

Tame Impala

The new gods of psychedelic rock

"Throw roses in the rain/Waste your summer praying in vain/For a saviour to rise from these streets"

40 PAGES
OF REVIEWS

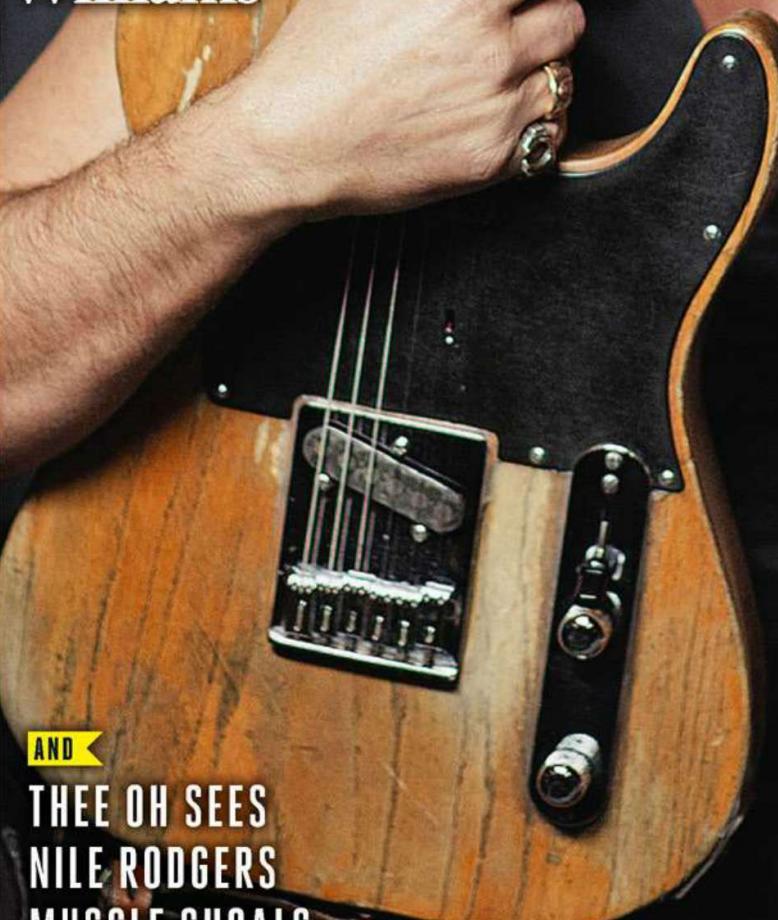
UNCUT

In Springsteen we trust...

BRUCE

'A light in the midst of darkness'

BY Richard Williams



AND

THEE OH SEES
NILE RODGERS
MUSCLE SHOALS
BOARDS OF CANADA

RODRIGUEZ

What next for the Sugar Man?

GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ARMY

'We still kicking ass!'

GEORGE JONES

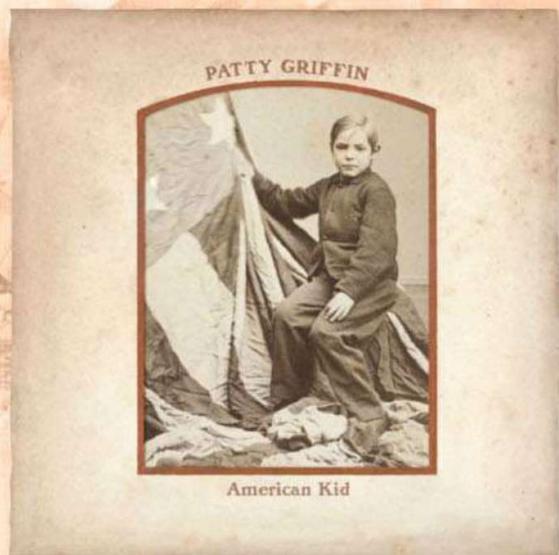
Farewell to 'The King Of Heartbreak'

JOHN FOGERTY

'The Grateful Dead had just put half a million people to sleep...'

PLUS

SPARKS
RICHIE HAVENS R.I.P.
MAVIS STAPLES & JEFF TWEEDY
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American Kid

THE NEW ALBUM FEATURING
THE SINGLE “OHIO”
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Are we rolling?



Nick Allbrook, with Pond, at Brighton's Great Escape festival, 2012

BEFORE MEETING HIM for the first time recently for the feature in this month's issue, I read a lot of interviews with Tame Impala's Kevin Parker in which he was variously cast as a brooding outsider, a sullen introvert, generally moody, an outcast, someone on the edge of things, inclined to solitary misery. In at least one magazine article, the words "tortured" and "genius" appeared in close proximity to describe him. I kept imagining him in the studio, sitting in a sandbox, like Brian Wilson, sadly damaged.

Of course, Parker turned out to be nothing like the lonely soul of journalistic legend, a view of him that had evidently been encouraged by not much more than a song he'd written called "Solitude Is Bliss" and the titles of Tame Impala's two albums, *Innerspeaker* and *Lonerism*. He barely recognised this version of himself, and neither did his Tame Impala bandmates, Jay Watson and Nick Allbrook, who also happen to be two of his oldest friends.

"Kevin is one of the least troubled people I know and not tortured at all," Jay told me, backstage at the Coachella festival, out there in the California desert, where Tame Impala were playing the weekend I met them. "It's funny how people want people in bands to be like cartoons. Like, Nick Cave's The Devil. Kevin's The Loner. It's all kind of true and all kind of bullshit, really. Everybody in a band becomes a generic personality eventually, even the most amazing and talented people."

"He's not done too badly out of it as an image, though," Nick said, tongue somewhere close to his cheek. "Almost as well as Jethro Tull did with their woodland aesthetic."

Jay and Nick, of course, have their own band, Pond, who last year released their fourth album, *Beard, Wives, Denim*, which Kevin produced and drummed on. I saw them at last year's Great Escape festival in Brighton, when they were truly mind-blowing, a head-spinning mix of Hendrix, MC5, early Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin, loud enough to wake the long-time dead. "Kevin's always had a knack for writing catchy songs," Nick said. "We've always been more interested in making people's ears bleed."

It turned out they have a new album – *Hobo Rocket* – set for June release and have also already written its follow-up, the wonderfully titled, *Man, It Feels Like Space Again*. How would they describe *Hobo Rocket*?

"Half an hour of pummelling feedback," Jay said. "If you liked the live show, you'll love it." Tame Impala's schedule means they won't be able to tour behind the album, which turned out to be not much of a problem for them.

"We've thought of a way around that," Nick said. "We're going to film a set of us playing the whole album in our garage with a flag from a different country behind us for each song. We'll put it up on YouTube as Pond's 2013 World Tour."

I was thrilled to hear there was a new album due, but just as eager to find out more about Pond backing former Can singer Damo Suzuki last year in Perth. "It was absolutely fucking awesome," Jay recalls. "One of the guys wanted to rehearse, but you're apparently not allowed to rehearse. He hates it. We barely even had a sound-check. He just turns up and does his thing. Kevin was playing drums with us that night and he said, 'Why don't we do that thing we were doing at the sound check?' Damo was appalled. It all had to be entirely improvised."

How did he come to be in Perth, which is a bit mind-boggling in itself? "He's been to Australia a million times," Jay says. "He'll go anywhere. All you have to do is book him, pick him up somewhere and cook him dinner."

"Actually," Nick says, "he cooks you dinner. He's a better chef than he is anything else. That's no blight on anything else he does. It's just that he's an amazing fucking chef. Tempura watermelon for entrée, that sort of thing. It was fucking incredible."

Man Jones

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring JEFF TWEEDY & MAVIS STAPLES | BOARDS OF CANADA | THEE OH SEES

Shoals survivors

Swampers, Stones and seminal records... A new movie examines the remarkable history of Muscle Shoals studios, Alabama





"A hell of a session..."
Wilson Pickett and
Duane Allman in
FAME Studios, 1968



FAME founder
Rick Hall in his
studio, 1968

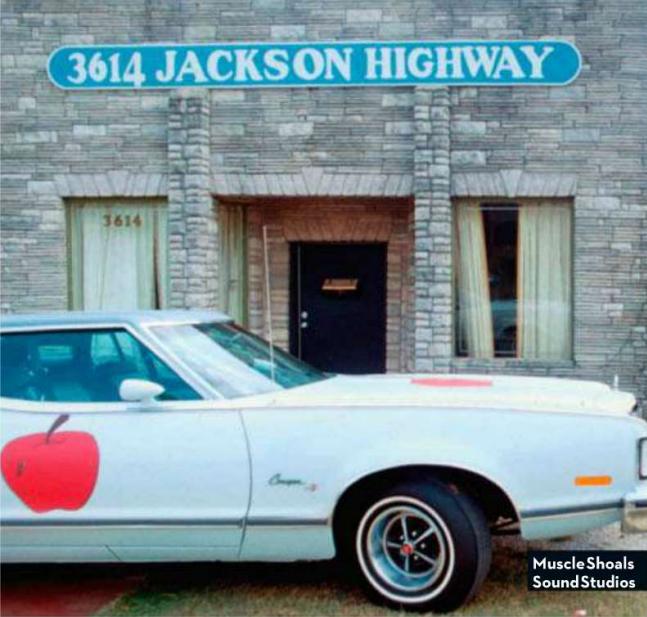
AS GREGG ALLMAN tells it, history was made during a lunch break in Muscle Shoals. In the segregated American South, in the late '60s, it wasn't done for a white man and a black man to be seen taking a meal together. Allman recalls how his brother Duane, then a session musician at Muscle Shoals' FAME Studios, and Wilson Pickett "stayed back" one lunch break. "My brother went up to Wilson, and said, 'Why don't you cut 'Hey Jude', The Beatles' song?' It was a hell of a session." As Jimmy Johnson, guitarist with the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section confirms, "That was the beginning of Southern Rock."

Pickett's "Hey Jude" is one of many landmark recordings made in Colbert County, Alabama, at FAME Studios or, later, the Muscle Shoals Sound Studios. That session – along with others by Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Otis Redding, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, Traffic and more – is commemorated in an illuminating new documentary, *Muscle Shoals*.

Director Greg Camalier began work on the film in 2009, after a cross-country drive from New York City to New Mexico took him to Muscle Shoals for an overnight stop. Surprised that no-one had made a film before about the city's rich musical heritage, Camalier set up meetings with Rick Hall, who founded FAME Studios in 1959 in Florence, Alabama before relocating to Muscle Shoals two years later, and session musicians Jimmy Johnson and bassist David Hood. Says Camalier, "They had some trepidation as to whether this thing would get finished because they'd been approached by 20 to 30 film crews over the decades, and nothing had ever come of it."

As much as Camalier's film is a vivid document of the incredible music recorded in

GETTY IMAGES



Muscle Shoals Sound Studios

→ the city, it's also a tribute to the many backroom players involved in the story. Chief among them is Hall, a man with a formidable moustache, whose Camalier describes as "a classic American figure". Hall's back story – a sawmiller's son, he lost his first wife and his father under tragic circumstances in quick succession – left him "baptised by fire", according to Camalier. "He was a survivor who had determination and tenacity like no other. He really wanted to escape the life he was born into. Failure wasn't an option to him. He's an incredible character still, an amazing guy."

Alongside Hall, Camalier focuses on Johnson, Hood and drummer Roger Hawkins, who as "the Swampers" – the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section – helped Hall build FAME before decamping in 1969 to open the rival Muscle Shoals Sound Studios with the assistance of Atlantic Records boss, Jerry Wexler. "It was like we had thrown shit on his dreams," says Hood in the film. As Camalier sees it, the film is "a celebration of these individuals from

"It was a great place to record 'cos in that town in the late '60s, there weren't nothing else to do, bro"

down there, to tell their tale".

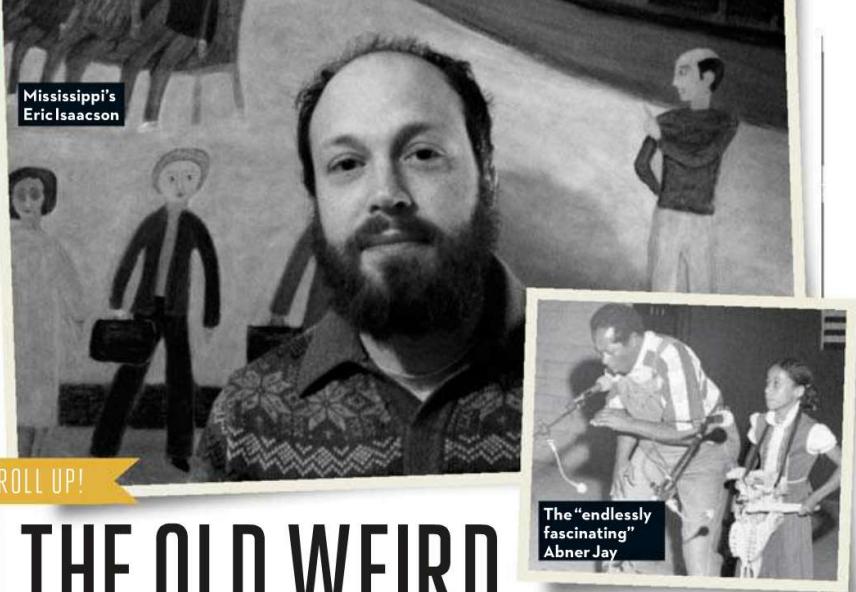
To assist in the telling, Camalier has assembled an impressive roster of talking heads, from Aretha Franklin and Wilson Pickett to Bono, Steve Winwood and the Stones. Keith Richards remembers the Stones' fabled December 2-4, 1969 sessions at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios that produced "Wild Horses", "Brown Sugar" and "You Gotta Move" as "one of the easiest and rockin'est sessions that we'd ever done. I don't think we've been quite so prolific, ever. We cut three or four tracks in two days and that for the Stones is going some. I always wanted to go back there and cut more. *Exile* would probably have been cut in Muscle Shoals."

Speaking to *Uncut*, Gregg Allman remembers his own formative experiences recording in Muscle Shoals, as a member of the Hour Glass, in 1968: "We met people like David Hood and Jimmy Johnson, and all those great people down there. It was a great place to record because in that particular town at that time in the late '60s, there weren't nothing else to do, bro. If you weren't recording, you better be finding something to do. The place was dry. Being one of the first studios I'd ever been in, I remember the doors, I remember when we left there my shoulders and back were real sore because the doors were so heavy. But they had anything you needed, microphones, any kind of amps. They were loaded, always."

MICHAEL BONNER

Muscle Shoals opens in the UK in October 2013

Mississippi's Eric Isaacson



ROLL UP!

THE OLD WEIRD AMERICAN ROADSHOW...

The Mississippi Records carnival rolls into Britain. Involves a singer who channels angels and a 100-year-old "black Bob Dylan"...

ERIC ISAACSON ADMITS that there's something desperate about the business of running Portland, Oregon's Mississippi Records. For the past eight years, his cultish, respected reissues label has been releasing limited-run vinyl pressings of (mainly) old blues, folk, gospel, country and global indigenous music. This despite the fact that, in Isaacson's view, "contemporary culture, at least in America, does not value the preservation of art, music and film. The desperation comes into play in that you're fanatically believing culture is of great worth in a world that doesn't agree too often." Spreading some of that fervent belief is one aim of his audio-visual tour of the UK and Europe in June and July.

I Don't Feel At Home In This World Anymore is an edutainment show in four parts, the most gee-wow of which is perhaps the showing of rare footage shot by Alan Lomax between 1978 and 1985 for the *American Patchwork* series. Isaacson's selections – on loan from the Association For Cultural Equity – include bluesman Bishop Perry Tillis, who claims to channel angels and so sings in their voices; banjo player Sheila Kay Adams; gospel singer/guitarist Rev Louis Overstreet and his four sons; and one-man-band Abner Jay, who plays from his homemade stage/trailer.

"I'm just showing a small sliver that was edited down from a small sliver the Alan Lomax Archive gave me access to,"

Isaacson explains. "[Curator and Kentucky fingerpicker] Nathan Salsburg is visiting Europe later this year to show more and play music. There is so much great footage it could fuel hundreds of projects; I've just chosen the cream of the crop as I see it."

Alongside the Lomax material, Isaacson will also show videos from Mississippi's own archive, make a short presentation telling his label's story and play music from its catalogue, which reaches as far back as 1890. "I've fitted the presentation together as a romanticised, incomplete and very personal version of the history of underground music movements," he says. "I'm no academic or archivist. All I bring is enthusiasm for under-represented art. I've been lucky enough to be granted access to this film and music, and I'm sharing the bits I find most inspiring."

Isaacson admits he's most excited about introducing audiences to Abner Jay. "He called himself the black Bob Dylan. He claimed he was over 100 years old, said he had 16 kids, travelled the country as a troubadour and released all his own records. He did all of this with the utmost sincerity and artfulness. He's endlessly fascinating to me." **SHARON O'CONNELL**

The Mississippi Roadshow rolls into ATP Camber Sands (June 21-23), Bristol Cube (24) Cheltenham Venue TBA (25), Birmingham Vivid Projects (26), Glasgow Glad Café (27), Cardiff Chapter Arts Ctr (30), London Café Oto (July 1) and Bradford 1 In 12 Club (2)

THREE OF THE BEST MISSISSIPPI RECORDS

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Sticks Over My Shoulder
Recordings of idiosyncratic Georgia bluesmen made by musicologist/producer George Mitchell from 1979-1981.

8/10

VARIOUS ARTISTS

I Don't Feel At Home In This World Anymore
A collection of blues, country and US roots music recorded between 1927-48. Features tejano star Lydia Mendoza

8/10

ALEMAYEHU ESHETE

Alemayehu Eschte
Singles recorded between 1967-74 by "the Ethiopian Elvis", who blended R'n'B, Afro-jazz, soul and rock'n'roll with traditional indigenous music.

8/10

"It was like Mavis Unplugged..."
Mavis Staples, 2013

"Oh Tweedy, don't look at me!"

Jesus wept! MAVIS STAPLES and JEFF TWEEDY do it again...

HERE HAVE BEEN many landmarks in the long career of Mavis Staples, but even she must have been a little surprised to find herself collecting the Best Americana Album Grammy in 2011 for *You Are Not Alone*, her collaboration with Wilco's Jeff Tweedy. Staples is many things – a great soul and gospel singer and, as a member of the Staple Singers, an artist in the forefront of the Civil Rights movement. But if she can be categorised as Americana, it's in the most inclusive definition of the term.

Her second collaboration with Tweedy, *One True Vine*, is a stark, moving affair, with that rich, expressive voice to the fore. "I told Tweedy, that was the way we used to sing, with just Pops' guitar," says Staples. "We didn't have a rhythm section. I really enjoyed singing like that. It was like Mavis Unplugged."

"When we first talked, she wanted to make a record with just me," says Tweedy. "So I started there, and as we moved forward through the songs I felt compelled to flesh some of them out a little." Tweedy plays all the instruments, accompanied only by his son Spencer on drums.

The song selection is diverse, but Staples has no difficulty bending Low's "Holy Ghost" and Funkadelic's "Can You Get To That" into shape. There's also a great new Nick Lowe song, "Far Celestial Shores", and Tweedy's contributions include the stark "Jesus Wept".

"When Tweedy was playing that song for me, I said: 'Oh my God, I'm

weeping,'" recalls Staples. "Tweedy said: 'Mavis, are you crying?' I said, 'Oh Tweedy, don't look at me'. It just hit me, I felt it so strong. It just took me to another place."

"These songs are just old memories," she continues. "'Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed On Jesus', we would sing every Sunday in church when I was a kid. Jeff and his family all came to my sister Cleethie's [Cleetha] wake recently. She just passed this year, and I had the entire congregation sing that song. I tell you, it just felt so good."

"And the thing about 'What Are They Doing In Heaven Today' – that song made me really think: I wonder, what are they doing? Is my mother making sweet potato pie? Is Pops playing his guitar? It's a good feeling that you get from singing these songs."

The sense that Staples is engaged in a conversation with her past is underscored by the inclusion of an old Staple Singers favourite, "I Like The Things About Me". "That was one of my

favourite songs that I loved to hear Pops singing," says Staples. "I enjoyed singing it, too. I know I can't sing it like Pops, but I tried my best and I know he's smiling."

The song also includes surprisingly fierce guitar from Tweedy. "I was happy that that survived," he says. "Part of me wondered if it was going to raise any eyebrows, but every time it came up, Mavis and her sister, Yvonne, would both go crazy, like it was the coolest thing they ever heard. Any time you think you're gonna blow Mavis' mind, she's way ahead of you. It's hard not to be a little ageist at times, and then realise that she played with Jimi Hendrix."

Staples is especially fond of the title track, with a bleakly optimistic Tweedy lyric about pain and salvation. "'One True Vine' made my skin crawl on my bones," says Staples. "I said: 'Ohhh Tweedy, you have done it now! You're going to make me come out there and shake you!'" *ALASTAIR MCKAY*

One True Vine is out June 24 on Anti-



Jeff Tweedy and Mavis Staples recording *One True Vine*

A QUICK ONE

► *Elvis Presley's* last major studio sessions are released together for the first time in a single package as *Elvis At Stax: Deluxe Edition*, a 40th anniversary 3CD boxset of 55 tracks recorded at the Memphis studio over 12 sessions in June and December, 1973. The boxset is released on August 5 and comes with detailed liner notes by Presley scholar, Robert Gordon. A single CD of highlights will be released at the same time, called *Elvis At Stax*.

► *All Tomorrow's Parties* may have confirmed that their regular weekend events will come to an end, but they will be going in some style. Two *End Of An Era* events have been announced for November 22-24 and November 29-December 1 at Pontins at Camber Sands. The highlight of Part 1 will be a set from Television, who perform *Marquee Moon*. Chelsea Light Moving, Dinosaur Jr and Les Savy Fav are also on the bill. Part 2 features the reformed Loop, The Pop Group and 23 Skidoo.

► Former Hüsker Dü drummer/singer/songwriter *Grant Hart* releases his first album for Domino on July 22. *Argument* is a 20-track double album, based on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Hart and band The Burn/Burning will tour ahead of the album's release, including a date at the London Water Rats on June 18.

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Photos? What sell-outs... the mysterious Boards Of Canada: (l-r) Michael Sandison, Marcus Eoin

Cracking the enigma code

Boards Of Canada return with new album, mysteriously...

