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on psychedelics!"

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BLONDIE
DEEP PURPLE
MICHELLE SHOCKED
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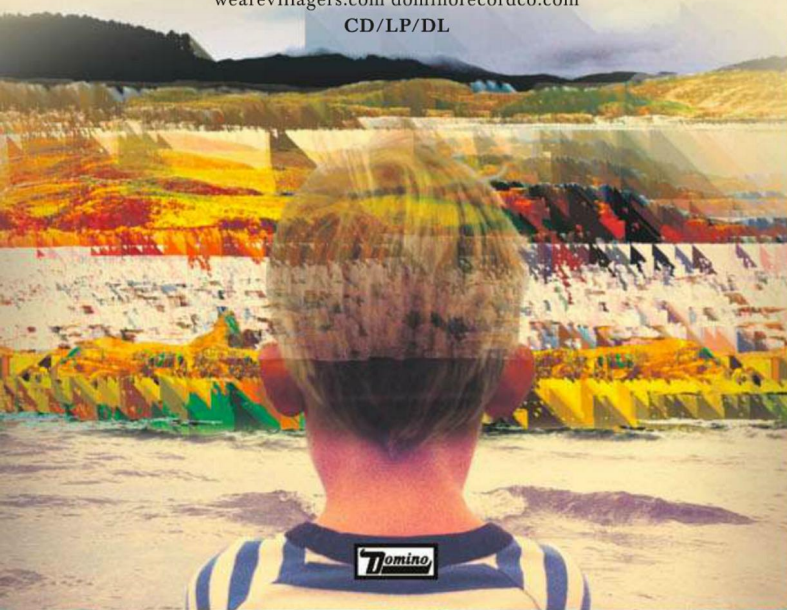
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Are we rolling?



Bryan Ferry: matchmaker to the dancing queen(s)...

ANYWAY, LOOKING THROUGH this month's review section, one of the albums we've written about caught my eye and took me back to somewhat lively events in February, 1979. Roxy Music are due to play the first date of their reunion tour somewhere in Europe. *Melody Maker* want me to cover it, wherever it is. I get a tip the tour will open in Stockholm, where Roxy have been rehearsing in great secret. I call their legendary "media consultant", the permanently harassed Simon Puxley. He denies the tour will open in Stockholm. The first date, he tells me, will actually be in...er... *Berlin*. I don't believe him and that weekend fly out to Sweden, where I find them in the bar of the Grand, a handsome old hotel overlooking the harbour. Puxley whitens at my appearance before gaining his composure and sternly telling me that under no circumstances will he give me a ticket for that night's concert. I tell him I already have one and leave him ashen-faced. It's a great show, as I tell Bryan Ferry later. We're having dinner at somewhere plush and I'm sitting opposite Ferry, next to Antony Price, who designs Ferry's tour togs. I tell him I loved Bryan's new suit. "He does look lovely in sharkskin," Antony swoons.

Not long after this, we all fetch up in some cavernous nightclub, the disco booming quite deafeningly. Ferry and I are having a drink when a striking blonde, wearing something in a startling electric blue that looks like it's been sprayed on and hasn't yet dried, bounds over to our table. Ferry introduces us, but the music's so loud I don't catch her name. She now appears to be trying to get Ferry to dance, an invitation he politely declines and slips away to another table. She turns her attention to me now and with a yank of my arm that nearly pulls my shoulder out of its socket hauls me onto the dance floor, where around us many couples are cavorting beneath the strobes, something suddenly intoxicating in their carnal gyrations. At which point, of course, I should have realised I was drunk and left it at that. But no, I recklessly decide to give it a go, although I am no hoofer and have no relevant past experience of dance-related escapades with women who look like they've taken a bath in body dye and come out of the house naked and still wet. Whatever, the next thing I know we're in the midst of a bopping throng and my companion is giving it her veritable all, every part of her body in some kind of fantastic motion. Rather less nimbly, I hop from foot to foot, like someone trying to shake a ferret from his trousers. The music's louder than ever and I'm quite overwhelmed by my partner's increasingly astonishing whirls, pirouettes and general dance floor gymnastics. She's a blur of exciting motion, abandoned gesticulation and much energetic arse-wiggling. She grinds her groin against me with an exaggerated pneumatic pumping action that makes me blush to recall and then disappears into the crowd, everything shaking.

I quickly scarper back to the table where I'd been drinking with Ferry, but he's already at the door, the rest of Roxy piling into waiting limos. In the back of one of the cars, Ferry notices my by-now quite dishevelled state and asks where I'd got to. I tell him I've been dancing, information that causes him to raise a cultured eyebrow. "With *who*?" he asks. The voluptuous blonde he'd introduced me to whose name I didn't catch, I tell him, the one who looked like her out of Abba, Agnetha, the blonde one. He knows who I mean and sighs, a little theatrically. "Allan," he says finally, "that was Agnetha out of Abba." We drive back to the hotel in silence, Ferry's eyebrow raised all the way. The record by the way that reminded me of this is Agnetha's first album since 2004 and it's reviewed on p67. Enjoy the issue.

Max Jones

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVEALATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring BLEECKER BOYS | MICHELLE SHOCKED | MARK MULCAHY



Before the flood...

25 years on, MIKE SCOTT and THE WATERBOYS revisit *Fisherman's Blues*.
7CD boxset, reunion tour and raggle-taggle hully-gully to follow...

The Waterboys at Spiddal House in spring 1988: (l-r, back row) Trevor Hutchinson, Jimmy Hickey (crew), Jake Kennedy (crew), Pat McCarthy (engineer), John Dunford (producer), Colin Blakey and Fran Breen; (l-r, front row) Anthony Thistlethwaite, Mike Scott and Steve Wickham



FISHERMAN'S BLUES, says Mike Scott, "should have been a double or triple album, or two or three separate albums released in consecutive years." The recording of The Waterboys' fourth record, a landmark blend of folk, country, rock and blues, stretched from January 1986 to the summer of 1988. Hundreds upon hundreds of hours of spontaneous music-making took place at Dublin's Windmill Lane Studios, with *Blonde On Blonde* producer Bob Johnston in San Francisco, and finally at Spiddal House, an appealingly faded mansion in County Galway, where the band embraced their inner raggle-taggle gypsies during freewheeling

sessions with the (much more sensibly attired) local folk musicians.

The wonderful results were released as a single album in October 1988, but Scott has always lamented the fact that *Fisherman's Blues* only hinted at the grandeur, scope and magnificent folly of the band's epic Irish adventure. Even the release in 2001 of *Too Close To Heaven*, an album of outtakes, followed by an expanded double-disc version of the album in 2006, left plenty of treasure in the vaults.

Not anymore. *Fisherman's Box*, a 7CD set released this autumn to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the album, collects 121 tracks

from the "mythical" sessions: everything on the original and subsequent editions is included, alongside 85 previously unreleased tracks. The Decemberists' Colin Meloy, a huge fan of the record, has written the sleevenotes. "I can't turn back the clock, but the *Fisherman's Box* set is the next best thing," says Scott. "It's a collection of everything potent we recorded during those amazingly creative two and a half years."

To celebrate the release, Scott will be reuniting the core *Fisherman's Blues* band for a Waterboys tour at the end of 2013. Fiddler Steve Wickham has been his closest musical ally for years, but Scott has also extended an invitation to



Mike Scott at
Dublin's Windmill
Lane Studios,
September 1986

➤ Anto Thistlethwaite, a key member of the original lineup who played sax, mandolin, Hammond, harmonica and anything else he could coax a sound from on their first five records. "Steve and I did a couple of shows with Anto six months ago in Ireland and it was clear the old chemistry was in perfect working order," Scott explains. "We wanted to do more and the 25th anniversary of *Fisherman's Blues* gives us the perfect excuse." Wickham simply describes the trio as "musical soul brothers" who still carry a "musical torch".

As well as playing with The Waterboys, Thistlethwaite has recorded with everyone from Donovan to Robyn Hitchcock, and has been a member of Galway folk-rockers The Saw Doctors for the past 12 years. "When Mike, Steve and I reconvened in September last year I was struck by the intensity and depth of our musical empathy," he tells *Uncut*, describing their musical relationship as "a three-piece jigsaw, each part allowing the others to shine. It's an isosceles triangle with Scott's acoustic guitar at the apex, Wickham's fiddle and my sax/mandolin holding down the other two corners. It'll be a joy to step onstage with them and see if we can blow the roof off some halls!"

Also coming along for the ride is *Fisherman's Blues* bassman, Trevor Hutchinson, who has been playing with his acclaimed traditional group Lúnasa since the mid-'90s. "Who else to play bass but the original?" says Scott. "The mighty Trevor, the handsomest man in Ireland, ace improviser, groover and hook-conjurer!" Current Waterboys drummer, Ralph Salmins, will complete the lineup. Scott emphasises that this will not be a "classic album" tour. "I've no interest in playing *Fisherman's Blues* track-by-track, and anyway the original album only contained a fragment of what we recorded back then. What appeals to me is re-igniting the spirit of The Waterboys of that era, of roaming our old repertoire, adding numbers from the *Fisherman's Box* which we never played live, and seeing what new magic we can make."

GRAEME THOMSON

***Fisherman's Box* is released by EMI on October 14. The Waterboys play Liverpool Philharmonic (December 8), Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (9), Glasgow Barrowland (10), York Barbican (11), Birmingham Alexandra (12), Oxford New Theatre (15), Guildford G Live (16), Bristol Colston Hall (17), Hammersmith Apollo (18), Drogheda TLT (20), Killarney INEC (21), Galway Leisireland (22) and Dublin Convention Centre (23)**

CATCH OF THE DAY

Mike Scott previews three favourites from *Fisherman's Box*

HIGHERBOUND: "There are four versions of this on the set. An early sketch, two later versions with different tunes, and finally the definitive five-minute-long cut which wasn't released because I hadn't finished writing the words. Listening back, 25 years later, that doesn't seem to matter much; the track sounds so great."

STRANGE BOAT (First Play): "Me playing my new song to the band for the first time."

HIGHER IN TIME SYMPHONY: "An 11-minute meisteertake of the song 'Higher In Time', with me on electric piano and Wickham on effected fiddle, shooting off into multiple sonic stratospheres."



(l-r) Stiv Bators of The Dead Boys and Susan Springfield of The Erasers with Bleecker Bob at CBGBs, NYC, 1977, and below, with Frank Zappa

LOST CULTURE

WEST 3RD STREET FREEZE OUT!

Bleecker Bob's Golden Oldies, New York record shop of legend, makes way for a frozen yoghurt franchise. A city mourns, wryly...

GREENWICH VILLAGE in New York City will lose another cultural landmark this summer, when Bleecker Bob's Records becomes a frozen yoghurt shop. Forever Yoghurt promises "record store décor" when it opens on West 3rd Street on June 1. The Chicago chain is also in talks with Bleecker Bob's managers about giving them a counter inside the new store.

On a cold March evening, Chris Weidner, a quiet, grey-haired man who has worked at Bob's for 40 years, looks around the shop's ragged interior, stacked with crates of vinyl, and tries to imagine it all fitting behind a counter in a yoghurt shop. "It could work, I guess," he says softly.

When Bleecker Bob's Golden Oldies opened as Village Oldies in October 1967 on nearby Bleecker Street, it joined venues like The Gaslight, where Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso read their work in the '50s, and Folk City, where Dylan is said to have played his first professional gig in 1961. "We had our own canopy coming out into the street, saying Village Oldies," 'Broadway Al' Trommers, Bob's former partner, remembers. "I figured, let's specialise in something." So Al and 'Bleecker' Bob Plotnik started out selling street doo-wop from their own collections. They cut deals to sell tickets for nearby rock venue, the Fillmore East, and Woodstock festival in 1969.

In the '70s, when CBGBs was hosting Television and Blondie, Al left the

business. Bob made a name for himself as a first-rate importer of UK punk records he picked up on his many trips to London.

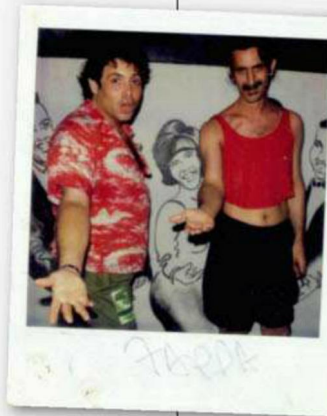
Bob also made a name for himself as an exacting manager. Photos show him larking about with Frank Zappa and Robert Plant, but regular customers remember him as a bully. The comments on stories announcing the store's demise are revealing. Karen Eliot, a former employee, wrote, "Bob was not a loveable curmudgeon if you were an employee, he was an abusive asshole." Bob could be abusive to customers, too: *Seinfeld* even parodied his bad behaviour in a 1993 episode.

In reality, by 1993, business had started to get tough. Banks and chains started taking over spaces once occupied by venues in the Village. In 2001, Bob suffered a massive

stroke. He would never work again. "If it weren't for Weidner and Bob's girlfriend JK keeping the store alive, it would've been gone a long time ago," Trommers says. With them, a few dedicated employees kept the old cash register ringing seven days a week, just like always.

That night in March, JK sits in the back of the store. She's been spending more time there recently, greeting customers and listening to people's memories. "I'll be sorry to see you go," says a young student, clutching a bag of dog-eared vinyl.

"So will I. But believe me, we've done everything we can," JK says. "We fought the war." HAZEL SHEFFIELD





Michelle Shocked outside Moe's Alley nightclub in Santa Cruz, Thursday, March 28

SHOCKED HORROR

“My reputation was sacrificed years ago!”

The strange return of MICHELLE SHOCKED. Don't call it a comeback...

AS LIVE MELTDOWNS GO, it wasn't quite up there with George Jones announcing he was Donald Duck or Grace Slick goosestepping across a Hamburg stage. But Michelle Shocked's inflammatory remarks during a San Francisco show in March have landed her in something of a media storm.

The controversy centred around her views on same-sex marriage. Citing Proposition 8, the Californian law that recognises only the marital union of a man and woman, her somewhat confused rant suggested Jesus would return once preachers were held at gunpoint and forced to marry gays. She then dared the audience to Tweet “Michelle Shocked said God hates faggots.” The ones who hadn't already walked out duly obliged.

The aftermath found the singer besieged by accusations of homophobia, resulting in club owners cancelling the rest of her dates. And while

she later issued an open apology and claimed she was merely reporting anti-gay views she doesn't share, there was precious little sympathy. Even a high-profile retraction on Piers Morgan's CNN show failed to dampen public anger.

Shocked's reaction to the pulling of the tour was to turn up at one of the cancelled gigs in Santa Cruz. The singer, having taken a temporary vow of silence in protest at the supposed infringement of her First Amendment rights, was clad in a white jumpsuit with ski mask, her mouth gaffer-taped with a sign that read: ‘Silenced by Fear’. It was a curious postscript to the whole affair. “By nature she's an anarchist and a rabble-rouser,” explains longtime friend Pete Anderson, producer of *Short Sharp Shocked* and *Captain Swing*, the late '80s folk LPs that introduced Shocked as a left-leaning champion of social causes. “But I have no idea where she was going that night. I'm not sure

she did, either. I had to explain to her later what Proposition 8 was and she's like: ‘Oh, I didn't know any of that.’ Right or wrong, I think the ‘God hates fags’ thing was sarcastic, but all her actions reflect what she's really about. I challenge you to dissect her songs and find hate in them. She's done so many things for the disenfranchised, and the gay and lesbian community, that I'm saddened by people's lack of compassion.”

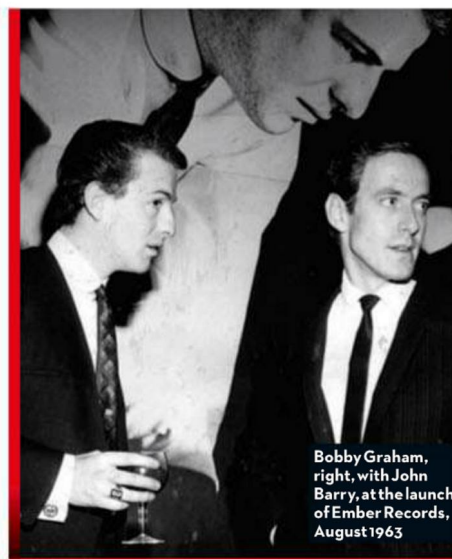
It isn't the first time Shocked has sparked controversy. A rambling keynote speech at 1992's SXSW saw her liken black funk-rockers Fishbone to old-time minstrel performers, admitting later that “my performance could be called into question”. A few years later, in order to justify her release from her record contract, she filed a \$1m lawsuit that invoked the Thirteenth Amendment, America's anti-slavery law.

Some years ago Shocked became a born-again Christian. Though, for someone who once told Chicago publication *OutLines* that she'd taken a woman lover, interviews suggested it was at times difficult to reconcile her beliefs with those of her church. In 2008 she told the *The Dallas Voice* “homosexuality is no more less a sin than fornication. And I'm a fornicator with a capital F.”

Colleagues view her more outspoken public comments as the product of a highly impulsive, well-meaning personality who often falls victim to misinformation. “I can't be an apologist for what she said,” offers friend and Austin filmmaker Liz Reeder Neubauer, for whom Shocked scored 2004's political doc, *Bush's Brain*. “It was wrong. But Michelle is very spontaneous and always shoots from the hip, then deals with the repercussions later. I think she had no intention of creating this firestorm. She's done so much good over the years, yet everyone just seemed very quick to assume that she'd done some sort of social 180-degree turn.”

Clearly embattled, Shocked herself only agreed to be interviewed by *Uncut* via Twitter, in the hope that “the conclusion you reach might be a little more worthwhile than the general consensus that I'm crazy or homophobic or both.” She appeared defiant and somewhat cryptic with her responses. “The backlash,” she explained, “was unwarranted and caught me off guard, but I accept it as an overdue challenge.”

And so to the future. Can she rescue her reputation? “Nothing's changed. I've got great art to make. My reputation was sacrificed years ago. [But] I'm still here.” **ROB HUGHES**



Bobby Graham, right, with John Barry, at the launch of Ember Records, August 1963

AND ON DRUMS... BOBBY GRAHAM

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ Originally in The Outlaws, Joe Meek's backing group of choice for Mike Berry and John Leyton, Bobby Graham moved on to play drums in Joe Brown And The Bruvvers. Although he turned down Brian Epstein's offer to join The Beatles (the Bruvvers were paying him more money), Graham appeared as a session man on 13 No 1 singles and 107 Top 50 hits. The Kinks and Who producer Shel Talmy described him as “the greatest drummer the UK has ever produced.”



KEY SESSIONS: The Animals' “Baby Let Me Take You Home” and “We Gotta Get Outta This Place”, Petula Clark's “Downtown”, Tom Jones' “It's Not Unusual”, The Kinks' “You Really Got Me”, “All Day And All Of The Night” and “Tired Of Waiting For You”, The Pretty Things' “Rosalyn”, “Don't Bring Me Down” and “Midnight To Six Man”, Them's “Baby Please Don't Go” and “Here Comes The Night”, The Walker Bros' “Make It Easy On Yourself” and “The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore”. **PHIL KING**

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Returning from the creative desert: artists' favourite Mark Mulcahy

SURPRISE, SURPRISE, SURPRISE!

It's a miracle! MARK MULCAHY returns with a new album...

IT HAS BEEN a long eight years since Mark Mulcahy released an album; his third solo effort, *In Pursuit Of Your Happiness*. Around 2006, the singer-songwriter – and former lynchpin of Miracle Legion, who enjoyed cultish acclaim for around a decade from 1983 – was working on a record with Scott Amore from The Butterflies Of Love and admits they “just couldn’t get it done. It almost sounds like some old Emerson, Lake & Palmer story,” laughs Mulcahy, “but I simply couldn’t finish it. I hate to say the unfinished album is cursed, but it’s in that league. I do like it and hope one day to put it out, but I wanted to make a record closer to where my head is at now.”

That record is *Dear Mark J Mulcahy, I Love You* (the title is taken from a note sent by a fan), a set of lean and seductively freewheeling, vaguely alt.country-toned pop songs with a knockabout cool and great arrangements, that show off the singer’s trademark, wryly reflective lyrics

to a T. It was recorded with keyboardist Ken Maiuri and around ten musicians from Northampton, Massachusetts, near Mulcahy’s home in Springfield. “There are a ton of great players there,” he explains. “You can just make a few calls and get three or four people to come to the studio for the day. Rather than getting bogged down in a lot of people doing a lot of stuff and then going back and chipping

“I try not to write songs about myself...”

away at each song, we did the record one song a day. I’ve always wanted to do that, because I think you stay focused on that one song. I really can’t say enough about the luck I had in playing with those guys.”

Down the years, Mulcahy has won plaudits from the likes of Thom Yorke, Michael Stipe and The National, all of whom contributed to 2009’s *Ciao My Shining Star*, which was both a tribute and benefit album made following the sudden

death of his wife. One of the things they all admire is Mulcahy’s drily observant yet engaged lyrics. Whether they’re about wasted opportunities or a less than healthy relationship, each song hits its target with punchy poeticism. But it’s a mistake to assume every one is autobiographical. “I try not to write songs about myself,” Mulcahy claims. “I’m not sure I wrote from someone else’s point of view, but it was more my view of someone else’s view that interested me.”

The new LP marks a fresh chapter for the man, with a new label (Fire) and manager, live UK dates (with band) scheduled for this August and plans to “put out more records in the next few years than I have in the past six years. I have a lot of reasons why I’d like to succeed, so I’m willing to do all the work needed beyond just writing songs. I can sit here all day writing a song and never put my shoes on,” Mulcahy jokes, “but... I have to put my shoes on and go outside.” SHARON O’CONNELL

Dear Mark J Mulcahy I Love You is out on June 17. Mulcahy plays London Lexington (Aug 28), Brighton Latest Music Bar (29) and End Of The Road festival (Aug 30–Sept 1)

A QUICK ONE

► The 14th Uncut Ultimate Music Guide “hits” UK stores on May 16, and the subject this time is **Nick Cave**. The usual formula applies: unexpurgated archive features from *NME* and *MM*, unseen for years (and including some memorably chaotic Birthday Party face-offs); plus deep new reviews of every album and an intro from Cave himself... “A whole magazine about me? How exciting...”

► Portland’s cult reissue label **Mississippi Records** are coming to Europe this summer, showcasing amazing film of outsider folk and blues shot by Alan Lomax between 1978 and 1985. The carnival arrives at ATP Camber Sands (June 21–23), Bristol Cube (24), Cheltenham Venue TBA (25), Birmingham Vivid Projects (26), Glasgow Glad Café (27), Cardiff Chapter Arts Centre (30), London Café Oto (July 1) and Bradford 1 In 12 Club (2).

► Jack White’s relative quietness of late may be explained by the imminent appearance on *Third Man of Nine Miles From The White City*, a 2003 White Stripes live set from Chicago’s Aragon Ballroom. Among the 26 tracks: a couple of Robert Johnson tunes and rare live takes on Dylan’s “Love Sick” and Beefheart’s “Party Of Special Things To Do”.

► Visit uncut.co.uk for daily news updates, reviews, blogs and the best features from the Uncut archives.

UNCUT AT THE GREAT ESCAPE

PHOSPHORESCENT, THE STRYPES, MIKAL CRONIN and nine more confirmed for our Brighton binge

Not long ‘til the Great Escape festival in Brighton now – it runs from May 16–18 – and we’re pleased and relieved to announce the complete lineup for our stage. As usual, Uncut will be taking over the Pavilion Theatre for the duration, presenting four bands on each night. On Thursday 16, Matthew Houck (pictured right) and **PHOSPHORESCENT** will be headlining, supported by **LORD**

HURON and a couple of adventurous, folk-tinged British acts, **DEAN MCPHEE** and **RED RIVER DIALECT**. Friday sees a garage-rock symposium featuring **MIKAL CRONIN**, **ALLAH-LAS** and **CHARLIE BOYER & THE VOYEURS**, with guitarist **C JOYNES** opening the show. On Saturday, the psychedelic double-header of **WOODS** and **WHITE FENCE** is augmented by **MARY EPWORTH** and



retro-rock causes célèbres **THE STRYPES**. Should be marvellous – and hopefully, we’ll see a good few of you down there.

The Great Escape takes place in venues across Brighton (May 16–18). Tickets for the whole thing cost £49.50. www.escapegreat.com

WE'RE NEW HERE

SHOVELS & ROPE

Recommended this month: the “sloppy-tonk” pair who mix Townes with The Cramps...

CARY ANN HEARST and her husband Michael Trent, aka Shovels & Rope, never planned to form a band. As solo musicians, both were content to offer advice on each other's music while doing their own thing. But to pass the time between tours in 2008, they began playing bars near their home in Charleston, South Carolina.

“Gradually the crowds got bigger,” recalls Hearst. “Then we started getting phonecalls asking us to tour as a duo. It was obvious we had something good going on. Eventually we thought, ‘What the hell? Let’s give it a shot.’”

Shovels & Rope's debut, *O'Be Joyful*, a raucous blend of country-blues and garage-rock which they have archly dubbed “sloppy-tonk music”, aims to replicate the chemistry that the couple found onstage, while reflecting their contrasting musical backgrounds. Nashville-born Hearst is “a country girl through-and-through”, while Trent is a Texas-born rocker raised on the Violent Femmes and Ramones. With their latest project, they have, says Hearst, “met in the middle. I got him into Townes Van Zandt and he got me into The Cramps. It's a good swap.”

The couple first met 10 years ago playing on the same festival bill. “My band was the first act and Michael's was the second,” recalls Hearst. “We became friends and then we were kind of on and off. Both our bands ran together and we would hang out, subsisting on beer and grilled cheese sandwiches. We were barely able to pay the

bills but we were having a ball anyway.”

Their financial woes were alleviated in 2010 when one of Hearst's songs, “Hell's Bells”, was used on the TV vampire series *True Blood*, allowing them to pay off their debts and get on the road. Another boost arrived last year when Jack White asked them to support him for a short tour. “It was very last-minute and we were both sick at the time,” says Trent. “Anyone else and we wouldn't have done it, but when Jack White calls, you go the extra mile.” In January this year, White got in touch again and asked them to contribute covers of Springsteen and Waits tracks for the Blue Series on his label, Third Man.

“I'm easily star-struck but he was charming and professional and quirky,” reflects Hearst. “He's like Willy Wonka as a cool rocker, rather than a weirdo with mommy issues.” Hearst and Trent have spent most of the last two years on the road – in the last 12 months, they reckon to have played over 200 shows.

“People are always telling us how romantic it is that we live and play together,” says Hearst. “Last night someone said how in love we looked onstage when in fact we were glaring at each other because

someone – and I'm not naming names – left their shoes in the wrong place in the RV.” **FIONA STURGES**

Shovels & Rope's album O'Be Joyful is released on May 6 on Dualtone. They play London Dingwalls on May 10

I'M YOUR FAN

“It's a real pleasure to see any stage lit up by those two people. They play and sing and holler with that beautiful, professional abandon that leaves everyone in the audience out of breath and full of joy.”

James Felice, The Felice Brothers



LUCY HAMBLIN

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

THEE OH SEES

Floating Coffin CASTLEFACE

Hypnotic, wildly overdriven garage-rock from the Bay Area vets, on a career-topping streak right now.

THE SHOUTING MATCHES

Grownass Man MIDDLEWEST

Justin Vernon ditches the falsetto and widescreen production, fronting this gritty, blues-tinged bar band. (Tom) Petty larcenies abound.

MARK KOZELEK & JIMMY LAVALLE

Perils From The Sea

CALDO VERDE

The indefatigable Kozelek plants his ruminations in electronic soundscapes. Business as usual, happily.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Imaginational Anthems 6: Origins Of

American Primitive Guitar TOMPKINS SQUARE
Tired of John Fahey copyists? Try a comp of the '20s/'30s pickers who influenced him.

COOL GHOULS

Cool Ghoul EMPTY CELLAR

More San Francisco garage, this time from these neat revivalists surely destined for double-headers with the Allah-Las...

GOAT

Stonegoat/Dreambuilding ROCKET

Two more Scando/Afro psych-groovers that take up where *World Music* ended. Not long enough, to be honest.

NEAL CASAL

Mountains Of The Moon [HTTP://SOUNDCLOUD.COM/THE-ROYAL-POTATO-FAMILY/MOUNTAINS-OF-THE-MOON-NEAL](http://soundcloud.com/the-royal-potato-family/mountains-of-the-moon-neal)

With the Chris Robinson Brotherhood on hiatus, guitarist Casal sustains the Grateful Dead love with a sweet Aoxomoxoa cover.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Road Songs: Car Tune Classics 1942-1962

FRÉMEAUX

Three CDs of premium-grade R'n'B, jazz, country and rock'n'roll, each one beginning with a version of “Route 66”. Get your kicks...

DATE PALMS

The Dusted Sessions THRILL JOCKEY

Cosmic desert ambience from, yep, San Francisco again. Also fans of Alice Coltrane and Pandit Pran Nath, one suspects.

ELVIS COSTELLO

Tramp The Dirt Down WARNER BROS

As Costello told *Uncut's* editor in 1989: “It's not only her [Margaret Thatcher] that the song is aimed at. It's what she represents... People are afraid to speak out.” Ding Dong!

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



Savages

*Silence
Yourself*

Featuring **Husbands**
and **She Will**

The Debut Album
Out 06.05.13



FILE UNDER: NOCTURNAL GARAGE

DEERHUNTER

THE NEW ALBUM OUT 06.05.13

4AD

monomania

FREE
CD!

SO REAL

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 MIKAL CRONIN

I'm Done Running From You

Giddy, guitar-driven, powerpop glory with an effervescing guitar solo by the great Ty Segall. Cronin plays almost everything else on his fine second album himself – and he also serves in Segall's touring band, of course.



Mikal Cronin

2 SALLIE FORD & THE SOUND OUTSIDE

Devil

It's a mighty long way down rock'n'roll – all the way from Memphis to the northwest coast of Oregon on this raw, reverb-heavy, Sun-inspired stomp from Portland's 21st-Century rockabilly queen, tearing it up like a latter-day Wanda Jackson.

3 THE HOUSE OF LOVE

Holy River

A ringing, gem-like, folk-pop showcase for Guy Chadwick's gentle voice and Terry Bickers' gorgeous, sky-scraping guitars. From their second album since their 2003 reunion – and best since their 1988 Creation label debut of sacred memory.

4 STEVE MASON

Oh My Lord

A syncopated Southern gospel groove, blissful piano rolls and a hauntingly memorable hook from ex-Beta Band man Steve Mason, thankfully back from the years of depression, breakdown, medication and hypnotherapy, and making some of the most affecting music of his career.



The House Of Love

5 PSYCHIC ILLS

One More Time

Leaving behind the freeform blow-outs of their early career, Tres Warren and his New York psych-rockers opt for a more structured narcotic ambience on the opening track from the follow-up to 2011's *Hazed Dream*.

6 SLIM CESSNA'S AUTO CLUB

32 Mouths Gone Dry

Cessna and his Colorado crew have been around for a couple of decades without making much impact in the UK. That should change with the release of a long overdue catch-up compilation, augmented by half a dozen new tracks, including this breakneck country romp.

7 GOLDEN GRRRLS

Older Today

Breezy girl-boy indie-pop from the Glaswegian trio of Rachel Aggs, Ruari MacLean and Eilidh Rodgers, whose charming but never twee debut *Night School Music* recalls the golden era of The Pastels and The Vaselines.

8 MV + EE

Trailer Trash

The rapturous jamming of David Crosby's *If I Could Only Remember My Name* and glissando guitar glory out of the Garcia school of cosmic noodling combine in typically ambulatory fashion on a track from the umpteenth LP from the prolific Vermont avant-folkers.

9 SHOVELS & ROPE

Birmingham

Twanging trad country with a rock'n'roll backbeat and an autobiographical twist, as the South Carolina husband-and-wife duo Michael Trent and Cary Ann Hearst soundtrack the story of their union "with two old guitars like a shovel and a rope" (see interview, page 10).

10 EVENING HYMNS

You And Jake

Gentle echoes of Bon Iver from Canadian indie-folk maven Jonas Bonnetta on a ghostly track from a deeply personal set of heartfelt ruminations, prompted by the loss of his father. The album title, *Spectral Dusk*, captures the mood perfectly.

11 ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Be Still [Radio Edit]

Heartfelt serenity with a bittersweet dash from the 19th solo album from the former Soft Boy, released on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Quintessentially English and – surely – not far off nomination as a national treasure.

12 WILLIAM TYLER

Cadillac Desert

The moonlighting Lambchop guitarist seems to channel Californian guitar history into an elegiac six-minute stringed



symphony that vaults deserts and canyons. Find it on *Impossible Truth*, his extraordinary second solo album of instrumental soundscapes.



Marnie Stern

13 MARNIE STERN

Noonan

Stern's famously virtuosic Van Halen-style finger-tapping guitar and shrill/sweet siren vocals are perhaps an acquired taste – but the 37-year-old New Yorker has seldom sounded as warm as she does on this life-affirming track from her fourth album.

14 BRAZOS

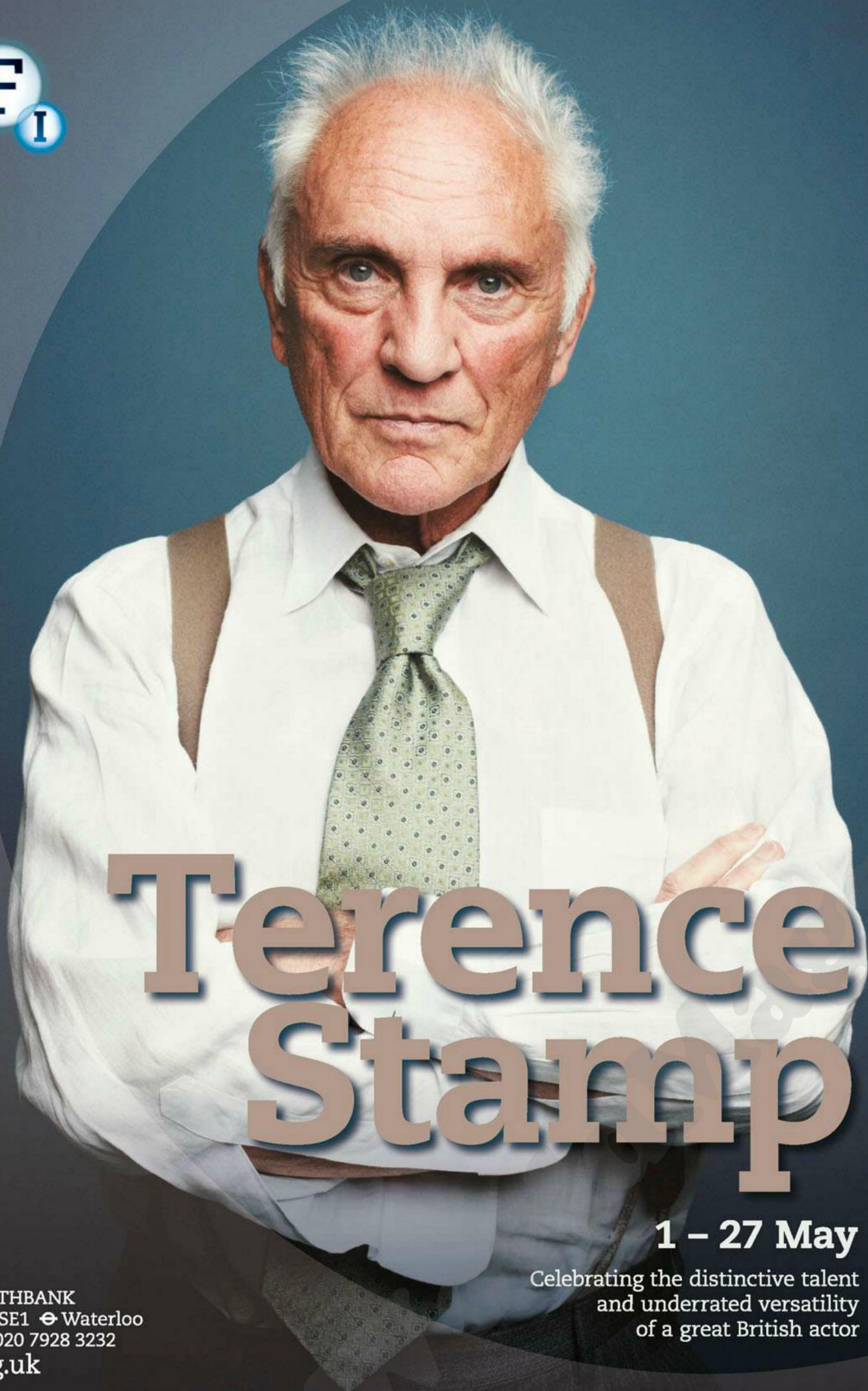
How The Ranks Was Won

Artful, groove-laden melodic contours and an intricate tale of ghost ships and ancestral dreaming on one of the standout tracks from the second album from Martin Crane's inventive Brooklyn-out-of-Texas trio.

15 THE BLACK ANGELS

Holland

A sinister Doors organ groove, fuzzy, acid-saturated drones and death cult lyrics from the retro Texan psych-rockers, whose fourth album seems to have emerged out of a *Nuggets* time capsule and landed felicitously in 2013.



Terence Stamp

1 – 27 May

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and underrated versatility
of a great British actor

Photo: Matt Holyock

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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Deborah Harry

Interview: John Lewis

Photograph: Joe Gaffney

The Blondie singer talks Muppets, black magic, Patti Smith, and William Burroughs... "My little dog bit the hell out of his gnarly little hands, ha ha!"

S

o, do we call you Debbie or Deborah?

"I used to make a big deal out of this," she explains. "Most of my friends have always called me Deb. Now, as an adult, I think Deborah is prettier. Once I got into my thirties I started to resist Debbie. It has implications of cuteness, which I can no longer assume..."

"Oh, it's true," she laughs. "I don't *wanna* be cute anymore!"

It's still frankly astonishing to remind yourself that Deborah Harry – the impossibly glamorous icon who transformed the pop landscape 35 years ago, who adorned the walls of a million teenagers in the '70s and '80s – is now 67. Together with old bandmates Chris Stein and Clem Burke, Blondie are busy releasing their 10th album and are about to start rehearsing for a world tour. Still, Harry is happy to reminisce about starring in *Hairspray*, dancing on *The Muppet Show*, and those far-off early days at CBGBs: "Vomit! Dead dogs!"



consider décor today, more like a living organism. Chris mentioned in interviews that he was interested in Aleister Crowley, so a lot of people assumed we were into black magic and he was a practitioner. It wasn't really like that. His interest in the occult was more similar to the study of hermetics and the Kaballah. I guess it's akin to yoga, studying ideas of electricity in the body, the power of thought, positive thinking. I find that endlessly interesting, and we both did. But yeah, after a while, the occult loses me. The further you go along that line, the sillier it becomes.

STAR QUESTION



When was the very first time you changed your hair colour? How old were you? To what shade? What was the style? Did roots not bother you even then?

John Waters

I was about 11 or 12, in grade school, when I started lightening my hair. The style back then wasn't very extravagant. In high school, of course, I had a beehive, a big head of bubble hair. At first I just lightened it with a little peroxide. Then I varied the colour a lot. I had some bleached-out white hair, I had red hair, green hair, black hair, you know, I did everything. This was the early 1960s. No-one had green hair then! It was hugely unusual. And people laughed a lot. Is John making jokes about my roots? The swine! Dear old John Waters was terrific on *Hairspray*. Very driven and energetic, and working with him was a breeze, 'cos he knew just

what he wanted. The entire cast and crew were really sad when we finished the shoot. Everyone just wanted to keep going!

The first band I ever saw live was Blondie at the Hammersmith Odeon in January 1980, aged 16. Who was the first band you saw?

Barry Butcher, Sittingbourne
Oh, that would have been in high school in New Jersey in the early '60s. It would have been some long-forgotten boyfriend's band playing a youth club! It was all very exciting, lots of fun, and I'd have been super-involved, helping to organise it, wanting them to be great. Just being a real groupie, of course! I don't think I went to any proper gigs until I moved to New York in 1965, when I started to see lots of great free concerts in the Park. Then I was at the Fillmore all the time.

Do you find One Direction's cover of "One Way Or Another" a bit humiliating or are you laughing all the way to the bank?

Peter Fors, Stockholm

I thought it was very good. I thought they applied it very well, to link up with the Undertones song and the name of their band. And I was flattered that they want to use it, and I'm glad it went to charity, to a good cause. All in all, it was a reasonably good experience. It would be a little churlish to complain about people doing versions of your songs and taking them to No 1, wouldn't it? Yes, I had heard of them before. They're the guys from that talent show – *X Factor*, is it? The ones who didn't win, right? They're pretty big in America! We haven't had a big boy-band for a while.

Is it true that Chris Stein's apartment was full of black magic paraphernalia when you first met him?

Emilio, West Virginia, USA
He had a walk-up on First Avenue, and it was high up, on the top floor of the building. It was bright, there were lots of windows, but it was kinda Gothic. Lots of dark wood, a statue of a nun, some nice paintings and drawings, not something you'd


STAR QUESTION



Tina would like to bring our dog Poppy on tour with us. Have you ever brought your dogs on tour with you?

Chris Frantz, Talking Heads/Tom Tom Club

Nearly. I once tried to bring my dog, Chi-chi, who is now dead. She was a tiny little thing, and I thought maybe I could bring her. But it was very disturbing. They're territorial. Maybe a big dog would be easier to travel with, but the little dog is too nervous. We travel mainly on the tourbus, and I couldn't inflict my dog on the band. This was the same animal who once sat on William Burroughs' lap when we were being interviewed together. He bit the hell out of Bill's gnarly little hands, ha ha! I now have two dogs. Kee-Suki and Jupiter. I've no idea what breed they are. They're the best ones. Mystery meat! →



“After a while,
the occult loses
me. The further
you go along that
line, the sillier
it becomes...”



The Muppets' Blondie Caper: Deborah Harry teams up with Kermit and co, 1980

STAR QUESTION



When Debbie and Fab 5 Freddy came to see me perform at Webster Hall in the Bronx, what was her initial impression when she first saw me getting busy on the turntables?

Grandmaster Flash

Oh my! Flash! I thought he was great. Impeccable. It was just wild, such an exciting performer and stylist. I was checking out hip-hop shows in the Bronx and Harlem very, very early on. Definitely 1979, probably as early as '78 or '77. The only white people there would have been the ones we came with. The atmosphere was very alive. Very energetic and interactive, before "interactive" really became an adjective that people used about events. It was a seething mass, a snakepit of activity, everyone writhing around, people answering back, lots of call-and-response, lots of shouting, "whoa-oh". Sometimes there was an amateur-hour feel, people jumping on and off the stage. Other shows, like Flash's, were billed with a specific rapper or spinner. I had a lot of records from The Sugarhill Gang. There were 45s and EPs available. "Rapture" was very much a homage. I like to think we formed a real understanding of the genre before it, but I've never claimed to be a rapper!

What was the biggest thrill for you – appearing on *The Muppet Show* or *Absolutely Fabulous*?

Prem Oswal, San Diego

That's a terrible choice to have to make – they're both pretty high on my list of career highlights! *The Muppet Show* was a big deal. I did a few sketches and I seem to remember singing "One Way Or Another", with Muppets dressed up as the band – black jackets, white shirts, skinny ties – and then I did "Call Me" in a disco, with the Muppets on backing vocals! I wasn't really interested in appearing on it until I saw Dizzy Gillespie doing it a few weeks earlier and I thought, "Oh my God, if a proper, serious, genius like Dizzy Gillespie can do it, then I've gotta do it!" But *Ab Fab*, that was possibly even more of a thrill, because that was something I'd watched and loved for a long time before appearing on it. Love it!

Your old friend David Johansen said that you were an artist, playing a part, as much Arthur Miller as Marilyn Monroe. Is that true?

Peter Savidge, Suffolk

Did David say that? That's a very nice compliment! Yes, in Blondie, to a certain degree, I think I play a character. I think what happened is that I've adopted some of the characteristics of that character, and that character has adopted some of me! It's more in the text than in the actual behaviour. It's more about playing what kind of emotional stand or situation is coming out in the lyrics. Like when I sing, "I will give you my finest hour/The one I spent watching you shower" [in "Picture This"], I'm playing a voyeur. But it's me. What can I do? I've gotta stand by it!

STAR QUESTION



What question, that you have never been asked, would you ask yourself and why?
Alan Vega, Suicide

Oh, Alan! That's a toughie. I'm always questioning myself, always, and beating myself up a little too much. So I guess the answer would be, "Why are you always beating yourself up?" I guess that fits in with Alan Vega. Have you ever seen Suicide playing live? That guy was always beating himself up! Yeah, I've always been hugely self-critical. I dunno if that was a lack of confidence, but I was very shy. And inexperienced. Ask anyone who saw Blondie in the early days, I was a wreck onstage! I'm a bit better now...

Did you and Patti Smith really hate each other?

Daniella Rodriguez, Bogotá, Colombia

I never hated Patti, and I don't know if she's capable of hatred. Even if she was, I don't think she'd waste her time hating me. Thing is, I always think Blondie were at the bottom rung of the whole CBGBs ladder. I think that Patti didn't really have any time for me, I think she was determined and working very hard and moving very hard, and we were so divergent in styles. She came at her craft from a literary, intellectual point of view, whereas I – although I have read some books, you know! – but I think I came strictly from a more underground pop-culture

thing. So there was a schism. But no, no needle between us.

STAR QUESTION



Debbie was a real sweetie. No attitude, no side, but a complete professional, as well as being very personable. Does

she recall that screen test for *Alphaville*? Robert Fripp

Oh, dear Robert Fripp! We all loved his playing on Bowie's "Heroes", and lots of other things, and we were always getting him to jump up onstage to play with Blondie. He's just a great character and a very interesting man, so knowledgeable about so many things. Yes, me and Robert had a photo session with Chris. We were going to do a remake of *Alphaville*, the Jean-Luc Godard movie. We had talked about it with Amos Poe – the No Wave director, who did *The Blank Generation* and *Subway Riders* and stuff. We hadn't finalised anything, but we did have a tentative agreement with Mr Godard. It was going to be our own production. Nothing came of it, though. We weren't really in the film business, we didn't have a proper film producer working with us, and we didn't get the money together and it kinda went by the wayside. But it might have been fun...

Can you remember any lyrics from your first band, The Wind In The Willows?

Sophia Harrison, Williamsburg

I actually do. We recorded an album in 1968. I remember a song called "Uptown Girl": [starts singing] "Realise/Before your eyes/And your short skirts tossing at the morning... der der der... or a downtown tripping anytime you could..." And there's another one called "Jeanie Judy": "The Jeanie Judy, I hear you say/ Recalling images of yesterday/ Upon the present's passionate years/ Shattered forth in happy tears..." They were all pretty hippy-dippyish lyrics! I didn't write any of them. In the past couple of years I've had a reconnection with Brooks Arthur, who was the studio engineer and owner of the studio where we recorded that album. He now does all the music for Adam Sandler's movies. It reminded me of being a novice in the music industry! ☺

Blondie tour the UK in June as part of the Forestry Commission's Forest Live Concert series



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"Some of
Trouble Will
Find Me is
like The
Band and
Air in the
same room"

Aaron Dessner



National heroes, Soho,
London, April 7, 2013:
(l-r) Scott and Bryan
Devendorf, Matt
Berninger, Bryce and
Aaron Dessner

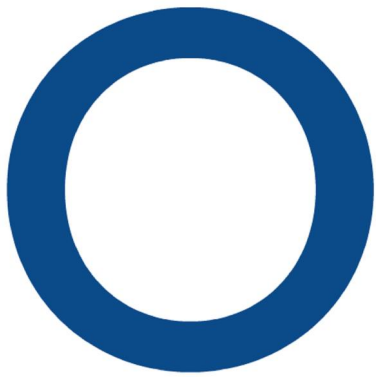
Story: Andy Gill

Photographs: Chris McAndrew

THE BAD NEWS BEARS

If you're looking for trouble, you've come to the right place... In an arty Berlin hotel, THE NATIONAL have convened to reveal the dark secrets of their new album, *Trouble Will Find Me*. How have a band who radiate contentment come up with a set of "fun songs about death"? "I feel," says Matt Berninger, "like I've always been going through an awkward phase!"





ON THE FACE of it, Berlin has not coped well with reunification. Deprived of its status as capitalist show-house to the Eastern Bloc, it's a curiously dysfunctional capital for such a prosperous

nation, architecturally undistinguished and swamped in the kind of bland graffiti tags that advertise a despairing combination of deprivation and lack of imagination.

Ironically, as you approach the old East Berlin, there are signs of life: the old Wall has become a gallery for some notably deranged and psychedelic street art, and the low rents and cheap living standards have caused an influx of international bohemians unable to survive in expensive Hoxton or the Left Bank. In the lobby of the Michelberger Hotel on Warschauer Strasse, a poster advertises a free tour of Alternative Berlin, promising "Street Art/Graffiti, Abandoned Sites, Artist Squats, Bizarre Shops, Underground Culture, Urban Lifestyle".

Housed in a semi-reclaimed tenement building surrounding an enclosed courtyard, the Michelberger has a funky industrial charm you don't get at the Four Seasons. Shelves of books and stacks of old luggage decorate the lobby, and the bar area is furnished with a motley selection of used office furniture. The bartenders sport interesting headgear, and the hotel is promoting its own brand of coconut water, Fountain Of Youth. It's here that The National have chosen to launch their new album, *Trouble Will Find Me*, the most potent realisation thus far of their trademark blend of downbeat moods and uplifting melodies.

The hotel, explains guitarist Bryce Dessner, is owned by some good friends of the band, and seemed the obvious place to base their operations, with a secret show planned for the evening. "Usually Matt [Berninger, vocalist] and Aaron [Bryce's guitar twin] fly around eight cities in eight days, and they come home grumpy, so this just seemed a much better alternative, to have us all there in one place. It's a way of making it a bit special for us, instead of something we dread.

SETLIST

MICHELBERGER HOTEL, APRIL 4, 2013

Demons
Don't Swallow The Cap
Heavenfaced
Graceless
Fireproof
Slipped
Sea Of Love
Humiliation
Pink Rabbits
Bloodbuzz Ohio
Fake Empire
I Should Live In Salt
Mr November
Terrible Love



And it's good in terms of learning to play the new songs." The band's presence is celebrated throughout the place. The walls of the bar are covered in live photos and artworks by the musicians and their families, including moody photos by bassist Scott Devendorf and multimedia paintings by the Dessners' sister Jessica. Screens in the corridors are silently looping the Chris Hegedus/DA Pennebaker webcast film of The National's 2010 show at the Brooklyn Academy Of Music. Turn on the TV in your room, and it's on there too.

TROUBLE WILL FIND ME is the sixth album of a career that has seen the band cruise a leisurely career arc from the low-key but polished indie Americana of their eponymous 2001 debut via the game-changing *Alligator*, to 2007's *Boxer*. That album established them as a major act, with the songs "Start A War" and "Fake Empire" featuring in various television dramas – the latter even being used for Barack Obama's campaign video. With their profile raised even further by the Dessner twins' assiduous cultural networking – notably curating the *Dark Was The Night* benefit album – 2010's *High Violet* was a huge success, selling in excess of 600,000 copies worldwide and confirming their growing status, to the point where they spent the next 22 months touring it across the globe.

"After *High Violet*, we finished six shows in New York [at the Beacon Theatre in December 2011] and that was the end of that thing," says singer Matt Berninger. "Aaron had a baby,

Bryan [Devendorf, drummer] had a baby, and I had a two-year-old, and at that point we thought, let's not worry about making another record now, maybe we'll put another one out in four or five years, right now we have other stuff to catch up on. I think that took the pressure off, and because of that, stuff started happening. Bryce and Aaron started throwing things into a folder – 'someday we'll make a piece out of this' – so there was a pure and relaxed birth of a lot of these songs."

"Babies sleep all the time, so I had a lot of time on my hands," explains Aaron. "The studio is in the garage, and I'd

go and record ideas. I was inspired by the whole experience, and having all these ideas – stuff was coming out that really felt like songs. The one that became 'I Should Live In Salt' came as a direct response to Matt sending me what he called 'breezy strummers' – Cat Stevens, certain Bowie songs – and within a day he sent it back with the chorus melody.

"Something about the process was more spontaneous and freewheeling this time, despite the lyrics being more poetic and personal, and

"We wanted the album to have a little hop in its step. There's something T.Rex-ish about parts of it..."

Aaron Dessner



The National onstage at The Michelberger, Berlin, April 4, 2013



Bloodbuzz London:
The National in Soho,
April 7, 2013

there being more notes, musically. Once 'I Should Live In Salt' existed, Matt and I realised we were making a record: there was something new about that song, the register he was singing in, the quality of it, and that weird late-'70s Korg synth – there's something playful about it but also emotional, and I think something aesthetically clicked at that moment."

Feeding into Aaron's music were influences from what he was listening to at the time, like the War On Drugs and Kurt Vile albums, and Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind*, for the way that Daniel Lanois' swampy production lends depth to the emotions. He admits that "Slipped" from the new LP came about directly from *Time Out Of Mind*: "I was playing 'Not Dark Yet' on the piano, changed it around and ended up with 'Slipped'," he explains. "It was an attempt to write a classic slow ballad, I wanted to give it this lilting emotion. 'Gospel' from *Boxer* was another attempt to write something like that."

For Berninger, Roy Orbison was a particular influence, emboldening him to layer more vocal melodies within one song than before. And the band paid extra attention to subtleties of metre and accent, with several songs employing weird time-signatures and random bars of three beats.

"A lot of the songs have two drum sets," says Aaron, "where Bryan would play one set, then another, to create this subtle slap or bounciness to it. We wanted it to have a little hop in its step. There's something almost T.Rex-ish about parts of it..."

"Like something glam-rock-ish," adds bassist Scott Devendorf, "but without the pyrotechnics – a '70s groove with drum fills."

"Even on 'Pink Rabbits', part of the drum track sounds like it could be Levon Helm," says Aaron, "but we layered in electronic snares, to give it a certain austerity, like The Band and Air in the same room – the bloom of the synth beneath the barroom piano. We were trying to create an aesthetic that would sound new to us: where in the past we might have used orchestrations, strings and winds, here we were using synthetic textures and bass pedals, electronic overlays of the drums, in order to give it a little more pop sensibility."

Intriguingly, drummer Bryan Devendorf, who warms up before shows by performing Steve Reich's "Clapping

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

WHAT WE DID ON OUR HOLIDAYS

We round up The National's recent extra-curricular projects...



SHARON VAN ETTEN TRAMP

An uncompromisingly stark series of

ruminations on a collapsed relationship, Sharon Van Etten's *Tramp* was recorded sporadically over the course of a year at Aaron's studio. He captured the full gamut of Van Etten's emotions, from the gritty "Warsaw" to the resignation of "Kevin's" and the poised desperation of "I'm Wrong", treating each heartbreaking episode with an almost saintly tenderness.



LOCAL NATIVES HUMMINGBIRD

Again, produced by Aaron in his garage studio, Local Natives' second album bears a striking resemblance to The National, due partly to Dessner's serving as a substitute fifth member, and partly to the similarity of approach and mood, coloured by the departure

of bassist Andy Hamm and the death of singer Kelcey Ayer's mother. A warmly cathartic album.



KRONOS QUARTET AT PROSPECT PARK

After contributing to *Dark Was The Night*, the Kronos Quartet commissioned Bryce Dessner to write something for their concert in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, stipulating that it shouldn't be too quiet. The resulting piece, "Aheym", was an intense, fiercely rhythmic work that prompted the quartet to commission three further works from Dessner. All four will be released as an album in the near future.



PLANETARIUM, WITH SUFJAN STEVENS

A venue in Holland asked Bryce Dessner and his neighbour Sufjan Stevens to write a piece for seven trombones, to be performed by a Dutch trombone collective. Somehow, in typical Stevens style, this metamorphosed into yet another multiple series work, this one in the form of songs about the planets. It's not as catchy as Holst, but the chordings and harmonies are quintessentially Sufjan.



➤ Music" (for two people) with drumsticks, writes out all his drum parts. "It's a way to memorise them," he explains. "I find things I wouldn't otherwise be able to do physically, by switching things around. It's a fun visual game, you write it out and alter the next barline down, to see what happens. It helps to add details to an otherwise linear flow." "These are details that make us feel excited as musicians," says Bryce.

"Stoners," concludes Matt, "are really gonna like this album!"

AS RECORDING PROGRESSED, it became clear that while the melodies and arrangements of songs such as "Fireproof" and "Pink Rabbits" were some of the most lissom and elegant that the band had ever devised, Berninger's lyrics were touching areas potentially darker than any they had investigated before, with lines such as

"We have
been called
depressive,
but this time
I didn't care
about trying
to write
against that"
Matt Berninger

"Your love is such a swamp" and "All my thoughts of you, bullets through rotten fruit". Several songs were about death – though not, he maintains, in a depressing way, claiming instead that it's "a fun record about dying".

"I became aware, after recording, that there are several songs about death," he says. "Three specifically: 'Heavenfaced', 'Don't Swallow The Cap' and 'Humiliation', in which people are facing mortality, existence or non-existence. But those ideas were coming out in ways I thought were light or funny, and I think some of it had to do with my idea that your afterlife is something you see happening as you raise a child – or even how it affects your friends. I don't believe in any tangible heaven or hell, more that our heaven or hell is formed by how we treat others who will be around long after we are gone. It's almost a soothing rumination on those thoughts. 'Humiliation' is about, if I were to die in an embarrassing situation, what would the world think of me, what would be the lasting impression I would leave? When I say 'fun songs about death', it's not so much fear of death, it's an exploration of thinking about what it means. I don't want it to seem like a depressing, death-obsessed record."

Nevertheless, the characters in most of the songs on *Trouble Will Find Me* do seem to share a fraught emotional condition, whether it's the apologetic regret of "I Should Live In Salt" (written for Matt's brother Tom), the heartbreak of "Pink Rabbits", the discomfiture of "Graceless", the numbness of "Fireproof", or the weary depression of "Demons". The latter song includes a line, "I'm going through an awkward phase", which could apply to virtually all these characters.

"Yeah," agrees Berninger, warily. "I'm trying to think how much that's a self-portrait – I feel like I've always been going through an awkward phase! It's just a fun line – so many of these things are not autobiographical, they are things that are emotionally personal, without being specific. Was I going through an awkward phase? Probably, in terms of trying to figure out how to be a good father. A lot of those songs aren't really about me, more an embracing of human imperfections and anxieties. That's just the stuff I love to sing about."

"It's funny – as a band and as people, we're all happier and more stable than ever. Bryan has babies, I have a daughter, Aaron does too, and I think there's a sense of perspective that allowed me the confidence to write whatever I was feeling. So there's love songs, songs about anxieties – the stability

KRISTIAN YEOMANS/NME/IPC; SYNDICATION

LIVE! TONIGHT!

NATIONAL ENQUIRER

Inside the band's forthcoming tour doc...

NAMED AFTER A song on the Boxer album, *Mistaken For Strangers* is a

documentary film by Matt Berninger's younger brother Tom, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival on April 17, 2013. Invited along as a roadie for the High Violet tour, Tom decided to bring along his camera and moonlight as an "irreverent documentarian", causing occasional stress behind the scenes – as might be expected from someone whose tastes lean more to horror movies and heavy metal than the kind of nuanced music that is The National's stock in trade.



Matt with his brother Tom, in a still from *Mistaken For Strangers*

Bryan Devendorf describes the finished film as being "about a 30-year-old guy finding himself, coming of age in the shadow of his rock-star brother", while the brother in question offers a fraternally generous assessment. "It's about the band, and about family, and about how hard it is finding your footing in the world," says Matt. "Even though it's mostly about my brother, you learn more about the band than anything else we could have done."



Paradise garage: Aaron Dessner in his home studio

TROUBLED SOULS

The guest contributors to The National's new album revealed

SUFJAN STEVENS The pan-stylistic musical genius plays a Tempest drum machine and Mofo synthesiser on "Demons", "Pink Rabbits" and "I Need My Girl". Also responsible for crucial harmony change in fourth chorus of latter song.

RICHARD REED PARRY The multi-instrumentalist from Arcade Fire and Bell Orchestre plays keyboards and provides arrangements and vocal melodies, most notably the string arrangement that concludes the final track, "Hard To Find".

THOMAS BARTLETT Classically trained pianist who founded Dovesman with Sam Amidon (and released a "re-imagined" *Footloose* soundtrack on the Dessners' label) is "all over" the LP on keys.

