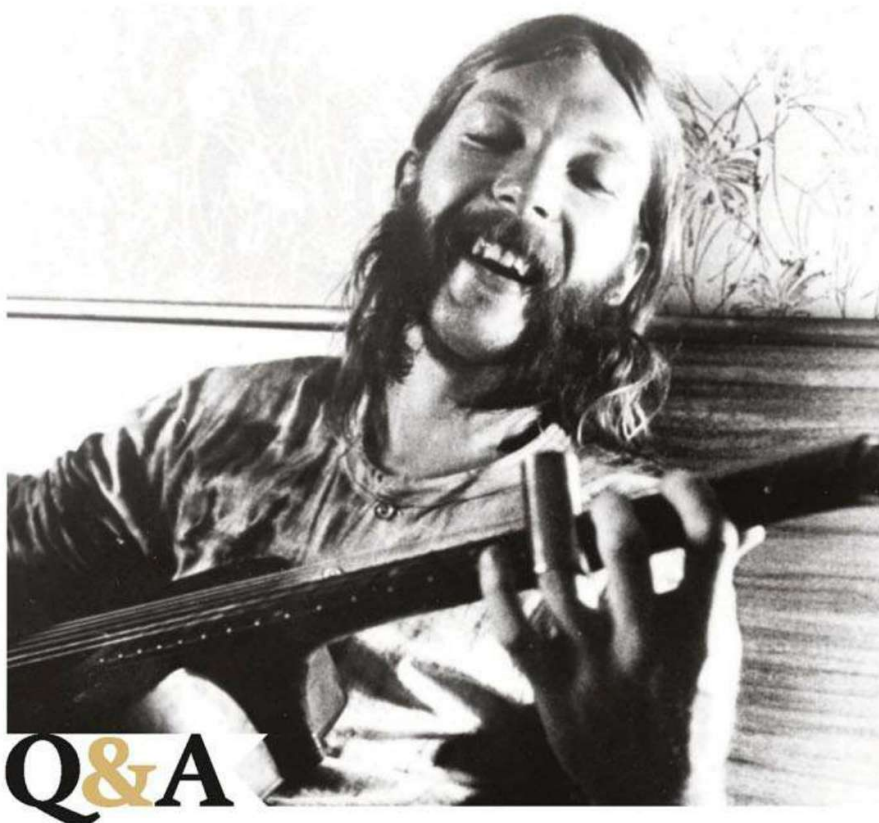
DELANEY & BONNIE, POOR ELIJAH/

TRIBUTE TO JOHNSON (live, previously unreleased) (Disc Seven)

Four months before his death, Duane joined Delaney, Bonnie and percussionist Sam Clayton in a down-home acoustic mini-set for New York's WPLJ, including this simmering slice of raw grit. "Delaney came from Randolph, Mississippi, and had that Delta blues background, and Duane cut his teeth on the blues of Robert Johnson and Elmore James," says Bobby Whitlock.

nights at Criteria in Miami with Eric Clapton and his Dominos making what may be the most exalted example ever of dueling electric guitars. Disc Seven, charting what would be the last few months of his life – an acoustic workout with Delaney & Bonnie for New York's WPLJ in July, an Allmans stop at the same station a month later, live and studio recordings from September, topped by the penultimate cut, an immersive 18-minute "Dreams". Then, finally, the only recording that could end this opus, the shimmering acoustic duet with Dickey, "Little Martha", its heartbreaking beauty intensified by the cumulative tidal force of the music that preceded it, while being reminded of the first time we heard it, on *Eat A Peach*, not long after we lost him.

If Duane Allman's purpose in life was to play the guitar, his daughter's purpose appears just as clearly to give voice to her father's wordless expressiveness. Galadrielle, who's finishing a book about her father, captures his prodigious soulfulness more vividly than anyone else who has yet attempted to do so in her notes to *Skydog*. "His spirit shines through every song," she writes. "There is something forever unknowable in his music, a mystery I cannot solve by listening, an element that is wholly his own and does not translate into words. Music told the truth. He grabbed on to it from the very beginning and never let it go." Amen.



Q&A

Galadrielle Allman, Bill Levenson and Bobby Whitlock remember Skydog and pick their choice cuts from the box

WHERE DID YOU get your name, Galadrielle?

GALADRIELLE ALLMAN: My father gave it to me, from *The Lord Of The Rings*, one of his favourite books. I was born in 1969 in Macon, simultaneously with the band. It's a big part of my life trying to get to know him and being part of preserving his legacy.

While the two of you were compiling the material as the co-producers of the boxset, what moments jumped out at you?

BILL LEVENSON: On the first disc, in '66 the Allman Joys went through this Yardbirds fixation, and "Mr You're A Better Man Than I" is an astounding read for a couple of kids in Florida who were just demoing their stuff. I found the tape back in '89 when I was working on the Allmans' *Dreams* set. We went to visit Mama A in Daytona Beach. She made us lunch, and when we were talking about tapes, she said, "Y'know, I've got these tapes over the refrigerator in the cupboard. Why don't you look and see what they are?" So I reached back in the cupboard and grabbed these little five-inch reels, and among them were these Yardbirds covers. And the only reason this track never got used was because it had some tape damage on the front end. But Galadrielle said, "It's so important, just let it go. It's better to present the five minutes with 10 seconds of distortion than not to present it at all." The Delaney & Bonnie & Friends WPLJ concert is just stunning stuff; most of it's unreleased, and for me, that becomes the heart of the package, almost. GA: It's really hard to pick specific songs, but I do have personal favourites. I thought it was

interesting that [*the Escorts' previously unissued*] "Turn On Your Lovelight" was so early. That's a song he could've played all of his life. I love his solo on the Soul Survivors' "Darkness". There are lots of moments like that, when you can feel him blazing out of the context of the song; it's so exciting. Boz Scaggs' "Loan Me A Dime" has always been one of my favorites. Generally, I love the fact that it's such a diverse and progressive collection; it really does reveal his development, that he wasn't just a master who came out of nowhere and built a great Southern rock band. He was more complicated than that, with an incredible range of experiences.

Bobby, did you know Duane was the real deal when he came into the studio and started playing with the Dominos?

BOBBY WHITLOCK: When we were on the road touring England as Derek & The Dominos, we were traveling in Eric's 6.3 Mercedes for most of the gigs that were near London. Our previous night's performance and the Allman Brothers live tape was all that we listened to. "Whipping Post" was a favourite. That was before even the thought of Duane entered the picture. Now it comes to me that at that time a seed was planted that blossomed in Miami on *Layla*.... I stayed up all night with Duane and Eric at the Thunderbird Motel in Miami listening to them trading off licks from Elmore James and Robert Johnson. That was one incredible night I will never forget. I knew I was bearing witness to something very special and sacred. Duane and Eric were like long-lost brothers reuniting, and nothing had changed except now they were men. INTERVIEW: BUD SCOPPA

"I stayed up with Duane and Clapton, trading Robert Johnson licks"



ALBUMS INCLUDED:

- 1 **Blue Öyster Cult** (1972)
– with 2001 CD bonus tracks
- 2 **Tyranny And Mutation** (1973)
– with 2001 CD bonus tracks
- 3 **Secret Treaties** (1974)
– 2001 CD bonus tracks
- 4 **On Your Feet Or On Your Knees** (1975)
– 2012 remaster
- 5 **Agents Of Fortune** (1976)
– with 2001 CD bonus tracks
- 6 **Spectres** (1977) – with 2007 CD bonus tracks
- 7 **Some Enchanted Evening** (1978) (CD)
– with 2007 CD bonus tracks
- 8 **Some OTHER Enchanted Evening** (1978) (DVD)
- 9 **Mirrors** (1979) – 2012 remaster
- 10 **Cultösaurs Erectus** (1980)
– 2012 remaster
- 11 **Fire Of Unknown Origin** (1981)
– 2012 remaster
- 12 **Extraterrestrial Live** (1982) – 2012 remaster
- 13 **The Revolution By Night** (1983)
– 2012 remaster
- 14 **Club Ninja** (1985) – 2012 remaster
- 15 **Imaginos** (1988) – 2012 remaster
- 16 **Rarities**
- 17 **Radios Apeear: The Best Of The Broadcasts**

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

The Columbia Albums Collection

SONY/LEGACY

“Guess what? I got a fever. And the only prescription is more cowbell.” Classic BOC, boxed. *By John Robinson*

8/10 AS MUCH AS it is in their umlaut and heavy rock, Blue Öyster Cult’s story is also written in their cover versions. A faithful, affectionate “Be My Baby”. After John Lennon’s murder, a screamingly heavy note-perfect “I Want You (She’s So Heavy)”. A crazed 1972 “Born To Be Wild”, not to mention a 1978 “Kick Out Their Jams”. While they enjoy a reputation, in part thanks to the efforts of *The Simpsons* and *Saturday Night Live*, as the archetypal metal band of middle America, Blue Öyster Cult were a far poppier, more melodic, even more countercultural proposition. A lot of guitar, a lot of show, a lot of mythology: at their best, the band were an arena rock MC5.

A garage rock band with chops in excess of their calling, the young members of Blue Öyster Cult couldn’t fit in on Elektra, and instead spent the 1970s making a fantastical world of their own on

Columbia. Strange hierarchies. Automotive speed. Sado-masochism. Blue Öyster Cult might well have been designed with the interests of the college-age male in mind. Rather than show the world their unimpressive faces, the band hid behind a firewall of mystical imagery and enormous riffs. Even until the end of their career, their albums were assembled with the help of clandestine guests: producer Sandy Pearlman; journalist Richard Meltzer; Patti Smith.

All intoxicating stuff. But without the band’s classic 1976 single “(Don’t Fear) The Reaper”, it’s doubtful we’d be talking in quite this detail. Written alone, as were later hits like “Godzilla”, by the band’s extraordinary guitar player Donald “Buck Dharma” Roeser, the single was a watershed moment for the band. It took BOC from a band you would see play at a city college to one you would see at a metropolitan sports arena and made the

Q&A

Eric Bloom



What's it like seeing your career laid out in a box like this?

My favourite disc is the rarities, the live tapes of "I Want You (She's So Heavy)", and the three songs that we submitted to the movie *Teachers*. Terrible movie, but I think the songs are good. Our management did the dirty work of listening to all the tapes. Our soundman George had a lot of these, and he did a lot of work cleaning them up. There's a Who song, I think. I was talking to our manager and he said, "There's a better performance of that but the lyrics are so wrong we couldn't put it on there."

Do you see your career as pre-"Reaper" and post-"Reaper"?

That's sort of true. When we weren't making a living we had band houses; a lot of the writing was collective. We would create in the basement or living room. *Tyranny And Mutation*, a lot of it was written on tour. I remember sitting in hotel rooms and Albert would hit a spoon on a book for a drum sound. But as we got more successful, we got four-track recorders: Buck wrote "Reaper" like that and just walked in with a completed song.

How did you evolve from the underground Stalk-Forrest group to the heavier Blue Öyster Cult?

Before I got there, it was like a jam band with improvised lyrics. We were not making a living playing original material, so we had to go back to the bars and play cover material, which honed our skills a little bit. We would get fired if we played originals. It was a lot of fun. We used to play biker bars and there were fights every night, guys would shove another guy's head in the bass drum. So we got louder and heavier – it was evolution. We would play an original and say, "Here's a Glen Campbell song..."

How did it work in the band with contributions from Sandy Pearlman and Richard Meltzer?

The first band house we had on Long Island, Meltzer lived in with his girlfriend and he had lyrics he would lay on us, and Sandy had lyrics he would lay on us. Sandy would give us direction: if he thought it was wrong, he would speak up.

What do you make of it when Blue Öyster Cult shows up in *The Simpsons* or *Saturday Night Live*?

We're always happy to show up in mainstream places like that. The "More cowbell" sketch was from the mind of Will Ferrell, I think.

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON

inescapable fact of death a staple of FM rock radio like no song since "Stairway To Heaven".

Having tasted the highs of success, however, it became difficult for the band to know quite where to go next. Their records remained as theatrical as they had hitherto been, but their concepts were now written with the mainstream rather than underground in mind. *Spectres* from 1977 was propelled by "Godzilla" and "RU Ready To Rock". Meanwhile, throughout the late 1970s, the band would be able to feed their live repertoire (there are three original live albums in here, a "best of the broadcasts" live radio disc, and also a download code to four more full concerts) by adding to their repertoire of decent songs at about the rate of one an album.

Most, like "Black Blade" (from 1979's *Mirrors*) or the Rainbow-like "Burnin' For You", another Buck Dharma joint from *Fire Of Unknown Origin* (1981) are good. Their parent albums, beyond 1980's *Cultösaurus Erectus*, however, are more of a challenge, a mixture of self-glorifying heavy metal anthems and science-fiction hijinks (writer Michael Moorcock wrote songs for BOC, as he had done for Hawkwind) played out in Jim Steinman-style AOR soundscapes.

It's particularly painful to

attempt to reconcile, say, '85's flat *Club Ninja* as the work of the same band that made the first three records included here. Known for their monochromatic covers, the band's eponymous debut (1972), *Tyranny And Mutation* (1973) and *Secret Treaties* (1974) enjoy a mythology of their own, and rightly so. These are "the black and white albums", and they announce the death knell of 1960s peacock culture in terms abstract ("Transmaniacon MC", about Altamont), anthemic ("The Last Days Of May") and formal ("Hot Rails To Hell", written on their first tour, supporting Alice Cooper).

The band's management had initially proposed them as an American riposte to Black Sabbath, (the two would later tour together), but what they got was something less monolithic, but ultimately far more enjoyable and dangerous. At their peak Blue Öyster Cult played music with the fury of punk, the classicism of Bruce Springsteen and the macabre preoccupations of the Velvet. It's hilarious, and at the same time no laughing matter at all. Cowbell and all, it is simply great rock'n'roll.

EXTRAS: Rarities disc; "in concert"

7/10 radio disc; download for more shows; notes by Lenny Kaye.



ADULT.

Resuscitation (reissue, 2001)

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

Stern electro duo's finest moments

Detroit's Adult. were always the odd couple at the electroclash ball,



8/10

scowling in the corner while the rest lapped up their 15 minutes. Ascetic and aloof, the husband-and-wife pair of photographer/vocalist Nicola Kuperus and producer Adam Lee Miller peddled comically dark electropop and stark new wave – at the time, in Motor City terms, they were the logical connection between Drexciya and The White Stripes. A compilation of early singles, *Resuscitation* remains their best album because it captures the searing energy and bloody-mindedness of two young idealists stopping at nothing to realise their vision. Subsequent releases would see Adult.'s appeal diminish as they turned into a grungy post-punk band no different to scores of others, but between 1998 and 2001 they dispatched a dozen missives from a sterilised world of spotless surfaces, each release complemented by Kuperus' Cindy Sherman-style still-life shots. Over the austere electro of "Nausea" and "Human Wreck" the Cruella de Vil-ish frontwoman snarls about modern-day trauma – anxiety, stress and failure – but unlike, say, their heirs Crystal Castles, Adult. could at least poke fun at themselves with titles like "Dispassionate Furniture". Droll misanthropy from two neurotic outsiders.

EXTRAS: Bonus tracks.

6/10 PIERS MARTIN

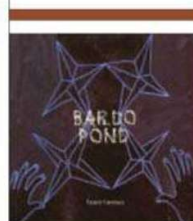
BARDO POND

Ticket Crystals (reissue, 2006)

FIRE

Splendid seventh from Philadelphia fringe dwellers

Album titles that relate directly to obscure

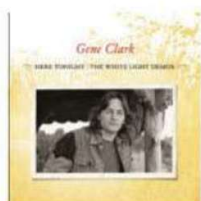


8/10

hallucinogens and a contribution to a Spacemen 3 tribute album give a pretty clear indication of Bardo Pond's interests and intent. Theirs is a masterly and distinctive take on cosmic/post-stoner rock honed over two decades, including an early flirtation with avant-jazz jams, channelled through fellow Philly resident, Sun Ra and his Arkestra. But for years now, their sound has been characterised by radically attenuated, subtly shifting psych rock grooves, hypnotic drone and washes of white noise and feedback, interlaced with Isobel Sollenberger's haunted vocals and wyrd-folk flute. Their *Ticket Crystals* LP from 2006 – reissued on vinyl only, with new artwork – is a good entry point for BP novices due to its sonic diversity and its ability to affect not only the head, but also the heart, especially via epic instrumental "FC II". This clocks in at 18 minutes, its endless loop of sawing violin, buzzy drone and whining electronics as perfect as a Möbius strip, set against deeply dubby atmospherics. It's in sharp contrast to their cover of The Beatles' "Cry Baby Cry", where Sollenberger coos like Cat Power. Hell, even doomy cosmic voyagers need to kick back on occasion.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL



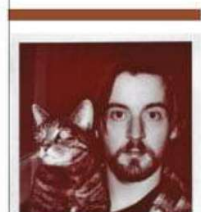
GENE CLARK Here Tonight: The White Light Demos

OMNIVORE

Fresh produce for fans and armchair psychologists to chew on
This recently unearthed treasure trove of 1970 song

demos was laid down while Clark was holed up with his girlfriend in a rustic cabin on the Northern California coast during a brief respite from the LA music biz. What's immediately striking about these recordings, containing nothing but Clark's voice, acoustic strumming and harmonica, is how unburdened they seem, a rarity in the output of this famously troubled artist. Generally, the original takes of the seven songs subsequently chosen for the Jesse Ed Davis-produced *White Light* come across with a hermetic intensity that would be lightened by the lilt of the studio arrangements. Aside from "Jimmy Christ", a snippet of Biblical imagery, the songs that didn't make *White Light* are worthwhile additions to the Clark canon. "Please Mr Freud" displays Clark's delight in Dylan-esque wordplay, as he playfully appropriates Bob's vocal idiosyncrasies, and "Opening Day" contains all the signifiers for a full-on Byrds treatment, while "Winter In" and "For No One" subtly convey the austere beauty of the fogbound Mendocino coastline. But even these moments of relative repose unfurl against an unmistakable backdrop of deep melancholy, like shafts of sunlight intermittently appearing amid a thick bank of storm clouds.