IT ALL STARTED with a piece of vinyl. On Record Store Day 2013, a mysterious 12-inch appeared in the racks of Manhattan's Other Music. The record itself featured a brief snippet of shimmering synth and a robotic voice intoning a six-digit code. The austere brown sleeve placed this code in a 36-number key, and revealed the sounds' makers: Boards Of Canada.

In 2013, a certain woozy musical nostalgia is in fashion, sounds of the past filtered through gauzy, psychedelic textures. But when Boards Of Canada's debut, *Music Has The Right To Children*, appeared in 1998, it had a black swan quality. The work of Mike Sandison and Marcus Eoin, brothers from a remote coastal town in northern Scotland, its sound stood at some remove from the computer futurism of their peers; a pastoral, analogue electronica that dwelt on the past with serene but disquieting effect. Interviews were rare, live shows rarer. This, along with themes of occultism, numerology and the Branch Davidian sect, would weave a mystique around the project – a mystique the pair have occasionally appeared keen to unpick. In a 2005 interview to promote *The Campfire Headphase*, Sandison said they were seeking something sunnier. "People were understanding things from our music that we didn't put in there... an evil undercurrent. And that became more important than the music itself."

For their return, however, Boards seem to be indulging their fanbase's thirst for enigma.

Another vinyl record with a different number popped up at Rough Trade's flagship store in Shoreditch. Radio 1 and NPR both played audio snippets revealing new numbers from the code, while US cable network Adult Swim screened a brief advert that depicted a drive through a US desertscape shot on wobbly Super 8, culminating with six more digits. Theories ricocheted around the internet. Were these map references, relating to the duo's adopted hometown of Edinburgh? Or perhaps they had something to do with 'numbers stations' – short-wave radio broadcasts, thought to be used by intelligence services to send covert or encrypted messages?

The code, eventually, was cracked. Inputted into a website, the cipher booted a page announcing that *Tomorrow's Harvest*, the duo's fourth album, would appear June 2013. A listen to the record at Warp Records' London headquarters suggests the last eight years have not been spent in vain. Clocking in at just over an hour, it sounds both quintessentially Boards, and also like a honing of their craft. The optimistic tones of *The Campfire Headphase* have receded slightly, a more ineffable mood dominating. There are raga-like drones, washes of John Carpenter-like arpeggiated synth, melodies that explode like sudden lens-flare, and rhythms that forsake the skitter of IDM for something more gently, but robustly propulsive.

Discerning a concept within *Tomorrow's Harvest*



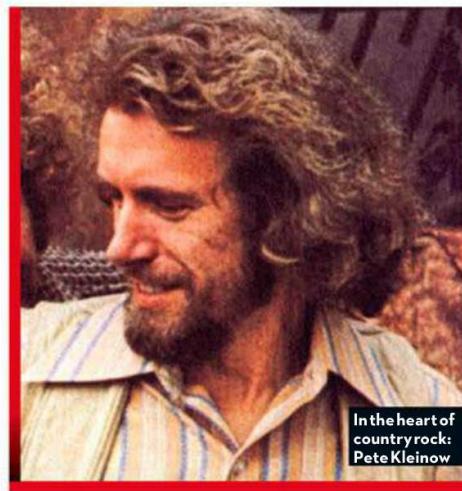
is some job. Some track titles ("Uritual", "Semena Mervykh") defy explanation; others gesture ambiguously to very Boards concerns

("Jacquard Causeway" may be a reference to the Jacquard loom, a rudimentary mechanical computer). It is music that revels in the power of suggestion, encouraging the listener to focus on minuscule detail, Magic Eye-like, until some no-doubt imagined narrative of international espionage or environmental collapse pops out. On "Telepath", a continuity announcer counts up a number scale, before starting from scratch, this time missing numbers along the way. Voices loom from the fog, conversational fragments float free: "...this is quite close... blatantly concealed..."

Yet for all the misdirection – perhaps in part because of it – tracks like "New Seeds" and "Palace Posy" feel on a par with anything in Boards' catalogue. Meanwhile, that first piece of vinyl just sold on eBay for \$5,700 – and according to Warp's Steven Hill, there are a couple of discs unaccounted for. "It's hard to say," he puzzles. "Maybe people have bought them and haven't shared them. Or maybe they're still to be found."

LOUIS PATTISON

Tomorrow's Harvest is released by Warp, June 10



In the heart of country rock: Pete Kleinow

AND ON PEDAL STEEL... SNEAKY PETE KLEINOW

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

► Although most famous for his time spent playing with The Flying Burrito Brothers, pedal steel guitarist Sneaky (aka Sneaky) Pete Kleinow actually left the group in 1971 for the more lucrative world of session playing. He figured on albums by Joe Cocker, Little Feat, Frank Zappa, John Lennon and Fleetwood Mac, among many others. By the 1980s, he had returned to his old job of creating special effects for Hollywood movies – his work can be seen in such films as *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Right Stuff*, *Gremlins* and *The Terminator* –

before being tempted back into the studio with Medicine, The Lemonheads and, alongside Garth Hudson, in *Burrito Deluxe*.

KEY SESSIONS: Joni Mitchell's *Blue*, Joe Cocker's *Joe Cocker!*, Frank Zappa's *Waka/Jawaka*, John Lennon's *Mind Games*, Little Feat's *Sailin' Shoes*, Delaney & Bonnie And Friends' *To Bonnie From Delaney*, Stevie Wonder's *Fulfillingness' First Finale*, Fleetwood Mac's *Heroes Are Hard To Find*, The Bee Gees' *Life In A Tin Can*, and Linda Ronstadt's *Heart Like A Wheel*. PHIL KING



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Model shown is New RAV4 Invincible 2.2 AWD from £28,195. Offer excludes metallic paint extra £495. Prices correct at time of publication and include VAT, delivery charge, number plates, 1 year's road fund licence and £55 first registration fee. 5 year / 100,000 mile manufacturer's warranty is subject to terms and conditions. New RAV4 range Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 30.7 (9.4) - 49.6 (5.7), Extra Urban 46.3 (6.1) - 64.2 (4.4), Combined 39.2 (7.3) - 57.6 (4.9). CO₂ Emissions from 176g/km - 127g/km The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

THE WHITE STRIPES

Nine Miles From The White City

THIRD MAN

Unthinkably, *Elephant* is 10 years old. To celebrate, Third Man are releasing this Chicago live set from 2003. You're quite right – it does come on red-and-white vinyl.

JULIA HOLTER

TBA DOMINO

Following the classically themed *Tragedy* and *Ekstasis*, this one finds Holter painting on a larger canvas – fewer pop songs, but some involving electronic/vocal music nonetheless.



IASOS

Celestial Soul

Portrait NUMERO GROUP

Greek ambient pioneer – website in rainbow colours, you know the kind – compiled by the magnificent reissue label. Historic drones.

HOUNDSTOOTH

Beachbummer/Francis N/A

The Portland group offer some enduringly attractive, girl-group-tinged indie pop. Reverb-drenched, naturally.

MASTER MUSICIANS OF BUKKAKE

Far West IMPORTANT

A power electronics racket, tribal drumming and fluid kosmische. Randall Dunn and his mysterious collective have returned.

BITCHIN BAJAS

Bitchitronics DRAG CITY

In the same camp as the above, BB mine a deep seam of 1970s ambient analogica. Nice Frippertronic guitar is a feature of this one.

OBLIVIANS

Desperation IN THE RED

A garage legend, Jack "countless bands, all fairly similar" Yarber releases his first album for 16 years. Some fine Luddite jams.

PHIL YOST

Bent City TAKOMA

A dark crate find from John Fahey's label. It's 1967 – Yost is making indie/loops/jazz which sound a bit like Boards Of Canada. Reissue!

THE CAIRO GANG

Tiny Rebels EMPTY CELLAR

Emmett Kelly's collaborations with Bonnie 'Prince' Billy are one part of his skillset. This new one features his take on Rowland S Howard's "Shivers".

DATE PALMS

The Dusted Sessions THRILL JOCKEY

Stroboscopic synth/rock drones, with a dark groove. If you slowed down a Wooden Shjips record, this is what it would sound like.

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



Thee Oh team:
(l-r) Mike Shoun,
Brigid Dawson,
Petey Dammit,
John Dwyer

WE'RE NEWISH HERE

THEE OH SEES

Recommended this month:
John Dwyer's unstoppable
garage-rock juggernaut

NOT EVEN JOHN Dwyer is sure how many albums he's released in a prolific career that has taken in half-a-dozen bands, including 10 years at the front of garage-psych barnstormers Thee Oh Sees. "I have no idea but I do have a copy of everything," he says. "I started an archive and had to buy all these records from eBay hoarders and labels I don't get along with any more."

Dwyer talks fast without rambling, eager to make his point and move on. That matches his musical output, where albums come thick and fast and no two are much alike. The latest, *Floating Coffin*, came out in April. "For this one, we set aside time when we weren't touring to try to sort it out," he says. "We record almost completely live – vocals, keyboards, guitar and drums all at the same time. We did five days recording [*it usually takes four*], and two mixing and came out with an album, an EP and a single."

Thee Oh Sees aren't easy to categorise, taking in garage, punk, psych and Krautrock that make them toe-tapping and ear-popping in equal measure. *Floating Coffin* brings a distinctive metal tinge to their palette on songs like "Night Crawler" and "Toe Cutter – Thumb Buster", though still filtered through a hallucinatory kaleidoscope and surrounded by mellower tunes like the crypto-funk "Maze Fancier" and the slow waltz of "Minotaur".

"Yeah, when we were recording I thought it was getting too metal, but nobody else has really picked up on it," says Dwyer. "There's a lot of heaviness and drop tuning, it's my memory of metal. I was

a total hasher. There was a lot of death metal in Rhode Island where I grew up."

Although Dwyer is undoubtedly leader of Thee Oh Sees, Brigid Dawson and Pete Dammit play important roles. Dawson shares vocals and plays

organ while Dammit plays a guitar fed through a bass amp. The lineup has released at least a dozen albums, depending on how you count them. "We've been together nearly 10 years," says Dwyer. "Nobody has to work outside the band unless they want to, I try to keep everybody above water and split it about even, so it's in everybody's interests to fucking behave."

Dwyer lives in San Francisco, where he is heralded as the lynchpin of a scene that includes Ty Segall and The Fresh & Onlys, Dwyer having put out both their debuts on his Castle Face label. *Floating Coffin* also came out on Castle Face.

"I couldn't be happier with that decision," he says. "The reason I started the label was that I wanted to put out my own stuff, and somewhere along the way I got sidetracked. But I've been saving up and I really want to take the label more seriously, put out new bands and reissue bands that never got much love the first time. I want to use it to show where my inspiration came from. If people like my

band and listen to these, they might hear some interesting stuff."

PETER WATTS

I'M YOUR FAN

"Thee Oh Sees set my brain on fire. They have it all: hypnotic, experimental, melodic, atonal, primitive, sophisticated, pure celebration without a hint of condescension."

**Lou Barlow,
Sebadoh/
Dinosaur Jr**



Floating Coffin is out now on Castle Face. See page 81 for 'How To Buy' John Dwyer

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

...LIKE CLOCKWORK



OUT 3RD JUNE



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GLORY DAYS

Your guide to this month's free CD

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1 PARQUET COURTS

Stoned And Starving

We kick off rowdily – as we so often do – with the centrepiece from the second release from the much-talked-about Brooklyn-out-of-Texas quartet. At five minutes, it's an epic in comparison to the rest of the album, which packs another 14 songs into 28 glorious minutes.



The Handsome Family

2 DENISON WITMER

Keep Moving Brother, Keep Moving Sister

A dreamy, beguiling melody and a hymn to self-discovery from the Pennsylvanian introvert's ninth and perhaps most satisfying album to date. Asthmatic Kitty label boss and key influence Sufjan Stevens is among those lending a hand.

3 THEE OH SEES

No Spell

You can tick the myriad influences – garage aesthetic, Krautrock propulsion, ethereal dreampop vocals. But a potent spark of originality illuminates this standout track from the startlingly fine new album from John Dwyer and his prolific Bay Area crew, currently at the very top of their game.

4 GENERATIONALS

Spinoza

Smart, hook-laden guitar-pop on the breezy opening track from the New Orleans duo's third album – and a wonderful, tightly wound guitar solo that bears the unmistakable influence of The Cure's mighty Robert Smith.

5 WILLIE NILE

American Ride

The title track from the eighth album by the veteran, Springsteen-endorsed NYC songwriter is a

widescreen, state-of-the-nation epic, name-checking Elvis and Al Green, and drawing inspiration from such landmark precursors as *Blood On The Tracks* and "American Pie".

6 THE HANDSOME FAMILY

Caterpillars

Americana's original odd couple walk on the wild side again with an everyday tale of a woman struck by lightning who is awakened from her coma by radio waves from outer space. That's when the caterpillars take over, obviously. Find it on their ninth album, *Wilderness*.

7 LADY LAMB THE BEEKEEPER

Bird Balloons

Never mind the whimsical stage name. The self-recorded debut from Portland video-store worker Aly Spaltro brims with unpredictable, incisive and improbably fierce songs, such as this fractious tale of desire, regret, betrayal and revenge.

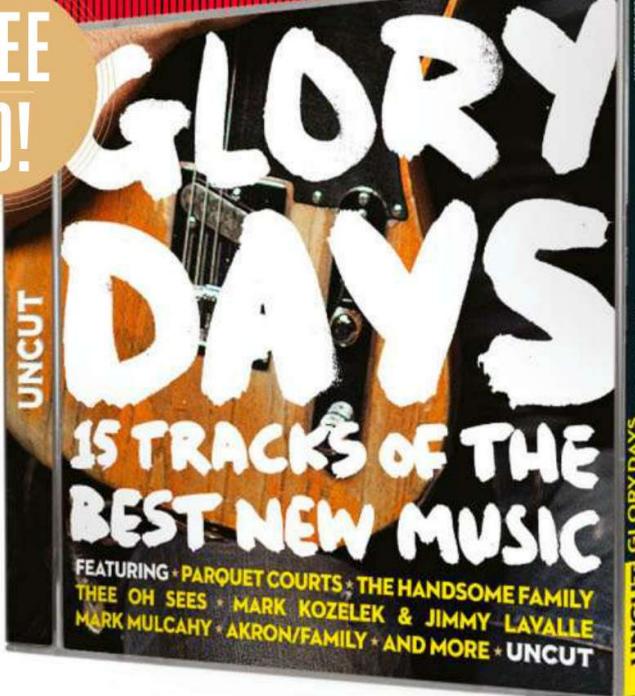
8 STEVE GUNN

Lurker

The sometime Black Twig Pickers/Hiss Golden Messenger collaborator shows he's not only a fine virtuoso guitarist in the Takoma school but



Parquet Courts



also an affecting singer-songwriter, who sounds like he's been hanging out on JJ Cale's back porch.

9 THE BAPTIST GENERALS

Dog That Bit You

Chris Flemmons' lo-fi Texans have taken a decade to follow up 2003's *No Silver/No Gold*, trashing an entire album along the way because "it sounded like any other indie rock-type band". With a touch of Crazy Horse and a taste of Joe Walsh, they've found their own singular path on this splendidly ramshackle album opener.

10 SUUNS

2020

Pulsing narco rhythms, sleazy electro boogie and neurotic, fragmentary vocals from the second album from Ben Shemie and his Montreal band, expansively outgrowing the Clinic comparisons that greeted their 2010 debut, *Zeroes QC*.

Jesse Merchant." A fine case of less is more.

11 MARK MULCAHY

I Taketh Away

Another welcome return, after an eight-year silence since the former Miracle Legion lynchpin's *In Pursuit Of Your Happiness* in 2005. An insistent but freewheeling melody, characteristically wry lyrics and that tremulous trademark voice all remind us of what we've been missing.

12 JBM

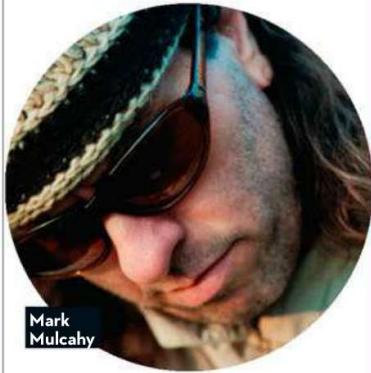
Winter Ghosts

Exquisitely crafted melancholy and haunting vocals from the second album by the enigmatic Canadian singer-songwriter, whose website biography consists of the single sentence: "JBM is the music of

13 DEADSTRING BROTHERS

Like A California Wildfire

Aching, old school country-rock from Kurt Marschke's Detroit band, all floating keyboards and weeping pedal steel with Masha Marjieh's vocal foils playing the part of Emmylou to perfection. Find it on the band's fizzing fifth album, *Cannery Row*.



14 AKRON/FAMILY

Whole World Is Watching

Brain-melting psych-rock delirium and a cavernous wall of sound from the experimental Brooklyn scene-makers' seventh album, now down to a trio of Dana Janssen, Seth Olinsky and Miles Seaton.

15 MARK KOZELEK/ JIMMY LAVALLE

Somehow The Wonder Of Life Prevails

One of those felicitous projects that starts as a single track but works so well it blossoms into a full album, as Kozelek's ruminative storytelling is transplanted into a minimalist electronic soundscape of synths and beats by The Album Leaf's multi-instrumentalist, Lavalle.

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AN AUDIENCE WITH...

John Fogerty

Interview: Michael Bonner

The Creedence Clearwater Revival man on Woodstock, Robert Johnson and The Black Keys: "For once I got to tell my kids about a new band I'd heard first!"

TOO MUCH DETAIL all the time," says John Fogerty towards the end of our interview. Indeed, Fogerty has spent the previous hour answering your questions in almost forensic detail, whether it's recalling the precise location of Creedence Clearwater Revival's fabled rehearsal studios, Cosmo's Factory, dispelling myths around their Woodstock performance or offering a view on the solo career of his late brother and onetime estranged bandmate, Tom. This month, Fogerty has a new album out – *Wrote A Song For Everyone* – in which he's re-recorded many of his best-known songs as duets with artists including Dawes, MMJ, Allen Toussaint and the Foo Fighters. Its release affords us the chance to chat about that incredible run of hits he enjoyed as CCR's singer-songwriter, and even allows him to reveal his current feelings about his ex-bandmates: "If we were all around to do it today, it would be a different story. As you get older, you get a chance to cool off and things aren't so urgent. You become a grown-up about a lot of stuff."

STAR QUESTION

Is it true that you are also a drummer, and that you were a huge John Bonham fan?

Dave Grohl

It's true that I was a drummer and that I am a huge John Bonham fan. Dave's a really wonderful man. He's incredibly intense. [Foo Fighters' version of "Fortune Son"] caused me to push myself to higher levels. People say that Creedence was a roots rock'n'roll band. I don't know if that was really true, but 40 years later it seems like a good fit. That's kind of what we do. It was just a lot of fun. We follow the trail backwards.

I read that CCR's original Cosmo's Factory rehearsal studio was somewhere in Berkeley. What was it like?

Will Johnson, Long Beach, CA

It was on 5th St, just off Gillman. At one point, we'd rehearsed in Tom's garage in the afternoon in El Cerrito.

The police showed up so we moved to a little shack behind [Creedence drummer] Doug Clifford's house. Anyway, the police showed up at that place, too. So now we needed a place to rehearse where we wouldn't bother anybody, so we went to the warehouse area and found a big, empty space which we fixed up. The cover on the album *Cosmo's Factory* is a small portion that we hung drapes around and laid carpet on the floor so it wouldn't have that big, hollow warehouse sound. The people next door started a few months after us, the North Face, who make camping and outdoor equipment. There was a few guys working next door, sewing sleeping bags. They said, "Wow, we can hear you guys through the wall, it really is kind of cool." Now they own the whole block, or something.

What are your memories of the time you spent in the Army Reserve unit in the late '60s?

Benjamin Steward, Weybridge
We were all young guys that were trying to start our life as adults. On

my active duty, I was in Fort Bragg, Fort Knox, where they have the gold vault. It's also the Armour Center, so I remember a lot of jeeps. As a matter of fact, at Fort Knox I believe I saw Elvis' signature on a wall. It said, 'Elvis Presley '58'. Now everyone would have a cell phone and take pictures, but back then nobody had a camera so I just had to remember it. I was also at a place called Fort Lee, Virginia, that was my active duty. I remember that time as being when the army conflicted with what I was trying to do as a musician, and of course you had to shave your head and go to meetings. It interfered with the musical career, but I look at my friendships from then very fondly.

Who were The Shit Kicker 3?

Harper McLean, Butte, Montana

Back in the day when Tom had left Creedence, I had bought myself a pedal-steel guitar, a Sho Bud Maverick. Anyway, it only had three pedals so I figured I could manage that. I never got really, really good, I just got to where I could kind of make noise on it. But

after the concerts, when the trio of Creedence was out on tour, we'd go back to a designated party room in the hotel we were staying in and we would play other songs, not just our own hits. Because I was sitting at a steel guitar, I tended to pick songs that would lend themselves to that style. We didn't pretend we were good at this. It was just a lot of fun.

There have been many cover versions of Creedence songs; do you have a favourite, and why?

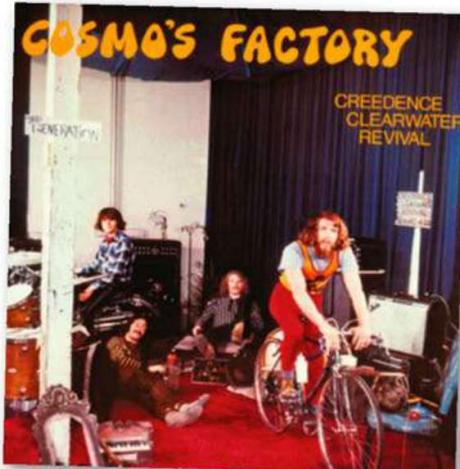
Garry Thomas, Christchurch, New Zealand

I'd have to start off by mentioning the Ike & Tina Turner version of "Proud Mary". It was just so full of new and wonderful things. The idea that she had a slow intro to it, then suddenly all hell breaks lose. That was an amazing record. There was a fella called Al Wilson, and he did a version of "Lodi" and that was on the radio here at the time, back in 1969 or so. Solomon Burke's "Proud Mary" was very nice at the time. Stylistically, at least, to have somebody like that cover your song – I was still 23 years old – that was such an honour. Have I ever heard Pavement's version of "Sinister Purpose"? No, but I'll check it out.

What do you remember about playing Woodstock?