ST VINCENT AKA Annie Clark, who has worked with The Polyphonic Spree and Sufjan Stevens, and has three albums of her own – as well as *Love This Giant* with David Byrne – is on background vocals throughout.

NONA MARIE INVIE The singer/keyboardist with Minnesota folk-jazz combo Dark Dark Dark also provides background vocals throughout, most prominently at the end of "This Is The Last Time".

SHARON VAN ETEN The singer-songwriter, whose third album *Tramp* was produced by Aaron Dessner, provides background vocals throughout.

allowed me to leave my guard down. We've been called sad and depressive, but this time I didn't care about trying to write against that, I just wrote songs that were moving me. Sometimes, writing about the sadness and the romance and the demons can be a process of self-soothing."

Matt does, however, deny that any inherent sadness is entirely down to him, claiming that the music the others send to him already has its own personality, and that his lyrics are usually being led by the music. This would amuse Arcade Fire's Richard Reed Parry, who has been an important contributor to *High Violet* and *Trouble Will Find Me*. Parry was puzzled when he heard the final version of "Conversation 16", the song he did most work on from the former album. "I wrote a choral arrangement to it, then the lyric changed completely – the words that inspired my arrangement had disappeared. I'm like, 'What? It's about what?' But it worked perfectly!"

Parry is frequently amazed at The National's persistence, their faith in musical paths that might seem unfruitful.

"They have a certain faith in the outcome of what they do that I find really inspiring," he says. "What I find fascinating is that they can start with an idea that I wouldn't have enough faith to work with, something simple, and just continue to work on it with a certain stubbornness, and see it through to a place that's really unique and beautiful and complex. They'll be bashing and bashing against an idea which, if I were in charge – which thankfully I'm not – I'd be saying, 'Give this up! It'll never be anything!' But they keep turning them over, adding and taking things out, until they reach something beautiful. It's an amazing process to be part of."

LATER THAT EVENING at the Michelberger Hotel, The National wander onto a stage erected in the interior courtyard, to give the premiere performance of *Trouble Will Find Me*. Red bulbs are strung up, and projections of plants – palm fronds, gigantic daisies – play around the walls, illuminating the faces of residents at their windows.

The band launches into "Demons", accompanied by a small brass section which then locks into a staccato, minimalist mode for the following "Don't Swallow The Cap", powered by pattering drum machine. "Heavenfaced" is a slower ballad illuminated by glints of guitar, and "Graceless" builds to a pulsing climax of scrubbed guitars. As the set progresses, Berninger struggles with a maverick music stand, eventually tossing his lyric sheets aside. "I thought the lyrics would be helpful," he says, "but they were just staring at me!"

But it's a good gig, despite his misgivings, climbing to a finale of old favourites like "Fake Empire" and "Bloodbuzz Ohio". "Pink Rabbits" – most listeners' favourite track from the new album – is a haunting highlight, boasting some of Berninger's wryest, most moving lines ("You didn't see me, I was falling apart/I was a white girl in a crowd of white girls in the park/...I was a television version of a person with a broken heart"). Elsewhere,

the Devendorf brothers lock into a compelling version of the classic Neu! motorik groove for "Humiliation", and, introducing "Sea Of Love", Bryce Dessner reveals that part of the track was recorded in this same hotel. Stagehands appear at certain points, turning up the onstage heaters to thaw out the Dessner twins' fingers so they can better negotiate the interlocking guitar figures of songs like "Fireproof", designed to emulate the harmonic structures of Simon & Garfunkel.

"My brother and I learned to play instruments together, looking at each other," explains Aaron Dessner, "and so much of what we've done has to do with playing off of each other, or playing mirrors of each other, inversions, being able to play the same thing different ways, or harmonise with each other. We had this project called The Long Count, which was about being twins, a song-cycle in which the music was based on these inversions, these mirror things: I would play something and he would play the opposite, or an eighth note off, or inverted. I think that interplay goes on in all of our albums – it's like a game between brothers."

The brotherly aspect seems to operate differently than with other rock bands, where the "creative friction" can lead to brothers never speaking to each other again.

"I think these guys being twins leads to less conflict than being brothers," says Scott Devendorf. "There's more of a shared bond with twins, they're more collaborative. With Bryan and myself, and Matt and his brother, who toured with us, it's helpful in terms of travelling and being a family. Obviously you have disagreements, but it's helped keep the band together."

"My brother has a movie coming out called *Mistaken For Strangers*," says Matt. "He followed us on our High Violet tour. It's a portrait of the band through a self-portrait of my brother. Part of his motivation in filming it was so people would realise there was another brother. I'm often asked what it's like to be the only one without a brother, and my mom sends him all those interviews, and I think he had a little chip on his shoulder!"

A few days after the show, in a London basement club, Berninger explains how nerve-wracking it had been.

"We call ourselves the Bad News Bears... There's always an awkwardness people are drawn to"
Aaron Dessner

"It was the first time we'd played those songs," he says. "I didn't enjoy it as much as I hoped, I got overwhelmed by anxiety and couldn't remember the lyrics. But it was cool..."

His reservations are largely unfounded: a work of grace and portent, laconic humour and heartfelt emotion, *Trouble Will Find Me* will surely become The National's first chart-topping album, the confirmation of the effectiveness of their careful, unhurried approach to developing their career and music.

"We're aware of how fragile existence is as a band, and also how far we've come," says Aaron Dessner. "We call ourselves the Bad News Bears, because no matter how hard we try to sound good, there's always an awkwardness there which is part of what people are drawn to."

"There's a certain humanity about the band," agrees Scott Devendorf. "We're not a supergroup, and the songs feel human: we like that about other music, and if we can bring a little of that into our own music, we're happy. I think that humanity has taken us a long way, even though it takes a while sometimes. We've focused on trying to be true to what we think." **👊**

Trouble Will Find Me is reviewed on page 77; the band will tour the UK in November



Collaborator Sharon Van Etten

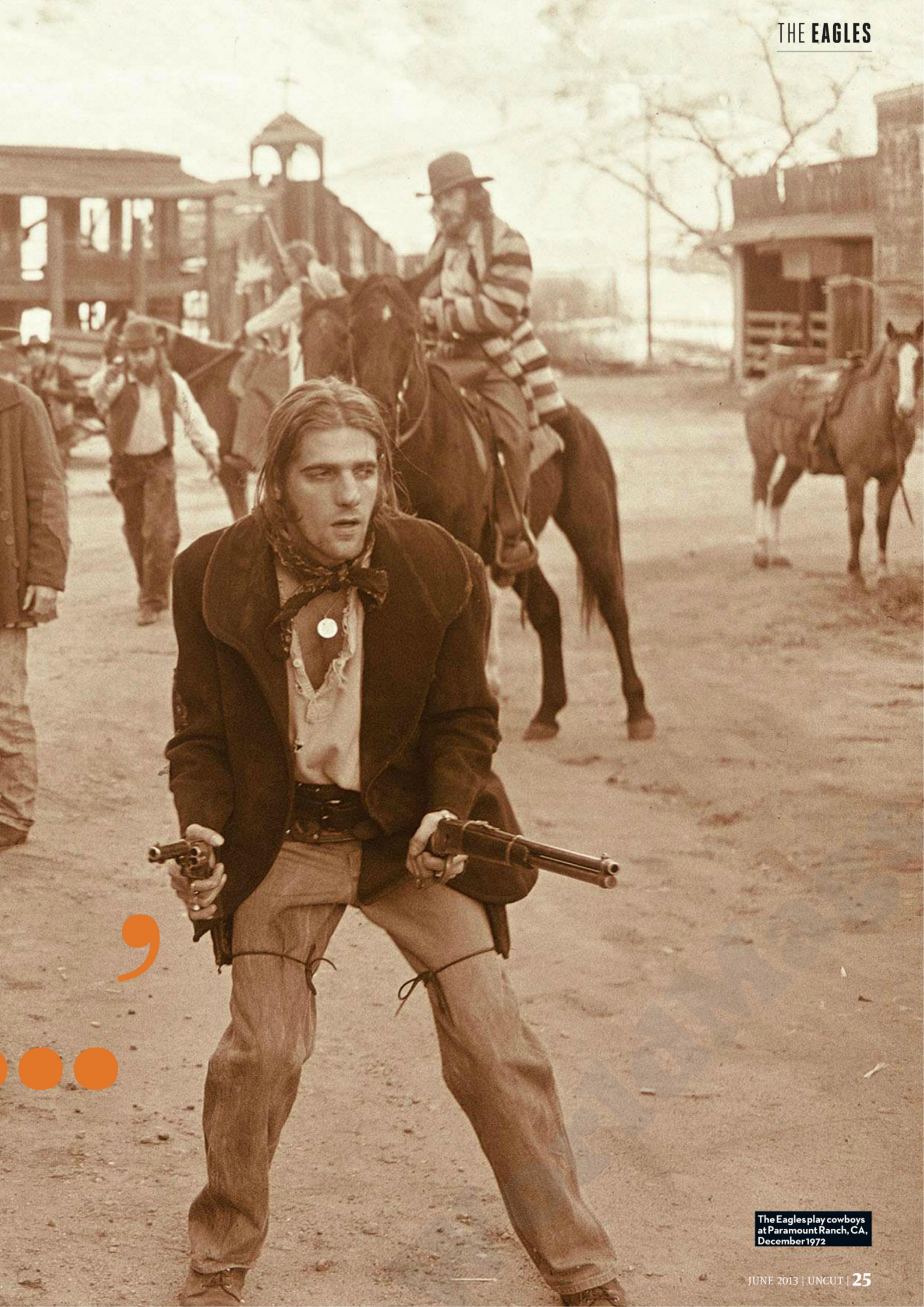


Story: Graeme Thomson
Photos: Henry Diltz

‘We
were
quite
taken
with
the idea
of being

outlaws.

1973. THE EAGLES are a ruthlessly ambitious band – “a benevolent dictatorship” – on the verge of superstardom. Why, then, do they make a “fucking cowboy record” in wild west London? Forty years on, the band, Jackson Browne and JD Souther unravel the legend of *Desperado*: “We’ve had the hits, now we want acceptance as serious artists.”



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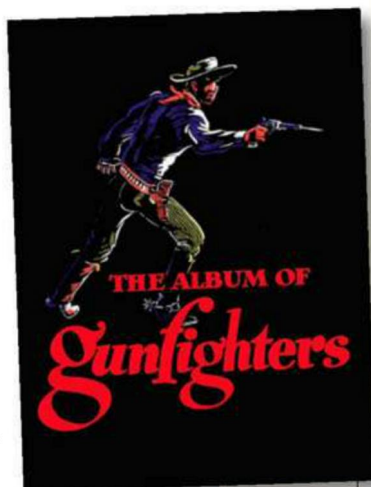


The Eagles play cowboys
at Paramount Ranch, CA,
December 1972

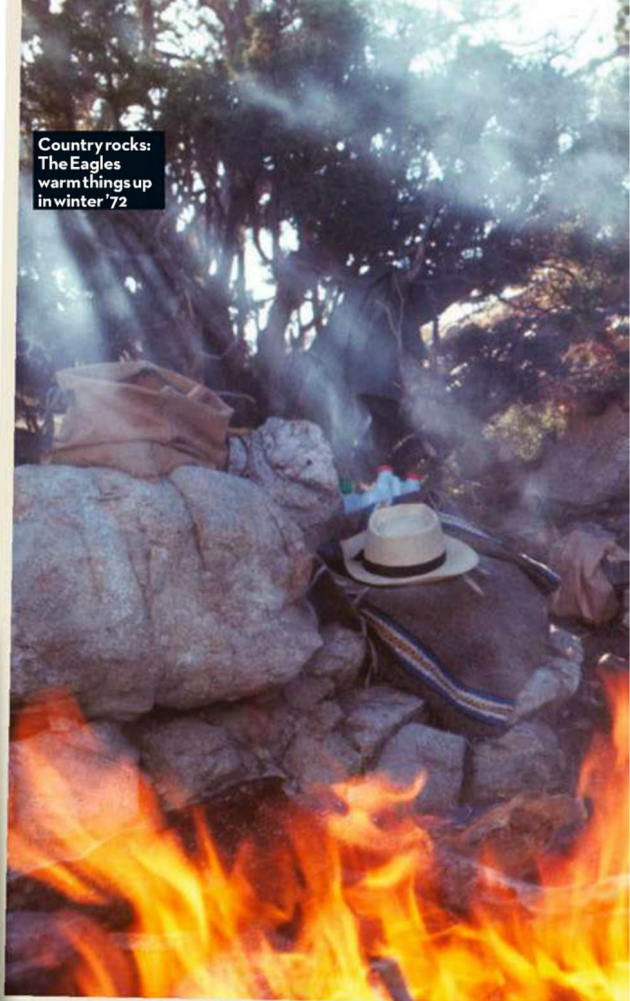
SOME 80 YEARS after Bob Dalton met his bloody end during a shoot-out in smalltown Kansas, a book is being passed around a \$60-a-month apartment in Echo Park, the low-rent Los Angeles locale where Glenn Frey, Jackson Browne and JD Souther live, write, drink, smoke and plot their futures.

The Album Of Gunfighters by J Marvin Hunter and Hoan H Rose contains photographs and brief biographies of the outlaws, bandits and bounty hunters of the Old West. Among the usual suspects – Jesse James, Billy the Kid, John Wesley Hardin – are the Dalton Gang, a band of train robbers from the early 1890s. Rootless and reckless, the Daltons lived outside conventional rules and were rarely seen until they blew into town, grabbed the spoils and split again. To the young musicians in Echo Park, hugely ambitious yet by no means immune to romance, certain parallels start to become apparent.

“We were quite taken with the idea of being, or at least portraying, outlaws,” says Souther. “It was a serviceable metaphor for our story.” Alongside Browne, Souther was one of two honorary Eagles who would shortly co-write “Doolin-Dalton”, the lead song on the band’s second album. Although some of the participants now express reservations about the premise – “Generally, I thought there were limitations to the metaphor of musicians as gunslingers!” Browne tells *Uncut* – the framing device for the songs on *Desperado* had personal resonance for the



The photo-book that inspired *Desperado*



Country rocks: The Eagles warm things up in winter '72

Eagles. Frey was from Michigan, Don Henley from Texas. Bernie Leadon hailed from Minnesota and Randy Meisner from Nebraska. Like generations of Americans before them, including the Dalton Gang, they had each headed west in search of glory. “All of us went out west,” says Leadon. “People would go to LA and fail, and the responsible ones would move back home and start a family, while the malcontent never-say-die type personalities said, ‘No, I’m staying!’ That was our story. The idea was: ‘How are we feeling about our lives and what we’re doing, and would the people in a gang have felt the same way?’ Breaking out of societal expectations and doing something extraordinary. We were just kids, but we were looking at our lives and trying to make reasonable comment about it.”

The result was an ambitious song-cycle that sold poorly, had no hits and was slated by their label as a “fucking cowboy record”. But the LP made the Eagles more than just another country-rock band. It made them mythic.

STRIKING GOLD

TALES OF 'DESPERADO'

The song that became a hit for Linda Ronstadt...

P ERHAPS THE EAGLES’ most beautiful and emotive song, “Desperado” caught everyone off guard. Previously, Don Henley’s sole writing contribution had been the words to “Witchy Women” – “then the next song he finished was ‘Desperado!’” laughs Bernie Leadon. It wasn’t just a pivotal moment in Henley’s writing; in displaying an explicit awareness of the emotional pitfalls of the lifestyle they’d chosen, it became an iconic Eagles song and a natural bookend to the equally reflective “Hotel California”.

According to photographer Henry Diltz, Henley had written an embryonic version of the song before the *Desperado* concept idea was fully formed. “It was started by Don as a



wake-up song for a friend,” says Diltz. “‘For God’s sake Leo, why don’t you come to your senses?’” Never a single for the Eagles, it became a hit for Linda Ronstadt later in 1973, with JD Souther producing. “It’s a beautiful melody and a good piece of literary work – the metaphors are rich, he was showing that his English major had paid off,” says Leadon, adding with a laugh, “I don’t think I wanted to admit at the time how good it was!”

THE EAGLES ALWAYS had a complicated dynamic. They were less a one-for-all gang of musketeers, more individual sharpshooters who formed an affiliation to pull off the biggest job of their lives. Frey and Don Henley were friends who left Linda Ronstadt’s backing band to form their own group. They recruited Leadon, a guitarist, banjo player and baritone singer formerly of Dillard & Clark and the Burritos, and Meisner, ex-Poco bassist and a gifted tenor. Meisner and Leadon were the more experienced and country-leaning, and perhaps the most accomplished musicians; Frey and Henley had the most forceful personalities and, in time, the most persuasive songs. It was never a sentimental attachment. “When we got together we defined our business plan: we wanted to be successful, world famous, acclaimed and rich,” says Leadon. “One of the first things Frey said was, ‘OK, let’s keep this simple. No Christmas cards.’ Did we go on holiday and call each other? No.”

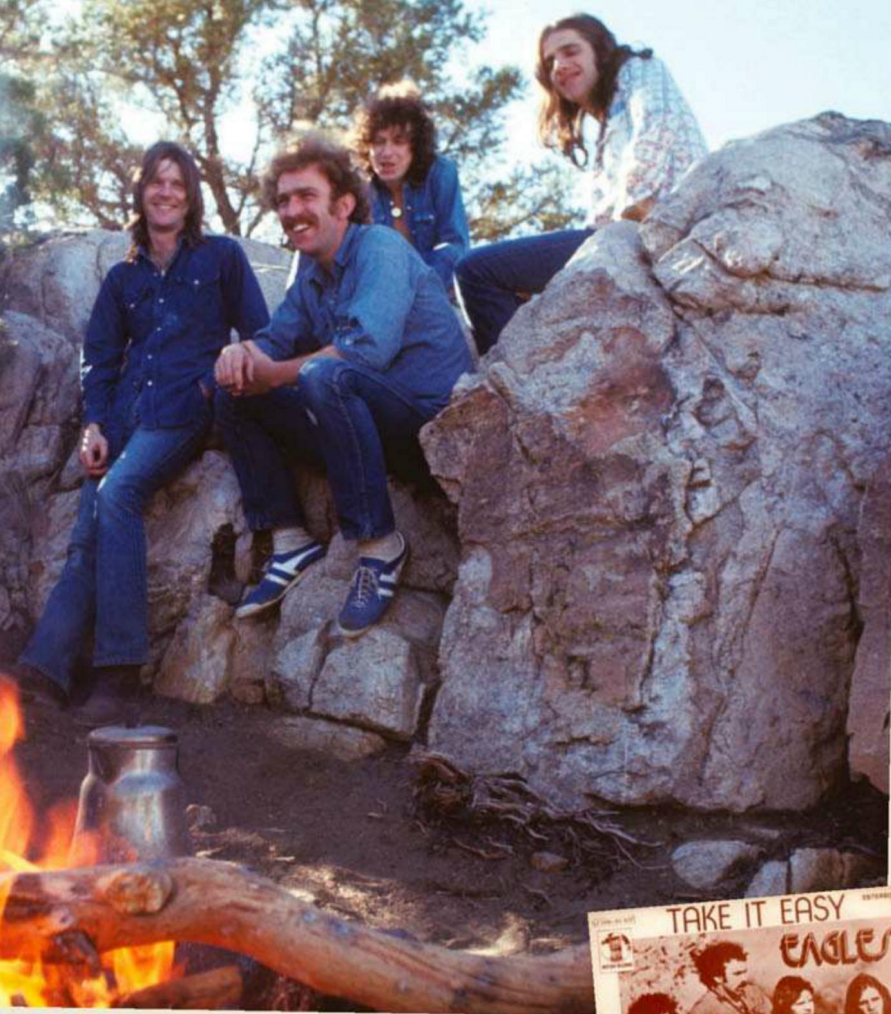
GANG CULTURE

"THEY WERE DOOLIN, DOOLIN AND DALTON"

The men behind the song...

GRAT, BOB AND Emmett Dalton were Oklahoma lawmen turned train robbers whose gang included George "Bitter Creek" Newcomb and Bill Doolin. Their most celebrated crime, recalled in "Doolin-Dalton", was an audacious attempt to rob two banks in Coffeyville, Kansas simultaneously on October 5, 1892, an attempt to "beat anything Jesse James ever did - rob two banks at once, in broad daylight." Their raids on CM Condon & Co and

the First National Bank ended in a shoot-out that left Bob and Grat dead alongside two other gang members. Emmett received 23 gunshot wounds but survived. Jailed for 14 years he died, aged 66, in 1937. After the Dalton Gang combusted, Bill Doolin formed an alliance with a fourth Dalton brother, William. It's the partnership between these two Bills that largely inspired "Doolin-Dalton". Originally calling themselves the Doolin Dalton Gang, they later became The Wild Bunch.

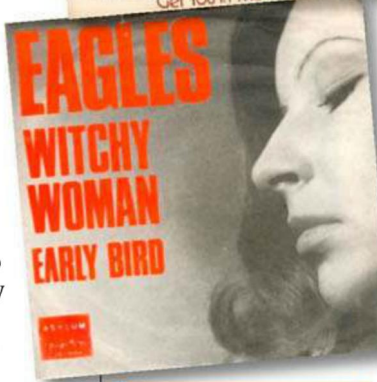
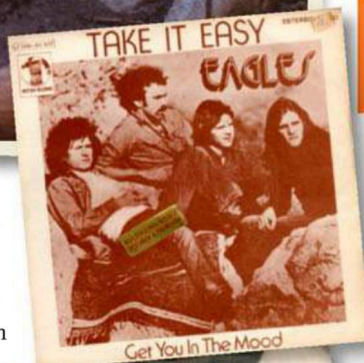


Although never members of the band, Souther and Browne were integral parts of the Eagles' creative family. Frey and Souther shared a one-room apartment at 1020 Laguna Avenue; Browne lived downstairs, where he wrote "Take It Easy", the song that gave the band a major hit with their very first single. "Even when JD and Jackson weren't directly involved in the songwriting they were involved in dialogue and ideas," says Ron Stone, then a senior member of David Geffen and Elliot Roberts' management company. "It raised the threshold for songwriting very high. Every word and melody counted. It wasn't a casual enterprise."

Taken from their eponymous debut album, released on Asylum in June 1972, "Take It Easy" and its follow up, "Witchy Woman", were both sizeable hits. "There was all this success and then - whammo - we were due back in the studio," says Leadon. "Frey said at the time, 'We've had the hits, now what we want is critical acceptance as serious artists. We'll do that with this album.'"

The album-orientated premise found a focus, says Browne, with "the book I'd been given about gunfighters of the Old West. I showed it to the guys, and I think it was Glenn who started singing, 'They were Doolin, Doolin and Dalton...'" Souther recalls it slightly differently. "Truthfully, the seeds of the beginning sequence are hazy now, but the first picture my memory can dredge up is Jackson singing the first verse [of 'Doolin-Dalton'] at a rehearsal in Hollywood and it making me smile."

The other key foundation song was "Desperado", a tough-but-tender ballad primarily written by Henley that became the album's emotional anchor point and, according to Browne, was "really the seed of the whole thing" [see panel]. At this point, Leadon recalls that "Glenn sat everybody down and mapped out which characters in the gang could have songs written about them, or encouraged us to write songs about this concept. It's a little bit of a thin premise, the outlaw gang compared to the modern rock'n'roll band, but then so are most Hollywood movies..."



"Generally, I thought there were limitations to the metaphor of musicians as gunslingers"

Jackson Browne



Bill Powers, Bob Dalton, Grat Dalton, Dick Brown

The rest of the material came quickly. The only non-original song on the record, "Outlaw Man", was written by David Blue, who was signed to Geffen and Roberts' management roster. "He was in the office almost every day," says Leadon. "I think Frey picked up on it." Blue's song fit the premise perfectly, but in fact much of *Desperado's* conceptual unity relies on the power of suggestion. "It told a story if you wanted it to, and it didn't really matter if you didn't, because the songs were strong enough to hold up on their own," according to its producer, Glyn Johns.

Leadon wrote the lowering "Bitter Creek" after Dalton gangster George "Bitter Creek" Newcomb, although it only references outlaw exploits in its final verse. His other song on the record, "Twenty-One" - "a silly banjo song about youthful optimism," according to its author - captures the excitement of being "young and fast", full of bravado and intent on grabbing what the world has to offer. The hard-rocking "Out Of Control" is fuelled by the same reckless energy, familiar to most touring musicians, but "Tequila Sunrise" describes the flipside, the "hollow feelin'" of the itinerant life. "Saturday Night" is similarly downbeat, a slow, nostalgic waltz lamenting the end of innocence

→ and the lack of a tender touch. None of these songs are explicitly tied to the concept, but spun around “Doolin-Dalton”, “Desperado” and “Outlaw Man”, and suffused with the atmosphere of the open plains and a tough, peculiarly male kind of loneliness, they easily trick the listener into believing they are.

Desperado may have been intended, as cover photographer Henry Diltz puts it, to be about “young adventurous dudes living by their talents and wits, seeking their fortunes and looking for ladies”, but it is, ultimately, an album of shadows, moral ambivalence and cold morning-afters. After all, they knew how the story ended: *The Album Of Gunfighters* offered graphic illustrations of renegades after they had been caught by the law. “It was filled with pictures of recently captured and killed late 19th-Century outlaws, including the Dalton gang,” says Souther, who took the book along to the cover shoot [see panel]. On the back of the album the band, alongside Browne and Souther, lie dead and bound, while above them stand a vengeful posse consisting of, among others, Glyn Johns, manager John Hartmann and road manager Tommy Nixon. The inference was clear. “Oh yeah,” says Browne. “The whole thing really comes together in that shot on the back where all the musicians are lying there dead!”

One of the last songs written, mostly by Meisner, “Certain Kind Of Fool” explored the mindset behind the “crazy kid” driven towards pursuing an extraordinary life. The protagonist who “*had a reputation spreading like fire through the land*”, could be either a bandit or a virtuoso. “The idea of musicians as outlaws was never intended by me to be the whole metaphor,” says Browne. “It was more something you could hint at, and the song on that album that does that best is ‘Certain Kind Of Fool’. It could be about a gun, it could be about a guitar, and it’s not really about cowboys at all. There’s no western motif.” It is also in many ways an eerie premonition of what would happen to the Eagles after success spun them around. “*It wasn’t for the money*,” sings Meisner plaintively. “*At least, it didn’t start that way...*”

EAGLES HAD been recorded at Olympic Studios in London with Glyn Johns in February 1972. Eight months later they were back, again with Johns, this time recording at Island Records’ studio in Basing Street. The four adopted Californians, singing country-rock and hymning the dusty myths of the Old West, arrived in a city in thrall to Bolan and Bowie. The culture clash was one to relish. The label found them flats on the King’s Road and they would travel by cab back and forth to the studio. At night they visited the local pubs, or occasionally stayed with Johns and his family in Epsom, driving around the country roads in the producer’s giant Lincoln Continental. “We all loved being in England,” says Leadon. “It was still a nation of shopkeepers then, so we’d go to the greengrocers, the tobacconist, we had a little cash and our needs were met. Our biggest problem was that Marlboro cigarettes didn’t taste the same. They weren’t toasted!” The other major point of cultural contention was the temperature.

“They adapted to London very well,” says Johns. “To get them out of their own comfort zone was good, it removed any distractions, but really, we could have made *Desperado* on the moon, it wouldn’t have made any difference. You didn’t need to be sitting in the middle of the desert with a horse tied up outside.” Nevertheless, Ron Stone believes being so far from home gave the performances an extra layer of poignancy. “They longed for Southern California, and the album has that wistfulness,” he says. “Not being in that place helped them. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.”

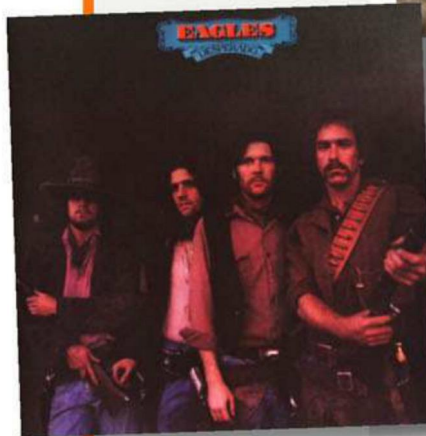
The album took four weeks and cost £30,000. It was disciplined work, the band working weekday office hours,

EYEWITNESS!

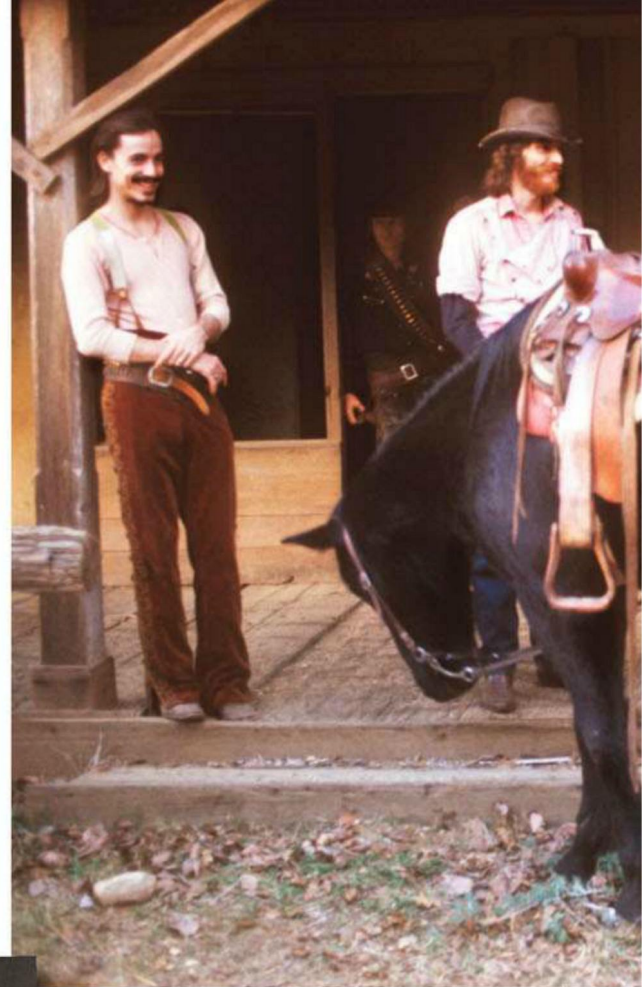
"GUN SMOKE WAS RISING ABOVE THE RANCH..."

Henry Diltz recalls the *Desperado* cover shoot

“FIRST, art director Gary Burden took the group down to Western Costume, a Hollywood movie costume company, to pick their favourite cowboy clothes from among those worn by John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart and Lee Marvin. Loaded with ammunition and beer, on December 18, 1972 we all went to an abandoned movie lot in the Agoura Hills, Paramount Ranch.



The day was mostly one of playing cowboys. There were gun shots, shouting and laughter. So much gun smoke was rising that fire engines arrived. There was a feel of reality and history to it all. JD Souther had a book of Old West outlaws, and in it was a photo of a posse with dead outlaws laying in a row like dead coyotes. We set up a posed photo just like the book, and that’s what appeared on the back of the LP. The package was planned as a fold-open with a double spread inside of the gunfight. You’d have the four Eagles on the cover, the gunfight inside, dead outlaws on the back. David Geffen decided to go for a single sleeve. Good for business, not for art!”



from late morning until 6pm. Johns wouldn’t tolerate any “hanky-panky” in the studio, something which Frey in particular resented, later comparing the producer to an over-officious school marm. The band’s drug use “increased with time”, admits Leadon, but during *Desperado* it was “self-regulating. We didn’t have much money, we were all quite well-behaved, and Glyn was very good at keeping us focused. He was a no-nonsense kind of guy: no substances in the studio – you’ll breathe air! Tea was the permissible stimulant.”

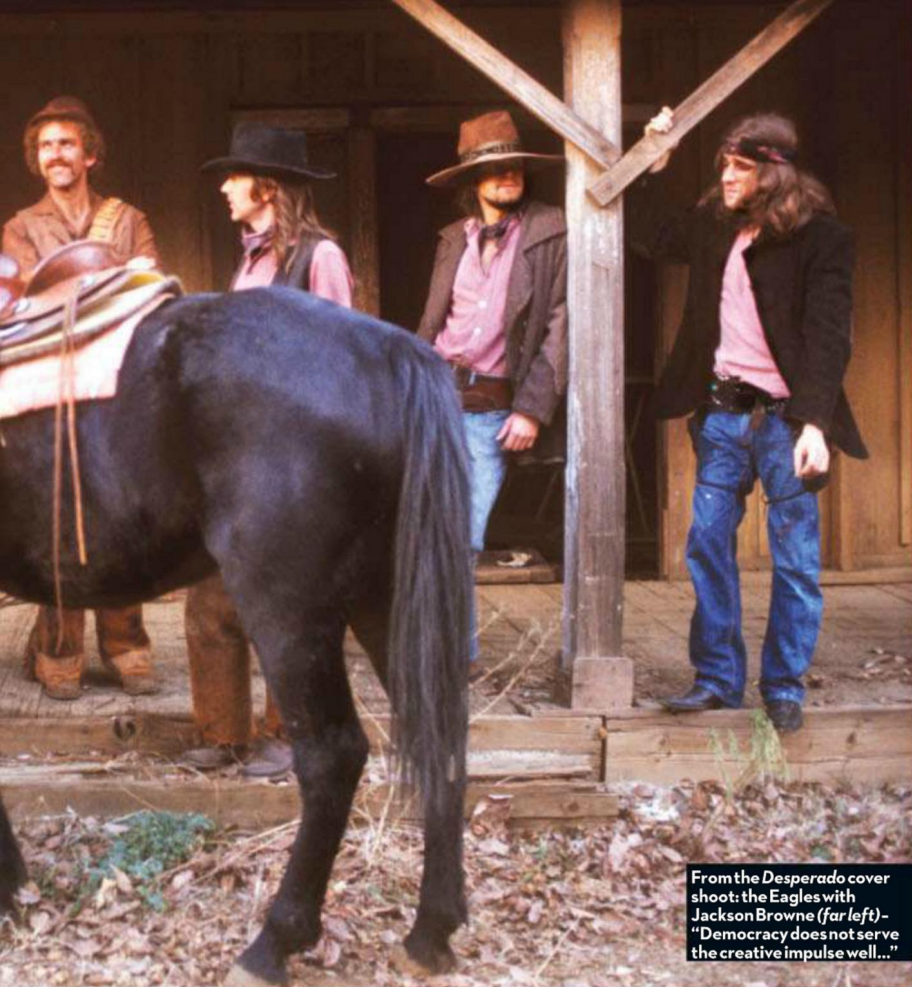
Johns remembers them as “very professional, very together”. The songs were written, the concept nailed down, even the running order agreed, before they set foot in the studio. The producer’s most obvious

contribution was inserting an instrumental version of “Doolin-Dalton” and adding elegiac codas of that song and “Desperado” to enhance the idea of a narrative arc. The only big production flourish was adding strings to the title track, a task for which Henley’s friend Jim Ed Norman was flown over to conduct members of the London Philharmonic. “I was standing in the studio listening to the playback, and it was just astonishing when those strings swell up under the second half of the song,” says Leadon. Even Johns was taken aback. “I didn’t realise ‘Desperado’ would turn out as well as it did, in the delivery from Henley and the string arrangement. The strings I hadn’t envisaged, I’m sure that was their idea.”

It was perhaps the last Eagles album of which it could be said that it was fun to make. “We were all really thrilled with it,” says Johns. “In fact, when they finished the record they were over the moon, they carried me on their shoulders out of the bloody control room! They were thrilled to bits.”

Nevertheless, changes were taking place in the band dynamic. Having worked with them mere months before on their debut, and as a producer who was firmly committed to the Eagles being an equilibrium where “no-one feels left out and is fairly represented”, Johns noticed a clear shift in the power base. “Henley and Frey assumed control during *Desperado*, is the best way of putting it,” he says. “That feeling was always there, but stronger on the second LP.”

On *Desperado*, the pair had a hand in writing eight of the



From the *Desperado* cover shoot: the Eagles with Jackson Browne (far left) – “Democracy does not serve the creative impulse well...”

10 originals, and shared writing credits on the two most high-profile tracks – “Tequila Sunrise” and “Desperado”. It was the start of the Eagles’ musical output beginning to reflect both the band hierarchy and also the manner in which it had been formed in the first place. “There was a degree of prefabrication to the Eagles,” says Stone. “We put them all together, with Glenn and Don as the centrepieces, but they wanted it to be a real, organic band. That’s the emotional component of the first two records: to be a proper band, almost playing at being a democracy. What they realised as time went on is that rock’n’roll is a benevolent dictatorship.”

Leadon, perhaps surprisingly, agrees: “They were more suited to lead. It was actually Glyn’s idea to make it more of a four-way thing. The natural dynamic was more like a Beatles vibe, with two main guys, but Glyn pushed hard to make sure Randy and I had two songs each on *Desperado*, and it worked out OK.” While both Leadon and Stone believe the friction and creative tension was a positive force initially, it quickly became a problem. Shortly into the recording of their third record, *On The Border*, they sacked Johns. “We fell out, really,” he says. “Henley and Frey treated the others like inferior beings – particularly Frey. I didn’t like what I was seeing at all and I made that fairly obvious.” Don Felder came in on extra guitar and the sound toughened. Not much later Leadon left, then Meisner. “Democracy does not serve the creative impulse well,” shrugs Browne. “In the end, Don and Glenn just took over the band.”

BACK IN THE late winter of ’72, returning to California with their new record, the Eagles began to experience misgivings. “Back home, the paranoia would begin,” says Leadon. “Second guessing everything: ‘Oh my God, it doesn’t sound like everyone else. The songs suck. We suck. We need to redo it.’” It was left to Johns, who flew over before Christmas to take part in the cover shoot, to talk them down. “Glyn was fabulous, truly

“Henley and Frey treated the other band members like inferior beings, particularly Frey...”
Glyn Johns



Bernie Leadon, fully loaded: “Back home, the paranoia would begin...”



David Geffen and Joni Mitchell, L.A., January 30, 1973

FIRST FLIGHT

THE ASYLUM YEARS

“If you want Neil Young, you’re taking the Eagles!”

ASYLUM Records was formed in 1971 by David Geffen and Elliot Roberts as an outlet for Jackson Browne, who was signed to the pair’s management company but couldn’t get a record deal. The connection with Browne eased the Eagles’ path to the label, which quickly became a boutique sanctuary for the cream of the Laurel Canyon scene, including Linda Ronstadt, Joni Mitchell, Judee Sill and Tom Waits. Geffen’s management roster, which included Neil Young and Crosby, Stills and Nash, gave him real clout as a label boss in the early days. “Geffen had a huge amount to do with the fact that our first record did as well as it

did,” says Leadon. “He kind of launched Asylum with us, he really pushed the first record. He was a tough customer. I recall him screaming at a promoter, ‘If you want Neil Young, then you’re taking the Eagles!’ It meant we got a headlining tour. That kind of leverage was invaluable.” Merging with Elektra in 1972, Asylum was briefly home to Dylan, releasing *Planet Waves* and *Before The Flood* during his hiatus from Columbia. Geffen left shortly afterwards and the label has since gone through various permutations. Revived in 2004, the current roster includes Cee Lo Green and Ed Sheeran.

what we needed at the time. He said, ‘You’re wrong. You don’t know, but I know. I’m right, shut up!’ And he was.”

Time may have proved him correct, but the initial impact of *Desperado* when it was released in April 1973 seemed to confirm the band’s concerns. There were no hit singles, critically and commercially the response was lukewarm, while “everybody at the record company was horrified,” says Stone. “Like, ‘What are we going to do with this?’ It was a big disappointment, but creatively it was such a leap, such an ambitious thing to do, not to sit on your success but to push the envelope. Now, when you look back across their work it doesn’t seem like such a radical thing to do, but at the time it was a left turn without signalling.”

Browne agrees. “*Desperado* was a brilliant move, because it gave the Eagles an identity. There was something limited about the concept, but it was also very potent. There was a nouveau-Indian hippy thing going on, everyone was coming to California, and in the end that was what they were writing about: that projected dream of what freedom could be. Vacate your assigned positions in life and be what you fucking want!”

History Of The Eagles is out on Universal on April 29



Nights In White Satin

THE MOODY BLUES

The strange tale of how a Mellotron, swanky bed-sheets and a toilet-seat conspired to give Justin Hayward and co a timeless hit (and Lonnie Donegan a lot of money)...

WHEN JUSTIN HAYWARD and John Lodge joined The Moody Blues in August 1966, the Midlands band appeared to be on the way out. Their 1964 No 1, "Go Now" was long gone, its R'n'B direction played out. It took keyboardist Mike Pinder's purchase of a primitive, tape-based orchestral sampler, the Mellotron, and a lyric inspired by luxurious bed-sheets to revive their fortunes.

"Nights In White Satin" was one of the most immediately recognisable classics of 1967, with its allusive lyrics and atmospheric arrangement built on a flute solo and epic harmonies. "We used to practise coming back from gigs by singing dirty rugby songs like 'Eskimo Nell' in close harmony," flautist Ray Thomas explains. "We gave Elton John a lift back then, and he was quiet as a mouse, listening."

"Nights In White Satin" also inspired one of the first full-blown concept albums, *Days Of Future Passed*, commissioned by Decca as a humble demonstration record for a new stereo system. The single has been a transatlantic hit three times – but it's only recently, says Hayward, that he feels he's understood the song. "I wrote it when I was immature, it's a naïve song," he explains. "And that's nice. But I never heard it until about two years ago, I was in bed and somebody sent me a version by Bettye LaVette. And I played it on my computer, and I burst into tears. My wife came in and said, 'What on earth's the matter?' I heard the lyrics for the first time. That's bizarre, isn't it? It's not that I'd been going through the motions. Every time I'd sung it, it had been heartfelt. But she took every line and made it something about herself that was transparent and clear. She explained it to me, somehow." **NICK HASTED**

JOHN LODGE: I don't think there were any bookings when I joined, except in Belgium. We realised we wanted to write our own music. The era of coloured suits was over.

JUSTIN HAYWARD: I'm not sure that any of us could see a way forward for the group.

RAY THOMAS: We played some cabaret dates in the Northern clubs, and halfway through the set you'd hear, "Scampi and chips twice." One night, Justin burst into tears. So we said, "Let's write our own stuff." We called it shit or bust. If they don't like it, we're knackered.

HAYWARD: A couple of days after that, Mike rediscovered an instrument called the Mellotron, and I went with him to the Dunlop factory social club in Birmingham, and bought it for about £25.

MIKE PINDER: I remember paying £300 for it. I used to work at the factory in Birmingham that made them. This one had tapes hanging out the back of the LSO moonlighting, which were triggered by a keyboard. What came out of that was "Nights In White Satin".

HAYWARD: Graeme and I were sharing two rooms with our girlfriends in Bayswater, and we came back very late at night. They were all asleep, and I sat on the side of the bed with my old

KEY PLAYERS



Justin Hayward
Vocals,
acoustic guitar



Graeme Edge
Drums



Ray Thomas
Flute



Mike Pinder
Mellotron



John Lodge
Bass



Derek Varnals
Engineer

12-string I was renovating for Lonnie Donegan, and I wrote the basic two verses. One part of it was that I lived out of a suitcase then, I never had any possessions, and a previous girlfriend had bought me some white satin sheets. I was at the end of one big love affair and the beginning of another, and there was a lot of random thoughts by a 19-year-old boy. There's quite a lot of truth in it. I did write letters, never meaning to send. "Just what you want to be, you will be in the end" is a philosophical thing.

THOMAS: Justin won't

own up to it now, but he had the idea for "Nights..." sitting on the loo – with the lid down. Nice acoustics, normally.

HAYWARD: We had a rehearsal room near where Mike lived in Barnes, and I played it to the guys. Then Mike added his Mellotron riff, and suddenly the others were interested.

GRAEME EDGE: Mike's riff is one of the oldest licks in music. For me it happened when we recorded "Nights" on the BBC Radio's *Saturday*





Dandies of future passed...
The Moody Blues in 1967:
(l-r) John Lodge, Graeme
Edge, Ray Thomas, Mike
Pinder, Justin Hayward

Club, which sounded very much as the record eventually turned out.

LODGE: None of us had got the full picture of “Nights” until then. When we went into the control room and listened to it, it was mesmerising. It was a time when we all felt we were floating on air. We were going to the clubs every night, and there was a particular buzz going on, with *Sgt Pepper* and “A Whiter Shade Of Pale”, all the Jimi Hendrix things. The energy was flying all over the place.

HAYWARD: We had a huge slice of luck when Decca asked us to do a demonstration record for the Deramic Stereo System, so their consumer division could sell stereos. That’s what *Days Of Future Passed* was, really. We had a debt to Decca, and they asked us to do a version of Dvořák’s ‘New World Symphony’. Peter Knight, who was supposed to be doing the orchestral stuff, came down to see us at the 100 Club, and it was his idea to change it around to a concept album about a day and night. We did “Nights” first.

“I stupidly and
innocently signed
away the
copyright...”

JUSTIN HAYWARD

DEREK VARNALS: In fact, it was originally recorded as a stand-alone mono single. Looking at my diary, we recorded it [at *Decca Studio One*] on Sunday, October 8.

LODGE: It couldn’t have taken long to record. But harmonically, the spread is huge. And also there’s no middle-eight, which all pop songs had then. But this was totally different. The scene is set with Justin’s singing at the beginning. Every instrument on that record has its own space. Nothing gets in the way of anything else. Because everything has its own space, everything sounds bigger. I think that’s what gives it its lushness,

and the dynamics. Your imagination takes over. Your brain is filling in the picture. It was like we were recording in CinemaScope. We used to talk about that. “How wide is the colour on this song?”

HAYWARD: Tony Clarke was a boffin producer who could see the whole thing cinematically. He’d describe it in this Stanley Kubrick way – “And then we fade across the setting sun, and sparks come out!” He was straight, four of us were pretty stoned – not John.

EDGE: It is the gelling quality of the harmonies – three of us were in the choir, we’d been trained over years to feel uplifting. It does sound huge at the end, but if you put a dB meter on it, it doesn’t alter that much. Your brain makes huge differences.

VARNALS: We did three bounces from one four-track to another, with a view to getting lots of Mellotron on, because its sound needed layering and smoothing out. But by the time we put the backing vocals on, the record had its own ethos, grand and dramatic, and it encouraged us to blend the voices in with the Mellotron. It starts quietly and builds. It’s quite an intense lyric. They’d been playing it onstage, so they knew how to do it. But it needed a lot of reverb to round it out.

HAYWARD: I sometimes hear it on the radio, and I think, ‘Nothing’s happening!’ I never really got why it was a hit.

VARNALS: It’s a very empty, simple arrangement. It’s really just the layers of the Mellotron and the backing vocals that give it that drama. And the way the voices sparked off the echo-chamber just right.

THOMAS: John, Justin, Mike and myself got round the mic. We only had four tracks, so we put four voices on one track, and four on another. When Tony mixed the two together, he said, “You’ve got to come and have a listen to



Cups out for the lads: The Moody Blues toast their success in August '68 – (l-r) Mike Pinder, Justin Hayward, Graeme Edge, Ray Thomas and John Lodge

→ this." When he played it back to us, it freaked us out that we could make such a big sound. We thought, 'Christ, that sounds bloody good.'

VARNALS: We tried it on other songs later, to give them a similar approach to "Nights In White Satin", but the voices never worked like that again. Then at the weekly A&R meeting on the 16th, somebody said, "It's not a single – should we do it on an LP?" That's when one of the A&R people, Michael Dacre-Barclay, grabbed it for a sound series he was already doing, to demonstrate the Deramic Stereo System.

HAYWARD: Dacre-Barclay was very shrewd, very suave – I never saw him again, and he took a royalty and a share of the publishing.

THOMAS: Decca wanted Peter Knight's orchestra to play Dvořák's 'New World Symphony', interspersed with us playing rock'n'roll like "Hound Dog". It would have sounded absolutely fucking awful.

VARNALS: On the 20th, the Friday morning, I went to a meeting when they knocked around the idea of doing a rock band with orchestral bits, in the same way that "A Day In The Life" had. But nobody mentioned Dvořák. I think that's when the concept of an album set over a day was developed, with "Nights In White Satin" at the end.

LODGE: We asked for 24-hour studio time, so we could have a lock-out, which was unheard of. We'd be recording till 5, 6am. I actually cannot remember going home to bed. I can only

FACT FILE

- **Written by** Justin Hayward
- **Performers:** Justin Hayward (vocals, acoustic guitar), Graeme Edge (drums), Ray Thomas (flute, backing vocals), Mike Pinder (Mellotron, backing vocals) John Lodge (bass guitar, backing vocals)
- **Producer:** Tony Clarke
- **Recorded at:** Decca Studio One, West Hampstead, London
- **Released:** November 10, 1967
- **UK chart position:** 9
- **US chart position:** 2

it wasn't on the single.

HAYWARD: A girl in France, Patricia, covered "Nights" and had a big hit with it first, then our version was a hit there. It was all a bit half-cocked.

THOMAS: France really put bacon on the table for us. We played with Josephine Baker there. She still got into the feathers and tights. She was an old lady then, and she'd still got one 'ell of a figure on her.

LODGE: We got a phone-call from England and it was No 19, and selling 20,000 copies a day.

EDGE: They said this is going to

remember being in the studio. If you said to me right now where were you living when you did that, I'd have to think about that.

THOMAS: In fact, they were pretty strict. We started in the morning and we finished at 5pm.

VARNALS: There's two versions of "Nights In White Satin". We overdubbed the orchestra on the last third of it on the stereo mix on the album, because Peter wanted to fit it into the big finale, which made "Nights" over seven minutes. I can't remember when the poem was added.

EDGE: I see the poem I wrote, "Late Lament", as homogenous to "Nights". But I wasn't upset

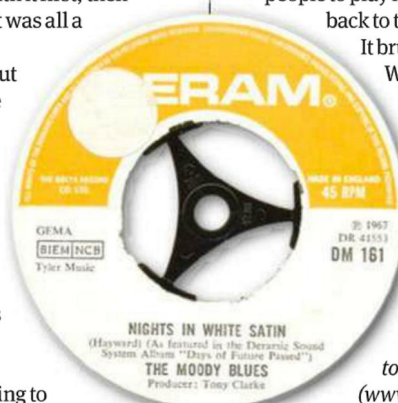
be a hit, and we'll pull it off as a single, so go and cut it down to three minutes, and we said, "No, it's four minutes, 20 seconds." That became the reason it was a hit in America. It was big on FM radio in Seattle first. We found out years later that the DJ picked the longest record so he could go out the back and smoke his bong! The second time he did it, the switchboard lit up like a Christmas tree.

HAYWARD: Then in '72 it was No 2 in the US, and in '79 it came back in the UK, thanks to Jonathan King. But I get very little financially from it, because when I was 18, I innocently and stupidly signed away my copyrights 'til I was 26 to Lonnie Donegan and his family for life, a deal a judge later described as "onerous". He was a deeply unpleasant man, and he became a parasite on the Moodies. He even sent someone to take the guitar I'd written "Nights" on while I was out, which was bizarre. But I'm the only person who has the joy to sing it, and for the audience to go, "That guy did that, and he's singing it for us."

EDGE: It's the last but one song in the set when we play it now. By then, I've picked my people to play it to. It brings old emotions back to the surface for some of them. It brushes the cobwebs off.

When we were making an album later, Justin was a little quiet and depressed. I said, "Don't worry, Justin. 'Nights In White Satin' is way too good to disappear." ☺

*The Moody Blues' boxset **Timeless Flight** is released June 3, and they tour the UK from June 5 (www.moodybluestoday.com)*



TIMELINE

August 1966 Justin Hayward and John Lodge replace Denny Laine and Rod Clarke in The Moody Blues

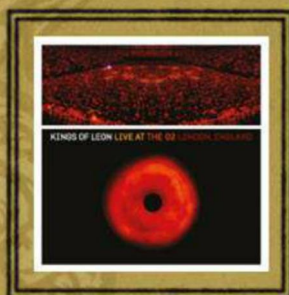
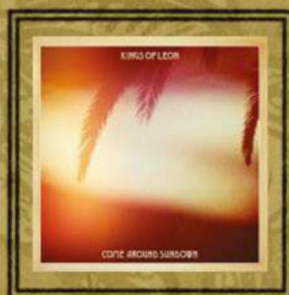
May 1967 The band play "Nights" on BBC Radio's *Saturday Club*
October 8, 1967 Record "Nights In

White Satin"
November 10, 1967 "Nights" is released in the UK, along with the band's album, *Days Of*

Future Passed, reaching No 19
1972 "Nights" hits No 2 in the US and No 9 in the UK, as

the band arrive at their private-jet-touring, Madison Square Garden playing pomp

Kings of Leon



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'A sonnet FOR THE tortured'

Twenty years ago, JEFF BUCKLEY released his first EP: four songs, played live and alone, that introduced an extraordinary new talent to the musical world. Soon, he would create a debut album, *Grace*, that suggested he could do anything. Buckley, however, wasn't so sure: "Jeff," says his best friend, "was incredibly insecure about *everything*." From tribute shows for his father, through the clubs, record labels and studios of New York and London, to the salons of his heroes, Jimmy Page and the Cocteau Twins, *Uncut* charts the tempestuous first moves of a lost legend. Eternal life guaranteed...

Story: David Cavangh

Photograph: Merri Cyr







Mystery white boy: Buckley performs to a handful of customers at Sin-é, 122 St Mark's Place, New York's East Village, circa '93

JEFF BUCKLEY's Grace tour lasted 21 months, visited Europe four times, racked up almost 150 North American dates and finally ended on March 1, 1996 in Sydney. The venue was a picturesque spot for the last goodbye: a club in a seaside hotel overlooking Coogee Beach. Among those there was Belinda Barrett, a 26-year-old producer for a Sydney film company, who'd become a Buckley fan the year before.

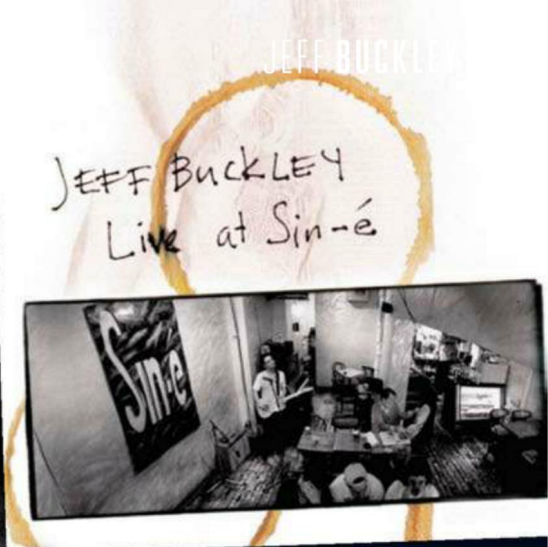
"Jeff's two tours of Australia were a life-defining time for me and many others," Barrett says today. "Jeff was someone you wanted to become a devotee of, and I did. He had incredibly loyal followers who really connected with his essence and spirit." She remembers looking around at gigs and seeing people gaping in astonishment at the stage. Two years on the road had honed Buckley's setlist into a hypnotic, invocatory, near-holy performance. "There were moments of coalescence in Australia," recalls his drummer Matt Johnson, "when new worlds in music felt like they were being glimpsed. Moments I'll remember until my dying breath."

Buckley was in good humour at the Coogee Bay Hotel's aftershow party. Belinda Barrett asked him for his autograph. "Steely balance," he wrote, adding: "Patti Smith". But behind the smiles, the long tour had taken its toll. Johnson, suffering from exhaustion and depression, was leaving the group; he'd complained bitterly about the ravages of the "rock machine". Under contract to Columbia, a Sony label, Buckley had committed to one of the most gruelling itineraries of the MTV-dominated '90s. The promotional conveyor belt stretched from Paris to Perth, and Buckley had had to learn when to acquiesce and when to resist. It may be one explanation why "steely balance" – a phrase more befitting a wine list – popped into his head as he was approached for an autograph.

"We always said to him, 'If it gets overwhelming, let's take a breath,'" says Paul Rappaport, Sony's former vice-president of artist development. "But you have to understand, people at the company were constantly fighting over him. 'He's got to go to France next.' 'No, he's got to go to Australia!'"

The conveyor belt paused; a Sydney hiatus in a New York story that had begun five years earlier.

IT WAS A tale straight out of Dick Whittington. Buckley's first visit to New York, in 1990, had ended with the 23-year-old Southern Californian fleeing Manhattan in despair after being accused of shoplifting. But in the spring of '91, the bells coaxed him back. A phone call from Brooklyn invited him to sing at a tribute concert for his



Live At Sin-É

The cover of Buckley's debut EP explained

Merri Cyr (photographer): Jeff's choice for the cover was interesting considering it was his first release on a huge corporate label. For the shot, I was standing on a ladder in Sin-é and I took the image with a Widelux panorama camera angled down at him from above. He's rehearsing for the show he's about to perform in the evening. As he's singing, the four people in the café are ignoring him entirely. An old Irish guy is smoking and reading his paper with his back to Jeff. The other three have their backs to him also. Jeff is looking up. It may be a photo of his last day as a non-celebrity. Pretty interesting choice for a debut photo if you ask me. I think a lot of thought went into choosing it. It has a gritty documentary look."

father, a man he'd hardly known. This time his arrival in the city would have an impact. Soon everyone from Marianne Faithfull to Allen Ginsberg would hear about him.

Held in a Brooklyn Episcopal church, "Greetings From Tim Buckley" was Jeff's equivalent of a debutante's coming-out party. He sang four of his father's songs in the familiar Buckley vocal tone and range, dumbfounding anyone who'd presumed Tim's multi-octave voice to be unique. The key moment came in "I Never Asked To Be Your Mountain" when the lighting designer projected Jeff's head onto a stained glass wall at the rear of the church. It was, says the show's producer Hal Willner, something akin to a visitation from Jesus. After that, there seemed little to keep Jeff in Los Angeles. "He became a sponge of New York culture," says Willner, who took him under his wing. "He jumped into the arty circle initially. I took him to see the Mingus Big Band at the Vanguard, and another night he went to see Sun Ra." Buckley based

himself in the Lower East Side, where he found "a village of freaks like himself" (in the words of actor-musician Michael Tighe, who would later join his band) and lived a monastic existence,

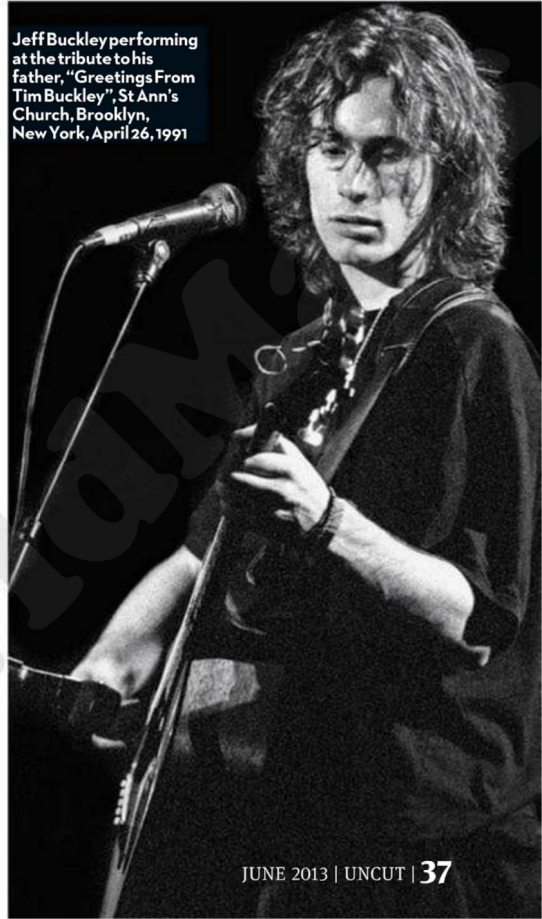
burning incense and contemplating a small Bodhisattva on his windowsill. "People who were attracted to New York were not of the norm," Willner adds. "They came here because of what they could do, which they couldn't do anywhere else."