EXTRAS: None.
BUD SCOPPA



CHARLES DOUGLAS Not Your Kind Of Music - The Basement Tapes 1995-1999

BROKEN HORSE

8/10 Leaving no turn
unstoned, here's

Douglas' early years, compiled

This double set pulls together four '90s albums by bedroom pop prodigy Charles Douglas. If you picked up the recent reissue of 1999's *The Lives Of Charles Douglas*, his brilliantly bolshy NYC garage-pop album, produced by Moe Tucker, you'll have some idea of what to expect, but *Not Your Kind Of Music* is far more primitive – often just a drum machine, a scratchy guitar and a quaking voice singing out impossibly catchy melodies from his parents' basement. Douglas has a rare knack for a compellingly odd pop song, in the lineage of Jonathan Richman or Daniel Johnston, but with a hardened cynicism and observational flair for personal minutiae that's far more streetwise. While Douglas was signed to a major, they refused to release any of these albums, claiming they were far too uncommercial; Douglas took matters into his own hands, with the usual outcomes – of the 300 copies of 1997's *The Burdens Of Genius* shipped, 250 were returned. This time, you can help cheat these extraordinary, hyper-personal records out of their self-designed obscurity.

EXTRAS: None really, but Douglas' liners are **8/10** mindbogglingly great. He'd write a fantastic memoir. Limited copies come with a free EP of further material.

JONDALE



THE DURUTTI COLUMN LC (reissue, 1981)

FACTORY BENELUX

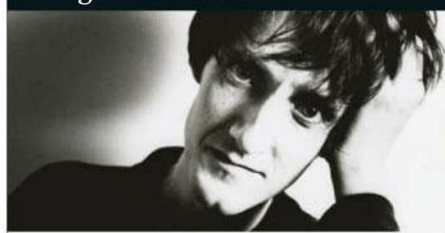
Mancunian guitar wizard's masterly second album
Vini Reilly's first album, *The Return Of The Durutti*

Column, was more notorious for its sandpaper sleeve than the music contained therein. The sleeve was a Factory Records joke, designed to destroy neighbouring albums. The music – despite borrowing a band name from a group of Spanish anarchists – was less demonstrative, and more rewarding. The follow-up, 1981's *LC* (short for "Lotta Continua" – continuous struggle) is no noisier, though it includes some piano, and skittish drums (by Bruce Mitchell of Alberto Y Lost Trios Paranoias). Reilly recorded it quickly on a four-track bought from Bill Nelson, prizing spontaneity over studio polish. He sings occasionally (in the manner of a whispering Bernard Sumner), notably on the beautiful opener, "Sketch For Dawn (1)". Broadly speaking, it's uncategorisable. Reilly – classical by training, derailed by punk – went for "new wave", by which he meant he was in serious opposition to rock'n'roll, and while he was experimental by intuition, his instincts were towards listenability. There's a lovely song for Ian Curtis, "The Missing Boy", which demonstrates that while he was a Factory man, his music transcends that time and place.

EXTRAS: 23 bonus tracks, including three **8/10** produced by Martin Hannett, with A Certain Ratio's Donald Johnson on drums.
ALASTAIR MCKAY

REVELATIONS

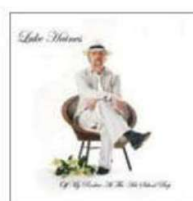
Vini Reilly on Factory Records,
his accidental album *LC* and a
song for Ian Curtis



► "I recall Factory being very disorganised," says Vini Reilly. "Tony Wilson left me to my own devices. I bought a four-track reel-to-reel from Bill Nelson. It was knackered, a very old machine. One night, about 3am, I went in my mum's spare bedroom, and I felt very inspired and recorded for about three hours, with a space echo, one guitar, a very cheap drum machine and mic. I put it onto cassette, and next day Tony asked me if he could have a listen. He listened, and he wouldn't give me my Walkman back. Next day we went into a small studio which was really built for jingles so Bruce could add his drums and I put a piano down. Tony said that's great, that's an album."

"The song 'The Missing Boy' is for Ian Curtis. The title came from when we were in America: myself, ACR and New Order were sat by the hotel pool one day, in LA, feeling pleased with ourselves. I suddenly turned round, and said to Tony: you know who's missing, don't you? He said, yeah, Ian. At exactly that point, the piece of music arrived in my head and that was it."

ALASTAIR MCKAY



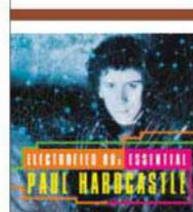
LUKE HAINES Off My Rocker At The Art School Bop (reissue, 2006)

FANTASTIC PLASTIC

Digital re-release of underrated, long-deleted mini-masterpiece

On this album's release, seven years ago, the selling point was producer du jour Richard X's presence on the title track. It's actually the least interesting part on an LP that bristles with grim comedy, a glam rock musical that could have been scripted by some surreal union of David Peace and Frankie Boyle. "Leeds United" is a masterpiece of lyric writing: quotidian tales of domestic drudgery ("When I get home/My wife will kill me") turn out to be a chilling tale that's narrated from the POV of the Yorkshire Ripper. Elsewhere Haines paints 1970s Britain as a land of organised sexual abuse ("Gary Glitter is a bad, bad man/Ruining the reputation of the Glitter Band"), closeted boxing gangsters ("Freddie Mills Is Dead"), endemic violence ("Fighting In The City Tonight"), and more organised sexual abuse ("The Walton Hop" addresses Jonathan King's old stomping ground). Haines clearly eyes three-day weeks, IRA bombing campaigns, endless strikes and antiquated pub closing hours with mild affection, but then gleefully undercuts any nostalgia with a broadside at "The Heritage Rock Revolution" ("It's a middle-aged rampage!").

EXTRAS: A five-track EP featuring a live, solo **6/10** version of "Leeds United", with an alarmingly prescient Jimmy Savile reference.
JOHN LEWIS



PAUL HARDCASTLE Electrofied 80s: Essential Paul Hardcastle

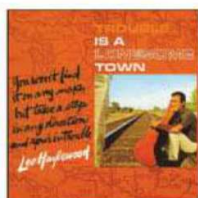
DEMON MUSIC GROUP

"19" star's smooth jazz legacy

5/10

At 30 tracks filling two discs, this retrospective of Paul Hardcastle's 30-year career plays havoc with the definition of 'essential', yet it paints a picture of a man who has seldom compromised his art. Most know Hardcastle from "19", his 1985 electro-funk No 1 about the Vietnam War that has not aged well despite a succession of trendy facelifts – a 2011 dub version, included here, updates the conflict narrative with samples of a report on British troops killed in Afghanistan and, for added pathos, a crying baby. Above all, we're reminded, jazz-funk courses like Babycham through every fibre of Hardcastle's being. This resulted in some pretty bland cocktail pieces such as "Sound Of Summer" and the scat-soul of "Time Machine", but it also allowed Hardcastle to smuggle his modern take on US synthesiser funk into the charts in the mid-'80s with "Rain Forest", "Just For Money" and "The Wizard", which became the *Top Of The Pops* theme for five years. Admittedly, the calibre of his blend of smooth jazz and urban swing is hard to fault, but it says something when the appearance of "The Voyager" – the balmy theme to the BBC's long-running *Holiday* programme – is greeted with relief.

EXTRAS: None.
PIERS MARTIN



LEE HAZLEWOOD

Trouble Is A Lonesome Town
(reissue, 1963)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Expanded first set from quixotic warbler

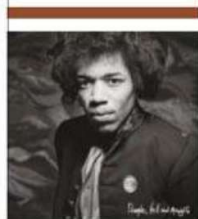
Hazlewood's debut, from

1963, promised to tell the tale of a town called Trouble "in a manner which will give you a unique half-hour of enjoyment" – a small ambition. In truth the record was little more than a demo, with spartan arrangements, by Hazlewood's later standards. It was his first non-pseudonymous release, but most of his instincts were fully-formed, after years working as a DJ, songwriter and producer (his audio biog, included here, shows he also had a well-developed sense of his own myth). He released a few singles under the name Mark Robinson, with Duane Eddy on guitar ("Pretty Jane", from 1958, is stuttering rock'n'roll, the B-side, "Want Me" is an Everly Brothers pastiche), but Trouble was conceived as a means of marketing his songs, made more coherent by the spoken-word intros which broadened the concept, and added a note of dark comedy. Happily, the songs are great. "Long Black Train" and "Run Boy Run" are as near as dammit Johnny Cash numbers, and "We All Make The Flowers Grow" is a rumination on death, which is maudlin, but sounds bright – the exact opposite of Hazlewood's usual formula.

EXTRAS: Three unreleased tracks, released as

7/10 "Mark Robinson" and with Duane Eddy, audio-autobiography.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



JIMI HENDRIX

People, Hell And Angels
SONY MUSIC

Jimi keeps on jamming from beyond the grave

The market for Hendrix

off-cuts shows little sign in abating. This latest release gathers 12 more of his dizzyingly copious post-Experience studio recordings, mostly featuring Billy Cox and Buddy Miles but also Rocky Isaac, saxophonist Lonnie Youngblood and, on "Somewhere", Stephen Stills on bass. Although all the tracks are previously unreleased, most of the material is familiar: some of it ("Earth Song", "Somewhere") may be noticeably different from previously issued versions, but almost all the songs have been heard before on other archive releases. The exceptions are "Inside Out", an embryonic instrumental version of *The Cry Of Love*'s "Ezy Rider", and "Let Me Move You", a long, fast, virile blues on which Hendrix trades hot licks with Youngblood. As on *The Ghetto Fighters*' furiously funky "Mojo Man", Hendrix here is a sideman, leaving the vocals to others. The original version of the venomous "Crash Landing" – finally stripped of its posthumous 1975 overdubs – also has historical value, but yet more tilts at staples like "Hear My Train A Comin'" add little to an increasingly swollen canon. No real lost treasure, then, but some interesting baubles.

EXTRAS: None.

GRAEME THOMSON



ARVE HENRIKSEN

Solidification
RUNE GRAMMOFON

Melting moments from Norway's ambient trumpet genius

It's the Norwegian dream to walk alone in the

wilderness, with the glories of nature all to yourself. Arve Henriksen's three solo albums for Rune Grammo attempt to take you there. Henriksen's electronically augmented horn has been heard for the past 15 years in improvising unit Supersilent. But his solo music is a more intimate, solipsistic affair, like Jon Hassell's Fourth World hothouse muffled by a crisp fall of snow. Pithy exhalations overlay foxed digital loops and abraded textures, surrounded by percussiveappings. Henriksen often seems caught up in a private, shamanistic ritual, negotiating some psychic channel between the organic and electronic realms of jazz, free music and experimental ambient. Not since Miles Davis has the normally exhibitionist trumpet been made such an introspective and mournful lump of brass. *Sakuteiki* (2001), *Chiaroscuro* (2004) and *Strjon* (2007), collected here over four vinyl sides each, form a continuum, matched in mood and temperament, packed with mesmeric moments, perched on the zero-centigrade cusp where objects can melt and solidify from minute to minute. *Chron*, a new LP, collages samples of Henriksen's travels – trains, airport hubbub, notes to self jammed into his mobile phone's mic. The urban wilderness is the new frontier.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB YOUNG



MATTHEW HERBERT

Herbert Complete
ACCIDENTAL

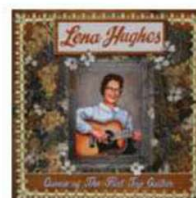
Sumptuous expanded boxset of early work from restless sonic pioneer

A prolific polymath and underrated innovator in

British electronic music, Matthew Herbert recently edged closer to National Treasure status when he was appointed creative director of the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop. Spanning 1996 to 2006, this five-disc boxset includes a wealth of rarities and buried treasure, notably collecting together Herbert's early 12-inch releases on long-defunct underground dance labels. From the ear-grating glitch-house of "Robot Radio" to the ringpull-funk stomper "Can Can", this is conceptual club music par excellence. On later albums, Herbert's sound became more conventional even as his methods turned increasingly experimental. He sampled the sound of human skin and hair, recording in caves and hot air balloons, but often then finessed the results into anodyne jazzy house. Diligent but clinical, *100 lbs* is the most disappointingly polite work here, though the bonus tracks feature some agreeably crazed remixes. *Around The House* is better, playful jazz-funk assembled from domestic sound sources. A luxuriant vehicle for the dreamy voice of Herbert's ex-wife Dani Siciliano, *Bodily Functions* is the best of the set, a love letter to classic late-night lounge jazz and bossa nova. Overall, a superbly rich and diverse archive.

EXTRAS: None.

STEPHEN DALTON



LENA HUGHES

Queen Of The Flat Top Guitar
TOMPKINS SQUARE

Lost treasure of folk guitar exhumed

First given a limited release on Power Records in 1965, and little heard since, the

only album released by Hughes has become a holy grail for guitar players seeking to understand the links between parlour music and traditional folk styles. In the sleeve notes, Pentangle's John Renbourn hails the record as "a lost treasure" and goes into detail about the technicalities of Hughes' mastery of the "ethereal harmonic technique" (what sounds simple is evidently hard to explain, but involves open-chords, thumb-picking and melodies eked from a single string). Certainly, Hughes makes an unlikely axe-hero. She was born in 1904, and lived in Ludlow, Missouri until her death in 1998, recording these 11 tunes in Arkansas in the early 1960s. She also played fiddle and banjo, and was recorded for the Smithsonian in 1975. Her repertoire mixed fiddle-tunes adapted for guitar, and traditional parlour pieces, which were often reworkings of popular tunes, hymns or 19th-Century airs. There's a wiry reworking of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus", and a beautiful, halting "Letter Edged In Black". Renbourn identifies it as a possible forerunner of AP Carter's rewrite of "Will The Circle Be Unbroken", a touchstone of country music. It certainly doesn't sound a lot like 1965.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

Live At The Fillmore 1968
HUX

Elfin princes of psych-folk in their regal pomp

"All now in my mind a dream patchwork, a

cobweb, someone's past, I guess it was mine," concludes Robin Williamson in the sleeve notes to this improbable archive find, seemingly bewildered as to what all the fuss is about. However, even at 45 years' distance – and in the wake of a free-folk movement which fetishised and cannibalised their work – this crystal-clear soundboard tape of he and Mike Heron in the midst of their annus mirabilis sounds unfathomable and new. Far enough out with the Tollund Man psychedelia of March 1968's *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, exemplified here by the metrical acrobatics of Williamson's "Waltz Of The New Moon" and Heron's amoeba lullaby "A Very Cellular Song", this New York show finds them making another paradigm shift towards the sitar-spangled wonder of double album *Wee Tam And The Big Huge*, released just eight months later. "Ducks On A Pond", "Puppies" and "Maya" thoroughly justify Stephen Malkmus' sober assertion that the ISB were "the greatest band of all time". "What is it that we are part of and what is it that we are?" asks Williamson, trundling imperially through an almost finished "The Half-Remarkable Question". Even now, one of a kind.

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH



JAMIROQUAI

Emergency On Planet Earth/Return Of The Space Cowboy/Travelling Without Moving

SONY

8/10

7/10

6/10

The 'twat in the hat's chart-topping first trilogy, re-released

The ridiculous hats, the garish cords, the shit lyrics, the fucking *didgeridoo* –

many found it baffling that Jay Kay emerged as acid jazz's only fully-fledged pop star. These three re-releases suggest Jamiroquai's huge international success came from the wealth of rather good 45s. Four were released from each LP: all mix fat basslines with surprisingly weird chord changes, and even the lesser ones left off comps (like *Space Cowboy*'s bossa-tinged pairing "Stillness In Time" and "Half The Man") have something to commend them. The problems are with the LP fillers, which are split between meandering ballads ("Manifest Destiny", "Everyday"), painful didgeridoo workouts ("Didjerama", "Didgin' Out"), Lilt-friendly reggae ("Drifting Along") and grimly efficient funk aerobics (based around Toby Smith's clavinet and Stuart Zender's busy basslines). Still, "If I Like It I Do It" and the rather fine "Whatever It Is, I Just Can't Stop" hold up well from the first LP.

EXTRAS: Each LP has a disc of remixes, demos and live cuts (including *Headhunters*/Kool & The Gang covers). The mixes by 4 To Da Floor, Morales and Quasar (and a few acoustic versions/demos) are better than the originals.

JOHN LEWIS



JETHRO TULL

Nothing Is Easy: Live At The Isle Of Wight Festival 1970

SALVO

7/10

Never mind the loot, here's the flute

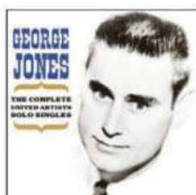
According to Tull leader Ian Anderson's liner

notes, the Isle Of Wight Festival was a test of endurance for both performers and punters; sporadic outbreaks of violence, Joni Mitchell breaking down in tears onstage, and Jimi Hendrix "not a happy bunny" about having to play so late, all contributing to an air of gloominess. For Tull, however, it was a personal triumph, riding high on the momentum of their chart-topping album *Stand Up* the previous year, and delivering a barnstorming set showcasing their transition from old-school prog blues ("Sunday Feeling") to more Celtic-driven folk rock ("To Cry You A Song"). Here is where Anderson's flute finds space in the music to complement rather than distract from guitarist Martin Barre's crunchy power chords ("Bouree"), making sense of a hybrid sound which, on paper at least, might have looked like a non-starter. John Evans' eloquent piano adds further textures, the arrangements busy but never overblown. Anderson isn't sure if the band ever got paid for their performance, but they did come away with a vibrant live album that perfectly encapsulates their singular style.