Marie Carlin, Perth, Australia

It was very exciting. We had to go by helicopter from a Holiday Inn where the artists were staying. As we got closer to the site, you could see people had abandoned their cars. It was like a sci-fi movie. I have no idea how those people – the morning that Woodstock was finally over →



STAR QUESTION



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“The Grateful Dead had put half a million people to sleep and so we tried very hard to wake them up”



Creedence Clearwater Revival in 1968: (l-r) Tom Fogerty, Doug Clifford, John Fogerty (top) and Stu Cook

→ and Jimi played his last note – got out of there. When we got on site, we saw maybe half a million people and because I seem to have this old soul inside me, I was worried it would be like a nightclub and somebody yelling "Fire!": if some sort of panic set in, all those people would move and there'd be a lot of danger. Playing the show itself was interesting. By the time I got onstage, the Dead had been onstage nearly two hours and their equipment had broken. I could only imagine they were in their usual state of mind – stoned, trying to find a power outlet. So by the time we got onstage, it was after midnight. The Dead had put half a million people to sleep and so we tried very hard to wake them up.

Mystery meat! STAR QUESTION



After so many great recordings and covers of your songs over the years, what was your vision going into this latest

project? **Allen Toussaint**
Allen and I worked together on this album on a track called "Proud Mary". We were both very busy but I could have spent several days asking him about the wonderful recording and musical career he's had. I encouraged all the artists to have a new look, their own vision of the song. I have an almost automatic reference for the songs, as I know

RICHARD SAKER/REX FEATURES

them so well. But each artist, I wanted them to approach it like it was something new. I discovered great new artists working on that.

What bands did you see while growing up in El Cerrito?

Nina Harding, Stockport

We had a wonderful venue called the Oakland Auditorium. I remember one show: Jackie Wilson, Hank Ballard & The Midnighters, BB King. It was always first-come, first-served, and these shows were usually on a Saturday or Sunday evening, so you'd get there at maybe 2 or 3pm and when they opened the door at 7, you ran like a son-of-a-gun to try to get to the front row. I usually went with my brother, Tom. I saw Jackie Wilson, Larry Williams... he was quite a character, doing all these hits, then he'd jump to the floor right in front of us and all these girls – BOOM! They ran up to him. He had on what we'd now call a tearaway shirt, because when they backed away he was naked from the waist up and his pants were in tatters.

Can you attempt to quantify to me how excellent the riff is for "Fortune Son"?

Rick Steers, Edinburgh

It was a piano riff. In those days, I could play some boogie woogie piano. I really loved when you got the boogie woogie bass thing going, then you'd riff over the top. I was never anywhere like Meade Lux Lewis, but of course we had Jerry Lee

Lewis, who was basically playing boogie woogie with a drumbeat. It was a really cool rock'n'roll style, but it was very much like boogie woogie of the late '30s and '40s, in the style of all those great piano players. So I could do that. It was a standardised riff, you could say. Steve Cropper did something like it in "Behave Yourself", and of course Steve was a huge influence on me. It was not so much invention, then, as it is a clever use of something that came before.

Why did CCR stop doing encores?

Chris Evans, Raleigh, NC

I began to notice that the biggest acts – I mean The Beatles and the Stones – were not doing encores because of safety. They would run off and then be done. They would try an 'Elvis has left the building' kind of thing, as they wanted to get out of there before the audience rushed the stage. So that was a thing I realised was happening. Now we had refrained from doing encores at a few shows in the States, but looking back it would have been a good idea to have some security come onstage, turn on the lights and start taking the equipment apart. Anyway, it was just the speed that things had gotten to with the very, very large bands – I'm sure Zeppelin were in the same boat – because of safety.

"In Creedence, with our roadhouse persona, my brother's music didn't fit..."

Last year, you joined The Black Keys onstage at Coachella to pay tribute to Levon Helm. How did that come about?

John Edmunds, Shreveport, Louisiana

That's right, we played "The Weight". They called me. It was like the day before. My kids were all at Coachella, as it's relatively near to where we live. When you're grown up, the idea of standing in 115° heat with no change of clothes and no place to sleep, you've got to really love it! You know, I turned my kids onto The Black Keys. I'd heard them way back in 2002, in one of those gadget stores, and I assumed it was an old Chess recording. I went up to the front desk and asked the kid who was working there – the idea was that they're supposed to show off the store's various stereo systems, and he was playing The Black Keys' first album. So I was pleased to be able to

go home and for once tell my kids about a new band I'd heard first!

What happened when you went to Robert Johnson's grave in 1990, and how did that affect your decision to play Creedence songs again after 25 years?

Helen Rodgers, Streatham

I thought it was to refresh my memory and fill in the blues family tree, if you will, look up where people like John Lee Hooker had lived. Part of the lure was hearing that there are several reported grave sites for Robert Johnson, so I tried diligently to find the best one. I got there on a hot and humid day, and I basically had an epiphany. Robert Johnson was right there, a rock star – the boxset of his recordings had been released in 1989 and it was on the Billboard charts. I was standing at the place where he was probably buried and I began to ponder who owned the songs. I thought it was some lawyer up in NYC, a shyster who somehow finagled his way into owning the master tapes. I thought, 'It doesn't matter, Robert. They're your songs.' Then a light went on in my head – it was almost as if I was talking about myself, because my songs are my songs. It doesn't matter who owns the records, they're my songs. So I could play those songs again in public. I realised that was what the trip was for. That blew my consciousness.

Did you listen to the solo albums of your brother, Tom? If yes, did you like them (then or now)?

Fred van Ginneken, via email

Oh, yeah. How do I say this... I felt that Tom's own songwriting had not really developed yet. There was an album he made with a band called Ruby [Ruby], and my brother Bob and I were listening to it and after about three songs, I said, "Tom's writing has got a whole lot better." Then it turned out the songs were collaborations or written by someone else in that band. To me, that was one of the less polished parts of Tom's musical make-up. But his singing was great. Tom had this sweet, high voice, like Bobby Freeman – or Ritchie Valens. There was certainly a place for Tom in the musical world, I just always felt that in Creedence, with our roadhouse persona, it didn't fit what we were doing. By the way, there's a rumour about one of his albums that I'm on it, but I'm not. I'm not on any of Tom's recordings. ☺

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» NEW ADVENTURES IN SOUND «

Led by sonic genius Kevin Parker, TAME IMPALA emerged from stoned squalor in the suburbs of Perth to pioneer a new form of questing psychedelia. We catch up with Parker over cocktails in the California desert to hear how music saved him: “I was totally into the thrill of breaking the law.”

Story: Allan Jones

Photographs: Aaron Farley



THERE'S A DOG barking somewhere, mariachi static coming from a radio stuck between stations, gentle splashing from a swimming pool. It's an otherwise perfectly still, bright Monday in Palm Springs, the swish desert resort in the Coachella Valley some 100 miles east of Los Angeles that has been home over the years to Hollywood stars, former American presidents, gangsters and rich retirees with not much more to look forward to than gangrene and golf.

Tame Impala's Kevin Parker, up early to meet *Uncut*, takes a seat at a shaded table on the patio of the Ace Hotel & Swim Club's Amigo Room bar, orders a cocktail from a passing waitress, something called a New Zealand Donkey, and looks out towards the San Jacinto Mountains looming craggily in the distance. It's just after midday, the temperature in the high 90s and rising. It will soon top 100 degrees, when everything we're looking at will turn to glare and dazzle. It feels a little like paradise. Is this the kind of rock star lifestyle Parker imagined for himself when he was scuffing about the pubs in far-off Perth not so many years ago in one of his early bands? The question makes him laugh. Then he gives it some thought.

"When I was 14 or 15, I was dead set on becoming a rock

star," he says, "the same as anybody who picks up a guitar at that age. I never thought it would happen because I'd try my fucking hardest to write songs and I always thought, 'What's the fucking point?' They just didn't seem any good. But I kept at it because I loved making music so much that being successful became less important than just doing it. By the time I was about 18, I'd accepted my fate would be to be in another Perth band that was going to eventually disintegrate and be forgotten. Weirdly, I was at peace with that. Gradually the love of doing it had taken over the ambition. The ambition dwindled away because I was around so many people who were making music just for the love of doing it.

"We'd get wasted and play gigs, have a lot fun. But the idea of doing it to become successful became a joke. We'd play with bands that were obviously doing it to be famous. They'd have all this super-expensive gear and their lead singer would have his own special fucking hairdo and they'd have all the fucking bells and whistles you could imagine and we'd be there fucking stoned, asking if we could borrow their drumkit. We'd be watching these bands and going, 'Are they kidding?' What are they trying to pull? They looked like fucking turkeys. That scene was so ugly we abandoned all that kind of rock star ambition. I was happy just plodding along like that, at peace with the fact we were never going



Journeying into the psychedelic frontier: (l-r) Nick Allbrook, Dominic Simper, Jay Watson, Julien Barbagallo, Kevin Parker, in Palm Springs, April 22, 2013



In many ways, a very hot band: Tame Impala at the Ace Hotel, Palm Springs, April 22, 2013

→ to get anywhere. I couldn't even be bothered releasing the songs I was doing because the people I wanted to hear them could already hear them, and they were the people who were in the band and the people who came to see us. My friends and the scene around me became more important than worldwide success or whatever."

The waitress brings him his drink, dropping off a round also at the poolside table where the rest of Tame Impala are whiling away the hours before they fly back tonight to Australia for a short tour before more sold-out American shows at the end of May, followed by European festival dates this summer and a headlining show in London at the Hammersmith Apollo.

"Now fucking look at us," he laughs.



AARON FARLEY

YESTERDAY UNDER A hard blue sky, and the sun a blowtorch in it, Tame Impala had arrived on site at the Coachella Festival. They'd played here the previous weekend, too, in the whipping air of an unscheduled sandstorm, which brought with it a certain amount of breezy mayhem. Yesterday, they went on just as the sun was beginning its slow descent, the light softening,

the earlier sharp outlines of things becoming blurred, as if most of what you looked at was a form of hallucination, a melting of shapes into a burnished atmosphere.

It seems like a timeless moment and as such is a perfect setting for music that itself exists outside of time, that roams with chronological abandon, boldly adventurous, across five decades of far out sounds, hot-wired to the restless experimentation of vintage psych, without sounding like the same psychedelic toolbox is being plundered from which sonic pioneers going back to 1966 have been picking spanners to throw in the musical works. Tame Impala at Coachella as much as they are on record are a musical craft made up of perhaps familiar elements that in its final shape is like nothing you have quite known before. There are echoes of the past and anticipations of a time to come. Can you be reminded of the future? In Tame Impala's musical universe, it would seem so.

This is the touring version of Tame Impala, of course, in which Parker is joined by longtime friends Jay Watson and Dominic Simper on guitars, synthesisers and keyboards, Nick Allbrook on bass and drummer Julien Barbagallo, who

HOW TO BUY...

IMPALA EMPIRE



Most reviewers seemed contractually obliged to mention the influence of The Beatles on Tame Impala's debut. But the 20-track Deluxe Edition, especially, may remind you as much of the psychedelic sprawl and stoned transcendence of Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*, with echoes, too, of the Neil Young of "Expecting To Fly" and

"Broken Arrow", the Mercury Rev of "Coney Island Cyclone", a lot of Flaming Lips and the Can of Future Days. The record established Parker as a 21st-Century Todd Rundgren whose *A Wizard, A True Star* is another useful reference point.

8/10

POND BEARD, WIVES, DENIM 2012
Parker produced and played drums on the fantastic fourth album by Pond, whose lineup includes Jay Watson and

Nick Allbrook, Wilder, more fantastically chaotic and raucous than Tame Impala, Pond here combined funky Led Zeppelin riffs, MC5 guitar firestorms and Stooges burn-outs with the psychedelic wash and drift of a dishevelled early Pink Floyd.

9/10

TAME IMPALA LONERISM 2012
Parker spent two years obsessing over every detail of Tame Impala's second album, whose recording he described later as fraught, if

not agonising. You wouldn't know it, though. As our review observed, *Lonerism* was more assured, melodic and expansive than *Innerspeaker*, an irresistible mix of classic psychedelia, prog, jittery post-rave and electronica. Highlights included the lysergic symphony of "Feels Like We Only Go Backwards", the epic swirl of "Apocalypse Dreams" and "Elephant", a spaced-out glam stomper that sounded like a mash-up of "Astronomy Domine" and "The Jean Genie".

9/10

used to play with Tahiti 80. In the studio and on record, however, Tame Impala is just Parker, the sole author, therefore, of Tame Impala's panoramic soundscapes and symphonic distortions. On Tame Impala's two albums to date – 2010's *Innerspeaker* and last year's all-conquering *Lonerism* – Parker writes, sings, plays, arranges and produces just about everything. Is he some kind of megalomaniac?

"Not at all," he protests in a gentle drawl. "It's just the way I prefer to work. I don't think you can reach the same highs working in a band as you can on your own. Nothing matches the sheer euphoria of discovering a new melody or a new batch of chords that just come out of nowhere. You have no idea where this music came from, but here you are listening to something you've just created and it's affecting you emotionally, it's groovy, it's everything you wanted it to be. Those are the moments in my life when I'm most happy."

"It's not like I'm brooding or miserable or withdrawn. I'm just happier on my own. For me, it's always been draining to be around people for too long because I'm naturally a pretty expressionless person. From an early age, I found being alone incredibly liberating. As a teenager, I was always trying to do things that would make me look cooler than I was and I'd get very frustrated because I was never comfortable in social situations. Once I finished school, I was like, 'Well, fuck it. I'm done with people. I'll just hang out by myself forever.'"

What were you like as a teenager?

"Confused," he says. "I was also a pretty wild and rebellious kid. I was permanently searching for some kind of identity. In high school, I was an absolute derelict. I just never came home, shoplifted, smoked weed. I was totally into the thrill of breaking the law. The adrenaline of shoplifting was unbelievable. I was like, 'Fuck! This is amazing!' We'd go into hardware stores and steal the biggest thing we could. My heart would be racing. One day I got caught shoplifting wallets from a surf store and I went home in a police car. My dad was out front watering the garden when the police car rocked up with me in the back. That was a bad day. And then I got caught smoking weed, which was even worse. They found a bong in my bedroom. That was terrible."

"I was about 14 and my dad banned me from seeing any of my friends. He rang up all their parents and told them their kids had been giving me weed. All my friends immediately got busted for smoking weed, even the ones who weren't smoking. So they all hated me. I found myself without any friends. Through the rest of school and university, I didn't have a gang that I hung with. I was just wandering around, confused and lost, usually trying to get some girl to like me."

Did music eventually provide you with the personality you'd been looking for?

"It saved me. It gradually took over my brain. Music became a bigger and bigger thing in my life, the only thing I thought about, the only thing I wanted to do. I gave up on any other kind of life. I quit university and worked a couple of nights at the bottle shop. Otherwise I was just bumming around the house with these guys who I was now living with."

THIS IS WHERE Troy Terrace comes into the Tame Impala story. It's the house in Perth where Parker lived in legendary communal squalor with like-minded types, similarly into music and drugs, a scene with Kevin in some accounts at its charismatic centre, a notion Nick cheerfully contests. "It's not like Kev was some kind of Psychedelic Jesus, who gathered all these people around him, like disciples," he tells *Uncut* at Coachella, Sonic Distortion making a racket in the background. "We were always a gang, living in the same house, sharing everything. The music scene in Perth at the time was like a series of little music houses. Ours was the psychedelic house. We were flag-bearers for stoner rock."

"We look back on Troy Terrace so romantically now," says Parker, "but we lived in fucking squalor. I can smell it now, sitting here. The smell of stale air and the constant



CABIN FEVER

'I LOVE TO LOSE MYSELF IN THE STUDIO...'

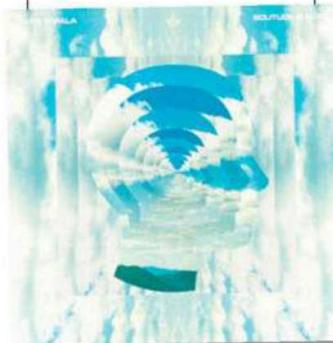
AS WELL AS Tame Impala's *Lonerism* and Pond's *Beard*, *Wives*, *Denim*, Parker's 2012 production credits also include the self-titled debut album, a dreampop gem, by his girlfriend, classically trained singer and songwriter, Melody Prochet, who records as Melody's Echo Chamber.

"I was just the producer," he tells *Uncut*, "so I could just concentrate on that and not have to worry about anything else, which was a blessing. I was just able to do the physical things I love, twiddling delays and making drum

sounds, without the artistic burden. I was just having fun."

"I'd do more producing, but unless the music is really great or I already know the people I'm producing, it's difficult to get excited about stuff. It just becomes work. And that terrifies me. The idea of music turning into a job is my mortal fear. It's pretty hard for me these days to lose myself in anything, without drugs of any kind. But when I'm in the studio, working on something I really love, I can lose myself completely. It's a beautiful feeling, it should never seem like work."

"It's not like I'm brooding or miserable. I'm just happier on my own..."
Kevin Parker



reek of tobacco and weed. Everyone who lived there was a musician, so the whole house was full of musical shit, instruments, amps. I recorded mostly in my bedroom. I loved it there. It was the most creative environment I'd ever lived in. We all had like 10 bands we were in, usually at the same time. Nick had Mink Mussel Creek. I had The Dee Dee Dums, who were kind of bluesy psych rock. At the time, I was into a lot of stoner rock – Queens Of The Stone Age, The Black Keys, White Stripes, Kyuss as well as Cream and Jimi Hendrix. Gradually, there was a shift in what we did, away from guitar-based blues-rock. Slowly, song by song, we became a lot more melodic and groovy and lush and that was the beginning of Tame Impala."

Although they played live as a band, it was understood by everyone that if things went further, Tame Impala on record would be just Parker, which caused some confusion when they were signed to hip Australian independent, Modular – "the day everything turned upside down," according to Kevin. The deal done, talk turned to getting 'the band' into the studio to record an album.

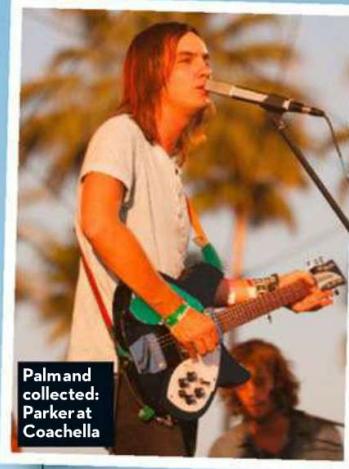
"At that point, I had to say, 'Look, you know I just record on my own in my bedroom, don't you? You know that's the deal, right? You know it's going to be me in a room with some microphones and some instruments or whatever?'" Fortunately, they were cool with me producing the album,

although they wouldn't let me mix it. I tried to convince them I could do a good enough job, I kept sending them mixes, but they were like, 'Fuck it. We're bringing someone else in.' I told them, 'No fucking way.' I kept turning down everyone they suggested."

Modular then told him they'd been in contact with Dave Fridmann, knowing Parker was a fan of his work with The Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev and MGMT.

"They said they were going to get him to call me, which he did. I was suddenly talking to Dave Fridmann. That seemed pretty cool. It was still pretty weird, though. He was this guy I just totally looked up to and was in

→ awe of. At the same time, I'd never handed one of my babies over to anyone to fuck with. I wanted him to do his own thing, to put the Dave Fridmann touch on it, but I didn't know how to hand over the music. I didn't know how to let him do his own thing. He'd do a mix and it would sound awesome, but not how I would have done it. I kept trying to get him to change it, to turn this up and turn that up, turn everything up. And he'd be going, 'You can't do it like that. It's just not going to work if you turn everything up. You just can't do that.' Of course, he was right and I learned a lot of lessons mixing *Innerspeaker* that made *Lonerism* a lot easier for both of us. I didn't know what the fuck I was doing with the first album."



Palmand
collected:
Parker at
Coachella

WHILE HE'S WAITING for the waitress to bring him another New Zealand Donkey, Parker considers a question about how it works with Tame Impala when he's recording an album. Does he play them tracks as they are completed or is there a grand unveiling of the whole thing when it's finally done?

"It depends how confident I'm feeling, which is seldom," he says. "So on a rare day when I'm feeling good about the songs I'll sheepishly play them some. It's a terrible time for me. Jay especially is brutal when he thinks something's not as good as it needs to be. I take everything they say into account, massively. Theirs are the opinions I value most. I'm super-anxious when I play them something for the first time. I pretend I'm not, but I'm fucking hanging on their every word."

When it comes to teaching them the songs ahead of touring, does he expect them to replicate exactly what he originally played?

"That wouldn't be interesting or fun. And it's always got to be fun. Sometimes I can be a bit of a Hitler, but we never forget that we're basically friends making music together. We never lose that vibe. There's no point in getting stroppy with anyone. If getting the song sounding immaculate and exactly like the recorded version is at the cost of not having a good time with your friends, it's not worth it. The way we play a lot of songs live is very different to the records, almost as if they were different songs, written in a parallel universe because it feels better with five guys in a room playing them that way. In the studio, it's a different environment altogether. One guy in the studio with all the time in the world to work on the music is totally different to five guys onstage playing live, and comparing the two is absurd. We just accept they're two different things and just get on with it."

"In the early days, we were a lot more precious about wanting to be considered valid members of the group," Jay had told me before the band's set at Coachella. "Now we

don't give a fuck. It's easier to play something the way Kevin wants to hear it and, more importantly, it sounds better that way."

The question begging to be asked about now, the waitress making her way back towards us, a tray full of drinks, is if Parker thinks Jay, Dom, Nick and Julien are good enough to play his music live, why doesn't he use them on the albums?

"It goes back to me needing the outlet of doing stuff on my own," Parker says, probably hoping this is the last word on the subject. "Playing live for me is about having fun, putting on a good show, sharing a great musical time with your buddies. I'm more protective of the music in the studio. That's when I need to be by myself. I've just grown up that way. I've done it like that since I was really young. I've just done everything myself. I think it has to do with a certain purity of vision. When you're on your own, you become every instrument. You're playing with different versions of yourself. And when it all comes together, it's a lot more satisfying. I love band music. I love the sound of people working together because you can hear all the different personalities. It's a beautiful thing. It's just not what I want my records to sound like. Tame Impala would sound totally different if more than one person made the records."