Buckley cut his hair short and sang in Gods And Monsters, a virtuoso raga-rock outfit led by former Captain Beefheart guitarist Gary Lucas. At first, the collaboration was fruitful. Buckley wrote lyrics for a pair of Lucas instrumentals ("And You Will", "Rise Up To Be"), turning them into "Mojo Pin" and "Grace". Lucas, angling to sign Gods And Monsters to the BMG-

financed Imago Records, envisaged success on a grand scale. Buckley – 14 years his junior – was his final jigsaw piece, his Robert Plant, his Jim Morrison. Gods And Monsters organised

"What I'm trying to do is just sing what comes to my body in the context of the song"
Jeff Buckley

Jeff Buckley performing at the tribute to his father, "Greetings From Tim Buckley", St Ann's Church, Brooklyn, New York, April 26, 1991





SONGS TO SHAKE THE WORLD

Gary Lucas on Jeff Buckley

"My band with Jeff rocked like a motherfucker..."

Captain Beefheart fans will need no reminding of guitarist Gary Lucas' breathtaking skills. He played the fiendishly difficult solo instrumental "Flavor Bud Living" on *Doc At The Radar Station* (1980) and was a full-time Magic Band member on *Ice Cream For Crow* (1982). Leading his own band Gods And Monsters in the early '90s, he accompanied the (then-unknown) Jeff Buckley on "Sefronia: The King's Chain" at the "Greetings From Tim Buckley" concert in 1991. Jeff was promptly installed as Gods And Monsters' singer/rhythm guitarist, but left for a solo career the following year. Gary Lucas: "When we were 'on' as collaborators and friends, we were an unbeatable combination. I knew upon hearing the demos of 'Grace' and 'Mojo Pin' that our songs would shake the world—they're the first two songs on *Grace*! Gods And Monsters is usually



dismissed in the narrative of Jeff's career as a 'failed experiment', but my band with Jeff rocked like a motherfucker. It was a lot harder and edgier than what was to come."

Lucas' book *Touched By Grace: My Time With Jeff Buckley* will be published in the autumn by Jawbone Press

→ a March '92 showcase gig at the same Brooklyn church where Buckley had honoured his father a year before. "I was so pissed off at Gary," remembers Kate Hyman, an Imago Records A&R executive. "Jeff was amazing—you could tell he was a star. But every time he came to the front of the stage, Gary would jump in front of him and play all over him." Buckley began to feel mismatched with Lucas

but was unwilling to confront him, a typical trait according to friends. The band's bassist, Tony Maimone, proved easier to confide in. "He says, 'Y'know, Tony, I'm not sure if I'm gonna continue with this,'" Maimone recalls. "It was a little bittersweet. He was kind and gentle, but I got the impression we weren't going to be playing with him for much longer. He had his own vision to pursue."

Steve Abbott, a New York-based Englishman who owned a London indie label (Big Cat), saw Gods And Monsters play in a club.

"He was extremely charismatic. Men fell in love with him. Women felt he was their future husband"
Nicholas Hill

Abbott immediately identified Buckley as their most interesting member. "He looked quite sulky and moody, whereas Gary was very in-your-face. Jeff came back on at the end and did a song by himself. It was one of those moments where you haven't quite heard anything like it. It didn't fit into any musical format. I spoke to him later and he told me he had some gigs at a place called Sin-é."

EYEWITNESS!

Cocteau Twin
Simon
Raymonde
on Jeff
Buckley

“WE FIRST met Jeff when he

was in his late teens. Robin and Liz had done Tim Buckley's 'Song To The Siren' on [This Mortal Coil's] *It'll End In Tears*, and I have a memory of someone coming into our dressing-room after a show in Paris and saying, 'Oh, by the way, Tim's son is outside and he'd like to say hello.' A few years later, in Atlanta, we had a couple of days off and he came along to hang out with us. We went to see him play at this tiny little coffee bar. I remember



thinking, a) what an incredible guitarist, and b) how supremely confident he was. He was doing all sorts of vocal things that, being in a band with Liz, I shouldn't have been surprised by. He was so lovely with us: he drove me and Liz around, took us to parties. He was anti-drugs and didn't drink or smoke. I found him thrilling to be with. He carried a ghetto-blasters around with him, on which he played music all day long. When I heard *Grace* later, I thought, 'Oh, now I get it...' A lot of his vocal techniques and stylings were inspired by the music he played in the car that day – Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Aretha Franklin, Robert Plant. It was a real insight into what he was listening to prior to making his record.”

ANYONE WHO ATTENDED Buckley's concert at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire on March 4, 1995 will remember the dreadlocked black man who walked onstage to duet with him on "What Will You Say". His name is Chris Dowd and he'd like to delete that night from his memory (not to mention from YouTube) – he admits that he was horribly drunk. Dowd, a founder member of LA ska band Fishbone, was one of Buckley's closest friends. After Dowd left Fishbone, he and Jeff lived together for a time in New York, Dowd fielding phone calls for Jeff while he was out. "It would be Chrissie Hynde or Elvis Costello. 'Hello, is Jeff there? Tell him Elvis called.' 'Er, OK.'" Buckley had become the darling of Sin-é.

Sin-é was a café in the East Village run by an Irishman (its name, pronounced "shin-ay", is Irish for "that's it"). It had a small bar and no stage. Buckley appeared at Sin-é almost every week in 1992, leaning against a wall and singing, accompanying himself on a Telecaster plugged into a little Fender amp. It was casual and informal (nobody paid to get in), but the customers agreed that something extraordinary happened when he sang. His voice, which he was modifying all the time, was sensual and gender-ambiguous. It could make people cry. It could make them feel elated. It could – and he would insist on this – eliminate conversation from the room. He alluded to his Sin-é period in a 1995 interview with Melbourne's RRR radio station: "What I'm trying to do is just sing what comes to my body in the context of the song. And if you go by the emotion of the song, it's almost like stepping into a city. Cities have certain customs and rules and laws you can break, and that's what I was doing."

"He would do mostly covers," Michael Tighe told *Uncut* in 2007. "Nina Simone. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. I was very impressed with his knowledge. I thought he had really good taste. What really sent me was when I heard him do 'Hallelujah'. That's when I felt I was in the presence of genius. That made me see white flashes." Buckley had heard Leonard Cohen's hymn-like "Hallelujah" in a version performed by John Cale on a Cohen tribute album. It had become a feature of Jeff's floating Sin-é repertoire – "Strange Fruit", The Smiths' "I Know It's Over", Bob Dylan, Edith Piaf – which grew by the week.

"I remember him opening once with 'Sweet Thing' from *Astral Weeks* and closing with 'The Way Young Lovers Do' from the same album," remarks Nicholas Hill, a radio DJ for New Jersey's WFMU. "To have the gall even to attempt something from *Astral Weeks* – usually that doesn't go over great. But this guy could reinterpret songs, sing them completely differently every time. He was investigating where they could take him. He was creating something bigger than the song. For the first three minutes, you wouldn't even know what the song was."

Transported but relaxed, Buckley would talk, do

impersonations, comment on what the clientele was wearing ("Nice sandals") and sing adverts and jingles that he remembered from his childhood. "The

motherfucker was so funny," says Chris Dowd. "He was like... if somebody took Lenny Bruce and Jim Carrey and mixed them into one person. A really dark sense of humour combined with an incredible ability to mimic everything. He had a photographic memory for music." Nicholas Hill concurs:

"Everyone was drawn to Jeff's personality. He was extremely magnetic and charismatic. Men fell in love with him. Women felt he was their future husband. It was just like, 'Holy shit, this is a major dude.' There was just no denying it."

"Sin-é was this teeny little place with a couple of tables and chairs," says Kate Hyman, "but it was a magical, fun time because there was no pressure. I was an A&R person, but I was enjoying listening to Jeff and not having to think about the business." Steve Abbott of Big Cat, who lived a two-minute walk from Sin-é, chatted to Buckley one night and was intrigued to find they shared a love of The Groundhogs – as well as a taste for Guinness. Abbott said he'd like to do a record deal. Hyman, too, wanted to sign Jeff to Imago at some point. But things were moving quickly. One night Hal Willner showed up at Sin-é with a friend named Steve Berkowitz, an A&R man for the major label Columbia.

Abbott: "I left New York to go touring with Pavement, who were on my label. Within the week and a half that I was away, the record industry discovered Jeff Buckley. He now had a lawyer. There was one ridiculous night where I saw three limos outside Sin-é. You didn't see limos in the East Village. This was when we still had muggings and killings, before the area was gentrified. I couldn't even get in the door of Sin-é. I kept getting pushed back out again."

Hyman: "When the limos started showing up, it was funny and silly and none of us took it seriously. But suddenly there was a bidding war. I was in there for a minute, but I was at a small label and there was no way we were going to beat out the majors." There was another stumbling block for Imago that Hyman is slightly reluctant to reveal. "Well, I guess it doesn't matter now," she says. "My boss, Terry Ellis – I took him to see Jeff and his comment was, 'He's really good, but he has no charisma.' He actually said that. Really."

Buckley's Sin-é apprenticeship didn't end in formal goodbyes – he appeared

there many more times, including a gig with his band shortly before recording *Grace* – but the innocence had been lost. "His initial crowd were disappointed because they couldn't see him in a club with eight other people," says Willner wryly. It was too late. The cat was out of the bag.



The WFMU Tapes

In a New Jersey radio station's vaults sits "a boxset's worth" of unreleased Buckley material

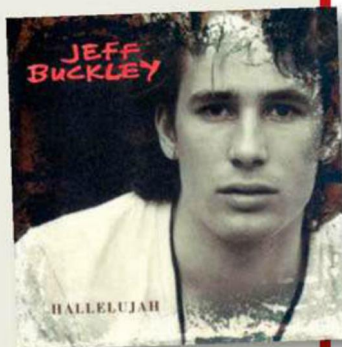
Nicholas Hill (DJ): "My show was not a DJ-interview type thing, it was more a forum for live music. With Jeff I had an open door policy. Many, many hours were recorded. Certainly a boxset's worth." One or two tracks have surfaced: Nick Cassavetes licensed "We All Fall In Love Sometimes" (an Elton John cover) for his 2009 film *My Sister's Keeper*, and the BBC used a version of "Strange Fruit". Hill: "The archive begins with Jeff and Gary Lucas, then Jeff solo. There was one session where he didn't bring a guitar, he brought a dobro, a bodhran and a harmonium. He also did a session with his band. The whole arc of Jeff's New York period is shown in this archive." The sessions include five Dylan songs, three versions of "Corpus Christi Carol" and an 18-minute jam (with the band), "Last Night I Heard The Needles Pray For My Soul", which Hill describes as "pretty intense". The archive has been mastered and currently awaits official release.

BUCKLEY AND COHEN

“I heard there was a secret chord...”

How Jeff made Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” his own

L EONARD COHEN WROTE it. John Cale covered it. So did kd lang, Willie Nelson and Bon Jovi. But when it comes to the definitive version, Buckley’s guitarist Michael Tighe surely speaks for most people: “Jeff slayed that song. He owns it now.” Having



performed it at solo gigs (it appears on *Live At Sin-é: Legacy Edition*), Buckley duly recorded it for *Grace*, but it wasn’t released as a single because, as ex-Columbia product manager Leah Reid explains, “Jeff’s music was not an easy sell to radio... and the only thing more difficult than getting a Jeff ‘band’ song on the radio in the mid-’90s would have been trying to get a Jeff ballad on the radio.” Throughout the 2000s, however, Buckley’s “Hallelujah” grew hugely in popularity. It was used in several US TV dramas and became popular with contestants on *American Idol* and *The X Factor*. The song was finally released as a single in 2007 and reissued at Christmas 2008, when it charted at No 2 in Britain behind *X Factor* contestant Alexandra Burke’s version of the same song.

→ **B**UCKLEY SIGNED WITH Columbia Records on October 29, 1992. The lure was a promise of artistic freedom, but their historic catalogue (Dylan, Springsteen, Cohen, Cash) inevitably influenced his decision. It took Sony’s Paul Rappaport all of five minutes at Sin-é – Buckley was singing a Van Morrison song at the time – to be convinced that Jeff was potentially a figure of equal stature.

Rappaport: “Donny Ienner [Columbia president] said to him, ‘I know you’re getting offered more money by Clive Davis [Arista] but I’m not going to give it to you, because it’ll mess your head up. I’ll give you half of that, and I’ll make a deal that we won’t pressure you.’” Sure enough, the first thing Columbia did after signing Buckley was... absolutely nothing. They left him alone for months. A hands-off policy was regarded as essential to his development.

“He still hadn’t written many songs,” Rappaport points out. “We had no idea, really, whether he could write or not.”

Brenda Kahn, a ‘punk-folk’ singer-songwriter on a Sony label called Chaos, was introduced to Buckley by her A&R man. She and Jeff giggled at the multi-million-dollar Manhattan world they’d accidentally infiltrated. “We both felt like, ‘What are we doing here? We belong on the Lower East Side.’ We were both in a giddy sort of realm.” They became friends (and briefly lovers), Kahn finding Buckley surprisingly precise – she uses the word ‘intentional’ – about all aspects of his creativity. He already knew the importance of leaving a legacy. He talked of needing to improve his lyrics. Kahn: “I was in awe of his abilities. Have you heard his recording of ‘Satisfied Mind’? The way his voice and guitar work together? I was like, ‘God! I can turn a phrase, but look what you can do.’ And he was like, ‘Sure, I can sing the crap out of anything, but how do I say it?’”

It was in Buckley’s nature to fluctuate between resolve and hesitation. On top of his ongoing worries about being sold to the public as Tim Buckley’s son, he was anxious to be perceived as a fan-based, credible artist, not some major-label hype. It was entirely characteristic of him to phone Nicholas Hill, who ran a 7” label, and tell him he wanted to record six indie singles immediately. It was also characteristic of him to change his mind and forget the conversation had ever happened.

Chris Dowd: “Jeff was the kind of person who was incredibly insecure about everything. His ability to play his instrument. His voice. When I first met him, he didn’t think he was good-looking. It was, ‘Women don’t like me,’ all this stuff. Later on, he was embarrassed to be voted one of

People magazine’s ‘30 Most Beautiful People’. I think one part of him secretly dug it, but the other part – the artist, the musician – was like, ‘What a fucking goofy fag you are.’”

“He was a bit dorky,” says photographer Merri Cyr, who shot the covers of *Live At Sin-é* and *Grace*. “That’s what made him charming. I think he was initially unaware of the effect he had on other people. Later, though, he became much more savvy about how he behaved and presented himself. I remember he acquired a stalker or two. He was scrutinised and was in the public eye. His demeanour changed over time. Perhaps he became a bit suspicious of people.”

Live At Sin-é was recorded in July ’93. Buckley and Columbia agreed that a four-song live EP was a smart, subtle way to introduce him to the public and the media. Following several planning meetings at Columbia, he was about to spend six weeks at Bearsville Studios in Woodstock

recording his first album. Chris Dowd: “Steve Berkowitz was being very protective of him. The pressure was probably more on Steve than Jeff. But the other thing is, Jeff could walk into a meeting with Donny Ienner and all the Sony people would be mesmerised by him. There’s no other word for it. They knew they’d signed a guy who was going to have a prolific, 30-year career. Fishbone were on the same damn label and we couldn’t get them to do anything. But Donny Ienner would have tattooed Jeff’s name on his penis if Jeff had told him to.”

With studio time at Bearsville booked, Buckley told producer Andy Wallace (Nirvana, Rollins Band) that he wanted to make a ‘band’ album. Wallace: “I thought that was a good idea. Over the course of a career, you want to reach out to more complex musical presentation, and he felt he wanted to do it right away.” Mick

“We didn’t want to do something fashionable. Feel was the key word. Nevermind what style it was”
Mick Grondahl

Grondahl (bass) and Matt Johnson (drums) were hand-picked because Jeff felt an affinity with them on both personal and musical levels. “He was very particular about who he was looking for,” says Nicholas Hill. “He wanted guys his own age who didn’t have baggage, who weren’t hot session guys. He’d done all that with Gary Lucas.” Buckley, a brilliant guitarist, recorded most of the album’s guitar parts but invited Lucas – in a conciliatory gesture – to play on “Mojo Pin” and “Grace”. Buckley-written material rubbed shoulders with covers of “Hallelujah”, “Lilac Wine” and Benjamin Britten’s “Corpus Christi Carol”. It was rock meets Sin-é.

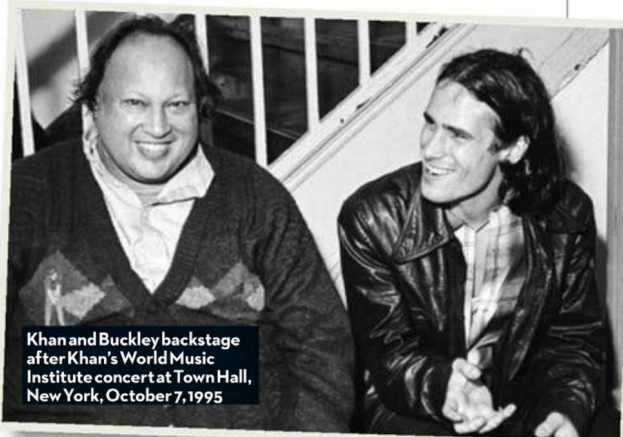
DREAM BROTHER

When Jeff met Nusrat

Face to face with his Qawwali hero

“Nusrat, he’s my Elvis,” says Buckley on *Live At Sin-é: Legacy Edition* before singing Nusrat’s “Yeh Jo Halka Halka Suroor Hai”. The world’s best-known singer of Qawwali (a Sufi devotional music), Nusrat came to the west’s attention when Peter Gabriel released an album on his RealWorld label in 1990. Buckley, discovering him that year, became a

Nusrat fanatic. They met in New York in 1995. Buckley told Nusrat his music had saved his life (“I was in a very bad place”). They then discussed dreams about their fathers – both of whom had been singers – as well as vocal techniques (Buckley: “It surprises me that those other



Khan and Buckley backstage after Khan’s World Music Institute concert at Town Hall, New York, October 7, 1995

Qawwals [singers] are so static. Nusrat is wild, I mean wild.” The conversation was published in *Interview* magazine in January 1996. Nusrat died aged 48 in August 1997, a few months after Buckley.



Buckley in
an outtake
from the
cover shoot
for Grace

ETERNAL LIFE (ON FILM)

Jeff Buckley The Movie

...and the movie...
and the movie...

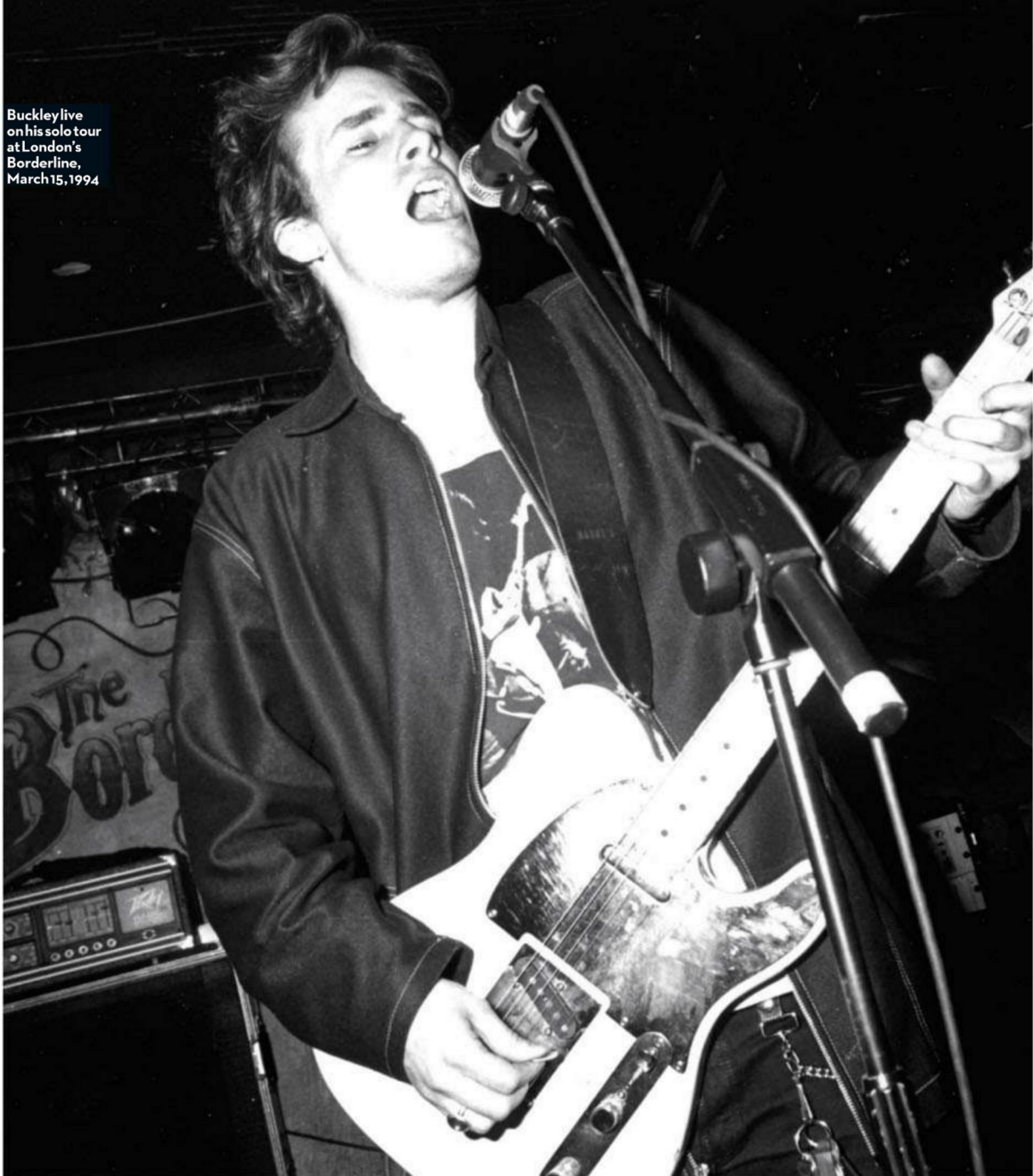
Three films about Buckley are currently in various stages of development. First to be finished is *Greetings From Tim Buckley*, inspired by the 1991 concert, which stars Penn Badgley (*Gossip Girl*) as Jeff. Hal Willner, who visited the set, says: "I'm flattered to be played by a great Broadway actor [Norbert Leo Butz], but it's going to be *Rashomon*. They're going



Penn Badgley and Imogen Poots on the set of *Greetings From Tim Buckley*

to change facts to make it a movie." Then there's *Mystery White Boy*, the 'official' story of Buckley and the only one allowed to use his music. Reeve Carney (star of Broadway musical *Spider-Man*) plays Jeff and Patricia Arquette takes the role of his mother, Mary Guibert. However, the film has yet to secure financing and remains in pre-production. Also to be green-lighted is *A Pure Drop*, which has a producer and screenplay but no 'Jeff' or director.

Buckley live
on his solo tour
at London's
Borderline,
March 15, 1994



Chris Dowd was one of the first to hear it. "He had a cassette. He put on 'Lilac Wine'. He was like, 'I'm going to play you something... OK?' I could see in his eyes he was insecure about what I was going to say. I started crying when I heard it. There I am, his fucking best friend, and he's made this album and he doesn't even believe how good it is. I was like, 'What are you worried about, man?' Either a song showed his depth of understanding as a musician, or it showed his sensitivity as a human being. There wasn't a song out of place. That album became a sonnet for the tortured."

LIVE AT SIN-É was released in America in November '93. But Columbia's counterparts at Sony in London declined to follow suit, feeling the EP had no commercial potential. Instead it was given a UK release by Big Cat, which had signed a licensing deal with Columbia. The next step was to bring Buckley over to promote it. "We knew he was very good live – that's how he was sold to us by the American company," says Luc Vergier, a Frenchman who ran Columbia's marketing in London. "We decided to put him

"I have
to say,
Jeff Buckley
is still
hard for
a lot of
people
to listen to.
It's too sad"
Hal
Willner

on the road, on his own, for a short tour."

Buckley arrived in the second week of March '94 with his Telecaster and Fender amp. He played in Sheffield, flew to Dublin and then hit London for a series of gigs that are still spoken of in hallowed terms 19 years later. On one particular Friday night, he gave a three-hour performance in two different venues, beginning at Bunjies, the folk café, where he handed everyone a flower with mock solemnity as they took their seats. When Bunjies closed, Buckley led the audience (still with their flowers) to the nearby 12 Bar Club where he played for a further 90 minutes. He took requests, accepted a joint and sang until he almost collapsed off the stage. "*Live At Sin-é* came out on the Monday," recalls Abbott, "and sold nearly 6,000 on the first day. The word of mouth from those two gigs was crazy."

Buckley returned to the UK in August with his band. Five days after *Grace* was released, they played the Reading Festival in a mid-afternoon slot beneath Cud and Echobelly. In hindsight, their lowly billing symbolises the size of the mountain Buckley still had to climb, and the extent to which *Grace* would struggle to assert its identity –



MATT JOHNSON JEFF BUCKLEY MICHAEL TIGHE MICK GRONDAHL

MANAGEMENT
George Stein and Dave Lory

JEFF BUCKLEY

COLUMBIA
9410

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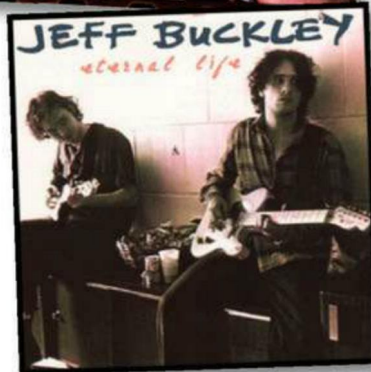
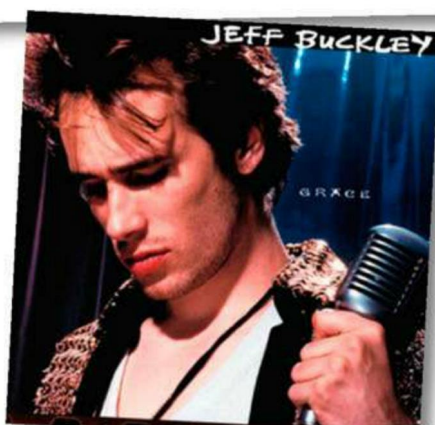
PHOTOGRAPHY: DANA TYNAN

let alone its audacity – in the year of *Parklife*, Alice In Chains and Hootie & The Blowfish. There was a unspoken subtext to the ensuing 21-month tour: Columbia's abiding disappointment with *Grace*'s sales in America.

"It never broke in an immediate way, the way other bands' records did," Mick Grondahl told *Uncut*. "It grew. To us, that was the point. We didn't want to do something fashionable. We wanted to do something that had a nice feel to it. Feel was the key word. Never mind that it was this style or that style. It was more about, how does it feel? How does it touch you?"

One man who loved *Grace* was Jimmy Page. There was arguably no-one whose opinion Buckley valued more. He'd sung Zeppelin songs at Sin-é. He'd amused Tony Maimone at Gods And Monsters rehearsals by thumping out "When The Levee Breaks" on the drums. Buckley's music on *Grace*, and in his band's live shows, embraced androgynous vocals, '70s rock, power chords and heroic drumming. One might even say there was a transference of Zeppelin energy taking place, a blessing or endorsement from afar, from the older men to the young. When Page and Buckley met, it was clear they understood each other on a profound level.

"Jeff told me they cried," says Chris Dowd. "They



actually cried when they met each other. Jimmy heard himself in Jeff, and Jeff was meeting his idol. Jimmy Page was the godfather of Jeff's music. A lot of people thought Tim was the influence on Jeff, but it was really Zeppelin. He could play all the parts on all the songs. John Paul Jones' basslines. Page's guitar parts. The synthesiser intro on 'In The Light' – he could play it on guitar and it would sound just like it. And then he would get on the fucking drums and exactly mimic John Bonham."

Perhaps Page also recognised in Buckley – whom he considered the greatest singer to have emerged in 20 years – a rare courage, an elemental intrepid streak, a fearlessness and a gung-ho spirit that allowed him to reach heights of expression that many of his '90s contemporaries were too self-conscious to risk or too uninspired to imagine. In that sense, Buckley was a true son of Zeppelin. Matt Johnson, in a comment that is all the more poignant given the circumstances of Buckley's death, remembers him as an adventurer in music and in life – a man "well suited to jumping into raw experience – unprotected, raw experience. He seemed to have a quicksilver flexibility and an ability to adjust."

Since the day his body was found in the Mississippi River in June 1997, appreciation of Buckley has soared ("Grace was way more successful posthumously," Johnson notes) and in many people's eyes he's become the timeless heritage artist that Columbia believed they'd signed in 1992. Others feel he was only just finding his feet. "It would have been amazing to hear his fourth or fifth album," says Brenda Kahn. "I don't think his music had been totally fleshed out yet." Hal Willner thinks about that fifth album, too. What conceivable directions would Buckley's voice and guitar have taken?

"I have to say he's still hard for a lot of people to listen to," Willner continues. "His mom, Mary, got me to edit together some tapes that he made in his early New York days. The stuff with Gary. And what was interesting about those tapes – what was really heartbreaking – was hearing him sing the way he sang when he came to New York. He changed it later... became less studied. But it's hard to listen to it. It's too sad."

Buckley left his New York home on June 1, 1994 to tour *Grace* in America. "Keep the next year free," the band were advised by George Stein, Buckley's lawyer-manager, a comment they would later laugh about. First France became enchanted with them (two tours in '95) and then Britain wanted them back. And even when they'd toured America twice, three times, and been to Japan, there was always Australia waiting in the distance. ☺

DANA TYNAN

NEW
YORKE...

The Night That Changed Radiohead...

THE GARAGE, LONDON, MARCH 17, 1994

One of Buckley's most talked-about solo gigs took place in an upstairs room in Islington. The audience included producer John Leckie and his clients Radiohead, who'd just begun recording *The Bends* at RAK Studios. Chrissie Hynde and John McEnroe were also there; legend has it McEnroe carried Buckley's amp downstairs after the show. Leckie: "It was riveting. You weren't used to seeing a solo singer performing with such all-consuming passion." Radiohead returned to RAK that night, where an emotional Thom Yorke recorded the vocal for "Fake Plastic Trees". Buckley's gig has

gone down in Radiohead lore thanks to a 1997 Yorke quote ("Jeff Buckley gave me confidence to sing in falsetto"). Leckie insists Yorke was singing falsetto already, but agrees that Buckley "inspired us". According to Chris Dowd, Buckley heard, wrongly, that Radiohead had disliked the gig. "He told me, 'Thom Yorke came to see me play and walked out. He walked out because I suck.' That was Jeff's immediate go-to: 'I suck.' It's so sad. He never got to hear all the people that he influenced."



Hail to the chief:
Buckley fans
Radiohead in 1994

Story: Jaan Uhelszki
Photographs: Aaron Farley

How *Laura Marling*, Britain's finest young singer-songwriter, **fell out of love**, survived a strange audience with Joan Baez, **left music to become a chef**, drank the magical waters of Lake Shasta, **moved to LA...** and made her masterpiece...

SILVER LAKE IS located just five miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, but light years away from the brittle glitter of Hollywood that lies just beyond these small bumpy foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains. Culturally, if not psychically, it's even further from the small village of Eversley, Hampshire – in the heart of Jane Austen country – where Laura Marling was born 23 years ago.

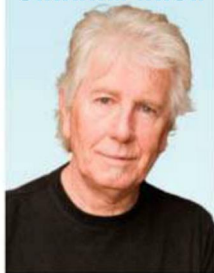
A fountainhead of Modernist architecture, drought-resistant foliage, urban farming and single-origin coffee beans, Silver Lake, like everything in Southern California, is a place where nothing is exactly the way it seems. There is no actual silver lake – the city is named for Water Board Commissioner Herman Silver, who oversaw the creation of two reservoirs that crest the small community – and the body of water that bears Herman's name is a dark indigo blue.

Silver Lake has always been a magnet for creative types. It's where Steve McQueen spent his teenage years and Anaïs Nin lived out her final ones, and a place Raymond Chandler and Woody Guthrie both called home. Elliott Smith and Beck took their first steps toward fame on these pitted sidewalks, and Katy Perry wrote "I Kissed A Girl" less than a mile from the pre-war brick apartment

I'M YOUR FAN

"I absolutely love it when someone sings from their heart to yours... This woman certainly speaks to mine..."

GRAHAM NASH



building that is now Marling's new address.

Silver Lake is another one of the steamy incubators of American pop culture, but that's not why Marling moved here last December. She'd already been enmeshed in something similar back in London, at the nexus of a cluster of interconnected bands including Noah And The Whale, Mumford & Sons and Johnny Flynn, associated romantically, artistically and sonically, playing acoustic music inspired by British and American folk traditions. But after six years and three albums, Marling was trying to get out from under the yoke of nu folk. "They don't even spell it right," she huffs, with a dismissive shake of her tangled white-blond hair.

EXAMINING LAURA MARLING'S history, you might be tempted to say she was groomed to be a folk high priestess, and – with her rich voice and exquisite phrasing, the most nearly worthy of anyone in recent memory to inherit Sandy Denny's ragged folk crown.

Resolutely British, Marling can trace her lineage as far back as the Domesday Book – tattooed on her left wrist in white ink is the Marling family motto: "Nulli Praeda Sumus", which translates as "We are prey to no-one." She says, "On my dad's side we are old English stock, and

PIETER VAN HATTEN

Under Americanskies:
Laura Marling, Silver Lake
Reservoir, Los Angeles,
March 19, 2013



It's 1969, OK!

“When I was touring I'd go to record shops, and I realised that a lot of my favourite records had been released in 1969. Then I started going to record shops and looking for records made in 1969 (or thereabouts - Ed). It seemed just everything I got was amazing. Here are a few of my favourites...”



1 CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG “CARRY ON”

From: *Déjà Vu*

“The classic CSN&Y tone change.”



2 JIM SULLIVAN “JEROME”

From: *UFO*

“Every track on this record is as good as this, it's a lost gem.”



3 CAETANO VELOSO “IRENE”

From: *Caetano Veloso*

“A hero guitar player.”



4 JUDY COLLINS “TURN! TURN! TURN!”

From: *Single*

“Her version of the Byrds classic is done with the voice and eyes of an angel.”



5 GEORGE HARRISON “I'D HAVE YOU ANYTIME”

From: *All Things Must Pass*

“Co-written with Dylan, you can't go wrong.”



6 DAVID AXELROD “A LITTLE GIRL LOST”

From: *Songs Of Experience*

“Unique and bizarre.”



7 JIM FORD “WORKIN' MY WAY TO LA”

From: *Harlan County*

“Funk folk.”



8 CAPTAIN BEEFHEART “WHERE THERE'S WOMAN”

From: *Safe As Milk*

“The king of rhythm of a certain kind.”



9 CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL “BORN ON THE BAYOU”

From: *Bayou Country*

“Driving music.”



10 SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE “I WANNA TAKE YOU HIGHER”

From: *Stand!*

“I discovered a love of funk and soul when I found this was released in 1969.”

I think once upon a time we were quite the family.” But despite the impressive Anglo heritage, she takes many of her creative cues from post-Beatles North American folk-pop.

At three, she was given a guitar by her father, a recording studio owner who counted The La's and Black Sabbath as clients. The first song he taught her was Neil Young's “The Needle And The Damage Done” (a version of which she later cut as a single for Third Man). Laura and her two older sisters were raised on the music of Young, Bert Jansch, Joni Mitchell and James Taylor.

At 16, she wrote, recorded, then uploaded a number of songs onto a MySpace profile.

“She was really shy when I first met her,” says multi-instrumentalist Pete Roe, who's played on all four of Marling's albums. “She was really young. A friend of mine was playing drums in her band. I properly met her the first day of rehearsals. I remember it being a very awkward situation. She had 10 people in the room trying to be in her band, including a string quartet, and it was clear she didn't want to be there.”

Nevertheless, Marling's mysterious, visionary tunes started attracting a dedicated following – many of them old hippy types who believed her the reincarnation of Joni Mitchell.

“I can always tell when people are about to tell me that I remind them of Joni,” Marling laughs a little wickedly as we sit at an army-green metal table at an outside café on one of Silver Lake's main streets. “And it's not that I don't get it. *Court And Spark* was the first album that I listened to over and over. I always make sure to thank them. But for me, music is often an act of recycling. My dad bought a Joni Mitchell album in 1969, then 25 years later played it to his daughters. It certainly affected me. But I feel it's not only the music I listen to but also the books I read that feed into my songs. It all goes into your brain, then you manipulate it and manifest it in whatever your thought process is, and make something else with it.”

Mitchell's former paramour Graham Nash is a fan. As is Neil Young, who asked her to open for him on a half-dozen European shows last year, while Joan Baez asked to meet when they were performing at adjoining venues in London: Baez at the Festival Hall, Marling at the Purcell Room.

“Her assistant came over and summoned me,” Marling explains, her inky blue eyes narrowing as she says the word – summoned – rolling it over as if it was a bad taste in her rosebud mouth. “She told me, ‘Joan wants to meet you, would you come to her dressing room?’ I've always found that bizarre, if someone's requested a meeting with you. I mean, it's not always a bad thing so I said, well, I've got to play my show but



Rambling woman: Laura Marling performing in 2011, with Ruth de Turberville on cello



“I walked into a restaurant and said, ‘Could I come in and work?’ I was elated, then I realised I had to start at 5.30am...”

afterwards, fine. Right after I was finished, her assistant came back and got me and escorted me backstage through this series of mazes,” Marling stops and takes breath. “When I got backstage I was plonked in a queue of people. In front of me

was a woman who was 102. I watched as Joan Baez entertained her for a bit and then sort of shuffled her off to the side, and then it was my turn. I said, ‘Hello, I'm Laura Marling.’ She said to me, ‘Tell me about being a Quaker.’ My face dropped and I said, ‘Oh, God. I'm not a Quaker, I went to a Quaker school.’ Then she said, ‘Well, how did your parents become Quakers?’ I said, ‘They're not Quakers either, they're both atheists.’ She said, ‘Oh. Well, it's nice to meet you,’ and turned to the next person in the queue,” explains Marling, screwing her exquisite cameo face into a moue, due to the absurdity of the exchange, but more so because fame sits so lightly on her thin shoulders.

DESPITE OVER 500,000 in combined album sales, Brit and NME awards, two Mercury Prize nominations, a coveted slot on Glastonbury's main stage, and collaborations with Ryan Adams and Jack White, the singer, who has just released her fourth album, *Once I Was An Eagle*, is curiously diffident about fame. She didn't have a prepared speech when she was anointed Best Female Artist at the 2011 Brits, clomping onstage in a pair of black high street pants, a plainish white blouse, wedge sandals and her hair done up in a messy ballerina bun. “Thank you. My name's Laura,” she whispered after taking the statue from Boy George. “There you go, Mum, that's for you.” After thanking her label, she mumbled,



EYEWITNESS!

"She doesn't do small talk..."

Ethan Johns
on working with
Laura Marling

"We connected immediately after we met. I remember for the first album we did a fair amount of prep work as we were cutting live with a large band. The second album, she did all the prep work on. And the third album, there was none. We started recording immediately and it was completely freeform. But it was just the two of us so we didn't have to worry about what anyone else was going to play.

"This record was one of the most fun experiences in a recording studio I've ever had. Just from a selfish perspective, it was so inspired. The good ones flow creatively, and there was nothing in the way of the music. The beautiful thing about Laura is she knows how to get out of her own way – this record was born out of that.

"What people miss about Laura is that she's very funny and she's a very nice person. I think she's distant only in that her consciousness wanders a bit. And she doesn't do small talk. People always say she's wise beyond her years, but she's still a 23-year-old in a lot of ways. She happens to be an exceptionally bright young woman and a very wise one but she's still a young woman."

INTERVIEW: JANA UHLESHZKI

"This is really weird." It was the same when she nabbed *NME's* award for Best Solo Artist in 2011, beating out Florence & The Machine, Paul Weller and Kanye West. She grimaced as she held up the award, almost embarrassed at the attention, thanking her band and the people who come to gigs. "It's all about the gigs, you know."

And then it wasn't.

"I really fell out of love with touring a little over a year ago," she says, picking at the black duct tape holding her battered iPhone together. She sees me watching her and flashes an embarrassed grin. "If you think this is bad, you should see my laptop. I'm really hard on my things," she explains.

"I fell out of love with touring in a tourbus and all the stuff that made it feel... special," she says, looking off at something I couldn't see. "That wasn't what I loved about music. I liked the adventure of touring, and that no longer existed for me."

But the thrill seemed to have gone out of lot of things for Marling during that period. A relationship had gone awry, and she found herself plunged into depression. "This incredible darkness just fell on me. I didn't really notice it until I'd come out of it. I've met a lot of people and seen how other people live, and I've come to the conclusion that I'm just one of those people who find life a little bit more difficult.

"Before I began writing this record I was less sure than I've ever been in my life. I had found myself in this place that I did not see coming, I had no frame of reference for it. It wasn't a broken heart exactly, it was the product of a bad relationship.

"I was amazed that by some luck I managed to get out of that situation. I can't help but think if I had remained in that relationship how different my life would have been, playing a passive, forgiving role that isn't me at all," she says, a frown creasing her brow. "I started writing the record right in the thick of it. Being almost unaware of what I was saying. I wasn't listening to the stuff I was writing, it was just happening.

"I'd made the record, and I was still in that phase where I was very out of love with touring, and I thought, 'I'm going to have to come up with a backup plan, because I don't know if I'm going to be able to keep this up forever.' So I walked into a London restaurant I go to a lot and said, 'I'm competent. I've got a chef's knife. Could I come in and work?' Much to my surprise and delight they said, 'Of course. We've actually just lost someone, so we need someone to fill in.' I was elated, but then I realised I had to begin work at 5.30am. I was very quickly aware that I have never actually worked a day in my life. But while that was quickly apparent, it was amazing too, because I learned lots of technical stuff and I learned how consistent you have to be at a restaurant. After coming out of all of that, it's been a relief opening myself up to feeling young and naïve and allowing myself to behave like that."

MARLING – DRESSED in a tight-fitting military jacket, even tighter denim Capris and Swedish Hasbeens sandals, with only the merest smear of foundation on her skin and a pair of khaki green headphones strung around her neck – looks like a fresh-faced model for an Urban Outfitters catalog. But despite her charmingly crooked teeth, the coltish beauty and the beguiling shyness, there is a profundity she doesn't readily offer up.

"I'm sure it's common knowledge that I don't like the idea of people feeling they know what I'm thinking," she begins, with only the faintest of smiles. "But with this record I did have a conscious thought that I know myself well enough now to be that little bit more vulnerable in my writing. I didn't start writing the album thinking I'm going to write this middle, this beginning, this end, and then I'd feel better."

Ethan Johns, her longterm producer, agrees. "I think she's being a lot more upfront here. I don't feel she's as afraid now."

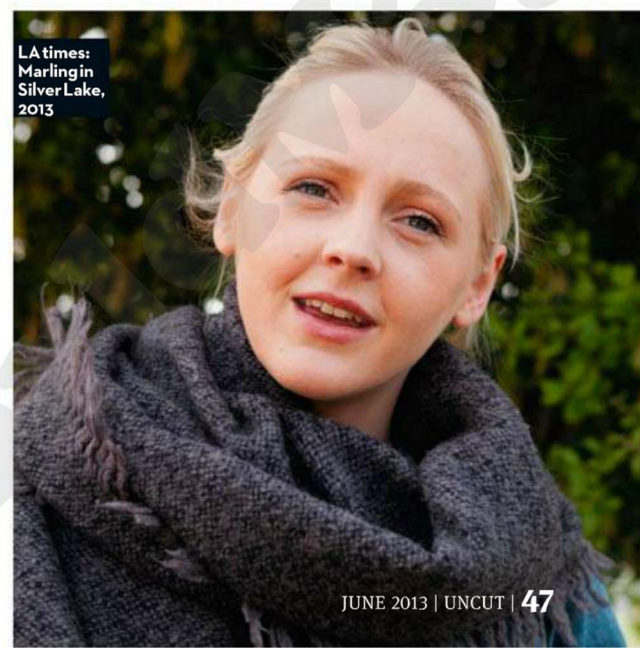
While there is an arc to the album, almost a concept, according to Johns, he saw it as something else entirely. "What I had talked about doing was almost scoring it like a play or film, where different moods and characters within the narrative would have sounds and instruments attributed to them. It's a loose concept, but it gave me a road map as to how to arrange it."

The songs are sequenced in the order they were written, Marling's fertile mind organising her thoughts into a cohesive whole, creating something akin to her moving through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' Five Stages Of Grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

"First, there was this kind of rage and anger and frustration that begins the album," she says. "I was living in a flat in London. It was awful, and I think that was the first welling-up of frustration, because I was living in this place I didn't want to be living in, and my flatmate used to smoke a lot of pot, so I was always sort of half-stoned because of this pot smoke.

"There was something important for me about titling this album – besides keeping with the six-syllable titles of my other three albums – which I had in my head as a story I felt was particularly important. It starts off almost helplessly and kind of bruised and angrily, but that's not what it means to me. It's more finding the access to freedom and happiness. And so the title, *Once I Was An Eagle*, is almost a whimsical, dreamlike image, but it also sums up the feeling of I could go anywhere and do anything, and that's exactly what the album means to me."

With that in mind, she embarked on what she called the Working Holiday tour of America last autumn, which took her to out-of-the-way places, churches and town halls. More harrowing, she set off alone – no bandmates, no road manager, only her two guitars, a few changes of clothes, a GPS and her laptop. She met all sorts along the way, including a shaman in Oregon who instructed her to go



L.A. times:
Marling in
Silver Lake,
2013

RICHARD JOHNSON/NME/IPC; SYNDICATION: AARON FARLEY



English literature: Marling in her adopted American neighbourhood

to California's Lake Shasta and drink the cold clear water from the lake because it had magical properties. Although a self-professed atheist who insists she lives purely by logic, without an occult bone in her slender body, she did what the shaman said.

"I was staying in a shaky motel and couldn't really sleep, because I was scared someone was going to break in. So at 5am, I got up, when it was still dark, packed up the car and drove down this little dirt track about a mile outside of town. I walked a couple of steps and thought, 'No, it's not worth it,' and was absolutely about to get back in the car. 'No-one knows I was here. It's like this never happened.' That triggered this explosion of thought process where I said to myself, 'It's not about whether anybody knows. This is something you may never have the chance to do again.' That didn't stop the fear. But I overcame it and started running. I didn't see any water, and fell right into the lake.

"I had the presence of mind to fill up a canteen with some water, then I ran back to the car. I got on the highway, welled up with excitement, amazed I could see the sun and the moon at the same time, thought that was significant. But I didn't take a sip of the water until later, when I stopped for gas. Nothing could describe the taste. I'd never tried anything like it."

As for magical powers? Shortly afterward, Marling got the sense she had to move to Los Angeles.

"No!" she laughs. "It had nothing to do with the waters. I did that tour where I was on my own, and then I ended up in LA," Marling says, almost too matter-of-factly. "I had a few people I knew here. I actually came here with a fella, but immediately thought, 'If I'm going to do this, I need to do this on my own. This is the whole purpose of me completely upping sticks.'

"The title, *Once I Was An Eagle*, sums up the feeling of I could go anywhere, and that's exactly what the album means to me"

It ended the day I moved in here," she explains, waving a slender hand in the direction of her apartment building, not 50 metres from where we are sitting.

"The next morning I woke up for the first time on my own in a studio apartment, and I thought, 'Right, you're just going to have to make some friends.' Several people who live in this building are just the nicest people I've ever met, and within a month we rented a house in Joshua Tree, and it was a lovely experience. I'd never have dreamed I would hang out with people for a whole weekend that I'd only known for a month."

DESPITE HER OWN personal version of *Singles*, or *90210*, Marling is rather anonymous on the city streets, and she likes it that way: a ghost flitting among strangers, picking when and where she wants to interact.

"On a very practical level, you could say she needed to prove something to herself," says Ruth de Turberville, a friend since childhood who's played cello on all four of Marling's albums. "She's had no proper job, no job that anybody really recognises. She missed out on university. She missed out on a lot of things that affect most teenagers. Obviously, she had many experiences that other people don't, but I think this might be her way of saying, 'I'm making up for lost time. I want to travel a bit. I want to explore myself not just through music but on my own in every sense.' I get the impression that she's keen to just be Laura Marling, on her own."

"I was just starting to get recognised in England," explains Marling, shyly. "Here it's much, much, much, much less. But I did have a funny thing happen the other day: a new neighbour moved into the building, and her very first night she played her music too loud. The downstairs neighbours complained, and the next day she baked cookies and left them outside all our doors. I introduced myself and said, 'That's really sweet, thank you.' When I was about to leave, she asked, 'Are you Laura Marling?' I said I was, groaning a little inside. 'Oh God, I'm a huge fan of your music. I was playing your record last night.' That's the first time anything like that happened, the first time I've formed a relationship knowing that someone has known of me before we became friends. That was quite confusing and conflicting for me at first. But I've found I didn't need to worry about it as much as I did, and we've gone out for tea. The thing about being here, I've found, is I don't worry about much. And I love that."

After the interview, Marling sent a quote by Anaïs Nin, with the note: "I thought this particularly apt – 'A man should respect one's desire to have no past.'" Or better, those who are creating a new future. ☺

Once I Was An Eagle is reviewed on page 68

AARON FARLEY

BUYERS' GUIDE



ALAS, I CANNOT SWIM

VIRGIN (2008)

After releasing two EPs, Marling's debut, *Alas I Cannot Swim* uses half of Mumford & Sons and Noah And The Whale as her backing band (Noah And The Whale's Charlie Fink produced), along with keyboardist Pete Roe. Released three days after her 18th birthday, nevertheless she articulates the nuance of heartbreak with the scars of a veteran.

8/10



I SPEAK BECAUSE I CAN

VIRGIN (2010)

Her first with producer Ethan Johns (Ryan Adams, Kings Of Leon). He coaxes a not-so-simple honesty out of her clear vocals, expressing her own coming of age as she grapples with love, death, heartache and sex, taking inspiration from flawed relationships, restless lovers and a cache of letters from a wife to her husband written during World War II.

9/10

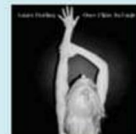


A CREATURE I DON'T KNOW

VIRGIN (2011)

Marling left school at 16, but had become something of an autodidact at 21. Most of the songs refer to her reading list. "Salinas" came from Steinbeck's *Grapes Of Wrath*, and "Sophia" from Robertson Davies' *The Rebel Angels*. Beside the high-minded tone, Marling has grown bolder, arrangements more capricious, voice more chilling, lyrics more ambitious and subject-matter less oblique.

8/10

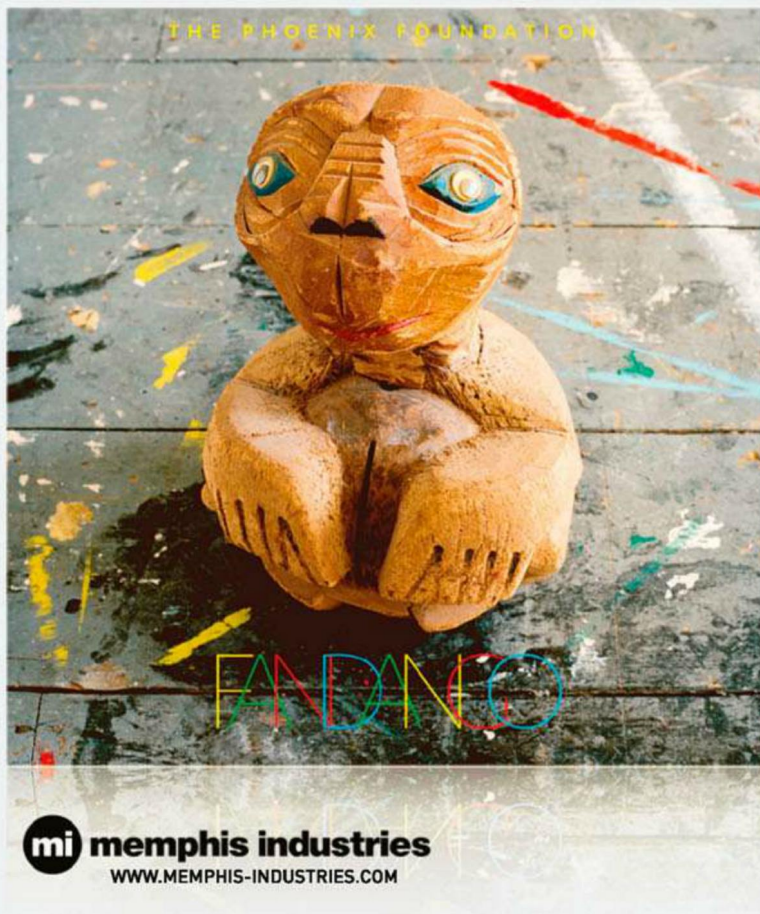


ONCE I WAS AN EAGLE

VIRGIN (2013)

More of a three-act play than an album, this disc is rather sparser and starker than its predecessors, only featuring Marling, Johns, Roe and occasional cello by Ruth de Turberville. At the peak of her considerable powers, Marling prowls through an ill-considered love affair, attempting to restore herself to her former innocence and failing. But failing with a chilling panache and tension.

9/10



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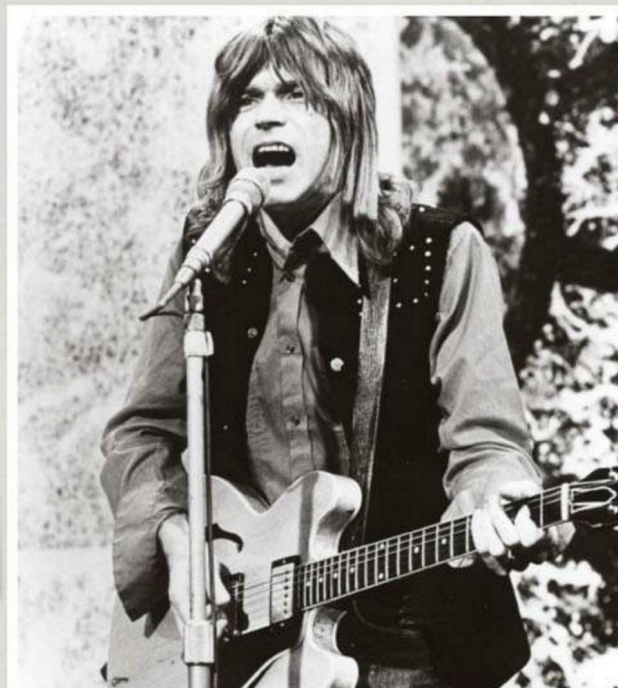
Dave Edmunds

The best-connected man in rock remembers extraordinary times with Keith Moon, various Beatles, Dylan, Chuck Berry, Max Wall et al. Plus: Exclusive! The first Traveling Wilburys lineup revealed...



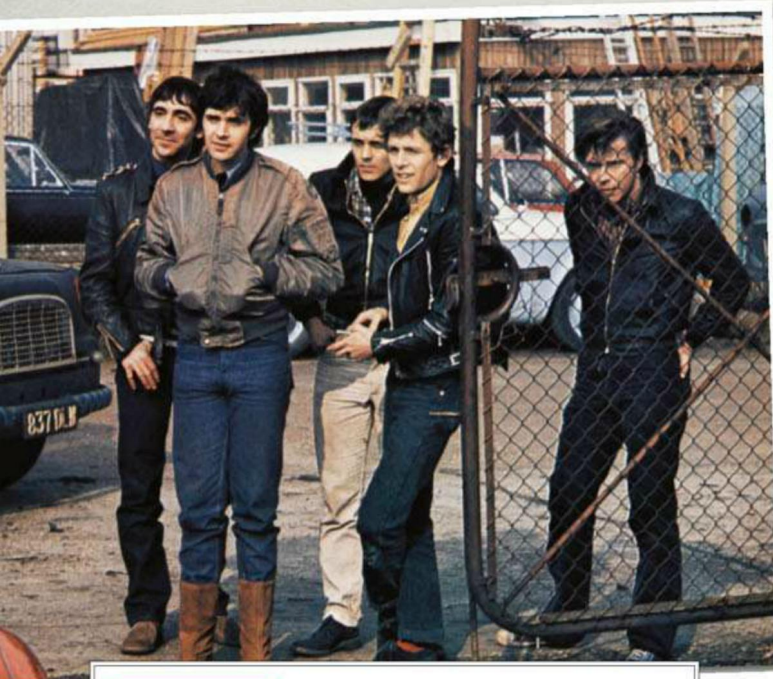
LONDON, 1969

Love Sculpture – a name I had no part in. Basically, we [Edmunds, left, with Rob 'Congo' Jones and John David] were a covers band from Wales, and we kicked off with one big hit, "Sabre Dance", which got us up to London. EMI gave us 23 hours to make a blues album. We knocked that together in Abbey Road, as The Beatles were next door mixing "Hey Jude". I remember hearing the big note at the end, and thinking, 'What on earth are they up to?'



LONDON, 1971

"I Hear You Knockin'" on *Top Of The Pops*. It was my first record under my own name, and one of the fastest-selling singles ever. It went to No 1 in two weeks, and it sold three or four million. I had no idea what to do next. I've always been caught on the hop. I just love all aspects of recording, rather than concentrating on a career or what I'm trying to say, because really I don't have anything to say.



LONDON, 1974

Filming *Stardust*. I stayed with Keith [Moon] a few times in Harry Nilsson's place in Park Lane. In fact, he was homeless. I stuck some clothes in the wardrobe, and the next thing, he'd be wearing them. He didn't have his house, Tara, because he was divorcing or something. Actually, he gave it to me one day. He'd say to Dougal, his PA, "Get the keys to Tara and give 'em to Dave, please, I want Dave to have the house..."



EDEN STUDIOS, CHISWICK, LONDON, 1977

Max Wall – and look what good shape Ian [Dury]'s in there. Wow! This was for a song called "England's Glory". It was just something that Ian wanted to do. And he wanted me to do it because I told him I'd supported Gene Vincent a few times in the early '60s in Wales, and he sat me down to tell him everything. It was great having Max, typical old-school entertainer, and his manager with the thin moustache.



LONDON, 1978

Rockpile. I'd signed a deal with Led Zep's Swansong. Nick [Lowe] and I met up at the Nashville Rooms, and said, "Let's get a band together." But when we made an album as Rockpile, I signed something with Jake Riviera whereby I gave away my recording rights. Hell broke loose over that, and I couldn't work with Nick again. The two managers weren't a problem, though. Peter Grant wouldn't even have recognised Jake. He'd be like a bug to be stamped on.



HAMMERSMITH ODEON, LONDON, 1979

With Paul McCartney's Rockestra. I've worked with Paul a few times. He was OK. All right. You've gotta be careful. Filming *Give My Regards To Broad Street*, a horrible film with horrible songs, we'd always be jamming something – Ringo, Paul, me and Chris Spedding. And Chris started trying to play something when it was down tools. And someone came across to him and said, "Only play songs that Paul plays." [laughs] We can only have fun if Paul starts it.



LIMEHOUSE STUDIOS, LONDON, 1985

Carl Perkins wanted me to put this TV show together; and George said, "Well if you do that, I'll get Ringo and Eric." I knew George pretty well, I was hanging out a lot with him at Friar Park. But we didn't talk about music. Unless it was George Formby. With people like The Beatles, you don't want to be pushing into "Let's write a song", or you'll be shut out – forever. So I'd watch the racing with him on TV.



PALACE THEATER, LOS ANGELES, 1987

Slim Jim, me, Brian Setzer, Jeff Lynne, George Harrison, Duane Eddy and Bob Dylan. Dylan was there with George. If I'd been a bit more forceful, I might have ended up with them in the Wilburys. I talked George into working with Jeff Lynne. Before that, whoever was at George's table, he'd say, "Let's form the Traveling Wilburys." At one time it was Mary Hopkin, Joe Brown, Alvin Lee and myself. He'd say it as a joke. A rather sad joke for me when it materialised.



MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK, 1989

I've played a few times with Chuck Berry. Once was on his 60th birthday. I put a band together to play with him, with John Entwistle on bass. Midway through the gig, John started getting a bit over-confident and busy. Chuck walked over right into his face, and said, "Don't do that!" In the dressing-room, I said, "Do you have a setlist?" "No, each song starts out like this. Da-da-da-da-da..." "No kidding. How about ending?" "I stamp my foot."



ON TOUR, 2009

On tour with Jools. I was with him for a year. I'd just turn up and play, and I usually got home by midnight. My guitar looks great there. It's exactly the same model as Buddy Holly had. I moved back to England 10 years ago, and in the last six months I've got a digital studio set up in a little room in my house, and I'm recording again, and writing. I'll hopefully have another album out in the summer.