EXTRAS: Full festival set on DVD, interspersed with Ian Anderson interview clips

filmed in 2004.

TERRY STAUNTON



GEORGE JONES

The Complete United Artists Solo Singles

OMNIVORE

9/10

Possum primetime: 16 early As & Bs from country's greatest singer

Jones was everywhere in the

early '60s, a hyper-hillbilly paying respects to elders like Hank Williams and Bob Wills, a romantic foil pouring out duets with singing partner Melba Montgomery, a key player in C&W's fascinating evolution from Hank Williams to the famed Nashville Sound. His United Artists period is – arguably – his greatest, sandwiched in between wildman neo-rockabilly '50s sides and the gripping, grown-up psychodrama permeating the Billy Sherrill countrypolitan era. This snappy set, predating country settling into leaden predictability, reflects Jones' versatility as well as country's creative frontier and runs the gamut from gospel ("He Made Me Free") to holiday novelties (the rock'n'roll in all but name "My Mom And Santa Claus"), to the hard-boiled heartbreak and honky-tonk of some of his greatest songs – especially "She Thinks I Still Care" and "Brown To Blue" – plus stellar, vibrant backing from players like guitarist Grady Martin and pianist Pig Robbins. "The Race Is On" is irresistible, but there are many hidden gems, among them the terrifying murder ballad "The Open Pit Mine", and "What's Money", an irreverent bit of inspiration – written by Billie Jean Horton – and sung with the gleeful gusto of a little kid at Christmastime.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



REVELATIONS

A walk on the wild side with country legend George Jones

► When George Jones began singing his sodden songs of heartbreak and drink, their sentiments didn't require method acting. Hard drinking was part and parcel of life in hardscrabble Beaumont, Texas circa '40s/'50s, and booze-fuelled Jones tales soon multiplied like a rash of fire ants. Like the one where he shot out the floor of his tourbus; or when he grabbed (and twisted!) country superstar Porter Wagoner's penis in a fit of jealousy (Wagoner was messing around with Jones' wife Tammy Wynette, Jones' booze-brain claimed). Then there's the (recurring) lawnmower story: "Once, when I'd been drunk for several days," Jones wrote in his autobiog, "[ex-wife] Shirley decided she'd make it physically impossible for me to buy liquor. I lived eight miles from Beaumont and the nearest liquor store. She knew I wouldn't walk that far to get booze, so she hid the keys to every car we owned and left." But she forgot one thing. "I imagine the top speed for that old mower was 5mph. It might have taken an hour-and-a-half to get to the liquor store, but get there I did." LUKE TORN



KIRSTY MACCOLL

A New England: The Very Best Of

SALVO

9/10

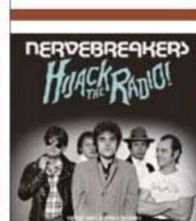
Magnificent précis of a much missed talent

By no means the first Kirsty comp since her tragic death 12 years ago,

A New England is, nonetheless, the most pleasing and complete overview yet of one of the UK's most cherished singer-songwriters. She may only have released five albums during her 20-year career, but the cherry-picked highlights of her output showcase an impressive array of styles, underpinned by her intuitive sense of melody and trademark lyrical wit. The evocative pop jangle of "They Don't Know" and "Terry" rests comfortably alongside more ambitious excursions into dance territory ("Walking Down Madison"), Cuban rhythms ("In These Shoes") and elegant country two-steps ("Don't Come The Cowboy With Me, Sonny Jim"). Beyond self-penned offerings, MacColl was always adept at bringing fresh perspective and personality to other people's material, such as the Billy Bragg title track and The Smiths' "You Just Haven't Earned It Yet, Baby", and her superbly restrained sense of theatricality on Cole Porter's "Miss Otis Regrets", her other, less celebrated collaboration with The Pogues. Ultimately, though, it's the clarity and eloquence of the portraits she paints with her own words that are most striking, not least the heart-warming ode to lovers forced apart, "Soho Square".

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON



NERVEBREAKERS

Hijack The Radio! Vintage Vinyl & Studio Sessions

GET HIP

7/10

Handy odds'n'sods set from darkly drawn Dallas über-punks

Duly connecting the dots, mixing all the right influences present from their pre-punk, early 1970s inception – eg The Stooges, MC5, Roky Erickson, and especially the New York Dolls – Dallas quintet Nervebreakers were primed once the Pistols, Clash and Ramones busted down the door (and they served as opening act for all three). They were stunted on record, though (just one full-length album, circa 1980), but this set, rounding up assorted rare 45s, demos and radio shows, bridges multiple gaps. With their hard-nosed, mercurial guitars, borrowed from a legion of '60s garage/punks and, of course, the Stones, crashing hooks and songwriter T Tex Edwards' daffy compositions – "I Love Your Neurosis", "Why Am I So Flipped?" – the Nervebreakers straddled everything from punk to power pop, old-school hard rock to irony-laced new wave. *Hijack The Radio!* turns up a bunch of gems, from the ringing cry of the title cut to the disarming pop of "So Sorry", the latter showcasing some fine, racing guitar leads; plus some churning, shockingly direct punk sentiments ("I Wanna Kill You", "My Life Is Ruined"). "My Girlfriend Is A Rock", though, is the killer, an overcharged, incendiary, absurdist slice of pop/punk heaven. It is their moment of immortality.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

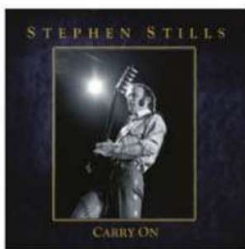


STEPHEN STILLS

Carry On

RHINO

Stills distilled: myriad highlights across 50 years; 25 previously unreleased cuts. *By Luke Torn*



6/10

DURING THE YEARS 1966 to 1972, Stephen Stills was the darling of the New Frontier, among the hottest stars of rock'n'roll, a magnetic, charismatic presence. He was a triple threat: a lethal guitarist, as likely to peel off sizzling electric leads as to serenade with

gentle, earthen finger-picking; a refined, emotional songwriter – the instantly recognisable “For What It’s Worth” struck an apposite anti-authoritarian nerve in early 1967; an angelic yet gutsy singer, with a versatile tenor deft at both ethereal harmonies and down-and-dirty blues.

From the earliest glimmer of the Buffalo Springfield, down through the salad days of Crosby, Stills & Nash, and into his underrated stint helming Manassas – with onetime Byrd Chris Hillman – Stills was a natural, a good luck charm. After that: confused decision-making, torpid solo records, drugs and a long, deteriorative slide.

Carry On, an eons-in-the-making four-disc, 82-track set traversing his entire career, floats through the eras, highlighting both Stills’ early brilliance and gamely piecing together – or trying to – a cogent narrative for the erratic, wilderness years. As with Rhino’s parallel boxes on Graham Nash and David Crosby, it strangely deconstructs the career of an artist who has always been best showcased as an ensemble player. It fills a few gaps, points up some

outstanding, lost performances, but in playing both sides of the fence – a glorified best-of on steroids and a definitive rarities set – it winds up in no-man’s land. And it misses some golden opportunities.

An earnest, pristine folk tune, “Travelin’”, kicks things off, Stills’ fresh-faced voice and eloquent guitar presentation apparent at age 17. The coffeehouse standard “High Flyin’ Bird” – from Stills’ little-known folk-scene group Au Go Go Singers – follows, a soaring, intrepid vocal transcending a hokey arrangement. Other dimly remembered proto-Stills groups – ie The Continentals and The Company – are AWOL.

Instead, from here through Disc One, it’s predominantly the familiar tried-and-true, including 16 oft-anthologised Springfield/CSN standards, from “Rock’n’Roll Woman” and “Pretty Girl Why” to “Suite: Judy Blue Eyes” and “You Don’t Have To Cry”. The Springfield vault remains virtually un plundered here – a “remix” of “Everydays” (remixes constitute more than a quarter of the unreleased cuts) is the only so-called rarity. The epic nine-minute studio “Bluebird,” surely one of Stills’ finest compositions, remains absent, despite the recent string of Stills/Young/Springfield archival releases.

The hair-raising “No-Name Jam” stems from the much-anticipated Stills/Hendrix tapes – long rumored and only recently discovered, informally recorded circa 1970 – both players firing electroshock guitar riffs over stock R’n’B rhythms. Hendrix’s stabbing, distorted notes spar with Stills’ long, fluid lines – à la the Stills/Bloomfield/Kooper 1968 super-session. It’s terrific, but as a solitary cut, a two-and-a-half-minute teaser,

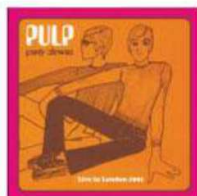
it’s over almost before it begins. Perhaps more from these sessions will appear under the aegis of Experience Hendrix.

The downbeat, almost jazzy “Who Ran Away?” points to the transition from Springfield to CSNY; “Forty-Nine Reasons”, later to morph into “49 Bye-Byes”, is a certified find. A one-man-band tour de force, with slippery backwards guitars, churchy piano and a grand roundhouse hook, it’s heartbreak on tape, and worthy of Stills’ legend. Both these source from 1968 demos, like Stills’ 2007 *Just Roll Tape* collection.

Other early-era tracks are moderately arresting, including “The Lee Shore”, Stills interpreting a Crosby composition, and a breathless, intimate 12-string demo of “So Begins The Task” (later done-up Manassas-style). Several stunning 1970s cuts are equally essential: a spooky, solo live banjo take of “Know You Got To Run”, paranoiac supreme, Stills swerving from the icky faux-romanticism now dominating his writing; an alternative take of “The Treasure”, originally on *Manassas*, is a fine driving rocker; and a mesmerising demo of “Black Coral”, an oceanic dreamscape with Neil Young on synthesiser. But that one marks the beginning of Stills’ creative end.

Yet, while one would expect *Carry On* to fully mop up all significant yet-unreleased Stills (building from CSN’s retro-release *Demos* and Rhino’s astounding collection of Manassas leftovers, *Pieces*) – it hardly manages the task. “Ivory Tower”, a gorgeous pop melody with some electrifying guitar, dating from the late-Springfield/early-CSN era, is woefully absent. “Everyday We Live”/“Whole People”, a soul-searching *Déjà Vu* outtake with signature Stills falsetto, Manassas’ version of “Thoroughfare Gap”, and “One Way Ride”, a long-missing Stills-Young Band leftover, were all deserving of a look-see. The list goes on.

Instead, the last quarter of *Carry On* tries to shore up a flagging ship amid subpar album tracks and bloated live performances. One has to be among the truest believers to stick around past about the 1977 mark, despite an occasional flash of inspiration or chops (“Spanish Suite”, the atmospheric “Haven’t We Lost Enough?”), the law of diminishing returns kicks in.



PULP Party Clowns RETROWORLD

Baby photos of Britpop's saving grace

The contractual situation surrounding Pulp's early years has not lent itself to classy treatment of

7/10

their back catalogue; the band's Red Rhino and Fire recordings have been rehashed haphazardly for years, but *Party Clowns* – a live recording taken from a televised *NME* 'Class Of '91' show – is something new, even though the packaging is familiarly crappy. Eight years after the release of their debut single and fifth on the bill – below the Pale Saints, Levitation, Kingmaker and See-See Rider – Pulp were getting nowhere slow, but their dark ages are waning. Still in his crimplene phase, Jarvis Cocker espouses the benefits of the stylophone ("I'm not related to Rolf Harris in any way," he maintains in mitigation), but the self-conscious 1970s overtones cannot mask the sensuous power of the *Separations*-era Pulp, Russell Senior's wah-wah guitar crystallising the funky Jacques Brel dynamic of "Death II" and "My Legendary Girlfriend". An embryonic version of "Babies", though, is the surprise treat here: a full three years before the group would play it on *Top Of The Pops*, it has a tune, a chorus, and even if it doesn't have proper verses yet, the countdown has begun. They'll be bigger than St Etienne: just wait and see.

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH



ROEDELIOUS Selected Pieces 1990 To 2011 MULE MUSIQ

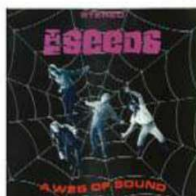
An indecisive blur of previously unreleased flotsam from the Krautrock king

6/10

From his mid-'60s days in the Zodiac Free Arts Lab, through his long-term collaboration with Dieter Moebius in Cluster, Hans-Joachim Roedelius has pretty solid claim to being Krautrock royalty. Having originally formed Cluster as a trio with Moebius and Tangerine Dream's Conrad Schnitzler (this trio lineup went out as Kluster), then later adding Michael Rother of Neu! to the Cluster duo to form Harmonia, he's been involved in avant-electronics for decades. But his turn to solo material has led him down some thorny, knotted paths, particularly in the past two decades, which is borne out by *Selected Pieces 1990 To 2011*. Like much of what he's done over the past 25 years, it's pretty shaky at times, but intermittently firing, equally lost in ambient reverie and stubbed-toe electronic (see the rattling-off-course beats in "Frolic At Six"). It may be odd to say this about someone who so often privileges drift-works, but when Roedelius focuses in on little spoors of melody, his music really excels – see the charming, idyllic "Endless", a three-minute miniature with a sense of the 'everyday sublime', the ghost in the machine, that unexpectedly acts as precursor to the palimpsest electronics of hauntology.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



THE SEEDS A Web Of Sound (reissue, 1966) ACE

Sky Saxon and gang's long-MIA second album, with beaucoup extras

8/10

For a time the hottest band on Sunset Strip, sneering,

screaming *Nuggets* prototypes The Seeds were modern primitives run wild, spinning a decadent career out from "Pushin' Too Hard", maybe the prototype garage/punk single. Where peers Love and The Doors played more on the esoteric and the neurotic, The Seeds were gut-punch R'n'B, slimed-over with sex, drugs, more sex and all-around creepy-crawly. *A Web Of Sound*, their second LP (essentially, their last stand), both scaled the heights of garage/punk and exposed its limitations: latterly, 15-minute sex trip "Up In Her Room" gets old fast; in fact, the more they stretched out – musically and metaphorically – the less effective they were. Still, the swaggering Seeds – think *Out Of Our Heads*-era Stones – laid down some of the most subversive rock'n'roll ever, and *Web* has its share: the stutter of "Tripmaker"; "Just Let Her Go", melody sputtering into white noise; and "Mr Farmer", keyboard-pop with a delightfully light touch.

EXTRAS: Exhaustively researched by archivist-supreme Alec Paleo, *Web* features a mono edition; seven outtakes and alternates, including an early "The Wind Blows Your Hair". The Seeds' freak-folk dance with the devil; and *A Full Spoon Of Seedy Blues*, Saxon's Muddy Waters-endorsed stab at Chicago blues.

LUKE TORN

HOW TO BUY... ROEDELIOUS Hans-Joachim's magic machine music



HARMONIA Musik Von Harmonia

BRAIN, 1974

The first of two Harmonia albums – three, if you include *Tracks & Traces* with Eno –

here Roedelius teams up with Dieter Moebius and Michael Rother, taking the DNA from their other bands, Cluster and Neu!, and improvising brilliantly laissez-faire (non-)grooves over which Rother's guitar scythes and reels.

9/10



CLUSTER

Sowiesoso SKY, 1976

You can't go wrong with the first six Cluster albums, but *Sowiesoso* is their most holistic trip, a gorgeous glide through

gently giddy melodies. No-one else programs machines in such a joyous and idiosyncratic way.

9/10



ROEDELIOUS Wenn Der Südwind Weht SKY, 1981

A lesser-known gem showing the Cluster fondness for caramelised melodic touches,

but placing them in an even more elegant zone. Songs like the title track play out with great warmth and teary-eyed radiance.

8/10

JON DALE



DEL SHANNON Home & Away NOW SOUNDS/CHERRY RED

'60s pop idol's long-shelved baroque masterpiece

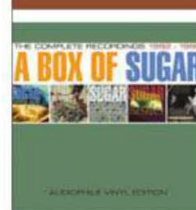
Perhaps merely an innocent bystander to

8/10

Loog Oldham's Phil Spector predilections, Del Shannon was at a crossroads in early 1967, but ready to prove ongoing relevance. Old-time stars were fast becoming anachronistic in this post-Beatles/almost-psychedelic window. Oldham would soon found Immediate and manage the Small Faces, but not before guiding Shannon through this would-be classic, one that label Liberty didn't even see fit to release (it's since leaked out in dribs and drabs). With its schizophrenic mix of romantic euphoria and paranoia, plus an over-the-top mix of strings, banjo, harpsichord, 12-string guitars, French horns and dazzling vocal arrangements, *Home & Away* is Shannon's tour de force, think Jan & Dean's *Carnival Of Sound* and *Pet Sounds*. Revolving around affairs of the heart, its covers and originals range from reflective rhythm-and-pop ("My Love Has Gone") to sour harangues ("He Cheated"), all armed with über-melodic hooks. At heart lie its two best songs – "Led Along", whose bouncy prance belies its insecurities, and "Life Is But Nothing", a dark confessional that Shannon inhabits with a typically devastating, broken-hearted vocal.

EXTRAS: Four mono singles cuts, including a 6/10 live "Runaway '67", along with unseen photos and extensive sleeve notes.