And what about the next album, you wonder, hoping for a breeze to blow in from somewhere and suck the heat out of the suffering air. What will that sound like? It turns out there may not be one. "Right now, doing another album doesn't excite me," he says. "There's something narrow-minded about thinking an album is the only way you can put out music, especially in the world we're in at the moment. Anything is possible. There's so many people doing interesting things with the internet and technology, there could be so many ways of listening to music and also making it. It's 2013 and you can make music anywhere. We've got laptops. You can make music anywhere. I just recently caved in and bought an iPhone and I've been downloading all these musical apps and I can control my recording programme from my iPhone pad and that's fucking blowing me away. There are so many possibilities, my brain is overloading on them all. I just need to wait, think about things a bit more. Then I'll know what to do next." ♦

"Music
became the
only thing
I thought
about. I gave
up on any
other kind
of life..."
Kevin Parker

Thanks to the Ace Hotel & Swim Club in Palm Springs – www.acehotel.com. Tame Impala play London's Hammersmith Apollo (June 25), Glastonbury (28) and the Reading and Leeds festivals (August 24, 25)



Hits you right between the ears.

“Loose has surrounded itself with a dozen or so artists and bands who are discoveries waiting to happen”

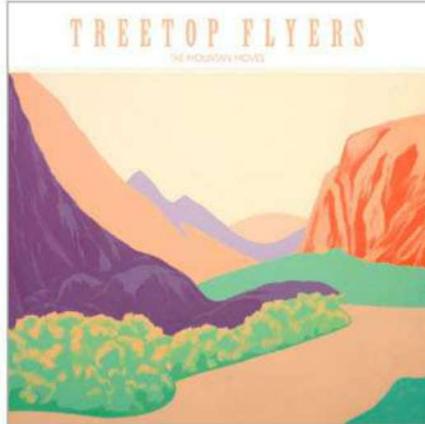
Rolling Stone



The Handsome Family
Wilderness

“The Beatles of the folk world” *Greil Marcus*

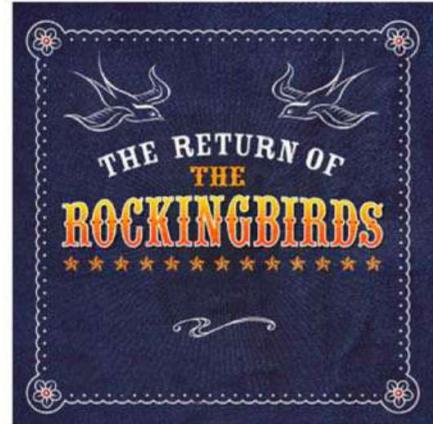
★★★★ UNCUT
★★★★ MOJO



Treetop Flyers
The Mountain Moves

“Treetop Flyers are in it for the long haul” *MOJO*

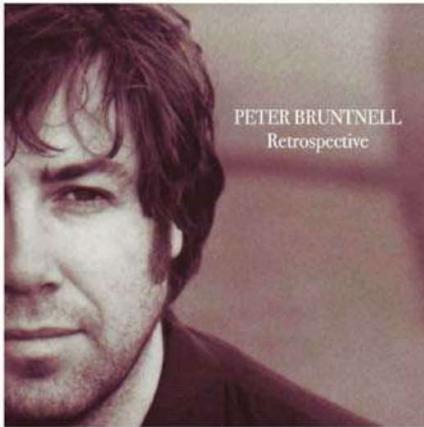
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The Rockingbirds
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“head and shoulders above any UK country record this century” ★★★★★ R2

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Peter Bruntell
Retrospective

A career spanning 17 track collection - includes a reworking of Played Out with Rumer

“one of the finest songwriters in Britain”
THE INDEPENDENT

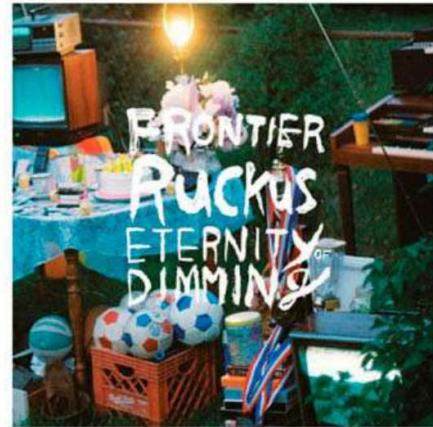
“Jackson Browne for your children”
MOJO



Jonny Fritz
Dad Country

“he looks like a great discovery, I urge you to buy this album” *NO DEPRESSION*

★★★★ *THE INDEPENDENT*
★★★★ *THE SUN*



Frontier Ruckus
Eternity Of Dimming

“its a fascinating album” *MOJO*

★★★★ *THE SUN*
★★★★ UNCUT

Story:

Andrew Mueller

“He could make you cry, with his voice...”

GEORGE JONES 1931-2013

His fans ranged from Gram Parsons to Frank Sinatra, while Roger McGuinn calls him “more than just the greatest country singer ever”. Yet, for much of his life, George Jones’ formidable talent was skewed by addictions. Here we celebrate the incredible musical achievements and colourful life of a man Robbie Robertson describes as “the greatest of the greatest...”

IN 1982, GEORGE JONES released an album called *A Taste Of Yesterday's Wine*. It was a collection of affable tear-ups recorded with Merle Haggard which closed with a leadenly self-deprecating track called “No Show Jones”. It was not an altogether comfortable listen even then, Jones straining somewhat to jokingly reclaim the nickname he'd earned with years of drug and alcohol-induced unreliability. Since George Jones died on April 26, aged 81, “No Show Jones”, and the immeasurable other trite romanticising of Jones' most abominable and self-destructive behaviour, has rung even more damply. Though Jones never had anybody to blame for the image but himself, he deserves better than folkloric immortality as an obdurate inebriate riding his lawnmower to the liquor store after one of his miserable, terrified wives had hidden the car keys.

At least, Jones' glorious musical legacy deserves better than intractable association with Jones' jackassery, and worse. Certainly, Jones' dedicated lifelong enemy – himself – was far outnumbered by his fans. Frank Sinatra called him the second-best singer in America. Dolly Parton said he was her all-time favourite. Merle Haggard

reckoned him the greatest country vocalist who ever lived. Kris Kristofferson thought him the best since Hank Williams. Gram Parsons crowned him “the king of broken hearts”. Emmylou Harris praised his ability to “take a song, and make it a work of art – always.” Waylon Jennings, in a song called “It's Alright”, on his 1980 album *Music Man*, observed

that, “If we all sounded like we wanted to, we'd all sound like George Jones.” The verdicts of these abundantly qualified judges were accurate: George Jones was not merely the standard by which male country crooners will forever be measured. He was one of the finest interpretive singers who ever lifted a microphone.

George Jones' unmistakable half-drawled baritone had sorrow and pain, rage and snarl, pride and dignity, warmth and humour, often flaunting that entire range within three verses and three choruses. There cannot be a single country songwriter of the last 50-odd years who has not wondered what it might be like to hear their words sung by that voice.

MUSIC FROM BIG GEORGE

“HE WAS THE MAIN MAN...”



ROBBIE ROBERTSON

“He was unquestionably my favourite country singer. He was the Ray Charles of country – the one who could make you cry with his voice. I heard the news he'd died and I listened to “She Thinks I Still Care”, because that just kills. He was a better singer than Hank Williams, and Hank could certainly tell a story. But when you talk about the greatest of the greatest, George Jones was the main man.”

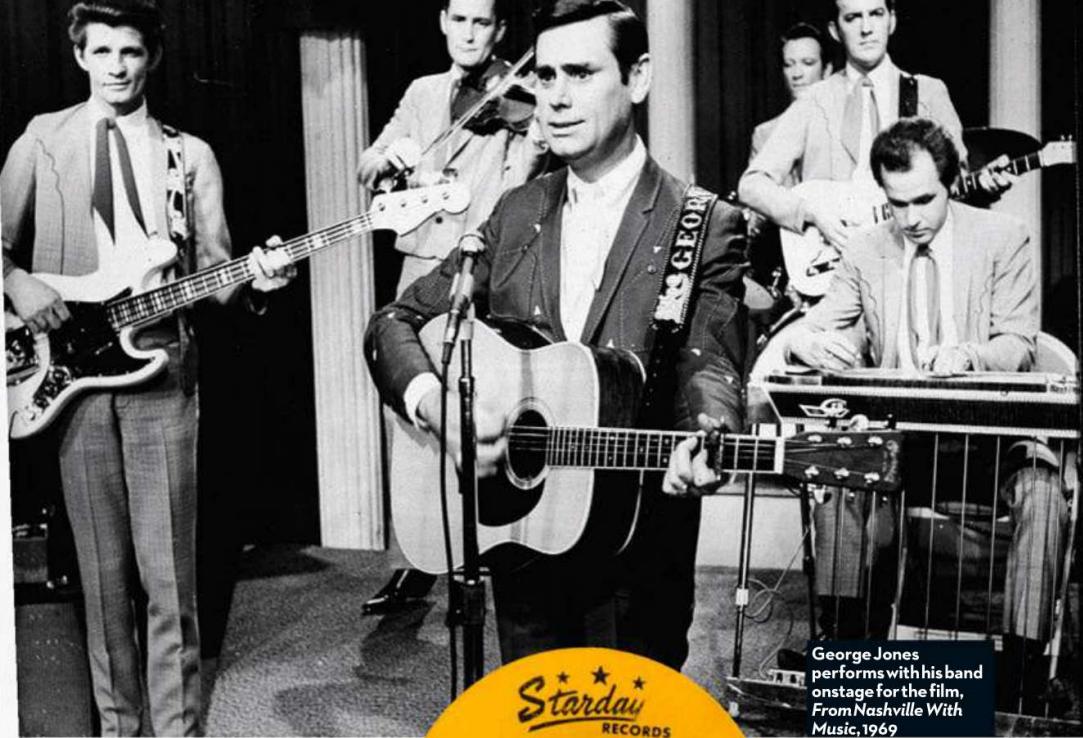
“We wouldn't listen to country music, the guys in The Band, but we would listen to George Jones and Charlie Rich. That was it, just because it was so real. A lot of people come from his school of singing – fortunately they didn't try to copy his hairdo.” *INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON*

GEORGE JONES WAS born on September 12, 1931 in a log cabin in Saratoga, Texas. He was the youngest of eight children. His father





Busking on the
streets as a child
circa 1940 in
Beaumont, Texas



George Jones
performs with his band
onstage for the film,
*From Nashville With
Music*, 1969

→ was a truck driver and moonshiner (Jones' first No 1 hit, 1959's bootlegger boogie "White Lightning" was therefore nonetheless autobiographical for having been written by JP "The Big Bopper" Richardson; appropriately, if wretchedly, Jones was so sloshed during the session that it took him 84 takes to put down the vocal). Jones' mother did the doubtless harder work of raising seven kids – the eldest, Ethel, died before George was born – in a far-flung rural community during the worst of the Great Depression. As Jones reached his teens, the family moved to the bigger Texas town of Beaumont. Jones left school in seventh grade, and pursued what he already perceived as his vocation by strumming his Gene Autry guitar inside churches for the congregation, or outside churches for change.

Jones furthered his trade playing the sort of fabled Texas honky-tonks that were obliged to wind chicken wire across the stage to protect musicians from flying bottles. It was a hazardous apprenticeship in other respects, as well – Jones once spent four days in jail after being arrested face-down

"If you saw me sober,"
Jones would
later confess
of his wild
late-'70s
period,
"chances are
you saw me
asleep..."



drunk in cow pasture, and rather longer in hospital after being stabbed during a dispute with a debt collector sent to repossess his car. He was also, in a stroke of right-place-right-time happenstance, asked to play

lead guitar for Hank Williams on a radio session for a local station. Awestruck and terrified, Jones couldn't bring himself to pluck a note (he would later atone for this dereliction with two superb album-length tributes, 1960's *George Jones Salutes Hank Williams* and 1962's *My Favorites Of Hank Williams*).

Jones married young – not yet 20 – as smalltown Americans of the time often did, and divorced quickly, as drunk and absent musicians always have. Needing a regular wage to support his daughter, Jones enlisted in the Marines. A less fortunate soldier would have ended up fighting in Korea; Jones spent three years stationed in California, spending nights off singing in a San Jose nightclub. He left the Corps in late 1953 and returned to Beaumont, where he sang in bars, and worked as a disc jockey for local station KTRM. He became a recording artist in 1954, when Beaumont label Starday signed him: Jones' first hit, a jaunty Hank Williams pastiche he'd co-written called "Why Baby Why", followed in 1955. He was on his way.

THE EVENTFUL CAREER that ensued carried Jones to great heights without ever lifting him far from his roots: give or take the shifting fashions of production, "Why Baby Why" would not have sounded askew on any of the dozens of albums he subsequently issued. Where many of his early contemporaries – Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis – drifted to varying degrees towards rock'n'roll, Jones kept it resolutely old-school country all his life, on record and off.

But Jones wasn't inhabiting cliché: he was inventing it. Every hell-raising good old boy who has traded on a reputation of spending more nights in tourbuses, hotels, cells and the doghouse than with any of a succession of long-suffering spouses, before staggering to the studio next morning to sing about it, has to some extent been following Jones' script. His relentlessly candid 1996 autobiography, *I Lived To Tell It All*, was knowingly titled: every other page feels like it could have been the last. Here a backstage

NOTORIOUS JONES

"HE WAS AN INSPIRATION..."

ROGER McGUINN: "The first time I ever heard George Jones was in 1968, when

Gram Parsons had made The Byrds fall in love with country music. Gram loved George and held him in the same high esteem as Hank Williams or Porter Wagoner. I loved him, his singing style reminded me of folk music. I thought what a strong, clear, in-tune voice and what feeling he put into his songs.

"Covering 'Why Baby Why' was my guitar player Rick Vito's idea. I wasn't familiar with that song before we recorded it for my *Thunderbyrd* LP [1977]. You don't need a songwriter's



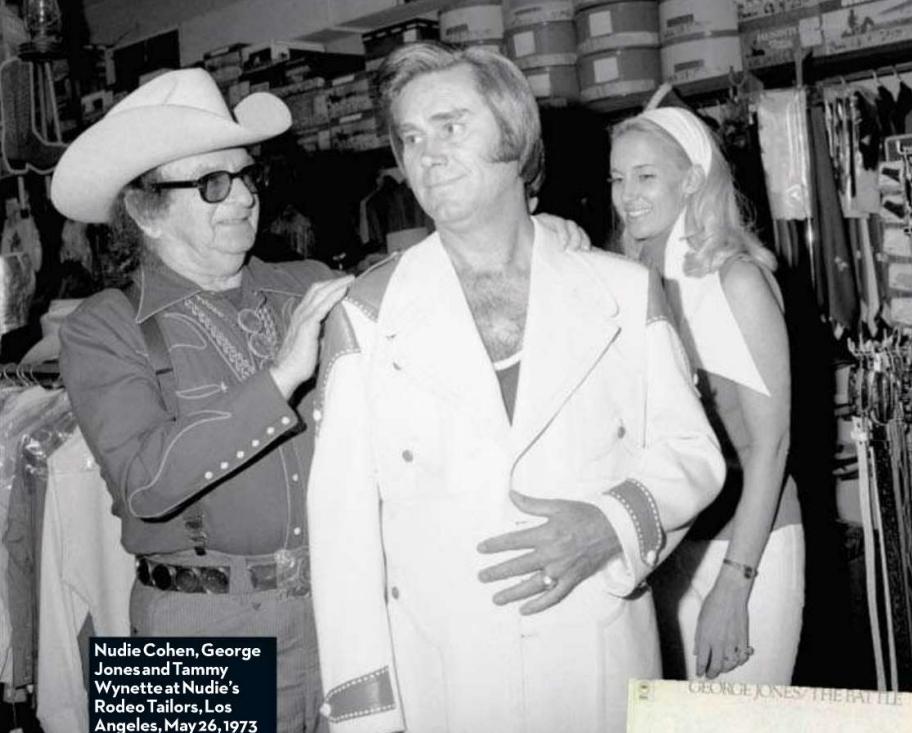
permission to record a song that's already been recorded.

"The only time I came into contact with George was at the Musicians Hall Of Fame Awards show, held at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville on November 26, 2007. My wife Camilla said when

George Jones spoke to her, she was so in awe that she was speechless, which is a very rare thing for her.

"George influenced an entire generation of country singers – Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam and Alan Jackson to name a few. He was more than just the best country singer ever, he was an inspiration to those who struggle with substance abuse. After years of being called 'No Show George' he married a woman who helped him pull himself out of his downward spiral."

INTERVIEW: ROB HUGHES



Nudie Cohen, George Jones and Tammy Wynette at Nudie's Rodeo Tailors, Los Angeles, May 26, 1973

punch-up with Faron Young. There a near-drowning comatose in a hotel bathtub. A bus crash. An ass-kicking in Albuquerque. A drunken flight to the Mexican border pursued by knife-brandishing ne'er-do-wells. The near-accidental murder of a friend during a vodka-induced pistol demonstration. The inducement of an audience riot after walking off after singing one line of one song. The deliberate demolition of a length of his own fence with one of many, many to-be-written-off Cadillacs. The venting of on-the-road ennui by ventilating the tourbus with bullet holes. The millions lost in ill-conceived, poorly managed business ventures.

Despite his own dogged efforts to ruin everything, by the mid-1960s Jones was a star, and about to become a

bigger one. In 1966, he was introduced to a young singer named Tammy Wynette. She was married, to her second husband, songwriter Don Chapel. So was Jones, to his second wife, Shirley Ann Corley. A union that began as the kind of domestic melodrama about which people write country songs only grew more so. Jones and Wynette married in February 1969. Mr & Mrs Country Music, as they became known, would spend the next six years driving each other to both tremendous artistic pinnacles, and also to the edges of their sanity (literally – at one point, Jones was escorted from their Florida mansion in a straitjacket and held in a padded cell for 10 days).

It seems more than a poetic coincidence that Jones made the best music of his life during his infamously turbulent marriage to Wynette, and immediately following its collapse. Between 1972's *A Picture Of Me (Without You)* and 1976's *The Battle*, Jones cranked out a set of albums of sumptuous melancholia. His voice was maturing as he entered his forties. He had formidable reserves of anguish

and confusion upon which to draw. And he'd found the producer capable of creating the epically lachrymose arrangements his voice deserved and his torment demanded. Nashville's own Phil Spector, Billy Sherrill, had co-written "Stand By Your Man" for Tammy Wynette. He summoned for Jones symphonies of sighing strings that almost made the misery of albums like 1974's

The Grand Tour and 1976's *Alone Again* sound better than happiness could possibly feel.

His mid-'70s peak was a run all the more poignant and all the more remarkable for the fact that Jones, by every account including his own, had little idea what he was doing from one day to the next, or indeed who he was. For a time, his personality became effectively sub-divided between two psychological squatters: a mumbling old man who sounded like Walter Brennan, and a duck named Dee-doodle. The shows Jones performed while possessed by the latter character are not

GETTY IMAGES



BUYERS' GUIDE

POSSUM PICKS

The best of George Jones

GRAND OLE OPRY'S NEW STAR

STAR DAY, 1957

Though Jones would become principally renowned as a singer, his debut is an enduring reminder that he possessed chops as a writer as well – he wrote or co-wrote everything here, including the enduring standards "Why Baby Why" and "Ragged But Right".

7/10

GEORGE JONES SALUTES HANK WILLIAMS

MERCURY, 1960

The first of two album-length homages to Williams, and the first of a recurring habit of single-artist tributes that would help

stamp Jones as country's defining male voice: other songwriters to be so honoured would include Bob Wills, Little Jimmy Dickens, Dallas Frazier and Leon Payne.

8/10

THE GRAND TOUR

EPIC, 1974

An exultant wallow in heartbreak, Jones inhabiting songs by Nashville's finest – Johnny Paycheck, Mel Street, Bobby Braddock, among others – like an inmate on suicide watch. As a masterclass in affecting lyricism and vocal virtuosity, meaningfully rivalled only by Sinatra's *In The Wee Small Hours*.

10/10

ALONE AGAIN

EPIC, 1976

Another belter from Jones' mid-'70s binge of tears-in-your-beer barstool soliloquies. The titles tell the story – "Stand On My Own Two

Knees", "Ain't Nobody Gonna Miss Me". Jones sounded like he was learning the hard way the lesson of the self-penned opening track: a man can be a drunk sometimes, but "A Drunk Can't Be A Man".

9/10

GOLDEN RING

EPIC, 1976

The pick of several albums Jones made with Tammy Wynette, and an almost real-time document of a marriage collapsing. A collection of brutal heartbreak songs – Buck Owens' "Cryin' Time", Jody Emerson's "Tattletale Eyes", Red Lane and Danny Morrisson's "I've Seen Better Days", among others – sung by two people breaking each other's hearts.

9/10

I AM WHAT I AM

EPIC, 1980

Best recalled for the staggering Bobby Braddock/

Curly Putman cut "He Stopped Loving Her Today", which inspired Jones to his greatest heights as a singer, and darkest depths as an interpreter of melodrama. But he wasn't far off on "If Drinkin' Don't Kill Me (Her Memory Will)" and "I've Aged Twenty Years In Five".

10/10

COLD HARD TRUTH

ASYLUM, 1999

A determined and broadly successful bid to recapture the mid-'70s magic, with Alan Jackson/George Strait collaborator Keith Stegall ably filling the Billy Sherrill producer/mentor role. An astute selection of songs, especially the Jamie O'Hara title track and the Bouton/Brown/Burch weepie "This Wanting You", ensured that *Cold Hard Truth* did more than echo past glories.

8/10



The Highwaymen, featuring Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson and George Jones, perform at the memorial concert for Johnny Cash, Nashville, November 10, 2003

widely reckoned among his best. By the late 1970s, he was bankrupt and living in his car, and his management were getting him through gigs by paying dubious doctors to inject him full of stimulants to keep him awake, and truss him in medical tape beneath his embroidered suits to make it physically impossible for him to fall over. "If you saw me sober," Jones would later confess of this period, "chances are you saw me asleep."

Jones was saved, eventually and in instalments, by a song, and by a woman. The song was "He Stopped Loving Her Today", an exquisitely woebegone confection by Bobby Braddock and Curly Putnam, an obituary for a man finally spared lifelong heartache by the doorknock of the Reaper. Initially, Jones didn't get it, at a number of levels. It took 18 months for Billy Sherrill to wring a vocal out of him. The stumbling block was the four-line spoken interlude – Jones couldn't nail it drunk, and Sherrill couldn't keep him sober long enough. When it was finally in the can, Jones declared, "Nobody will buy that morbid son of a bitch." It became his first No 1 in six years. It is routinely, and plausibly, declared the greatest country single of all time.