Subtle As A Flying Mallet by Dave Edmunds is reissued now on Cherry Red

Vintage Tiki: Todd at his TikiIniki bar and restaurant, Princeville, Hawaii (Kauai) 2013





A WIZARD, A TRUE STAR

Hello, it's TODD RUNDGREN! Classic rock's most forward-thinking genius looks back — at working with The Band, at recording on Mescalito, and at that world-beating "Springsteen spoof". Shocking news, too: the indefatigable gadget-freak doesn't own a cellphone. . .
"It's like heroin — don't start in the first place!"

Words: Andy Gill

"I ALWAYS KNEW I was a musician," says Todd Rundgren. "I knew I had a sensitivity to it as an artform — and fortunately, I got to grow up in an era when being a musician was a cool thing."

Rundgren's sensitivity to music has enabled him to sustain a career now well into its fifth decade, and seen him work with a diverse range of artists, from The Band to Meat Loaf, XTC to Tame Impala, Patti Smith to Ringo Starr. Just back home in Hawaii from touring Japan in Ringo's All-Starr Band, he's preparing for the release of his latest album, *State*, which marries techno methods with smart pop songcraft to convey typically razor-sharp observations on contemporary mores.

It's the 24th solo album of a career that has taken in psychedelia, pop-soul, prog-rock, techno, and even an entire album created from treated vocal noises. Todd's brain, it seems, is never satisfied, his conversation springing nimbly from one idea to another, coloured by the laconic, almost disdainful humour that has occasionally rubbed clients up the wrong way. Not that he should care: despite this, he remains a sought-after producer whose CV includes one

of the world's biggest-selling albums, *Bat Out Of Hell*. Its 43 million sales (and rising) has secured Rundgren the financial security to indulge an insatiable interest in new technology — he has been involved in pioneering work in music video, interactive performance, computer graphics, and the early subscription music download service PatroNet. Which makes it a surprise to learn that he doesn't own that most ubiquitous of devices, a cellphone. "People gasp when I say that!" he says. "It's like heroin — don't start in the first place!"

UNCUT: What is it like performing in Ringo's All-Starr Band?

TODD RUNDGREN: This is one of the best gigs anyone could possibly have. You play three of your own songs, a bunch of everybody else's songs, and a bunch of Ringo and Beatles songs. You travel the same way that Ringo does, you stay in the same hotels that Ringo does — you are essentially a Beatle! In Nagoya, when we got off the train we were mobbed as if we were Beatles. It's just a lot of fun — you get to re-live your musical childhood. All of us were Beatles fans, so playing Beatles songs, what more can you ask for?



Garage-psych quartet Nazz with Rundgren, right

TODD RUNDGREN BUYERS' GUIDE



NAZZ NAZZ (1968)

Debut of Todd's tyro garage-psych-delicious combo; includes phasing-swathed "Open My Eyes"; included on *Nuggets*, and the first version of the Todd classic "Hello It's Me".

7/10



RUNT (1970)

Todd's solo debut, a diverse affair showcasing his skill at everything from blues rockers to Laura Nyro-influenced piano pop like "We Gotta Get You A Woman".

8/10



THE BAND STAGE FRIGHT (1970)

Follow-up to The Band's eponymous second album – surely the most Difficult Third Album ever attempted? Todd's first big production commission.

8/10



SOMETHING/ ANYTHING? (1972)

You spoil us, mister ambassador: possibly the most diverse double-album in rock history. Includes the iconic "I Saw The Light", and "Hello It's Me".

9/10



A WIZARD, A TRUE STAR (1973)

The ne plus ultra of solo psychedelic concept-album extravaganzas, a mighty brain-fuddling web inside your mind. Includes the majestic "Just One Victory".

9/10



FAITHFUL (1976)

One side new material, the other side exactly precise covers of psychedelic classics like "Good Vibrations" and "Strawberry Fields Forever".

8/10



MEAT LOAF BAT OUT OF HELL (1977)

The "Springsteen spoof" which ate the world (43 million sales, and rising). Just one more wafer-thin mint, Monsieur Loaf?

8/10



XTC SKYLARKING (1986)

Apparently fractious recording sessions result in XTC's best album, a pastoral psych-pop classic.

8/10



LIARS (2004)

Todd returns to his classic retro-nuevo pop-soul style with a concept album about liars of all stripes, from politicians and preachers to utopian self-deceivers.

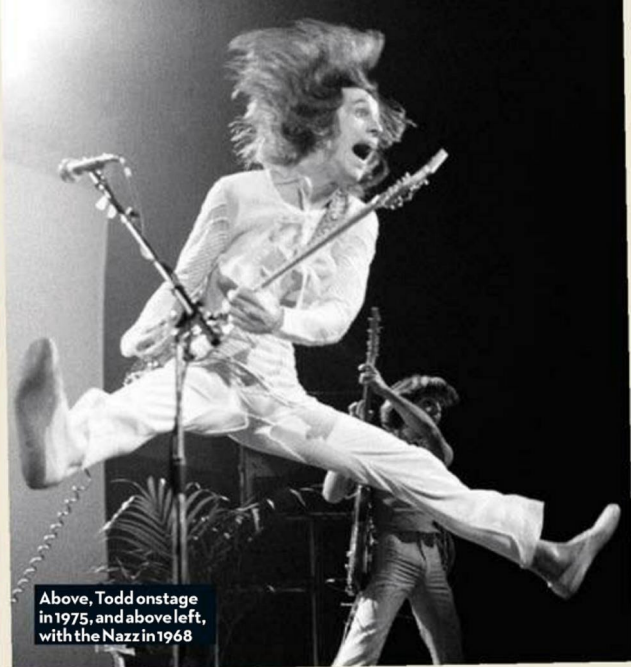
8/10



STATE (2013)

Cautionary fables about contemporary misconceptions, clad in modern techno-prog livery.

8/10



Above, Todd onstage in 1975, and above left, with the Nazz in 1968

➔ **Your new album's called *State*. So, what kind of a state are you in?** I like to use words that have multiple meanings; that gives me a lot of room to operate. "State" can be interpreted as the act of making a statement, as the condition of something, colloquialised as the state of someone's mind, and of course there's the implications of the political state. But the context for me was comparing dance-oriented DJ-style presentations I'd done in the early '90s, which took a lot of effort, with recent DJ gigs done by younger artists. I realised everything had collapsed into something very simple – so I had the idea of the State Machine, which will play the same thing over and over 'til you tell it to play something differently. Part of what inspired me was how low expectations are – all you have to do is say, "Can you feel ze lurrve?" every once in a while, and everyone goes crazy. With that as a foundation, who knows what you could come up with?

If you were starting out, do you think you'd have succeeded in today's talent-show pop culture?

That sort of transient success, where you're really big, and then five years later working as an A&R man, or in some novelty package touring casinos, that to me was never the object. Immediately after I left the Nazz, I said, "I've had enough of all this publicity, I just want to make records, behind the scenes." Then I started having hit singles, and had to learn how to be a performer. And now that I am, I really enjoy it. So if I had to start out again today, success wouldn't be the important thing, that would be whether I was still doing it 20 years from now.

How would you have coped with teen stardom if you'd been a sensation straight out of the box?

You always wonder about that. Like, after *Something/Anything?*, as far as AM radio was concerned, it was as if I had died. So there's this aspect, like with Jimi Hendrix: if I'd kept on doing what I was doing, would people have got bored with it? It's only your "death" that has elevated you to such grand heights, y'know? You inherit a certain mythology when you've disappeared from the overground; but in a sense I never disappeared from that part of the audience that, firstly, went along with me on the progressive rock thing, then with the quirky experimentalist singer-songwriter thing. And, of course, I had a thriving but chequered career as a record producer, as well. But there was always discontinuity in my career.

Do you ever wake up and think, "No music today!"?

I go through periods of creativity, and usually that's out of necessity. Then I go through periods of idle listening – I still feel I have to have my ears open for ideas to steal, but that's kind of what a musician's life is like anyway. But sometimes



The Band, 1971

you give up and say, "I'll never steal that," so then you just pay tribute by doing your own version of it!

So when you listen to music, do you find yourself involuntarily analysing it to find out how it works?

If I'm in a plundering mode, I'll do that. When something becomes seemingly the norm, the record producer part of me wants to know why, and I'll analyse the sound and the component parts that go into it. Sometimes I'd just like to surrender to what I'm hearing, and not get into that sort of deconstruction, but as a producer I have to, because I never know what I'm gonna get asked to do. I can't just listen passively, I have to understand the meme. In the back of your mind you're thinking, 'How can I use that?' There are certain records I can't listen to in case I'm so influenced I start literally copying them: when I heard the Bon Iver album I thought, 'Wow, there's a lot of interesting stuff here, I'm not going to listen to this album again until I finish my album!'

"I produced Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* because I thought it was a Bruce Springsteen spoof!"

have a lucrative job like record production, so that I can be freed up to think in different ways in terms of my own music.

The Band's *Stage Fright* was one of your first high-profile production jobs. What was that like?

We did the basic recording in the Woodstock Theatre, which has since burned down and been rebuilt. We set up the control room in the prop tent in the back of the theatre – it was baking hot during the day, and freezing at night. I played *Stage Fright* the other night, and it's funny the things that you remember when listening to it – one is that on that album,

Do you prefer working solo or with a band; and studio or performance?

I still see a lot of distinction between the creating part of the process and the performing part. Once you get to performance, there's a different kind of creativity going on; but songwriting is a mysterious process that involves a lot of dependency on my subconscious. That makes it hard to collaborate. It's a drag getting stuck in one part of the equation, which is why it's good to

UNI STATES

MEET PROFESSOR TODD!

In autumn of 2010, Rundgren spent two weeks as a visiting Guest Professor at Indiana University

"I t involved a whole array of things," explains Todd. "I was there at the behest of a particular endowment, for kids so smart they get a full scholarship. I'd evaluate work they'd done. I gave songwriting classes, and went off-campus for a couple of events, one where I took them to a studio and gave them a history of the evolution of it, from this clunky vintage equipment up to the laptop. And I gave what was supposed to be a recital and seminar, but turned into a concert."

He also got to conduct the university's marching band as they played his "Bang The Drum All Day", a staple of US sports events. A similar stint is planned at Northwestern University, which will include Todd playing with a string quartet again. As he explains, "You gotta diversify as you get older!"



TODD RUNDGREN

and presumably some of their other recordings, Levon wasn't the only drummer; Richard played drums as well, and trying to figure out which was which is hard! The final mix was done in Bearsville Studios, with most of the band

present all the time. That was tedious! Democratic mixing never goes well.

The production you're probably still most famous for is *Bat Out Of Hell*. It was a glorious accident. Nobody making that record ever thought, 'This is going to be the biggest-selling album of all time.'

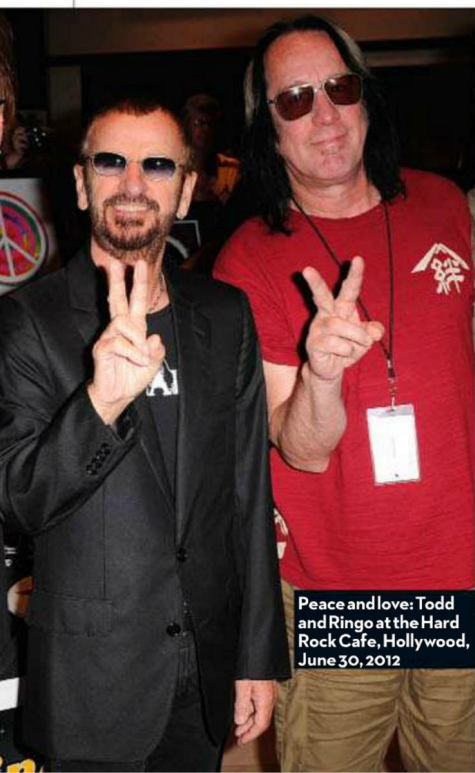
I did it because I thought it was a Bruce Springsteen spoof! Then the day before we went in and did it, Meat Loaf decided he wanted off his original label (RCA). We had already rehearsed everyone, so I had to get Bearsville to put it on my tab. Because Bearsville underwrote all the session pay and the orchestral overdubs and other stuff, they had right of refusal on the record, and they turned it down; then Warners, their distributor, turned it down. So here I was, stuck with the bill for the record, while they spent six months finding a label. They put out a single, nothing happened. Then they put out another single, nothing happened. And then another six to eight months later, through a combination of relentless touring and the fortunate coincidence of MTV playing "Paradise By The Dashboard Light" endlessly because they were short of programming, that finally broke the album. I didn't see any payback on it until a year and a half after we finished the record.

Presumably a mighty substantial payback, though...

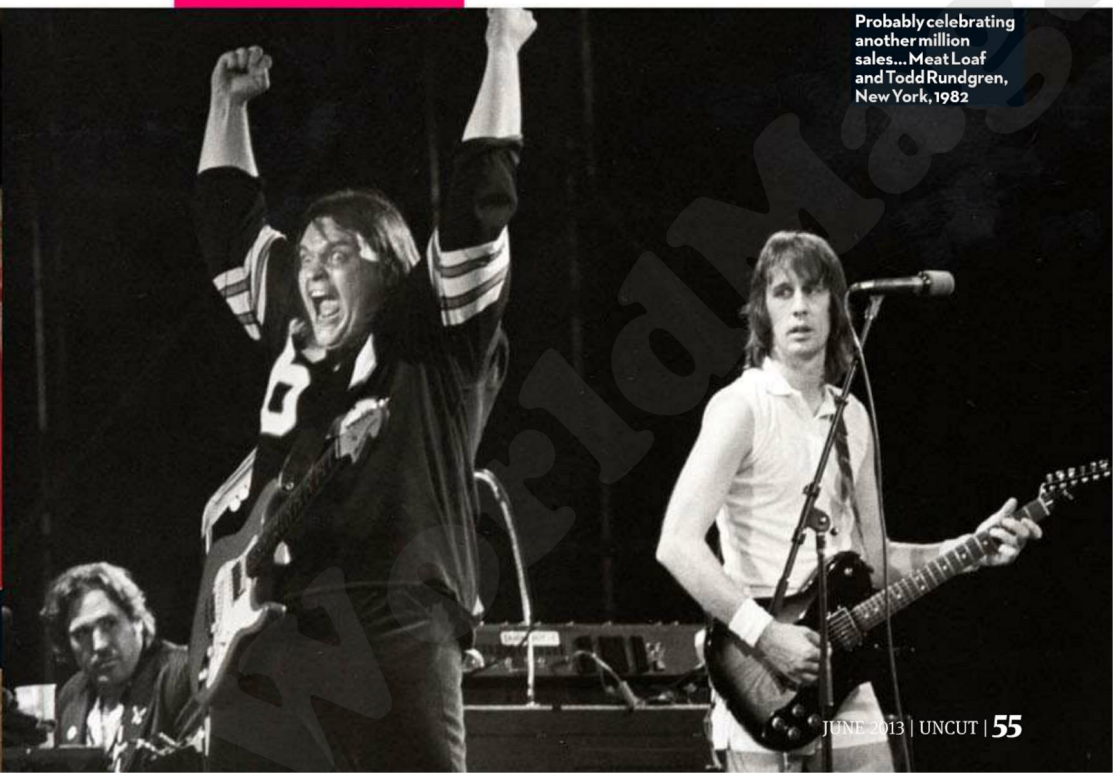
It was quite substantial, yes. My act of faith in this Springsteen spoof paid off!

Which producers influenced your own work in that capacity?

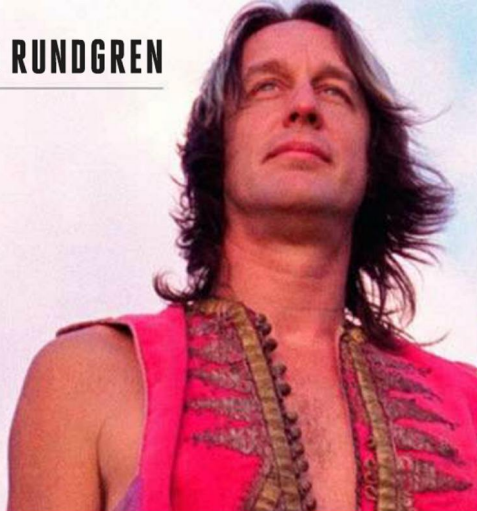
Well, The Beatles obviously was the first time anyone thought about what a producer did, and after that I became more conscious of producers' contributions. It's all a matter of figuring out what's best for the record, rather than applying a trademark sound. Currently, I really enjoy Steve Lillywhite's production, and I believe his natural inclination is to get people to just play, while he gets the sound right. At the other extreme there's someone like Mutt Lange, who essentially tortures every note in the record out, 'til the



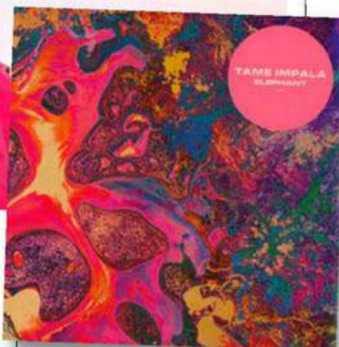
Peace and love: Todd and Ringo at the Hard Rock Cafe, Hollywood, June 30, 2012



Probably celebrating another million sales... Meat Loaf and Todd Rundgren, New York, 1982



Todd wears a waistcoat almost as garish as Tame Impala's "Elephant" single sleeve (below)



➤ artist wants to kill himself! But those records are hugely successful, and success justifies whatever you do. But I could never spend a year making a record. Usually, I get called in because somebody has already spent a year making the record, and they want to get it fuckin' finished! Two weeks later, boom! We're finished!

Was the *Runt* album a group or solo project? The reissues had your name added as artist.

Everyone was thinking group, rather than solo artist. But 'Runt' was the name of the album. The artist was Todd Rundgren, but people thought the group was called 'Runt' – and we may have gone along with that, even played as Todd Rundgren & Runt, but it was never meant to be a group. The Sales brothers played on the record, but so did other people – I had already done work on *Stage Fright*, so I asked Rick Danko and Levon Helm to play on a song, 'cos I wouldn't have to pay 'em, and because I wanted to dabble in all different kinds of music, so I faked up a Band song for them to play on.

You've always been a hot-dog with new technology. Where does that desire come from, to be at the cutting-edge of the possible?

A lot of it comes from having a short attention-span – not boredom so much as curiosity. There's plenty to keep me entertained, sometimes you just choose not to use it. It's less natural intelligence, more like unsatisfied curiosity. And sometimes I get lucky putting two and two together. I like to get the facts straight, to understand the underpinnings of certain things.

On the new album, "Something From Nothing" seems like a meditation on the act of creation.

In some ways – though once I'd finished the album, I realised it was more a collection of cautionary tales. It's an autonomic process – I do what I do, and I don't actually know what it means until later, after I've delivered the record and can't do anything about it anymore. So I've realised a lot of the lyrics present the negative side of these things, they're cautionary tales about putting too much dependence on certain assumptions. In that particular case, the song is not so much an exhortation to have faith as a warning that faith is no good as a substitute for actually knowing things. The people in these little parables I'm writing are stuck in a rut, they just think, 'If I stick around here long enough, something will change for the better.' No, sometimes you have to do something, you can't depend on faith alone.

Do you consider yourself an analogue or digital kind of guy?

Nah, I don't even pay attention to all that stuff. I would not go to the trouble of analogue at this point. I've only thought about the most convenient way to do something. I held out against MIDI for ages, and likewise with digital. In the '90s I eventually got a Pro Tools system – and it was a pain in the ass the entire time I owned it. And the audience don't care – if you asked them they'd probably choose digital for convenience. If they wanted analogue, they'd be carrying around tiny little record players with tiny vinyl discs!

"If people really wanted analogue, they'd carry tiny record players with tiny vinyl discs!"

If you did 180 gram vinyl audiophile reissues of *Something/Anything?* and *A Wizard, A True Star*, they would sell shedloads. Maybe, but I'm not going to be a spokesman for analogue. My records were always too long for vinyl, they sounded quieter than most people's records, and became noisier quicker – and the theory about analogue being better ignores facts you can't escape, such as the sound at the beginning of a vinyl record is always better than the sound at the end. Do the maths! When you get to the end, you're putting the same amount of sound into a lot less real estate! That's why we always had to trim the bottom off my records, in order to keep them from skipping. When they went to CD, my records all had some form of sonic improvement – we could restore the bottom end, and they wouldn't sound all grimy and degraded towards the end.

***A Wizard, A True Star* has become almost the signature work of your career, a major psychedelic landmark. What were you on when you made that?**

Mescaline, mostly. I was even wiring the studio on psychedelics! It just agreed with me. Then after a while, some of the effects became permanent, and I realised, Jeez, I don't have to waste time with all these other side-effects. I'll just keep this part! Recently, Tame Impala asked me to remix this track "Elephant", which is their version of *A Wizard, A True Star*, loosely based on it. I didn't even know these guys until they asked me to remix it, and suddenly I find out there's this whole modern musical subculture for which that record is iconic. Then I'm thinking, 'Fuck, I can't waste my own record a second time – I gotta find out what it is they like about me, and go do more of that!' My original fans are getting sick and dying now! I need to refresh the fanbase! 🍄

State is available now on the Esoteric Antenna label; Todd Rundgren tours the UK in June

TODD'S TIPS

APPS! IPADS! LA2A LIMITER-COMPRESSORS!

Todd's top gadgets...

- "I have a crossword app, something like **Across** or just **Crossword**. I am addicted to crosswords: I have a subscription to the *New York Times* puzzles for my laptop. I do that every day, and I'll do a couple of Sudoku puzzles too, just to get my brain working."
- "My recommended recording environment is Propellerhead's **Reason**. All my recent recording is done with

that. And there are gadgets that go inside that gadget! They've come out with a model for the classic LA2A limiter-compressor, which I have used constantly since it came out – it's got that sound like the originals I used to own back in the day."

- "I got a new bike! A **Specialized Crossroads**, it's pretty expensive, my wife got it for me. It's green, with one of the more comfortable seats, and a little rack on the back. I wear my Bell helmet with red and white pinstriping."



Todd's iPad MIDI Designer set-up and (below) his smart new bike



- "I now have to have two **iPads**. One is not enough! They're now integrated into my system, so I can control my computer for live situations. I doubled up at the recommendation of Lindström – I saw he was using two, and thought, 'Oh! That's the way to go!' You can have one performance running on one iPad, and another waiting in the wings on the other. I've been using MIDI Designer and MIDI Stuff – you can build custom control environments on them, with touch virtual buttons and sliders to mix with."

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ALBUM BY ALBUM

Deep Purple

The rock legends relive their classic LPs – burning casinos, axes and all...

THEIR MAGNIFICENT GUITARIST, Ritchie Blackmore, has long since left the band for a life of quasi-medieval music-making. Their keyboard player, that classically trained gentleman of arts and letters Jon Lord, has lately passed away. And yet, in a band with just one member of the original lineup remaining, there is still in Deep Purple's music a vibrantly beating heart, their live reputation undiminished by the passing years or the band's many changes in personnel. *Now What!?*, their first studio record in eight years, finds them in strong voice: the organ/guitar blueprint that Blackmore and Lord conceived of still in operation, albeit explored by different people. Drummer Ian Paice, singer Ian Gillan and bassist/producer Roger Glover – mainstays of the classic "mark II" lineup – were on hand to talk *Uncut* through their classic works.



Malcolm Arnold rehearses Deep Purple and "bunch of cunts" the Royal Philharmonic at the Albert Hall, September 24, 1969



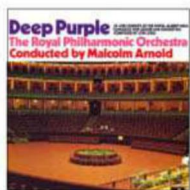
SHADES OF DEEP PURPLE

PARLOPHONE, 1968

In two days, the MKI, extensively backcombed Deep Purple record a debut

of classically influenced, vaguely psych rock and covers. Derek Lawrence, an associate from Ritchie Blackmore's days working on Joe Meek sessions, produces. A massive US hit follows.

IAN PAICE: Chris Curtis, the drummer of The Searchers, had an idea of a band like a roundabout – you came on, and after a while you got off. It was all mad, totally mad. But in this madness, he had got together Jon Lord and Ritchie Blackmore, who was a bit of a legend among British musos. The whole first album was written and rehearsed in this crazy old farm called Deeves Hall. We were living there for a couple of months – in the parts of it that weren't being destroyed by two builders. Through Derek Lawrence there was a record deal in place for a new English band on a US label [*Tetragrammaton*] set up by Bill Cosby. The first record was recorded in two four-hour sessions. We did four hours in the afternoon, then Derek mixed it in the evening. We came back the next day and did the same thing, and that was it. That was in the old Pye Studios. It did OK in England but it had a lot of push in the US because of this new label. "Hush", the single, everyone knew, and whatever we did to it, they seemed to like, and it became a big hit. We went over there for our first tour and thought we'd made it – only to discover that it's not quite that easy.



CONCERTO FOR GROUP AND ORCHESTRA

HARVEST, 1969

Jon Lord's strong, occasionally marginalised work. Orchestral tunes

meet rock jamming in the Albert Hall.

ROGER GLOVER: It tells us everything that Jon Lord was about – that music has no boundaries.

IAN GILLAN: The first movement is a battle – two giants circling each other. The slow second movement, they start to show respect for each other. The third movement is beautiful harmony.

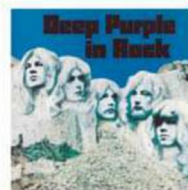
ROGER GLOVER: Ian Gillan and I had been in the band five or six weeks at this point. In at the deep end? Not half. Not being able to read music, our cue sheets were a sight to behold. We all made our own notes: "Wait for the silly tune, then watch Jon." That was our entrance.

IAN GILLAN: After the dress rehearsal we went for an Italian meal. I remember Jon saying, "I wonder, dear boy, if you're going to get around to writing the lyrics before we go onstage?" I duly completed them in the restaurant and had them put up on a music stand on a napkin.

ROGER GLOVER: Our first meeting with the orchestra was at a rehearsal halls. It wasn't a warm welcome. Malcolm Arnold really gee'd them up, but I can't tell you what he said.

IAN GILLAN: He said: "You are all playing like a bunch of cunts." They hated us – there's so much snobbery in music. I thought, 'You bunch of arseholes. I've seen you on a Tom Jones session with your sandwiches on the floor, reading your *Tit-Bits* magazine...'

ROGER GLOVER: We put our faith in Malcolm Arnold, and he in us. That was a mark of the man – he was brave, he wasn't scared of change.



DEEP PURPLE IN ROCK

HARVEST, 1970

Roger Glover and Ian Gillan's studio debut with the group. Jamming in a rundown

West London hall creates on-the-hoof hairy rock greatness.

ROGER GLOVER: The *Concerto* was divisive. Ritchie let Jon have his way for that one. Without that, maybe *In Rock* wouldn't have been so hard.

IAN PAICE: Every time we had a day off we'd go to Hanwell Community Centre, which was this wonderful, crappy place in West London and write stuff. In those days, if we had an idea on the way to a show, we'd try it out onstage – every day was a writing day.

ROGER GLOVER: It was a whole different level to what I'd known. I remember the first rehearsal I had with Purple and I thought, 'I don't know this...' I didn't realise they didn't know what it was either – it was a jam. To me, a jam was 12-bar blues. This was something else: it was rock jazz. It was then I learned the measure of this band.

IAN GILLAN: We'd go into the studio and polish it up and record them two or three songs at a time. "Child In Time" was something that came out of a 10-minute studio jam: Jon was dicking around with a song called "Bombay Calling" by It's A Beautiful Day, he slowed it down and that was the root of it.

ROGER GLOVER: My favourite song on that album is "Hard Lovin' Man" because that's where the fire of the stage came into the studio. [*Long-standing engineer*] Martin Birch was a big part of that, he was a great engineer. We were wringing sounds out of our instruments they weren't intended to make.



The classic Mark II lineup: (l-r) Blackmore, Glover, Lord, Gillan and Paice



FIREBALL

HARVEST, 1971

A funkier, soulful set, this wasn't what everyone expected – but it remains a Gillan favourite.

ROGER GLOVER: We

were following up a big success and you can't be unaware of that. We went down to a big old house, The Hermitage, in north Devon to write. **IAN GILLAN:** That didn't last very long. Pranks, axes through doors, that sort of thing.

“Ritchie played TOTP with his guitar back to front – I don't think we got asked back after that”

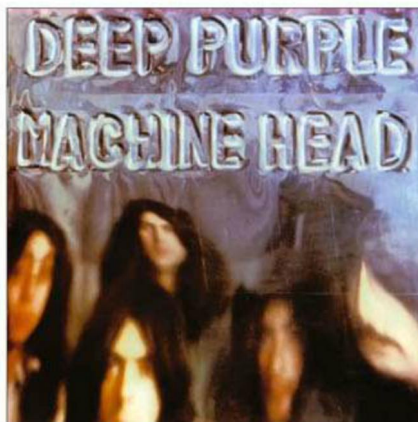
ROGER GLOVER: It was Ritchie wielding the axe and it was through my door. He wanted to borrow a crucifix because he was having a séance. I didn't want anything to do with it. I was in bed reading my book, and the next thing I knew, an axe came through my door and there was Ritchie. He's a great practical joker, but I thought he went a little too far.

IAN GILLAN: I'm not sure what got done. We drank a lot of cider.

ROGER GLOVER: We'd been on the road about a year, and a little bit of drink came into it. I can't remember what we wrote there apart from “Strange Kind Of Woman”.

IAN PAICE: I can't remember much about it, but we did enjoy ourselves.

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



MACHINE HEAD

PURPLE, 1972

“We all went down to Montreux...” Purple show their workings, as “Smoke On The Water” recounts how a rock classic was recorded in a Swiss hotel corridor. Local legend Claude Nobs assists, invaluable.

IAN PAICE: It was a comedy of errors trying to get it recorded. It wasn't so much a question of going to Montreux as going somewhere where there was a helpful room sound. Our friend Claude Nobs said the casino in Montreux was going to be closed, and did we want to use it? We were all at the Zappa show where it burned down. My overriding memory of that concert is of Zappa telling people not to panic. At which point he chucked his guitar down and legged it.

ROGER GLOVER: We only had the Rolling Stones mobile for a certain amount of time.

When the fire started, we went back to our hotel, and watched the fire from the bar. About two hours after, Claude Nobs appeared in the bar looking terribly haggard, and all he could think about was us, and what we were going to do.

IAN PAICE: We had to make it work. Like the lyrics of the song say, put the mattresses up for soundproofing – in three weeks, three days we finished writing and recording the whole album.

ROGER GLOVER: Claude helped us look around Montreux – it was hard to find a place in a sleepy town where a band can make a lot of noise at 3am. The ground floor corridor in the Grand Hotel presented the best opportunity, but we had to get a carpenter to build a couple of false walls.

IAN GILLAN: Every day we saw earthquakes, disasters, storms and crashes – that's part of music. So when someone sets fire to the building... we'd never written a song about it. It was only in desperation, because we were short of material and desperate to get out of the place.

ROGER GLOVER: “Smoke...” was the last thing we did. We recorded a backing track at the first place Claude found – the title came to me a couple of days after the fire. I just woke up and said, “smoke on the water”. I mentioned it to Gillan and he said, “Sounds like a drug song.” We didn't like promoting drugs in songs – we were a drinking band. We sat around listening to the backing track and one of us said, why don't we write the story of what happened to us here? Then I said, what about “Smoke On The Water”? “Yeah, fine.” We did it line by line. It's very literal and conversational – maybe that's the magic of it. It amazes me that such a particular story could have such a general acceptance.



The 'modern' Deep Purple circa 2005: (l-r) Don Airey, Ian Paice, Roger Glover, Ian Gillan and Steve Morse



MADE IN JAPAN

EMI/PURPLE, 1972

Not just a commercially successful record, but a hard rock paradigm: the live double album. Fierce jams, from the

band's best period.

IAN GILLAN: For a rock band, I didn't see the point in live albums. To my mind, you've got to be there.

IAN PAICE: Warner Bros Japan wanted to open up the Japanese market to hard rock. They said, we would like a live album for Japan – you can have it for the rest of the world. The only expense we had was Martin Birch. I think getting him over there and hotelling him cost about \$3000.

ROGER GLOVER: I always felt our shows were too loose. There would be stops and starts, Ritchie would decide he wanted to do something on his own, and would make the usual signal – slice his fingers across his throat. If I hear "Lucille"... I burst out laughing. It falls into such chaos and somehow we tumble out of that.

IAN PAICE: We recorded three nights – an amalgamation of *In Rock* and *Machine Head*. When we listened to the tapes before we left Japan we thought, "This is pretty good..." But no-one could have envisaged it was going to be one of our biggest albums.

ROGER GLOVER: I couldn't figure out why we were so successful but now I realise that we were dangerous, unpredictable. It was not cabaret. It was aggressive, loud and in your face.



MARK I AND II SINGLES

PURPLE, 1973

Fabulous double comp issued in a variety of rather sexist sleeves: lady in jeans (1973), lady in

swimming costume (1978), or sexy lady welder (1979). Whatever, a testament to how DP could unexpectedly turn its hand to singles.

IAN GILLAN: Singles, we hated it, going on *Top Of The Pops* and all that rubbish. I remember Ritchie played *TOTP* with his guitar back to front so his strings were on the inside – I don't think we got asked back after that. You get embraced and consumed. People say, "Ah, it's good for you..." But it's not.

IAN PAICE: We weren't militant about it, but we always thought we were an albums band, man. But everyone released singles: Hendrix, Cream. Even if it wasn't the intention of the recording. It's down to the record company to say, "That's coming out as a single." You just get on with it.

ROGER GLOVER: "Black Night" was the management's idea of a lead track. To have that success – it feels like it's out of your control.

IAN PAICE: Some of the singles are quite interesting. We never contemplated "Smoke On The Water" as anything other than part of the *Machine Head* album. It was only when the master tapes went over to California and Warner Bros that some guy there said "This track is really good – but it's too long." And so they chopped out a couple of minutes in the middle, chucked it out, and it went crazy.

"I was in bed reading my book, and an axe came through my door and there was Ritchie..."



PERFECT STRANGERS

POLYDOR, 1984

The 1980s. Wilderness years profitably cultivated by the reformed classic lineup.

IAN GILLAN: I went for a curry with Rodney Marsh – I was a huge QPR fan, and he came to see the Gillan band at Hammersmith Odeon. We went for a few beers afterwards and when he ran out of compliments, he said "...but it's not as good as Deep Purple." And of course he was right. I thought of that, and I gave Jon Lord a call the next day to sound things out.

ROGER GLOVER: I wasn't sure it was a good idea. Maybe because I wasn't sure whether it would work in the '80s. We had this meeting, and when it did happen all of us sitting round the table, the five of us, it was an amazing feeling.

IAN PAICE: As silly as it sounds, it was like going home – everyone set up and started playing. It felt very easy and very natural. It was like, why did we ever stop?

IAN GILLAN: We set up in a rented house in Vermont, started jamming, and you could see people smiling and nodding. Then we all went out and got pissed – it was great. But things

changed for the next one: this megalomaniac appeared out of nowhere playing the banjo – and that's when things had to change again.



NOW WHAT?!

EDEL/EARMUSIC, 2013

A meeting with producer Bob Ezrin proves instructive. An attempt to bottle live lightning in the studio prompts

a generally exciting return.

IAN GILLAN: The fans wanted it, the label wanted it. No-one in the band was particularly interested in it – we're basically a performing band, and we had all the material we needed.

ROGER GLOVER: There was some talk that we shouldn't do albums anymore. But we're an albums band and if it's out of fashion or not, I think we have to stick to who we are. We did start thinking about it two years ago – we had a writing session in Spain. Some of the key ideas came from that session. Then a year ago Bob Ezrin came to see us in Toronto and he just inspired us. The next writing session we had in Dusseldorf in a big hangar, was with two words of his in mind: "stretch out".

IAN PAICE: We met with him in Canada and we realised we were all on the same page: to try and catch in the studio some of the magic that goes on onstage – which happens and then is gone. Bob said, "That's what you want to capture." There's a lot of musicality in the old records. We took a couple of weeks in a soundstage in a town in Germany and chucked ideas out. We honed them, sent the ideas to Bob and after that it became easy. ①

Now What?! is released on April 29; Deep Purple tour the UK in October

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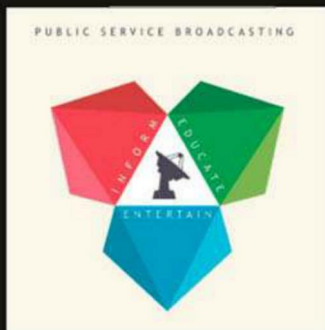


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STAGECOACH

SAY HI TO THE BAND

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Perfect melodic slacker-pop indie heroes from Dorking unleash their debut album - all nucleus of pop layered with sumptuous influences from the likes of Wilco, Weezer and Pavement. Recorded with Rory Attwell.



GREG HAINES

WHERE WE WERE

DENOVALI LP / CD

Greg Haines text here: "Blurring influences such diverse as Lee Perry, Rhythm & Sound, Klaus Schulze And Tangerine Dream this record is simply an ingenious masterpiece."

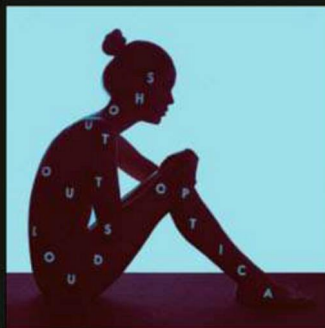


IT HUGS BACK

RECOMMENDED RECORD

SAFE AND SOUND LP / CD

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SHOUT OUT LOUDS

OPTICA

MERGE LP / CD

Stockholm's Shout Out Louds commemorate ten years with the release of Optica, an album celebrating color and light from a band confident in their sound.

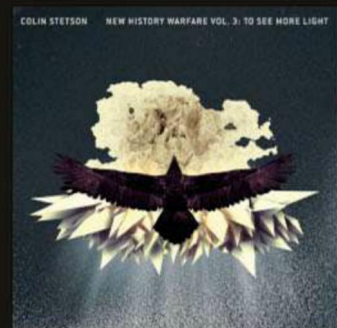


SECRET CIRCUIT

TACTILE GALACTICS

RVNG ZLP / CD

Delivered from its celestial womb to the human world for inevitable elevation, Tactile Galactics is the new album by Secret Circuit, the psychedelic dance music moniker & cosmic interface of LA artist Eddie Ruscha JR.



COLIN STETSON

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TO SEE MORE LIGHT

CONSTELLATION ZLP / CD

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MIKAL CRONIN

MCII

MERGE LP / CD

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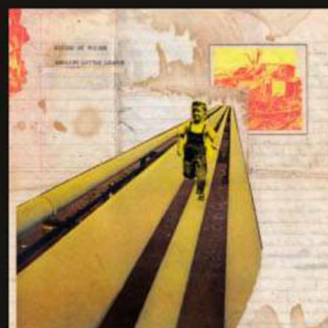


CUT YOURSELF IN HALF

MEKKANIZM

NEW HEAVY SOUNDS LP / CD

'A pummelling rock debut bursting with monster riffs and psychedelics. Stoner rock meets hardcore in a metal mash up of mayhem and melody.'



GUIDED BY VOICES

ENGLISH LITTLE LEAGUE

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

English Little League is the fourth album from the reunited "classic" Guided by Voices line-up and hums along the full spectrum of rock's highways and byways.



VAR

NO ONE DANCES QUITE LIKE MY BROTHERS

SACRED BONES LP / CD

Recorded by Sean Ragon of Cult of Youth, Var is Elias Rønnefelt of Iceage along w/ members of Lower & Lust For Youth. A stunning electronic debut ranging from techno-pop to industrial to performance art.

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ALEX JOHN BECK



TRACKLIST

- 1 Obvious Bicycle
- 2 Unbelievers
- 3 Step
- 4 Diane Young
- 5 Don't Lie
- 6 Hannah Hunt
- 7 Everlasting Arms
- 8 Finger Back
- 9 Worship You
- 10 Ya Hey
- 11 Hudson
- 12 Young Lion

VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Modern Vampires Of The City

XL

New Yorkers at the top of their game on elaborate love letter to their hometown. *By Piers Martin*

9/10 LAST MONTH, ON Easter Saturday, the four members of Vampire Weekend took a stroll along New York's Fifth Avenue accompanied by the actor Steve Buscemi. It was the occasion of the Easter Parade, and so the band wore slightly brighter threads than usual, topped off with bunny ears and silver top hats, and each carried a basket full of sweets to hand to children on the way. Buscemi wore a dark blue suit and top hat and sang the bluesy chorus of Vampire Weekend's new single "Diane

Young" – "Baby, baby, baby, baby right on time" – through an old-fashioned loud hailer. Of course, this was a filmed publicity stunt to draw attention to the upcoming Vampire Weekend live concert stream Buscemi would be directing, but it neatly illustrated the remarkable appeal of the New York band in 2013: significant enough to attract a star of Buscemi's calibre – their last LP *Contra* topped the US charts three years ago, remember – but more than happy to goof around in fancy dress for the kids.

New Albums

➔ Right from the start, through their madcap videos, fizzing Afropop and preppy attire, there's been a Disneyish quality to Vampire Weekend. Gifted melodically and openly influenced by non-Western music, they sing of obscure grammar, foreign objects and social status, their records underpinned by a tremendous flair for rhythm. In Ezra Koenig, they're fronted by a real-life Ferris Bueller, a Twitter wit and star of Instagram, who appeared in a recent episode of *Girls* as himself, a handsome twentysomething New Yorker wisecracking at a house party (Koenig has known the show's creator Lena Dunham for years). They're different – special, even – and they know it: when forming the band while studying at Columbia University in 2006, they composed a manifesto for the group that featured a rule stating that no member would ever be seen onstage or in the press wearing jeans or a T-shirt. Question Koenig's regular Ivy League combo of polo shirt and chinos and he'll gladly point out Ralph Lauren's Polish-Jewish immigrant roots. If the hallmark of any great band is that they make what they do look effortless, then Vampire Weekend have barely broken sweat in the six years they've been in public.

By the same token, this is all ammunition for their detractors. Few bands in recent memory have polarised opinion quite like them. Perceived by some as privileged imperialists, smug purveyors of "Upper West Side Soweto" who holiday in the Hamptons, they were in danger of turning into a caricature; in terms of their clean-cut, primary-coloured Americanness, as fellow pop-realists they'd make an interesting subject for Jeff Koons. Had they continued in the vein of their self-titled debut and its swift successor *Contra*, zipping through ska-infused synthpop and sugary teen-punk while dipping into *Schott's Miscellany* for esoteric topics, chances are, as perfectionists, they'd tire from it sooner than us. In this respect, one of the reasons *Modern Vampires Of The City* is such a triumph – and it's comfortably their most stimulating and rewarding album – is the sense that this ambitious band took their time to push

Modern vampires: (l-r) Ezra Koenig, Rostam Batmanglij, Chris Tomson, Chris Baio



themselves absolutely in order to make the record as thrilling as possible.

Viewed as the culmination of a trilogy, we find VW in reflective mood, taking stock of their achievements. Happy to be home after four years on the road, this is, loosely, a love letter to New

York. The title of the album was revealed in the *New York Times* classifieds, and the city was foremost in Koenig's thoughts as he wrote the lyrics. Easing off the reggaeton and calypso, the band pick up on styles closer to home such as gospel and country, which when added to

THE PATH TO MODERN VAMPIRES OF THE CITY...

Four inspirations for Vampire Weekend



PAUL SIMON *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*

COLUMBIA, 1973
Graceland's Zulu swagger is typically associated with VW, but Simon's earlier solo breakthrough, recorded at Muscle Shoals, provides a blueprint of sorts for Koenig and co's latest in the way he blends soft pop with country and gospel music to create a lively and tender all-American masterpiece.



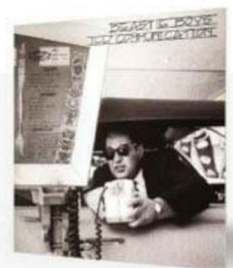
THE CURE *The Head On The Door*

FICTION, 1985
These 10 unorthodox but irresistible songs steered The Cure out of the crypt and on to college radio in the mid-'80s. Like *MVOTC*, each track has a distinct personality – Koenig loves "Close To Me" – and like The Cure, VW are an alternative act who've crossed over without compromise.



JUNIOR REID *One Blood*

BIG LIFE, 1990
The opening line of the Soup Dragons collaborator's "One Blood" inspired the LP's title: "Modern vampires of the city hunting blood, blood, blooooood". The band are big reggae fans, particularly Koenig, raised on ska and rocksteady by his Jewish father. "He'd point out the links between Judaism and Rastafarianism."



BEASTIE BOYS *Ill Communication*

GRAND ROYAL, 1994
Bursting with ideas, samples and hometown pride, the Beastie Boys' boundless enthusiasm for their craft – their wit, wordplay and attention to detail – showed Koenig how snapshots of a city can be stitched together to tell a wider story. One of his favourite bands, the Beasties gave him a sense of what an album could be.

Rostam Batmanglij's dextrous arrangements, give these new songs emotional depth and a broader appeal while still possessing VW's knack for startling pop hooks.

It's revealing that they delayed the album for a year so they could polish and tweak the dozen songs until each one sparkles. "We really challenge ourselves to make sure the recording is as exciting as the songwriting, and vice versa," says Koenig, and it shows. From the tick-tock of opening track "Obvious Bicycle" that leads to Koenig's swooning chorus of "So listen/Don't wait" through to the Satie-like saunter and creamy harmony of closing number "Young Lion", there's not a dull moment. Particular attention should be paid to "Step" and "Diane Young". The latter, a wild rockabilly shimmy, highlights their obsession with sound design to spice things up, with Koenig's voice pitchshifted from Barry White up to Paul Simon, a trick employed later on to almost ludicrous effect for the chipmunk chorus of "Ya Hey".

"Step" is notable not only because its origin can be traced

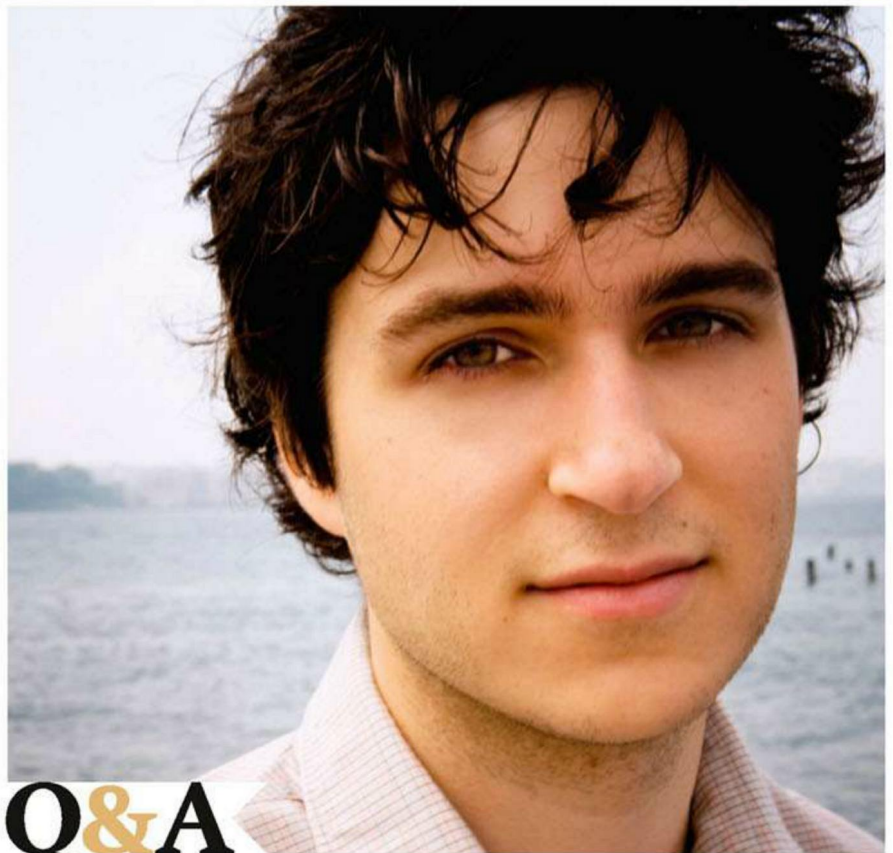
SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Rostam Batmanglij and Ariel Rechtshaid
Recorded and mixed at: RB's Apt; 222 10th St; Slow Death Studios, Burbank, LA; Downtown Studios, NYC; Vox Studios, LA; Echo Park Back House, LA
Personnel includes: Chris Baio (bass), Rostam Batmanglij (piano, guitars, banjo, vocal harmonies, backing vocals, drum and synth programming, keyboards, shaker), Ezra Koenig (vocals, guitar, piano), Chris Tomson (drums), Ariel Rechtshaid (additional drum and synth programming, additional bass)

retrospectively, via samples and covers, from New Jersey rapper YZ to hip-hop crew Souls Of Mischief to Grover Washington Jr and ultimately to Bread's "Aubrey", but because the band then weave a melody from "Aubrey" with their own composition that appears to blend Ravel with doo-wop. And if the music doesn't seduce you, Koenig's lyrics surely will. To select a few lines from "Step": "Ancestors told me that their girl was better/She's richer than Croesus and tougher than leather/I just ignored all the tales of a past life/Stale conversation deserves but a bread knife".

Koenig is on vintage form throughout. Whether you focus on a single line or attempt to unpick an entire song, there's plenty to delight and confound. In "Hudson", a spooked affair that dwells on the death of the 17th-Century British explorer Henry Hudson, he mentions a Euro 2012 quarter-final: "We watched the Germans play the Greeks". Even with more traditional fare they keep things fresh. "Unbelievers" and "Worship You" might trespass on Mumford's haybaled land, but soon a drunken saxophone wanders over the clattering rhythm of "Worship You", while Koenig pokes the Lord on "Unbelievers": "Girl, you and I will die unbelievers/Bound on the tracks of the train".

If in the past you've admired Vampire Weekend from a distance, this is the album that should have you falling in love with them. A more enjoyable pairing of words and music this year it's hard to imagine.



Q&A

Erza Koenig on New York City, decoding his lyrics, and singing about someone who doesn't exist

HOW DID YOU go about making the record?
Well, there were two distinct parts of working on this album. A lot of it came from being back in New York after the long period of touring the previous albums. I didn't have an apartment in New York for almost two years. When I came home, that was the beginning of a new chapter. I was in New York City for the winter and going over to Rostam's house and working, having lots of creative breakthroughs and also banging our heads against the wall. That's the period I associate with the beginning of the album, the formulation of the aesthetic. Then there's a secondary period when we were in LA for a month finishing up the record. This is the home stretch, when we brought in Ariel [Rechtshaid] as a co-producer and we worked like crazy, putting in the blood, sweat and tears to finish the recordings.

The album is full of New York characters and stories. This album is very much rooted in New York but it also feels like our most American album. There are influences that are more distinctly American than anything we've ever done before, meaning there's little bits of gospel and country and American folk music – you know, in ways that aren't maybe too obvious, but it's in there. The idea of a Vampire Weekend-goes-country album struck us as horrifying, but the idea of subtly incorporating these things into what we were already doing felt very fresh.

Do you look forward to reading people's interpretations of your lyrics?

I'm usually curious because sometimes people notice things that I hadn't thought of. Some people surprise me with how accurately they decode certain verses. I guess this album is a fairly dense piece of work so they'll probably have their work cut out if they really want to go deep. I feel that on this record we stepped our game up in every way. We always think about the music and the art and the lyrics as being intertwined. To me, being in a band is the ultimate multimedia project.

For "Diane Young" should we read it as "dying young"?

There was a moment when early on it could have been "Dying Young" but we decided to call it "Diane Young". That was more attractive on multiple levels. The song is kind of about whether you should live your life putting yourself in dangerous situations or not, but the truth is, once you call a song "Diane Young", Diane Young starts to feel like a person. When I sing it, I think about this mythical Diane Young figure. And on a practical level, I thank God we didn't call it "Dying Young" because the world doesn't need another song with that title. Also, when we were finishing up our record, Ke\$ha released a song called "Die Young", so that was a sign that we made the right decision.

Is this album the final part of a trilogy?

Yes, that's how it feels. These three albums do belong together and they really do tell a certain story. I've a feeling the next one is going to be something new.

INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN

"A VW-goes-country album struck us as horrifying..."

PRIMAL SCREAM

More Light

FIRST INTERNATIONAL

Bobby & co run the gamut from cool to cringe on 10th LP, says *Graeme Thomson*



7/10

PICKING HOLES IN Primal Scream is traditionally one of life's less onerous tasks. There

goes Bobby G, hymning revolution while sounding like a man who would struggle to overthrow a parking fine. On top of the de trop sloganeering there's the borrowed poses, recycled rock clichés, the hipper-than-thou name-dropping.

More Light is not short of ammunition for those inclined to mock. Within 90 seconds it's railing at "21st-Century slaves" and "television propaganda". Soon Gillespie is quoting Thatcher and contemplating the threat of "neutron bombs". Bless. Even when the targets are updated – "crackhouse zombies", "bankers who steal your own money" – the effect is more insipid than incendiary.

The good news is that Primal Scream's 10th album is sufficiently vibrant, inventive and surprising to ensure the medium comfortably trumps the message. After the pedestrian pop-rock of 2008's *Beautiful Future*, *More Light* marks a return to what Gillespie might conceivably describe as "sonic outlaw mode". The tightly wound dynamics familiar from *XTRMNTR* and *Vanishing Point* are much in evidence: "Sideman" and "Hit Void" marry pounding Krautrock to free-form instrumental freak-outs channelling The Sonics' "Have Love Will Travel", The Stooges' "Funhouse" and John Coltrane. "Turn Each Other Inside Out" is The Velvet Underground's "What Goes On" and "The Murder Mystery" meeting the poetry of David Meltzer. "Culturecide" arrives with an escort of sirens and squelchy jazz-funk dynamics, The Pop Group's Mark Stewart riding shotgun, wailing like a West Country Lydon. It's both deeply silly and slightly thrilling.

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** David Holmes
Recorded at: Das Bunker, London; Vox Studios, Los Angeles
Personnel includes: Bobby Gillespie (vocals), Andrew Innes (guitars, bass), Martin Duffy (keyboards), Darrin Mooney (drums), Barrie Cadogan (guitar), Jason Faulkner (bass), Jim Hunt (saxophone), Robert Plant (vocals), Kevin Shields (guitar), Mark Stewart (vocals), Sun Ra Arkestra



This is Primal Scream at their most dense and dark, but in fact the best bits of *More Light* live up to its title: full of air and space and possibility. The bursts of sunlit saxophone that punctuate the album, nodding to the blissed-out pastures of "I'm Comin' Down" and "Higher Than The Sun", remind you that this is their first record since touring *Screamadelica* in 2011. The cultural context and musical styles may be miles apart, but the two

records share a spirit of adventure and rejuvenation. In particular, the cinematic sensibility of producer David Holmes adds drama and texture. "River Of Pain", a stark tale of domestic violence set to a looping acoustic guitar riff, Arabic rhythms and Gillespie's whispering vocal, creeps with latent menace. The Sun Ra Arkestra are given free rein on the slowly collapsing middle section, which leads to a swooping string flourish. It's genuinely terrific, Bollywood meets Albert Ayler.



Q&A

Bobby Gillespie

It's quite an upbeat title. We're at a different stage in our lives. We're a bit more open, we have children growing up, and hopefully we're growing up at the same time. We're not as drugged out and fucked up as we were, we're clearer in our thoughts and stronger in our sense of who we are as people. And we've toured a lot in the past few years. We're a good band, we know our strengths.

How do you write these songs? Slowly! We've always worked from atmospheres and attitudes. We don't sit around with acoustic guitars writing songs. It's more organic than that.

What did David Holmes bring? We knew that with him we could just stretch things a bit. We love three-minute songs you can play on the radio, but we don't always want to make albums like that. He sequenced the record like a movie: "2013" is the opening credits, then you're right into the action and the darkness - from there, he thinks there's some kind of narrative going on. I'm not sure! He wanted "It's Alright, It's OK" to be the end title credits, so you leave the cinema thinking, 'Yeah, we can fucking beat these bastards!' Ha ha! It's great to have someone on board thinking like that.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON

warped country-jazz skewered on a nervy string drone, thrumming with unreleased tension. "Goodbye Johnny" is similarly atmospheric, the lyrics taken from an unreleased Jeffrey Lee Pierce demo (not the song of the same name on the first Gun Club album) and set to smoky LA noir, all twang and slurpy sax. Later, Robert Plant pops up to prowling through the terrific "Elimination Blues", a slow, smouldering desert blues powered by a hypnotic electric guitar figure.

With its 13 tracks running to more than 70 minutes, *More Light* does flag. A tendency to prioritise militancy over melody is most apparent on "Invisible City", where punchy horns and a blizzard of social commentary ("kebab shops", "suburban orgies", the lot) fail to disguise an inherent lack of purpose.

The final two songs look back to less complicated days. "Walking With The Beast" is a spare, Byrdsy blues, while "It's Alright, It's OK" is "Movin' On Up" redux. Initially, the latter feels like it belongs on a different Primal Scream album - or *Beggars Banquet* - but gradually its inclusion begins to make sense. *More Light* is, essentially, a

committed, adventurous and largely enjoyable précis of Primal Scream's improbably long career, running the gamut from the Stones to Sun Ra, the cool to the cringe. Not everything works, but somehow everything fits.

TRACKLIST

- 1 2013
- 2 River Of Pain
- 3 Culturecide
- 4 Hit Void
- 5 Tenement Kid
- 6 Invisible City
- 7 Goodbye Johnny
- 8 Sideman
- 9 Elimination Blues
- 10 Turn Each Other Inside Out
- 11 Relativity
- 12 Walking With The Beast
- 13 It's Alright, It's OK

Much of *More Light* meanders pleasingly. Opener "2013" is a nine-minute, two-chord space-rock odyssey featuring Kevin Shields, Moroccan motifs, whirring electronics and a nicely off-kilter horn refrain. It's still not quite this generation's "1969", not least because the pre-chorus melody sounds like "Kokomo" by The Beach Boys. "Tenement Kid" is

AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

- p68 LAURA MARLING
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- p79 TRICKY
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AGNETHA

A
POLYDOR

Pound-shop makeover for ABBA's 'Blonde One'

Agnetha Fältskog's reclusive tendencies might easily be put

5/10

down to the fact that she rarely gets offered material worth getting out of bed for. Her first outing since 2004, the typically ill-judged A has been assembled with a production team whose credits include Britney Spears and Kelly Clarkson, and its collision of tea-time melodrama and Gary Barlow make her sound more *Pop Idol* rather than pop idol. Fältskog's voice retains its Valkyrie soulfulness through ill-carpentered Carpenters tat like "Back On Your Radio" or Girls Aloud stomper "Dance Your Pain Away", but with the right songs she would be super rather than a trooper.

JIM WIRTH



ASPECTS

Left Hand Path
PSYCHO BOOGIE

Long-dormant Bristol hip-hoppers return with spooked new sound

Widely hailed last decade as an inventive and original new force

7/10

in British hip-hop, Bristol's Aspects displayed enough tongue-twisting comic wordplay and genre-busting beats to earn critical comparisons to the Beasties, Kool Keith and Eminem. Back from a long sabbatical, their third album is a masterful collage of gothic moods and virtuoso rhyming, painting their native West Country as a clammy horror-movie backdrop on the withering rural-graveyard jam "Scumerset". There are party-friendly tracks here, too, notably the brassy funk belter "See You Next Tuesday", but gallows humour and noir-ish trip-hop soundscapes dominate.