LUKE TORN



SUGAR A Box Of Sugar EDSEL

Lavish vinyl set from Bob Mould's power trio Sugar will probably never be as fondly remembered as Bob Mould's first band, Minneapolis hardcore trio

8/10

Hüsker Dü, but the three records they made between 1992 and 1994 might well constitute the peak of Mould's songwriting career. Hüsker Dü was troubled, dark and genre-expanding. But Sugar, primarily, was about melodies, and Mould sure can write them. Released to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Sugar's debut album (and *NME*'s 1992 Album Of The Year) *Copper Blue*, this box is out to please the completists, collecting all the group's studio albums on vinyl with a wealth of extras. *Copper Blue* still gleams the brightest, blending Mould's breezy, increasingly Beatles-inflected melodies with emotionally coruscating lyrics ("The Slim" deals with a friend's death from AIDS) and proving Mould wasn't too proud to crib an idea or two from his followers (the Pixies-ish "A Good Idea"). Underrated, though, is the follow-up *Beaster*. Featuring material from the *Copper* sessions, it still feels of a piece, dark and heavy with religious imagery. Patchy 1994 swansong *File Under: Easy Listening* completes the set.

EXTRAS: Debut single on seven-inch; double 9/10 gatefold vinyl of *Besides*, collecting B-sides and 1992 radio session; double gatefold vinyl of *The Joke Is Always On Us, Sometimes* live album; 20-page booklet collecting photos, memorabilia and interviews.

LOUIS PATTISON

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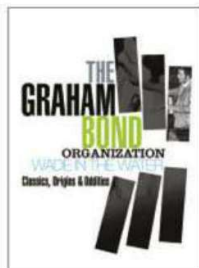
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The Specialist

The Graham Bond Organisation



Out of time: (l-r) Graham Bond, Dick Heckstall-Smith, Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker



THE GRAHAM BOND ORGANIZATION

Wade In The Water: Classics, Origins & Oddities

REPERTOIRE

A wizard, a true star

Graham Bond is usually remembered for his magickal interests and his untimely death, an apparent suicide in 1974. The band he founded, the formidable Graham Bond Organization – whose output between 1963 and 1967 is celebrated here – is better known for Bond's more illustrious sidemen, notably Ginger Baker and Jack Bruce. A year after the pair left to form Cream in summer 1966, replacement drummer Jon Hiseman and trusty tenor saxman Dick Heckstall-Smith also quit, joining rival

bandleader John Mayall before themselves founding Colosseum.

Yet it's the GBO's electrifying recordings that should be remembered, a thrilling, unique brand of British R'n'B, driven by Bond's supercharged Hammond organ. In 1961 Bond was well established as an alto sax player (with Don Rendell), before he switched allegiance from Charlie Parker to Ray Charles. Briefly joining Alexis Korner, Bond poached Bruce and Baker from Blues Incorporated to create the first GBO in 1963, adding budding guitarist John McLaughlin. McLaughlin's rapid departure and Heckstall-Smith's arrival established the definitive GBO lineup adopting a daring jazz rock approach that was truly liberating.

Bond's intense, wholehearted playing influenced Brian Auger, Zoot Money, Jon Lord and Keith Emerson, among many. Bond was an innovator, playing the Hammond through a Leslie cabinet (pre-Mike Ratledge/Soft Machine) and pioneering the Mellotron on record, road-testing the cumbersome instrument long before it became a fashionable prog accessory. An intimidating, unruly looking bunch, the GBO had no obvious frontman or focal guitarist. Commercial success eluded them, to the point of bafflingly covering Debbie Reynolds' "Tammy", but the GBO did record the two exceptional albums *The Sound Of '65* and *There's A Bond Between Us*.

These underpin this collection, elevated by such delights as Duffy Power's rousing Parlophone singles (with the GBO) and unheard sessions with Jamaican guitarist Ernest Ranglin. There's little from the final trio with Heckstall-Smith and Hiseman but that's a contractual quibble (interested parties should check out *Solid Bond*). Deserted again by musicians he had nurtured, suffering depression and battling drug abuse, Bond uprooted to America for a couple of years, returning to oversee various ungainly bands (Holy Magick, Incantation, Magus) that drew on a preoccupation with the occult.

Bond re-united with Ginger Baker in the unwieldy Air Force, worked with Pete Brown (who provides this boxset's affectionate notes) and recorded two LPs that clumsily tried to marry chants and incantations with free jazz. At his best, though, powering the original GBO, Bond was a true catalyst for future ideas, still sounding dazzlingly fresh and modern today.

MICK HOUGHTON

8/10



SWAMP DOGG
Total Destruction To Your Mind/Rat On!
(reissues, 1970/71)
ALIVE NATURALSOUND

8/10

First reissues for two astonishing albums

By the time he recorded Swamp Dogg's 1970 debut Jerry Williams Jr had already had a colourful career. Debuting as a piano-playing prodigy in 1954 the series of singles that comprised his "chitlin circuit"-based solo career was supplemented by writing hits for Lulu and



7/10

Gene Pitney, among others. Now combining Solomon Burke showmanship with Joe Tex's choleric testifying, *Destruction* made it clear – Dogg was a revolutionary creation, responding to the freedom of black music's new era. Spicing the deep soul stew with dollops of Frank Zappa absurdism, the comic-cut auteur was cold-shouldered by radio, and his observations on US race relations ("Redneck") earned him a place on Nixon's enemies list. Returning riding a rodent on the front of sequel *Rat On!* (once voted worst cover of all time), his anti-war agenda stood strong on "Remember I Said Tomorrow". Outraging Irving Berlin's estate with his "God Bless America", Williams continued – as to this day – to be a maverick on his own outspoken and heartlifting course.

EXTRAS: None.

GAVIN MARTIN



TOY LOVE

Toy Love
CAPTURED TRACKS/
FLYING NUN

A founding document of the New Zealand underground, revisited

7/10

The first fruits of an international pact between

recently rejuvenated legendary New Zealand label Flying Nun, and pretenders to the throne in the US, Captured Tracks, *Toy Love* resurrects the early singles, demos and associated junk from the titular group, one of the formative acts for the NZ underground. Including in their membership future Tall Dwarfs (Chris Knox and Alec Bathgate) and Bats (Paul Kean), Toy Love have always felt a little bit 'guilt by association' – while these are great pop-punk tracks, they do seem to pale once you're immersed in the wild, rambunctious energy of the scene they helped foster. (And if anything, it was really The Clean's VU-Dylan-Modern Lovers nexus that really lit the touch paper.) But that's not to belittle the 29 songs compiled here, which feed, with great intelligence, '60s garage enthusiasm through the nascent punk explosion, leavened by a particularly Kiwi sense of humour. Vocalist Chris Knox hasn't quite found his own voice, singing with a proto-Anglo sneer, but this helps gift these songs some of their wayward charm. And the demos are appealingly primitivist, a roughshod burn through "Pull Down The Shades", the anthem of Toy Love's predecessor group The Enemy, the flammable highlight.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Studio One Ironsides

SOUL JAZZ

Heavyweight collection of faves and rarities from JA's leading label

8/10

"Ironsides" was one of the lesser labels under which the productions of the late Clement 'Coxsone' Dodd were released, though the 18 tracks here were mostly issued under Dodd's customary banners of Studio One and Coxsone. It's a powerful selection that runs from Don Drummond's 1963 "Nanny Corner", a typical blast from the great ska trombonist, to Johnny Osbourne's 1979 "Jealousy, Heartache And Pain". As with all great labels a mystique clings to Studio One's distinctive sound, in which thunderous basslines compete with shrill guitar and organs, woozy brass parts and muffled drums. The 'middle' between bass and treble is sparse, leaving vocals naked. The non-initiated are likely to be underwhelmed (these are records made for sound systems) but The Gladiators' crepuscular "Bongo Red" (1971), The Paragons' unsettling "Danger In Your Eyes" (1974) or Alton Ellis' soulful take on Tyrone Davis' "Can I Change My Mind" (1970) are the lifeblood of reggae tradition. Add to that the vocal antics of DJs such as Lone Ranger and Dennis Alcapone and classy singers like Cornel Campbell and Marcia Griffiths and you have one hell of a compilation, even without the somewhat overrated rarities.

EXTRAS: None.
NEIL SPENCER



VARIOUS ARTISTS

She's So Fine: The Rise Of The Girl Groups

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Oh yes, it's ladies' night, and the feeling's right

8/10

The most common

definition of the girl group sound is arguably the early '60s wave of Shangri-Las, Chiffons and various permutations in the Phil Spector stable, but the form's roots stretch back a further 20 years, to the vocal accompanists of wartime big bands. *She's So Fine* doesn't begin that early, but its 95 chronologically sequenced tracks kick off in the mid-'50s with outfits like The McGuire Sisters ("Sincerely") still drawing on the big band past. As the decade progresses, the influence of R'n'B increases, Etta James featuring both as a solo act and leader of The Peaches, and stories of teenage heartbreak become a familiar theme (The Poni-Tails' "Born Too Late", The Shirelles' "I Met Him On A Sunday"). It's these songs that paved the way for the perceived golden era of 1960-'63, which fills Discs Two and Three. Girl groups served to articulate the emotions of their lovelorn listeners, who could immediately identify with the concerns of The Marvelettes' "Please Mr Postman" or The Crystals' "Uptown". Amid all the soul-searching and swooning over the wrong kind of boy, there's space aplenty for throwaway tracks about dance crazes, so prepare to cut a rug to the mashed potato, the wah-watusi and the waddle-waddle.

EXTRAS: None.
TERRY STAUNTON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Deutsche Elektronische Musik 2: Experimental German Rock And Electronic Music 1972-83

SOUL JAZZ

8/10

Krautrock or prog? The choice is yours

The genus of "Krautrock" suggests Teutonic aesthetes making hypnotic proto-punk and futuristic synth-pop while dodging Baader-Meinhof bombs. This 2CD compilation – like 2010's first volume – suggests that Krautrock is actually a hipster-friendly rebranding of what is, effectively, progressive rock from West Germany. In keeping with the title's promise of "Elektronische" there is plenty of space-age electronica (the Radiophonic Workshop sounds of Michael Hoenig and Pyrolator, the proto-techno of Asmus Tietchens); and there are also blasts of Afro-tinged funk (Can's "Halleluwah", Niagara's trance-like "Gibli"); while the album ends with Faust's 12-minute opus "Krautrock". But there's also pastoral jazz-rock (Gila and Bröselmaschine sometimes recall Brit-jazzers like Neil Ardley) and amusingly ponderous prog (Popol Vuh and Electric Sandwich). A revelation comes in the form of AR & Machines, the alias of '60s boy-band idol Achim Reichel. On the evidence of the two tracks here, Reichel's music is the sound of Status Quo ingesting several tabs of acid and mutating into medieval troubadours. In a good way.

EXTRAS: None.
JOHN LEWIS



THE WHO

Live At The Isle Of Wight Festival 1970

SALVO

First ever CD/DVD combo of legendary '70s show

9/10

A proliferation of live documents suggest that The Who peaked as a

touring band in 1970. This set from the Isle Of Wight knees-up, following on from *Live At Leeds* and the recently issued *Live At Hull*, freezes them in their quintessential pose: furiously windmilling guitarist, bare-chested singer with shaggy curls, manic drummer and implacable bassist in skeleton suit. The music itself is immense. Not least a seismic rendition of Mose Allison's "Young Man Blues" that arguably edges out the ...*Leeds* version for sheer thrills. Even the new stuff, namely 'Lifehouse'-intended tunes like "Water" and "I Don't Even Know Myself", the latter with a curiously countrified middle-eight, sound gloriously intact rather than mere works-in-progress. The entire run at *Tommy* is here too, while perhaps the greatest moment is "My Generation", an explosive electrified wigout as epic as it is fierce. This audio-visual treat may be the umpteenth repackaging of The Who at IOW, but it could well prove the definitive one.

EXTRAS: "Substitute" and "Naked Eye", omitted from the original film, finally make it to DVD (though both fetched up on 2009's Blu-ray edition). The former is oddly muted; the latter an extended tour-de-force that shows the dizzying sweep of the band at full pelt.

ROB HUGHES

COMING NEXT MONTH...



Don't believe what you've read: white men can sing the dubstep goth blues! Certainly, that's what you'll think if you've spent a while with the new **Depeche**

Mode album, *Delta Machine*. A record filled with an examination of the band's many guises from zeitgeist-aware elder statesmen to cathartic balladeers and from electronic songmeisters to bluesy twangers, it's an interesting if at times exhaustingly emotional kind of ride.

No stranger to the blues, **Eric Burdon** returns with a set that pays homage to his roots with his new one, *Til The River Runs Dry*. Ups, downs, Burdon's seen them all but somehow come through it with his magnificent voice intact, and so it's fitting that his new one hopes to bear testament to the enduring power of the human spirit. That spirit sounds...pretty mellow, actually.

Out the back, next to the lawnmower, the Archive section isn't without its charms next month, either: *Last Splash* by **The Breeders**, featuring the defining moment for Kim and Kelley Deal's band, "Cannonball". There's the classic *Inspiration Information* by **Shuggie Otis**, and last but not least the massive *Skiffle* boxset from the Bear Family label. Set up your tea chest bass, and get your twang on. See you there.

JOHN ROBINSON

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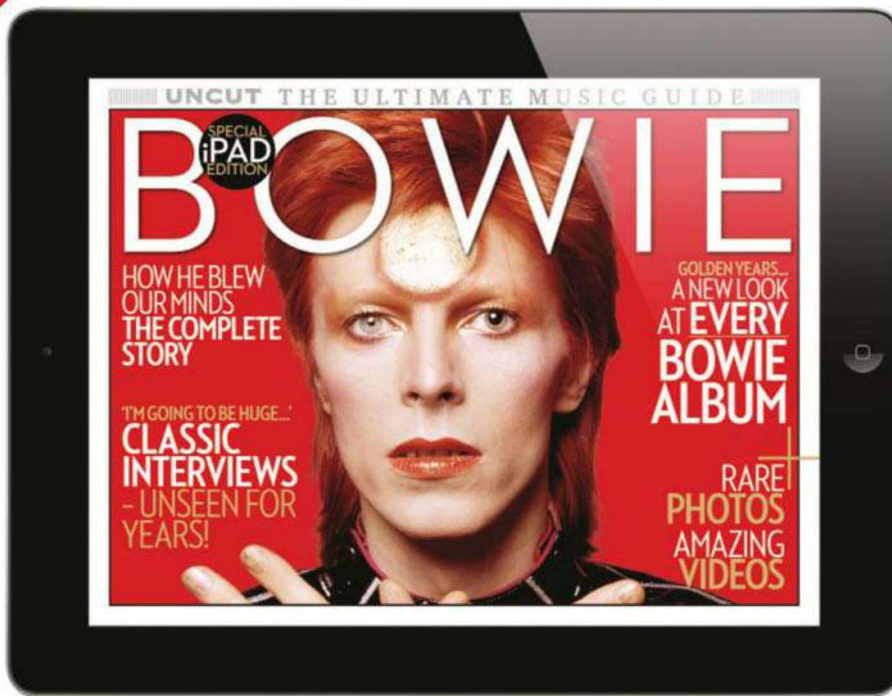
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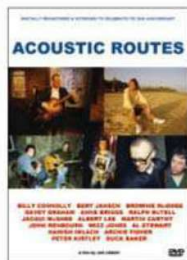
Blues summit: Jansch with one of his heroes Brownie McGhee

BERT JANSCH

Acoustic Routes

ABSOLUTE DISTRIBUTION

Understated BBC overview reissued. *By John Robinson*



8/10

EVEN IN A career that unfairly afforded him more time in the shadows than the spotlight, it would be hard to conceive of a time at which interest in Bert Jansch was lower than in 1992. Getting on for two decades since his last flurry of top-quality work for Charisma, and still a few years shy of his “rediscovery” by a younger

generation of guitarists, it was then that the BBC broadcast an hour-long film called *Acoustic Routes*, focused, pretty much exclusively, on him.

As this reissued, feature-length edition of the film unshowily demonstrates, fashions change, but Bert Jansch did not. An older cousin of BBC4’s *Folk Britannia*, *Acoustic Routes* gives an impressionistic overview of the singer/guitarists of the British folk revival like Davy Graham, Wizz Jones, Ralph McTell, and John Renbourn, touching in with performances from all of them, generally in duo with Bert. All illustrate the same fundamental point: Jansch’s magnificent chops came packaged with a huge compositional talent, neither of these diminished by years of epic boozing or his career vicissitudes.

One thing Bert was not, however, was a talker. Nor do many of his contemporaries seem keen to grasp the nettle and elucidate just what it is that made Bert

Jansch a cut above. Happily, the film devises an excellent solution to this: Billy Connolly. Connolly plays and knows a lot about folk music and its musicians, and as a near-contemporary avoids any kind of awkwardness with the subjects. As such, he becomes a kind of de facto narrator of a film that might otherwise simply feature some not especially talkative people playing the guitar extremely well.

He quickly gets to the point. Brandishing a copy of the “blue album”, the 1965 debut, *Bert Jansch*, Connolly enthuses about how this wasn’t just a great album, it was an essential hip artefact. At the time it came out, you would, he says, position it at the front of your stack of albums. You would do your best to emulate the handsome, glowering presence on the front of the album, noting the Spartan, bare-boards setting of the cover image. “Back then,” he concludes warmly, “Glasgow was filled with people with no furniture in their houses, trying to play ‘Strolling Down The Highway’...”

The furniture thing becomes something that Connolly riffs on throughout – noting of the cover of *Bert And John*, Jansch’s collaboration with John Renbourn, he says Bert is now “so wealthy he has loads of furniture...” Of course, wealthy is another thing that Bert never was, and here we see 1992 Jansch rehearsing some new music with Renbourn in the kitchen of an unprepossessing Hammersmith flat. These are two men without very much in the way of material reward for their skills, still operating at a terrifically high level, Bert continuing to

generate music that is immediately empathetic, the pair of them playing with staggering levels of feeling and technical grace.