The woman was Nancy Sepulvado, a divorced assembly-line operative from Louisiana who became the fourth Mrs Jones in 1983. She forgave Jones' drinking, bingeing and violence, and even the mercifully brief kidnapping of one of her daughters by drug dealers seeking to persuade Jones to settle his tab. Her patience and fortitude did not turn Jones into anyone's idea of a temperance union evangelist – there were still fights, rampages and accidents, among them the near-fatal vodka-lubricated 1999 car wreck later recalled by Drive-By Truckers in "George Jones Talking Cell Phone Blues". But there were fewer such eruptions, and Jones was able to demonstrate – most importantly to himself – that he could still sing without cocaine or whiskey, especially on '95's syrupy but likeable reunion LP with Tammy Wynette, *One*, and 1999's pugnacious, sombre *Cold Hard Truth*.

IN 1985, SURELY aware that he was tempting both fate and hubris, Jones had recorded a Max Barnes/Troy Seals track called "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes". It was a knowingly schmaltzy salute to the ageing heroes of the early years of rock and country. Among those namechecked are Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, Conway Twitty, Jerry Lee Lewis, Lefty Frizzell and Marty Robbins: Jones' friends, contemporaries, collaborators and peer group.

As it turned out, the song wasn't brilliantly timed. A few of its protagonists still had decades left in them, as did Jones



RICK DIAMOND/WIREIMAGE; LYNN MCAFEE/GLOBE PHOTOS, INC.

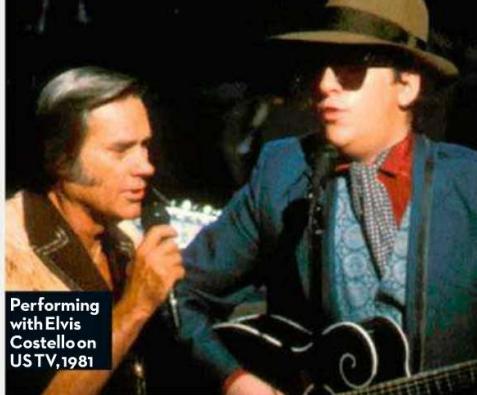
HIT PARADE JONES' DUETS

Ten great team-ups

"(WE'RE NOT) THE JET SET"

(with Tammy Wynette)

Mr & Mrs Country Music's anthem. A grand romance set in Rome, Athens and Paris – Rome, GA; Athens, TX, Paris, TN.



Performing with Elvis Costello on USTV, 1981

Williams Jr confessional brings the best out of Parton as a redeeming angel.

"WHEN YOU'RE UGLY LIKE US (YOU JUST NATURALLY GOT TO BE COOL)"

(with Johnny Paycheck)

And indeed they were both of those things. It is easy indeed to believe that the slurred, stuttering vocals were no theatrical contrivance.



Jones with Melba Montgomery

"THE 4TH OF JULY"

(with Shooter Jennings)

Not so much a duet as a cameo, Jones manifesting right at the end of this cut by Waylon Jennings' kid to echo his earlier appearance in this breezy narrative concerning a lovestruck roadtrip.

"WE DIDN'T SEE A THING"

(with Ray Charles)

A 1984 performance on YouTube is especially worth the search – both men struggling to hold it together as if the irony of Charles singing this one has only just occurred to them.

"A FEW OLE COUNTRY BOYS"

(with Randy Travis)

A mutual tipping of the hat between two generations of old-school country crooner.

"STRANGER IN THE HOUSE"

(with Elvis Costello)

A perfectly pitched Nashville sniffer composed by Costello during his Billy Sherrill-produced *Almost Blue* period.

"BURN YOUR PLAYHOUSE DOWN"

(with Keith Richards)

A potential answer to the question of how many people Keith is overawed by. The segue from Richards trying to sing like Jones to Jones actually singing like Jones is hilarious.

"LET'S INVITE THEM OVER"

(with Melba Montgomery)

A lovingly dysfunctional couple conspire to cheat on each other with their best friends, who may or may not be in on the plan.

"YOU'RE STILL ON MY MIND"

(with Marty Stuart)

The singer's singer and the sideman's sideman combine for a stately version of the honky-tonker's honky-tonk standard.

"THE BLUES MAN"

(with Dolly Parton)

Jones' solemn reading of the Hank

For the last 30 years, Jones was able to demonstrate that he could still sing without cocaine or whiskey

himself, who was partway through his farewell tour when he died. The last show, scheduled for Nashville's Bridgestone Arena on November 22, was to have included guest spots by Garth Brooks, Keith Richards, Shelby Lynne, Kenny Rogers, Charlie Daniels and Kid Rock, among others.

"Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes" was not among the songs performed at Jones' funeral at Nashville's Grand Ole Opry House on May 2. Notwithstanding Alan Jackson's finale of "He Stopped Loving Her Today", the musical board of fare consisted of more orthodox selections for such an occasion: Randy Travis doing "Amazing Grace", Travis Tritt crooning "Why Me Lord", Brad Paisley singing "Me & Jesus", Vince Gill and Patty Loveless combining for "Go Rest High On That Mountain", that kind of thing.

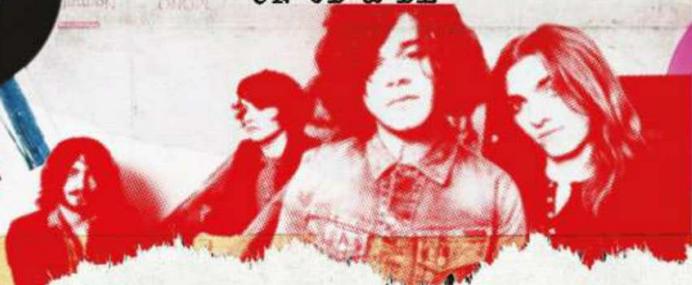
All of which was entirely fitting. George Jones was, in his monumetally wayward fashion, a believer – and also, lest anyone forget, the singer of several fine albums of country gospel. But maybe at least half a reason "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes" was omitted was the fact that there was not, even on that stellar guestlist, a satisfactory answer. ☺

the view

SEVEN YEAR SETLIST

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THE MAKING OF...

One To Another

THE CHARLATANS

How the Midlands' grooviest gang headed to deepest Wales and came up with "this monster riff" – their biggest hit, and their last recording before tragedy struck wayward organist Rob Collins

IN MID-JULY, 1996, The Charlatans were looking forward to the release of "One To Another", their first new material in over a year. The band were excited by the single's prospects – the opening, thundering loops from Chemical Brother Tom Rowlands, the chunky keyboard riff that reminded their friend Mani from The Stone Roses of classic Northern Soul. Then, on July 22, a month before the single was due to be released, the band's keyboard player Rob Collins crashed his car near the Monnow Valley studio where the band were recording. He died of his injuries that night.

"I remember on the way to the hospital," Burgess recalls, "when we didn't know whether we were going to be visiting Rob or finding out some terrible news, I heard 'One To Another' on the radio for the first time. I heard the first words and I thought, 'Shit, man. He's dead.' I just felt it. The lyrics almost fell into that meaning – where you have a feeling and everything takes on this otherness. Did it make the record sound like a farewell message to him? Absolutely. I felt that it had taken on another thing. I thought it was our 'Love Will Tear Us Apart'. I felt it was part of that club, of deaths that put a myth around a record. And I wanted to make sure that we kept Rob's name alive."

The song became the band's biggest hit to date – reaching No 3 in the charts. It received its live debut when The Charlatans supported Oasis at Knebworth, playing to an audience of 125,000 people on August 11, with Primal Scream's Martin Duffy on keyboards. Tony Rogers joined the band as keyboard player in 1998.

"One of the nice things," says guitarist Mark Collins, "is when we play live, we carry loops

around with us, and Rob's still on there, including with "One To Another". He still comes on tour with us. We haven't shaken him off yet."

NICK HASTED

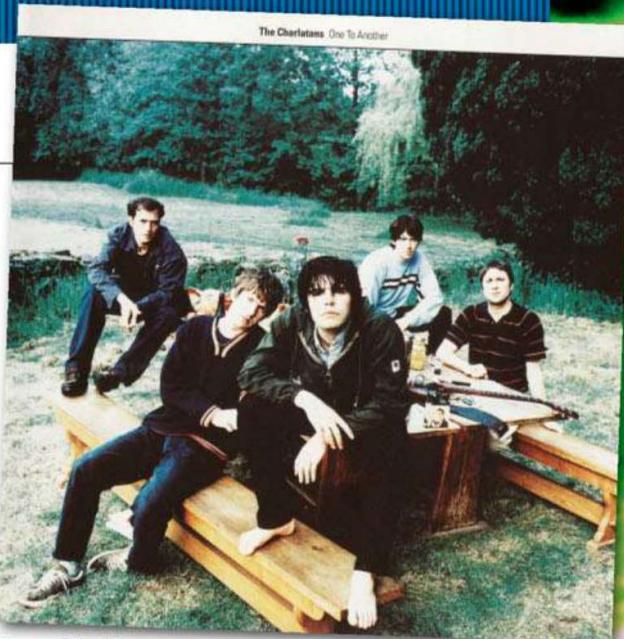
TIM BURGESS: Monnow Valley Studio to Rockfield is off a country road, down a dirt track, surrounded by a river, and nothing else. You had to drive to the local village, Monmouth. And that was in the middle of nowhere. We first went there during *Up To Our Hips*, and we just felt lucky there.

MARK COLLINS: It had a vibe, and it was our place. It was all the scraps from Rockfield, the posh studio up the road. It wasn't the latest bits of equipment, but with a kick in the right place, it was brilliant.

BURGESS: Rob was having issues – family things, he wasn't dealing with certain things well. He was drinking a lot and taking a lot of drugs, so a lot of the things he was doing were impulsive nonsense. It's not so bad when there's a destructive element in there. It can help creativity. But I think everyone knew that something was going to happen. He got in fights every night. He dropped acid in my tea, just as I was going to bed! [Laughs] It wasn't great, to be honest.

DAVE CHARLES (PRODUCER): "One To Another" was the first thing we started.

COLLINS: We used to rehearse in a place in Staffordshire called Stones, and after about a week, I'd arrive and Rob'd still be playing this



KEY PLAYERS



Tim Burgess
Vocals



Mark Collins
Guitar



Martin Blunt
Bass



Martin Duffy
Live keyboards

same monster riff.

BURGESS: Rob had this riff, but I couldn't really write anything over it.

COLLINS: I came up with a verse, three notes I put in to break it up, and it gave Tim somewhere to go. And then it came together really quickly.

BURGESS: As soon as

Mark came up with that "changin' the way that you feel" bit, I came up with the melody, that in my head sounded like something off *Fresh* by Sly & The Family Stone. I was in a serious relationship that ended at the time, with someone who meant a lot to me, so the chorus was about that. "Pleased to meet you/Hope I never see you..." I don't know where a lot of it came from. I remember the "bemy spider-woman/I'll be your spider-man" bit coming on the train from Paddington to Newport. I remember telling some friends that I didn't know whether "One To Another" is brilliant or shit. And they said, "It's going to be brilliant, then." Because if you're having that kind of conflict or feeling a bit fragile, then it's brave.

CHARLES: "One To Another" was actually started in Rockfield. The Chemical Brothers' Tom Rowlands was coming down to do some stuff



The band in Monnow Valley, summer 1996, shot for the sessions for the single sleeve, left: (l-r) Jon Brookes, Mark Collins, Tim Burgess, Martin Blunt, Rob Collins

with it, and he didn't arrive for a couple of days. So while we were waiting, I very crudely cobbled together a sample, which was the basis of it. We started with that riff, and we set the drums up at Rockfield. It was Martin and Jon, possibly Rob, and we recorded the drumtrack and I sampled that, with probably a bit of bass and a reverse-backwards thing. It reoccurs all the way through the song. I made a loop of that. When Tom arrived, he made the sample more technoe. And then we overdubbed the drums down at Monnow Valley, which has a huge glass room, which gave it an enormous ambience. And there's a wah-wah riff which is Rob playing a Clavinette through a guitar amp, and a bit of Hammond in the middle.

BURGESS: The breakdown in the middle is incredible. There's a clock ticking like a bomb's going to go off – I think it was a sample of Big Ben. And then the drums come back in. Visually, we were thinking of a B-movie, a bad remake of *Godzilla* or something like that. Lo-fi, but in your face, and fun.

MARTIN BLUNT: One of those loops is Jon's

drums that we recorded on cassette. It ended up as the back-beat of the song, with real drums as well.

CHARLES: The whole band played along to the loop together to get a feel of it, then we started cutting it about.

BURGESS: We sent it back to Tom Rowlands once we'd finished overdubbing, and he did a mix. What he sent us was more like a dance 12-inch version. We dismantled that and built it back up, with more of the feel that we had of a live band.

COLLINS: We managed to get Tom's samples onto six tracks, and it was an all-hands-to-the-desk job, and we played 'em in.

BLUNT: Four of us were standing at the desks doing little pushes and fades.

CHARLES: The mixing was an actual performance.

COLLINS: We were playing the record on the faders. It's a bit clumsy. It falls apart in places, and sometimes I think that's part of the record's charm. It's got chemical beats that are a bit loose and a bit out of time. It's

all a bit random – sometimes the riff drifts a little. But if it was recorded today it wouldn't sound so right. It's organic, it's real.

BURGESS: I thought it sounded like a garage classic. And Mani from The Stone Roses thought it sounded like a Northern Soul stomper.

Obviously it had modern beats. But it sounded like an updated version of the Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction". I had a record player in my room in Monnow Valley, and Jon and Martin came up and we put a test pressing on, and we just thought, 'This is brilliant.' It was an emotional moment when we were all huddled together, it just really came out of the speakers. If you hear it now, you can just tell how much work went into it. Every single moment, there's a moment. That's how hard we were concentrating, that's how focused we were.

BLUNT: We were down to do some interviews in London, and we ended up at some club in Camden, and it came out on the speakers, and even I got on the dancefloor. Everybody was. It sounded euphoric.

COLLINS: We said, "Right, we want to release it now." Beggars Banquet said, "Yeah, all right." Rob's in the video we did in London. It was all ready to go.

BLUNT: I'd gone down with chicken pox, so I'd gone home. The last time I spoke to

"If it was recorded today it wouldn't sound so right. It's organic, real"

MARK COLLINS



Tim Burgess onstage at V96, Chelmsford: "It sounded like an updated version of the Count Five's 'Psychotic Reaction'..."

→ Rob was when he was going back down to the studio. I said, "You take care." He said, "I always do."

COLLINS: Me and Tim had been into town with Rob to have a few drinks. And that was the last time I saw him. We got back to the studio, and after an hour-and-a-half Rob hadn't come back. We thought maybe he'd dropped in at Rockfield, because Black Grape were there. But then a copper arrived, and said, "Get yourself over to Abergavenny hospital." Rob definitely had a devil-may-care attitude. But I don't know whether that was anything to do with why his wheel hit the kerb that night. It was a winding-country-road accident

in the dark. Afterwards we spent four or five days saying, do we finish the record, or split up? If we're finishing the record, the single should come out. And we were booked to do Knebworth, which I didn't want to do in the first place.

BURGESS: We weren't going to do it, and Jeff Barrett of Heavenly said that you have to. I said, "How?" And he said, "Martin Duffy from Primal Scream will do it for you." And I later found out that it was Bobby [Gillespie] who suggested it. And I'll always be grateful.

MARTIN DUFFY: I only had a week to rehearse. And they were completely rootless. They didn't know whether they were coming or going. "One To Another" was the first song we rehearsed. When I hear it, it takes me right back to that. It was intense, to say the least. I love The

FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Tim Burgess, Martin Blunt, Rob Collins, Mark Collins, Jon Brookes
- **Performers:** Tim Burgess (vocals), Mark Collins (guitar), Rob Collins (Hammond organ, Clavinet, piano), Martin Blunt (bass), Jon Brookes (drums), Tom Rowlands (loops)
- **Producers:** The Charlatans and Dave Charles
- **Recorded at:** Monnow Valley Studios and Rockfield Studios, Monmouth
- **Released:** August 26, 1996
- **Highest chart position:** UK 3

that we had no control over. I was almost watching it, even though I was taking part. It was a nice day, and all of a sudden the clouds came up and it started thundering and lightning. We were even more mesmerising than we normally are! We played "One To Another", which was just out. And when we finished, we all collapsed. People were putting their arms round us, and saying

Charlatans, and it was an honour to be asked. I think the funeral was four days before the gig.

BURGESS: The funeral was crazy. All his family were there, pointing the fingers. It was like, "Shit, we just knew him. A different Rob than you knew..."

COLLINS: I think I just went at Knebworth with a steely attitude.

BURGESS: I knew that we had to be the best band. I knew that we had to perform out of our skins. And we did. But it could've gone either way. We had the courage to do it without our star man – because Rob was an incredible player. There was an otherworldliness going on onstage,

stuff that I don't even remember, because it wasn't important.

BLUNT: We watched a bit of Oasis, then we said, "Come on. Let's get out of here."

BURGESS: We'd done it, and it was something that we had to do, in order to continue. We played that *Tellin' Stories* album to our biggest audiences after that. The arms of the world were wrapped around us. We felt very loved. Duffy had to go back to Primal Scream, and we were very fortunate in finding Tony Rogers to be our keyboardist. We built our own studio, because we didn't want to go back to Monnow Valley after Rob died, almost outside the gates. It was the end of that era.

COLLINS: I don't know whether you can say what happened afterwards redeems Rob's death. It's still the loss of a very talented individual. It softens it rather than redeems it. It makes you feel something good came out of this. Something.

Because I would trade this all to have him back. But if you have to leave a legacy, "One To Another" is not a bad one.

BURGESS: It's a unique story. It's not just 'band form, have a couple of hits, fall apart and then reform'. It's a lot more brutal. That time was about as hard as it gets, but since then it's been OK. Since then it's just been life, you know. ☺

A DVD on the making of *Tellin' Stories*, Mountain Picnic Blues, is out May 6



TIMELINE

Summer 1996 The Charlatans start recording their new album in Monnow Valley and Rockfield,

Monmouth. "One To Another" is the first song they work on.

July 23, 1996 Rob Collins dies from his

injuries sustained in a car crash.

August 11, 1996 The Charlatans play in front of 125,000

people at Knebworth.

August 26, 1996 "One To Another" is released and reaches No 3.

April 21, 1997 *Tellin'*

Stories is released, reaching No 1 and becoming The Charlatans' most successful album.

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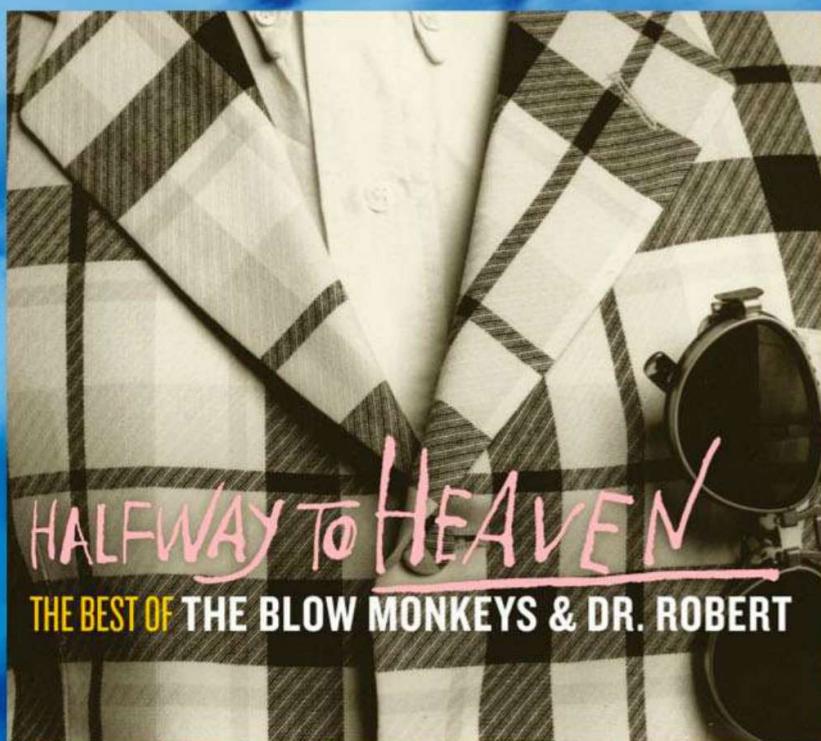


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“What my band and I are about is a sense of responsibility”

Photo: Jamie Squire

In 1973, a young British journalist was one of BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN's first champions. In a landmark review of *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.*, he hailed a brilliant new talent, comparable to Dylan, Van Morrison and 'the original prophets of rock and soul'. With Springsteen about to play his biggest-ever UK shows, RICHARD WILLIAMS celebrates the virtues he heard 40 years ago in Springsteen's music and that have been there ever since: 'loyalty, respect, commitment... the rich empathy that would become his life's work.'







The showmen must go on: (l-r) Clarence Clemons, Springsteen, Steven Van Zandt, onstage at Hammersmith Odeon, November 18, 1975; and right, Springsteen at the same gig

WHEN Bruce Springsteen played Hyde Park last summer, he opened his set with "Thunder Road": just his voice and

harmonica, paced by Roy Bittan's piano. It had a particular significance, and he shared it with the crowd. "I want to start with something special tonight," he told them. "This is the first thing we played when my feet first touched British soil in 1975. It's a little love letter for you."

Back on that night in 1975 the very same arrangement of "Thunder Road" had opened the first of two shows at Hammersmith Odeon. This was also his first performance outside the United States, and the one at which he was forced to confront and deal with the scale of the commercial forces threatening to engulf him as the success of *Born To Run* gave him a first bittersweet taste of impending global superstardom. It was the day he went around the venue sweeping record-company flyers off the seats and pulling down the posters announcing that "Finally London is ready for Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band", a vain gesture since that boast also shone in neon letters above the Odeon's front entrance.

The first of those 1975 shows was edgy and enthralling. There were plenty of first-generation Springsteen fans in the hall, the type who'd been along for the ride (and learnt to endure the scorn of hipsters) since the appearance of *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.* two and a half years earlier, but their eager enthusiasm was challenged by the

THE 10 MOST PLAYED SONGS

...in the UK from 1976-2012

- 1 **Born To Run** - 65 times
- 2 **The River** - 58
- 3 **The Promised Land** - 56
- 4 **Thunder Road** - 55
- 5 **Badlands** - 53
- 6 **Born In The USA** - 44
- 7 **Hungry Heart** - 43
- 8 **Darkness On The Edge Of Town** - 41
- 9 **Out In The Street** - 37
- 10 **Bobby Jean** - 35



scepticism of a large number of industry types on freebies, drawn by the significance of the occasion, bristling with readiness to proclaim that the emperor was naked.