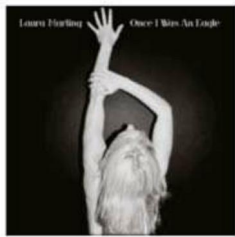
STEPHEN DALTON

LAURA MARLING

Once I Was An Eagle

VIRGIN

The 'English Joni' ruthlessly dissects her love life on confessional fourth. *By Andy Gill*



9/10

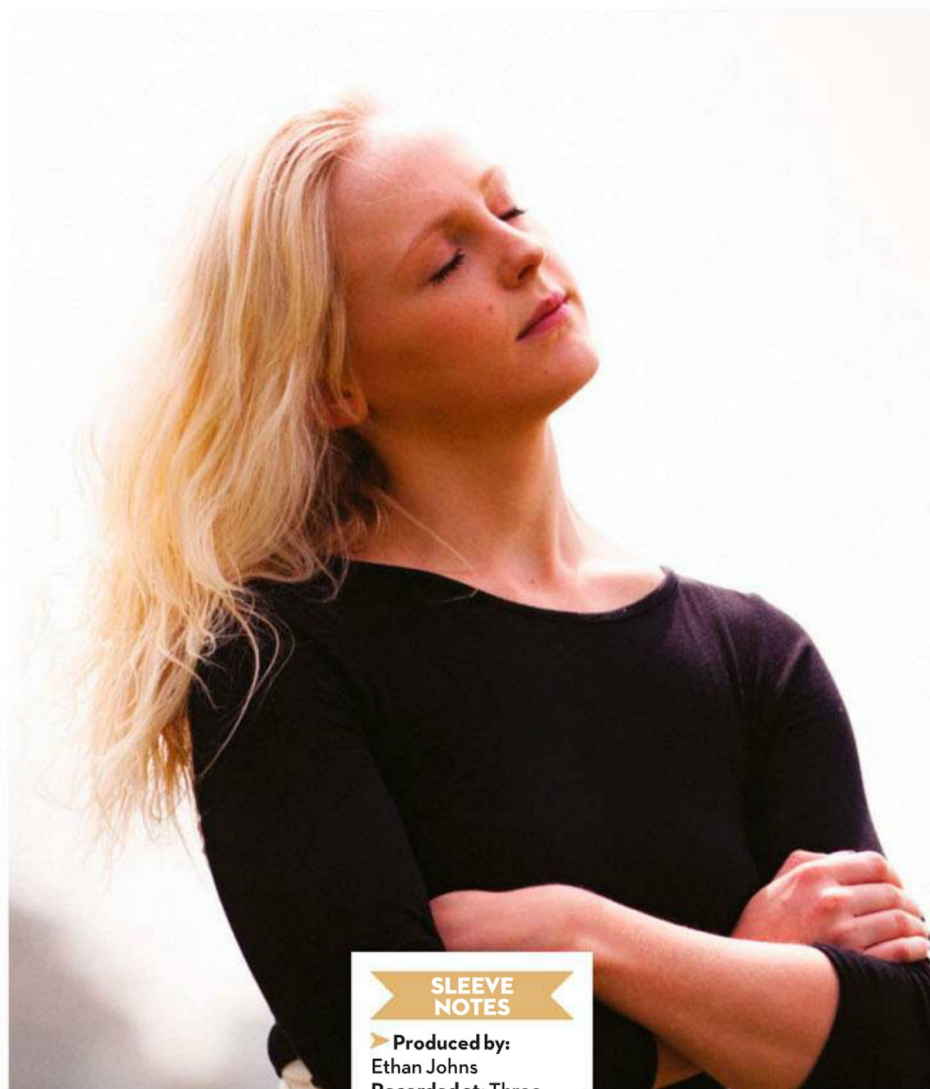
EVER SINCE THE appearance of her debut *Alas, I Cannot Swim* in 2008, Laura Marling has had to get used to being compared to Joni Mitchell, a reflection on the commendable acuity and intelligence of her lyrical observations rather

than any musical similarities. Those comparisons are unlikely to diminish with the release of *Once I Was An Eagle*, which recalls Mitchell's landmark *Blue* in the way she ruthlessly dissects her love life, hunting for emotional satisfaction. Rarely since the Laurel Canyon heyday of CSNY, Jackson Browne et al, has the confessional mode been quite so unashamedly mined for artistic ore than on an album whose closing track "Saved These Words" offers the scarred conclusion, "You weren't my curse/Thank you naïveté for failing me again/He was my next verse". It's almost like a form of protective colouration, warning would-be suitors she won't be trifled with, and won't hide bitter consequences behind undue politesse.

It takes her a while to reach that resolution, although naïveté is a recurrent theme throughout the album's various stages, as she progresses through the responses to romantic catastrophe – anger, disbelief, bitterness, resignation, the usual immolations of the spirit. "Once is enough to break you... to make you think twice about laying your love on the line," she reflects in "Once"; and even earlier, in the brutal "Master Hunter" – a sort of 21st-Century take on the theme of "It Ain't Me, Babe" – she's already cauterised the most scorching pain: "I cured my skin, now nothing gets in".

"Master Hunter" is the closing passage of an extended five-song sequence – or the bridge to the next sequence – which opens the album with a relentless, wave-like insistence, the songs segueing smoothly on the back of rich, resonant modal strumming, as if successive chapters of a single train of thought. It's an unflinching rumination on desire, doubt and disgust, Marling acknowledging her own complicity in the situation even as she steels herself: "I will not be a victim of romance... of circumstance... or any little man who would get his dirty hands on me," she resolves in the title-track, before admitting, "When we were in love, I was an eagle, and you were a dove". Romance, she realises, is a complex dance of predator and prey, in which neither party ever solely plays the one role.

Working alone for the first time with just producer Ethan Johns, Marling recorded her vocal and guitar parts live, in a single day. Then over the next nine days, they overdubbed further textures – mostly guitar, but hints of organ, along with Ruth de Turberville's cello – and the rattling, explosive undercarriage of hand percussion that drives the songs along and offers dramatic punctuation to the action. In places – notably "Breathe" and "Devil's



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Ethan Johns

Recorded at: Three

Crows Studio, LA

Personnel: Laura

Marling (vocals,

guitar, percussion),

Ethan Johns

(guitars, keyboards,

percussion), Ruth de

Turberville (cello)

Resting Place" – the strings and drones lend the arrangements an eastern, Arabic flavour; while elsewhere, the delicate guitar filigree hangs sparse and spider-web slim across "Undine", a more traditional-sounding folk song about a sea-spirit.

The latter is one of several cases of Marling transmuting the highly personal subject-matter into mythopoeic tableaux – "Little Bird", for instance, uses a discussion between the eponymous avian and Marling's alter-ego, Rosie, to contemplate the impulses which have

recently led the songwriter to shift base to a suburb of Los Angeles. "When I think about the life I left behind, I still raise no praise to the sky," she admits in the wistful "Once", though whether creating a new life alone abroad will settle her emotional issues remains to be seen; it's a conundrum perhaps best summarised in the title of a

transatlantic epistle here addressed to a "new friend across the sea", who may, of course, be herself: "When Were You Happy? (And How Long Has That Been)".

Q&A

Laura Marling

It feels quite an angry record in places.

It was written as I was going through hurt and frustration, and it weaved around things, making it less painful for me to lay these things bare. But there was so much more frustration from not being able to change things that I was going through, and what it had brought upon me: this loss of naïveté.

The idea of water comes up quite a bit. I was struck by the line in "Master Hunter": "I don't stare in water anymore, water doesn't do what it did before". What does it mean? I've always associated water with endless thought, the infiniteness of the mind, and in that lyric I was

saying I can't sit and contemplate myself anymore. I just can't do it. I have to act.

You famously read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* three times in the months leading up to recording your debut album. Did you have any similar rituals before you started *Once I Was An Eagle*? I do a lot of lists... like before I go to bed I have to write a list of all the things I could possibly be anxious about before I get into bed. But picking up the guitar is the first step, and is a pleasurable pastime. It's something that quite often accompanies a glass of wine after dinner. So that would be my routine, and sometimes I write a song and sometimes I don't. Some days when I don't have much to do, I go and buy a book and sit in a café and do all that underlining to try to expand my mind a bit. So I consider that a kind of ritual. I read *Moby-Dick*. Does that count?

INTERVIEW: JAAN UHLSZKI



THE BAPTIST GENERALS
Jackleg Devotional To The Heart
SUB POP

Ramshackle Texans' overdue return

8/10

Chris Flemmons' lo-fi folk ensemble made a splash in 2003 with *No Silver/No Gold*, then disappeared, abandoning their attempted follow-up in 2005. Flemmons' experience running the NX35 festival in Denton, Texas taught him to abandon his control freakery, leaving production to the group's Jason Reimer and Stuart Sikes. The results go beyond folk, with flurries of orchestration and discord adding rusty grandeur to Flemmons' pained vocals. Highlights include the bitter "Clitorpus Christi" (opening line: "My God, that trollop was loud") and "My O My", which combines the directness of Jonathan Richman with the cracked soul of Will Oldham.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



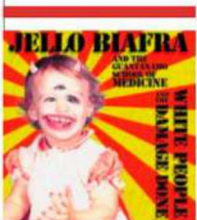
KARL BARTOS
Off The Record
BUREAU B

Ex-robot's nostalgic synthpop

6/10

Karl Bartos co-wrote *The Man-Machine*, *Computer World* and *Electric Café* during his 15-year stint as Kraftwerk's percussionist, but his solo output since 1990 has lacked a certain boing-boom-tschak. *Off The Record* marks a return to form – literally – with Bartos, now 60, drawing on his personal archive of home recordings from the '70s and '80s for a sentimental scroll through the memory banks (he calls it "sound biography"). Crunchy and vocodered, "Atomium" and "Rhythmus" will be familiar to anyone who's heard *The Man-Machine*, yet a sense of wistfulness prevails: "I wish I could remix my life to another beat", he sings on "Without A Trace Of Emotion".

PIERS MARTIN



JELLO BIAFRA AND THE GUANTANAMO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
White People And The Damage Done
ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES

7/10

Jello takes on Wall Street

Since his acrimonious split with the Dead Kennedys, Jello Biafra has built a career on spoken-word performance, contested Ralph Nader for the presidency of America's Green Party, and tended to his label, Alternative Tentacles. *White People...*, though, finds him doing what he arguably does best: punk rock satire delivered with comic panache. Jello is still in good voice, so this could basically pass for a mid-'80s Dead Kennedys album, were it not for the contemporary references: see "Werewolves On Wall Street", the financial crisis recast as schlock horror flick, or "Crapture", a vicious mockery of America's God business.

LOUIS PATTISON



BENJAMIN BIOLAY
Vengeance
NAÏVE

Guest-heavy sixth album from French enfant terrible

6/10

When dropped by your record label, it takes chutzpah to title your next, self-released concept album *La Superbe*. An actor, producer, songwriter and singer with Gallic good looks to spare, Biolay carried it off. This follow-up is a parade of AOR bluster ("Aime Mon Amour"), retro electro ("L'Insigne Honneur"), orchestral balladry ("Personne Dans Mon Lit") and Anglophile rock, with torrid, Gainsbourgian romance as its theme. Among several guests, Vanessa Paradis coos and Carl Barât does a classy spoken-word turn on the title track. Impressively diverse, but somewhat second-hand.

NEIL SPENCER

HOW TO BUY... JELLO BIAFRA
The satirical punk rocker's finest work



DEAD KENNEDYS
Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables
CHERRY RED, 1980

Released mere months before Reagan was elected US President, the DKs' debut is both storming punk record and vicious satire of the US political establishment. "Kill The Poor" imagines neutron bomb as social cleansing tool, while "California Über Alles" is a gleeful demolition of Governor Jerry Brown, a sort of hippy Führer ruling with his "suede-denim secret police".

9/10



LARD
The Last Temptation Of Reid
ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES, 1990

Post-Kennedys, Biafra teams up with Al Jourgensen and Paul

Barker of Ministry for a studio project welding hardcore punk politics to the jackhammer rhythms of industrial rock. Standouts include "Mate, Spawn And Die" and "Drug Raid At 4am" ("You blink, you die/I hate you more than my job"), and there's an odd cover of Napoleon XIV's 1966 novelty hit, "They're Coming to Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!"

8/10



JELLO BIAFRA
I Blow Minds For A Living
ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES, 1991

Jello's third spoken-word full-length clocks in at an hour and a half, touching on the Pledge Of Allegiance, the War On Drugs, and his 1979 bid to become mayor of San Francisco, which began as a prank but saw the singer come fourth with over 6,000 votes, helping force a run-off. A righteous effort that's easily funnier than most stand-up shows.

7/10

LOUIS PATTISON



DEAN BLUNT
The Redeemer
WORLD MUSIC/HIPPOS IN TANKS

Hype Williams man lays his heart on his sleeve

8/10

Dean Blunt is one half of postmodern pranksters Hype Williams, who make shadowplaying, chest-rattling dub that makes you feel like you've been awake for 36 hours – much of it among the most compelling recent emissions from the underground. On his second recent solo release, he continues his modulation into a kind of scatterbrained quiet storm singer, crooning an oblique end-of-the-affair narrative adorned with Badalamentian strings and zonked electric guitar. The dream logic shifts are managed with little short of genius, with ballads like "Predator" and "Poison" shocking moments of emotional clarity amid the samples and stylistic 180-degree turns. An unmissable craftsman.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



CHARLIE BOYER & THE VOYEURS
Clarietta
HEAVENLY

Edwyn Collins produces Londoners' Velvetsy debut

7/10

Another quality group from the "friends of The Horrors" section of the shop (see also: Toy, Rachel Zeffira, SCUM), Charlie Boyer and his crew display an impressive classicism, but retain the vigour of youth. Throughout, the tombstone-featured Boyer pilots a driving and primitive guitar clank, his vocals floating somewhere between Tom Verlaine and Gaz Coombes. The album never lags completely, but it's fair to say that the band acquit themselves far more strongly on "You Haven't Got A Chance" and "I Watch You" than on rather less comprehensively developed garage rock like "Go Blow A Gale" that seems to be their default setting.

JOHN ROBINSON



BRAZOS
Saltwater
DEAD OCEANS

Artful second album from Brooklyn-out-of-Texas trio

8/10

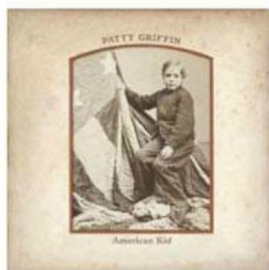
Brazos' 2009 debut *Phosphorescent Blues* soundtracked the poetry of Adrienne Rich and the title track of the follow-up surrogates the voice of *Moby-Dick's* narrator Ishmael. But mainman Martin Crane's forte is smart-pop rather than art-rock, his bookish cleverness always subjugated to groove-laden melodic contours that excite comparisons with fellow Brooklyn sophisticates Vampire Weekend. Intricate tunes such as "Charm", "How The Ranks Was Won" and the calypso of "Valencia" are invested with an urgency and bounce that suggests imminent collapse into anthemic dumbness – and yet somehow it never happens. Rare and enchanting understatement in a brash and gaudy world.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



PATTY GRIFFIN *American Kid* COLUMBIA/NEW WEST

Understated country-folk from lauded Austin songstress At an Austin benefit gig last December, Patty Griffin introduced new beau Robert Plant as “my driver”. It’s a relationship that began when she was backing singer on his 2010 album *Band Of Joy*, and subsequent US tour, and one that carried through to live dates as the Sensational Shape Shifters. Last summer Plant appeared to suggest they were married, only to refute everything days later. But whatever the detail, disclosed or otherwise, it’s a combination that looks set to run on. The couple have promised another *Band Of Joy* opus, the mood this time being “far out with psychedelic pedal

7/10

steel”. In the meantime it’s no great surprise to learn that Plant crops up on Griffin’s new solo album.

The life of her father, a WWII vet and sometime Trappist monk who also raised seven children, provides the backstory to *American Kid*, Griffin’s first all-new offering since 2007. It’s a record that manages to sound deeply affectionate without being sentimental. The tender rumination of “Wild Old Dog” and “Mom & Dad’s Waltz” accentuates the gentle ache in Griffin’s voice. It’s one that invites obvious comparisons with Alison Krauss, albeit packed with a little more weight and muscle.

“Ohio” is the pick of three tunes that also feature Plant. Though, unlike his work with Krauss on 2007’s *Raising Sand*, his is a more discreet, less tangible presence. It’s a yearning ballad set to the rustic buzz of a picked guitar, with Plant bringing soft backing harmonies to Griffin’s lead. He reprises the role on similarly low-key efforts “Faithful Son” and “Highway Song”.

American Kid’s most striking moments lie elsewhere. Not least on “Don’t Let Me Die In Florida”, whose driving electric guitar and mandolin signal an uptempo note to an otherwise downtempo theme; or the choral stillness of “Gonna Miss You When You’re Gone”. Griffin’s elegant phrasing and nuanced delivery make this a bewitching piece of work, with or without the hired help. **ROB HUGHES**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► **Ryan Adams’** recent gig at the Royal Albert Hall, backed by a quintet that included **Don Was** and **Benmont Tench**, not only signalled his first full band show in over four

years but also showcased a couple of new tunes: “In The Shadows” and “Where I Meet You In My Mind”. An album, produced by **Glyn Johns**, is due later this year. Until then, *Southeastern* is the new one from ex-**Drive-By Truckers**, **Jason Isbell**. His first solo album since 2007 and due out on Southeastern Records/Thirty Tigers, Isbell calls it the most personal thing he’s ever done. Expect cameos from Kim Richey and Amanda Shires. Also newsworthy is

Shooter Jennings’ *The Other Life*, which taps into the spirit of late father Waylon by sticking the finger to Nashville’s idea of modern country. In particular, “Outlaw You” salutes the way his old man “busted down the door” and bemoans the current crop: “Hey pretty boy in your baseball hat/ You couldn’t hit country with a baseball bat”. Guests include country-blues hound **Scott H Biram** and Austin’s **Patty Griffin**. Watch out too for “Southern gothic supernatural musical” *Ghost Brothers Of Darkland County*, a blues’n’roots project of fraternal love, lust, revenge and more besides. It’s the brainchild of Stephen King, John Mellencamp and T Bone Burnett, who’ve enlisted some stellar guests to flesh out the detail, including **Kris Kristofferson**, **Elvis Costello**, **Neko Case**, **Dave Alvin** and **Taj Mahal**. **ROB HUGHES**



THE CHILD OF LOV *The Child Of Lov* DOUBLE SIX

Albarn-assisted debut from the Dutch D’Angelo

The world doesn’t really need another pasty European with a Prince

8/10

obsession, but *The Child Of Lov* – aka Amsterdam’s Cole Williams – serves up his purple funk with a hefty dollop of strange. It helps that *The Child Of Lov*, while not big-studio slick, is so imaginatively realised: the bass is thick, the drums stutter and swing with casual authority, and the atmosphere of tightly controlled chaos resembles Organized Noize’s work for Outkast. Williams’ voice starts out as an exaggerated parody of a codpiece funkateer but sheds its affectations as the album goes on, with “Warrior” approximating the cracked majesty of primetime TV On The Radio.

SAM RICHARDS



COCOROSIE *Tales Of A Grass Widow* CITY SLANG

Arty US sister act continue to charm and unsettle

7/10

The sibling performance artists Sierra and Bianca

Casady are known as an acquired taste, their semi-operatic, feminist-crusading, fairy-tale folk-pop often deemed too eccentric for those of a straight-laced disposition. But aside from the odd burst of medieval flute, their fifth album is unlikely to scare the horses, striking a neat balance of darkly powerful and whimsical. This is best illustrated in the evocative, otherworldly “Gravediggess” which imagines a conversation between an orphan child and the titular old woman (“Gravediggess, dig me a hole I can bury all of my love in”), set against mournful piano and melodica, and beat-boxing from the duo’s producer Tez.

FIONA STURGES



MIKAL CRONIN *MCII* MERGE

Ty Segall’s wingman takes flight on a cleaner follow-up to his noisy solo debut

9/10

Mikal Cronin’s second album hits you with

the immediacy of a record that you’re listening to for the first time but feel like you’ve already heard a thousand times and yet still aren’t bored of. Take “Shout It Out”, with its whooping chorus and buzzing guitar, or the shimmering “See It My Way” – this is classic songwriting in the jangly tradition of Big Star, The Lemonheads and The Smiths, but with a tough leading edge. Cronin’s buddy Ty Segall is one of a few guest musicians to pop up (his guitar backs the insistent churn of “Am I Wrong”) but otherwise everything, gloriously, is the work of Cronin.

PETER WATTS



DEADSTRING BROTHERS
Cannery Row
BLOODSHOT

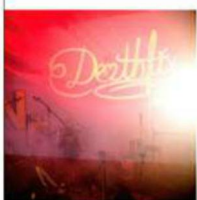
Detroit's finest Americana combo stretches winning streak to five LPs

8/10

A man deep in 1968-'72

Rolling Stones, with a catholic approach to American country, folk and blues roots, Kurt Marschke and company long ago tripped past mere surface affectation into a deeper well, transforming pure inspiration into an oeuvre of their own. *Cannery Row*, slathered with floating keyboards, pedal steel and Masha Marjeh's instinctively perfect vocal foils – a la Emmylou – is an embarrassment of riches, led by the rebirth within "It's Morning Irene" and the instant classic "Long Lonely Road" – "Dead Flowers" recast as both a definitive kiss-off and soaring road song du jour.

LUKE TORN



DEATHFIX
Deathfix
DISCHORD

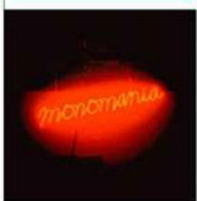
Hardcore veterans turn their hand to glam, pop and prog

6/10

Dischord Records, the label behind much of the '80s Washington DC hardcore

punk wave, has been relatively quiet over the last decade, save for a handful of reissues and the occasional release from Fugazi vocalist Ian Mackaye's semi-acoustic project The Evens. Here, another Fugazi vet, drummer Brendan Canty, joins other Dischord alumni for a rather adult-oriented outing. There is splendid piano-pop ("Playboy"), leanly recorded excursions in cosmic prog ("Transmission"), and evidence of an occasional charming eccentricity: see the lolling Chic disco of "Dali's House". "Wish I was at James Murphy's house," sings Canty, "Cos you can steal ideas, and Daft Punk's always playin' there".

LOUIS PATTISON



DEERHUNTER
Monomania
4AD

Back to basics for prolific Atlantan five-piece

7/10

Coming after the psych-pop masterpiece of *Halcyon Digest*,

and the pristine lullabies of *Parallax* under his Atlas Sound moniker, this is Bradford Cox back in the garage, shredding feedback and ramshackle songcraft onto tape. But even his palate cleansers are still Michelin-starred. Splattering, defenestrated jams like the title track and "Leather Jacket II" are bracing if not lovely; salt-aired tumbledown pop hits like "Pensacola" and the Wilco-ish "Dream Captain" are perfect for pre-summer car stereos; and their lethal weapons – Cox's wistful croon and a proto-motorik chug – are as wonderfully deadly as ever.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



DELTA MAINLINE
Oh! Enlightened
REHAB SOUND RECORDINGS

Impressive debut from Scottish septet, who mix rockabilly with space-rock

7/10

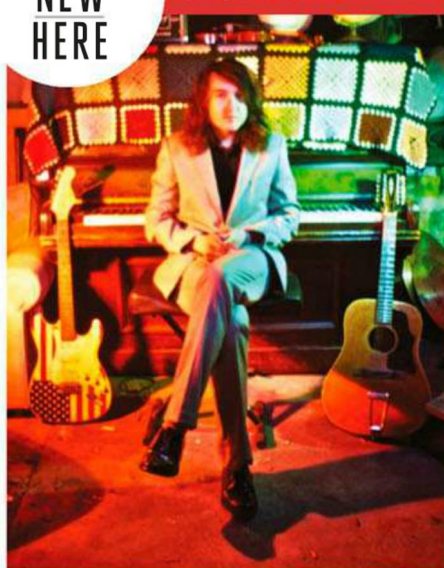
This Scottish seven-piece have been likened to

Spiritualized thanks to a fondness for hazy, quasi-spiritual space-rock like "The Church Is Up For Sale", but they are just as happy belting out pounding rockabilly on "Misinformation" and the rollicking "Florentine Regime" or taking things down a peg on piano-led requiem "Fixing To Die". The key is variety and a full utilisation of their numbers. That's best epitomised by the excellent "Stop This Feeling", which opens with standard VU drone but adds brass and pace before ending with an Eno-esque flurry of synthesised waves, or the similarly complex, full-throated howl of "Home To You".

PETER WATTS

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Mikal Cronin



➤ Although Mikal Cronin comes from the same San Francisco scene as three-album-a-year tyro Ty Segall, Cronin will leave just one album, *MCII*, as his legacy for 2013. That's not to say he's a slacker. Newly graduated from music college, Cronin played almost every instrument on this fizzing set of jangly powerpop himself and recorded it last year between touring and playing bass in the Ty Segall Band.

"It's scary how prolific Ty is, but it's inspiring," says Cronin, who recorded *Reverse Shark Attack* with Segall in 2009. "I feel a push to be more productive. I was touring a lot, so had to go out on the road between recording. Ultimately, it forced me to step back and listen to what I was doing so I could shape it a little more."

The album, which recalls Big Star and Nirvana, is "about new starts". It was recorded in the same studio as Cronin's self-titled 2011 debut, "but last time I did it in a week and this time I had a couple of months." Music college, he adds, has been a boon, helping him "expand" the sound. "I've always wanted to put strings on things, use more harmonies. These are ideas I've had for a while but now I've got the chance to flesh them out."

PETER WATTS



THE DESOTO CAUCUS
Offramp Rodeo
GLITTERHOUSE

Danish Americana from Howe Gelb collaborators

8/10

Scandinavian desert-rock may not seem like the

best idea, but the Danish contingent in Giant Sand have form. They branched out in 2008 when Howe Gelb's attentions were elsewhere, with the sketchy *Elite Continental Custom Club*. Their second set has a beautifully rounded sound, understated Americana (Arizona via Aarhus) hung around the sweet dislocation of Anders Pedersen's voice. It all comes together on "Fire Sale", a tale of "Southern hellholes, gloomy poor souls, losing track in pick-up trucks". The ache of loss throbs on "Polaris", a slow country shuffle which locates its sadness in the fading constellations of the Northern sky.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



DIAMOND RUGS
Diamond Rugs
PARTISAN

Aggravatingly unreconstructed blues-rock from US indie supergroup

5/10

A collaborative project comprising members

of Deer Tick, Black Lips, Los Lobos, Six Finger Satellite and Dead Confederate, Diamond Rugs' debut sounds like the result of a late-night jam in a festering bar after a night on the tequila, very likely performed from under the table. While there's pleasure to be had from the band's exuberant MC5-meets-AC/DC racket, their dubious tales of salt-of-the-earth hookers, as found in "Call Girl Blues", and drunken lechery, outlined the wilfully crass "Hungover And Horny" ("it's such a drag getting slapped in the face when you're sitting in the back of the car") takes the retro vibe too far.

FIONA STURGES



KLAUS DINGER AND JAPANDORF
Japandorf
GRÖNLAND

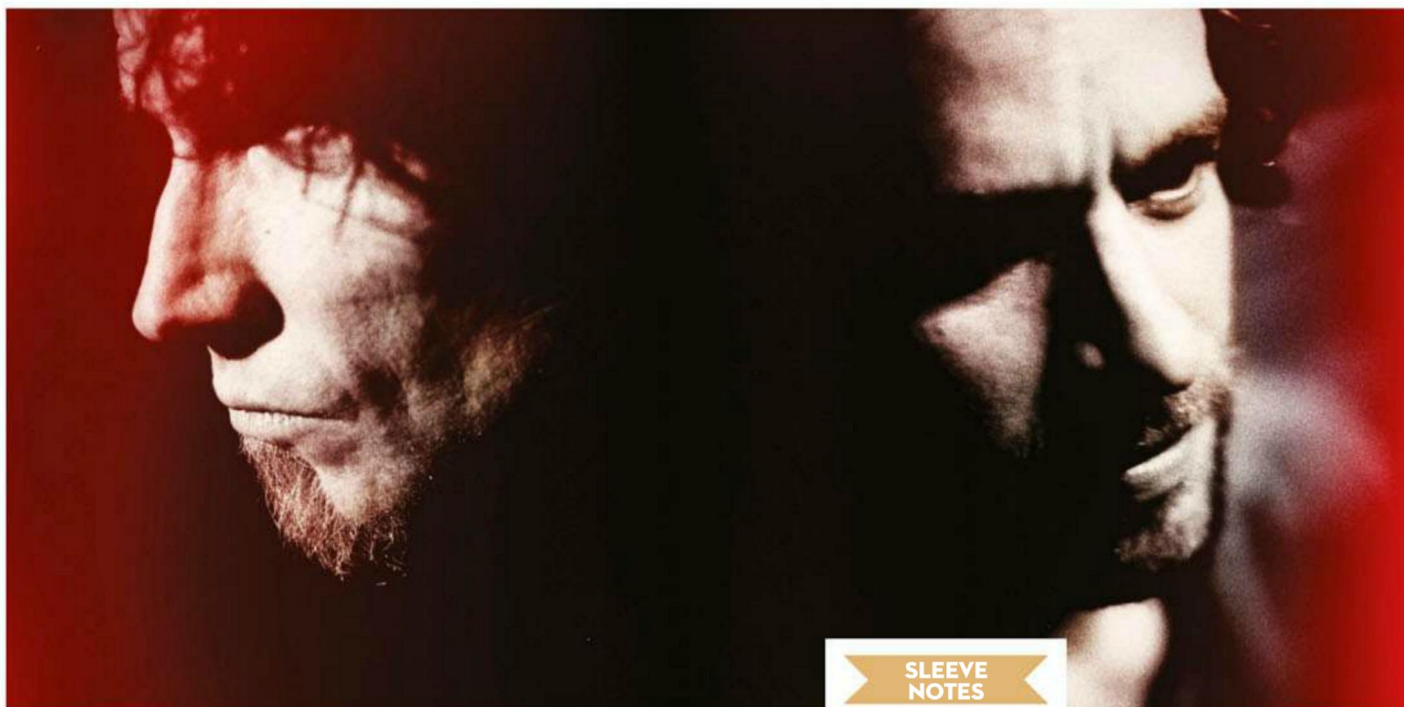
Late Krautrockers' final fling

6/10

Kosmische doyen Klaus Dinger passed away five

years ago aged 61, but not before he'd knocked a new La Düsseldorf album into shape with a group of freewheeling Japanese artists and musicians living in Düsseldorf; his partner, Miki Yui, completed the record. Ragged, euphoric and a bit patchy, *Japandorf* is a fitting swansong for the former Kraftwerk drummer and Neu! lynchpin who came to symbolise a kind of wild-eyed freedom of expression. Highlights include a 13-minute freak-out to "Cha Cha 2008" and a touching duet called "Osenbe". The set ends with church bells. Dinger, you hope, is still chugging away in heaven.

PIERS MARTIN

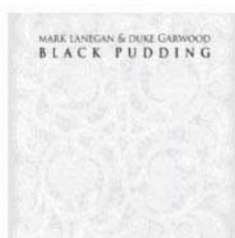


MARK LANEGAN & DUKE GARWOOD

Black Pudding

HEAVENLY RECORDINGS

Dark meditations meet serene, fingerpicked guitar. *By Peter Watts*



8/10

IT SAYS A lot about *Black Pudding* that while Mark Lanegan possesses one of the most recognisable larynxes in music, it's an instrumental that greets the listener on the eponymous opening track. The crisp, beautiful fingerpicking by Duke

Garwood recalls John Fahey or Jack Rose, and sets the tone for an album that is very different from Lanegan's last work, the heavy blues-and-synth euphoria of 2012's *Blues Funeral*. In fact, you have to go back to Lanegan's 1999 covers album, *I'll Take Care Of You*, to find anything quite like this.

Black Pudding began in 2009, when Garwood and Lanegan were touring in Italy and agreed to record together. Garwood – a Londoner who has released four albums and worked with the Archie Bronson Outfit, Josh T Pearson and Kurt Vile – would send Lanegan songs by email. Four years later, they had enough to head into an LA studio and fill an album with sublime acoustic country-blues.

The three albums Lanegan has made with Isobel Campbell, the most recent being 2010's *Hawk*, worked partly because the contrast between the two singers made for a perfect whole. Here, a similar effect of light and dark comes in the collision between Garwood's serene, cascading melodies –

mainly on guitar, but also on piano and recorded much more brightly than his usual work – and Lanegan's sandpaper voice. On songs like “Last Rung” and “Driver”, Garwood works a fine, fresh hypnotic groove that ebbs and flows like waves, while Lanegan's husky voice often operates much like another instrument. On “Driver” he barely bothers with a lyric, humming along.

With “War Memorial”, Lanegan is more in control, opting for something close to a croon as he paints a slight, sinewy glimpse of war in one of his finest lyrics. Accompanied by gentle strum and mournful sax, Lanegan writes from the blood-sodden perspective of a soldier witnessing visceral combat. “*I saw a squad of deserters hung from an oak... a pack of feral dogs snapping at my hooves... entire battalions snuffed like a spark*”. His themes are relentlessly dark, and two of the best songs on the album, “Pentecostal” and “Death Rides A White Horse”, feature whispered tales of death, God and murder over sprightly guitar. “Pentecostal” has a chiming bluesy drone, while Lanegan spits “*this is how I came, with a stench and a stain*” in a lyric that takes in Satan, God, the killing floor, a mansion on the hill and an albatross in a riot of spiritual self-flagellation. “Death Rides A White Horse” is a glorious murder ballad: “*Cut your midnight black hair and roll you in the dirt*”, sings Lanegan over a stop-start blues rhythm. “*Only God knows where I'm going, only God can know my*

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at:

Pink Duck Studios, California

Produced by: Justin Smith; mixed by Alain Johannes

Personnel: Duke Garwood (instruments), Mark Lanegan (vocals), Alain Johannes (additional guitar and keys on “Thank You” and “Shade Of The Sun”)

shame”. It's American old-time religious death-and-sex guilt at its deepest and most perverted.

Elsewhere, it is the instrumentation that offers the complexity, bringing texture to this deceptively simple-sounding album. “Cold Molly” shudders with Herbie Hancock bass while “Mescalito” has a thudding drum machine, incessant as a heartbeat, as leisurely guitars fade in and out. On the shimmering, sinister and seductive “Sphinx”, there's the drone of harmonium and Lanegan's voice distorted through a Leslie speaker,

while intricate guitar picks out an underlying melody. Similar is “Thank You”, this time with the drone coming from a mellotron played by Alain Johannes, which sounds like an orchestra methodically tuning up. It's strange and unsettling. “*I've been crawling through disease*,” says Lanegan, struggling to make himself heard above this fusion of blues and avant-garde. “*The carnival is toxic*.”

Johannes also crops up on the beautiful, cosmic haze of “Shade Of The Sun”, playing ecclesiastical synth while Lanegan chants of Eden and city walls like something from a psychedelic Bible. That precedes the final song on the album, another instrumental titled “Manchester Special”, as Garwood's purifying, artful guitar washes over us, playing John The Baptist to Lanegan's Old Testament prophet, and cleansing us of his sticky, fascinating sin.

Q&A

Mark Lanegan



Why did you record with Duke Garwood? I'm a big fan of Duke so I put myself in his world. I did lyrics and vocal melodies but all the music is his. There's always something different with Duke

and some of the music he did for *Black Pudding* may be a departure from what he did before.

Why did you bookend the album with instrumentals? I thought they were fantastic

pieces of music. I'm a big fan of John Fahey and it reminded me of that stuff.

Was there a theme? Death and God are pretty much my go-to themes. I was just doing what felt appropriate for any piece of music. In the studio, Duke and I were flying by the seats of our pants. It was an opportunity to try whatever we wanted. I feel the finished thing isn't one of my records and it's not one of his, but it's definitely ours.

Do you eat black pudding? My road manager years ago, a Scottish guy, told me about it. I really liked it. It's a bummer, you can't really get it in the States but I've made it myself – blood, oats, spices. How does it smell cooking? Good!



THE DOT Diary

COOKING VINYL

Better second album from Mike Skinner's new outfit

Former mastermind of The Streets, Mike Skinner, and ex-The Music crooner

6/10

Rob Harvey pretty much disgraced themselves with last October's DOT debut *And That*, a dog's dinner of half-baked rap and pop that gave the impression that this odd couple weren't really trying. But they're still at it, and boozy sessions for *Diary* held during the long winter nights have produced a number of tracks that validate the whole enterprise, in particular the strutting Rod Stewart disco of "Left Alone" and "Makers Mark". There's plenty here to suggest that the combination of Skinner's skilful, funny songwriting and Harvey's bluesy choruses will deliver something special soon.

PIERS MARTIN



THE FLOWERS OF HELL

Odes

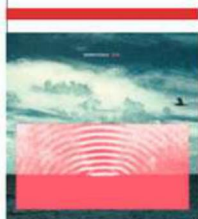
OPTICAL SOUNDS

Sing-a-long faves with Greg Jarvis' Anglo-Canadian collective...

7/10

Their last album consisted of a single instrumental improv lasting 45 minutes. How to follow? A covers album of three-minute pop songs, natch. Joy Division, The Carpenters and Fleetwood Mac are among those getting a weird and wonderful makeover, but at its core *Odes* is a Lou Reed/Velvets homage. "Walk On The Wild Side" is transformed into a languid post-rock waltz, the spooked vocoder beauty of "O Superheroine" stitches "Heroin" into Laurie Anderson's "O Superman", and "Mr Tambourine Man" is re-imagined as Nico might have sung it on *The Marble Index*. The result is a covers album as extraordinarily (re)inventive as you're likely to hear.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



GENERATIONALS

Heza

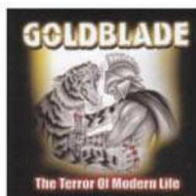
POLYVINYL

New Orleans duo mix guitar-pop with electronics on impressive third album

8/10

The latest effort from this Louisiana two-piece sees the band move further away from simply apeing their influences as they instead start to integrate them into their own style of indie-pop, heavily underscored by punk, electronic and soul. *Heza* – the name a corruption of Heather, a friend of the band – still contains several terrific examples of hooky guitar pop – note the tremulous two-note solo on "Spinoza" and the fantastic glam shuffle of "I Never Know" – but tracks like the moody and introspective "Extra Free Year", the spacey, Banshee-pop "Kemal" and the electro-soul "Put A Light On" are intriguing, wide-angled explorations.

PETER WATTS



GOLDBLADE

The Terror Of Modern Life

OVERGROUND

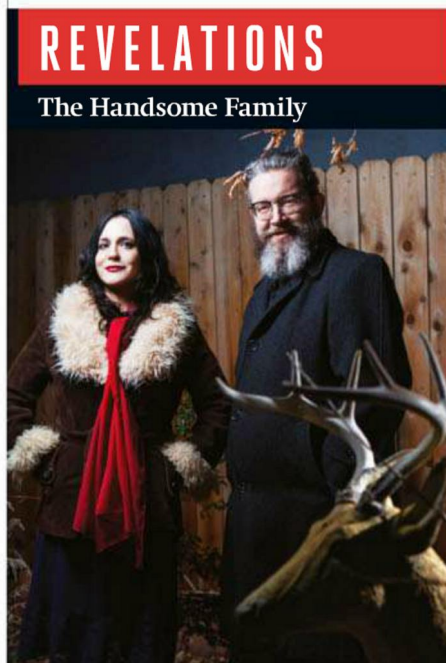
The (updated) gospel according to John Robb

The world isn't exactly running short on punk bands, but Goldblade

6/10

approach the form with the sort of tireless spirit and unwavering focus that you fully expect them to be among the last men standing. The quintet's sixth album is essentially a fairly classicist take on punk rock, one that takes in The Clash, The Ruts (especially on punky dub skank "The Shamen Are Coming") and Sham 69 – notably "We're All In It Together", political soundbite subverted into terrace chant. On the whole, it's a little in hock to its influences, although the closing eight-minute title track is a fine exception, building from soupy feedback drones to a climactic thrash of chunky no-wave guitars and heavy Rasta dread.

LOUIS PATTISON



REVELATIONS

The Handsome Family

"Our passion is to make beautiful objects," says Rennie Sparks, one half of The Handsome Family and writer of some of the most darkly sublime lyrics country music has ever known. "That feels like important work to me, to make something beautiful out of nothing."

Twenty years into their musical career – and 24 into their marriage – Brett (music) and Rennie Sparks (words) remain on an extraordinary creative roll. Their latest LP, *Wilderness*, is about animals and how their existence intertwines with humans. It comes with a book of essays, written and illustrated by Rennie, that, she says, "don't quite explain the songs, but I like to think they add to the soup."

Rennie's vivid storytelling style is in elegant keeping with the narrative traditions of folk music, in which a sense of wonder at the natural world and its mysteries is a recurring motif.

"We can never really know what it's like to be a woodpecker, or an octopus or a lizard," Rennie muses. "All we can know is what these creatures mean to us and try to imagine how the world looks and feels to them. It's this imagining that keeps me awake at night."

FIONA STURGES



GRAVEOLA

Eu Preciso De Um Liquidificador

MAIS UM DISCOS

Quirky debut from Brazilian post-modernists

The title means "I Need A Food Processor" which

7/10

sums up the approach of this young band from Minas Gerais. Samba, folk, rock, advert samples, the whirrs of kitchen equipment – throw them into the blender and see what emerges. They aren't quite that random, but numbers like "Desmantelado" morph between Zappa-esque rock, brassy salsa and jazzy woodwind, while their vocals oscillate between male yearning and breezy female harmonies. Underpinning all their knowing irony is some straight acoustic samba: the Nascimento-like "Canção Para Um Cão Qualquer" or the bossa of "Desencontro". Radical pop from the new world.

NEIL SPENCER



GUIDED BY VOICES

English Little League

FIRE

Dayton, Ohio's indie veterans continue their Indian summer

6/10

Robert Pollard is pushing 60 but shows no signs that he'll ever grow up. GBV's 20th album – and their *fourth* since reuniting just over a year ago – is filled with the kind of gleefully shambolic sounds you'd expect from an adolescent indie band. Out-of-tune pianos are played with one finger, surreal nonsense is howled and screamed, and distorted guitars are played through ludicrous phaser pedals. "Taciturn Caves" is a lo-fi Black Sabbath epic, "Birds" sounds like a Krautrock Byrds, while the scruffy bubblegum punk of "Islands (She Talks In Rainbows)" and "Quiet Game" are sweetened by Beach Boys harmonies. It all kinda works, though.

JOHN LEWIS



THE HANDSOME FAMILY

Wilderness

LOOSE MUSIC

Husband-and-wife country duo walk on the wild side

8/10

The songs on this terrific ninth album by Albuquerque's Brett and Rennie Sparks are each named after animals, though *Wilderness*, which comes with an illustrated book of essays, is more than merely a lesson in natural history. The animal kingdom looms large but human experience is still at the core of Rennie's surreal couplets, given added portent by Brett's compellingly mournful baritone. In the Latin-flavoured "Caterpillars" a woman is struck by lightning, woken out of her coma by radio waves from outer space and is later wrapped in a cocoon by giant caterpillars – all in a day's work for the Handsomes.

FIONA STURGES



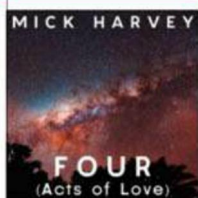
HAR MAR SUPERSTAR
Bye Bye 17
CULT

Nu-soulster's fifth – on Julian Casablancas' label
When Minnesotan native Sean Tillmann first appeared in 2000, he was

6/10

performing novelty rap and R&B pastiches toggled out in nothing but Y-fronts and tube socks. Since then, he's ditched the sexed-up shtick by degrees and proven that he's a soul vocalist of genuine talent and – with names like Kelly Osbourne and J.Lo to his credit – no slouch as a songwriter. But four years on from his last album, HMS brings little fresh energy to the soul-pop party, despite recording with a full live band. He successfully channels Sam Cooke, especially on "We Don't Sleep" but the album's length (barely 30 minutes) and lo-fi production make *Bye Bye 17* appear disconcertingly slight.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MICK HARVEY
Four (Acts Of Love)
MUTE

Former Bad Seed's moody sixth; PJ Harvey guests
Harvey is best known for his pivotal guitar and songwriting work in The

7/10

Birthday Party and The Bad Seeds, and for lending his multi-instrumental and production skills to PJ Harvey's *Let England Shake*, but he's no solo recording novice. His latest album is his second since quitting the Seeds, and a contemplation on romantic love presented in three acts. It leans heavily on minor chords, gothic-blues minimalism and brooding atmospherics with a widescreen sweep, and features several covers – most notably, of The Saints' "The Story Of Love" and Roy Orbison's "Wild Hearts". In a genus so often characterised by grandiloquent gesturing, this is drama of the pensive and underplayed kind.

SHARON O'CONNELL



HOLLIS BROWN
Ride On The Train
ALIVE NATURAL SOUND

Bluesy, twanging debut requires more fire
Any band who took their name from an early Bob Dylan song, have covered Willie Dixon's "Spoonful"

6/10

and chose to record their first album in Nashville are hardly obscuring their aims and intent. So it is with Hollis Brown, four young native New Yorkers in thrall to classic country rock, blues and delta soul, whose poppy approach sets them apart from peers Alabama Shakes and Houndmouth. There's no denying either their integrity or their talent ("Walk On Water" especially brews up a dirty blues storm) and vocalist Mike Montali has a fine, Fogerty-like rasp, but sometimes – as on "Nothing & The Famous No One" – they allow their contemporary pop leanings to steer them off course.

SHARON O'CONNELL



HOOKWORMS
Pearl Mystic
GRINGO

Excellent debut from angry Leeds psychonauts
Hookworms' love of meandering psychedelia and US hardcore find

8/10

a happy marriage on this debut, which takes a gloomy Yorkshire perspective on the Spaceman 3 side of psych-rock. "Away/Towards" and "Preservation" are titanic, thrashing boogies that wouldn't disgrace Wooden Shjips, while the fat organ on "Form And Function" brings a Mod touch to a VU-inspired slice of drone-pop. There's no let up: "Since We Had Changed" squeals and thumps like a Zeppelin deflating in an abattoir, while "In Our Time" combines found sounds and slinky beats with MJ's delayed vocals – all members, intriguingly, are known only by their initials. Audacious and urgent.

PETER WATTS

REVELATIONS

Mick Harvey on the themes of *Four (Acts Of Love)*



➤ **What prompted you to reflect on love at this point in your life?**

"Love's such an all-pervasive theme of popular music, and a prime motivator that people really believe in. It's a constant. But what I've made out of that steps outside of the normal appraisal and approach. All too often, the word is thrown around in a very loose and shallow way. Romantic love is narrow and self-referential and creates a very small circle around an individual, as opposed to the bigger scheme of things. But the song cycle is a fairly simple idea, so I didn't want to make it a weighty and self-important, philosophical treatise. I just wanted to throw up some questions. It's hard to say whether overall the album is rueful or hopeful. In the context of my own life, I'm a positive person, but in terms of the broader universe, I'm quite a cynic."

This is your second solo LP since quitting The Bad Seeds. Has there been some skin shedding?

"On a private level, yeah. I'm much less stressed. And I think I'm a more approachable, relaxed person. I've got more time for people, which is really nice. Much as I loved being in The Bad Seeds and I loved Nick and everyone, it wasn't quite working the way it was meant to work, any more. It was hard making the break, of course, but it's been very positive."

SHARON O'CONNELL



KARL HYDE
Edgeland
UNIVERSAL

Underworld man's solo debut

As its title suggests, Hyde's first solo album finds him traversing the urban hinterlands, snatching

6/10

glimpses of the numinous from the back of a car or a corner booth in a street café. "Sometimes my imagination wants to come out and play," he reveals in "Angel Café", over a watery rhythm track. Elsewhere, piano notes fall like snow, and ambient guitar tones twinkle like sun on water, while Hyde's vocals range from almost trad-folk on "Your Perfume Was The Best Thing" to a slow delivery akin to Tim Buckley's "Starsailor" on "Cut Clouds". The tone of observational distance builds to an understated climax with "Shadow Boy", which expands to epiphanic scale across eight minutes, Hyde noting how "words slip through my lips and fall broken".

ANDY GILL



GLENN JONES
My Garden State
THRILL JOCKEY

Cul De Sac member and music scholar takes some time out for guitar soli explorations

8/10

Many of the guitar soli precariat fire records out on a whim, often without the real need to articulate anything new about their playing, or about their instrument. Not so Glenn Jones, though, who keeps things spare and understated. He's a stunningly articulate player, with a deft melodic ear, able to wrench overtone magic from the guitar, but just as capable of keeping things on the down-low, the better to emphasise the gorgeous lines and phrases he sends sighing from the steel strings. And his pieces for banjo, like the revenant lyricism of the title track, are charming, moist-eyed miniatures.

JONDALE



JUNIP
Junip
CITY SLANG

Swedish trio led by José González find their deep folk groove

7/10

Junip are all about the rhythm. Essentially a more expansive take on the liquid folk of singer-guitarist José González, this second album feels less mannered than 2010 debut *Fields*. González, keyboardist Tobias Winterkorn and drummer Elias Araya create a propulsive swell of noise that never strays too far from a keen melody. "Line Of Fire" is a standout track, the delicate lacework of their playing billowing out into a string-led climax. As is "Your Life Your Call", which slips a warm groove under some soft vocal incantations. They're a disarming bunch, too, conjuring a lovely restful air from some deceptively tricky manoeuvres.

ROB HUGHES



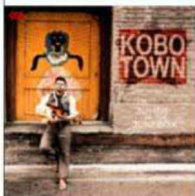
THE KINGSBURY MANX
Bronze Age
YEP ROC

Melodic schizophrenia, file under synth-folk
Rustic Americana is given a curious makeover on the Manx's sixth album,

7/10

with Mini-Moog synths and trumpets weaving through the folky acoustics that were the dominant force on their previous releases. The daring sound palette serves Bill Taylor's plaintive vocals better than one might expect, acting like supporting characters in musical novellas ("Weird Beard And Black Wolf", "In The Catacombs"), bringing greater light and shade to the more subdued numbers. Uptempo rockers still have their place, though, and the spectre of power pop is clearly evident on the singalongs "Future Hunter" and "Solely Bavaria", where Elliott Smith meets Cheap Trick.

TERRY STAUNTON



KOBO TOWN
Jumbie In The Jukebox
CUMBANCHA

Calypso traditions re-imagined in startling style by Canadian band
Relocated from Trinidad to Toronto at the age of 13,

8/10

Drew Gonsalves grew fascinated by the music of his lost homeland, finding fellow émigrés who were determined to shunt calypso into modern times. This debut surpasses expectations, mixing sing-song narratives with dancehall reggae and drowsy "Ghost Town"-style horns. It's helped by producer Ivan Duran, who oversaw the late Andy Palacio's feted final album *Wátina* and who brings odd textures and arrangements to witty tales like "Mr Monday" and "Joe The Paranoiac". The best comes last, with "Tick Tock Goes The Clock" rocking out in a blaze of apocalyptic brass.

NEIL SPENCER



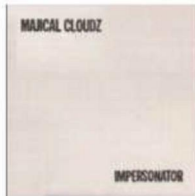
LITTLE BOOTS
Nocturnes
ON REPEAT

Former Next Big Thing still gazing at the stars from the gutter
Premature adulation is a double-edged sword. Victoria "Little Boots"

6/10

Hesketh's overhyped 2009 debut *Hands* was engaging enough in a lo-fi Kylie-lite way, but disappointingly low on killer anthems or sparky charisma. This belated sequel feels more shiny and sleek, but also more faceless and safe. "Motorway" is a lovely dystopian rave-pop throbber with inevitable echoes of St Etienne, while "All For You" rewrites PSB's "Domino Dancing" as an icy synth lament, and "Beat Beat" has the knowing dumbness of vintage '80s Madonna. But too many of these frictionless Eurodisco makeweights only prove that great, urgent, heart-tugging electro-pop is easy to simulate but difficult to pull off successfully.

STEPHEN DALTON



MAJICAL CLOUDZ
Impersonator
MATADOR

Canadian singer combining plush vocals with delicate electronica

6/10

Majical Cloudz is the work of Montreal's Devon Welsh, a songwriter who builds his simple pop melodies round intricate electronica created by Matthew Otto, adding loops and samples but always keeping Welsh's resonant voice front and centre. At times, say on the minimalist "This Is Magic" or the simple "I Do Sing For You", the backdrop is so subtle that the end result is almost like an aria. Elsewhere, the tunes deliver more of a punch – the fidgety "Mister" combines insistent percussion with a constant synth drone and backing vocals – but even here the instruments are always operating at the service of dominating vocals.

PETER WATTS



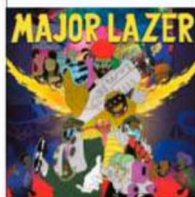
HUGH LAURIE
Didn't It Rain
WARNER BROS

Damn right he's got the blues – again
Well, Bertie Wooster hasn't gone dubstep. While Hugh Laurie's second album doesn't

6/10

stray far from his first, 2011's New Orleans homage *Let Them Talk*, most notably on Dr John's "Wild Honey", it does offer a little more variety. Joe Henry once again produces, while Laurie reprises his well-intentioned but essentially unconvincing bluesman shtick on a set of material spanning Jelly Roll Morton's "I Hate A Man Like You" to Alan Price's "Changes". Supported by A-grade sessioners, including Greg Leisz, he devotes a fair share of the vocals to soul singer Jean McClain, Guatemalan musician Gaby Moreno and, on "Vicksburg Blues", Taj Mahal. Wise move.

GRAEME THOMSON



MAJOR LAZER
Free The Universe
MAD DECENT/BECAUSE MUSIC

Diplo's mutant dancehall commando returns
"Nerdy white guy makes reggae record" is usually a recipe for cringe. Diplo avoids that fate by

7/10

ensuring that his Major Lazer project remains noisily irreverent. Contemporary dancehall is such a gloriously daft, anything-goes format that no-one can really complain when he adds juddering dubstep drops, mariachi fanfares and slam-dance sections. It's not just anything goes, but anyone: local legends Vybz Kartel and Elephant Man rub shoulders with Peaches, Bruno Mars and Vampire Weekend's Ezra Koenig doing a silly voice. It's all enjoyably preposterous, although the highlight is the least typical Major Lazer moment: a haunting, pared-down number called "Get Free", sung by Dirty Projectors' Amber Coffman.

SAM RICHARDS



HARRY MANX
Om Sweet Ohm
DOG MY CAT

Ninth album of east-west fusion from Springsteen-endorsed slide guitar virtuoso

7/10

Like John McLaughlin, Manx marries familiar jazz and blues guitar tropes with Indian scales and ragas. But in contrast to McLaughlin's cerebral approach, Manx's slide playing has an earthier sensibility, enhanced by rootsy songwriting and a soulful baritone, heard to fine effect on the Bollywood blues of "Reuben's Train". A syncopated take on John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" is another highlight while the more ethereal moments of string magic recall the Ry Cooder/VM Bhatt collaboration – no surprise as Bhatt was Manx's Indian tutor. Springsteen, Ben Harper and Taj Mahal count themselves fans and on this showing Manx deserves to be known as far more than a muso's muso.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



APRIL MARCH & AQUASERGE
April March & Aquaserge
FREAKSVILLE

Faux-French chanteuse conducts transatlantic love affair

6/10

Born Elinor Blake, April March is a New York singer-songwriter and die-hard Francophile whose Anglicised Serge Gainsbourg cover "Chick Habit" landed her a slot on the soundtrack to Tarantino's *Deathproof*. Her breezy bilingual ballads are a natural fit for Aquaserge, a French-based collective featuring members of Tame Impala and Stereolab, who share her passion for the allure of vintage Gallic chansons. Coquettish confections like "J'Entends Des Voix" and "Des Tics Et Des Toc's" are full of cutesy *Amélie*-style knowingness, though the album is saved from pastiche by a sprinkling of electronica and subtle psych flourishes. Slight, but charming.

STEPHEN DALTON



STEVE MARTIN AND EDIE BRICKELL
Love Has Come For You
ROUNDER

New and Old Bohemians collide, to mesmerising effect

8/10

Martin's stand-up routine of the '70s often involved a banjo cameo, but it's only in the recent past that he's made a concerted attempt at a bluegrass career. This third album in four years is different though, with Martin forgoing his instrumental reels for a more sober set of rootsy folk tunes essayed by spare picking and the whispery intimations of Mrs Paul Simon. It works beautifully too. Peter Asher's simple production is a fine exercise in restraint, magnifying the spacious beauty of Brickell's voice on standouts like the title track and "Sarah Jane And The Iron Mountain Baby".

ROB HUGHES



MISS KITTIN Calling From The Stars

WSPHERE

French mistress of chilly electro returns with a double Fischer's spooner's millennium-booting

7/10

"Emerge" is now but a distant memory and "electroclash" has since been through countless mutations, but it is the dance music that will not die. The challenge for the likes of Miss Kittin – whose "Silver Screen Shower Scene" (with Felix da Housecat) was a cult smash in 2001 – is where to take it, over a decade on. The DJ, producer and singer-songwriter's solo third suggests there's no shame in sticking to your retro-futurist guns, as long as you fire off the odd unexpected volley. Hence a sweet cover of REM's "Everybody Hurts" and skilled essays in minimal electro house like "Tamarin Bay", alongside her trademark disaffected coldwave.

SHARON O'CONNELL



HEDVIG MOLLESTAD TRIO All Of Them Witches

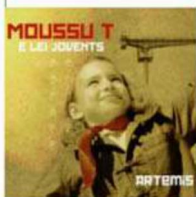
RUNE GRAMMOFON

Howling, hexed free rock from Nordic guitar heroine

8/10

Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen is not your average guitar brandisher: a tall bottle blonde from northern Norway who channels the spirits of Hendrix and Tony Iommi through her semi-acoustic lightning rod. Her free rock trio is on thunderous form on these lithe and sinewy instrumentals, stirred up in a cauldron of sub-metal froth and white-hot jazz rock. Titles like "Sing, Goddess", Code Of Hammurabi" and "Kathmandu" lend a historical heft to the group's invocations, but on "Shawshank" and "Ghrá Rúnda", quieter, more reflective modes cast an equally hypnotic spell.

ROB YOUNG



MOUSSU T E LEI JOVENTS Artemis

CHANT MONDE

Marseilles combo don't falter on charming fifth

7/10

Rarely are attempts to revive a cultural past as successful as Moussu T's, who pines for the heyday of 1930s Marseilles, when the port hosted jazz, chanson and folk. Singing in French and southern dialect Occitan, the group echo their city's moods; sometimes tough and bitter, at others sweet and romantic. "Toute Mon Temps" is bare, fresh-air blues (with birdsong); "Occitane Sur Mer" a Waitsonian croak; "Sur Ma Serviette" a charming seaside jaunt with banjo; "Tentacules" sad and reflective. It doesn't quite match 2010 album *Putan De Cançon*, but *Artemis* confirms a singular and consistently entertaining identity.

NEIL SPENCER



ALISON MOYET The Minutes

COOKING VINYL

Essex diva's soulful synthpop hits and misses on eighth solo LP

6/10

For a singer blessed with one of the most distinctive voices in British pop, it's strange that Alison Moyet has not had a substantial hit for nearly 30 years. Eighth solo outing *The Minutes* probably won't rectify this, but it's a treat to finally hear Moyet stretch herself on a classy and engaging modern collection that's only really let down in places by the sanitised electro of one-time Björk and Robyn producer Guy Sigsworth. But when it's good – as on the Yazoo-shaded "Filigree" and "Love Reign Supreme" and the lip-curved Grace Jones throb of "Right As Rain" – it's very good indeed.

PIERS MARTIN

HOW TO BUY... WILLIE NELSON The country outlaw's finest cuts



Shotgun Willie

ATLANTIC, 1973

Nelson's first album with Atlantic was a sensational reinvention after a long period of drift.

Backed by an all-star band including Waylon Jennings, Doug Sahm and Jessi Colter, Nelson sang old standards like they were his, and songs of his own that sounded like old standards. An early benchmark of what would become known as Outlaw Country.

9/10



Red-Headed Stranger

COLUMBIA, 1975

Ambitious but breezily realised concept album, expanding the ancient standard that served as

the title track into a narrative chronicling the travels and travails of a fugitive murderer. Nelson did his thing of weaving together old songs with his own compositions, and the results – as ever a testament to Nelson's understanding of American song – were seamless.

9/10



Songbird

LOST HIGHWAY, 2006

Though Nelson sells himself as an amiable, avuncular hippy, happy to go where he's pointed, a hunger

still itches. Aged 73, he got Ryan Adams to produce this terrific collection of chestnuts (Cohen's "Hallelujah", Parsons' "\$1000 Wedding"), Nelson standards ("Sad Songs & Waltzes", "We Don't Run") and a couple of new tunes. He'd never sounded much different, but he'd never sounded better.