Acoustic Routes doesn’t go in for voice-overed linear biography at all, and instead tells its tale in just this kind of understated fashion. Along its meandering path, the film duly alludes to the existence of the Jansch/Renbourn jazz/folk supergroup The Pentangle, evinced by a duet with Jacqui McShee (extraordinary tie-dye, madam), but doesn’t tell you an awful lot about what that might have been like. It finds Bert (excitingly, in the company of Anne Briggs) returning to the sight of Edinburgh’s Howff club and playing a fantastic version of “Black Waterside”, and then giving a barbed but still vague answer to the question of how he feels about Jimmy Page essentially nicking that arrangement and crediting himself for it. There’s a US segment which yields a great performance of “Heartbreak Hotel” with Albert Lee and a moving if uneventful blues summit with Brownie McGhee, one of Bert’s heroes.

The offhand tone of the thing is probably best captured in a London sequence where Bert talks about Les Cousins, the London folk scene and Bob Dylan’s fleeting appearance on it in 1963. It catches up with Wizz Jones, Al Stewart and Bert – three guys in the ironed jeans and white tennis shoes stage of their lives. They have a chat and a bit of a play with Martin Carthy, and walk the Soho streets they knew as young men. They talk Paul Simon and Jackson C Frank. “I took Bob Dylan in there,” Bert then tells Wizz, indicating a pub function room. “Did he play?” asks Wizz. “Nah,” says Bert, “he was too stoned...” The pair then drop into a guitar shop to buy some strings.

For a lesser musician, in a more on-message film, this might all have been a rather bigger deal. Not for Bert Jansch: a man whose head wasn’t easily turned, and someone who focused on what he needed to do, and then simply went about getting it done.

EXTRAS: To coincide with the DVD release, 15 previously unreleased tracks from the film will be released on CD and vinyl, and for digital download.

Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Terri Hooley's tale of punk and the Troubles is told, Nicole Kidman goes Gothic, we meet an adorable robot, and Snoop Dogg gets serious (and seriously stoned)

S**TOKER** Hollywood has never quite known what to do with Park Chan-wook. On the face of it, a director of extremely violent genre films like *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* and *Oldboy*, dig a little deeper however, and Park's output isn't that easy to qualify. His films are violent, yes, and often in the most grisly sense possible, but they are also astonishing to watch – beautifully styled and composed – and undercut with a rich sense of the absurd.

Recent attempts to remake 2003's *Oldboy*, arguably his most famous film, have seen off a couple of directors (including Steven Spielberg) and leading men from Christian Bale to Will Smith. Spike Lee's version, starring Josh Brolin, is due later this year. In the meantime, *Stoker* is the Korean filmmaker's English-language debut. Though the violence of Park's earlier films is dialled down – though fans of “the hammer scene” in *Oldboy* will enjoy some business here involving a pencil – a sense of high camp prevails. When India's father Richard dies in a car accident, she is surprised when Charlie, an uncle she never knew existed, turns up for the funeral. “This is Richard's brother,” India is told. “He's come back.” From where – and why – are the film's great mysteries, playfully teased out by Park and the screenwriter – *Prison Break* actor Wentworth Miller. The vibe here is a ripe mix of Gothic fairy tale, Almodóvar camp and Hitchcock melodrama. Many familiar genre tropes are in evidence – there's a sprawling house, a mysterious nanny and a distant mother, all filtered through India's personal and sexual awakening. Matthew Goode's Charlie is a handsome, charming presence – but he's impossible to read. He smiles easily, but he has dark, shark-like eyes that give nothing away. And what exactly does he want with his dead brother's belt? As Evelyn, Nicole Kidman revisits the role of Grace from *The Others* – another neurotic mother rattling round a rambling old house. Mia Wasikowska, meanwhile, leads the film as India – her dark hair and pale skin bringing to mind one of those creepy ghost girls you get skulking round basements in Japanese horror films. The play between the three leads is terrific – a bit bonkers, quite creepy, often over-the-top. Brilliantly, this is the only house still standing where the freezer sits in the furthest corner of an extremely badly lit basement.



➤ **Good Vibrations** There already exists a hefty body of work documenting the adventures of record label bosses from the punk era and beyond – but the accomplishments of Terri Hooley have so far been largely unrecorded. Hooley, a Belfast native, is a man with impressive rock credentials: he berated Bob Dylan for not withholding his taxes in protest at the Vietnam war (Dylan told him to “fuck off”), and on a visit to London found himself in a fight with John Lennon: “There was some talk of money being sent to the IRA and I chinned him. He hit me back,” Hooley said. In the mid-'70s, Hooley opened a record shop, Good Vibrations, on Belfast's Great Victoria Street and launched a sister label in 1978. While it's fair to say that Hooley's greatest musical success is Good Vibrations' fourth single – “Teenage Kicks” by The Undertones – his broader achievements are perhaps harder to calculate. Both shop and label offered a valuable creative outlet for the city's teenagers during the worst of the Troubles, with Hooley's enthusiastic commitment to Northern Ireland's punk scene providing a powerful counter-argument to joining the paramilitaries. It's this depiction of Belfast in the 1970s – commendably understated, but resonant throughout – that adds an extra level to Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn's film. For much

of the time, Hooley's tale is, while enjoyably ramshackle, a familiar one of skanky pubs, transit vans, snooty major label executives and poorly attended gigs. As befitting a label boss operating in the independent sector during the late '70s, Hooley combines shameless self-promotion and committed idealism with woeful business acumen. A benefit gig is intended to raise funds for the shop and label, but Hooley's generously proportioned guestlist ensures it ends up making a loss. As Hooley, Richard Dormer is a lively, gangly mass of teeth and relentless optimism, dedicated to bringing “one love to the people of Belfast”.

➤ **Reincarnated** “I'm at a point in my career now when I have to say something,” Snoop Dogg explains to Bunny Wailer, as the two men stoke up some fruity Californian weed. *Reincarnated* finds Snoop at a transitional period in his life. He has just turned 40, but arguably of greater impact is the recent death of his school friend and collaborator Nate Dogg. In an introspective frame of mind, Snoop sees parallels between himself and Bob Marley – “not just the weed, [but] the struggle, the love, the peace, the power” – and heads to JA to get a “real thorough understanding of reggae, Rastafari and the whole lifestyle”, while also recording an album at one of the island's high-end residential studio complexes.

Reviewed this month...



STOKER
Director Park Chan-wook
Starring Mia Wasikowska, Matthew Goode
Opens March 1
Certificate 18
8/10



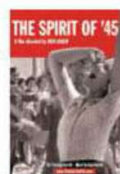
GOOD VIBRATIONS
Directors Lisa Barros D'Sa, Glenn Leyburn
Starring Richard Dormer
Opens March 29
Certificate 15
7/10



REINCARNATED
Director Andy Capper
Starring Snoop Dogg, Bunny Wailer
Opens March 22
Certificate 18
8/10



ROBOT AND FRANK
Director Jake Schreier
Starring Frank Langella, Susan Sarandon
Opens March 8
Certificate 12A
7/10



THE SPIRIT OF '45
Director Ken Loach
Starring Tony Benn
Opens March 15
Certificate U
8/10



Snoop Dogg takes a trip in the Blue Mountains

Directed by former *NME* staffer Andy Capper, *Reincarnated* is an intimate film about Snoop's personal journey to becoming Snoop Lion – an epithet bestowed upon him by Bunny Wailer, a man for whom weed is apparently best smoked through a device resembling a hollowed-out carrot. Throughout the film, Snoop finds resonances with his own life. A visit to Kingston's beleaguered Tivoli Gardens neighbourhood prompts memories of gangbanging on the eastside of Long Beach – "21st Street block East Side LBC!" Elsewhere, a nocturnal trip to Trenchtown with Damian Marley sets Snoop musing on the parallels between Marley Snr, Wailer and Peter Tosh and his own friendship with Nate Dogg and Warren G. But this isn't just a film about one man's path to spiritual fulfilment and the recording of an album. It is also a film where some men get deeply stoned – often with hilarious consequences. A journey to a weed farm deep in the Blue Mountains with some toothless dudes who look like pirates provides some great stoner comedy – Daz Dillinger rolling around on the floor, too stoned to get up, is priceless. The film is particularly strong on context, with Capper getting good interviews with Snoop, commendably honest about his time as a gangbanger, his relationship with Death Row boss Suge Knight, the death of Tupac Shakur and his own criminal activities. "I'm wise, or a bit wiser," says Snoop, with a smile.

➤ **Robot And Frank** Unusually for a pair of first-time indie filmmakers, writer Christopher Ford and director Jake Schreier have made a film

that is less concerned with the problems facing their own generation and instead addresses issues of ageing, dementia and family responsibilities. Although, there is a robot involved. We are in the "near future". Frank – played by Frank Langella in a rare but welcome lead role – is living out his autumn years in pretty, upstate New York. A retired cat-burglar with a lengthy prison record, he has a fractious relationship with his two children, hippie-dippy Madison (Liv Tyler) and yuppie attorney Hunter (James Marsden). Frank suffers from "episodes of disorientation". Fearing for his father's condition, Hunter buys Frank a talking robot – like Asimo – who will cook, clean and generally look after Frank. At first scornful of Robot – "He's going to murder me in my sleep!" – Frank soon realises the little chap can help him on his latest escapade.

Pitched somewhere between sci-fi movie, odd couple comedy and old-school character movie, *Robot And Frank* has many gifts – not least Langella himself, whose gentle authority carries the film. His would-be courtship with local librarian Susan Sarandon is warmly played. But critically, he convincingly handles the film's central relationship between Frank and the robot (voiced by Peter Sarsgaard). *Robot* sidekicks in film – *R2D2*, *Twiki*, *Teddy in AI* – are, basically, annoying. But it says much about Langella's skill at his craft that he can even make us feel well disposed towards this little fella.

➤ **The Spirit Of '45** Ken Loach's documentary opens, as is traditional when discussing the end of the Second World War, with grainy newsreel footage of cheering crowds in Trafalgar Square and families reunited as servicemen disembark from trains, planes and troop ships, kitbags slung over their shoulders. Loach's film, however, is less concerned with the post-war celebrations and instead sets out to document the progressive socialist ideals of the post-war years as pioneered by Clement Attlee's 1945-'51 Labour government. Through a mix of archive film and contemporary interviews with retired miners, nurses, railwaymen, steelworkers and union officials – alongside a handful of historians and economists – Loach delivers a film that persuasively casts the workers as very much the heroes of the hour alongside forward-thinkers like Attlee, Aneurin Bevan and Herbert Morrison. Looping back to show the privations of the '30s – "where everything was run by rich people for rich people" – the film then moves through the Attlee government's far-reaching nationalisation programme and the creation of the NHS: "a list of objectives you might have in wartime,"

comments Tony Benn. Critically, at a time when the NHS is under threat, *The Spirit Of '45* reminds us of how revolutionary Bevan's plan for free, universal healthcare was – "people got spectacles for the first time in their lives," says one former doctor. For

its final act, the film jumps to 1979 and the election of Margaret Thatcher. The closure of the country's indigenous industries and the break-up of the public sector under successive Tory administrations, Loach suggests, has done much to hasten England's decline. Far from polemicising, though, Loach goes about his business quietly, foregrounding the remarkable stories of these men and women who, essentially, helped build modern Britain.

The creepy, bonkers Stoker is a ripe mix of Gothic fairy tale, Almodóvar camp and Hitchcock melodrama

Also out...

THE BAY

OPENS MARCH 1

Found footage eco-horror, from Barry Levinson, with something nasty in the water playing havoc with the residents of a small coastal town.

BROKEN CITY

OPENS MARCH 1

Solo directorial outing for Allen Hughes, who casts Mark Wahlberg as a private eye who discovers some serious shit on dodgy New York mayor, Russell Crowe.

CAESAR MUST DIE

OPENS MARCH 1

A production of *Julius Caesar* is mounted in an Italian maximum-security prison. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani direct.

OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL

OPENS MARCH 8

Prequel, basically, to the MGM classic; Sam Raimi directs James Franco as a smalltime circus magician who is transported over the rainbow.



PARKER

OPENS MARCH 8

Jason Statham gets to live out his Lee Marvin fantasies playing Parker, Donald E Westlake's anti-hero first seen in *Point Blank*.

SIDE EFFECTS

OPENS MARCH 8

Latest from Steven Soderbergh: thriller with Rooney Mara having problems with some prescription drugs.

SHELL

OPENS MARCH 15

Strong debut from Scott Graham. A father and daughter live in a rundown petrol station in a remote part of the Scottish Highlands.

WELCOME TO THE PUNCH

OPENS MARCH 15

James McAvoy – who does stuff like this now – faces off against Mark Strong in Brit crime flick. Men of a certain stripe – Peter Mullan, Johnny Harris – co-star.

JOHN DIES AT THE END

OPENS MARCH 22

American indie comedy: a drug sends users across dimensions. Bad news. Clancy Brown – the Kurgan from *Highlander* – co-stars. Good news!

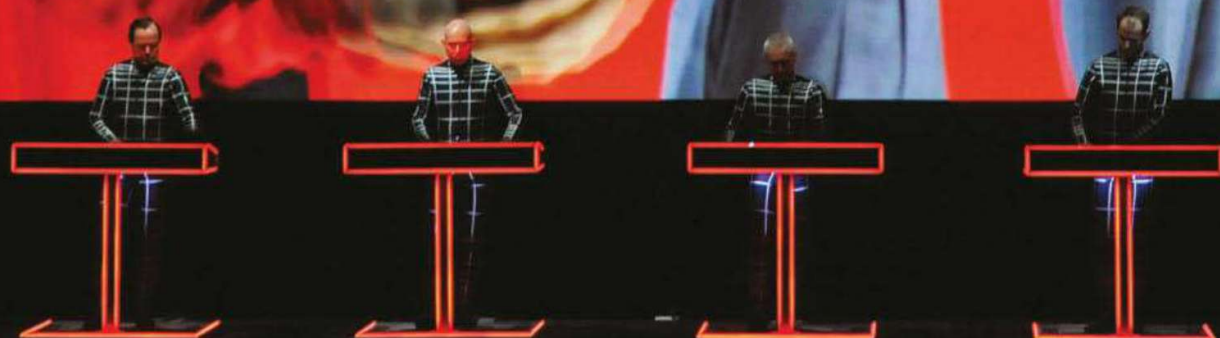
TRANCE

OPENS MARCH 27

Post-Olympics, Danny Boyle's art heist thriller finds James McAvoy and Vincent Cassel after a lost painting.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FRENCH



SETLIST

- 1 Trans-Europe Express/
Metal On Metal/Abzug
- 2 Franz Schubert
- 3 Endless Endless
- 4 Europe Endless
- 5 The Hall Of Mirrors
- 6 Showroom Dummies
- 7 Autobahn
- 8 Geiger Counter
- 9 Radioactivity
- 10 The Robots
- 11 Spacelab
- 12 The Model
- 13 Neon Lights
- 14 The Man-Machine
- 15 Numbers
- 16 Computer World
- 17 Computer Love
- 18 It's More Fun To Compute
- 19 Home Computer
- 20 Tour De France 1983
- 21 Tour De France 2003
- 22 Planet Of Visions
- 23 Boing Boom Tschak
- 24 Techno Pop
- 25 Musique Non Stop

KRAFTWERK

TATE MODERN, LONDON, FEBRUARY 8, 2013

The man-machine reveals its genius – and its human side...

EVEN BY THE standards of a 19th Century Grand Tour, Kraftwerk's stately progress around the world's salons, museums and culturally repurposed temples of industry has become somewhat leisurely of late. Summer 2013 might see a return to the festival mainstream, but the past 12 months have found them focused on more elevated residencies, in New York's Museum Of Modern Art, the Kunstsammlung gallery in their hometown of Düsseldorf and, now, London's Tate Modern.

If one Kraftwerk song works as a mission statement for this campaign, it is 1977's "Europe Endless", a catalogue of "parks, hotels and palaces" and "elegance and decadence" which transforms a mundane touring band into refined cultural ambassadors. It captures the romance and mystique of upper-class travel before the wars, while simultaneously being an anthem

of pan-European idealism: an idealism that now, like so many of Kraftwerk's more optimistic visions of the future, feels tinged with melancholy and unfulfilled promise.

"Europe Endless" is the opener of *Trans-Europe Express*, notionally the album being showcased at tonight's show. In the unlikely event you missed the media frenzy (as the gigs coincide with the return of My Bloody Valentine, a certain breed of music journalist have had their best week in years), Kraftwerk are fastidiously working through their back catalogue, one album at each show, over eight nights. Their first three albums, Krautrock puritans will note, have long been disowned, or at least discreetly ignored.