MOST BIG ROCK shows started late in those days; fans cheerfully endured the protracted charade of ponytailed roadies strutting back and forth, making minute and probably meaningless adjustments to amplifiers and microphones. To keep an audience waiting was the accepted prerogative of the established superstar. It was a little different for an artist making his British debut, particularly one whose career had been suspected of artificial assistance in the shape of record-company hype. Springsteen's unexplained 45-minute delay simply increased the tension.

But from the moment a white pin-spot illuminated the source of the opening harmonica blast, the night was electrifying. Not every sceptic went away converted, but the majority got the point. Here was a performer who managed to combine the old, the new, the serious and the fun, who could hold the attention with a story that lasted longer than the song it introduced, who could rock as hard as the original prophets of rock and soul yet create a world peopled with characters and scenes from his cinematic imagination. As the set progressed, you could feel the nerves settle and the energy build. Then, for the first of his encores, he sat at the piano to deliver a slowed-down solo version of "For You", its bruised tenderness demonstrating that his



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN



The Asbury Park lineup: (l-r, back) Dave Sancious, Vini Lopez, Garry Tallent, (l-r, front) Bruce Springsteen, Clarence Clemons, Danny Federici, on the Jersey Shore, NJ, August 29, 1973

DAVID GAHR/GETTY IMAGES; JEFF FASANO

range extended beyond the rabble-rousing of "Rosalita" and the melodrama of "Jungleland". The second show, six days later, was more relaxed. In between times, he and the band had performed in Stockholm and Amsterdam, and he seemed to have come to terms with whatever the publicity and marketing people at the British arm of his record company were doing to get him across. When he took the stage at the Odeon again, it was to be greeted by an audience lacking the scenemakers whose suspicions had conditioned the atmosphere at the first night. He



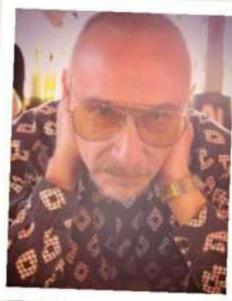
GREETINGS FROM SPRINGSTEEN'S FANS

Graham Parker on Bruce

The Rumour man on The Boss' impact in prog-stricken Britain

“I was a friend in Basingstoke. I distinctly remember going down to his place and he'd bought *Born To Run*. I'd missed Springsteen's first two, as everyone in England did. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was a bit like when Bob Marley took the reggae groove and integrated it with rock guitar, so it could cross over. Springsteen had got the foundation of rock'n'roll, but he'd applied The Ronettes to it. That made it totally unique. In those days, '75, even most of '76, outside

London it was all progressive. People were still discovering Uriah Heep, and expected a band to have long hair and wear a denim suit. Hearing Springsteen was a pretty good sign that something could change, and get us out of the progressive slump. And it was sincere. That was the main thing about it. He was putting every drop of passion into the record. And there wasn't a great deal of that around.



I was impressed by *The River* later, and *Tunnel Of Love*, which had a tension in it that the '80s sound couldn't ruin, so claustrophobic, and songs wearing it on their sleeve - I've married a woman and I want to be with someone else, maybe the fortune teller lied! And 'Born In The USA' was almost punk in its minimalism. But there's nothing he could do that would be bad. By the time *Born In The USA* came out, he'd become so iconic that he couldn't really go wrong in Britain, or anywhere. It's never going to be, 'Oh, Bruce, you can't fill out

Wembley this year.' Even if they're not huge fans, people are like: 'Springsteen! We've got to see him!' But at the same time, this guy's a working musician. I did a gig in the carpark of the Stone Pony, Asbury Park, in maybe 2003, and Bruce showed up and asked for a guitar. 'Oh, what one, Bruce?' 'I don't know, an electric guitar!' He's still just a guy who's playing. He's kept that sincerity that I first heard in him." NICK HASTED

Page 24—MELODY MAKER, March 31, 1973

A Dylan for the 70s?

BRUCE SPRINGS-TEEN: "Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J." (CBS).

It could be 50 summers ago, a sunny tress afternoon up in Susie's room, cooking baked beans, and "Free-wheelin'" by "Free-wheelin'" man, that this guy named Dylan could articulate so brilliantly the most secret emotions.

It could be 1973, and we've been here since 1972, and here I am with an album, a totally unfamiliar feeling, a different, and I'm getting excited.

Even now that I know the words, and

can sing along with the record, the adrenaline rushes still have it. It's headiness makes words difficult, and I just want to listen to the record again. And again.

Bruce Springsteen. He's from New Jersey, 23, and he lends a hand for which he plays guitar, and writes songs. His guitar track recurs to speak of, and I'd never heard him a couple of weeks ago in an American magazine which printed some of his lyrics. Just reading his words again, I've been taking their cue from the likes of Bob Dylan of "Subterranean Blues".

They leap off the page with a vivid attack

which is really contemporary. And now this, well, the accompanying article was not very good too, but it didn't really indicate that he was this really

brief, Springsteen is an

outgoing, interesting, and a

family self-concert in his voice.

In a voice

as smooth as Jackson Browne's,

surely as Van Morrison's,

with more cold blue steel and

calligraphic, tells stories

from his own personal

leneration Row. Get this, a

single line called "Grown

Up". The line

flows from my mouth as

you were going to wing it

in a joke, she couldn't

and she could sing it pushed

B-Side, and she was

with the blues with my gear

on standing/broke

the rules, strafed my

high-pitched, now give

thought to Landing.

and the crowd were more at ease with each other, the mood was lighter, and all the good impressions from the previous week were fully confirmed.

In his own mind, however, a certain wariness remained. And when he returned to London to play six nights at Wembley Arena in the spring of 1981, he began the first night not with something from *The River*, which the tour was promoting, but with a hurtling version of "Born To Run" in which he never seemed to open his eyes, the hectic pace and extreme intensity of his delivery clearly intended to blow away the lingering memories of that first visit. For those who recognised what he was doing, it was the most compelling of re-introductions.

The performances he gave during that second stay in London represented him and his musicians at the absolute pinnacle of their art, their power and fluency in perfect balance as the setlist – now drawn from five albums – was shuffled each night to create self-contained sequences of thematically linked material. The simple emotions of 1975 had acquired more complex hues and more profound undercurrents of meaning, and those who accused him of exploiting his own clichés were completely missing the point. His understanding of "that pure American brother, dull-eyed and empty-faced" – the protagonist of the first album's "Lost In The Flood" – had deepened into a rich empathy that would become his life's work.

The memory of the old unease, however, would never entirely disappear. On his return to Hammersmith Odeon in 2006 – by that time renamed the Apollo, but otherwise unchanged in almost every way since his previous visit 31 years earlier – with a riotously enjoyable show based on the *Seeger Sessions* album, he prefaced the first song by saying, almost under his breath, something about the place being inhabited by ghosts. Springsteen is not a man to forget the significance of the moments on which his career pivoted.

IT WAS IN the early weeks of 1973 that a review copy of *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.* found its way to my desk in the old *Melody Maker* office on Fleet Street. I'd read with interest an enthusiastic piece about him in *Crawdaddy*; some of his lyrics had been extensively quoted, and they made him sound very different from the succession of New Dylans who had been presented to the public at regular intervals by hopeful record companies. On the page, the stories in his lyrics were elaborate but the language was direct, and it came from the street. He sounded like someone who knew exactly where to go looking for the unexplored mythic dimensions of rock'n'roll.

HELEN RED

This, remember, was the heyday of progressive rock; the likes of ELP, Yes, Genesis and King Crimson were filling the pages of the music papers. For another kind of taste there was the beginning of the LA scene represented by Ry Cooder and Lowell George, and the Laurel Canyon singer-songwriting of Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, Jackson Browne and the reborn Carole King, with the Eagles just around the corner. In Britain, styles were being set by David Bowie and Roxy Music, grievously confused in the public mind with Sweet and David Essex. The Wailers and the Maytals were barely beginning to challenge the rock audience's automatic disdain for Jamaican music. Hendrix was dead and I wasn't interested in Led Zeppelin or anything else that sounded even vaguely like heavy metal. The influence of The Velvet Underground had yet to achieve the traction of a new generation that would, within another couple of years, turn the world upside down.

At that point, pop music had only just started to look at its own past and wonder whether certain elements might not have been abandoned too early in the evolutionary rush that accelerated throughout the 1960s, taking The Beach Boys, for example, from the garage simplicity of "Surfin' USA" to the high sophistication of "Heroes And Villains" in five years flat. A lot of good ideas had been left behind, but it took a while for anyone to work out how to put them to creative use. Richard Nader's Rock And Roll Revival Shows presented such founding fathers as Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Fats Domino to a younger audience, and the likes of Sha-Na-Na, Australia's Daddy Cool and even the Mothers Of Invention dipped into a stylised form of doo-wop, but with no fresh relevance. There had to be more to it than the cool pastiche of Bowie's *Pin Ups* or Bryan Ferry's *These Foolish Things*. Johnny Rivers could celebrate the classic repertoire in finely crafted and thoroughly enjoyable albums like *Blue Suede Shoes* and *LA Reggae*, but they had no real depth, no fresh relevance. When others spiced their repertoire with golden oldies – James Taylor, say, with his charming version of Jimmy Jones' "Handy Man", or Linda Ronstadt with "You're No Good" – it was a pleasant exercise in nostalgia.

IF I ALREADY knew what to expect from Springsteen's words, it wasn't until I took the review copy of *Greetings* into the *MM* listening cubicle and placed it on the cheap stereo deck that I knew what he actually sounded like. Here was a middleweight voice hoarse with urgency above a tight little band that seemed to have borrowed its basic moves – nifty guitar riffs, funky bass, crisp drums and soul sax – from the Van Morrison of "Brown Eyed Girl", "Moondance", "Domino" and "Wild Night". That was fine by me. In fact, given what else was around, it was more than fine.

First, however, you had to get past Side One, Track One. Was it something as simple as the use of the word "diplomat" in the tumble of verbiage with which "Blinded By The Light" began – "Madman drummers bummers and Indians in the summer with a teenage diplomat" – that set the lights on bullshit-detectors flashing, its echo of one of the famous lines from Dylan's "Like A Rolling Stone" ("You used to ride on the chrome horse with your diplomat") persuading some listeners to condemn him as a plagiarist?

McCartney! Townshend! Fogerty! Sting!

Famous faces who've played live with the E Street Band in the UK

Link Wray

"I Fought The Law"

Wembley Arena, June 2, 1981

Pete Townshend

"Born To Run"

"Sweet Soul Music"

Birmingham International Arena, June 7, 1981

Edwin Starr

"War", Villa Park,

Birmingham, June 22, 1988

Wembley Stadium, June 25, 1988

NEC, Birmingham, May 16, 1999

Sting, Peter Gabriel, Tracy Chapman and Youssou N'Dour (tour co-headliners)

"Get Up, Stand Up"

"Chimes Of Freedom"

Amnesty Human Rights Now! Tour, Wembley Stadium, September 2, 1988

Brian Fallon

"No Surrender"

Glastonbury, June 27, 2009

Hyde Park, London, June 28, 2009

Tom Morello

"Death To My Hometown"

"Jack Of All Trades"

"The Ghost Of Tom Joad"

"Land Of Hope And Dreams"/"People Get Ready"

"The Rising"

Hyde Park, London, July 14, 2012

John Fogerty

"The Promised Land"

Hyde Park, London, July 14, 2012

Paul McCartney

"I Saw Her Standing There"

Hyde Park, London, July 14, 2012

Paul McCartney and Tom Morello

"Twist And Shout"

Hyde Park, London, July 14, 2012



Turn it up: Bruce gets a little help from his friend, Paul McCartney, Hyde Park, London, July 14, 2012

It wasn't the best way to start a career, and you needed to accept "Blinded By The Light" as a piece of good-humoured nonsense in order to get to the more substantial, impressive work represented by "Growin' Up", "Lost In The Flood" or "Spirit In The Night". And, particularly, by "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City", which sparked and crackled with a priceless sense of discovery. Here was an edge that even the best of the New Dylans – the likes of John Prine, Loudon Wainwright III and Steve Goodman – didn't possess, and it came from the presence of an unabashed pop sensibility.

There was nothing po-faced or self-conscious about it, nothing nostalgic or condescending. With Springsteen, whether he was playing one of his own songs or covering "We Gotta Get Out Of This Place", "Pretty Flamingo" or "When You Walk In The Room", you could sense straight away that the past of rock'n'roll was a living, breathing part of a vibrant present that renewed itself every day. In 1973, that was new.

So I gave the album a rave review, saying that the experience of sitting in the cubicle listening to *Greetings From Asbury Park N.J.* reminded me of the sensation I'd had 10 years earlier while hearing *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* for the first time in a record-shop booth: suddenly the world seemed to have taken a big lurch forward. On that day, Dylan did something important to me; it's what, a couple of years later, he would also do to Springsteen, who would describe it as "giving us the words to understand our hearts". That's what "Lost In The Flood" and "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City" seemed to be doing, too, and I put a piece of paper in a battered office typewriter and tried to get an impression of it down in time for the next edition. As a piece of prose, the review wasn't something I'm particularly proud of now, but I've never had reason to be ashamed of the thrust of its advocacy. It ended with a suggestion that Bruce Springsteen might have a part to play in the future of rock'n'roll. The last words were: "He might even be it."

ALMOST EXACTLY ONE year later, writing in Boston's *Real Paper*, a rock critic and aspiring record producer named Jon Landau came to a strikingly similar conclusion after seeing the E Street Band support Bonnie Raitt one night in April 1974. Landau had already written a favourable review of Springsteen's second album, *The Wild, The Innocent & The E Street Shuffle*, a record in which the themes of *Greetings* were pursued and elaborated to excellent effect but no greater commercial success. What he saw at Harvard Square Theater only fuelled the critic's enthusiasm. "Last Thursday," he wrote, "I saw my rock and roll past flash before my eyes. And I saw something else: I saw rock and roll future and its name is Bruce Springsteen."

We were all proselytisers in those days. Writing for a music paper hadn't yet become a competitive sport. We wanted people to hear what we heard. Each of us was on a bit of a crusade: we just wanted to stop people listening to garbage and to share our enthusiasms and discoveries. No doubt that was Landau's motivation, too. But as his friendship with Springsteen burgeoned, he began to

"COVER ME!"

The most covered songs on the UK tours...

The Isley Bros: "Twist And Shout" - 17 times

Woody Guthrie: "This Land Is Your Land" - 16

Jimmy Cliff: "Trapped" - 16

John Fogerty: "Rockin' All Over the World" - 13

Hank Williams: "Mansion On The Hill" - 11

Chuck Berry: "Bye Bye Johnny" (as "Johnny Bye-Bye") - 10

Blind Alfred Reed: "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live?" - 8

Edwin Starr: "War" - 7

Elvis Presley: "Can't Help Falling In Love" - 6

Creedence Clearwater Revival: "Who'll Stop The Rain" - 6

John Lee Hooker: "Boom Boom" - 5

Bob Dylan: "Chimes Of Freedom" - 3

Jerry Lee Lewis: "High School Confidential" - 2

Bobby Fuller: "I Fought The Law" - 2

Jimmy Cliff: "Many Rivers To Cross" - 2

Suicide: "Dream Baby Dream" - 2

Elvis Presley: "Mystery Train" - 2

Chris Kenner: "Land Of 1,000 Dances" - 2

The Rolling Stones: "Street Fighting Man" - 1

Bob Marley: "Get Up, Stand Up" - 1

Joe Strummer: "Coma Girl" - 1

The Clash: "London Calling" - 1

The Impressions: "People Get Ready" (in medley with "Land Of Hope And Dreams") - 1

The Beatles: "I Saw Her Standing There" - 1

take a hand in shaping the singer's destiny. First he persuaded them to move out of a scantly equipped studio in New Jersey and to complete *Born To Run* in a better environment. Then he helped to sharpen and develop Springsteen's songwriting skills, getting him to pare away the images that had crowded the frames of his early work and to isolate the material that would prove such durable themes for the rest of his career. He encouraged him to watch the films of John Ford and to read the novels of John Steinbeck, and to think in terms of establishing a parallel position for himself in the ranks of American artists depicting the realities of life at the base of the social pyramid. Stimulated by this informal higher education, Springsteen latched on to the business of dreams and promises, and their ability to survive although betrayed and tarnished. As he summarised it, many years later: "What do you do when your dreams come true? What do you do when they don't?"

Landau also helped his new friend through the painful process of extricating himself from a problematic relationship with his first manager and assumed the duties of management himself, gradually relinquishing the role of co-worker in the recording studio but continuing to provide active support and guidance. Landau has done very well out of that *Real Paper* review, the proceeds of Springsteen's success enabling him, for instance, to compile a world-class personal art collection of old masters. But for his input during those crucial years in the mid-1970s, when Springsteen had served his apprenticeship but needed to refine his focus, you'd have to say he deserves every last Titian and Tintoretto.

SOMEHOW CELEBRITY NEVER quite killed Springsteen, despite the contradictions inescapable over the course of a 40-year career in the music industry. The man who swept the detested publicity flyers off the seats before that first show at Hammersmith Odeon, and who prefaced a radio broadcast from the Roxy in LA that year with a shout of "All you bootleggers out there in radioland - roll those tapes!", was happy to go along, less than a decade later, with an international marketing campaign for *Born In The USA* so lavish and precise in its documented specifications that it made the invasion of Iraq look like a Saturday night police operation in the Bigg Market. Early in the upward curve of his celebrity he made a pledge never to play stadiums, yet the last time I saw him he was performing in the O2, with its fast-lane entry for VIPs and holders of the correct mobile phone contract. Somehow he manages to rise above the marketing tricks, and he certainly did his best to make a 20,000-seat arena on the Isle Of Dogs feel like a sweaty little club on the Jersey shore ("We're the big-building killers," he proclaimed that night, and you had to give him the credit). He has been unfailingly modest and transparently honest for so long that his integrity now goes unquestioned.

In 1975 he prefaced "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City" by saying: "This is for Pete." He's been dedicating songs to old fans and to new acquaintances ever since. At one of the Wembley Arena shows in 1981 my girlfriend and I were unexpectedly invited into his presence during the intermission; we weren't the only recipients of this welcoming gesture, but he made us feel as though he was genuinely pleased to see us, even though he was in the middle of a four-hour show and the smell of embrocation hung over the dressing room. He's the only rock star who continues to give the impression that he would like, if it were

possible, to extend such an invitation to every member of his audience.

After the show, Pete Townshend was stunned by the endorphin rush. "I'm flying, mate," he said

A couple of weeks earlier I'd been to review his first night in Manchester and I'd been amazed by the way he threw himself off the stage to surf the crowd, with no apparent concern for his own safety, only a few months after John Lennon had been shot by a fan outside his own front door. A

week or so later, before the Wembley shows, the late Capital Radio disc jockey Roger Scott and I drove down to Brighton, where, relieved of reviewing duties, a supposedly hard-bitten journalist was unable to resist rushing down the aisles and joining in the mass singing of the first verse of "Hungry Heart". Backstage after the show Pete Townshend was slumped in a chair, half-stunned by the endorphin rush. "I'm flying, mate," he said.

That night I was scheduled to interview Springsteen. There had been more than 300,000 applications for 105,000 tickets to his UK shows, and the idea was to explain to the general readership of *The Sunday Times* what made him such a distinctive kind of rock star - what differentiated his approach from that of, say, Rod Stewart. We met in his hotel room, where a copy of Jerry Hopkins' *Elvis: The Final Years*



Runway boy: Springsteen at London's Wembley Stadium, on the tour to support *Born In The USA*, July 1985



was on his bedside table. As he had with Anthony Scaduto's pioneering Dylan biography and Joe Klein's *Woody Guthrie: A Life*, he was using it as a primer for a life in the spotlight, a guide to what to do and what to avoid.

He said he felt like getting some fresh air, so we left the hotel and walked along the parade by the seafront: an East Sussex version of the New Jersey boardwalks of his youth. Soon he was reflecting on the lessons he had learnt since his first visit to England, which were mostly about the importance of taking control of your own destiny. "What my band and I are about is a sense of responsibility," he said. "If you accept it, that makes you responsible for everything that happens. People tend to blame circumstances, but in the end it's always your choice. Take Elvis. He lost control. After a while, he even lost control of his own body. Starting in 1975, I had to fight a battle to regain control of what I do."

But taking control did not entail putting a distance between himself and his audience. "My father was a pretty good pool player and not much else," he said. "When he was about the age I am now, he was offered a job with the telephone company, but he turned it down because it would have meant travelling away from his wife and kids. Years later, I realised how that missed opportunity had hurt him ever since. So I've always felt that if you're fortunate enough

UK TOUR REVELATIONS

Number of dates played in the UK: 83

Impromptu karaoke

Performance: May 24, 1993, performs the Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash" in the Stanhope Arms, London, SW7

Number of shows at Wembley Stadium: 17

Songs played during pre-concert acoustic set at Crystal Palace, May 26, 2003: "Does This Bus Stop At 82nd Street?", "Growin' Up" and "This Hard Land"

Time taken for two 2008 shows at Emirates Stadium to sell out: 10 minutes

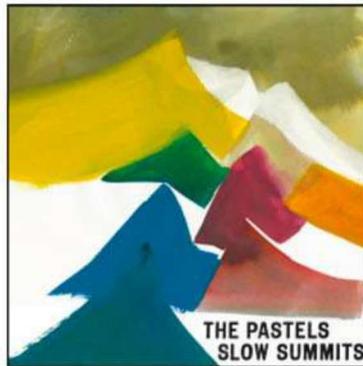
Smallest venue played: St Luke's Church, Old Street (capacity: 372), May 9, 2006

to be up there onstage, it's your responsibility to try and close the gap with the audience, to give them the sense that there are other possibilities than the ones they may be seeing."

It was after midnight, but every now and then a young fan who had been to the concert and was still wandering around in a euphoric daze would recognise the slight figure wearing the scuffed leather jacket, crumpled jeans and muddied boots in which he had taken the stage. Each approach was warmly welcomed and every request for an autograph or an Instamatic photograph – there were no mobile phones in those pre-digital days – was cheerfully granted. It prompted a reference to his crowd-surfing.