8/10

ANDREW MUELLER



WILLIE NELSON & FAMILY Let's Face The Music And Dance

SONY/LEGACY

Nelson celebrates his 80th birthday with songs nearly

7/10

as old as himself

Willie Nelson's fourth album this decade alone, *Let's Face The Music And Dance* shares with its immediate predecessors a sense of being whatever seemed like a good idea at the time. Nelson being Nelson, this lackadaisical tends toward the affable and charming more often than not. He would have heard most of these songs for the first time as a boy, and treats the likes of Mack Gordon's "You'll Never Know", Spade Cooley's "Shame On You" and Carl Perkins' "Matchbox" with the easy affection earned by old friends.

ANDREW MUELLER



SCOUT NIBLETT It's Up To Emma

DRAG CITY

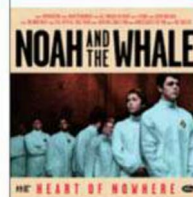
Primal, arid garage rock from Drag City staple

"I think I'm gonna buy me a gun/A nice little silver one," seethes Emma Louise Niblett on "Gun", the

7/10

opening song of her sixth LP, which repurposes heartbreak as revenge. She hasn't acquired any other new weapons here, though, sticking to her usual palette: intimidating, sludgy-but-spare garage that builds like someone surreptitiously tightening a thumbscrew. But there's a noticeable, effective shift towards slight indulgence. Her barely contained rage at being duped again is countered by trembling, rising strings on "Can't Fool Me Now", whereas a tortuously slow cover of TLC's "No Scrubs" and closer "What Can I Do" wind up with climactic, spiralling guitar solos. Listen with the lights on.

LAURA SNAPES



NOAH AND THE WHALE Heart Of Nowhere

MERCURY

Crisp drivetime rock from erstwhile folkies

It seems an age since Charlie Fink's gang were regarded as the

8/10

Mumfords' nu-folk siblings. The lilting opening instrumental and spare closer "Not Too Late" aside, their fourth album continues in the vein of 2011's *Last Night On Earth*, divining its inspiration from cool, crisp '80s US new wave, "Every Breath You Take" basslines, Brat Pack soundtracks and wistful songs about girls. "One More Night" could be a classic Cars ballad, "Still After All These Years" is clipped pop-funk, and "All Through The Night" sounds like an outtake from Ryan Adams' *Rock N Roll* album. Anna Calvi pops up on the scratchy title track, nicely complementing Fink's laconic croon.

GRAEME THOMSON



THE NATIONAL

Trouble Will Find Me

4AD

Brooklyn quintet's sad and uplifting sixth. *By Louis Pattison*



8/10

THE NATIONAL'S PATH to fame has been taken by increment. When they debuted back in 2001 with their self-titled record on Brassland, a label founded for such purpose by the band's twin sibling guitarists Aaron and Bryce Dessner, their vaguely

alt.country-ish songs felt of small and intimate dimensions, expressions of sore-headed introspection just large enough to fill a glass a few times before the barman called time. Just over a decade later, as Barack Obama hit the campaign trail for re-election, The National played from 2010's *High Violet* before a 10,000-strong rally in Iowa at the request of the President's campaign team.

What this really reveals is that The National write songs which are scalable: built around small, personal sentiments that, when blown up large, strike a chord. In the run-up to *Trouble Will Find Me*, Matt Berninger, the group's vocalist, spoke of their career as a process of "trying to disprove our own insecurities". Leaving aside that any anxieties you harbour when the commander-in-chief has your back probably isn't going anywhere soon, the fact remains that a well-adjusted National is hardly a desirable prospect, so it's perhaps for the best we find our way into the Brooklyn quintet's sixth album on a note of characteristic self-examination. "*Don't make me read your mind, you should know me better than that*," sings Berninger, gently, as "I Should Live In Salt" unfolds in a wooze of Korg keyboards, before its steady build to a bruised climax: "*I should live in salt for leaving you behind*".

Berninger's lyrics are key to The National. Introspective and impressionistic, laced with self-doubt, they're like little fictive miniatures, or a conversation conducted in the intimate language of a lover's code (it's probably no coincidence that since 2007's *Boxer* he's worked on lyrics with his wife Carin Besser, formerly fiction editor at the *New Yorker*). Little epigrammatic phrases pop out of his songs, veiled in meaning, but with a crisp elegance that lodges them in the memory. "*I'm under the gun again/I knew I was a 45-percenter then*," he sings on "I Need My Girl". "*I have only two emotions, careful fear and dead devotion*," quips "Don't Swallow The Cap". Tender piano and sparse, echoed drums usher in "Slipped", a fuck-up's confession that self-lacerates to the bone: "*I'm having trouble inside of my skin/I'll try to keep my skeletons in*."

As crucial, though, are the contributions of the Dessner brothers. No indie-rock makeweights, both are classically trained, having engaged in extra-curricular projects from New Music performances with the Copenhagen Philharmonic to The Long Count, an orchestral show with artist Matthew Ritchie based on the Mayan creation story *Popol Vuh*. Their growing expertise as arrangers was evident on *High Violet*, and is even plainer here. Bryan Devendorf's steady, circular percussion anchors, keeping songs like "Fireproof" and "Heavenfaced" in a state of broad structural simplicity. Given close attention, though, they

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: The National
Recorded at: Clubhouse, Rhinebeck, New York
Personnel: Matt Berninger (vocals), Aaron Dessner (guitar), Bryce Dessner (guitar), Bryan Devendorf (drums), Scott Devendorf (bass), Sufjan Stevens (piano, synth, drum machine), Richard Reed Parry (double bass, electric guitar, piano, vocals), Annie Clark and Sharon Van Etten (vocals)

bloom with cello, piano, and clarinet, instruments scored in with a composer's eye for detail and careful restraint.

As ever, The National find uplift in melancholia. "Demons" and "This Is The Last Time" are anthemic, as surely as the songs of Arcade Fire or U2 – they share that emotional weight, that goose-pimpling build, but these songs instinctually shy away from grandstanding or big gestures; every time you think they're headed for a giant chorus, they'll veer off, or Berninger will shrug off the gravity with a lyrical clown move delivered in

deadpan: "*There's a science to walking through windows*," he repeats on "Graceless".

Perhaps for the first time, The National sound relaxed in their skin. This itself raises questions. For a band admirably prepared to get up there on the political stump, *Trouble* can feel somewhat First World Problems. The lyric of "Pink Rabbits" ("*I was a white girl in a crowd of white girls in a park... I was a television version of a person with a broken heart*") has a satiric quality, but by and large The National dwell on an insoluble sadness that can't help but feel a little self-regarding. Still, here we risk critiquing a band for not doing what they have not set out to do. Obama might be back in the White House, but there are no fairytale endings here. These remain uncertain times, and *Trouble Will Find Me* suggests an uncertain soundtrack can still be a source of comfort.

Q&A

Matt Berninger



You've said you found this record easy to write... When Aaron and Bryce started sending me music, I found it easy to fall right into it. In the past, our records have sometimes felt hard to craft. Sometimes the music would be beautiful, but it was hard for me to find my footing. This time, it was a joy. We probably spent more time on it than any other record, but it came more easily. We weren't overthinking it.

There are a number of guests on the record – Sufjan Stevens, Sharon Van Etten, Annie from St Vincent – but no big cameos. Sufjan was playing this drum machine on a lot of songs. Sharon and Annie are mostly singing in a harmonic role. But it's all supportive roles, and we do a lot of layering. [Laughs] I'm the only star!

You've noted Roy Orbison as an influence – do we spot his fingerprints here? He had some asymmetrical ways of piecing melodies together – on "In Dreams", there are eight different ones. And he could sing in four octaves. I can't sing even close to his range, but I was trying to sing way up. In "Heavenfaced", I keep getting higher and higher, and it ends way up there. *LOUIS PATTISON*



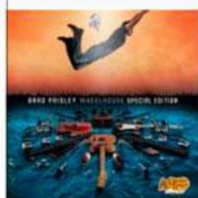
NOT WAVING **Umwelt** ECSTATIC

Serene synth workouts from Walls' Italian half
It's been an interesting journey for Alessio Natalizia, from Italian post-punk revival band Disco

7/10

Drive via the homespun psychedelia of Banjo Or Freakout and Walls' amiable ambient techno to the vintage synth excursions on display here. *Umwelt* is intended as a tribute of sorts to electronic music pioneers Roedelius and Manuel Göttsching, acknowledging that the brave new world they once envisioned now sounds comforting and occasionally somewhat kitschy. Offering nine expansive instrumentals, all named after remote geographical locations ("Kneecap Ridge", "Carrizo Plain"), *Umwelt* is a worthy companion to Boards Of Canada's *Geogaddi* and Luke Abbott's *Holkham Drones* in the nostalgic techno tundra.

SAM RICHARDS



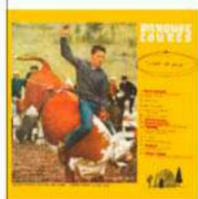
BRAD PAISLEY **Wheelhouse** ARISTA

Racism, Southern guilt and Eric Idle explored by Nashville titan
Brad Paisley is Nashville's most interesting star, a traditionalist unafraid to

8/10

innovate who celebrates Southern life while refuting redneck clichés. His ninth album is typically busy and expansive, beginning with a tuning radio (à la Dexys) and moving from stompers ("The Mona Lisa") and tearjerkers ("Tin Can On A String") to things like "Accidental Racist", which features a guest rap from LL Cool J, and "Onryo", an extraordinary Japanese hoe-down. Paisley loves a gag – Eric Idle guests, while "Harvey Bodine" is about a near-death experience that wasn't near enough – and while the album is too long, he consistently crafts a fine tune. He also plays a neat guitar.

PETER WATTS



PARQUET COURTS **Light Up Gold** WHAT'S YOUR RUPTURE?

Tipped New York band's handsome indie-rock

8/10

Parquet Courts are the latest hot new garage act to stumble out of Brooklyn (via Denton, Texas), and while it would be easy to cast the good-looking four-piece as sheepish proponents of nifty Big Apple indie in the mould of The Strokes or Television, their smart, literate second album shows they possess something of the slapdash romance of the Modern Lovers or Pavement. *Light Up Gold* packs 15 songs into 33 minutes, and most are great: goofy rackets like "Yonder Is Closer To The Heart", "N Dakota" and "Stoned And Starving" that barrel along blissfully, co-frontman Andrew Savage's sort-of-sung lyrics a source of perverse delight.

PIERS MARTIN



THE PASTELS **Slow Summits** DOMINO

Sixteen years later, finally a dazzling fifth album from Glasgow's finest
While there's been plenty of action in the world of

8/10

Pastelism over the past two decades – a soundtrack, *The Last Great Wilderness*; a collaboration with Japanese pop ingénues Tenniscoats; the Geographic Music imprint – it really has taken Scotland's secret music ambassadors quite a while to follow up 1997's intimate, lamp-lit *Illumination*. *Slow Summits*, in contrast, is bold and immediate, from the Orange Juice stylings of "Check Your Heart" through the swirls of strings that quietly devastate "Kicking Leaves", to the joyous turn that spins the instrumental title track from introspection to heart-bursting rapture.

JON DALE



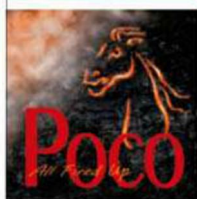
THE PHOENIX FOUNDATION **Fandango** MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Psych-leaning haze-pop from Kiwi six-piece

7/10

2011's *Buffalo*, the New Zealanders' first foray into Europe, drew much of its charm from a layered set of dreamily unhurried songs that nibbled at the edges of prog and psychedelia. *Fandango*, their fifth album, is built of the same stuff, though with a grander sense of scope and ambition. At times they appear to have added more lacquer than necessary, with "Thames Soup" and "The Captain" buffed up into beacons of '80s synth-pop. The band are instead at their beguiling best on the folkish fuzz of "Corale" and "Friendly Society", an 18-minute jam throbbing with droney ambience and Popol Vuh-flavoured kosmische.

ROB HUGHES



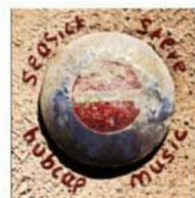
POCO **All Fired Up** POCONUT

Country-rock rebound: Rusty Young and company's first album in 11 years

5/10

Hardcore Poco-heads will find plenty to like on the reshaped group's *All Fired Up* (Paul Cotton, George Grantham out; Jack Sundrud, Michael Webb in). Light playful melodies, crisp harmonies, and plenty of instrumental mettle – think the strategic franchise approach of latter-day Little Feat. The songwriting, though, is mere genre exercise, mostly, and thin on the ground. There are exceptions: "Hard Country", a working-class ballad given an excellent keyboard/guitar interweave, works up a fine, mesmerising head of steam; a crowd-pleaser in the making. The self-reverent "Rockin' Horse" similarly spotlights plenty of dazzling instrumental prowess. One for the fans, though.

LUKE TORN



SEASICK STEVE **Hubcap Music** FICTION

American bluesman brings in the big guns but keeps it simple
Dispensing with the hyperbole favoured

8/10

by record companies, Seasick Steve handwrote the press release for his sixth LP. "It's called *Hubcap Music*," he explains, "cus I play some songs on a guitar made of hubcaps and a garden hoe, and cus I couldn't think of nothing else." This no-nonsense approach extends to the songwriting that, as on his previous albums, basks in his love of music, freedom, friendship, dogs and tractors. Famous guests including Jack White, Luther Dickinson and John Paul Jones occasionally herald a more expansive sound, though the mood here is the same as it ever was: raw and true.

FIONA STURGES



SHE & HIM **Volume 3** DOMINO

Career best from the starry retro-pop duo
Following a wan Christmas LP, Zooey Deschanel's pep is abundant on She & Him's third album,

8/10

singing less like the Spectorite ingénue of old, more bold Brill Building-era vamp. It doesn't work on their curdled cover of Blondie's "Sunday Girl", but *Volume 3* is terrific when M Ward's heavier production subsides and Deschanel's voice freely suggests swinging from lampposts in a romantic swoon. It's her first album since divorcing Death Cab For Cutie's Ben Gibbard, but the strongest confession, "we told a story of love from our hearts but it never came true," on the jazzy luau of "Shadow Of Love", means that skeleton remains firmly in the closet, hidden by her lovely outfits.

LAURA SNAPES



SHOVELS AND ROPE **O' Be Joyful** DUALTONE

Gothic tales and rollicking country blues from South Carolina

8/10

This ragged and rowdy debut from the instrument-swapping, honky-tonk-loving couple Carry Ann Hearst and Michael Trent is all about the stories. There's wooden-legged women playing banjos in "O' Be Joyful", bad boys "with selfish souls" in "Hail Hail" and a cuckolded, knife-wielding butcher's wife in "Shank Hill St". That Jack White invited Hearst and Trent on tour isn't that surprising given the discernible echo of Jack 'n' Meg in their darkly enthralling tales, while their instinctive harmonies echo latter-day pairings The Handsome Family and The Civil Wars, albeit with an extra slug of scotch.

FIONA STURGES



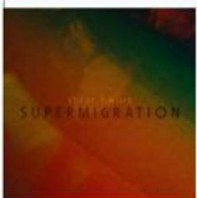
SLEAFORD MODS
Austerity Dogs
HARBINGER SOUND

Aggro street talk from Nottingham punk poet
Jason Williams, the man behind Sleaford Mods, doesn't actually hail from

7/10

Sleaford, but nearby Grantham, twice voted the UK's most boring town. This is the territory of *Austerity Dogs*, a grim vignette of minimum-wage jobs, shit bands, spilled chips and hard men in chain pubs set to drum machine and prowling bass guitar. Williams' caustic screeds, echoed by co-conspirator Simon Claridge, rock up somewhere between the street poetry of John Cooper Clarke and an East Midlands take on the Wu-Tang Clan. Amusing beef is had, with Pete Dinklage, Ian McCulloch and Brian Eno ("What the fuck does 'e know?"), and while musically quite basic, "My Jampany" and the Fall-ish "The Wage Don't Fit" churn along at bracing pace.

LOUIS PATTISON



SOLAR BEARS
Supermigration
PLANET MU

Second dose of Irish duo's high-grade psychedelics
If Solar Bears' bewitching 2010 debut pitched the pair as a kind of Boards

8/10

Of Ireland, pedlars of deep-fried nostalgia and tape-saturated electronics, its excellent follow-up finds John Kowalski and Rian Trench playing to their strengths with horizons newly broadened. It's surely no coincidence that Beth Hirsch, famously heard on Air's "All I Need", sings the tender psych-pop of "Our Future Is Underground", for *Supermigration* often conjures *Moon Safari*'s mood of pastel positivity. But it's when these Bears hunt for dark matter on "Happiness Is A Warm Spacestation" and "A Sky Darkly" like a boozy Vangelis that they're most persuasive.

PIERS MARTIN



ROD STEWART
Time
DECCA

Rod plods back to rock'n'roll
For the most part Stewart's much-trumpeted return to both rock'n'roll and songwriting feels like

6/10

cheap '91 plonk hoping to pass itself off as vintage '71 vino. The occasional glint of mandolin and fiddle fails to alchemise *Time*'s glossy LA rock, or excuse some shocking lyrics. In fine voice, Stewart ruminates on youthful bravado ("Can't Stop Me Now"), divorce ("It's Over") and something called "Sexual Religion" over off-the-peg anthems and unremarkable ballads. Only "Brighton Beach", evocatively recalling first love, and father-to-son sermon "Live The Life" hint at former glories. There's also a faithful cover of "Picture In The Frame" by Tom Waits, who may be wishing Stewart would start serial-covering someone else.

GRAEME THOMSON



JAN ST WERNER
Blaze Colour Burn
THRILL JOCKEY

Sublime driftworks, floated out by Mouse On Mars co-founder
He may be half of German ADD-tronica outfit Mouse On Mars, but Jan St Werner

8/10

has an equally storied career within academic and experimental music – he was artistic director of avant-gardist Amsterdam institution STEIM for a number of years. With *Blaze Colour Burn*, St Werner continues the playfully engaging work with liminal, lunar electronics he started with the long-running Lithops project, though he's now folding in all kinds of other instrumentation – a lurid saxophone swims through the two-part "Spiazzacorage" before the piece is buffeted by the winds of a recorder ensemble. This is modern experimentation as it should be – rich, dense, and rewarding.

JON DALE

REVELATIONS

Parquet Courts exceed their goals and explain their name



► "Oh, we exceeded our goals for this band months ago," says Austin Brown, one of New York art-rock quartet Parquet Courts' two singer-guitarists. "I mean, *Time* magazine made our track 'Master Of My Craft' its No 5 song of last year, right next to Taylor Swift, and that's just ridiculous."

Brown and his mid-twenties Brooklyn bandmates – fellow frontman Andrew Savage, Andrew's younger brother Max on drums, and bassist Sean Yeaton – are holding hands as their ramshackle band of two years rides a wave of giddy hype that saw them crowned kings of SXSW in March as word spreads about the rare quality and easygoing charm of their second album, *Light Up Gold*.

Recorded in three days in their rehearsal space, its flashes of Television, The Strokes and Talking Heads place Parquet Courts squarely on the Big Apple's musical map, even though Brown himself hails from Texas, where he met Andrew at college. "These comparisons are lazy but not inaccurate," he says. "As long as we're making the journalist's job easy then we're happy."

And that name? "It's a reference to the Boston Celtics. Their basketball court is parquet." So which names did you reject? "Um, The AC Units was one," he mumbles. "And The Skulls." A lucky escape.

PIERS MARTIN



SUUNS
Images Du Futur
SECRETLY CANADIAN

Sparkling Canadian narco-boogie
Montreal's Suuns confounded a lot of people by sounding exactly like Clinic on their 2010 debut

9/10

Zeroes QC. From Ben Shemie's neurotic quaver to his band's spooked voodoo shuffle, the resemblance was uncanny, though not unwelcome. Second album *Images Du Futur* is an altogether sleazier affair on which Suuns, toughened and grubby from two years on the road, come into their own. Now their menacing bad-boy boogie, locked into a heavy narcotic groove and propelled by an itch that can never be scratched, feels urgent and thrilling. Each track – "2020" and "Bambi", in particular – oozes pulsing drug-rock that always hits the sweet spot.

PIERS MARTIN



THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS
Love Lust Faith + Dreams
POLYDOR

Fourth from actor/director/renaissance man Jared Leto and band

4/10

Succeeding where many of his thespian predecessors have failed TSTM's five million sales to date has left Leto emboldened on this Steve Lillywhite-produced follow up to 2009's *This Is War*. That's not necessarily a good thing. The newer ingredients are still wearisomely familiar: ominous sci-fi instrumentals ("Convergence") attempt to build atmosphere by a surfeit of Muse-like angst, but ungainly electro pomp ("Up In The Air") contrives to spoil it. Their brand of gut-wrenching emo, aligned to fearsome fantasy rock remains both wildly overcooked and deeply derivative. Not that that's hindered their past elevation.

GAVIN MARTIN



TRICKY
False Idols
FALSE IDOLS/IK7

Tenth album from the wayward trip-hopper

7/10

Tricky has spent the past 15 years floundering outside his comfort zone, but *False Idols* finds him finally making peace with his past. Co-vocalist Francesca Belmonte bears more than a passing aural resemblance to Martina Topley-Bird, while echoes of *Maxinquaye* abound in the album's sputtering rhythms, murky funk licks and muttered threats. There are some persuasive pop tunes here, too – "Nothing Matters" and "Is That Your Life" could be new singles by SBTRKT or AlunaGeorge – although too many tracks still lack the grungy swagger that once came naturally. A return to a winning formula, if not an emphatic return to form.

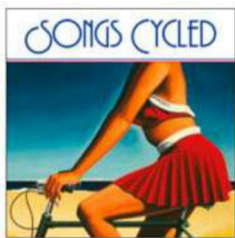
SAM RICHARDS

VAN DYKE PARKS

Songs Cycled

BELLA UNION

The pint-sized Pope of pop candy-coats his protest songs. *By John Lewis*



9/10

IN 1967, AGED ONLY 24, Van Dyke Parks came to the pop world's attention with two glorious failures. He co-wrote Brian Wilson's aborted orchestral pop masterwork *Smile*, then followed it with his own symphonic voyage across America

entitled *Song Cycle*. Both were highbrow epics that helped take pop music into the conservatoire: few rock'n'roll bands would ever have considered writing the Joycean poetry of "the pit and the pendulum drawn/Columnated ruins domino" (as Parks did in "Surf's Up"); even fewer would have the chops to write the kind of densely orchestrated arrangements that referenced Aaron Copland's Wild West symphonies, Schumann lieder, Tin Pan Alley standards and the fractured folksong of the entire American continent. As Parks himself says, he's spent nigh on half a century counteracting charges that he was rather too clever for his own good. "The rock critics would slop words like 'obscurantism' and 'obfuscation' on me," he snorts, gleefully. "They've always wanted opacity."

Songs Cycled, his first proper solo LP in 24 years, is opaque and entirely accessible. All 12 of its tracks would make sense to your parents, grandparents or children; all could be easily smuggled onto the Radio 2 playlist; few would sound out of place on any of the Disney soundtracks that Parks has worked on since *The Jungle Book*. But, the more you snuggle up inside Parks' wonderfully upholstered orchestrations, the more you realise that this MOR sheen hides an audacious, subversive and politically trenchant agenda.

Only four of these tracks are entirely new compositions, where agit-prop sentiments are sweetened by exquisite, chirruping arrangements. The opening track, "Dreaming Of Paris", draws connections between the US invasions of Vietnam and Iraq, but manages to do so within the boundaries of a woozy, hopelessly romantic tango. "Black Gold" is a Sondheim-ish account of the "ecologic nightmare" created by a doomed oil tanker. "Wall Street" is a pretty, Disneyfied duet with Inara George which turns out to be a dark meditation on 9/11. And "Missin' Mississippi" is a gentrified cajun-style duet with Gaby Moreno that pays homage to VDP's native state in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

For Parks, "a good arrangement transcends the mathematics of melody", and all the remaining tracks are radical rearrangements of his old material, or traditional songs that complement the originals. On 1967's *Song Cycle*, "The All Golden" was a bafflingly complex score for strings, brass and harp; on this new version, Parks' voice is backed only by rippling piano and simple accordion, and the song benefits hugely. "Hold Back Time", a herky-jerky country grunter first croaked out by Brian Wilson on the '95 collaboration *Orange Crate Art*, is transformed into an elegant tango, with a nimble, swooping arrangement for strings, ukuleles and pedal steel. "Sassafrass", a daft, folksy nursery



SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Jackson Browne's Groovemasters Studio, Santa Monica; Doug Lacy Legacy Studios, LA; and Muscletone Village Studios, LA
Personnel: Van Dyke Parks (vocals, bk vocals, piano, accordion, keys, musette, guitar, arrangements), Ira Ingber (guitars, vocals), Cameron Stone (cello), Carl Sealove (bass guitar), Matt Cartsonis (mandocello, mandola), Peter Kent (violins, concert master), Kathy Dalton, Inara George, Gaby Moreno (guest vocals), Danny Dash and Timothy Hutton, David P Jackson, Doug Lacy (bk vocals), Chris Bleth (woodwind), Leland Sklar, Dave Stone (bass), David Rallicke (saxes), Ian Zenith, Don Heffington (percussion), and The Esso Trinidad Steelpan Orchestra

rhyme, popularised in the '60s by the West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band, is transformed into a demented piece of antebellum baroque. A 19th-Century "sacred harp" hymn, "The Parting Hand", is given a jazzy a cappella arrangement, while the closer transforms "Amazing Grace" into a cowboy hymn in 5/4.

When it comes to world music, Parks has often tried to have his cake and eat it. With the rather sickly calypsos of 1975's *Clang Of The Yankee Reaper*, or the plinky-plonky Okinawan folk music of 1989's *Tokyo Rose*, Parks embraced the "exotic" while simultaneously offering a critique of orientalism and colonialism. On *Songs Cycled*, the exotica is rather more effectively harnessed. "Aquarium", recorded in 1971 with the Esso Trinidad Steel Band, is a steelpan arrangement of the most famous piece from Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival Of The Animals*. It

should sound ridiculous, but instead it glistens and sparkles, and links in with a deceptively militant 1930s

Trinidadian calypso entitled "Money Is King". "Wedding In Madagascar" is a traditional African folk waltz that's been lovingly orchestrated, reminiscent of similar projects by old pal Ry Cooder.

Some critics will ponder where this fits into the music soundscape. Is it music theatre? Symphonic pop? Worldbeat? Protest song? "With music critics," says Parks, "it's like the Pope and birth control: if you don't play the game, you don't make the rules!" Let's just be grateful that the Pope of pop is still making the best music of his life.

Q&A

Van Dyke Parks

Is there a lyrical theme uniting these pieces? There's an ecological theme. They say: "write what you know", and what I know is that the planet is going to hell in a basket. We're at an ecological impasse, we've entered the anthropocene age, and it scares the hell out of me. My work tries to candy-coat it, to lighten this diet of darkness, so I wouldn't sound like a despairing old man.

This sounds like an expensive album... It is! And there is no

patronage for serious recording artists any more. I've wanted to make this for years but no-one was interested. Like the Little Red Hen, I ended up funding it myself! I recorded demos as 45s to sell at my performances, to fund the next studio session. Finally I was noticed by Bella Union. Putting a room full of string players together is expensive. I've put myself out on a limb and there I am, hanging, until I recover from the folly of my bravado.

Has pop displayed a decline in musicianship in the 50-odd years since you entered the business? Kinda. It can be traced to the economics of the business, which

has pushed people into thinking of just guitar/bass/drums. This has created a world of ZZ Tops, which is regrettable. But this is no time for snobism or smugness. I am comforted by the fact that my approach, once seen as maverick, has been surpassed by the crazy derring-do of a new generation, who have transmogrified the song form. All sorts of people, be they Animal Collective or Fleet Foxes or Tom Morello - I'm heartened by them. And there's a whole world of music - worldbeat, fado, Brazil, Saharan nomad music, the list is endless - that provides a tidal flush for the smug snobbery of rock'n'roll. *INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS*



THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Nanobots

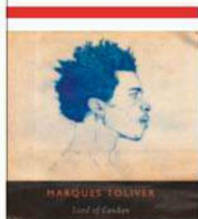
LOJINX

6/10

25 tracks in 45 minutes!
This patchwork quilt of musical inventiveness is comparable to The Residents' 40-track *Commercial Album*,

but with satire replacing surrealism. It's a riot of scattershot styles, from the Hendrix-esque guitar wig-out of "Insect Hospital" and the quietly threatening electric piano and percussion of "Black Ops", to the jazzy collusion of sax, accordion and bass clarinet in "The Darlings Of Lumberland". It features some of the most tightly compressed lyrical gambits ever committed to digital wax: a potted biog of Nikola Tesla over two minutes, and in "Sleep", a complex psycho-philosophical rumination on daily renewal in 38 seconds. But with three tracks of 15 seconds apiece and three others barely six seconds, that's virtually an eternity in TMBG time.

ANDY GILL



MARQUES TOLIVER

Land Of CanAan

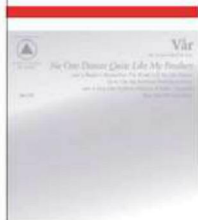
BELLA UNION

9/10

The emergence of a major soul talent
First spotted busking in London by Bella Union head honcho Simon

Raymonde, this full-length debut picks up where Toliver's 2011 EP "Butterflies Are Not Free" left off. The versatile singer/violinist deals in an alluring hybrid of elegant soul (think Stevie Wonder or Ronald Isley) and more classical motifs, seductively sweet on the gentle strum of "Weather Man", tenderly testifying on the impossibly catchy "Something's Wrong". Each of these 10 songs is meticulously crafted and performed with a power and confidence you'd expect from a more seasoned artist. "Try Your Best" is an organic beauty, textbook soul sophistication, but there's barely a misplaced note on the whole magnificent album.

TERRY STAUNTON



VÅR

No One Dances Quite Like My Brothers

SACRED BONES

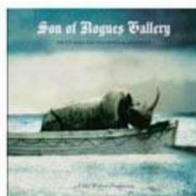
8/10

Stern synth-pop and apocalyptic folk, from Denmark

Vår hails from the same

Copenhagen scene that spawned breakout gothic punks Iceage; indeed, Iceage singer Elias Bender Rønnenfelt, alongside co-vocalist Loke Rahbek, is one of the group's core personnel. But whereas Iceage channel rage and alienation, *No One Dances...* is something more serene; tender, even. Much of the colour is supplied by synths that gather like dark clouds, but "Begin To Remember" and "Motionless Duties" boast elaborate instrumentation, Rønnenfelt's plaintive, Robert Smith-like lamentations borne up on acoustic guitars, wilted trumpets and stern drum salutes. The mood is heavy throughout, but only the closing, exhausted "Katla" outstays its welcome.

LOUIS PATTISON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Son Of Rogues Gallery

ANTI-

8/10

Second star-studded comp; "heave ho", etc
Hal Willner launched his first collection of "pirate

ballads, sea songs and chanteys" in 2006, inspired by chats with Johnny Depp (who appears here) while working on *Pirates Of The Caribbean*. They press-ganged a stellar crew, but early signees Shane MacGowan, Tom Waits and Keith Richards weren't free until this follow-up. Also a double, it sees old hands like Richard Thompson and Nick Cave return to mix it with Patti Smith, Michael Stipe, Courtney Love, Todd Rundgren, Dr John and Iggy Pop – who joins A Hawk And A Hacksaw on the bawdy "Asshole Rules The Navy". It's an impressive cast, matched by the energy and eccentricity of the contemporary and traditional songs alike.

SHARON O'CONNELL

WE'RE NEW HERE

Denison Witmer

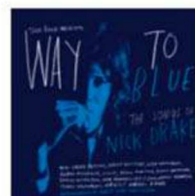


➤ Counting Denison Witmer's albums isn't easy. Since a cassette release in 1995, there are roughly nine. What's clear is that the Brooklyn-based, Pennsylvania-raised songwriter has found his voice on his current, self-titled set. "It's based on an epiphany I had in the Van Gogh Museum. It was really nice to see the paintings that everyone knows, and to see elements of his schooldays sketches in those paintings. That was really attractive. The point is you're chasing this idea, you're trying to fully realise what you hear in your head."

Witmer was in Sufjan Stevens' touring band circa *Michigan* (Stevens plays on Witmer's album) and saw what happens when an underground musician hits mainstream success. Working under the radar at his own studio – The Honey Jar in Brooklyn – has allowed him to escape early expectations.

"Early in my career, writers latched onto this idea that I was supposed to become the next Elliott Smith. That made me a little bit bummed because, sure, I touch on things that have a sad feeling, but I don't dwell in that place. I'm a hopeful person – that's my nature. I see the light at the end of the tunnel. These songs are all quiet encouragements."

ALASTAIR MCKAY



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Way To Blue - The Songs of Nick Drake

NAVIGATOR

5/10

Fair-to-middling convention honours folk-rock's Peter Pan

As wonderful as Nick Drake's songs are, the biggest names producer Joe Boyd could muster for the 2010 tribute events documented here were Green Gartside and Robyn Hitchcock – a reflection, perhaps, of a degree of Nick Drake overload. Kate St John's arrangements are suitably elegant, but most of the performances here are proof that Drake's gaunt, under-performed songs do not welcome wobbly bottom-lipped reinterpretation. Vashti Bunyan's tremulous take on "Which Will" is the best of a reasonably uninspiring lot, hinting worryingly that the "Fruit Tree" of Drake's legend could do with some judicious pruning.

JIM WIRTH



DENISON WITMER

Denison Witmer

ASTHMATIC KITTY

Beguiling "Quiet music" from Pennsylvanian introvert

8/10

Among the inspirations for Denison Witmer's

ninth album was baseball pitcher RA Dickey, who rebuilt his career by mastering the "knuckleball", a toss which requires the thrower to eschew spin and trust in his abilities. Certainly, there's a theme of abandoning preciousness on the stately "Born Without The Words", and there are occasional echoes of Paul Simon (on a lovely cover of Bry Webb's fatherhood song "Asa"). The album ends with Witmer addressing the poet Rilke with the mantra "take yourself seriously/Everything mysteriously". Here, the influence of Sufjan Stevens (who plays piano) is obvious. Whatever, it's a beauty.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



WOLF PEOPLE

Fain

JAG JAGUWAR

Second helping of deliciously wiggly prog-folk from UK quartet

8/10

Anyone partial to a distinct strain of English folk from

yesteryear, namely the sylvan otherness of Trees or dawn-of-the-'70s Fairport, will find plenty to toast in the music of Wolf People. Yet their equal fondness for proggy time signatures and full electric blowouts marks them out as kindred spirits of psych-leaning contemporaries like Black Mountain or Dungen. The Besnard Lakes' Jace Lasek adds backing vocals to the sinister dreamweave that is "All Returns", though the band's modernist witchery is perhaps best served by the phosphorescence of "Hesperus" or "NRR" – its spidery tangle of rural mores and garage grooves.

ROB HUGHES

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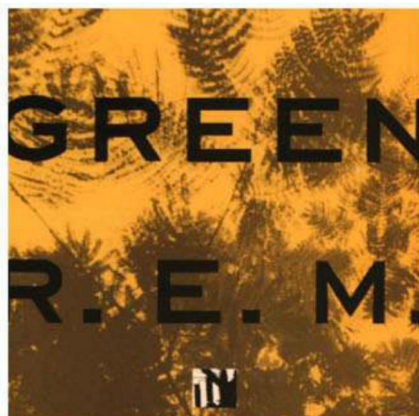
1 Barrel-scrappings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



BART EVERLY



TRACKLIST

CD ONE: Original album

- 1 Pop Song 89
- 2 Get Up
- 3 You Are The Everything
- 4 Stand
- 5 World Leader Pretend
- 6 The Wrong Child
- 7 Orange Crush
- 8 Turn You Inside-Out
- 9 Hairshirt
- 10 I Remember California
- 11 Untitled

REM

Green (25th Anniversary Deluxe Edition)

RHINO

The Georgians' major-label debut – even more thrilling and subversive a quarter of a century on. *By Bud Scoppa*

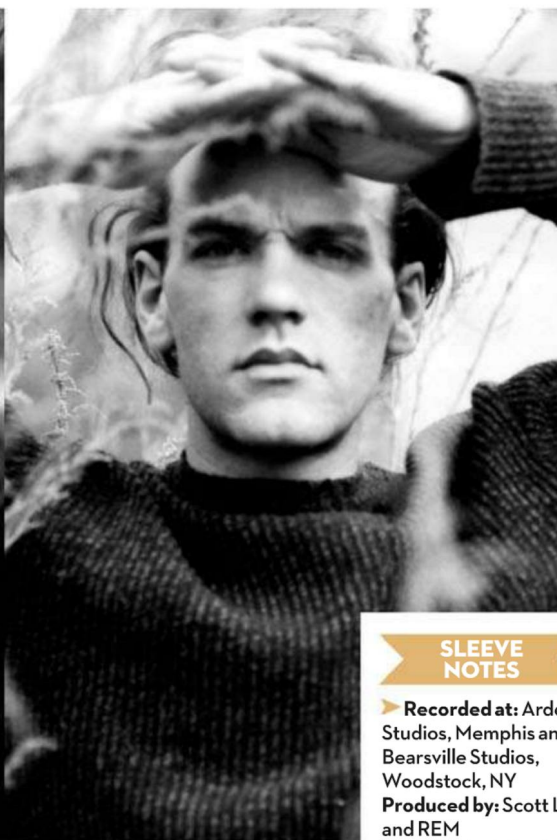
9/10 POINTEDLY RELEASED ON Election Day 1988, REM's sixth album – and the group's major-label debut – completed the college-rock band's improbable rise to the top of the rock pyramid alongside U2, who were then coming off the monumental *Joshua Tree*. That the Athens foursome pulled off this feat without compromise or calculation bespeaks an era when mass appeal and artistic adventurousness went hand in hand.

The climb had been gradual but steady for the band, initially triggered by 1983's strikingly original

Murmur, REM's first long-player, released by Los Angeles indie IRS Records a year after they signed the then little-known group. Their recipe stirred Michael Stipe's dreamlike, allusive lyrics and mumbled vocals into a style derived from the stately jangle of The Byrds and spiced up with a shot of punk's DIY energy. From that spellbinding debut, which captivated the critics on both sides of the Atlantic, the band made two more self-defining LPs in 1984's *Reckoning* and the following year's *Fables Of The Reconstruction* before enlisting John Mellencamp's producer Don Gehman, who



Taking a stand in 1988: (l-r) Bill Berry, Michael Stipe, Peter Buck, Mike Mills



SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Ardent Studios, Memphis and Bearsville Studios, Woodstock, NY
Produced by: Scott Litt and REM
Personnel: Michael Stipe (vocals), Bill Berry (drums and bk vocals, bass on "You Are The Everything", "The Wrong Child", and "Hairshirt"), Peter Buck (guitar, mandolin, drums on "Untitled"), Mike Mills (bass, keys, accordion, bk vocals), Bucky Baxter (pedal steel on "World Leader Pretend"), Jane Scarpantoni (cello on "World Leader..."), Keith LeBlanc (percussion on "Turn You Inside-Out")

scraped off the murk, pushing them toward greater clarity and scale on 1986's widescreen *Lifes Rich Pageant*. REM's sonic evolution continued with 1987's *Document*, co-produced by Scott Litt, which became the band's first million-seller in the US, even with its preponderance of politically charged songs. *Document* yielded their first US Top 10 single in the creepy, widely misconstrued "The One I Love", as well as one of their signature songs, the exuberant if irony-laced anthem "It's The End Of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)".

When the band reunited with Litt to begin recording at Ardent Studios in Memphis (where their heroes Big Star had cut their obscure masterpieces), they brought with them a brace of new songs shaped by the experience of playing basketball arenas on the *Document* tour – big, churning rockers like "Pop Song 89" and "Orange Crush" (the latter as martial and militant as U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday"),

seemingly designed to lift crowds of 20,000 out of their seats while flicking their Bics. These behemoths required suitably earthshaking treatments, and Litt was up to the challenge. The engineer turned producer – who'd come to REM by way of their spiritual big brothers the dB's – put a particular emphasis on recording the drums, thickening Bill Berry's muscular hits with snare samples so that they erupted like mortar shells.

This aural aggressiveness courses through the album like a high-voltage charge, animating the menacing "Turn You Inside-Out" and "I Remember California" on the one hand, the resolutely positive "Get Up" and "Stand" on the other. The physicality of the latter two tracks is set off by decorative pop arrangements – a swelling chorale overhanging Peter Buck's deadened-string power riffs on "Get Up", plinking piano and percussion on "Stand" – which serve to coat the urgency of their message of resiliency with a layer of sweetness. Cut from the same cloth as "It's The End Of The World...", "Stand" is part election-year protest song, part throwback novelty tune – one that in hindsight perfectly captures the zeitgeist of the late '80s. It would also

become REM's biggest hit to date and their second biggest ever (behind only "Losing My Religion" from the subsequent *Out Of Time*), climbing to No 6 on the US charts.

These arena-ready rockers may have drawn most of the initial attention when *Green* was released – *Rolling Stone* went so far as to compare "Turn You Inside-Out" to Led Zep – but they were just one aspect of what REM had cooked up. Equally unprecedented, if less assaultive, was the featured appearance of the mandolin, the foreground instrument on the signature REM ballads "You Are The Everything" (paired with Mike Mills' accordion, another newly introduced instrument), "The Wrong Child" and

"Hairshirt". Just as inspired, and even more striking than these Stipean reveries are the lush "World Leader Pretend", ornamented by cello and pedal steel, and the closing "Untitled", a rhapsodic piece anticipating the profound compassion of "Everybody Hurts", on which Buck drums and Berry plays bass, as *Uncut* editor Allan Jones points out in his notes for the reissue.

The bonus disc – which contains 21 of the 29 songs from REM's concert at North Carolina's Greensboro Coliseum, the 129th show on the 130-date Green World Tour – doesn't merely provide historical context, it captures the band (expanded to a five-piece with the addition of the dB's Peter Holsapple on guitar and keys) at its live performance peak. In a sustained burst of inspiration, REM deliver the hooks for the punters who'd come to them by way of "Stand", while still giving the core cultists all the subtle detail they'd come to expect from their favorite band in the world. After opening the Greensboro show with their oppositional pop hits, "Stand" and "The One I Love", they strategically place *Green*'s roof-raisers through the performance, and each supercharges the momentum, the cudgeling power of "Orange Crush" sweeping along the paired *Lifes Rich Pageant* jangle-fests "Cuyahoga" and "These Days" in its wake, the

TRACKLIST

CD TWO: *Live In Greensboro 1989*

- 1 Stand
- 2 The One I Love
- 3 Turn You Inside-Out
- 4 Belong
- 5 Exhuming McCarthy
- 6 Good Advices
- 7 Orange Crush
- 8 Cuyahoga
- 9 These Days
- 10 World Leader Pretend
- 11 I Believe
- 12 Get Up
- 13 Life And How To Live It
- 14 It's The End Of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)
- 15 Pop Song 89
- 16 Fall On Me
- 17 You Are The Everything
- 18 Begin The Begin
- 19 Low
- 20 Finest Worksong
- 21 Perfect Circle



with your best songs and the hell with Side Two; if it was weaker than Side One, too bad. But we wanted Side Two to be just as strong, as the second half to us was just as important as the first.

It's tempting to think of the LP title as an ironic comment on the money you got from Warner Bros. How did the title come into being? It represents so many things. First of all, we clearly were environmentally conscious, and we didn't mind keeping that in the forefront. Part of it was we had just signed a new record deal, it was a new beginning, we were gonna be embarking on a really long tour; it seemed like a restart in

a good way, hence the "green" reference there. And sure, it was an ironic comment on the new record deal. We could've gotten a lot more money going to other record labels, but that wasn't the point for us. It was that we got creative control when we signed with Warner Bros. Of course, that's lost on all the people who can only see dollar signs.

I get your insistence on creative control, but it's hard to imagine any label signing REM and then telling you what kind of record to make. Listen, some of those other label heads we spoke to... there were at least two I can think of where that would not have been the case. They would've been very interested in maximising their return on investment by inserting themselves into the process. Now, [Warner Bros heads] Mo Ostin and Lenny Waronker were music lovers, and if they had some input, we certainly didn't mind listening to that, because their hearts were in the right place.

Still, leaving IRS after seven years must have been tough. At the time, it was the hardest decision that I'd ever had to make, and I think all the guys felt the same. But we were honest and fair with IRS. We never asked to renegotiate the contract; that wasn't our style. And we gave IRS every chance; they were great for us – I have nothing but the best things to say about everybody at

IRS. But at the same time, we were sick of going to Europe and playing for the same 12 people at every show, and when you look for the record, it's not in the stores.

Did you feel the pressure of having to top yourselves after achieving commercial success? It wasn't something we dwelt on. For us, the only challenge was to make a better record than the last one. We always knew what we didn't want to do. It was satisfying

to show that you could become successful without resorting to the same clichés and methods that the people at some record companies would tell

"We didn't do anything to achieve Hitsville; we just did it because it was fun for us to play"

you were the only ways. We never wanted to get to a point where we'd wake up, look in the mirror and not feel good about it. So the level of success was incidental to the method of achieving it. We didn't do anything to achieve Hitsville; we just did it because it was fun for us to play.

Looking back on the band's body of work, it strikes me that working with Don Gehman led to a breakthrough in terms of how you wanted the records to sound, and then, during the course of six LPs with Scott Litt, you explored different facets of that sound. Would you agree? One of the main things for us was to try to not repeat ourselves, and that happened to include sound as well as composition. Don Gehman said, "Look, boys, this is what I like to do. I want this record to rock, I want it to sound rich and deep and loud," and we said, "That sounds great, let's try that." Because we'd done the folksy jangle and the murky English thing, all of which we loved, but you have to grow – to keep it interesting for yourself. And part of that is recording methods and the end-result sound. So we tried to make it big, loud and rock'n'roll and quiet and intimate, and I think we achieved both. At that point, people trusted that what we were doing we were doing out of honesty, and they didn't mind going along with us because of that. *INTERVIEW: BUD SCOPPA*



Q&A

Mike Mills recalls the circumstances that led to *Green*: "The only challenge was to make a better record than the last one..."



GREENBRINGS TOGETHER some of REM's heaviest and most delicate songs. How did

that come about? A lot of the difference compositionally and instrumentally was that Peter just got tired of playing electric guitar all the time, and was enjoying the mandolin. We still liked making loud rock songs, but at the same time we thought it would be fun to completely mix it up if we took a more acoustic-based approach. At the other extreme, Scott Litt knew that some of these songs were gonna be rocker-sounding songs, and as a producer, he knew how to get big drum sounds – little things that you may not notice at first listening to it, but they add almost a live feel to it.

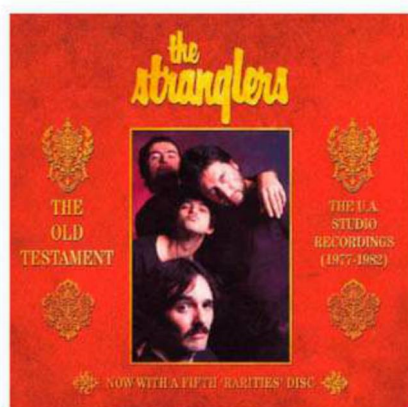
***Green* was released a couple of years into the CD age, but I suspect you were still thinking in terms of a two-sided album**

when you sequenced it. For Peter and I especially, growing up as music fans, there was always something special about the difference between Side One and Side Two. We enjoyed that, because you could do something different thematically on one side versus the next. Initially, we might have been looking at putting acoustic on one side and electric on the other, but that limits the way you hear the songs – you don't get the record as an entirety, which is something we were always concentrating on: an album as a total construct, as a journey for 40 minutes. Even though you had to get up and turn it over, it was still part of a journey, with a beginning and an end, rather than going halfway and then turning around. "Orange Crush" is very powerful – it's still one of my top five favourite REM songs, and that seemed like a really great way to open Side Two. Don Gehman believed in starting the record

nightmare vision of "I Remember California" doubling the exhilaration of "Get Up". Pulling mostly from the three most recent LPs, the band cherry-picks a handful of gems from their early days, most satisfyingly the quintessential jangle-rockers "Good Advices" from *Fables...*, sped up for the occasion, and *Murmur*'s "Perfect Circle", which closes the CD (though not the actual set, which ended on the night with covers of Syd Barrett's "Dark

Globe" and The VU's "After Hours"). They also introduce "Belong" and "Low", which would appear on 1991's *Out of Time*, arrangements already locked in. It seems ludicrous in retrospect, but when *Green* came out, more than a few REM purists were taken aback. Some fans went so far as to accuse their heroes of selling out, the presence of overtly commercial touches confirming their suspicions that the band had turned its back on artistic purity,

lured by their multimillion-dollar deal with Warners. But hearing the record anew reveals an abundance of riches in the details, the product of the same artistic restlessness and unwillingness to stand pat that had motivated this one-of-a-kind band every step of the way. Together, the studio and live discs serve as a thrilling reminder of what a great band REM were a quarter century ago – fearless in pursuit of their vision, masterful in realising it.



FEATURING...

Rattus Norvegicus
No More Heroes
Black And White
The Raven
The Gospel According To The Meninblack
La Folie
B-sides/rarities

THE STRANGLERS

The Old Testament (The UA Studio Recordings 1977-1982) (reissue, 1992)

EMI

Five-CD boxset from the punk years shows The Stranglers were the outsider's outsiders. *By Alastair McKay*

8/10

FROM THE START, The Stranglers never quite fitted in.

They were punk enough to get banned from venues around Britain during the Sex Pistols scare, and their early records – notably “Something Better Change” and “No More Heroes” – were propelled by the energy and anger of the period. They scowled. They wore leather. They were, on occasion, violent.

But listen, now, to their first two albums, *Rattus Norvegicus* and *No More Heroes*, and you hear a fierce pub rock group, playing fast and loose with their influences. The Doors are there, obviously. The presence of Dave Greenfield on organ, and, later, Moogs, offer a link to prog rock. The vocal hiccups on “Straighten Out” are an echo of Buddy Holly. “Nice ‘N’ Sleazy” is almost reggae, sung like a robot prophesy. “Peasant In The Big Shitty” is – though this may not be immediately apparent –

influenced by Captain Beefheart, who also provided the riff for “Down In The Sewer”. And Don Van Vliet’s impersonation of Howlin’ Wolf was the inspiration for the vocal style of Hugh Cornwell and Jean-Jacques Burnel, even if their interpretation of the bluesman’s growl was inflected with more than a dash of White Van Man. So there was sound and fury, and it felt like punk rock. But it would probably have happened even if the Sex Pistols hadn’t.

In truth, punk as it is now understood was a shapeless, ill-defined thing. It was an energy. The Stranglers were fortunate enough to have an album-and-a-half worth of songs ready to go when the nascent movement hit the mainstream, and though they radiated a sense of danger and malevolence, their songs were rarely political. True, there was “I Feel Like A Wog”, an unthinkable sentiment now, though its intention was, the group argued, to



identify with the downtrodden. Their apparent sexism was also out-of-tune with the ideological assumptions of the day, though that may have been the point. Their first hit, "Peaches", was a voyeuristic prowling along a beach, with lyrics which included a rather confusing reference to a clitoris. It was educational in a way. Clitorises weren't as prevalent in popular culture in 1977 as they are now. But if it was discomfiting, it was also honest about male (hetero)sexuality.

This set collects the six albums made for United Artists, adding a disc of oddities, including radio edits of singles, and (largely unnecessary 12" remixes). The rarities aren't all that edifying, though the thin humour of an early novelty number, "Tits" (live at the Hope And Anchor) does illuminate a persistent feeling that the real roots of The Stranglers were in musical theatre, possibly burlesque (the song itself is rotten). And the tunes originally released as Celia & The Mutations ("Mony Mony" and "Mean To Me") – show how they were capable of turning their hand to pop, albeit with marginal commercial success.

Their biggest hit, "Golden Brown", came towards the end of their tenure at UA, just as the label was giving up on them, and on punk. True, the record company had endured 1981's *The Gospel According To The Meninblack*, a heroin-induced space opera laden with squeaky voices and Clangers-style sound effects. (Or, if you are on the right medication, a visionary precursor of techno).

But if it did nothing else, that lengthy experiment

Q&A

Jean-Jacques Burnel, bass and vocals



Musically, The Stranglers were diverse. You weren't quite punk.

Yeah, we had a blank canvas. We charged up lots of blind alleys. It was fantastic not to be stereotyped like our peers. The pubs were the mainstay of our apprenticeship. They were places you could learn to front an audience. A lot of the punk bands were coming to see us, so there was a connection. We were bumping into the Sex Pistols, and Joe Strummer, when he was still in The 101ers, let us play at the Elgin pub. And I lived with Wilko [Johnson] in 1977.

You fit alongside Dr Feelgood, really, rather than punk.

Yeah. There was a lot of crossover, but I really didn't like the new orthodoxy, which started as early as '76. There was suddenly a division between us and the other bands, probably instigated through a few personal malentendu. But then it got polarised. We were successful in '77, and with success comes antagonism, and hypocrisy. We admitted to smoking dope, others didn't, so they accused us of being old hippies. There wasn't so much age difference. I was the same age as Joe [Strummer]. Also the new orthodoxy said you shouldn't have keyboards. I just thought: what a load of cock!

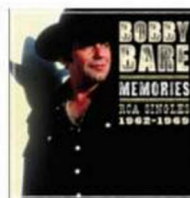
One thing that does fit with punk is your aggression. Was that there before '77?

Yes, it was. In 1976 we played 190 gigs. We were playing all over the country, and the other bands were playing in London and getting on the cover of NME. We were getting the full brunt of people's anxiety, their anger. So we had dockers trying to beat us up in Grimsby, rugby players having a go in North Wales. We got used to violence. We were used to holding our own. In fact, it was disappointing when we didn't have a punch-up after a gig. It got pretty perverse. I remember almost sacking a road crew guy for cleaning my bass, and mopping off all the blood.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY

with Class A drugs produced the lovely "Golden Brown", the highlight of 1981's *La Folie*, and perhaps the prettiest hymn to stupefaction not written by Lou Reed. Musically, it showed how far The Stranglers had travelled. The riff is played on a harpsichord, and lopes along in bleary waltz-time. The anger and venom of punk is entirely absent. Cornwell sings prettily.

But perhaps there's a note of exhaustion in his delivery, too. For, although the title track of *La Folie* has a kind of early 1980s majesty, and a bit of Euro-weirdness, courtesy of Burnel's Serge Gainsbourg-style vocal, the energy is gone. True, the single "Strange Little Girl" (a rejected song, revived in the hope of repeating the success of "Golden Brown") had a delicate melody, but 1980s pop was about frivolity and light, not ennui. The Stranglers, whose dark energy had soundtracked the Winter of Discontent, were outsiders again.



BOBBY BARE
Memories: RCA
Singles 1962-1969
SPV/YELLOW

Double-disc set of primetime country from a master of the silvery baritone

7/10

In one of the more bizarre career swerves in Nashville history, Bobby Bare teamed up with Petter Øien to enter the Norwegian heat of last year's Eurovision Song Contest. They came third. Bare might have been better slicking fresh paint onto one of the numbers from his first stint with RCA in the '60s. It was there that his silvery baritone first provided the soundtrack to break-up songs and hard-luck tales, drafted in by label bigwig Chet Atkins and repaying the faith almost immediately with 1963 Grammy-winner, "Detroit City". The first disc of this round-up is the keeper, with Bare's forlorn tones bringing real emotive heft to standards like "The Streets Of Baltimore", "The Long Black Veil" and "Talk Me Some Sense". The second CD fares less well, though. More experimental efforts, such as Tom T Hall's mini-soap opera "Margie's At The Lincoln Park Inn", tend to miss the mark, as do sentimental weepies "They Covered Up The Old Swimming Hole" and "The Town That Broke My Heart". But more often even the thinnest base material ("Rainy Day In Richmond", "My Baby") can't prevent Bare from fashioning a lump and placing it squarely in the throat.

EXTRAS: None.
ROB HUGHES



THE PAUL BUTTERFIELD BLUES BAND
The Original Lost Elektra Sessions
RHINO

Butter & co's incendiary blues reinvention, at first blush

8/10

This first attempt to capture on wax the electrifying, down-and-dirty club sound of the young Paul Butterfield Blues Band was deemed a failure in 1964, replaced with an entire new slate of songs for their stunning eponymous debut LP. But as a snapshot of blues purism reborn at the dawn of the rock era, it's hard to find a shred of fault here. Brought up on Chicago's mean streets and in its vaunted blues sanctuaries, the players – singer/harpist Paul Butterfield, guitarists Elvin Bishop and Mike Bloomfield, bassist Jerome Arnold, drummer Sam Lay – are in their fiery prime, infusing the songbooks of Willie Dixon, Sonny Boy Williamson, Little Walter, Muddy Waters et al, with jolts of groove and instrumentalism adroit at tension and release. Bloomfield's psychotic leads stretch the songs to sonic extremes, while Butterfield's harp provides steely texture everywhere. While nothing is terribly original here (see 1966's estimable *East-West*), that wasn't the point. Besides, Butterfield's written-to-orders – "Nut Popper", with rabid Bloomfield guitar, and the Wolf-ian "Lovin' Cup" – are surprisingly effective. In short, Bob Dylan had his reasons for wanting to face down his Newport '65 audience with these fellows.

EXTRAS: None.
LUKE TORN

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



THE DEVIANTS

Ptooff!

ANGEL AIR

7/10

Hairy misfits' defiant debut preceded punk by a decade

There's a delicious irony to the fact that Britain's first punk album was released at the height of '67's 'Summer Of Love' by a bunch of long-haired, dope-smoking hippies. The Deviants came from the same psychedelic counterculture of Ladbroke Grove pads and squats that produced Hawkwind, Quintessence and the Pink Fairies. Yet aside from their choice of drugs, everything about singer Mick Farren and his misfits was pure punk: the garage riffs (mainly borrowed from Bo Diddley via The Pretty Things), the 'fuck you' attitude, the DIY aesthetic of both recording and packaging (which folded out into a poster), the anti-social sneer and song titles such as "Garbage" and "Nothing Man". As Farren succinctly puts it today, "We grew our hair but we kept our leather jackets."

If they'd had the luxury of a proper budget, The Deviants might've made the British *We're Only In It For The Money*, for there are touches of cynical, Zappa-esque wit on "Deviation Street". The mayhem of the Fugs, Stooges and MC5 made them obvious fellow travellers, too. But British rock at the time had produced nothing quite like The Deviants.

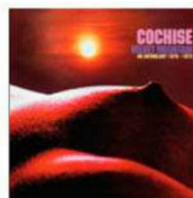
There are concessions to '60s psychedelia on the Barrett/Ayers-style whimsy of "Child Of The Sky" and in guitarist Sid Bishop's clumsy Hendrix impersonations. But for the rest, Farren's antagonistic bellowing breathes a fiery contempt for the notion that singing "All You Need Is Love" will usher in the Aquarian Age.

The Deviants made two more albums before the decade was out. *Disposable* ('68) boasted such admirable moments of insurrection as "Let's Loot The Supermarket". But by *The Deviants 3* ('69) they were beginning to sound like just another heavy rock band. "We learned a few things and started trying to write songs and that fucked us up," Farren admits. In true punk spirit, The Deviants really had one rowdy, messy shot. They splurged it up the wall on *Ptooff!* and we'd have to wait another decade to hear anything as defiantly ugly, truculent and resentful in British rock music again. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

I'M YOUR FAN

"The Deviants' attitude paved the way for a tradition of unruly street rock that continues to annoy to this day."

JULIAN COPE



COCHISE

Velvet Mountain: An Anthology 1970-72

ESOTERIC

Taking coals to Newcastle

7/10

Cochise's rhythm section of Rick Wills and Willie

Wilson had been in Cambridge group Jokers Wild, from whence Pink Floyd poached Dave Gilmour, while guitarist Mick Grabham had enjoyed fleeting chart success with one-hit wonders Plastic Penny. Cochise's sound was largely informed by the presence of steel guitarist BJ Cole, making his break from the British country-music circuit. They found a home on UA/Liberty where A&R man Andrew Lauder was building a credible British underground roster of groups that set about emulating American West Coast rock and where Cochise would join Gypsy, High Tide, Brinsley Schwarz and Man. *Velvet Mountain* rounds up Cochise's three albums, Pretty Things guitarist Dick Taylor producing their rough and ready self-titled debut. *Swallow Tales* was easily the best, with BJ Cole's songs (the Love-like "Lost Hearts" and atmospheric "Axiom Of Maria") standing out among Cochise's otherwise meandering rock. The lack of a cohesive songwriter eventually stemmed their progress, which resulted in covers of familiar Buddy Holly and Paul Simon songs and one of their crowd-pleasing set-pieces, Neil Young's "Dance, Dance, Dance".