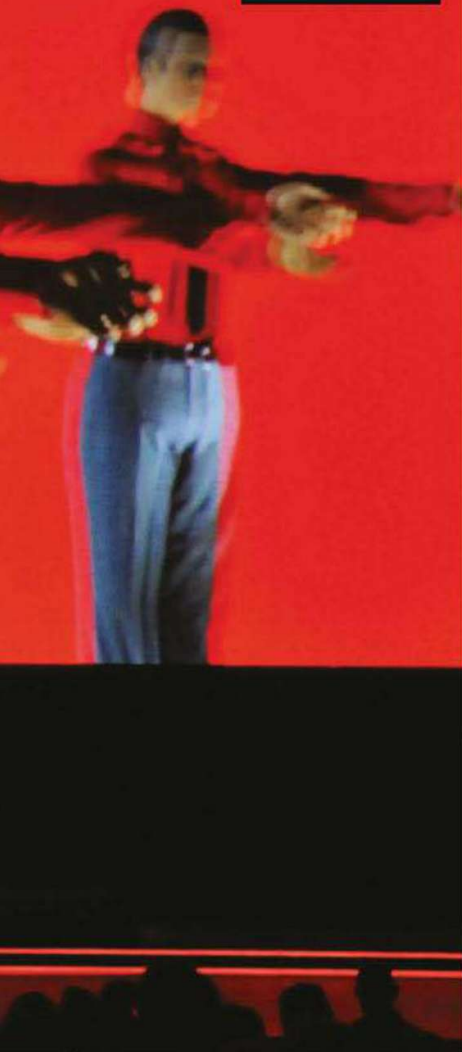
There are signs, though, that Ralf Hütter, Kraftwerk's enduring father figure, is keen to subvert the formula, a little. For a man whose reputation has been built on rigorous structures, on making creative whims at least appear

superseded by mechanical functionality, the decision to begin with the second half of *Trans-Europe Express* feels mildly shocking. More surprisingly still, when "Europe Endless" is eventually performed, it is blighted by an uncharacteristic human frailty, as Hütter's voice slips out of sync with the programmed harmonies.

Later, in the 90-minute hits selection which follows *Trans-Europe Express*, Hütter and his three fellow operators (l-r: Henning Schmitz, Fritz Hilpert and new boy Falk Grieffenhagen) will betray a preference for 1978's *The Man-Machine* and 1981's *Computer World* by playing virtually all of those LPs. First, though, there is one rare treat from *TEE*: the stark tones of "The Hall Of Mirrors", reverberating from every angle of the Turbine Hall, as the pristine Surround Sound installation shows its worth.

One of the eerier songs in Kraftwerk's catalogue, "The Hall Of Mirrors" marks a rare moment where sound design,

Showroom dummies:
model performers
Kraftwerk at Tate Modern



including a harpsichord-like new counter-melody, is left to fend for itself without the assistance of the 3D visual extravaganza. Perhaps the lyrics – “*He fell in love with the image of himself/And suddenly the picture was distorted*” – would make any interpretation too crass? Grieffenhagen, the band’s video technician, merely practises a faint smirk, at once imperious and mischievous, that he seems to have inherited from Florian Schneider. Kraftwerk’s illustrious co-founder, Schneider hung up his bodysuit in 2008.

Soon enough, Grieffenhagen is back at what just about constitutes work. A relatively cursory reading of *Trans-Europe Express* takes less than half an hour, and the 3D spectacle is under way again with a magnificent “Autobahn”. If “Europe Endless” revealed an unexpected fallibility to the man-machine, the second section of “Autobahn” feels like Kraftwerk are improvising, after a fashion. Henning Schmitz appears to rather forcefully tamper with the mix – there is visible exertion, involving what are plausibly knobs and faders – to create something more spontaneous and visceral than the myth of Kraftwerk would suggest.



It is mainly unclear, of course, what the quartet do for most of the two-hour show. The introduction to “Tour De France 1983” sees them theatrically joining in on their consoles one at a time, as if manually constructing the fanfare, while “Musique Non Stop” concludes with each performing a solo, of sorts, before exiting with a bow. But these flourishes feel like a quaint and sweet pantomime of musical orthodoxy, rather than evidence of a ‘live’ performance that rock fans fixated on authenticity might understand. The thing is, while trying to unpick Kraftwerk’s secrets might be diverting, a need for verifiable, tactile proof of musicianship is totally missing the point. Over 40 years, Kraftwerk’s genius and influence has taken many forms, but none so potent as the idea that synthesised music can carry just as much emotional heft as one earnest guy with an acoustic guitar. That poignancy illuminates the likes of “Neon Lights” and “Radioactivity”, the latter partially translated into Japanese to better reflect the horrors of Fukushima. As the litany of surveillance agencies in “Computer World” implies, Kraftwerk’s attitude to progress has always been more complex, more ambivalent, than their stereotype as *Tomorrow’s World* pin-up boys would suggest.

Kraftwerk’s astounding musical prescience also comes to the fore on the *Computer World* material: “Computer Love” and, especially, “Numbers” sound more than ever like critical precursors of techno, not least because these versions have only needed marginal tweaks to update them. Again, though, it’s just as easy to hear a musical sensibility that stretches backwards as well as forwards, in the melodic grandeur that references European classical tradition as well as minimalist systems music.

Less than a thousand people are seeing Kraftwerk at each of these shows – so few that the chaos and disappointment which accompanied the tickets going on sale last December feels more comprehensible, if not excusable. The number also feels pretty surreal when one considers that the Irish indie band, Two Door Cinema Club, are playing to a crowd five times as large over in Brixton Academy on the same night that *Trans-Europe Express* is performed.

As a consequence, Kraftwerk’s multimedia fantasia is both monumental and intimate. When the audience gasps at a 3D satellite, looming out of the backdrop during “Spacelab”, they can also see the fleeting and satisfied smile that crosses Fritz Hilpert’s generally impassive face. They can watch Ralf Hütter strenuously throbbing right leg during “Planet Of Visions”, and consider that even the architect of this conceptual behemoth finds it hard to keep robotic poise in the face of such compelling dance music. And they can be awed by an opulent celebration of one of pop’s greatest bands, where it’s possible to see how the human automata work up close.

JOHN MULVEY

John Murry

THE BORDERLINE, LONDON, JANUARY 29, 2013

Americana’s toughest new star returns to London

THE LAST TIME John Murry played London in 2006, he was promoting an album he’d recently released with his songwriting partner at the time, Bob Frank. *World Without End* was a blood-soaked collection of newly written murder ballads – “a bunch of songs about killing people,” as he puts it at one point tonight, his gaunt appearance making it look like he’s actually just got out of prison after serving hard time for one of the more harrowing crimes described on the record.

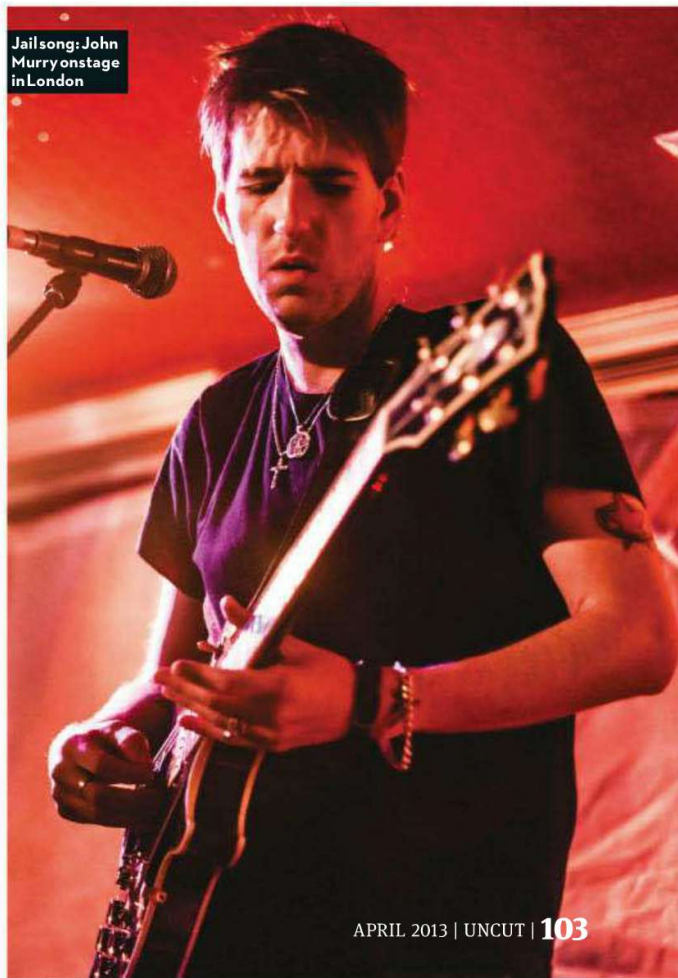
With his penitentiary pallor, institutional haircut and the scrawny frame of someone whose only recent exercise has been jailyard laps in the shadow of a machine gun tower and a high wall topped with razor wire, Murry looks in fact like someone you might see in a Jim Marshall shot of cheering cons at a Johnny Cash concert in Folsom or San Quentin. The people onstage with him, meanwhile, look less like bandmates than former cellmates, one tough crew.

After a long time lost to a near fatal heroin addiction, the now sober Murry last year released *The Graceless Age*, an album that was deeply textured, dense with layers of guitars, keyboards, synthesisers, strings, percussion, backing vocals and electronic distortion. The sound of it is too rich to replicate tonight, the band instead emphasising the raw emotions of its songs via a brutal dismantling of the record’s ornate textures. This works well for the most part, especially on the slow-fever burn of “Things We Lost In The Fire” and the ominous chug of “California”. The elegant ballads “Southern Sky” and “The Ballad Of The Pyjama Kid” are less well-served, however, by sounding like something off *Tonight’s The Night*.

There’s a startling cover of Sparklehorse’s “Maria’s Little Elbows”, though, and a draining version of the epic “Little Colored Balloons”, whose evocation of druggy squalor is as grim as Lou Reed’s “Street Hassle”. Dig those encores, too: raucous takes on The Rolling Stones’ “Cocksucker Blues” and Townes Van Zandt’s “Waitin’ Around To Die”.

ALLAN JONES

Jail song: John Murry onstage in London



Children's choir
not in shot...
Nick Cave rips
it up in London



NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE, LONDON, FEBRUARY 10, 2012

O Children! Old Nick recruits some little helpers to launch *Push The Sky Away*

AW, I'VE TOTALLY fuckin' forgotten how this goes." There isn't an ideal time for any performer to utter this admission, but the climactic furies of "Stagger Lee", summoning the murderous rage of a priapic drifter, are an especially incongruous backdrop. At this point, however, the crowd is inclined to forgive Nick Cave: it's the last song of a long show, two-hours-plus of colossal melodrama. Aided by prompts from those in the stalls who know the last verse better than he does, Cave gets his eternally extraordinary band to the end of "Stagger Lee", and the standing ovation they've earned.

Tonight's show is the first of four launch events – Paris, Berlin and Los Angeles will follow – for The Bad Seeds' 15th album, *Push The Sky Away*. Proceedings are fanfared by a short film on the making of the

album, which was recorded amid the rustic splendour of La Fabrique, a studio housed in a 19th-Century Provençal mansion. La Fabrique's racks of classical vinyl and antique books are a setting that suits The Bad Seeds, who now resemble an amiable mob of gangsters turned professors. Cave, as ever, is gruffly insightful: "We don't really know what we want," he says, "but we know what we don't want – those known entities in songwriting, which we're desperately trying to get away from."

On that score, and many others, *Push The Sky Away* may be considered a mission accomplished. The first Bad Seeds album since the departure of founding mainstay Mick Harvey is, inevitably, a strange one – it's often gentle, occasionally whimsical (Cave's definitively Australian deadpan has always been an underrated component of his

work). The first half of tonight's show consists of *Push The Sky Away* in its entirety, in order. "It has kind of got a narrative... surge," explains Cave. The Bad Seeds are less restrained onstage than on the surprisingly decorous record, unleashing spectacular hell on "Jubilee Street" and the "annoyingly long" (Cave's words) "Higgs Boson Blues".

The Bad Seeds touring *Push The Sky Away* differ slightly from the personnel that made the album. Regular drummer Thomas Wydler is ill: his seat will be warmed by returning prodigal Barry Adamson, who played bass on the first four Bad Seeds albums. Continuing as Mick Harvey's replacement on guitar is Ed Kuepper, formerly of The Saints and Laughing Clowns. Behind them tonight are two female backing vocalists, a string quintet and The New London Children's Choir.

SETLIST

- 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
- 10 From Her To Eternity
- 11 Red Right Hand
- 12 O Children
- 13 The Ship Song
- 14 Jack The Ripper
- 15 Deanna
- 16 Your Funeral My Trial
- 17 Love Letter
- 18 The Mercy Seat
- ENCORE:
- 19 Stagger Lee

The presence of the latter proves a challenge to Cave's characteristically mordant stage patter. His introduction to *Push The Sky Away*'s "Mermaids" ends up going, "This song is kinda sad. Year after year, it just gets sadder and sadder. Er... don't listen to me, kids." The warbling infants are dispatched during the second half of the show, allowing The Bad Seeds to set unrestrained about such after-the-watershed material as "Your Funeral My Trial", "Jack The Ripper" and "The Mercy Seat". It's nearly 30 years since the first Bad Seeds album: it's a glorious privilege to be able to take them for granted.

ANDREW MUELLER

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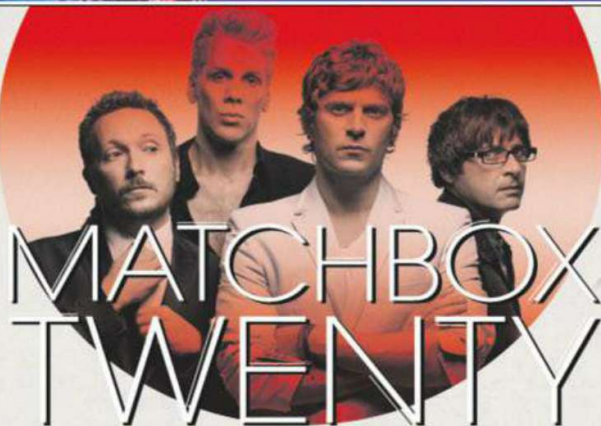


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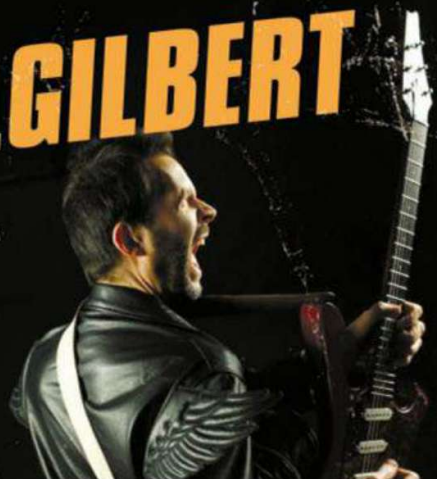
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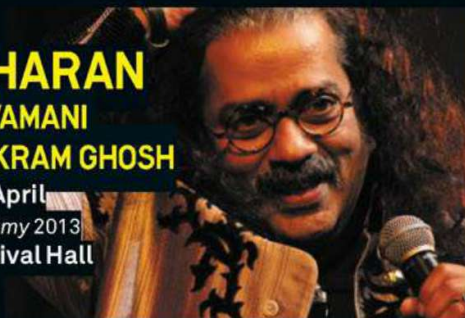
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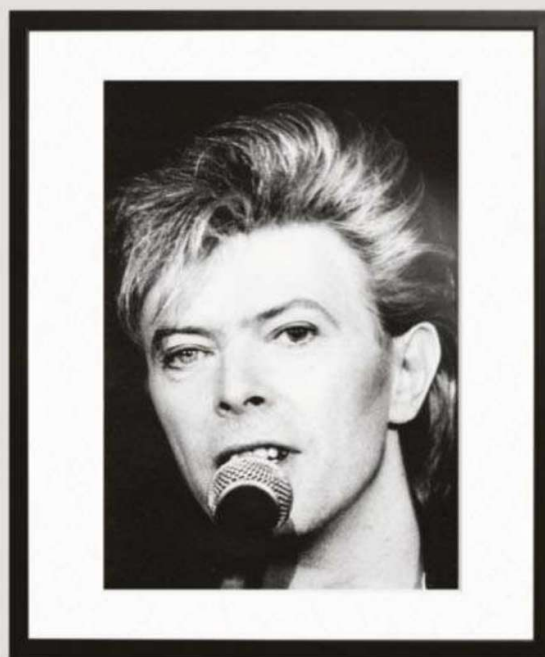
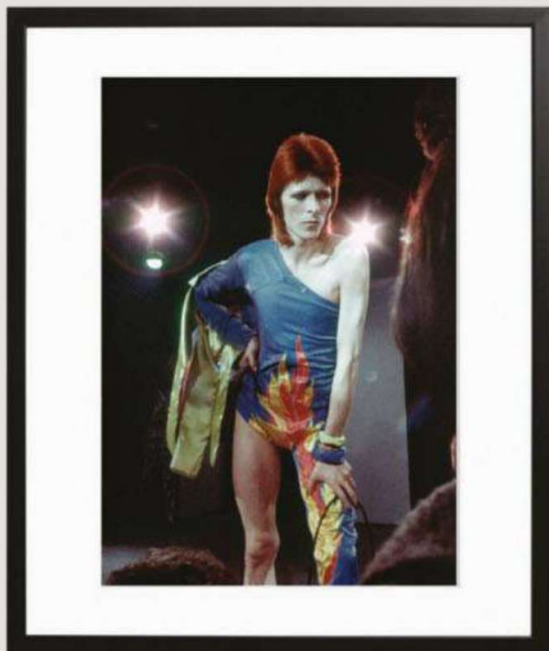
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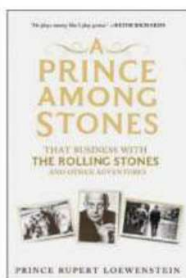
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BLOOMSBURY

8/10

EVEN BEFORE IT gets on to The Rolling Stones, for whom he worked across four decades as financial adviser – or as he puts it, “a combination of bank manager, psychiatrist and nanny” – Prince Rupert Loewenstein’s *A Prince Among Stones* offers by way of an account of his own early life a fascinating glimpse into a gilded world of European aristocracy far removed from the infinitely more modest beginnings of the band with whom he would so unexpectedly be linked, first rescuing them from financial disaster and then with a visionary’s deft touch turning them

into a commercial juggernaut.