"It boils down to a question of whether you trust people or not," he said. "I'm always inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt. I get roughed up sometimes, when people try to pull chunks out of me, but mostly it's OK. It's vital to stay close to those people. I remember going to see bands when I was a kid, watching the musicians from real close up, studying the way they moved their hands, then going home and trying to copy them. Being in a band and playing music is what got me out of the trap of never realising my potential."

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He has never relinquished that belief in the redemptive possibilities of music, as long as it is executed with passion and commitment. "When you walk onstage tonight to bring the noise," he told the young musicians listening to his keynote speech at the start of the 2012 South By South West festival in Austin, Texas, "treat it like it's all we have."

SO MAGNIFICENT WERE those 1981 shows that it was hard for anything to survive in their shadow. I saw the 1985 *Born In The USA* tour at St James' Park in Newcastle and the 1988 *Tunnel Of Love* excursion at Wembley Stadium; not surprisingly, some of the magical intimacy had gone, along with that priceless feeling that each show was being invented on the spot, from scratch, that very night. And then, in 1992, came the return to Wembley Arena for the release of *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, the simultaneously released albums on which, having moved to Los Angeles, he broke away from the E Street Band. I could appreciate why he'd done that – after 20 years, who wouldn't want a change of scene and company, even temporarily? – and when I play those albums now they aren't quite as featureless as I thought then, but I missed any sense of passion in the show and took the previously unimaginable decision to make an exit at half-time. At that point, I thought I might never go back.

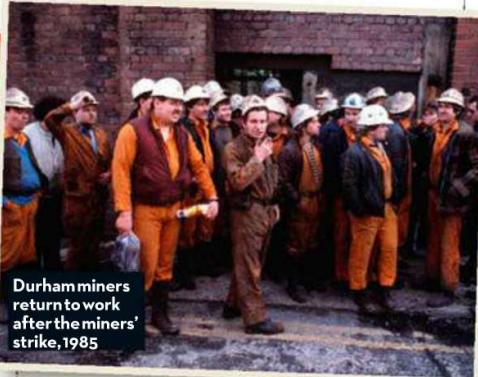
TUNNEL OF LOVE

'Who's Bruce Springsteen?'

How the Durham miners came to receive a £16,000 donation from the Boss

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN played Newcastle's St James' Park on June 4, 1985, on the first UK date of the *Born In The USA* tour. It gave his British fans first-hand insight into Springsteen's desire to be truly close to his audience. "I want to try and just work more directly with people... to find some way [to] tie into the communities we come into," he explained to *Rolling Stone*'s Kurt Loder when the tour began in 1984. Over subsequent years, he's made individual donations of thousands of dollars to local causes, from food banks to the widows of New York firemen killed on 9/11. In Newcastle, the Durham Miners' Wives Support Group became his first British beneficiary.

"He didn't come and see us in person," says Dave Temple, then a miner and now a press officer at the Durham Miners' Association. "I went into the office and [Support Group chair] Anne Suddick said, 'Bruce Springsteen's just donated £16,000 to us.' And I said, 'Who's Bruce Springsteen?' We had got desensitised – we were getting donations from all over. But it was a great thing that he did, and it did lift everybody's spirits. I'm sure it was towards the end of the



Durham miners return to work after the miners' strike, 1985

strike, earlier than the gig."

In the febrile political atmosphere of the 1980s, Springsteen's choice of charity pointedly took sides. "I think he was badly advised about the coal strike and the issues involved... it's a great shame," right-wing Tory MP for Newcastle Central Piers Merchant complained to *NME*'s Gavin Martin. "Though he was a welcome guest," Merchant added to Springsteen biographer, Christopher Sandford, "it was unwise of him to get into a local controversy."

Oxfam and Chiswick Rescue (a charity supporting battered women) also received substantial donations.

Two decades later, the audience at Sheffield's Hallam FM Arena on November 14, 2006 found The Boss' engagement as strong as ever. "I guess they don't make that much steel here anymore," he said, introducing "Youngstown" from *The Ghost Of Tom Joad*, about the decline of the titular Ohio steel town. "Then again, they don't make that much steel in Youngstown anymore, either." Part of Springsteen's bond with his audiences, in Britain as elsewhere, is his keen awareness of the places he plays. *NICK HASTED*

Springsteen has never relinquished that belief in the redemptive possibilities of music, as long as it is made with passion



Better than the vest: Clarence Clemons onstage with Springsteen, during the 1988 tour for *Tunnel Of Love*

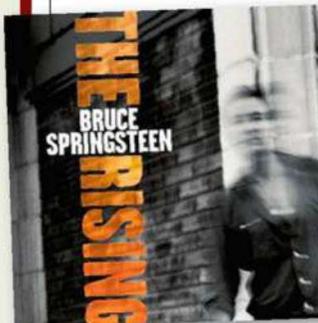
The simplicity of "Streets Of Philadelphia" in 1994 and the working men's stories of *The Ghost Of Tom Joad* the following year seemed to get his juices flowing again, as the similarly unadorned *Nebraska* had a dozen years earlier. But the long-awaited reunion of the E Street Band in 1999 was something of a disappointment: with the exception of the acoustic interlude, in which Danny Federici's accordion and Nils Lofgren's pedal steel guitar made "The River" and "Mansion On The Hill" glisten, they seemed to be going through the motions. Springsteen's raps lacked even the illusion of spontaneity.

It took the shooting of Amadou Diallo by the New York police, the trauma of 9/11 and the hideousness of George W Bush's two presidential terms to renew his momentum. "American Skin (41 Shots)" was a powerful reaction to the Diallo incident, and personal and public responses to the

Twin Towers disaster were mingled in *The Rising*, to particularly bold effect when he incorporated the Qawwali singer Asif Ali Khan's group into "Worlds Apart". Even the good-time songs – "Waitin' On A Sunny Day", "Mary's Place" and the singularly beautiful "Let's Be Friends (Skin To Skin)" – contained a hint of dread.

Three years later the E Street Band were stood down again for *Devils & Dust*, an Americana album which sounded as though he had been spending a lot of time – as many of us had – listening to the stark, sombre records Johnny Cash had been making with Rick Rubin. This was the second album to make use of the production skills of Brendan O'Brien, who was broadening the range of available sonic resources. New Mexico took the place of New Jersey as the imagined setting for the songs and although the regional inflections didn't always work, the album contained some brave moves, notably "Reno", an account of a hotel-room encounter with a hooker.

Assembling the *Seeger Sessions* band in 2006 gave him another creative boost, although it took time before the music played on that tour, to such joyful effect, filtered into his own songwriting. Again collaborating with





The rising: Springsteen on the Wrecking Ball tour, July 2012

→ O'Brien on *Magic* in 2007 and *Working On A Dream* in 2009, he returned to a more varied approach, allowing the cheerful "Girls In Their Summer Clothes" to coexist with the haunted "Devil's Arcade" and coming up with a fine homage to The Beach Boys in "This Life", a song that unaccountably failed to become the new "Hungry Heart". Although the arrangements were fuller than ever, these didn't sound much like E Street Band records, but perhaps that was O'Brien's intention, to make something that would work alongside whatever else was on the radio in the first decade of a new millennium.

By the time Springsteen arrived at the O2 in late 2007 it was without Danny Federici, the unobtrusive figure behind the Hammond organ; within months he would be dead from melanoma. The sound of Federici's B3 had been one of the things I most liked about the E Street Band, a link to their roots in soul music, particularly when he took his solo on "Hungry Heart", but onstage it was his use of the glockenspiel on some of the songs that was more significant to the tone and texture of the music: that bell-like sound was borrowed from Phil Spector's Wall Of Sound, and to me it represented the sound of innocence, even in the midst of darkness.

There were no bells to be heard on *Wrecking Ball*, which came out last year as a blast of undiluted anger aimed at the people who, by creating the conditions for the economic collapse of 2008, had blighted so many of the ordinary lives about which Springsteen wrote. Now there was another casualty. This time it was Clarence Clemons, whose tenor saxophone solos had the same effect in a show as Bob Dylan's harmonica in one of his concerts: the sound alone was enough to send a shiver of delight and recognition through the audience. Clemons died after a stroke in the summer of 2011, and while Charlie Giordano from the *Seeger Sessions* band had swiftly been drafted in to take Federici's place at the Hammond stool, the only way to replace Clarence's giant presence was with an entire horn section.

THE WRECKING BALL TOUR TOP 20

The 20 most played songs around the world on Bruce's latest world tour

- 1= **Death To My Hometown** - 98
- 1= **Waitin' On A Sunny Day** - 98
- 1= **Born To Run** - 98
- 1= **Dancing In The Dark** - 98
- 5= **Wrecking Ball** - 97
- 5= **Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out** - 97
- 7 **We Take Care Of Our Own** - 95
- 8 **My City Of Ruins** - 92
- 9 **Badlands** - 90
- 10 **Shackled And Drawn** - 82
- 11 **The Rising** - 77
- 12 **Land Of Hope And Dreams** - 63
- 13 **Spirit In The Night** - 60
- 14 **Jack Of All Trades** - 59
- 15 **We Are Alive** - 56
- 16 **Thunder Road** - 55
- 17 **Hungry Heart** - 51
- 18 **The Promised Land** - 46
- 19 **Out In The Street** - 45
- 20 **Because The Night** - 43

Maybe *Wrecking Ball* didn't have any songs that would make the cut if you had to whittle the entire 40-year output down to two dozen songs for this summer's three-hour concerts, although a case could be made for "Land Of Hope And Dreams". But Springsteen was among the few (Cooder was another) prepared to take a stand in an election year. "Too many protest singers, not enough protest songs," as Edwyn Collins so memorably put it, and Springsteen deserves a little indulgence for never having forgotten where he put his conscience. "If Woody Guthrie were alive today," he told a Madison Square Garden audience not long ago, "he'd have a lot to write about: high times on Wall Street, hard times on Main Street." That's his job now.

But he hasn't forgotten that it's also his job to give us a good time, and so he goes on, expanding the "heart-stopping, pants-dropping, hard-rocking, booty-shaking, love-making, Viagra-taking" E Street Band to 17 pieces, co-opting guests from John Fogerty to Tom Morello, singing "I Saw Her Standing There" and "Twist And Shout" with Paul McCartney, and cheerfully indulging requests for relatively obscure items from his own back catalogue (such as a wonderful version of "Incident On 57th Street" at Hanging Rock in Australia earlier this year).

And, when appropriate, reminding us of certain core virtues too easily neglected: loyalty, respect, commitment. "We live in a post-authentic world," he told his audience at SXSW last year. "And today authenticity is a house of mirrors. It's all just what you're bringing when the lights go down. It's your teachers, your influences, your personal history; and at the end of the day, it's the power and the purpose of your music that matters."

I like very much the fact that when he started last summer's Hyde Park concert with the ageless "Thunder Road", the 62-year-old sang it in the same key that he used 37 years earlier at Hammersmith Odeon. Most voices slide down the scale as they age. Everything about Bruce Springsteen seems to be holding up. ☺

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THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

Earlier this year, RODRIGUEZ capped an extraordinary 12 months when *Searching For Sugar Man*, the documentary that revived his career, won an Oscar. But what's next for the reclusive singer-songwriter? His first album in 40 years? Sure, but first: "I'm going to run for mayor!"

Story: Michael Bonner

Photo: Toby Selander

TURNED OUT to be an auspicious day for Sixto Rodriguez. That morning, he'd flown back to the United States from South Africa, where he'd played a pair of sold-out shows to more than 10,000 people. In the evening, meanwhile, the Academy Awards were taking place in Los Angeles, where among the nominations for Best Documentary was *Searching For Sugar Man*, the film that had made the Mexican-American singer-songwriter an international star after four decades in obscurity.

Looking back on the events that took place earlier this year, on February 20, Rodriguez remains Zen-like. He explains that he had declined the offer from the film's director, Malik Bendjellou, to attend the Oscars in Los Angeles, preferring instead to stay at home in his native Detroit. "There was too much to do that day," Rodriguez says. He tells us that, no, he didn't watch the ceremony at home: "I don't have TV service, so I didn't catch it." It transpires that Rodriguez slept through the most important night of his career so far, unaware that a television audience of over 40 million Americans had tuned in to watch Bendjellou's film win the Oscar. "My daughter Sandra called me and told me. It's pretty stunning,"

Rodriguez says, before adding in his customary self-deprecating manner: "But it's Malik's film. So credit to him. I was glad he won. He painted me in a good light, I feel. I've seen it over 40 times."

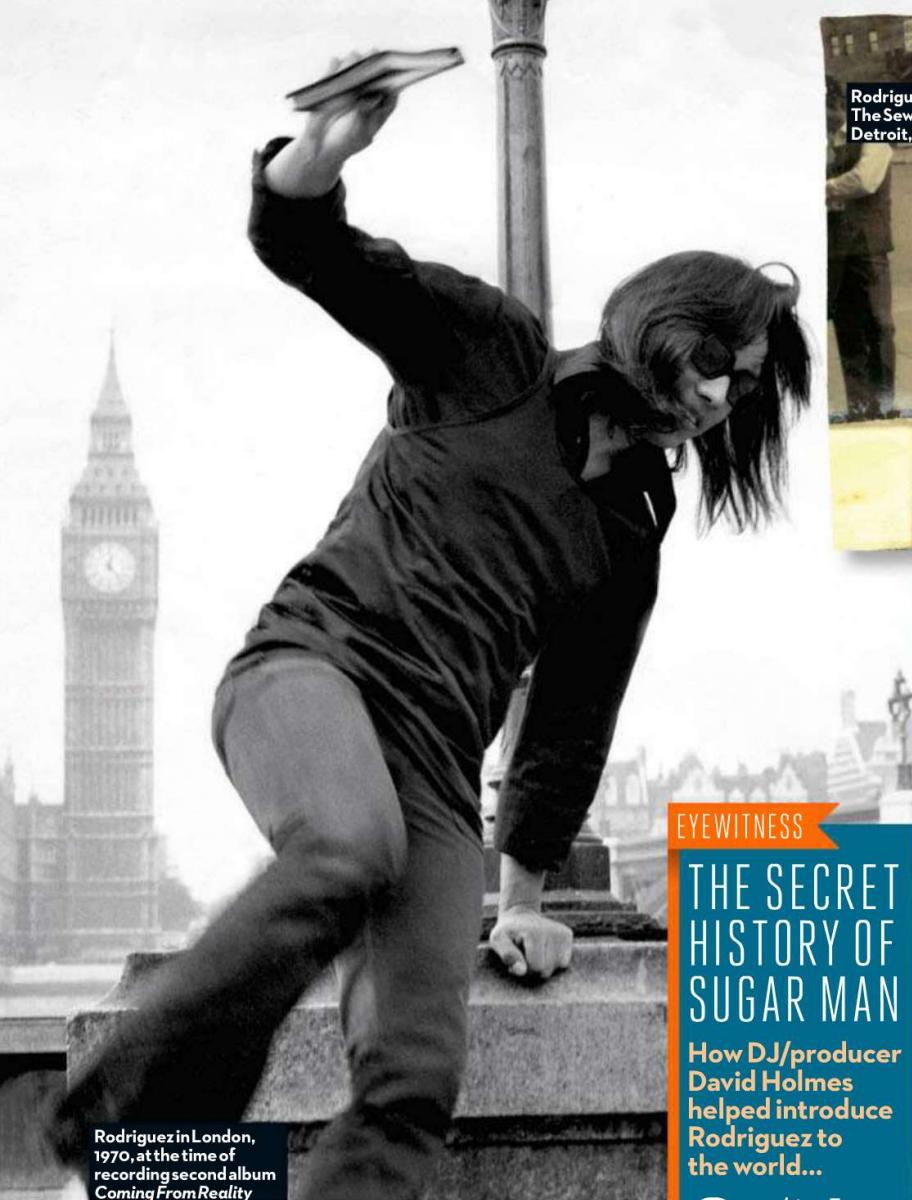
The success of *Searching For Sugar Man* has opened a number of doors for Rodriguez that have otherwise remained firmly shut for almost 40 years. Now "a solid 70" years old, Rodriguez can finally enjoy the benefits of his late arriving success. He now travels in "a couple of buses, we've got two of those, they sleep 12 people," he explains. "I'm a singer, vocals against guitar. The thing is, I go to different countries and I have bands there. Altogether I'd say I maintain, like, 12 bands all over the world. Right now, I'm playing with an American band. I have a South African band, I have an Australian band, I have a Sweden band, a UK band."

And what's his greatest extravagance been?

"I enjoy room service," he says after a pause. "Two o'clock in the morning. You know. It's just the very nice little things. That late success has happened is OK. I'm grounded. I use my seniority to my advantage. That's helped me out. Who'd have thought? So, yeah. I'm a lucky guy."



All the way from
Detroit: Rodriguez in
Durban, South Africa,
March 14, 1998



Rodriguez in London, 1970, at the time of recording second album *Coming From Reality*



On The Tonight Show With Jay Leno, January 11, 2013

EYEWITNESS

THE SECRET HISTORY OF SUGAR MAN

How DJ/producer David Holmes helped introduce Rodriguez to the world...

Searching For Sugar Man presents a compelling story arc, but it leaves a lot out. In particular, the role of Belfast DJ David Holmes, whose 2002 comp *Come Get It, I Got It*, was critical in introducing Rodriguez to a new audience via the inclusion of his signature song, "Sugar Man". "I bought it from a shop called A1 Records in New York in the mid-'90s for \$100," recalls Holmes.

"The first place I heard 'Sugar Man' was on the Holmes compilation and then we started bugging everyone," says Matt Sullivan.

Other long-forgotten artists featured on David Holmes' compilation include Harold Alexander and Betty Adams.

→ **M**USIC IS LITTERED with artists who have fallen off the map, but there are few who have enjoyed a third-act career resurrection like Rodriguez. His two albums – 1970's *Cold Fact* and its successor, 1971's *Coming From Reality* – both bombed in the States, but went on to provide the soundtrack for the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa, where his lyrical folk songs about oppression, prejudice and corruption found a receptive audience. Rodriguez, meanwhile, quietly went about his business back in Detroit, working in construction and effectively retiring from the music scene, unaware until the late '70s of his superstar status in South Africa and also Australia. "I didn't do any music," he explains. "I was never on the circuit, or anything like that. I stayed pretty much out of it because there was nothing happening to me." But in 2008, things began to change. The American label Light In The Attic re-issued *Cold Fact* and *Coming From Reality* the following year, and began the business of gradually re-introducing Rodriguez to the rest of the world – a process that has taken on its own extraordinary momentum since Malik Bendjellou's film came out last year. *Searching For Sugar Man* – an alluring detective story about the hunt for Rodriguez in modern-day Detroit and the unravelling of his lost years – has now sold 24,000 copies in the UK on DVD and Blu-ray since its release four months ago. By comparison, *It Might Get Loud*, the Jack White/Jimmy Page/Edge documentary, sold 33,000 copies in its first year. The soundtrack, Rodriguez says, has sold 250,000 copies in America alone. He has played *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno* accompanied by a 25-piece orchestra, and reveals that Santana once sent 36 red roses to his dressing room, while on May 9, he received a Doctorate in Humane Letters from

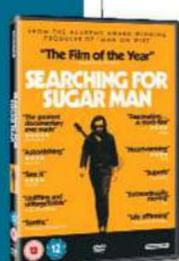
Detroit's Wayne State University: "I don't know if it means I'm smart or I'm educated, but it's quite an honour." Meanwhile, he's been on the road for close to two years, and the venues have been getting bigger. He played Coachella in April, and on top of a slew of UK festival dates that include Glastonbury, he's also sold out two nights at the Hammersmith Apollo. In October, he is scheduled to play the Barclay Center in New York, one of the venues chosen by The Rolling Stones to host their 50th anniversary celebrations last year.

How does it feel to find fame four decades later?

"I guess it feels as good as it would have felt if I was a success earlier," he answers gnomically. "But now because it's so many times over the success that anybody could even dream of, global success, I think that's what changes the picture. In the 1970s, I wouldn't have reached any part of the audience I reach now, with technology, and through the film."

"He gets recognised now when he goes through airports," says his daughter, Regan, who also manages him. "The South African fans are the strongest fans. We were in Canada, at CBC Radio, and a woman recognised him and she started crying. She almost got down on her knees, she could barely stand up, she loved him – this is her family's biggest musical icon. They feel very strongly about him, about Apartheid and being part of the struggle for freedom. We really had to calm her down. It was Beatles-like."

WHILE IT WOULD seem churlish not to let Rodriguez pause to enjoy his late-flowering success, the question of what he'll do next is intriguing. Speaking to Rodriguez, you get the impression that he's an amiable old



hippy radical, and he'll do what he wants in his own time. His voice has a soft, slightly stoned drawl to it, while his speech occasionally lapses into a kind of 1950s hipster patois. Concert-goers are "steppin' out", the junior members of his audiences are "young bloods". He's lived in the same house in Detroit's lower-middle-class Woodbridge neighbourhood for 40 years, with "a wood-burning stove," recalls Steve Rowland, who produced *Coming From Reality*. "He's a true libertarian. He doesn't believe in the gas company and the electric company, he thinks they're taking the piss out of everybody." Regan admits her father "didn't have a phone for a while. He's not into that kind of technology." Critically, though, at 70, Rodriguez is "not a real healthy guy," explains Rowland. "He's got joint problems, and also he's got glaucoma and he's practically blind."

Wymond Miles, from San Francisco's the Fresh & Onlys, who were Rodriguez' West Coast backing band from 2008 to 2012, remembers being shocked at their first meeting: "I didn't realise how physically frail in some ways he was. But when he took off his coat, he was ripped. He had bulging muscles and veins, in his late sixties, from all the labour work he'd done."

So is Rodriguez working on a new album?

"I am," he reveals. "But I'm booked, have touring commitments until October. So after that, I always try and put a cap on things, but the touring is, like I say, the commitments we made a while back. So we just finish those, then we're freer. Then I'll look at that recording. I've talked to a couple of producers – David Holmes and Steve Rowland – and so those two, they're interested. The songs are more quickly musical that I'm doing right now."

"Does the pressure concern me? Yeah, I think so. I think that now, because of the space of time, and in my particular case, it's an unusual career. So, yeah, I think in my case they're going to say, 'What is he going to play now?' As to the new stuff, it will be totally new. Titles and that I have, but if I tell them my titles, they're going to have them. It's going to be good stuff. Music is all majors and minors. The thing is, once it's played, it's copied. We go to shows to do our concerts, they're filming, they're recording, they're on their phones, so our audience is broadcasting, so I try not to do new stuff without thinking about it, that this stuff is going up faster than I'm going into the studio. My career, it's been a mess. Now I'm more slow about it, so that's why it's such a delay. I want to be protective."