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON



DONOVAN

Breezes Of Patchouli

EMI

Deeply dippy: 4CDs of the hippy minstrel's golden years

8/10

His cool may have been forever blown after Bob

Dylan slapped his winsome talents down in *Dont Look Back*, but Donovan is not a man troubled by self-doubt. The exiled Scot greeted his admission to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2012 with typical humility. "My work will be re-evaluated by a whole new generation and they'll find in it comfort that they can use," he noted. "My work is positive and I am so glad that they will be exposed to it." *Breezes Of Patchouli* brings together the five albums Donovan recorded from 1966-69, along with contemporary flotsam (highlights: a harpsichord-heavy run through "Epistle To Dippy" and a lesser-spotted Italian-language reading of "Jennifer Juniper"). The hits remain unimpeachable ("Hurdy Gurdy Man", "Wear Your Love Like Heaven" et al), and for all of the jazz pastiche and queasy reggae, Donovan had hidden depths – swing your pants with awe as the apocalyptic electronica of "Tangier" gives way to the impeccably groovy "A Sunny Day", featuring flautist du jour Harold McNair. The man who wrote "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" versus the man who wrote "I Love My Shirt": it's not necessarily as one-sided a contest as it looks.

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH



NICK DRAKE

Bryter Layter
(reissue, 1970)

ISLAND

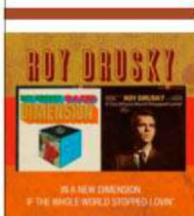
Boxed vinyl edition of magnificent, surprisingly swinging second album

8/10

Aimed at collectors with deep pockets rather than neophytes, the records offered up by Nick Drake's posthumous career weirdly mimic those released in his lifetime – being the preserve of a very select few. This boxed vinyl edition underlines the point. Rather than duplicating the original artwork, it prints a photo of a sealed, remaindered copy of the original 1970 album, marked with a record shop sticker: "V Good". That's not even the half of it: *Bryter Layter* not only contains Drake's most fully realised songs, (the driving, witty "At The Chime Of A City Clock", say) but also some of his most vibrant arrangements. As well as Robert Kirby's strings, here folk rockers from Joe Boyd's Witchseason roster (Richard Thompson, Dave Mattacks and Dave Pegg; drummer Mike Kowalski from the little-known Redbone), all create a warm, empathetic environment for this recalcitrant performer. Late in the LP, the bossa/folk/soul of "Poor Boy", with backing vocals by Doris Troy and PP Arnold, and the gently devastating "Northern Sky", are two of the most striking and engaging songs in his catalogue.

EXTRAS: Shop and live poster, and digital 7/10 options, including "dubbed from disc" version – for that authentic, "listening to a record while on your iPod" experience. V Good.

JOHN ROBINSON



ROY DRUSKY

In A New Dimension/If The Whole World Stopped Lovin'

HUX

Twofer from the "country Perry Como"

8/10

Though he spent 45 years on the roster of the Grand Ole Opry and was a pioneer of Owen Bradley's lightly orchestrated "Nashville Sound", Roy Drusky has slipped into obscurity. When he's remembered, it's for "Yes, Mr Peters", an adulterous duet with Priscilla Mitchell, though he was on the Opry bill when a Watergate-ravaged President Nixon dropped by in 1974 to play with Roy Acuff's yo-yo (Drusky sang "Satisfied Mind"). A modest performer, he started as a DJ and TV host in Georgia, moving to Nashville when he scored a couple of hits for Faron Young. He turned down "I Fall To Pieces", suggesting it would be better sung by a girl (that girl was Patsy Cline). These two albums date from 1966, a year after "Yes, Mr Peters" topped the charts. He tackles country standards on the second set. "Mr Jones, I Want To Marry Your Wife" is a highlight, echoing the grammar of "Mr Peters"; and he delivers the heartbreak of Roger Miller's "A World I Can't Live In" beautifully. *New Dimension* has some misses – let's forget his attempt at Cilla Black's "You're My World" – but everything gels on the smoothly despairing "Rainbows And Roses".

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



ELECTRONIC

Electronic (reissue, 1991)

EMI

Remaster of Marr/Sumner masterpiece with bonus disc of extras

9/10

Little good has ever come of the supergroup. Collaborations between already well-known musicians tend to rely too heavily on the assumption that if all these stellar talents are in the room, the songs will take care of themselves. *Electronic*, a collaboration between Johnny Marr, then a few years out of The Smiths, and Bernard Sumner, taking a sabbatical from New Order, were a rule-proving exception. *Electronic*'s eponymous debut was immaculately timed – Manchester, whose local pop idiom had been largely defined by Marr and Sumner's previous works, was the centre of the musical universe. It represented a significant raising of the bar – to a height which few, sadly, proved able to reach. "Get The Message" and "Some Distant Memory" shimmered and shimmered like Marr's most sumptuous Smiths compositions; "Tighten Up" and "Getting Away With It" would have ambled onto any New Order album.

EXTRAS: The bonus disc included with this 6/10 edition is not a necessary component of a complete life, but it has its moments – especially "Disappointed" (*Electronic*'s third Pet Shop Boys collaboration, after "Getting Away With It" and "Patience Of A Saint") and the previously unreleased baleful soul of "Second To None".

ANDREW MUELLER



REVELATIONS

Gilmour + Cochise = Jokers Wild

➤ In 1962 Syd Barrett was churning out *Shadows* licks with Geoff Mott & The Mottoes. At the time, Barrett's goal was to paint, but Mottoes drummer Clive Welham and bassist Tony Sainty had ambitions in pop. In October '64, they formed Jokers Wild, recruiting guitarist David Gilmour, Barrett's friend from Cambridge Tech. Jokers Wild's forte was harmony pop, influenced by The Four Seasons, whose "Walk Like A Man" and "Big Girls Don't Cry" they aped excitedly on a self-funded, one-sided LP in '65. One of its 50 copies reached budding entrepreneur Jonathan King. He produced Jokers Wild's cover of "Hold On, I'm Coming" for Decca but once Sam & Dave's original hit, it was shelved. By mid-'66, future Cochise members Rick Wills and Willie Wilson had replaced Welham and Sainty, the re-jigged Jokers Wild finding work in Europe. It all crumbled after Gilmour got the call from Pink Floyd. He played the first of five gigs with Barrett in Jan '68; thereafter, Barrett's bandmates stopped picking him up. Gilmour was more loyal to Wills and Wilson, using them on his '78 solo album, Wilson also joining sessions for *The Madcap Laughs* and Barrett.

MICK HOUGHTON



FOUR TET

Rounds - Special Anniversary Edition

DOMINO

Re-release of folktronica wunderkind's game-changing LP

8/10

Rounds was Kieran

Hebden's third album as Four Tet, a meticulous and mesmerising experiment in electronica that joined the dots between folk, hip-hop, post rock and cosmic jazz. Hebden, Fridge alumnus and member of Badly Drawn Boy's backing band, seemed to have hit upon something revolutionary: computer music crafted with a human hand. Never mind Radiohead, even Springsteen liked it. In the 10 years since its release, *Rounds* has, perhaps, lost its edge, its more abrasive textures have smoothed with time and left it looking a little polite. Even so, there's no disputing its elegance and warmth. The glitch-strewn "Hands" opens with a sampled heartbeat set awry by out-of-time drum patterns and an insistent synth motif. Just as the twitchiness threatens to bring on a migraine, it unfolds into a laidback hip-hop groove. The happy-sad "My Angel Rocks Back And Forth" sets a looped piano melody against the sigh of an iron lung and a distant bass drum, while "As Serious As Your Life", with its Air-esque phrasing and robotic effects, remains, like *Rounds* as a whole, an irresistible collision of the abstract and melodic.

EXTRAS: Diverting if not entirely essential 6/10 bonus disc of the album tracks performed live in Copenhagen in 2003.

FIONA STURGES



KIM FOWLEY

Wildfire: The Complete Imperial Recordings 1968-69

CHERRY RED

36 discharges from the id, courtesy of rock's definitive madman

5/10

From the outer reaches of late-'60s LA psych madness comes this trilogy, authored by rock's foremost Zelig. Fowley is best known for "Alley Oop", a zany 1960 smash by the Hollywood Argyles; or as producer/svengali of '70s all-girl phenomenon The Runaways. Here, he pushes every envelope – social mores are flipped, subversive sex celebrated. *Born To Be Wild*, LP #1, is spirited but throwaway, save a sharp take on "Pictures Of Matchstick Men". *Good Clean Fun*, solo LP #3, features the Bonzos, Warren Zevon and Red Rhodes, but can't rise much above gimmicks. "Search For A Teenage Woman" tells you probably more about Fowley's proclivities than anyone needs to know; "Baby Rocked Her Dolly" provides the sick pleasure of Fowley's anticipating Gram Parsons' country-rock. Sandwiched in between is *Outrageous*, a created-and-cut-live artefact (musical director: Mars Bonfire) channeling Iggy-style lunacy (see "Animal Man", recorded well before The Stooges' breakthrough), Zappa/Mothers-inspired chaos, spoken word, proto-metal Steppenwolf/Butterfly/Fudge-style heaviness, headachy white noise, even pseudo-sunshine pop ("Bubble Gum", covered by Sonic Youth). In all, a few moments of inspiration interlarded with heaps of inane gibberish.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



PETER GREEN SPLINTER GROUP

The Best Of

MADFISH

Ex-Mac guitarist's '90s and noughties compiled
After leaving Fleetwood Mac – the band he founded

6/10

– in 1970, Peter Green wrestled with serious mental health issues, with the result that his career was largely dormant until the 1990s, when he re-emerged with the Splinter Group. This 2CD compilation collects the highlights of the nine albums they made between 1997 and their demise in 2004. There are – perhaps inevitably – precious few glimmers of the dazzling, quicksilver guitar talent Green possessed in the early Mac days. Instead, this is an overview of a highly competent but unspectacular blues band, leaning heavily on Nigel Watson's guitar and, in their early incarnation, featuring Cozy Powell on drums. The repertoire draws from soul standards and blues staples – Elmore James, Sonny Boy Williamson, tons of Robert Johnson – but does find room for Fleetwood Mac's "The Green Manalishi". Many of the recordings are live, culled from the band's eponymous 1997 debut album and 1999's *Soho Session*, with Green's gruff growl and fine blues harp to the fore on "Look On Yonder Wall" and "Steady Rollin' Man". Tracks from 2000's *Hot Foot Powder* feature guests Hubert Sumlin, Otis Rush and Buddy Guy, adding some welcome variety to a pleasant but largely unremarkable compilation.

EXTRAS: None.

GRAEME THOMSON



THE GROUNDHOGS The United Artists Years 1972-1976

EMI

The hunt saboteurs' Hawkwind hit the skids
Asked to list the lowest points in his career,

7/10

chief Groundhog Tony (TS) McPhee followed up "breaking my wrist while on tour in the USA" with "Hogwash not getting into the charts". Those two personal tragedies mark the start of this unhappy 3CD collection, with management issues, lineup changes and an evidently ugly divorce combining to torpedo the career of one of punk rock's most unlikely heralds (Captain Sensible "bought a Gibson SG because I played one," McPhee would claim). Recovering from that broken wrist prompted the experiments with primitive synthesizers that made 1972's *Hogwash* weirder and nearly as wonderful as any of the Groundhogs hit LPs, but the millennial hard rock of "You Had A Lesson" and space oddity "Earth Shanty" proved a bit uptown for the Status Quo crowd. Cue decline – The Groundhogs left United Artists for a while, split up and then reformed grudgingly for *Crosscut Saw* and *Black Diamond*, the personal clattering untidily into the political while McPhee's voice morphed into some unholy hybrid of Lemmy and Fozzie Bear. A splint can help heal a fracture, but nothing can mend a broken spirit.

EXTRAS: Workmanlike 1972 and 1974 live shows, heavy on *Split*-era material.

JIM WIRTH



HALF JAPANESE 1/2 Gentlemen/Not Beasts

(reissue, 1980)

FIRE

Maryland art brutes' lo-fi assortment box
Not even a bit Japanese, musically incontinent

7/10

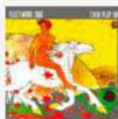
brothers Jad and David Fair mounted their own samurai assault on rock'n'roll with their 1980 debut. Expanded from six sides of vinyl to eight – or three CDs – *1/2 Gentlemen/Not Beasts* is a punk rock assault course; a reductio ad absurdum reading of The Stooges' rock primitivism and the Modern Lovers' suburbanite naïveté with a challenge at the end of every side – how much more can you take? The Residents and Swell Maps made ugly, bulldog-chewing-on-Dansette deconstructions of pop before Half Japanese, but never anything so monstrously sustained. This avalanche of primal scree includes the brothers' panzer attack on Bob Dylan's "Tangled Up In Blue", geeky-ultra thrash like "No More Beatle Mania" and "Shy Around Girls" and the Throbbing Gristle industrial sludge of "RRRRRRRR" or "T/T/T/T/T/T". Faster and marginally sillier than Minor Threat, most of it is barely music; as Jad Fair would later say: "The only chord I know is the one that connects the guitar to the amp." Half unlistenable/not bad.

EXTRAS: Considerably more of the same, including home surgery readings of The Velvet Underground's "Foggy Notion" and the New York Dolls' "Babylon".

JIM WIRTH

HOW TO BUY... PETER GREEN

Highlights of the Mac's mercurial genius



FLEETWOOD MAC Then Play On

BLUE HORIZON, 1969

Their 1968 debut may have brought Green's band instant success, but it's Fleetwood Mac's third album that finds him at the peak of his powers. New guitarist Danny Kirwan frees up the sound, and the result is a masterclass in dynamics. Features "Oh Well".

9/10



PETER GREEN The End Of The Game

REPRISE, 1970

Recorded just after leaving Mac, Green's solo debut is like nothing he did before or since. Much beloved by Royal Trux, these six jazz-flecked acid rock instrumentals, culled from an epic studio jam, at times sound like aural representations of Green's precarious mental state.

8/10



PETER GREEN SPLINTER GROUP Hot Foot Powder

CROWN/ARTISAN, 2000

Like 1997's *Songbook*, an album of Robert Johnson covers. Green's passion is obvious, but the USP here is the guesting blues legends, including Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin, Otis Rush, David "Honeyboy" Edwards and Dr John.

7/10

GRAEME THOMSON



TOM JANS & MIMI FARINA Take Heart/ Tom Jans

REAL GONE MUSIC

Twofer featuring rarely glimpsed, early '70s folk/pop outings

7/10

As a pointer toward where pop was headed in 1971, you'd have to go some to outdistance *Take Heart*, the long-out-of-print, never-before-on-CD collaboration between Fariña, Joan Baez's sister and Richard Fariña co-conspirator, and LA singer-songwriter Jans. Traces of the Village folk-rock boom appear (cf. "Kings And Queens", a solid riff on Charlie Poole's trad "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down"), but, with Jackson Browne's future band on board, the Laurel Canyon Sound beckons. Fariña's sorrowful songwriting and soaring vocals, especially on the merciful "Letter To Jesus" and an elegy for Janis Joplin, "In The Quiet Morning", and some exquisite harmonising bode well, but so-so material overall and a certain tentativeness – despite perhaps foreshadowing the Richard/Linda Thompson sound – prevail. Jans, a frustrating talent admired by Tom Waits, was hot country/pop crossover property circa mid-'70s – his oft-covered "Loving Arms" is here as part of his solo debut. When delving into dark character sketches and soul-searching autobiography ("Green River", the boxer's tale "Hart's Island"), Jans could be a riveting writer, but a propensity for caddishness and cloying arrangements blunt his more erudite artistic gifts.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



DENNIS JOHNSON November

PENULTIMATE PRESS

The quiet man of American minimalism, pulled into view

9/10

It's the kind of story you don't expect to stumble across in our saturated, hyper-mediated age – a quiet, limpid piano piece, composed in 1959 and mostly lost to time since, a huge influence on minimalist composer LaMonte Young's marathon composition *The Well-Tuned Piano*, finally restored to its rightful place in the history of modern music thanks to the detective work and tireless researching of a noted music critic. Such is the case with *November*, cheated from obscurity by said writer Kyle Gann, who revived the piece largely via a rough two-hour cassette recording of a performance by Johnson. At its full length it should stretch out to four/five hours, and that's what pianist R Andrew Lee does here, realising *November*'s distant melancholy with an expert touch, his playing the gentle, yet hard-headed bedrock for the oscillation between composition and improvisation the piece requires. While it shares some surface similarities with other 20th-Century piano pieces, like, say, those by Morton Feldman, it has little of the unresolved tension of his works. Instead, *November* plays out quietly, yet assuredly, gently filling the space it inhabits, musing away at minimalism's history. Which has now, almost as quietly, been re-written.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS

Kaya (Deluxe Edition)

ISLAND

Remastered 35th-anniversary of a laidback classic. *By Neil Spencer*



8/10

"ME REALLY A country boy at heart," Bob Marley told me on the release of *Kaya*, a declaration that took me by surprise. Bob had a fearsome reputation as a Trenchtown dread, a former rude boy turned Rasta, well able to take care of himself in the urban

jungle of Kingston. This was no PR spin; Bob had known and survived the hazards of ghetto life. Yet here he was extolling a very different existence in idyllic terms. "Me grow up a farmer, and at the end of the day it nice to sit in the hills, listen to the rain fall on the roof and everyt'ing sweet mon."

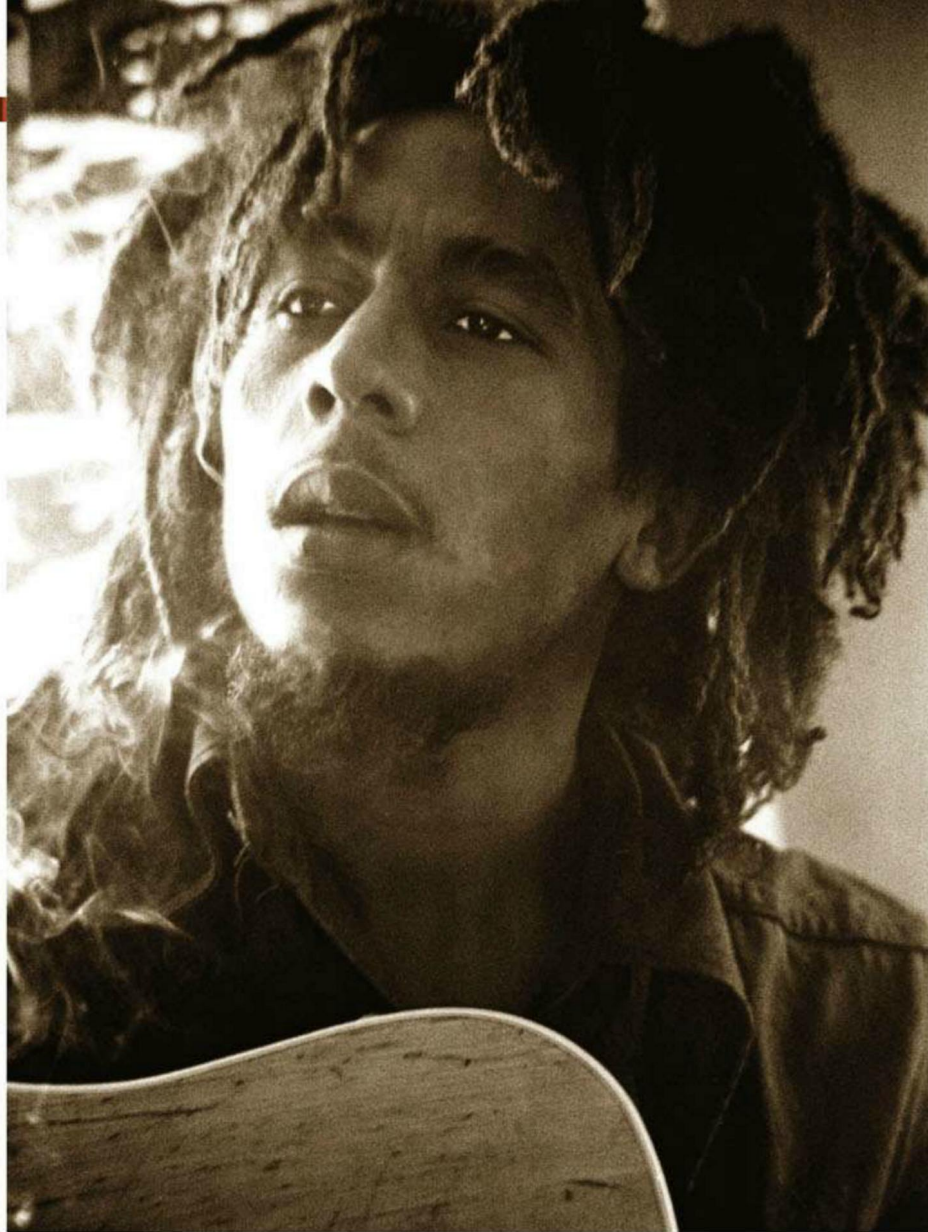
This was, in part, Bob acknowledging a part of his biography not widely known; his early years struggling not among west Kingston's partisan yards but in the rural hills of St Ann's, where he was born (and later laid to rest). Bob the Farmer – this was news!

The country boy narrative also fit *Kaya*, a laidback affair that was consciously directed, like its predecessor *Exodus*, at a wide audience. Yet where *Exodus* had tempered its mellifluous love calls – "Three Little Birds", "Waiting In Vain" – with righteous militancy, *Kaya* was all dreamy and reflective.

This too was intentional. After his near assassination in '76, Marley wanted to cool down the fevered climate surrounding his persona and politics. Better to kick back and ponder than provoke. It was time for the aptly named "Easy Skanking" ("Excuse me while I light this spliff") or "Kaya" (ganja), for an escape into the personal.

Often considered the slightest album of Marley's Island canon, *Kaya* boasts few iconic tracks – "Is This Love" became a hit, "Satisfy My Soul" a lesser one – yet it remains complete unto itself in mood and charm. Largely drawn from the same sessions as *Exodus*, *Kaya* was mixed in Miami to give it a separate identity, its pensive, shimmering atmosphere arriving partly from a clutch of older Wailers songs from the group's sojourn with Lee Perry.

"Kaya" itself is a simple, catchy call for herb once rain has closed down activity, though its middle eight surges unexpectedly to let Bob brag "*feel so good in my neighbourhood*". More cryptic is "Sun Is Shining", whose apparent reverie is punctuated by anguish. If "*the weather is sweet*", as the languid rhythm affirms, why the need for Marley to come "*to the rescue*" and declare "*where I stand*"? Though this remake loses the appealing melodic part of the original, it's still a highlight, and has gone on to have the oddest afterlife of any Marley song, with



multiple techno remixes for the Ibiza generation.

The jorgalogue of "Satisfy My Soul", another update, is less arresting than the scratchy original, though like "Misty Morning" it benefits from some sweet, Stax-style horns. The latter is another weather song and another enigma. While someone is "*out there somewhere having fun*" (a woman presumably), Marley struggles with the mental churn of philosophy, the riddle "*give your more to receive your less*" perhaps referring to the reward for his work being a murder attempt.

Dualities run through the rest of the record. "Crisis" contrasts the suffering of the many with the indulgence of their oppressors, just as the nyabingi chant of "Time Will Tell" asserts "*you think you're in*

heaven but you're living in hell". "Running Away" is less a song than an inward interrogation about Marley's motives for escape, concluding "*you can't run away from yourself*".

That leaves the twin love croons, "Is This Love" and "She's Gone", amiable enough but hardly Marley at full stretch. The JA single "Smile Jamaica" wasn't on the original *Kaya*, and its sprightly rhythm doesn't quite belong, but it remains an example of the magic that often flowed when Marley and Lee Perry worked together. The bonus CD of a Dutch concert from 1978 doesn't add much to Marley's live canon, but it makes up in atmosphere and performance what it lacks in sound quality, which is, at times, a great deal.

Four lesser-sung late Bob Marley tracks

SMILE JAMAICA 1976

Created for the concert of the same name, this collaboration with 'Scratch' Perry has aged well, the title becoming a ubiquitous phrase. Perry's silky beat (two speeds for 'A' and 'B' sides) lopes along, while Marley's lyrics include a sly nod to the tarnished sentiments of "Island In The Sun".

ZIMBABWE SURVIVAL 1979

Accusations that Marley had 'gone soft' on *Kaya* were upended by this homage to the freedom fighters battling Ian Smith's illegal regime. The Wailers even played Zimbabwe's independence

ceremony in 1980. Marley didn't live to see his hopes for the nation dashed by Mugabe's dictatorship, but his 'Africa Unite' vision lives on.

COMING IN FROM THE COLD UPRISING 1980

Marley clearly suspected his time wasn't long when he wrote this warm, defiant meditation on life's fleeting nature. "*When one door is closed, don't you know another is open?*" he posited, reminding us that "*the biggest man you ever did see was just a baby?*" Bob loved a proverb!

RASTAMAN LIVE UP 1978

Originally a JA-only single, this flew the red, green and gold flag for the "*congoman... bongoman... binghi man*" at home. It later found release on *Confrontation*, though the original single is a punchier mix, with a terrific, noisy dub.

PAUL McCartney AND WINGS

Wings Over America

HEAR MUSIC/CONCORD

Expanded live epic shows the two sides of Wings, says *Garry Mulholland*



7/10

THE ORIGINAL *Wings Over America* was a 28-track, triple-vinyl document of Wings' first US tour. Dressed in a swish but anonymous Hipgnosis sleeve depicting a blinding light creeping out of the opening cabin door of a jet airliner, it was released just

before Christmas in 1976, reached a creditable No 8 in the UK, and became the fifth successive Wings album to top the Billboard charts. As it hit the shops in Britain, the Sex Pistols were drunkenly swearing their way to infamy on the *Today* show, and *Wings Over America* was as symbolic of everything punk was against as a Keith Emerson Moog solo.

Now that even vintage punk reissues come dressed up as coffee-table boxsets, the latest McCartney-curated version of his first official live album can't possibly stop at digitally remastered triple-vinyl and double-CD. The Deluxe Edition boxset includes a bonus CD of eight of the same tracks recorded at San Francisco's Cow Palace, a DVD containing doc and photo montage, and a book containing more art, liner notes and memorabilia. But the remastering – which unsurprisingly favours Macca's low end; you won't hear too many live albums with richer, better bass than this one – punches home the most important point. Wings were an unbelievably good group of players, capable of perfectly reproducing the studio complexities of songs like "Jet" and "Live



And Let Die", bringing a slick, bright and at times savage sound to the concert stage and layering it expertly with brass and often gorgeous harmonies.

On the downside, the setlist includes just five Beatles songs. And their presence both illuminates the weaknesses of the album, and tells a simple truth about Wings: the Beatles tunes and Wings singles here are just plain brilliant; the Wings album tracks, however, stink up the place. This is a diamonds-to-shite pattern set early, when a raucous "Jet", followed by a thrillingly soulful version of coruscating

Lennon pastiche "Let Me Roll It", are undercut by the turgid pub rock of Denny Laine's "Spirits Of Ancient Egypt" and Jimmy McCulloch's "Medicine Show".

It takes until the vinyl Side Three for the LP to fully recover momentum with a

lovely six-track acoustic interlude, featuring campfire intimate versions of "I've Just Seen A Face", "Blackbird" and "Yesterday", and a surprising, Laine-sung take on "Richard Cory", Paul Simon's 1965 socialist ballad based on Edward Arlington Robinson's 19th-Century poem, which must have gone down a storm with the middle-American couples who only turned up to see a Beatle sing "Lady Madonna" and "The Long And Winding Road".

Wings Over America is, like any triple live album, too bloody long. But it's also a snapshot of a Paul McCartney who, despite some of the Wings album-track dross, felt compelled to make surreal symphonic pop that continued the pop ideals of *Sgt Pepper* and "The White Album", at least until the following year's "Mull Of Kintyre" showed him just how profitable being Cliff Richard with Beatles gravitas could be in the accursed 1980s.

EXTRAS: Deluxe boxset of bonus eight-track live CD, 7/10 DVD including *Wings Over The World* tour doc and photo montage, and commemorative book including Linda McCartney photos, Humphrey Ocean drawings, lyrics and memorabilia.



THE BEST OF MACCA LIVE

More documents from McCartney's time on the road



Tripping The Live Fantastic: Highlights!

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1990
Documenting Macca's

first world tour since the final Wings jaunt of 1979, this simultaneously-released shorter version of the slick *Tripping...* seems to mark the moment he came to terms with his Beatles legacy: Fab tracks, from "I Saw Her Standing There" to "Let It Be", dominate.

6/10



Unplugged (The Official Bootleg)

PARLOPHONE, 1991
MTV's flagship acoustic

show came of age when it bagged McCartney for its April 3, 1991 broadcast as he became the first artist to release an *Unplugged* performance as an album. Intimate, spontaneous and exuding a warmth and charm absent from anything he'd recorded since The Beatles.

9/10



Paul Is Live

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 1993
This underrated stopgap was mainly notable at the time

for its *Abbey Road*-satirising sleeve. But these tough, feral performances from the US and Australian legs of the 1993 New World Tour now sound like a perfect Beatles-nostalgic prelude to McCartney's upcoming work on the Anthology reunion.

7/10



Back In The World Live

PARLOPHONE/EMI, 2003
This international

release of recordings from the US leg of the Driving Rain tour caused controversy when McCartney reversed the credits on The Beatles' songs to 'Paul McCartney/John Lennon'. The hard-rocking post-'80s Macca shines here, particularly on a raw version of "Let Me Roll It".

7/10



BOBBY KALPHAT AND THE SUNSHOT ALL STARS

Zion Hill (reissue, 1977)
PRESSURE SOUNDS

7/10 Revelation time for lost 'Dub monster'

In the world of record nerding, monetary value rarely corresponds with artistic merit, so the fact that original pressings of the 1977, white-label-only album formerly known as *Zion Hill Dub* have sold for over £1,000 should set alarm bells ringing. However, as this typically tasteful Pressure Sounds revamp reveals, that scary price tag conceals an elegant mix of sinuous Phil Pratt rhythms and the melodica work of sometime keyboard king and prison officer Bobby Kalphat. Jamaican producers were often primarily money men, but Pratt was more hands-on, quietly establishing himself as a Lee Perry-style auteur before quitting music in the early 1980s to run a Caribbean takeaway in North London. *Zion Hill*'s idiosyncratic tone is set by multiple versions of the title track – the Heptones' "Party Time" gone back to its roots – and "Take Five" – rewrite "Counter Punch", a suitably steamy-sounding product of Perry's Black Ark Studios. More about warmth and playfulness than two-sevens-clash militancy, it might not technically be a dub album, but *Zion Hill* is comfortably up to Scratch.

EXTRAS: Six bonus Pratt/Kalphat instrumental moods. Top finds: the pleasantly sparse "Garla Zar" and the chirpy dub cut of Pat Kelly's "I Don't Want To Go".

JIM WIRTH



KINGS OF LEON The Collection Box

RCA/LEGACY RECORDINGS

Rockers' first decade enshrined

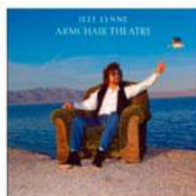
It may seem premature to box up KOL's output thus far, but it's indisputable that the now-13-year-old

8/10

band has amassed a beefy and consistently adventurous body of work between their perfectly titled 2003 debut *Youth And Young Manhood* and 2010's *Come Around Sundown*. More practically, perhaps Sony figured KOL's fanbase could use a reminder of their accomplishments following a three-year absence from the scene prior to the expected release of their sixth album later this year. The boxset brings together the five LPs with a minimum of window dressing, though it does contain a handful of extras, most substantially 2009 concert film *Live At The O2*, which captures the Followills' appearance in the front of the constituency that had embraced them long before their countrymen. Song-wise, *Only By The Night* is tagged with "Frontier City", while the underrated *Come Around Sundown* adds the guitar freak-out "Celebration", an alternate mix of "Radioactive" and The Presets' remix of "Closer", which italicises the track's existential unease. While the extras hardly justify shelling out, this box gathers all the necessary evidence to cement KOL's status as one of the previous decade's most important and productive rock groups – a still-young band whose best days hopefully still lie ahead.

EXTRAS: Live DVD, bonus tracks.

6/10 BUD SCOPPA



JEFF LYNNE Armchair Theatre (reissue, 1990) ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA

Zoom/Live (reissue, 2001)
FRONTIERS

8/10



6/10

Racer's middle years, but while he was finally legally able to work as ELO on 2001's charming-enough *Zoom* and *Live* – taken from a US TV broadcast – neither threaten to match Lynne's past Bach-meets-McCartney glories. His neglected solo debut – *Armchair Theatre* – is another matter. Stoically digesting the deaths of Shannon and fellow Traveling Wilbury Orbison as well as that of his mother, he conjures up a sitar-spangled funeral dirge in "Now You're Gone", but the overriding sense is one of gratitude. Tears of joy twinkle from behind Lynne's aviator shades on "Lift Me Up", while, with a little help from his friend, Ringo Starr, "Blown Away" spirals upwards in Judee Sill-ish rapture. Out of the blue, a discovery.

EXTRAS: Unreleased tracks – *Zoom*'s "One Day" tops anything on the LP proper.

JIM WIRTH

HERE! MY! DEAR!

Four-figure rated LPs with more than rarity value



LEE PERRY with VIN GORDON

Musical Bones TROJAN, 1975
Recirculated on the Upsetter's *Dubstrumentals*, *Musical Bones*

was a white-label pre-release; like *Zion Hill* (see review), it's a set of steamy backing tracks showcasing a lone instrumentalist – in this case, trombonist Vin Gordon. £1,000 for an original.

8/10



BILLY NICHOLLS Would You Believe

IMMEDIATE, 1968

Conceived by Andrew Loog Oldham as a British riposte to *Pet Sounds*, this finds labelmates the Small Faces and future Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones backing

obscurity-bound writer Billy Nicholls. An original LP sold at auction for £8,000 at the end of March.

8/10



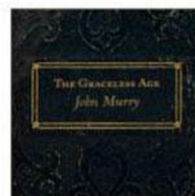
MARK FRY Dreaming With Alice

RCA ITALIANA, 1972

The title-track's appearance on a mobile phone ad has sucked some of the cool-cat cachet from Vashti Bunyan's debut, which leaves this £1,000-rated, Italian release as the ultimate English hippy artefact. "Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep" hitmakers Middle Of The Road may be his backing band.

7/10

JIM WIRTH



JOHN MURRY The Graceless Age (reissue, 2012) RUBYWORKS

Expanded reissue for the troubled Mississippian's instant classic

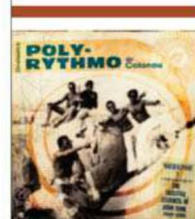
9/10

Available last year via the Bucketfull Of Brains label, this swift reissue comes due to Murry's signing to the rather bigger Rubyworks, which has repacked the album as a two-disc set with six previously unreleased tracks. If you missed it first time round, the original 10-song album is an unflinching, personal exorcism, set against a dense squall of keyboards, strings, percussion and guitars, as Murry lays bare the dark calamities of a life racked with pain, addiction, betrayal, guilt and self-destruction. And that's one of his better days.

EXTRAS: An alternate take on "California"

7/10 doesn't stray very far from the original. But the five other tracks on the bonus disc are all new songs. Only the slow, moody blues of "I Need You" features the full band found on *The Graceless Age*. The rest are aching acoustic demos – and even when stripped of the seething textures of the finished record, it's clear that the songs are cut from similarly cathartic cloth. "Weighted Down" and "Yr Lil Sister" in particular stand comparison with the searing honesty of the original set.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



ORCHESTRE POLY-RYTHMO DE COTONOU Vol 3: The Skeletal Essences Of Afro Funk 1969-80

ANALOG AFRICA

8/10

More rare-as-hen's-teeth discoveries from Franz

Ferdinand's favourite Afro-funkers.

Lauded by the likes of Franz Ferdinand and Damon Albarn, this funk outfit from Benin, West Africa, actually released more than 50 LPs and hundreds of 45s during their '69-'82 heyday, which suggests that there are many more compilations to follow. They exemplify the sonic ping-pong that has long existed between Africa and the African diaspora. Much of their sound is about adding a slightly funky twist to voodoo polyrhythms, with tracks like "Karateka" based around syncopated beats played on the huge, slender, barrel-style sato drums. Sometimes (on tracks like "Vi E Lo") they take that in an Afro-Cuban direction, other times they turn into Vegas crooners ("Min We Tun So") but, more often, they create Africanised James Brown homages, with tracks like "Akoue We Gni Gan" and "Houzou Houzou Wa" replicating the JB's chicken-scratch guitars and perky jerky rhythms. Even weirder is when they start to enter heavy rock territory – check out the guitar riff from "Al Gabani", or the last two minutes of "A O O Ida", where a funk groove mutates into a shrieking Led Zeppelin freak-out, with a Farfisa organ and a shaky saxophone playing the role of Jimmy Page.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS

The Specialist

Gospel



► IT'S BEEN SAID that the devil has all the best tunes, but the cratedigging of Chicago-based reissues label Numero Group proves otherwise. Their *Good God!* series shows that gospel music need not be blandly reverential or evangelistic, or a cul de sac only for those with faith, but instead a universal music that also celebrates the beauty of earthly life – you can even dance to it.

The third instalment of the *Apocryphal Hymns* series is out this month, and every one of its 20 tracks is a classic. The focus is generally on slower, even somewhat psychedelic, material than before, but there is a huge breadth of expression: Chester Lewis shapes his faith in a meandering blues guitar solo, while Jonah Thompson uses a low-key blaxploitation sass, and Francis Reneau is even coquettish, batting her eyelashes at the man upstairs as she sings “come take this bride”. Special mention must go to Supreme Jubilees’ “It’ll All Be Over”, so perfect in its quietly surefooted faith that it feels hewn from God’s love itself, and the harmonisation on “Have You Tried Jesus” by the Bernard Upshaw Singers is totally overwhelming, a keening swell of adoration whose slight

imperfection gives it a brilliant humanity.

It’s that lack of slickness that charges the work of Otis G Johnson, whose 1978 album *Everything – God Is Love* 78 also gets



a reissue this month on Numero. This is an outsider gem, with Johnson rambling like a bluesman over echoing Hammond organ tones and a drum machine so basic it’s effectively a click track; fans of the smoke-fugged dub of Hype Williams, Ariel Pink’s bleached vision, or Studio One’s most paranoid moments will find much to love. This is neither happy nor clappy, but sounds like the troubled faith of Job; an examination of God rather than a mere celebration.

Finally, on *King Bullard Version: Songs Of The BOS Label*, Numero bring together a handful of late-’60s Cleveland gospel outfits, from the tightened funk of The Trumplettes to more gorgeous harmonies from The Mighty Imperials. Their work, like all of the gospel material that

Numero have unearthed, shows that you don’t need to sign away your soul at the crossroads to be blessed with songwriting genius – these melodies come from somewhere deeper than art, and you don’t need to share their belief to be thrilled by it.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



RILO KILEY

rkives

LITTLE RECORD COMPANY

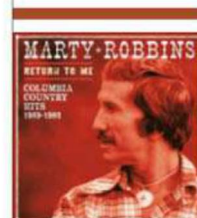
Flipsides, demos and unreleased material from Jenny Lewis and co

6/10

Rilo Kiley officially split last year but, for the past 15-odd years, they’ve been the day job of singer and actress Jenny Lewis. Lewis’ extra-curricular work – with Nebraskan scenesters such as Mike Mogis and Conor Oberst, or with her boyfriend Johnathan Rice in Jenny & Johnny – has always been more interesting than Rilo Kiley’s rather pedestrian alt.rock, and the best moments here reject indie rock’s metier in favour of folksier forms, allowing Lewis to show off that pleasing Appalachian yodel. Opener “Let Me Back In” is an acoustic number with the air of a Cole Porter tune; “All The Drugs” is a Springsteen-ish plodder with a lovely chorus; “Bury, Bury, Bury Another” sounds like a bluegrass lament for the pre-2008 boom years (“We were happy/Because we had jobs that we liked”); “American Wife” is a cracking waltz; while “A Town Called Luckey” is a lengthy narrative about a mid-life crisis. There are some creative dead-ends, though, like “Dejalo” (an ill-advised excursion into P!nk-style R&B, featuring a guest rap from Too \$hort), and the tracks sung by Blake Sennett are a little pointless, but there is enough here to warrant a reappraisal.

EXTRAS: Seven previously unreleased 6/10 tracks.

JOHN LEWIS



MARTY ROBBINS

Return To Me: Columbia Country Hits 1959-1982

YELLOW/SPV

Definitive round-up of the trail balladeer’s glory years

7/10

Marty Robbins’ succession to the throne of childhood hero Gene Autry arrived in 1959, when “El Paso” topped the US charts and became the first country song to win a Grammy. Steeped in the *High Noon* mythology of the Old West, such gunfighter balladry served as the dominant motif of Robbins’ subsequent career. This winning compilation, spanning a 23-year period which yielded scores of hits, is frontloaded with outlaw tales, chief among them “Jimmy Martinez” and “Big Iron” (later covered by Johnny Cash). His style was as simple as it was effective: rich baritone voice, Tex-Mex acoustic guitar and background harmonies that waft in like a smooth summer breeze. Other highlights include the croonsome “Don’t Worry”, complete with Grady Martin’s accidental fuzz-fart guitar, and the vivid melodrama of 1964’s “The Cowboy In The Continental Suit”. Later years saw Robbins slide into a more sentimental realm, a victim of Nashville’s urge to make country more pop. Tunes like “It’s A Sin” and “My Woman, My Woman, My Wife” are little more than lachrymose MOR. That said, he was still able to peel back the years with 1976’s very fine “El Paso City”, a belated, mariachi-scented follow-up to the hit that made his name.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB HUGHES



JESS RODEN

Hidden Masters: The Jess Roden Anthology

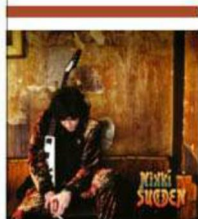
HIDDEN MASTERS

Overdue reappraisal of an underrated British voice

8/10

This meticulous 6CD set marks the first thorough overview of Jess Roden's 20-year career from fronting popular '60s mod-soul band The Alan Bown Set to lesser- and lesser-known work with The Humans and Seven Windows. Drawing heavily from Roden's '70s output for Island, such as the label's largesse that Roden recorded with Allen Toussaint in New Orleans and Spooner Oldham in Muscle Shoals as well as extended Island family members like Rabbit Bundrick, Mike Kellie and Paul Kossoff. Among the highlights is the powerful, unreleased "Surrender To Your Heart" featuring Steve Winwood and Jim Capaldi. One of the most soulful British voices of the time, like Terry Reid or Frankie Miller, Roden never achieved the success he deserved. His big break might have come with ex-Doors John Densmore and Robbie Krieger in The Butts Band in 1973 but it was a major disappointment and stalled a promising solo career. Roden is far better heard with his own country rock outfit Bronco, on 1974's *Jess Roden* album or raising the roof on his own band's *Play It Dirty, Play It Class*. If the prospect of 94 tracks, half unreleased, is daunting, they reveal Roden to be remarkably potent, a truly fine singer and an underrated songwriter.

EXTRAS: None.
MICK HOUGHTON



NIKKI SUDDEN

The Boy From Nowhere Who Fell Out Of The Sky

EASY ACTION

Swell Maps man's great, peregrine career, from multiple perspectives

9/10

It would usually take Papal dispensation to lead the kind of unpredictable life of the late, great Nikki Sudden. He went through bedroom Bolanisms to collaborations with Mike Scott, and Dave Kusworth in the Jacobites, the latter connection also opening out onto a history featuring Stephen Duffy and Duran Duran (Andy Wickett, from Kusworth's first band TV Eye was an early Duran member; Duffy and Kusworth were in The Hawks, and Duffy sang with a formative Duran), then on to his late-era troubadourism. *Boy From Nowhere* is the ultimate Sudden set, and the first two discs do his wild history justice, moving from post-punk days, where Swell Maps channelled T-Rex and Can, through to the Stones/Thunders genuflection of his '80s albums, and on to his more idiosyncratic, bruised-heart melancholia and rough-housing rock movement. Plenty of unearthed gems on the other four discs, too, the highlight of which is the reissue of the ultra-limited *Beau Geste* odds'n'sods cassette from the mid-'80s. Also included are radio sessions and live recordings. Much as Sudden was in thrall to his heroes, his ability to create his own whirl around him was kinda sui generis – rarely has a boxset been more appropriately titled.

EXTRAS: Limited early copies include an additional CD.

JON DALE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Sun Country Box

BEAR FAMILY

Hours of fine '50s Phillipsdom

8/10

Memphis-based Sun Records became known

as a cradle of blues in the early '50s, soon growing to accommodate the growth spurts of rock'n'roll. Yet label owner Sam Phillips' initial charge was country. This essential set (nearly nine hours of music bridging 1950 to '59) captures the often primitive beauty of those recordings, made at a time when hillbilly, honky-tonk, boogie-woogie and old-time folk began to converge into something less preoccupied with boundaries. The majority of the songs will be familiar to those who forked out for 1986's *The Sun Country Years*, though here they're appended with alternate versions and outtakes. Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee and Carl Perkins are all present – largely a concession to their key role in Sun's development – but the real heroes of this six-CD comp are those lesser-known names whose lack of success was in inverse proportion to their talent. The stately gospel-folk of Howard Seratt, for instance, could easily have made him into the star that Phillips imagined, had his religious views allowed him to record secular songs. Elsewhere there's the reedy chug of Charlie Feathers, jumpin' hot-stepper Warren Smith and Smokey Joe Baugh, whose "Hula Bop" suggests a white Louis Armstrong tearing up a juke joint.

EXTRAS: None.
ROB HUGHES



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Born To Be Together: The Songs Of Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil

ACE

7/10

Mr & Mrs Manhattan

Of all the songwriters toiling away in cubicles in New York's Brill Building in the early '60s, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil were perhaps the ones who took the most time to look out of their window. The bustling metropolis was as much a muse to the husband-and-wife team as broken hearts, Manhattan providing the backdrop for such evocative odes as "On Broadway" (Clyde McPhatter) and "Uptown" (The Crystals). Beyond specific geographical nods, however, there was often a savvy Big Apple attitude to a great deal of their work, be it the underdog protagonist of Gene Pitney's "Looking Through The Eyes Of Love" or the ghetto-trapped lovers in The Animals' "We've Gotta Get Out Of This Place". Lyricist Weil wrote with an almost filmic clarity, transporting the listener to the eye of the storm with a well-chosen phrase – think of the observational opening line of "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'". This collection brings together 25 choice cuts from across the decade, although occasional credit has to go to outside collaborators (Phil Spector, Leiber & Stoller), helping to flesh out minor masterpieces that both skilfully dissected the pitfalls of romance and painted high-definition portraits of an intrinsically American mindset.

EXTRAS: None.
TERRY STAUNTON

COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ The road to **Black Sabbath's** forthcoming 19th album, **13**, has not been so smooth. Guitarist Tony Iommi was diagnosed with the early stages of lymphoma; drummer

Bill Ward, who played live with the band in 2011, announced he would not be part of the recording owing to an "unsignable" contract. But the heavy metal progenitors' first full-length in 28 years is done, and promised June 11.

Rock heavyweights of a younger vintage, Josh Homme's **Queens Of The Stone Age** also break a lengthy hiatus with the follow-up to 2007's *Era Vulgaris*. Most excitingly, **Like Clockwork** features Dave Grohl returning to the drum stool; other names on the excellently disorientating guestlist include Trent Reznor, Arctic Monkeys' Alex Turner, Jake Shears of Scissor Sisters and Sir Elton John.

Elsewhere, there is **Kveikur**, the seventh effort from **Sigur Rós**, which poses the tantalising promise of something heavier – "aggressive", even – from these hitherto ambient-oriented Icelanders. And there is reissue gold in the shape of Bobby Whitlock's **Where There's A Will There's A Way: The ABC Dunhill Recordings**, a two-in-one collection of '70s-era albums from the

Memphis songwriter who became the first white artist to sign to Stax. **George Harrison**, **Eric Clapton** and **Delaney & Bonnie** all feature.

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THIS MONTH: THE EAGLES, THE STOOGES, CANYON LEGENDS CSN



Head of the "Keystone Cunts", Julia Louis-Dreyfus as Selina Meyer in *Veep*

VEEP SERIES 1

HBO

Iannucci's political comedy is more workplace sitcom than sardonic satire, says *Michael Bonner*



7/10

IN THE SPRING of 2009, Armando Iannucci told me about his experiences in America researching *In The Loop*, his big screen iteration of *The Thick Of It*. Reminiscing about a visit to the State Department, Iannucci concluded that "You discover it's just full of people who are a bit disorganised and it's all a bit vague. Then you realise

these institutions look powerful on the outside, but once you get inside it's just people doing jobs. And we all have our failings and things we'd rather hide."

As it turns out, this is very much how people behave in both *The Thick Of It* and Iannucci's more recent TV series, *Veep*: workplace comedies that take place within the corridors of power on either side of the Atlantic. *Veep* focuses on American Vice President Selina Meyer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus), whose default setting – harried – will be familiar to anyone who's watched British government minister Nicola Murray struggle to outrun her department's latest omnishambles in *The Thick Of It*. In fact, *Veep* is Iannucci's second attempt to transpose *The Thick Of It* to America. In 2007, Christopher Guest directed a pilot for ABC that "didn't get picked up," Iannucci told me, describing it as "a bit dull, really. The BBC just went and sold it to the highest bidder without telling me." For *Veep*, Iannucci partnered with HBO. He parachuted in the creative team behind *The Thick*

Of It – including Ian Martin, who operated as Iannucci's "swearing consultant" on the BBC show. Iannucci also invited Chris Morris to direct *Veep*'s Episode 7, marking their first collaboration since 2002's *Absolute Atrocity* Special in *The Observer* (Morris is also directing two episodes of Season 2).

With such a crossover behind the scenes, the similarities between the two shows are inevitable. Just as Nicola Murray was surrounded by a squabbling, borderline incompetent team of advisors, so Selina Meyer's office is staffed by her own "Keystone Cunts" – her chief of staff Amy (Anna Chlumsky), head of communications Mike (Matt Walsh) and personal aide Gary (Tony Hale). Broadly, each of them is a little bit Ollie, a little bit Glenn, a smidgen of Terri. Elsewhere, there is new team-member Dan (Reid Scott), hired because he's "a shit", and West Wing staffer, Jonah (Timothy C Simons), who has "the social skills of a man who was raised by wolves". As with their Whitehall cousins, each episode finds them struggling to contain a gaff of some description – an unguarded comment on TV, perhaps, or a Tweet. And as with *The Thick Of It*, the vibe is very much about panic, indignity and escalating disaster: "Double wank and shit chips," as Glenn would say. Critically, *Veep* is about how a person who holds the second most powerful office in the world is, essentially, powerless. (A great running joke has Meyer repeatedly asking her receptionist: "Did the President call?" The answer, of course, is: "No.") In Season 1 of *Veep*, we follow Meyer's attempts to launch the Clean Jobs commission – as

conceptually vapid as one of Nicola Murray's policies, like "Quiet Bat People" or her "Fourth Sector pathfinder initiative". There is also a filibuster reform bill, memorably described by one character as "like persuading a guy to fist himself".

Critically, though, there is no Malcolm Tucker figure in *Veep*. The opening scene of the very first episode of *The Thick Of It* saw Tucker sack minister Cliff Laughton from the Department of Social Affairs and Citizenship. Accordingly, *The Thick Of It* ran on a nervous energy – propelled by a very real sense that at any second Malcolm could descend on the DoSAC offices and "tear the fucking skin off" Laughton's successors, Hugh Abbot and Nicola Murray. The Vice President of the United States is harder to remove from office, which significantly lowers the stakes – out of 47 real-life *Veeps*, only two have ever resigned and none have been sacked. The fear that drove *The Thick Of It* is largely absent from *Veep*, which plays more broadly like other American workplace sitcoms, in particular *The Office* and *Parks And Recreation*. Do American TV comedies do "dark"? I'd be surprised, for instance, if further down the line *Veep* ever attempted anything like the hour-long episode when Tucker, Murray and co ended up in front of the Lord Justice Gooding inquiry.

Veep, though, is frequently very funny and pivots around a faultless performance by Julia Louis-Dreyfus, who delivers lines such as "I need you all to make me have not said that. I need you to make me un-said it" with expert comic precision. Brittle and self-absorbed, after 20 years in politics she has had all her idealism ground out of her, leaving just raw ambition. In Episode 2, a health scare for the President means that, fleetingly, she becomes Commander-in-Chief, finally receiving the power she craves. The scene where she learns that the health scare has passed, and is politely ushered out of the White House Situation Room, taking one last look over her shoulder as she leaves, is brilliantly underplayed.

EXTRAS: Audio commentaries on each episode, 7/10 deleted scenes, Making Of documentary.



DEAD HEAD

BBC

Seldom-seen 1980s television cult

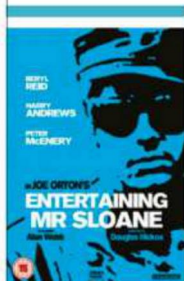
If you've been plagued by memories of a show featuring Denis Lawson as a petty criminal in 1940s clothes staggering around an über-'80s London with a severed head in a box, here's your chance to lay

them to rest. From 1986, Howard Brenton's faux-noir series has never been repeated, perhaps because the nudity, violence and establishment-conspiracy plot attracted controversy, perhaps because it's not completely brilliant. There's a weird, claustrophobic fascination, though, as it tries mixing Dennis Potter and *Max Headroom* on a *Blake's 7* budget.

EXTRAS: Brenton commentary.

7/10

DAMIEN LOVE



ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE

STUDIO CANAL

Fair '67 adaptation of dark and saucy Orton play

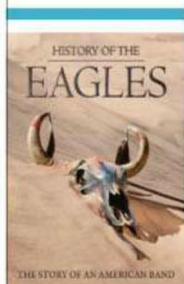
Beryl Reid, naked under a negligee, sucking an ice lolly in a cemetery, is the striking opening image of this 1967 adaptation of Joe Orton's study of manipulation

and repressed sexuality. The "smooth-skinned" Mr Sloane (Peter McEnery) is drawn into her eccentric household, where brother Ed (Harry Andrews) becomes equally obsessed with the youth and dresses him up as a leather-suited chauffeur. Orton's dialogue is saucily erudite and the suburban *mise en scène* delightfully of its time.

EXTRAS: Television interview featuring playwright Joe Orton.

6/10

ROB YOUNG



THE EAGLES

History Of The Eagles

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

Sanitised version of events... but worth it for footage of '70s LA

Split into two halves, the first two-hour chunk is best, dealing with the band's career up to its 1980 breakup. With the story joined by to-camera links

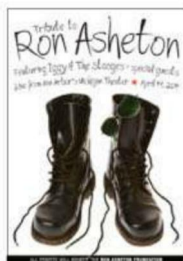
by Glenn Frey and Don Henley, you could surmise that this is very much their sanctioned version of events, although present and former members – Bernie Leaton and Randy Meisner in particular – get their say. The archive footage of '70s LA is nice, but there are omissions: cocaine, women and ticket pricing among them. Jackson Browne and the mighty JD Souther offer their ha'pennies worth.

EXTRAS: Consider Part Two to be a DVD

5/10

Extra, covering the reunion years.

MICHAEL BONNER



IGGY AND THE STOOGES

Tribute To Ron Asheton

WIENERWORLD

Live requiem for heavyweight guitarist

The Stooges staged this emotional commemorative show in their Ann Arbor hometown in 2011, in honour of guitarist Asheton, who died in 2009. There's

a lot from MC Henry Rollins to begin, but then it's the blessed, sweat-drenched ceremony, interestingly augmented in latter stages by a 12-piece orchestra – an odd way to hear "Dirt". The highlight is another unorthodox Stooze sound, as guitarist James Williamson picks up an acoustic to accompany Iggy on specially composed "Ron's Tune": "This is a requiem for a heavyweight/Though it is a little late..."

EXTRAS: None.

7/10

DAMIEN LOVE



THE NEWSROOM

HBO

Incisive drama lifting the lid on TV journalism

Aaron Sorkin's third series set in the world of broadcast television combines elements of its short-lived predecessors (*Sports Night*, *Studio 60*) with the political thrust of his most celebrated small-screen work, *The*

West Wing. Jeff Daniels is the elder statesman news anchor locking horns with the network and bemoaning the decline of serious media, leading a solid ensemble cast in which Sam Waterston particularly shines. Each episode pivots around real-life news events from recent years, with independent paymasters HBO arguably allowing Sorkin greater freedom than usual to vent his rhetoric spleen.

EXTRAS: Commentaries, featurettes, deleted scenes. TERRY STAUNTON

8/10



SOUND CITY

SONY

Misty-eyed eulogy for legendary Cali studio, with A-list rock stars

A downhome studio in the San Fernando valley, Sound City was patronised by Neil Young, Fleetwood Mac, Johnny Cash, and Nirvana, who recorded *Nevermind* there in 1991.

The studio closed in 2011, prompting Dave Grohl to purchase its custom-built analogue Neve Console for his own Studio 606 and direct this somewhat misty-eyed eulogy. Quite muso, in places – one chapter is entitled "The Drum Sound" – but Grohl lines up an A-list of interviewees (Stevie Nicks, Neil Young, Rick Rubin). Some all-star jams, too, notably "Cut Me Some Slack" – Nirvana, basically, with Paul McCartney in the Kurt role.

EXTRAS: Performances from Dave Grohl's

6/10

Sound City Players.



CSN&Y with Dallas Taylor and Greg Reeves at Peter Diltz's house, August 2, 1969

LEGENDS OF THE CANYON

UNIVERSAL/UMC



Laurel Canyon's summer of CSN remembered

As eyewitnesses go, they don't get much closer than Henry Diltz, a founder of the Modern Folk Quartet who accidentally found a second career in photography when he snapped a group of snazzily dressed young men who turned out to be the Buffalo Springfield. Diltz is now a proprietor of the Morrison Hotel gallery,

7/10

selling fine art rock photography, but in the late '60s, he was a fixture of the LA music scene centred round the Troubadour and the Whisky A Go Go, where the revivalist sounds of the folk revival were turning into something less trad.

His proximity to the action is captured in the Extras, which include footage of The Byrds at the Troubadour, and Stephen Stills acting the country squire at his Surrey mansion. Alas, the 8mm footage is silent, so the bulk of this doc is peopled with talking heads. Mama Cass and Joni Mitchell are talked up (Diltz has beautiful stills of Joni), but the broader story of the Canyon gives way to a familiar retelling of the early careers of CSN and – not interviewed – Young.

The film settles into a tale of competing personalities and wasted talent. David Crosby, whose rep was sealed by his smart green cape, notes, of the way The Byrds dismissed Gene Clark, "We had a lot of money, big egos, no brains." CSN don't always agree on the order of events, but they are well-schooled in telling their own story. More telling interventions are made by less central figures. Van Dyke Parks makes an unusually ill-tempered claim to have named the Springfield, while (sacked) CSN drummer Dallas Taylor is amusingly acerbic about the "total hippy shit" he saw. There's a show-stealing cameo, too, from club boss Mario Maglieri, who lives up to his nickname, "The Godfather of Sunset Strip". In the end, Diltz's argument seems to be that the legends of the strip were Crosby, Stills and Nash, an analysis that the group are in no rush to disprove. There's little music in the film but it's worth a look just to observe Stills' reaction when informed of Dallas Taylor's suggestion that George Harrison, and not Neil Young, might have joined as the fourth voice of CSN. Mirth is only the half of it.

EXTRAS: 8mm silent footage, photo library, extended interviews, booklet.

5/10

ALASTAIR MCKAY

HENRY DILTZ

Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Scrapping with Ginger Baker, Shane Meadows on The Stone Roses, the Matthew McConaughey renaissance continues, and what to do now Borgen is off the box...