The Loewenstein-Wertheim family into which he was born, as we are instructed in a densely detailed 15-page appendix, is one of Europe’s most noble ancestral lines. Its bloodline is a branch of the Bavarian royal house, including various kings, plus a couple of Holy Roman Emperors, the first king of independent Greece, Electors Palatine, kings of Sweden, Hungary, Norway and Denmark, not to mention two ‘antikings’, whatever they might be, of Bohemia.

“I came from a certain sort of distinguished background,” he writes, somewhat understating the case. He grew up in an environment of privilege and entitlement that was often somewhat tenuous. The family fortunes were much diminished by his parents’ reckless spending, an inability to manage their once apparently limitless resources that made him as a young man a keen student of finance, concerned not only with making money, but keeping it. He turned out to be good at both.

After graduating from Oxford, he went to work in the London offices of New York stockbrokers Bache & Co. Due to his many and influential connections throughout the continent, he was soon deployed by the company to investigate and secure new business opportunities in Europe, where he spent much of his time, most of it having rather grand lunches in opulent surroundings and otherwise attending lavish dinner parties in illustrious company – political leaders, international financiers, royalty (both reigning and deposed), moguls, tycoons, aristocratic playboys and glamorous figures from the worlds of music, cinema, theatre, opera and dance. At one of the smaller dinners to which he was invited, he mentions almost in passing, he shared a table with Maria Callas, Ingrid Bergman and the Duchess of Windsor.

In 1963, he became managing director of a merchant bank, Leopold Joseph, in the City of London, in which capacity five years later he was approached by the antiques dealer Christopher Gibbs, who as a leading socialite and member of Swinging London’s Chelsea Set was an intimate of the Stones and especially close to Mick and Keith. As Gibbs explained to an intrigued Prince Rupert, Mick had become increasingly concerned about the Stones’ financial position and the worrying fact that despite all the records they’d sold they seemed to have no money. He wanted to know where it had gone and why no more appeared to be coming in. Could Prince Rupert perhaps investigate with a view to the future management of the Stones’ finances?

A man of tastes too refined to recognise any musical merit whatsoever in the kind of racket



“He plays money like I play guitar”: Keith Richards with Prince Rupert Loewenstein at a Stones record deal signing with Virgin, London, 1991

famously made by the Stones, about which he is hilariously disapproving, he was nevertheless charmed sufficiently by Jagger when they met to accept a formal invitation to manage the Stones’ business affairs.

Thus began a 40-year association which in the first instance meant urgently getting them out of pernicious contracts with their record company, Decca, and the management clutches of Allen Klein, who he quickly realised had been syphoning off millions from the band’s income that properly should have gone to them, thanks to which dubious accountancy the Stones were virtually broke and facing a hefty tax bill that would account for up to 98 per cent of their income, which they could not afford to pay. His first recommendation was to quit the UK – the south of France was his preferred destination for their exile – while he negotiated their tax liabilities with the Inland Revenue and sought their extrication from current contracts with Decca and Klein, who he pithily describes as “oily and aggressive”. He soon had them out of the deal with Decca, and would reach an accommodation with the Revenue. But Klein was another matter.

The 17 years of litigation that Klein instigated was a test of both Loewenstein’s patience and ingenuity and provides the book with some of its most colourful anecdotes. He recalls, for instance, a particularly intense negotiating session with Klein and lawyers in New York in May 1972, that dragged on for many hours with both parties in unforgiving mood. Mick and Keith, who were also in attendance, at one point went out for dinner, returning a while later with what Prince Rupert describes as “a couple of dancing girls”, with whom they were quickly sequestered in a room from which the sounds of raucous partying were soon heard. “This vastly lightened the proceedings,” he drily notes.

Elsewhere, he is equally wry about Mick, who up to a point he clearly admires, both as a performer and to a slightly lesser extent for his good business sense. In other ways, he often seems to have found Mick rather ridiculous and there’s a very funny

account of Jagger turning up to a ball Loewenstein hosted at his Holland Park home – a modest bash for 500 guests, including Princess Margaret and the Maharaja of Jaipur – wearing “what I can only describe as a rustic smock. He looked like a cross between a milkmaid and one of the Evzones, the soldiers who guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens.”

He was not always impressed by Mick’s lack of good manners, much valued of course in Prince Rupert’s natural circle of aristos and toffs, among whom punctuality was a paramount virtue. He was thus appalled by Mick’s frequent tardiness and infuriating habit of turning up unforgivably late for dinner parties and weekend beanos at various posh country piles. Sometimes, he would not turn up at all and subsequently fail to offer the appropriate apology (one’s head on a plate would barely have sufficed), an unpardonable sin. While he nevertheless generally hit it off with Mick, he found it hard at first to get close to a suspicious Keith Richards, who for some months refused to meet him. When they did meet, he was surprised to discover he perhaps liked Keith more. “I saw that Keith was – and I hesitate to say this – the most intelligent mind of the band,” he writes. Like so many before and since, he was not immune to Keith’s more raffish inclinations and recounts with some relish a story about Keith pissing out of the window of a hotel room in which yet another life-sapping business meeting was entering its umpteenth hour.

During his time with the Stones, it’s fair to say Loewenstein pioneered new ways of maximising their earnings, especially via tour sponsorships that others would quickly learn from, even as he often had to deal with the regular toxicity between Mick and Keith. In the end, he became exasperated by their failure to seize upon a new financial initiative he presented to them after painstaking preparation. Exhausted by their interminable dithering, he concluded there was no more he could usefully do for them and in March 2008 duly retired, still without a good word to say about their music.

OBITUARIES

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

SHADOW MORTON

Songwriter, producer

1940-2013

THE HIT THAT launched George 'Shadow' Morton's career was supposedly written in just over 20 minutes, as a frantic response to a challenge from established Brill Building songwriter Jeff Barry. The latter, suspicious of Morton's intentions towards his writing partner and future wife Ellie Greenwich, had told the Brill Building wannabe to prove himself by creating a memorable tune. Morton then enlisted an unknown girl group from Queens to cut a demo. The result was "Remember (Walking In The Sand)", which promptly shot The Shangri-Las to No 5 on the US chart. It was the beginning of a defining era for both Morton and the group. Follow-up "Leader Of The Pack", produced by Morton and co-written with Barry and Greenwich, became a Billboard chart-topper. Requiring 63 takes,



Leader of the pack: Shadow Morton (far right), in a Manhattan theatre in the mid-'60s, with Ellie Greenwich and Jeff Barry

the song carried the same giddy rush of teen psychodrama as Phil Spector's work with The Ronettes. It was also a personal triumph for the perfectionist Morton. "I can remember spending hour after hour on those vocals," he told interviewer Richard Arfin in 1991, "how to say something, what it was about. I was more a director than I

was a producer." Morton's other major successes with The Shangri-Las were "Give Him A Great Big Kiss" and "I Can Never Go Home Anymore". He later admitted: "I lucked out. Four girls who fell into my lap from the get-go, and I never realised how much talent I had on my hands. Mary [Weiss] and the others had the ability to make my

stories believable." Morton went on to produce Janis Ian's 1967 hit "Society's Child", Iron Butterfly's signature song, "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida", and 1974's *Too Much Too Soon*, the second New York Dolls album. Producer Mark Ronson has admitted that Morton's songs were a big inspiration on Amy Winehouse's 2006 opus, *Back To Black*.

'BUTCH' MORRIS

Jazz cornettist, creator of 'conduction'

1947-2013

CALIFORNIAN LAWRENCE 'BUTCH' MORRIS began his career as a cornettist in the West Coast free jazz movement of the early '70s. But it wasn't until moving to NYC later in the decade, where he became active in the loft-jazz scene, that he set about formulating the technique that made his name. His work with tenor saxophonist David Murray, for whom he would often direct a large ensemble of players, led to his development of 'conduction'. The idea was that Morris, via hand gestures and baton figures, would conduct improvising musicians, creating spontaneous arrangements and exploring the idea of unconscious structure. These experiments were finally issued in 1995 as *Testament: A Conduction Collection*, a mammoth 10CD set recorded

between '88-'95. By the end of the '90s, his techniques had crossed over into the worlds of theatre, dance and film. As a sideman, Morris also appeared on six LPs apiece with Murray and avant-sax player Frank Lowe, alongside Wayne Horvitz's 1983 LP, *Some Order, Long Understood*.

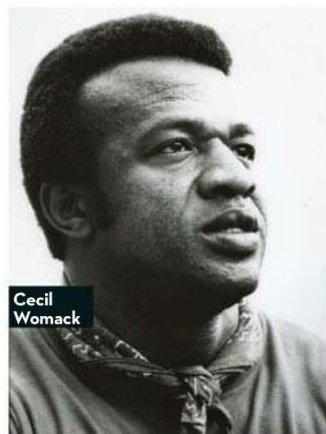
CECIL WOMACK

Soul/R'n'B singer

1947-2013

CECIL WOMACK'S FIRST big break arrived in the late '50s when soul singer Sam Cooke became mentor to The Womack Brothers, the gospel group he'd formed with siblings Bobby, Harry, Friendly and Curtis. Cooke promptly took them on tour, convincing them to change their name to The Valentinos and embrace secular music. They enjoyed a handful of hits on Cooke's SAR label, the most prominent being "It's All Over Now", covered by The Rolling

Stones in 1964. The Valentinos dissolved later that year, in the aftermath of Cooke's murder in an LA motel room. In 1966 Womack married Motown star Mary Wells, for whom he wrote and produced, before divorcing a decade later. The split allowed him to wed Cooke's daughter Linda in 1977, upon which he entered the most successful partnership of his career as R'n'B duo Womack & Womack. Their biggest hit was 1988's infectious "Teardrops", which has since been covered by the likes of Elton John,



Cecil Womack

Sugababes and The xx. Cecil's other songwriting credits include The O'Jays, Teddy Pendergrass and George Benson.

NIC POTTER

Prog-rock bassist

1951-2013

"HE WAS A natural talent, driven by instinct and capable of working out instant basslines out of material that the others had already been rehearsing," Van der Graaf Generator's David Jackson observed of teenage bassist Nic Potter, who joined the band in September 1969. Potter, formerly of The Misunderstood, played on the innovative proggers' second album, *The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other*, before quitting during the recording of 1970 follow-up *H To He, Who Am The Only One*. He went on to work with Jeff Beck, Chuck Berry, Rare Bird and Magna Carta, before rejoining VdGG in 1977.

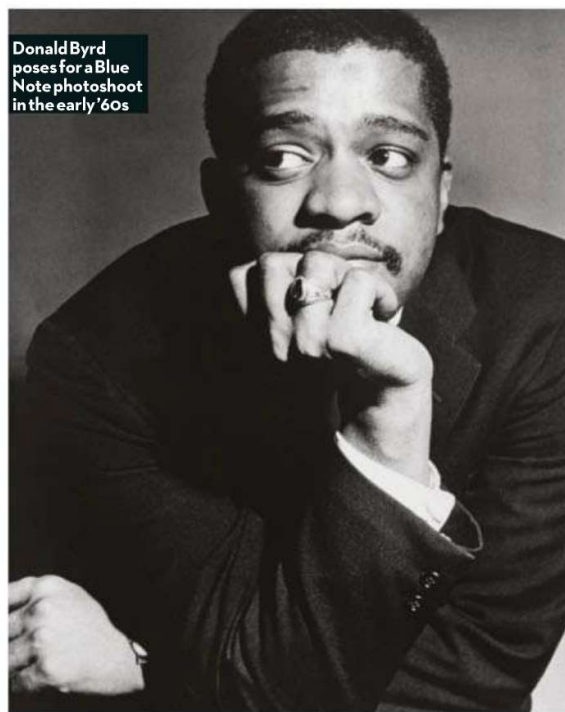
DONALD BYRD

Jazz trumpeter

1932-2013

THE RICH, ELEGANT tones of Donald Byrd marked him out as one of the jazz world's elite trumpeters from the late '50s through to the '60s. It was an era that saw him record with Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon, among many others, after initially joining Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1955. For three years until 1961, alongside sax player Pepper Adams, Byrd led his own bebop group. That year's *Royal Flush* was notable for the Blue Note debut of pianist Herbie Hancock, who stuck around for the classic hard bop follow-up, *Free Form*. Byrd became something of a mentor to Hancock, who called him "a born educator, it seems to be in his blood, and he really tried to encourage the development of creativity".

Byrd's legendary status was sealed during the '70s, when he reinvented himself as a jazz fusion pioneer, liberally dousing his compositions with funk and R'n'B. 1973's *Black Byrd*, produced by Larry Mizell and featuring sibling Fonce on additional trumpet, became one of the biggest Blue Note sellers in the label's history. He reunited with the Mizell brothers for three more major successes: *Street Lady*, *Stepping Into Tomorrow* and *Places And Spaces*. Byrd's dilution of his earlier style often proved too much for the headline purists. "The jazz people started eating on me," he bemoaned. In 1973 he founded The Blackbyrds, a fusion outfit that corralled some of his best music students at Howard University in Washington, DC. "Rock Creek Park", one of a number of R'n'B hits, was later sampled by Public Enemy and featured on the soundtrack of 1991 Brit-flick *Young Soul Rebels*. Nas also used Byrd's "Flight Time" to underpin 1994's "NY State Of Mind". During the '90s, Byrd hooked up with Gang Starr's Guru for two volumes of the latter's *Jazzmatazz* series.



Donald Byrd poses for a Blue Note photoshoot in the early '60s

STEVE KNIGHT

Mountain keyboardist

1935-2013

FELIX PAPPALARDI ALREADY knew multi-instrumentalist Steve Knight from his time producing New York combo The Peacemakers, who recorded one album as The Devil's Anvil in 1967. Impressed by Knight's skills on keyboard, Pappalardi drafted him into new outfit Mountain two years later. The band's heaving rock sound, fronted by Leslie West, brought them a modicum of success in the early '70s, most notably "Mississippi Queen" and the mighty "Nantucket Sleighride". Knight returned to his first calling, traditional jazz, when Mountain split in 1972, before becoming a door engineer and songwriter, occasionally popping up onstage at reunion shows over the years.

PATTY ANDREWS

The youngest Andrews Sister

1918-2013

LEAD SINGER PATTY ANDREWS was just seven years old when she first formed The Andrews Sisters with older siblings Maxene and LaVerne. In a career spanning four decades, the original group landed 113 chart hits, selling around 75 million copies and making them the most successful female vocal outfit in history. Their close harmonies and jump blues approach were epitomised by 1941's worldwide hit "Boogie

Woogie Bugle Boy". The Sisters split in 1951 when Patty joined another band, attributing the break-up to the sudden death of their parents. After LaVerne died of cancer in 1967, Maxene and Patty briefly pressed on as a duo.

RICK HUXLEY

Dave Clark Five bassist

1940-2013

THE DAVE CLARK FIVE, unlikely as it may seem, were once considered The Beatles' biggest rivals on the British and American pop scene. "Glad All Over", driven by the thumping beat of drummer Clark and the thick bass groove of Rick Huxley, usurped "I Want To Hold Your Hand" as No 1 in January 1964. The combo swiftly followed up with the equally nagging "Bits And Pieces", which stopped just shy of the top spot. In March that

year, they followed the Fabs by becoming the second British Invasion band to appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Huxley, who joined the group on its inception in 1958, played on all of their signal hits, including Billboard chart-topper "Over And Over" and "Catch Us If You Can", from the 1965 film of the same name in which the DC5 starred. When they disbanded in 1970, he moved into the property business. He was in attendance when Tom Hanks inducted them into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2008.

'BUBS' WHITE

Bonzos/Viv Stanshall guitarist

1944-2013

VIV STANSALL'S HABIT of seeking out prospective bandmates based on appearance as much as musical talent was

perfectly embodied in Anthony 'Bubs' White. Supporting the Bonzo Dog Band one night at a Cambridge May Ball, the 22-stone guitarist, with long hair and bowtie, clearly caught Stanshall's eye. "Nothing was said on the night," White recalled. "But a few weeks later there was an advert in *Melody Maker*, saying the Bonzos were looking for this fat guitarist from Cambridge." White played on the band's 1972 farewell, *Let's Make Up And Be Friendly* and featured in Stanshall's band for *Men Opening Umbrellas Ahead* two years later.

PRECIOUS BRYANT

Georgia blues guitarist

1942-2013

PRECIOUS BRYANT CAME from the same tradition of great Georgia blueswomen as Ma Rainey and Ida Cox. Her fingerpicking guitar style and soulful voice were first recorded in 1969 by Atlanta folklorist George Mitchell, who cited her as a "Georgia musical treasure". By the early '80s she'd become a fixture of Southern blues festivals, though her debut album, *Fool Me Good*, didn't land until 2002. Comprising original tunes, reworkings of Blind Willie McTell songs and old spirituals, the acoustic set brought her a couple of nominations at the WC Handy Awards. Her 2005 follow-up *The Truth* included stirring covers of Willie Dixon and Irma Thomas.

ROB HUGHES



The Dave Clark Five, 1965: with Rick Huxley, left

Feedback...