BEWARE OF MR BAKER begins with Ginger Baker breaking the nose of the film's director Jay Bulger with a metal walking stick. It sets the tone for what follows: Baker is a man for whom confrontation is second nature. Born on the outbreak of World War II – "I love disasters" – he recalls early on in the film the counsel of his late father: "Be a man at all times, hold your own ground. Use your fists, they are your best pals." It's advice Baker has clearly taken to heart throughout his life, from his earliest outings with the Graham Bond Organisation through his career peaks in Cream, Blind Faith, with Fela Kuti and beyond.

As Bulger's film opens, we find Baker living in South Africa in a gated commune that he shares with his fourth wife, her children and 39 polo ponies. He appears to spend his days reclining in a La-Z-Boy, wearing shades and chain-smoking Rothmans. He suffers from degenerative osteoarthritis and intermittently sucks oxygen through a respirator – although this hasn't conspicuously dampened his spirit, which, at 73, remains splenetic. The young Jagger is remembered as "a stupid little cunt", while John Bonham "couldn't swing a sack of shit" and the general public are just "fucking dumb". The film is propelled along by Baker's various conflicts – with former friends, bandmates, record companies, the authorities and his family.

"From time to time, I'd just break down," admits Eric Clapton as he outlines Baker's abrasive relationship with Jack Bruce in Cream. The archive footage provides ample evidence of Baker's considerable drumming skills, and the subtext of Bulger's film is that Baker's tremendous gifts make his behaviour somehow permissible – especially within the context of the '60s and '70s music scene. As John Lydon says, "I cannot question anyone with end results that perfect." The source of Baker's anger is presumably the loss of his father, who was killed in action in 1943 when his son was 4. In fact, the only time we see Baker soften is when he describes his friendship with jazz drummers Phil Seamen, Max Roach, Art Blakey and Elvin Jones, who were clearly surrogate fathers. Baker's own family – three ex-wives and three children – are kept very much at arm's length. "Horses don't let you down," he explains. "Nor do dogs."

➤ **Mud** After excellent work in recent projects like *The Lincoln Lawyer*, *Killer Joe*, *Magic Mike* and *Bernie*, Matthew McConaughey appears to be reconnecting with the spirit of his earlier, more indie-minded films like *Dazed And Confused* or *Lone Star*. In *Mud*, he plays a fugitive living on an island in the middle of the Mississippi who befriends two young boys, Ellis (Tye Sheridan) and Neckbone (Jacob Lofland): "I'm in a tight spot, could do with some help." Early indications suggest a contemporary take on Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn as Ellis and Neckbone ferret their way round the woods and swampy tributaries; there's riffs, too, on *Stand By Me* and even *Whistle Down The Wind*. Meanwhile, in its depiction of the self-sufficient bric-a-brac communities living off the grid, *Mud* brings to mind *Beasts Of The Southern Wild*. The film drifts into darker waters as writer/director Jeff Nichols gradually unveils central character Mud's back story: we learn he is on the run after "a bad piece of business", that his girl Juniper (Reese Witherspoon: feral) is waiting in town, as well as a bunch of hired guns who are keen to right Mud's wrongs. Around McConaughey, Nichols has assembled a strong supporting cast,

including Michael Shannon as Neckbone's uncle and a grizzled Sam Shepard, whose connection with *Mud* is, at best, shifty. Fans of old *Uncut* will hopefully enjoy watching Joe Don Baker lead a bunch of hitmen through prayers in a gloomy motel room. Credit, too, to the boys – Sheridan has only appeared in one film previously, playing Brad Pitt's son in Terrence Malick's *The Tree Of Life*, while Lofland is making his screen debut. As the film unfolds, the closest parallels I can think of to *Mud* are the early films of David Gordon Green – like *Nichols*, a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts and another disciple of Malick. As with Green, Nichols has a terrific eye for the natural beauty of his landscape, in this case, the brown waters of the Mississippi, the rust-coloured earth, the warm, summer light. McConaughey is itchy, slippery and charming. Fans of his work opposite Jennifer Aniston may be pleased to learn that he does, for the most part, keep his shirt off.

➤ **Something In The Air** is the English title for the new film by Olivier Assayas, although its original French title – *Après Mai* – arguably feels considerably more evocative. The film is set in 1971,



Reviewed this month...



BEWARE OF MR BAKER

Director Jay Bulger
Starring Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton
Opens May 17
Certificate 15

8/10



MUD

Director Jeff Nichols
Starring Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon
Opens May 10
Certificate 12A

7/10



SOMETHING IN THE AIR

Director Olivier Assayas
Starring Clément Métayer
Opens May 24
Certificate 15

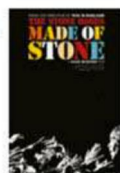
7/10



A HIJACKING

Directed by Tobias Lindholm
Starring Pilou Asbæk, Søren Malling
Opens May 10
Certificate 15

7/10



MADE OF STONE

Director Shane Meadows
Starring Ian Brown, John Squire
Opens June 5
Certificate 12A

5/10



Beware Of Mr Baker: Ginger in his beloved La-Z-Boy chair, with director Jay Bulger

and Assayas is interested in how a generation of politicised students defined themselves in the wake of the May 1968 demonstrations in Paris. Essentially, it's a rites-of-passage piece, pivoting on high-school student Gilles (Clément Métayer), who is torn between the heavy demands of his fellow student activists and pursuing his own less militant interests in filmmaking and art. When he's not sitting in smoky college rooms debating the issues of the day with his student pals, he's making action paintings, listening to Syd or reading Gregory Corso. Assayas was 16 in 1971, and there is presumably plenty that's autobiographical here. One of the film's strengths is its terrific attention to detail – particularly on the soundtrack. I'm reminded a little of Bertolucci's precocious *The Dreamers*, which was set during the '68 protests and featured such predictable cultural signifiers on the soundtrack as Hendrix, Dylan, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead and The Doors. On the other hand, the soundtrack for *Something In The Air* appears to be a very personal choice, clustered around the progressive psych-rock/psych-folk of Kevin Ayers, Nick Drake, Dr Strangely Strange, the Incredible String Band and Amazing Blondel. Ayers – solo and with Soft Machine – features high up Assayas' list of personal faves. Gilles is dumped early on by one girlfriend, who tells him she is leaving Paris for London, where her step-father is "doing the lights for Soft Machine". A wonderfully woozy party sequence, set in a huge country

house, is soundtracked by the Soft Machine's "Why Are We Sleeping?" and there's a tremendous use of Ayers' "Decadence" at the film's close.

➤ **A Hijacking** arrives conveniently during a lull in the BBC's scheduling of Nordic dramas. It offers – a selling point, surely? – an excellent opportunity to catch up with many familiar faces from *Borgen*. Here's slippery spin doctor Kasper (Pilou Asbæk), fully bearded up as the chef onboard a cargo ship boarded by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean; back in Copenhagen, Katrine's former boss at TV1, Søren Malling, is the company exec tasked with negotiating with the hijackers, assisted by *Borgen*'s Green Party boss, Dar Salim. As befitting its *Borgen* connections, *A Hijacking* is mostly a lot of smartly dressed people talking to each other in airy office buildings, alternating with the plight of Asbæk and his fellow hostages onboard the cargo ship. If this was, say, an American movie, you would expect to see – I dunno – Bradley Cooper as a Navy SEAL sent to blow the fuck out of the fucking pirates. Instead, *A Hijacking* – written and directed by *Borgen* scripter (and sometime Thomas Vinterberg collaborator) Tobias Lindholm – cleaves close to the spirit of the Dogme 95 movement. There is minimal use of music and Lindholm's vérité approach is lucid and compelling. The sequences on the cargo ship, as the conditions for the hostages deteriorate, are especially grim, the language barrier conflict with the Somalis threatening at any moment to end in tragedy.

➤ **Made Of Stone** follows The Stone Roses from their reunion in October 2011 to their three homecoming shows at Heaton Park in June the following year. As filmed by Shane Meadows, it's a fudge between fly-on-the-wall doc, concert film and archival trawl. Meadows – a fan – is not a natural documentarian. After trailing the Roses round the October 18 press conference called to announce the end of their 15-year split, he sets up his cameras at a house outside Warrington, where the band are beginning tour rehearsals. The footage of the band learning to play together again is the best stuff here – the focus very much on Reni, whose loose-limbed drumming and warm, playful humour makes him the natural star. In a narrative lurch, we decamp to Warrington's Parr Hall, where Meadows spends an age on the build-up to the band's secret comeback gig. Meadows films punters running down the road to the venue – will they, won't they get a ticket...? It would arguably be more instructive to know what the band themselves were doing at this point: were they all together, apart, were they nervous,

excited? The film similarly fails to successfully address the events at the show in Amsterdam, where Reni disappeared before the encore and Ian Brown called him a "cunt" onstage. The band do not offer comment; but nor does Meadows pursue any line of inquiry.

In fact, the Roses themselves are distant throughout. Interviewed only in voiceover, where they briskly narrate their backstory over archive footage, there's no formal meeting with Meadows to discuss the ongoing process of reunion. Among many of Meadows' open goals is the sight on the word 'NEWIE' written on a blackboard containing all the band's songs that stands in the Warrington rehearsal house. Surely, this is a new song? If only Meadows had asked them about it. Ah...

Osteoarthritis hasn't dampened Ginger Baker's spirit – young Jagger was "a stupid little cunt", the public just "fucking dumb"

Also out...

DEAD MAN DOWN

OPENS MAY 3

Original *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* director Niels Arden Oplev reteams with Noomi Rapace for this gangland thriller, co-starring Colin Farrell.

THE EYE OF THE STORM

OPENS MAY 3

Geoffrey Rush and Judy Davis attend to the wishes of dying matriarch Charlotte Rampling in this stately drama from Fred Schepisi.

I'M SO EXCITED!

OPENS MAY 3

Reviewed last issue. Pedro Almodóvar's terrific airplane-disaster comedy. Karaoke and mesclon included.

STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS

OPENS MAY 9

Benedict Cumberbatch is the baddie in latest franchise instalment. New London landmark The Shard co-stars.



Benedict Cumberbatch in *Star Trek Into Darkness*

THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST

OPENS MAY 10

Expanded version of Mohsin Hamid's novel, about a Pakistani working on Wall Street.

THE GREAT GATSBY

OPENS MAY 16

Baz Luhrmann's 3D spin of the Fitzgerald novel. It will be, at least, interesting.

HUMMINGBIRD

OPENS MAY 17

Jason Statham as an ex-soldier living down and out on the streets of London.

THE LIABILITY

OPENS MAY 17

We're sure this was called something else, but anyway. Tim Roth is an ageing hitman.

THE HANGOVER PART III

OPENS MAY 23

The mysterious rise of Bradley Cooper continues.

THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS

OPENS MAY 24

Remastered version of Bob Rafelson's 1972 classic, with Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern and Ellen Burstyn up to no good in Atlantic City.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD



SETLIST

- 1 Second Hand News
- 2 The Chain
- 3 Dreams
- 4 Sad Angel
- 5 Rhiannon
- 6 Not That Funny
- 7 Tusk
- 8 Sisters Of The Moon
- 9 Sara
- 10 Big Love
- 11 Landslide
- 12 Never Going Back Again
- 13 Without You
- 14 Gypsy
- 15 Eyes Of The World
- 16 Gold Dust Woman
- 17 I'm So Afraid
- 18 Stand Back
- 19 Go Your Own Way
- ENCORE:**
- 20 World Turning
- 21 Don't Stop
- SECOND ENCORE:**
- 22 Silver Springs
- 23 Say Goodbye

FLEETWOOD MAC

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK, APRIL 8, 2013

The stadium-sized psychodrama begins once again.
“This war is pretty good!”

UPON SEEING Fleetwood Mac perform, one cannot help but ponder the lot of Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham. Their romance ended the better part of four decades ago, yet the two of them are chained together seemingly for eternity in a sort of Sisyphean nightmare, forced to rehash in front of thousands of people night after night the recriminations that fuelled the blockbuster success of 1977's *Rumours* (which has sold 19 million copies in the US alone).

Of course, “forced” is hardly the right word – after all, they choose to open up

their wounds for all to see and do so to their great financial benefit – but, despite the apparent bonhomie on display, the energy that Fleetwood Mac exudes is weird. The choreographed moments tonight, like their slow dance twirl at the end of “Sara”, or Nicks’ declaration to Buckingham that “this war is pretty good” during the introduction to “Landslide”, do little to camouflage it.

On record, of course, this kind of misdirection has long been the ace up Fleetwood Mac’s billowing sleeves. *Rumours* didn’t go mega-platinum merely because of the intra-band soap opera that played out in the lyrics, but

rather because of the tension between that acrimony and the exquisitely produced Southern California soft-rock, giving just a hint of bluesy edge to the pretty melodies. Tonight, though, worn by age and scuffed up by a cavernous arena (and without the breezy vocals and, for the most part, the more optimistic songs of Christine McVie, who retired from performing with the band in 1998) the edges of the songs are torn and tattered. Time has taken its toll on Nicks and Buckingham’s voices, Mick Fleetwood’s drums are front and centre and more aggressive than on record, and Buckingham plays his guitar with

Crystalvisions still intact... Fleetwood Mac onstage in New York, with Stevie Nicks, right



more attack and rhythmic drive.

While Nicks still has the whiskey-and-cigarettes timbre, the high notes and much of the tremolo that characterised one of the most distinctive voices in rock are gone; she noticeably struggles with "Rhiannon". But other songs' coarser edges – "Sisters Of The Moon", with its fiery guitar leads, and the more atmospheric, Ry Cooder-ish fills of "Gold Dust Woman" – provide cover for her vocal limitations, and her less fluttery reading of "Gypsy" lends it more poignancy.

The songs may have slightly new skin, but nostalgia is still the order of the day. Nicks is adorned in one of her characteristic Morgane Le Fay dresses and playing a tambourine festooned in ribbons, Fleetwood sports jodhpurs à la the *Rumours* sleeve, and all but three of the songs pre-date 1984. Introducing "Without You", a ballad bearing more than a passing similarity to "Peace Train" that was recorded by Buckingham Nicks as a demo in the early '70s and recently rediscovered by them on YouTube, Nicks says that she wrote it "when they were really young and beautiful and in love". There is no escaping the original music's healthy, youthful glow;

the Pacific sunsets gleaming in the expatriates' eyes; the Californian natives' effortless melding of ocean breeze and desert heat. Despite the leaner, tighter arrangements, the songs now show some middle-aged paunch.

Tanned and toned and with the top button of his shirt undone, Buckingham whoops and hollers, as ever a little too eager to please as a live performer. While he refreshingly evades the traditional male rock star moulds, he is of a piece with fellow soft-rock icons like Jackson Browne and James Taylor, guys who, if they were born five years earlier, would have been lawyers and seem hellbent to prove how smart they are. His between-song patter is peppered with phrases like "we as a band had to subvert that axiom" and "it bears repeating", transforming a crowd of some 18,000 middle-aged men and women into fidgety pre-teens.

As his exegesis of his songs indicates, Buckingham is a notorious control freak – he spent a then-unheard-of \$1 million painstakingly trying to perfect the follow-up to *Rumours*, *Tusk*, widely regarded as rock's version of *Heaven's Gate* upon release. Although its reputation has been rehabilitated over the ensuing years, Buckingham still seems defensive about this quixotic curio, as he introduces a four-song selection from the album. Apart from the awkward, nervous energy of the punk-inspired "Not That Funny", the section proves the show's highlight. Nicks is at her best on "Sisters Of The Moon", a song the band haven't performed since 1979, as well as the album's most enduring track, "Sara". In the past, the group have performed the title track in a stripped-down version, shorn of its marching band bombast. Tonight, however, the horns are front and centre on a tape loop, Fleetwood is augmented by a second drummer hidden behind the stack of amps, and the original introductory verse is reinstated, making plain the song's paranoia. Filling Madison Square Garden with noise and rhythm and unstoppable forward momentum, "Tusk" truly brings the house down.

While the studio is the natural element for Buckingham, Fleetwood Mac have an undeniable command of live dynamics and are forbiddingly tight as a unit – there is not a note or a movement or even a breath that seems out of place. You could say that they're resolutely professional, but then some seemingly genuine affection between Buckingham and Nicks creeps through the carefully managed stagecraft. During their intimate duet on "Say Goodbye" (from 2003's *Say You Will*) that closes the show, there's even a sense that their bond might be one of true commitment, rather than bridled burden. **PETERSHAPIRO**

Jandek

Café Oto, London, April 4, 2013

Underground music's Man In Black returns. The mystery endures...

ASTONIGHT'S SUPPORT act, zither player Dimitra Lazaridou-Chatzigoga plays to a reverent crowd, a gaunt man dressed head-to-toe in black slips almost unnoticed from a door at the back of the room, places his hat upside down on the bar, and listens. Jandek – the artistic title given to the Houston, Texas musician thought to go by the name Sterling Smith – is perhaps the most enigmatic figure in all music. Starting with 1978's *Ready For The House*, he's self-released a string of outsider rock'n'roll and blues records, one or two a year, while maintaining a profile of total anonymity. Then in 2004 – shortly after a documentary, *Jandek On Corwood*, attempted to dissect the enigma – he suddenly played his first ever gig, unannounced, at Glasgow experimental music festival Instal.

Since then, Jandek has toured intermittently, building up a global network of live collaborators. Tonight he's backed by double bassist John Edwards, Trembling Bells drummer Alex Neilson and – for the first time – Byron Wallen, who switches between trumpet and French horn. But all focus is on the Texan. At first, he approaches his keyboard like he's experiencing it for the first time, picking out simple, tentative melodies. Soon, though, his fingers dance out elegant, unusual runs, and he leafs through a lyric book, singing existential fragments in a trembling baritone that feels old as time. "The person I want to be," goes one, "is hiding from me..."

On record, Jandek's music can feel somewhat oppressive, its sheer ascetic oddity writ in one gloomy shade. With the right collaborators – Neilson, spilling ecstatically across his kit, Wallen's horn sputtering wildly or blasting out, rich and melancholic – it becomes something richer and deeper. And for all that these songs dwell on death and endings, as the band whip up a storm you get glimpses that the man in black is having a ball up there. "Twenty-six hours in a day/Two more to romp and play," he sings, a half-smile on his lips, and you feel a tremble pass through the room. Some dark magic at work.

LOUIS PATTISON

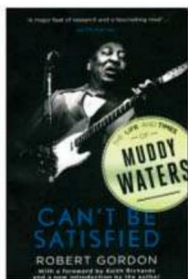
PETER DAVIDSON



Magichat: the still-elusive Jandek

Books

BY ALLAN JONES



Can't Be Satisfied: The Life And Times Of Muddy Waters

Robert Gordon

CANONGATE

9/10

ROBERT GORDON'S *Can't Be Satisfied: The Life And Times Of Muddy Waters* was first published in 2002, when it was duly acclaimed as the definitive biography of the great bluesman, whose music linked the Delta blues of his native Mississippi with the electric blues that subsequently flourished largely in the clubs of Chicago's South Side in the 1940s and then helped shape what rock music would become in the decades that followed. This welcome reissue coincides with the 100th anniversary of his

birth in April 1913 and the 30th anniversary of his death in April 1983. If you have not read it previously, here's an opportunity to be suitably enthralled by an extraordinary story.

Gordon writes well on all aspects of Waters' life and the music he made during it, turning the story of his career into the story of the blues itself. McKinley Morganfield was born at Jug's Corner in Issaquena County, Mississippi, into a sharecropper family, Muddy picking cotton from "sun to sun" – dawn to dusk, that is – on the Stovall Plantation, where he also had an illegal backwoods whiskey still that made him the plantation's principal bootlegger, and also played a home-made guitar at local juke joints. It was here in the summer of 1941 that Waters was first recorded, for the Library of Congress, by the folklorist Alan Lomax, a sometimes controversial figure whose pioneering field work with associate John Work preserved the songs of so many early blues singers, including Blind Willie McTell, Son House and Lead Belly. For Lomax, Waters, then 28, was a first-hand witness to many key figures in the history of the blues. Muddy had seen Charley Patton and Robert Johnson – the latter playing in the street at a place called Friar's Point, clearly an overwhelming experience. "People were crowdin' around him and I stopped and peeked over," Waters years later recalled. "I got back in the car and left, because he was a dangerous man." Son House was another early inspiration, whose bottleneck playing was a crucial influence on Muddy's own emerging guitar style. "He was so good he was unlimited," Waters would later say of House.

By 1943, Waters was in Chicago, part of a huge population drift to the northern cities from the Deep South, where plantation workers were being put out of work in the fields where they had traditionally toiled by new-fangled tractors and cotton harvesters. Gordon is very good on the cotton-dominated Delta economy and the social structure of the plantations, which bred a servile dependency he suggests Waters would never fully escape. He is equally vivid about what Muddy and others like him found waiting for them in the teeming streets of Chicago and the urban ghettos in which they now were gathered. Here, Muddy, after a number of false starts, put together the first of the bands with whom he would transform the rural blues that he had grown up listening to and playing, creating the template for a new electric blues that would go on to inspire, among others, The Rolling Stones (who took their name from one of his songs), Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin (whose "Whole Lotta Love" was based without credit on Muddy's version of Willie Dixon's "You Need Love") and too many more to mention.

In 1947, Waters signed to Chess, his label for the



"Violence hangs everywhere..." Muddy Waters in his later years

next three decades, and home also to Muddy's great rival, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Sonny Boy Williamson, Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry. The label, according to Gordon, treated its artists much as the more benevolent Southern plantation owners had treated their sharecroppers and tenant farmers, looking after all their most basic needs, but paying them as little as possible. Whenever Muddy needed money – which was often – Chess would allow him an advance against royalties they contrived never to pay him, so he was effectively always in their debt. At the height of his popularity, Chess encouraged the illiterate Waters to sign over the copyright to his entire catalogue to Arc Music, their publishing company, and thereby making a fortune compared to the pittance they'd paid Muddy.

Whatever, it was at Chess that Waters was finally able to unleash the full power of his electric blues, the classic sides for which he will always be remembered, which Gordon vividly evokes, as in this description of 1950's "Rollin' And Tumblin'".

"The song is little more than a harmonica, a bass drum in overdrive, an occasionally ferocious slide guitar and the orgiastic humming of several grown men," he writes. "The sounds are pugilistic and sexual. Someone yelps. Someone else responds. The randomness of the interjections is frightening, the rapid-fire drumming disorienting. Muddy's slide rings like one of those spokes on an iron wheel, haywire. The harp is hypnotic. Chant and hum, chant and hum. Violence hangs everywhere, the sex heated and raw."

The music made by Waters and a succession of usually formidable bands was as hard as the environment that originally hosted it, the tough clubs of Chicago's notorious South Side, where violence prevailed and it was advisable to carry a gun at all times. It was a hostile environment that not everyone survived. Waters lost bandmembers to dope, drink, prison, gunfire. One was stabbed to death. Another sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. Harmonica genius Little Walter – "a young buck with a lot of temper, likely to kill you or anybody that crossed him," according to Muddy's loyal guitarist, Jimmy Rogers – was hammered to death in the street in a spat over a game of craps. Pianist Otis Spann – who served Waters with such faithful dedication and also played with Chuck Berry, Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Buddy Guy and Junior Wells – drank himself into an early grave, dead at 40.

Muddy's personal life was no less turbulent. He was an inveterate womaniser, whose last wife, Marva Jean Brooks, was not yet 20 when he met her. He was over 60, by then. Most of his six children were illegitimate. Mistresses and a daughter were claimed by drugs. His career bucked and reared as the blues went in and out of fashion. But he endured, as does his music, the blues a beacon and solace, Waters the epitome of it.

"Muddy is like a very comforting arm around the shoulder," Keith Richards writes warmly in an affectionate foreword. "You need that, you know? It can be dark down there, man."



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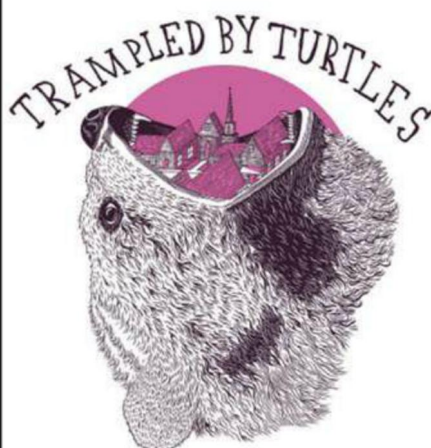
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SHEFFIELD O₂ ACADEMY 2

SATURDAY 08
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TUESDAY 11
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TEMPLE ROOM

WEDNESDAY 12
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FRIDAY 14
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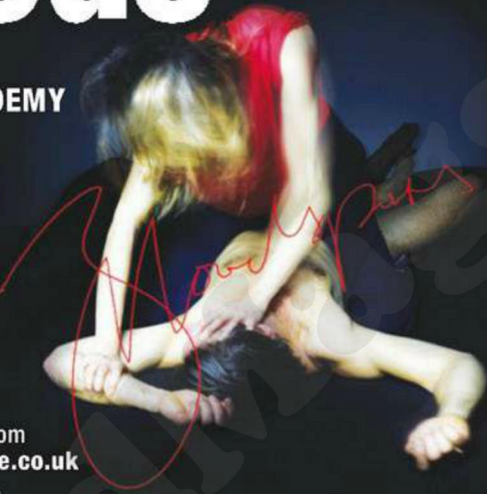
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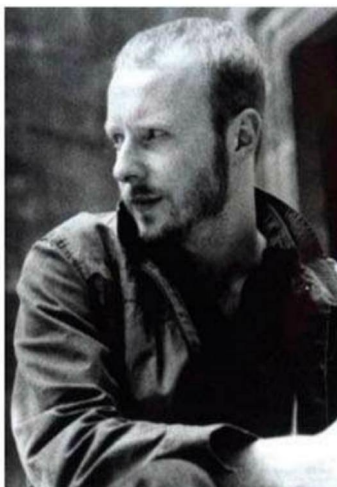
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FRI 17 MAY
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THE UNDERTONES



FRI 24 MAY LONDON KOKO
SAT 25 MAY MANCHESTER RUGBY CLUB

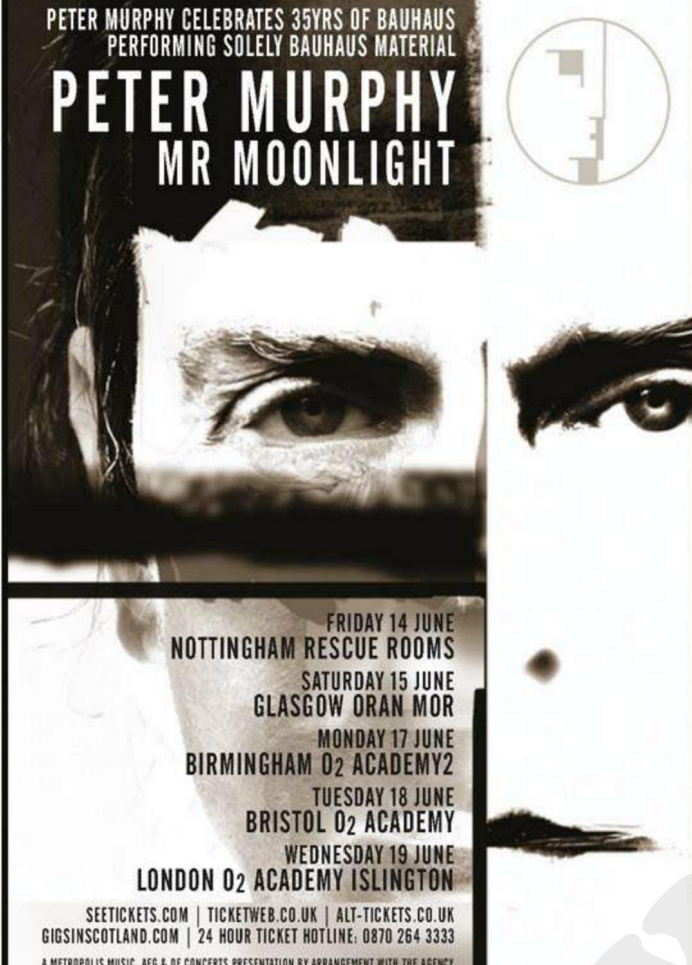
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PLUS MAX SPLUDGE AND THE PUKES

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CLAPHAM GRAND



Charles Bradley

victim of love

Friday 14 June
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Peter Hook & the Light - live
808 State - live
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Wednesday 8th
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Friday 10th
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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

Master of minimalism:
Jason Molina in Chicago,
circa 2003



JASON MOLINA

Songs: Ohia and Magnolia Electric Co
singer-songwriter

1973-2013

THE LOSS OF singer-songwriter Jason Molina, who has died from organ failure after a prolonged struggle with alcoholism, is doubly tragic. At 39 years old, not only was it appallingly premature, but it has deprived us of one of modern America's most prodigious talents. The music he made under the banner of Songs: Ohia and, later, at the heart of revolving collective Magnolia Electric Co, was often dark, eloquent, achingly beautiful and never less than compelling.

To his record company, Secretly Canadian, Molina's "singular, stirring body of work is the foundation upon which all else has been constructed." The Indiana label's first release was Songs: Ohia's "One Pronunciation Of Glory" in 1996, followed a year later by a self-titled debut. It was the beginning of a run of seven studio albums whose shuffling lo-fi aesthetic teemed with rich symbolism: wild birds, ghosts, old maps, tumbling stars, dead moons. Molina didn't consciously style himself as a folk singer, but his minimal guitar-and-voice approach gave itself to the existential blues of the wandering troubadour.

Molina's art was also shaped by his upbringing in the Ohio city of Lorain, situated at the mouth of the Black River by Lake Erie. "For someone who lived in the middle of America for a long time – the true Midwest – it has to be tightly woven into the music," Molina explained to this writer in 2005. "There's definitely a feeling that comes across in the music – the feeling of long, extreme winters and summers. Those kind of extremes are bound to affect people's whole lives. I think everyone should experience a little all-day darkness."

Molina's work as Songs: Ohia reached its creative peak with 2002's glorious *Didn't It Rain* and follow-up, *Magnolia Electric Co*. The former was a meditation on transience and identity, marked by the pained country-gospel of standouts like "Ring The Bell" and the near-eight-minute title track. Molina's baleful voice drew much of its emotive power from its similarity to early Neil Young, a comparison that he bore with a graceful kind of stoicism when interviewers would frequently bring it up.

Magnolia Electric Co, recorded with Steve Albini, was an entirely different record. There were still strong traces of Young, but this was the swashbuckling Neil of *On The Beach*, with crunching riffs that owed as much to Molina's love of Black Sabbath as Crazy Horse. His formative years, it turned out, had been spent immersed in the music of Sabbath, AC/DC and Judas Priest. Having begun his musical life as

bassist for various metal bands around Cleveland, Molina now indulged himself on epics like "Farewell Transmission" and "Hold On Magnolia".

Such was its transformative thrust that Molina decided to rename his band after the album title. He subsequently began performing as Magnolia Electric Co, though, in typically perverse fashion, his next LP was a solo set as Pyramid Electric Co. His prolific work rate continued up until 2009, issuing six more albums, including 2007's CD/DVD *Sojourner*, a fascinating wooden boxset of unheard recordings, complete with medallion and celestial map.

Molina's elevated standing amid his fellow songwriters can now be measured by the arrival of *Weary Engine Blues*, a collection of covers by friends and admirers like Will Oldham, Mark Kozelek, Darren Hayman, Alasdair Roberts, Damien Jurado, Jonathan Meiburg and Herman Dune. Initially conceived to help pay his medical bills during his battle with alcoholism, for which he repeatedly checked himself into rehab clinics, the proceeds will now go to Molina's family. The album instead serves as a moving requiem. "In my own songs, I try and amplify areas I'm not happy with instead of throwing them away," he explained to me of the songwriting process. "Pick away at the things that make me uncomfortable. I often end up with a ragged and strange piece of music that I try to make beautiful. Or at least something necessary." **ROB HUGHES**

STEVE GULLICK

OBITUARIES



The Stones recording *Let It Bleed*, 1969, with Andy Johns, right

ANDY JOHNS

Producer/engineer for Stones, Zeppelin, Television

1950-2013

1967 WAS A pivotal year for the young Andy Johns. Ushered into a recording facility for the first time by older brother Glyn, engineer and producer at London's Olympic Studios, the teenager soon gave up on his ambition of being a bass guitarist. Instead he became fascinated with the more technical aspects of the industry, starting out as assistant to Eddie Kramer on the Jimi Hendrix Experience's second album *Axis: Bold As Love* and serving as tape op on the Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. "In those days you could go into one studio and Joe Cocker was working, and then you're working with Jimi Hendrix in Studio One, or down the corridor Eric Clapton is doing something," Johns later marvelled.

Over the course of the next few years, Johns became one of the most in-demand producer-engineers in rock, helping craft seminal albums by Led Zeppelin, the Stones, Free, Blind Faith, Mott The Hoople and more.

One of his more testing experiences came during the

fractured sessions for 1972's *Exile On Main St*, spending months amassing tapes at the Stones' HQ in the South of France. "It was my job to capture those magic moments," he said later. There followed an intense three-day mixdown in LA, with Johns convinced he knew more about the tapes' content than anyone: "Everybody else was sick of the damn thing. [But] I learned about perseverance." Johns also confessed to picking up a drug habit during the making of the album. He went on to engineer the next two Stones efforts, *Goats Head Soup* and *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll*, before being fired from the latter for, in the words of Keith Richards, "hitting the hard stuff too hard".

His association with Zeppelin spanned the golden era of *Led Zeppelin II* to *Physical Graffiti*, while a similarly enduring relationship with Free saw him produce *Highway*, *Free Live!* and *Heartbreaker*. By the mid-'70s Johns had relocated to the US, where Television enlisted him to produce *Marquee Moon* after hearing his work on *Goats Head Soup*. The following decades were largely given over to producing American metal bands like Van Halen, Cinderella and LA Guns. Johns' recent charges include Eric Johnson, hard rock supergroup Chickenfoot and the Steve Miller Band, whose *Bingo!* was their first studio LP for nearly 20 years.

went on to feature on John & Yoko's *Double Fantasy*. His dizzying credits also include Dylan, Steely Dan, Paul Simon, Dr John, Aretha Franklin and James Taylor.

DEREK WATKINS

Trumpet player/Bond stalwart

1945-2013

THE TRUMPET LINES of Derek Watkins were a staple of every James Bond soundtrack, from *Dr No* through to *Skyfall*. The CV of the man dubbed "Mr Lead" by no less an authority than Dizzy Gillespie also boasted sessions for Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Eric Clapton, Elton John and the LSO. Though perhaps his most significant contribution to the pop realm was his signature horn-playing on The Beatles' "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever".

DEKE RICHARDS

Soul songwriter and producer

1944-2013

DIANA ROSS & The Supremes were struggling to repeat their earlier successes when Motown chief Berry Gordy set about assembling a new songwriting team that included Deke Richards. The resulting "Love Child", issued in September 1968, returned the group to the top of the Billboard charts, nudging aside The Beatles' "Hey Jude". The sophisticated soul of "I'm Still Waiting", written and produced by Richards, also gave Ross a solo UK chart-topper in 1971. By then he'd become co-architect of the Jackson Five sound, teaming with Gordy, Freddie Perren and Alphonzo Mizell as songwriting collective, The Corporation. The bubblegum soul brothers scored huge global hits with their first three Corporation-penned 45s for Motown: "I Want You Back", "ABC" and "The Love You Save".

GORDON STOKER

Jordanaires vocalist/manager

1924-2013

TENNESSEE'S GORDON STOKER started out as pianist on WSM's *Grand Ole Opry* show, but his main claim to fame was as tenor vocalist and manager of The Jordanaires, the gospel group enlisted as back-up by Elvis Presley in 1956. Stoker's tones can be heard on such deathless classics as "Heartbreak Hotel" and "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You". The Jordanaires remained with Presley until 1972, while also featuring on Patsy

PAUL WILLIAMS

Crawdaddy! founder

1948-2013

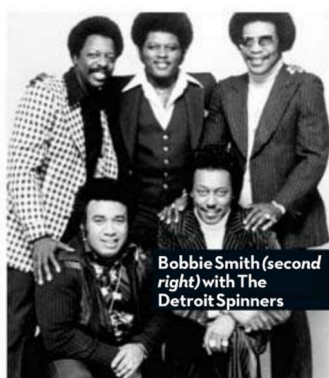
"THE FIRST MAGAZINE to take rock'n'roll seriously," was how student Paul Williams hailed the arrival of *Crawdaddy!*, the music bible he founded in February 1966. Williams was just 17 when he began publishing, predating the arrival of *Rolling Stone* by 18 months. "You are looking at the first issue of a magazine of rock'n'roll criticism," ran his first editorial. "*Crawdaddy!* will feature neither pin-ups nor news-briefs; the speciality of this magazine is intelligent writing about pop." By the time Williams closed the magazine in late '68, its distribution had jumped from 500 copies to over 25,000. He revived the title in the early '90s, before finally shutting shop in 2003.

BOBBIE SMITH

The Detroit Spinners' lead singer

1936-2013

THE HONEYED TONES of Bobbie Smith were a key factor in the appeal of soul outfit The Detroit Spinners. Their first hit arrived with 1961's "That's What Girls Are Made For", after which they were signed to Motown. But it wasn't until their '70s tenure with Atlantic that they achieved major success, most



Bobbie Smith (second right) with The Detroit Spinners

notably with "I'll Be Around" and "Games People Play".

HUGH McCracken

Session guitarist

1942-2013

SUCH WAS THE demand for the services of US guitarist-arranger Hugh McCracken that he once turned down Paul McCartney's invitation to join Wings. McCracken had joined the ex-Beatle for the New York sessions for *Ram* in early 1971, having already played on releases by BB King, Laura Nyro and The Left Banke. When he worked on John Lennon's "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" some months later, McCartney's former ally played up to their public estrangement by sidling up to McCracken: "You know that was just an audition to get to me?" He

PHIL RAMONE

Legendary engineer/producer

1934-2013

"MY CAREER AS an engineer and producer coincided with one of the most profound periods in pop music history: that of the contemporary singer-songwriter," wrote Phil Ramone in his '07 memoir, *Making Records: The Scenes Behind The Music*. The '70s proved to be an extraordinarily fertile period for Ramone, who engineered Bob Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks*, The Band's *Rock Of Ages* and Paul Simon's *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* and *Still Crazy After All These Years*, both of which he also co-produced. The remainder of the decade saw him helm hits for the likes of Chicago, Barbra Streisand and Kenny Loggins, though his most lasting association was with Billy Joel, with whom he worked right through to the late '80s.

Ramone's happy knack of producing chart hits might have earned him the moniker 'Pope Of Pop', but the classically trained violinist actually began in the jazz field. At A&R Recording, the Manhattan studio he co-founded with business partner Jack Arnold in 1959, Ramone set about

engineering albums for John Coltrane, Gerry Mulligan and Keith Jarrett. His first of 14 Grammys arrived with 1964's *Getz/Gilberto*, the bossa nova collaboration between sax player Stan Getz and guitarist João Gilberto. The move to the more commercial end of the spectrum didn't begin in earnest until five years later, when Ramone landed his first production credit on Burt Bacharach's *Make It Easy On Yourself*.

He was also a great technical innovator. In 1993, his pioneering use of new fibre optics technology enabled Frank Sinatra to record with artists from other studios in 'real time' for comeback LP *Duets*. It was so successful that they repeated the trick the following year on *Duets II*. The first commercial CD release, Billy Joel's *52nd Street*, also bore Ramone's stamp. More recently he was awarded the inaugural Grammy for Best Surround Sound Album for Ray Charles' 2004 swansong, *Genius Loves Company*.

The past decade found him producing two hugely successful duets albums for Tony Bennett, pairing the easy listening crooner with marquee names like Elton John, Bono, Paul McCartney and Sting. Ramone's career credits also include Aretha Franklin, Rod Stewart, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, BB King, Madonna and Pavarotti.



Cline's "Crazy", Jim Reeves' "Four Walls" and George Jones' "He Stopped Loving Her Today".

TERRY LIGHTFOOT

Trad-jazz bandleader/clarinetist

1935-2013

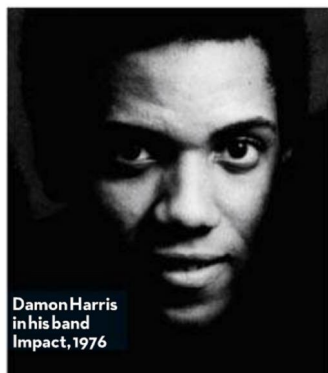
A PIONEER OF the post-war trad-jazz scene, bandleader and clarinetist Terry Lightfoot formed his first outfit in 1955. An early lineup of Terry Lightfoot's Jazzmen included future Cream drummer Ginger Baker, while trumpeter Kenny Ball served in the band before striking out on his own in 1958. The Jazzmen gained national exposure on early TV shows for Morecambe & Wise and Des O'Connor. Lightfoot later formed a lasting musical association with trumpet player Ian Hunter-Randall and briefly fronted the Acker Bilk Paramount Jazz Band.

DAMON HARRIS

Temptations/Impact singer

1950-2013

DAMON HARRIS ACHIEVED something of a major ambition when he replaced Eddie Kendricks in The Temptations in 1971. Still just 20 years old, the Baltimore singer had modelled his voice on Kendricks' falsetto during his time with The Young Tempts, a high-school band themselves styled after the doo-wop soul of The Temptations. His most distinctive performance for the group he'd always idolised came as lead on



1972's Billboard chart-topper, "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone", which also won three Grammys. The Harris effect was such that Michael Jackson simply referred to him as "The Voice". After leaving in 1975, he corralled his old bandmates from The Young Tempts and formed Impact, before forming his own Temptations tribute act in the '90s.

BEBO VALDES

Cuban arranger/composer/pianist

1918-2013

A POST-WAR residency as house pianist at Havana's Tropicana Club, where he played alongside Cuban musicians and visiting US names like Nat King Cole and Woody Herman, was the grounding for classically trained arranger-composer Bebo Valdés. His role in the development of mambo was secured when he invented his own rhythmic structure, the batanga, and in 1959 he formed his own orchestra, Sabor de Cuba. In exile since the Cuban Revolution, Valdés

scooped up three Grammys, most recently for *Juntos Para Siempre*.

JACK STOKES

Beatles animator

1920-2013

ANIMATOR JACK STOKES had already run his own studio before being asked to produce a TV cartoon series on The Beatles in 1965. Its huge success in the US led to Stokes being recruited to design the animated titles of the *Magical Mystery Tour* film, though his major contribution to Fabs lore arrived in 1968, when he and Bob Balser became animation directors on *Yellow Submarine*. Together with illustrator Heinz Edelmann, their bright, hallucinatory dreamscapes brought a bold splash of psychedelia to the fantastical realm of Pepperland.

ANGELA BOND

BBC radio producer

1927-2013

AS PRODUCER OF fledgling Radio 1 star Kenny Everett in the late '60s, Angela Bond's suggestion that he should rein in his anarchic tendencies by doing things "in the best possible taste" later provided him with a TV catchphrase. Everett's disregard for convention often landed him in bother with the BBC, though Bond, the station's first female pop producer, helped guide the show to listening figures of five million. She later oversaw Pete Murray's *Open House*.

ALVA LEWIS

Jamaican singer-guitarist and member of The Upsetters

1949-2013

PRODUCER BUNNY LEE was the first to record Alva Lewis in 1967, though it was under the tutelage of Lee Perry that the Jamaican singer-guitarist first came to prominence. As a member of The Upsetters, alongside Glen Adams, Aston 'Family Man' Barrett and brother Carlton, he scored a breakthrough global hit with the title track from 1969's *Return Of Django*. Perry then paired the band with Bob Marley & The Wailers, for whom they cut early 45s like "Soul Rebel", "Mr Brown" and "Duppy Conqueror".

DON BLACKMAN

New York jazz-funk pianist

1953-2013

NEW YORK PIANIST Don Blackman first toured with Parliament/Funkadelic in the early '70s, while also providing session duties for Roy Ayers and Earth Wind & Fire. As member of Lenny White's Twennynine, songs like "Peanut Butter" became key signifiers of the emerging jazz-funk movement. 1982's self-titled solo debut spawned minor hits "Heart's Desire" and "Since You've Been Away So Long", and was later sampled by Master P and DJ Jazzy Jeff. Tupac Shakur covered Blackman's "Live To Kick It" on *R U Still Down? (Remember Me)*.
ROBHUGHES

Feedback...

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WHEY OUT SOUNDS

I was utterly enthralled by John Robinson's sparkling portrait of the rollercoaster that was Cream [*Take 192*], accompanied by vivid reminiscences from oblique angles by Jaan Uhelszki, Chris Welch, Tony Palmer and others. As a teenager at a progressive boarding school in the early 1970s I was too young to have seen the band play live, but I played all their albums continually, and went on to become one of a generation of drummers inspired and influenced by the extraordinary skill and panache of Ginger Baker.

I did see him play with Baker Gurvitz Army, at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park, but was disappointed by the band's somewhat turgid material. A few years later, after his stint in Africa, Ginger pitched up with a three-piece at the unlikely venue of the Bridge House in Canning Town, a small and unremarkable pub next to a flyover in the industrial wastes of east London. Several hundred of us were crammed in to the bar, excited with anticipation, when suddenly a woolly apparition appeared behind the frosted glass of a side window: Ginger was hammering at the door, trying to get in.

There was what seemed an interminable wait in wilting heat while Ginger and the band prepared themselves upstairs in the landlord's kitchen; I knew this served as the dressing room because I used it many times myself. (The Bridge House went on to establish its own record label and become a landmark venue in London's rock history.) Eventually the trio mounted the postage-stamp of a stage, Ginger dressed in flamboyant woven African garb, and began. I remember nothing at all about the other musicians, or even the music, but I will never forget Ginger's astonishing technique – crossing and uncrossing his wrists as he rattled round the toms – and my own sense of awe at standing just a few feet from the master at work.

Inevitably, too much has been said in lament of Cream's short life. Did the band fulfil its almost unimaginable potential? As appreciative listeners, we should celebrate this fractiously disparate



Streets ahead of their peers: Cream at the peak of their powers

trio of superb musicians who cohered to make unique music that has indelibly secured its place in the public consciousness. Like hundreds of thousands of others, I missed out on a ticket for the Royal Albert Hall concerts in 2005, but I urge your readers to look at the video of "Sunshine Of Your Love" on YouTube for one telling reason if for nothing else. Amid all the tiresome fuss about Ginger's long-running fight with Jack Bruce, there's a point during Clapton's solo when Ginger embarks on a fill that suddenly causes Jack to break into a wide smile: he turns quickly to Ginger, who grins with delight in return. Who knows what it was about? A joke recalled from rehearsals? A frivolity at Eric's expense? I do know that for those few fleeting seconds at least, this fan's heart had cause to melt.

Nicholas Sack, Lewisham, London

RECALLING A RAVE UP

In response to your request for memories of The Marquee, I must tell you about The Yardbirds' Friday residencies. I used to go nearly every Friday for about three or four months in 1965 and was at the recordings of *Five Live Yardbirds*.

I was one of a few friends who would gather at the side of the stage, the guys in the band knew us well and used to invite us in to the band room, especially the girls among us, one specific night Eric [Clapton] and Chris [Dreya] invited me and my girlfriend Fran to a party in St John's Wood. Eric drove us there in his car (an old Vauxhall) where we proceeded to get wasted. I ended up on a sofa with Fran on one side and Eric on the other. On the Saturday morning we all went to a café for a fry-up, and Eric dropped Fran off in Highgate and me off in Islington. This shows what a nice guy Mr Clapton was and I imagine still is. Keep up the good work.

Dave Stanton, Somerset

MARQUEE MOONSHINE

Here are a couple of great moments from The Marquee. First, The Jam – as John's Boys – playing the whole album *Setting Sons*, pre-release, to a stunned and adoring crowd, and finishing off with an encore of "A' Bomb In Wardour Street". We exit to be confronted by a mob of skinheads baying for blood. There was a whiff of Mods in the air at their spiritual home, of course.

In seconds we are belting it down the road laughing at the tops of our voices, looking over shoulders at the silhouettes of two tribes fighting in the city. We all recognised the irony of that last great song in that location, but hadn't the time to stop and point it out to each other.

The second was less dramatic, but it was at the culmination of U2's dramatic rise to the top. I had followed them since their second gig at the Hope & Anchor. Still pretty sure there weren't more than 50 people at this less celebrated gig, but it was only when 'we' got to The Marquee that we realised that their greatness was assured. I remember feeling that they could never get better than this and live, that is, the argument holds true.

Fast forward several stadium gigs later, and we are at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff for their Vertigo tour. They start with songs deliberately chosen from those early days and I almost asphyxiate with excitement. Part of the blessing of music, and I mean blessing, is that it does allow us to relive the bliss of youth. Yes, laugh at us old fuckers with a full paunch of gut but no corresponding thatch up top, but our lives are important to us, and

that first taste of the forbidden promise of excitement stays with us for a reason. Because, for a few minutes, I was young again and the spirit of The Marquee, that greatest of clubs, was very much in the air again.

Pete Beynon, via email

OH! WOT A LEGEND

"Being yourself is the hardest trick of them all," Henry Miller once wrote, in a story about Auguste, a clown dedicated to making other people laugh. Kevin Ayers was one of the few people involved in the rock'n'roll business who managed truly to be himself. His authenticity and originality and the warmth and friendly simplicity of both his lyrics and music were often touching. I have been a Frank Zappa fan for over 35 years and I never considered one of Frank's strengths his hard work, even if the outcome of this is that we're still getting, 20 years after his death, lots of new great music. Be kind and pay respects to the jolly and talented cicada that Kevin Ayers has been. I hope that in one of your upcoming issues we'll get the opportunity to read a lot more about his work, life and times. Also it will be great to see him on your front cover; I feel this is the least that he deserves.

Minos Prinarakis, via email

FEELGOOD HERO

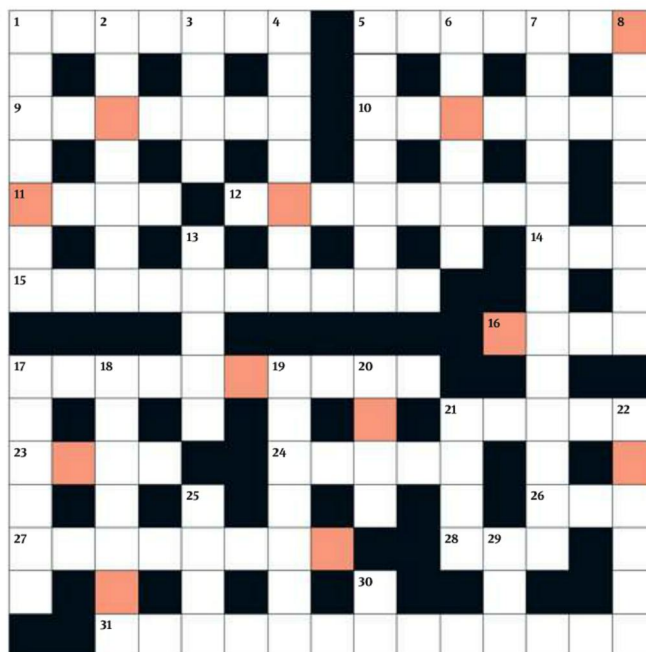
Thanks for the article about Wilko Johnson in the April 2013 issue of *Uncut* [Take 191]. I was truly moved by the honest and frank discussion that was so well reported. The details about the early Dr Feelgood days were interesting, because I only remember Wilko in The Blockheads and more recently appearing on Jools Holland's TV show. I admire Wilko for his approach to his illness and wish him all the very best.

Mark Jones, Rainham, Kent

KNEE ODDITY

I keep looking at the picture of David Bowie on the front cover of the April issue and there is one detail that disturbs me. The hole in the knee of his jeans reveals what appears to be a strip of white fabric. At first I wondered whether his jeans might have incredibly deep pockets, then I thought that maybe he had damaged his knee – the delayed effect of all those years caving around in platform-soled boots? – and was wearing one of those white elastic bandages favoured by tennis players. Or could it be, as part of the latest restyling of his image, David has taken to wearing cut-down long johns?

David Watson, via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Jeff Buckley. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* June 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: May 22, 2013. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Darn it! Eric puts his foot in it yet again (3-4)
- 5+17A 1967 Rolling Stones album from which no single was released (except for US version) (7-3-7)
- 9 The home of soul, blues and rock'n'roll is where Boz Scaggs is currently at (7)
- 10 A single mistake resulted in this being a chart entry for Pink Floyd (3-4)
- 11 (See 21 across)
- 12 In 1986 she charted with a cover of The Supremes' "You Keep Me Hanging On" (3-5)
- 14+24A Possibly sang live with legendary jazz musician (3-5)
- 15 "I won't be the lonely one sitting on my own and sad/A fifty year old reminiscing what I had", 2007 (6-4)
- 16 Album from New York punks Alice Donut that sounded a bit indistinct (4)
- 17 (See 5 across)
- 21+11A "I'd sit alone and watch your light/My only friend through teenage nights", 1984 (5-2-2)
- 23+3D Protest singer whose album included 'All The News That's Fit To Sing' (4-4)
- 24 (See 14 across)
- 26 Interpol number included by Tony Christie (1-1-1)
- 27 Life's too confusing for a Happy Mondays number (5-3)
- 28 (See 5 down)
- 31 Strangely pleased LP sank for Depeche Mode (5-3-5)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 "But you work in a shirt with your name tag on it, drifting apart like a plate tectonic", 2004 (2-2-3)
- 2 Albums by both Black Flag and Lambchop are not in the best condition (7)
- 3 (See 23 across)
- 4+19D New wave band who had a slight touch of the snooker balls as they went 'Naked' (7-3-4)
- 5+28A Blues-rock band formed in 1968 by ex-Jethro Tull member Mick Abrahams (7-3)
- 6 Not worth a button? U2 trousered plenty from this single (3-3)
- 7 She had 2010 hit with a cover of Elton John's "Your Song" (5-8)
- 8 Paul Young unable to communicate in French (2-6)
- 13 "He may not be a movie star, but when it comes to being happy, we are", 1964 (2-3)
- 17 Nick Cave song put back before ELO appear (6)
- 18 Alt. rock band who came out of 'The Back Room' (7)
- 19 (See 4 down)
- 20 Was this Bob Seger album saved from a flood of biblical proportions? (4)
- 21 Please reply in French to Pop Will Eat Itself (1-1-1-1)
- 22 Kings Of Leon are available for work outside normal hours (2-4)
- 25 Fronted by Martin Rossiter, their singles included "Olympian" (4)
- 29 Important start for Elvis Costello's subsidiary record label of Demon (3)
- 30 Echobelly album similar to 22 down but without the appeal (2)

ANSWERS: TAKE 191

ACROSS

- 1+5A Push The Sky Away,
- 9 No Quarter, 11 Haim,
- 12 Arc, 15 Uptight, 20 Hay, 21 Essence, 23 Ra, 24+2D It's Oh So Quiet, 29 Pooh, 31 Neon, 36 Subways, 37 Kerbdog

DOWN

- 1+27D Penthouse Tapes,
- 3+13A That Lady, 4+27A Extra Texture, 5 Surf City, 6 You'll See, 7 Would, 8+25D Your Town, 14 Truth, 16 Genius, 17+18A There Goes The Fear, 19 Eels, 22 Sex Bomb, 28+10A Black Uhuru, 32 End,

- 33 N-R-G, 34+30A LA Woman, 35+21D Mr Oizo

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Little Wonder"

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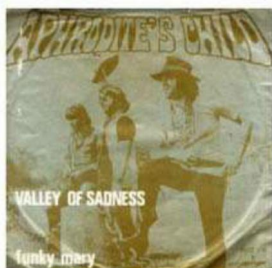
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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Kurt Vile

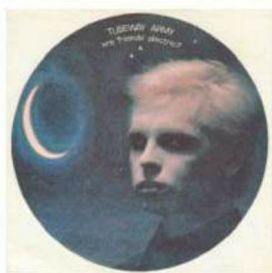
The constant hitmaker! The childish prodigy! The garage rock virtuoso picks his key jams. Involves analogue synths, Clarence White...



The record that taught me about prog pop

Valley Of Sadness Aphrodite's Child 1968

This is like music from another planet and part of that is Demis Roussos; he's from Egypt and lived in Greece, so I guess was influenced by the British Invasion. But they can all play incredibly well and the production values are way ahead of everybody else – it's so clean and everything is brilliantly isolated. It's so weird and out-there, and for so long I looked on this as a guilty pleasure.

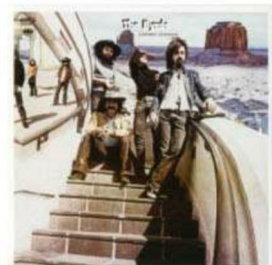


The synth hit I'd somehow overlooked

Are 'Friends' Electric? Tubeway Army 1979

I'm 33 and I've been into analogue synths since I was 20, but I had *Replicas* on my shelf forever and was just stuck on "Down In The Park". I didn't even realise this was on it. It has

this hypnotic, super-beautiful melodic thing going on and the drums – real, not programmed – are my favourite kind. They keep you travelling through a euphoric labyrinth of tones. Gary Numan's a very particular, precise individual.



A cover that improves on the original

Truck Stop Girl The Byrds 1970

This cover of the Little Feat song features late country guitar player Clarence White who invented the B-bender, which is that twang you hear a lot in country music. His voice is

really rough and gritty, but it's vulnerable and beautiful at the same time. It definitely kills the original, in my opinion. When I was in South America I wrote an ode to Clarence White, but I never released it.



One of post-punk's most underrated artists

A Quick Thing Nikki Sudden/ Rowland S Howard 1987

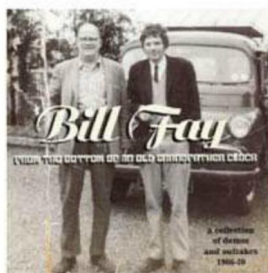
I love Swell Maps and I love Nikki Sudden, but Rowland S Howard is the key here for me. The slide guitars are slow and drugged-out and toward the end his voice is so low – he's just drawing everything out. There were guys like Johnny Thunders who were into their drugs and looked up to Keith Richards, but he was effortlessly the real thing; his music just rips your heart out.



A superior garage-rock anthem

Whiskey Woman Flamin' Groovies 1971

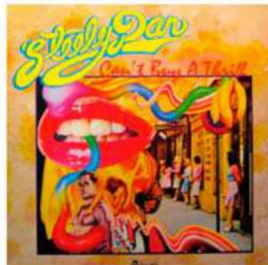
Even Keith Richards said these guys did the Stones better than the Stones. This is definitely garage-y, but it's very precise, and the guitars are bluesy and melodic, not just ballsy. It has an 'I'm-gonna-bust-outta-my-hometown' vibe, and when Cyril Jordan shouts "C'mon!", there's just the right amount of slapback delay on his vocals. It's about some hard-drinking woman, but sonically, it's an American anthem.



Part of the soundtrack to my Puerto Rican trip

Warwick Town Bill Fay c.1968

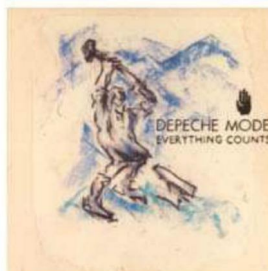
I got this song before I went on a trip to Puerto Rico and listened to it over and over. It's from an album of demos and outtakes; Decca signed him, but basically shelved every single he tried to put out. All the songs are melodic, but this one is grab-your-heart beautiful; you can tell he read a lot, because his words were so great. His polished pop was like Paul McCartney, but more... human.



One of my classic rock favourites

Only A Fool Would Say That Steely Dan 1972

My friend Stella [Mozgawa] from Warpaint played drums on my record and indirectly got me obsessed with Steely Dan. This has got so many great hooks in it; they could play circles around everybody else in LA then and had their own sleazy, funky thing going on. There's all kinds of satire, black humour and drug references, too. Lots of indie bands will put this down, because it just sounds cheesy to them, but...



My spur to using sequencers more

Everything Counts Depeche Mode 1983

In March 2012, on tour in South America and flying the same airline the whole time, I was listening to the same music selection, and the best of Depeche Mode was in that. "Everything Counts" was a popular song, but I'd missed it. There's such a beautiful melody there and the best synth and sequencer sounds; together, everything really makes you want to cry – in a good way. It's totally euphoric.

Kurt Vile's *Wakin On A Pretty Daze* is out now on Matador. He plays the Field Day festival in London on May 25.

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT: "He burst into the studio in a long black cape, carrying a walking stick with a lion's head with ruby eyes"

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