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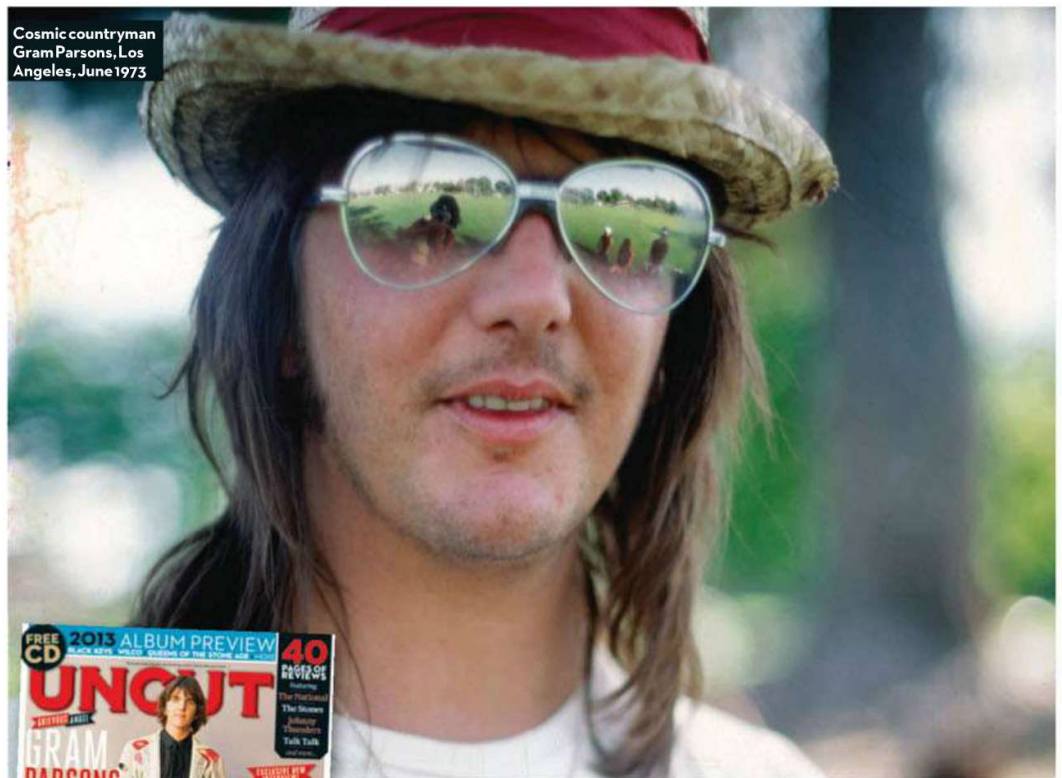
REMEMBERING GRAM

Whoa! I am a bit overwhelmed at what I found in the pages of the February 2013 issue of *Uncut*. I have been trying to cut down on the number of British music publications I buy due to their cost in the States, but I never seem to be able to resist *Uncut*, and with Gram Parsons on the cover, Take 189 left me with no choice but to ante up. I was as much of a fan of Gram Parsons as of The Byrds' *Sweetheart* album, but *The Gilded Palace Of Sin* became and has remained one of my top five of all time – yes, including the fuzz pedal steel that Elvis Costello called a “gimmick” of which GP was “mercifully free”.

If the fusion that was evident on the *Gilded Palace* album failed to move Costello, he has a big problem. But I will confess that my taste in music has always been extremely eclectic, which is another reason this recent issue moved me so much. As I pored back over page after page, I saw that there were articles on Kraftwerk, Joe Cocker, Ray Davies, Camper Van Beethoven (Santa Cruz compatriots), Aaron Neville and Shuggie Otis, as well as (sadly and unanticipated) an obit for Ed Cassidy from one of my all-time favourite bands, Spirit – all celebratory of the same sort of eclecticism. Then, at the end of the issue, I discovered an artist new to me – David Thomas of Pere Ubu – with taste that veers from the MC5 (what can I say!?) through Curtis Mayfield, King Crimson and Captain Beefheart. Life is too short for anyone to be able to absorb the music of every artist celebrated by *Uncut*, but I'm definitely going to be checking out Pere Ubu, and I have to thank *Uncut* once again for its many reminders as well as introductions. A great issue!

Roger Cloud, via email

...Re: your recent Gram Parsons cover story. Here's the thing about “country rock”. We all know what it means in the common parlance: The Byrds, the Burritos and their lesser imitators and heirs, such as Poco and the Eagles. But to pretend that Gram Parsons or anyone else “invented” it, or that he and others were not drawing on a deep well, is simply absurd. The “country” in



rock is as organic and as old (or older) than rock itself. Elvis Presley was country rock. Jerry Lee Lewis became a great country singer because he always was one. The Everly Brothers were country rock. The Delmore Brothers came perilously close, as did Hank Williams with “Move It On Over”. Then there's all the country “boogie” of the late '40s and early '50s, not to mention that The Beatles covered a Buck Owens tune.

In fact, one of the untold (or, at least, less frequently told) stories of rock music is the influence that country music and country musicians had on it. Gram Parsons may have come as close as anyone to perfecting it, but he hardly invented it. Cosmic American Music, indeed.

Derek T Ground, Toronto, Ontario

...As someone who in the past year has flitted between *Uncut* and similar publications, I am writing to say that so far in 2013 I have stuck with *Uncut*. This is because although I have heard of Gram Parsons and Tom Waits I don't actually know too much about them or their music. It makes a great change from reading yet another article about the usual suspects such as Pink Floyd or The Beatles. I also prefer listening to cover CDs of new or more obscure music as I am sent on pleasurable voyages of discovery, especially in Americana. It would be great as well to read and listen to new and upcoming bands and artists. I do like the much improved Reviews section, so please keep up the good work and I will stick with just your publication during the coming year.

Ben Peel, Skegness, Lincolnshire

...I greatly enjoyed your beautiful article about Gram Parsons. In my opinion, a mention of Bernie Leadon's ode to Parsons (“My Man”) wouldn't have looked out of place in the article. I was rather surprised, though, by Byron Berline's remark about Clarence White's funeral: “They didn't... play any music.”

In the song notes on The Byrds' album *Farther Along* (2000 reissue) it states: “‘Farther Along’... Arranged by Clarence White... Its hymnal qualities were put to poignant use in 1973 when Gram Parsons and Bernie Leadon sang the song at White's funeral.”

Peter H Kort, The Netherlands

LIVING IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

February 4 was a big date in my calendar, as it was the day in the new Ron Sexsmith album, *Forever Endeavour*, was released. OK, I accept that maybe Ron's not to everyone's taste (‘a bit miserable’, was my friend's assessment) but to his followers he's something akin to a demi-god. Having read the enthusiastic music magazine reviews, then the weekend newspaper reviews (‘a gem’, I think *The Sunday Times* said), I decided not to accept the prompt from Amazon (expected arrival February 6 or 7), but to do it the old way and buy it from a record shop and play it actually on the day of release.

There lay the problem. Being on the road that day, I first tried Nottingham Tesco and Sainsbury's – a long shot, I know, and

unsurprisingly, no joy – One Direction and *The Best Of Tina Turner* aplenty, but a ‘Ron Who?’ from the assistant. My next port of call was Bradford – I parked up and walked around the city centre, but couldn’t even find any sort of record shop. Next a move onto Keighley, but the locals said that there was no CD shop now left in the town. Late afternoon I ended up at Huddersfield HMV – surely mission accomplished – but again, no Ron. I was told that, while being run in administration, only certain suppliers were still agreeing to send in new releases.

I came home, despondent, at not being able to find a way to physically buy and play a CD that day. OK, I’ve ordered it today, some days later, from Amazon and will get it shortly but I can’t help looking back to younger days – leafing through LP covers in Nottingham Central Market and discovering the first album by Blood, Sweat & Tears, or the local small record shop and buying the first Black Sabbath album, mainly on the strength of the cover.

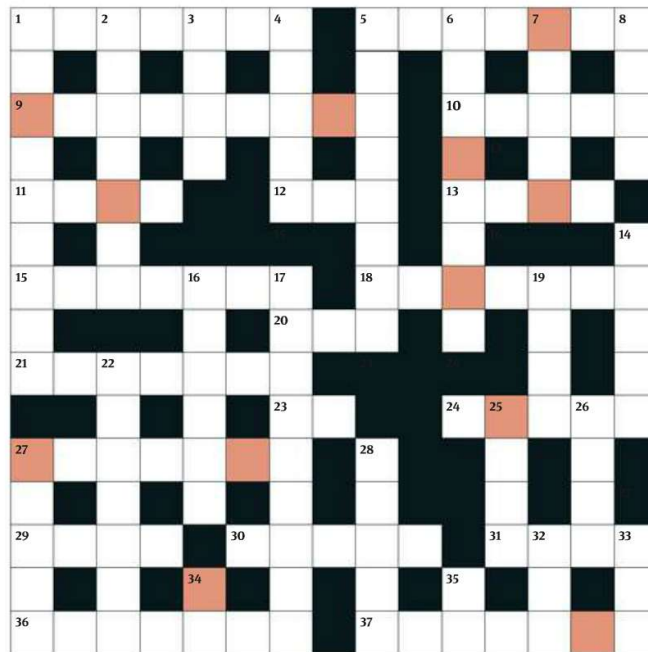
OK, both albums maybe haven’t stood the test of time but both contained gems which to a young 14-year-old were priceless discoveries. No doubt I’d pushed past some old-timers, as I am now, bemoaning the lack of 78s in the shops these days. But at least there were shops actually selling music. **Garry Perkin, Lambley, Notts**

AS TEAR GAS GOES BY

Your Family retrospective in the February issue was most welcome. In fact, it brought tears to my eyes – of the most literal kind. A huge Family fan ever since discovering them via American fanzine *Trouser Press*, I got to see the band open for Elton John on his ’72 US tour, in Greensboro, NC (the South not being the likeliest meeting ground for Family acolytes, I’ll grant you, but still...).

Family delivered, in spades, with Chappo even leaping off the stage near the end of the band’s set in an admirable though ultimately pointless attempt to get a reaction out of the first 10 rows or so of still-arriving EJ fans. That some nutcase later decided to lob a tear gas canister into the crowd three quarters of the way through Elton’s performance and duly setting off a stampede for the exits – ask Roger, I bet he will remember it – only served to cement the concert in my mind as one of my most memorable ever. I weep even now.

Fred Mills, Raleigh, NC



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by David Bowie. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: Uncut April 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: March 27, 2013. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1+5A** More of how to 'Murder Ballads' on satellite TV? You can shove it! (4-3-3-4)
9 Without showing mercy, this was Jimmy Page and Robert Plant 'Unledded' live in 1994 (2-7)
10 (See 28 down)
11 Sisters Este, Danielle and Alana _____ are "Forever" in their LA group (4)
12 The shape of an old Neil Young live album or new studio album from indie band Everything Everything (3)
13 (See 3 down)
15 Stevie Wonder, when he was 'Little', was tense and nervous (7)
18 (See 17 down)
20 One of the Men At Work is making this while the sun shines (3)
21 Heading east to terrible scenes of a Lucinda Williams recording (7)
23 Radio station begins with some music from Todd Rundgren's Utopia (2)
24+2D "You blow a fuse, zing boom/The devil cuts loose, zing boom", 1995 (3-2-2-5)
27 (See 4 down)
29 The _____ Sticks, Welsh indie band whose albums include *The Great White Wonder* (4)
30 (See 34 down)
31 "And the people bowed and prayed, to the _____ god they made", from Simon & Garfunkel's "The Sound Of Silence" (4)
36 Alt-rock band comprising Billy Lunn, Charlotte Cooper and Josh Morgan (7)
37 Nearly in the gutter with this beast of a band from Ireland who were 'on the turn' in 1997 (7)

CLUES DOWN

- 1+27D** He sets a pop tune differently on this Sensational Alex Harvey Band album (9-5)
2 (See 24 across)
3+13A "I would love to take her home, but her heart is made of stone", 1973 (4-4)
4+27A George Harrison album that had some additional feeling put to it (5-7)
5 "Well, there's two swinging honeys for every guy/And all you gotta do is just wink your eye", 1963 (4-4)
6 We'll get the picture of Madonna performing this (5-3)
7 Heading west to a terribly loud performance from Alice In Chains (5)
8+25D "Ever since you left, it just gets worse living out in _____", Deacon Blue (4-4)
14 Honestly, this is a genuine album from The Jeff Beck Group (5)
16 The brilliance of Warren Zevon, as noted by his 'best of' album title (6)
17+18A Doves single? A afraid it's just gone (5-4-3-4)
19 They've deemed their new album to be 'Wonderful, Glorious' (4)
22 Tom Jones flirtation with Mousse T (3-4)
25 (See 8 down)
26 (See 35 down)
27 (See 1 down)
28+10A A reggae band had a *Chill Out* (5-5)
32 "And in the _____ the love you take is equal to the love you make", The Beatles (3)
33 Adamski had energy by the sound of it (1-1-1)
34+30A The Doors' final LP with Jim (1-1-5)
35+26D Frenchman who had 1999 No 1 hit with "Flat Beat" (2-4)

ANSWERS: TAKE 189

ACROSS

- 1 Long Wave, 5 Loaded, 9 Strapped, 10+24D Fear Of Music, 12 Rollo, 13 Nilsson, 15+27D Misty Blue, 19 Aisha, 20 Krall, 21+28A

- Pink Fairies, 22 Drama, 25 Echo, 29 Soldier, 32 Yuck, 33 Cream.
DOWN
 1 Losers Weepers, 2 No Religion, 3 Wipe Out, 4 Vietnam, 6+18D Odyssey And Oracle, 7 Darkness,

- 8 Duffy, 11 Alas, 16+14A Isle Of Wight, 17 Mama, 23 Rainy, 26 Ringo, 30+34A I Am Kloot, 31 RAK.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"The New Soft Shoe"

Compiled: Trevor Hungerford

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IPC INSPIRE Recycle



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Billy Bragg

Life's a riot! The Bard Of Barking's musical education – whatever made listening to Rossini subversive?



The record that set me apart from my schoolmates

The Times They Are A-Changin' Bob Dylan 1964

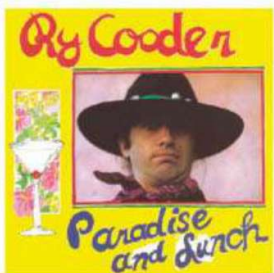
The copy I have I swapped with a guy I went to school with, for my copy of The Jackson 5's *Greatest Hits*. I took it home and it didn't just take me to a place where the politics were raw... it was an unearthly sound. Dylan was like Tolstoy compared to Elton John and Rod Stewart, which is what my mates were into.



The album that made me realise pop could be political

Motown Chartbusters Vol.5 Various Artists 1971

I didn't come from a political family; politics came to me exclusively through music. I was into black American soul-pop and this was very important as it puts Smokey Robinson's "Tears Of A Clown" next to "War" by Edwin Starr. These songs made me think pop music should have something to say about the world.



My roundabout introduction to Woody Guthrie

Paradise And Lunch Ry Cooder 1974

In 1977, my little band wanted to go on holiday and play music all night long. We ended up in a farmhouse run by Ruan O'Lochlainn and his wife, and never really came home. He was into Ry Cooder and played this all the time. Cooder introduced me to Woody Guthrie and other US songwriters from the early 20th Century.

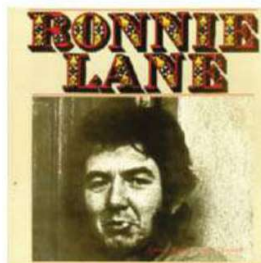


The greatest glam record ever made

A Clockwork Orange OST Various Artists 1972

The thing people forget about glam is the macho undertones; if you were a man in the '70s and went out with makeup on, you'd better be hard as bricks. It's ended up being

all about Bowie, which is a different vibe. This soundtrack is great, with all those electronic versions of songs by Walter Carlos, later Wendy, and it made listening to Rossini subversive. I used to do my homework listening to this.



My favourite record by a Face

Slim Chance Ronnie Lane 1974

The kid next door, who taught me how to play guitar, was obsessed by the Faces and, when Rod Stewart went to America, it was like a total betrayal. But then bassist Ronnie Lane went off to the country and started making LPs of old Faces songs, songs from music hall, songs by Fats Domino, country standards... but with a lovely, English pastoral feel. There are some great originals here, too.



The record that proved DIY could work

The Clash The Clash 1977

My mates and I had absolutely no idea how to get out of our parents' back rooms and do gigs, but then we saw The Clash. Punk blew the doors off the idea that in order to be in a band, you had to be like The Rolling Stones. We saw them on the first night of the "White Riot" tour, which was when we wrenched punk out of the guardians' hands and took control.



The album that led me to write "Between The Wars"

Handful Of Earth Dick Gaughan 1981

A Scottish political folk singer. It has "The World Turned Upside Down" on it, which I've also recorded. It reminded me folk could be political, when in the '70s, it was all "Gaudete". In '84, I went up to the minefields to do a gig and saw 80-year-old Jock Purdon sitting down singing unaccompanied; Gaughan was the pointer.



The record that did just what I wanted to do

The Smiths The Smiths 1984

I was fortunate to be their contemporary, as they were writing when chart pop was dominated by two geezers and a synthesiser – Pet Shop Boys, Nik Kershaw, Howard Jones – and there was something gritty about The Smiths. The lyrics were brilliant, the guitar was great; "Back To The Old House" is a classic, understated love song – so poignant, so beautiful. And that's exactly what I was trying to write.

Billy Bragg's Tooth & Nail, released by Cooking Vinyl on March 18, is reviewed on page 80

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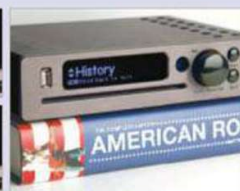
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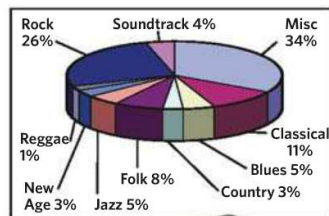
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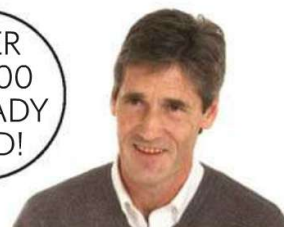
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