"We're talking about doing a third album," confirms Steve Rowland. "He said, 'I've written a lot of songs', and yes, we're going to get down and talk about it. I wanted to bring him out here to Palm Springs instead of Detroit, because he'll be out in the sun recording, relaxed, without a bunch of people around trying to get things off him, you know how people are."

David Holmes thinks "he should go down the Johnny Cash/Rick Rubin route and record an album that's intimate and sparse. The key to that is to record to tape in a great studio that's been around for as long as he has, with a great console, real plate reverberation, with a few choice musicians supporting him, and produced with real perfection."

"Last time I was with him in Detroit, he played some things here and there," admits Matt Sullivan who runs Light In The Attic. "He definitely has new material, it's just finding the time to put it down. There is a lot of pressure. A guy who most of the world didn't know his music, and now he's playing in front of thousands of people a night. There's a lot of pressure for anyone, 21 years old or 80. But he seems like the same guy, which is mind-boggling when you consider how things have evolved here. There's a lot of interest in him making new records, but it doesn't seem like it's phased him. One day, he's knocking down houses and carrying refrigerators downstairs in Detroit, the next he's playing in South Africa for thousands of people. For him, 'Well, this is just how it is,

"This is what I always wanted, to make something of myself through music..."



EYEWITNESS

MEET THE PICK-UP BANDS!

Rodriguez' group in every port...

Rodriguez has 12 pick-up bands dotted around the world, including Australian band The Break, who consist of former members of Midnight Oil. Light In The Attic's Matt Sullivan attempts to unravel the knotty history of Rodriguez American backing bands...

"Before the film, there wasn't the demand enough to fly or drive a band around the world, so myself and Regan set bands up for each region. The bands were paid, but there wasn't enough to even have an American band who would do the whole country."

So, it was mostly finding players that we liked. When he went to San Francisco for the first time, the promoter there was friends with The Fresh & Onlys, who covered the West Coast. Currently, Rodriguez is playing with three musicians from Detroit, one of whom

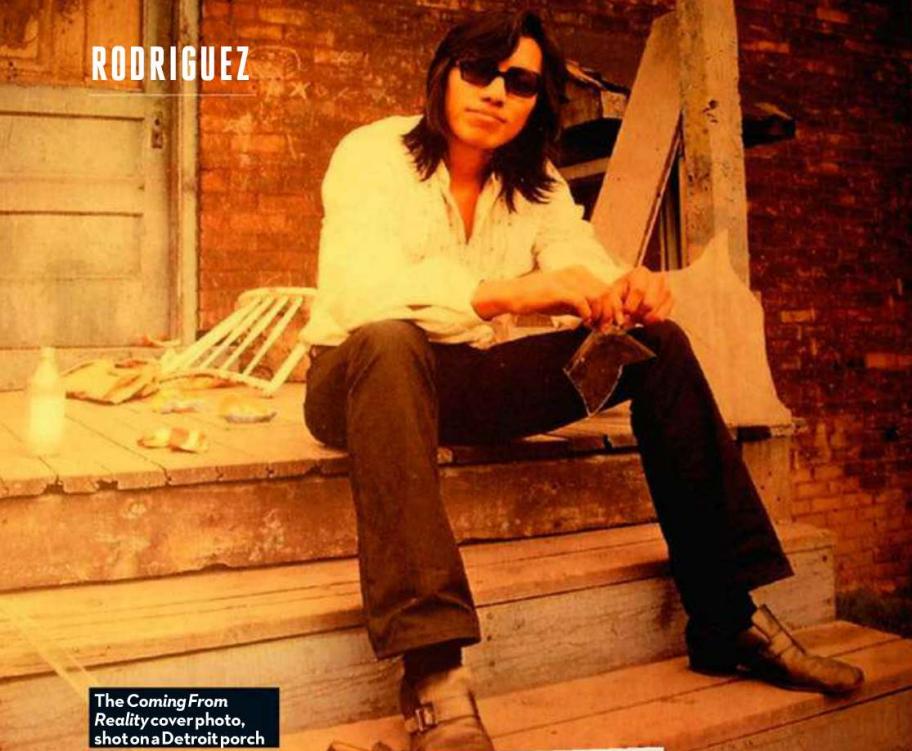
and I'm going to go with it." Rodriguez is always on his time."

All the same, Regan admits her father is ambitious. As a child, she and her sisters would be taken by their father to the local library, where "he used to read *The New York Times*, *Billboard*, *Pollstar*, some of the more industry papers, because that's the business he wanted to be in. That's what he wanted to do all his life. That's what he is, you know? Is he ambitious? Yeah, for sure. It's a challenge, he's totally up for it and having fun. When people ask him his age, he says, 'There's only two ages, alive or dead.' You're either living it, or you're not. That's part of him wanting to keep doing stuff. He's just getting started."

WYMOND MILES VIVIDLY remembers the "dramatic arc of change" between the Light In The Attic reissues in 2008 and the sudden gearshift following the release of *Searching For Sugar Man* in 2012. Miles describes an audience of "mostly 20- and 30-year-old hipster kids" giving way "all of a sudden to 50-year-olds and a whole older generation... in twice as big places as we had started." Light In The Attic's Matt Sullivan says the label sold "20,000 copies of *Cold Fact* and 15,000 of *Coming From Reality*" before the film; sales since its release are now soaring. "To a lot of people, nothing happened before the movie," Sullivan says. "But, no. Rodriguez toured a bunch in the States and we got him a show in New York, his first ever New York City show at [160-capacity] Joe's Pub in September 2008 and we moved up from there. I would be the tour manager and those were all like 250-500-person rooms."

"The first time I met him," says Miles, "we had a rehearsal space rented here in the city, we had horn players, a percussionist, this whole big nine-piece band we built around us for him. We had this big group there, and everyone else had to go and really he didn't even want to play his songs. We'd play them a couple of times. We'd get half way through 'Crucify Your Mind' and he would just applaud and say, 'It's going to be great.' He just wanted to play covers and hang out and talk with everyone. It's always been that way. He isn't really interested in rehearsals or what seems to be" →





The *Coming From Reality* cover photo, shot on a Detroit porch



Rodriguez in 2008, the year when the world started taking notice

much in his own songs. He just likes the groups. We always worked really hard to be well-rehearsed and it was nice to have his trust in us.

"We started with setlists and then, as the years have gone by, he's liked to work less and less with them. He's putting in more and more covers, too. I don't think we played any covers on those early tours when *Cold Fact* and *Coming From Reality* were reissued. But by the fall last year, there were no setlists and covers thrown out that we had never played together as a group or ever known that he knew how to play.

"Why do I think that was? On those early tours, we'd be in places like the Doug Fir [Lounge] in Portland, all in the hotel room together, passing the guitar around, and he played cover songs for maybe three hours, everything from Marvin Gaye to contemporary pop things. He just loved other people's songs. At this point, I think there's a certain humility built in – he still feels in the shadow, that people would maybe be more interested in other people's songs than his own."

IN FACT, RODRIGUEZ is now in a position where other people are covering his own songs. Recently, Brittany Howard from the Alabama Shakes and Ruby Amanfu covered a *Cold Fact* track, "I Wonder", for a single on Jack White's Third Man Records – White, of course, is another successful alumni of Detroit. In fact, the Motor City is a conspicuous presence in Rodriguez' own life. Steve Rowland remembers, "When we were making *Coming*

COLD FACTS

VOTE RODRIGUEZ

Rodriguez is planning to run for mayor of Detroit. Here's why...

Detroit used to have 2.5m people, and now it has 800,000, so that tax base has gone," he explains. "I feel it's going to be repopulated and change is coming. The former mayor [Kwame Kilpatrick] is going to do some time. He's got 23 counts out of 30 court indictments he's been found guilty on, so the former mayor is going to jail. Against that political backdrop is what Detroit is. The councils have been reduced to six men on each one, so they were cutting a lot of things in Detroit, something that's very overdue. But it's like any city that's undergoing a change. Police brutality, government repression... I'm against police brutality, those social issues..."

From Reality, he was going back to Detroit to run for mayor."

"I ran for mayor twice, for state representative twice and for the city council three times," Rodriguez confirms. "I describe myself as a musical political. I'm born and bred out of Detroit. Detroit is an interesting place. You've got to be from somewhere. I'm going to get back there for the Doctorate and I'm going to file to run for mayor. I can explain. To run for mayor, you need a minimum of 515 signatures of valid voters, up to 1,000, they won't accept any more than that. So I'm going to file and see what happens. I'm petitioning now through other people, so when I get back there for those few days, I'm going to file for office and see what happens."

Many of the songs on *Cold Fact* and *Coming From Reality* deal explicitly with life in Detroit during the late 1960s and early '70s. What was Detroit like during the time he was writing those songs?

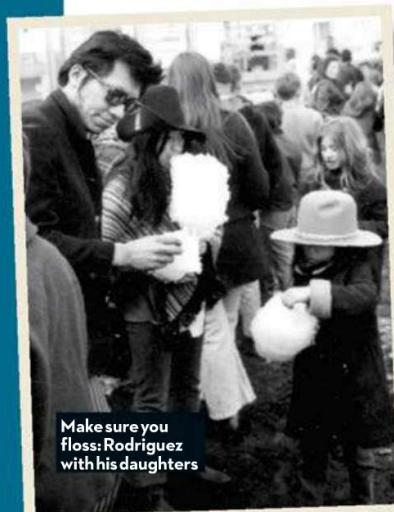
"The troubles in the city, the riots in Detroit, in '67, those were the things," he says. "Let's see, we had the Vietnam War, which is the backdrop, the students were burning their draft cards resisting the draft, that kind of thing. We had conscription. The students were moving to Canada, stuff like that. The protests were going on. All these things were happening. Detroit is an industrial city, post-industrial, they were in the thick of it. If you remember the slogans of that time, 'If it's good for General Motors, it's good for the country'."

"I remember, in 1964, three students went down south to help a vote of registration and they were killed in Mississippi. One of them was James Chaney and there was two more, I believe. There was another lady called Viola Liuzzo. She was a Detroit lady, a white lady from the suburbs, and she went down to help a vote of registration and she was killed in Alabama, in '65. So Detroit has supplied some of these issues, from the northern cities to down South. They might be obscure people but there certainly were part of the 1970s, '60s, Civil Rights movement. Civil Rights and women's rights was championed at that time. So those kinds of things were at least fresh then. The kids were starting to have tie-dye shirts, writing on their T-shirts. Now it's a big fad. But at that time, T-shirts were generally blank. Martin Luther King walked hands in hands with Walter Reuther, labour, the United Auto Workers, and priest and clergy, of course. But the thing is that labour Detroit has always been for the working people, so that's what my orientation is."

"FEEL A LOT of musicians are listening to me right now," acknowledges Rodriguez. "A lot of people in the industry. We've been on *Pollstar*, on the front cover of the touring magazine, we've been in *Billboard*, a lot of industry people are going to be listening. So I'm going to have to do a real good album, CD or whatever."

Does Rodriguez think his life has unfolded in the right way?

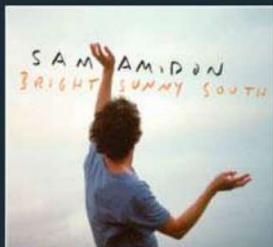
"This is what I always wanted, to make something of myself through music," he reflects. "Has it changed me? I divide it in certain ways. It started out with wanting personal success, but now it's much larger than that. You can't see it the same way. But it certainly is success, undeniable success, and so that in itself is what I was searching for, so there it is and it's great to enjoy it, share it. In music, I think if I put another thing out and it has a value, I've achieved. If it can make them dance and sing, it's good, I can feel that."



Make sure you floss: Rodriguez with his daughters

Rodriguez plays London Hammersmith Apollo on July 7 & 8

NEW FROM NONESUCH RECORDS



Sam Amidon Bright Sunny South

The acclaimed label debut from the celebrated musician known for his reworking of traditional melodies into a new form. Produced with legendary engineer Jerry Boys.

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

'Amidon reopens his songbook to the lonesome sound of a faint church organ and delicately picked guitar, awakening a spirit of strange, gentle melancholy that runs throughout the album. Excellent.' **Mojo**



Devendra Banhart Mala

Banhart's eighth album, and first for Nonesuch, took shape in Los Angeles, where he and longtime cohort Noah Georgeson produced the album together.

'A career-best LP. This is a beautiful album that counterpoints Banhart's boundless and surreal imagination against a newly-discovered depth and sincerity.' **Q**

'A thrillingly inventive blend of alt.rock, fingerpicking folk, Latin flavour and electronic pop.' **Uncut**

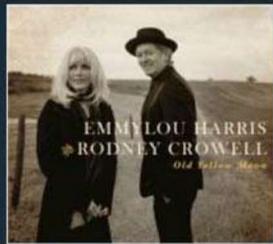


Bombino Nomad

The Nonesuch debut from the Tuareg guitarist, singer, and songwriter Omara "Bombino" Moctar. The album was produced by The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, who invited the Niger-born artist and his band to Nashville for the recording.

'A revelation, crunchy and gritty when it needs to be, but with a wealth of fine detail.' **Financial Times**

'A tremendous and timely distraction from the bad news from the desert this year.' **Mojo**



Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell Old Yellow Moon

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

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

'As old-timey as a string band barn dance but one where you're aware the last spin around the floor will undoubtedly prove to be a delight.' **Mojo**



Nataly Dawn How I Knew Her

The critically acclaimed label debut from the California-based singer/songwriter of the duo Pomplamoose, comprising 12 autobiographical, introspective songs.

'Dawn balances childlike wonder with sly wit and subtle emotion, switching from deadpan folky narratives to archaic country rocking with an ease reminiscent of such Americana greats as Natalie Merchant and Kate McGarrigle.' **Daily Telegraph**

'An enchanting collection of deceptively sweet, cleverly skewed alt-pop songs informed by country, folk, back-porch blues and honkytonk that brim with emotionally intelligent lyrics.' **Metro**



Rokia Traoré Beautiful Africa

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

'Traoré's sinuous voice sits at the centre of a hybrid maelstrom that combines the raw, earthy source of Malian rhythms with snarling rock guitars and pneumatic garage energy. This is the record fans of her explosive live shows always hoped she would make and a career highpoint.' **Uncut**

'Africa's most interesting and genuinely experimental contemporary musician.' **Daily Telegraph**



CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Sparks

“Looks, Looks, Looks”... The Mael brothers reflect on a life in pictures.
“We’re going to make some small dent in musical history!”



LOS ANGELES, 1972

RUSSELL MAEL: That's Halfnelson, the group that became known as Sparks. We were fortunate that our demos attracted only one person in all of the music industry, and that was Todd Rundgren.

RON MAEL: I kind of failed in this, but everybody wanted to look as much like they were in an English band as they could. In Los Angeles at the time there was a Laurel Canyon vibe, which really repelled us, and we wanted to be as English as we could possibly be.



LONDON, 1974

RUSSELL: Island Records invited me and Ron to come over and reform the band with British musicians, so now we were officially, in our eyes, a British band – three-fifths of this band were English, and we were living in London. So if nothing else had happened, we'd fulfilled our dream.

RON: The first thing I did was get a haircut, and go completely counter to any generic rock look.

RUSSELL: Everything went instantly well for us after we put out *Kimono My House*. Girls are screaming at your sophisticated chord progressions and lyrics about Albert Einstein, and ripping at your clothes.



PARIS, 1974

RUSSELL: Jacques Tati, the legendary French screen icon. He was intrigued to have us as lead actors in a film that was to be called *Confusion*. Tati had the whole scenario, and we'd go back and forth to Paris and meet, and now in hindsight it becomes even more painful that it didn't happen, because he passed away. But even looking at that photo, we're so proud that we would have been in his final film. Is that the great lost Sparks project? Yeah, it really is.



LOS ANGELES, 1974

RUSSELL: The *Big Beat* press photo, which was taken by Richard Avedon.

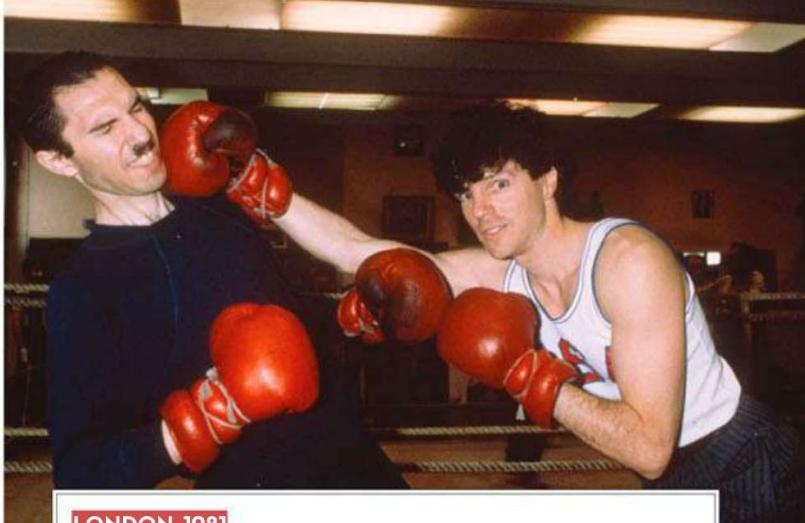
RON: We walked in the studio and said, “Where's the make-up person?”, and he said, “Men don't need make-up.”

RON: We'd gone back to America and formed another band with American people, in the hope we'd have the success we'd had in the UK. And when you're not able to get the same response, there was some frustration. I smashed the piano stool at the end of every show.



LONDON, 1979

RUSSELL: The "Beat The Clock" video from the *No. 1 In Heaven* album.
RON: We'd heard "I Feel Love" and it just sent shivers through us.
RUSSELL: Giorgio Moroder, too, was up for the challenge of working with a band. But critically there was a lot of confusion, being a rock band doing this thing with electronics.
RON: Yeah. What was really looked down upon at the time came to be thought of as what's new in rock music. You can't paralyse yourself with bitterness, but there's a hint of that in us.



LONDON, 1981

RUSSELL: We thought we'd do some kind of lavish promotional event to tie in with the *Whomp That Sucker* album. We went for several weeks in London to a boxing facility, to learn how to put on a boxing glove. And then they set up a full-scale boxing ring in the Hilton Hotel, and Ron and I did a three-round event. I can't remember who won. I think he beat me up and I was hauled off the mat.



SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE, LONDON, 1994

RUSSELL: With Bernard Butler, at the time of "When Do I Get To Sing 'My Way'", a massive hit in Germany. We have pockets of commercial success out of the blue. All of a sudden we were doing TV shows in Germany for a year, and having that same *Jackie* audience responding to what we were doing, only this is 20 years later. It happened in the '80s in America, too.
RON: Yeah – we can't synchronise things too well. We have to specialise.



LOS ANGELES, 2005

RUSSELL: Tony Visconti was an ideal foil for us in the '70s. He can apply his abilities to anything you might suggest – we'd say, "That song would be cool if it had a big band era-type arrangement," and Tony could score stuff with an authenticity to it, in that we didn't have to say, "Well, we didn't mean that kind of big band." He knew exactly what we were talking about.

RON: I think he's the best pop music producer.



LONDON, 2008

RUSSELL: That's one of the 21 nights when we played our 21 albums to date in concert, to launch the then-latest one. Not the wussy two albums in a row – we'll do 21, by God! I try to sing in the same keys and for my voice not to age. I don't want to sound sort of like that guy from Sparks sounded in 1974. I feel it's my responsibility to hold up my end of the deal.



Two Hands One Mouth: Live In Europe by Sparks is out on *Lil Beethoven Records*



All aboard the Mothership:
Captain Clinton, 1986

GEORGE CLINTON is on a mission to reclaim his musical legacy from pernicious lawyers, record labels and musicians. He's even taken his case to the White House. Here, Dr Funkenstein takes time out from his campaign to talk about the glory days aboard the Mothership, his upcoming reality TV series and to share his personal philosophy: "If you ain't free in your mind," he tells us, "then fuck it."

"MR PRESIDENT, SAVE THE FUNK!"

Story: Andy Gill

Photos: Fabio Nosotti/Corbis

IN HIS P-FUNK heyday, there was nothing quite as freaky as George Clinton. Resplendent in multi-coloured hair, space-pimp jumpsuit and five-inch stack heels, he looked like the mutant offspring of Sly Stone, David Bowie and Frank Zappa, and sounded like it, too. But not any more. These days, the Godfather of psychedelic funk has smartened up his act. "I wear suits and ties, I got my hair cut off," he says. "I have a whole new look, it's more like when I was in high school. I just started buying clothes from the places I used to shop in New Jersey when I was younger."

It's a weird new development in this weirdest of careers that has gone from singing streetcorner harmonies with The Parliaments as a teenager in the '50s, forging the influential alloy of rock, funk and drugs with Parliament and Funkadelic in the '70s, then piloting the P-Funk Mothership to global fame and catchphrase familiarity, before watching his bands' grooves underpin the growth of hip-hop culture in subsequent decades. But Clinton's new smart look is the appropriate garb for a life now punctuated by honorarian awards ceremonies and court appearances, as he battles to regain the rights to his own material. Not that it's been greeted warmly by some industry types. "Record people don't like it if you change completely," he says. "They wanted to sue me for cutting off my hair!"



BARBER SHOPPING

The Parliaments – named after the cigarette brand – originally learnt their trade as doo-woppers in the late '50s, while working in barbershops

The 'in' thing then was processing, that's straightening hair," says Clinton. "You chemically straighten the kinks and the naps out of it – you kill it, in other words – then you can style it, finger-curl it like Sugar Ray Robinson, Nat King Cole, Jackie Wilson, all the singers in the '50s and '60s. There's a picture of me on the *Trombipulation* album [below], where I've got the elephant nose on? The waves in my hair, that's a process.

"I made a thousand dollars a week processin' hair. There were so many people got their hair done at \$5 a head, I was cleaning up. I had a shop with 13 chairs, nine or ten barbers working for me. We had Cadillacs at 16 and shit – I didn't know how to drive, but we was making so much money! We'd rehearse in the barbershop – it was the only business that'd allow you to leave when you had to play a gig, or go to New York to try and hustle a record. Your customers was rootin' for you, so long as you did their hair before you left."

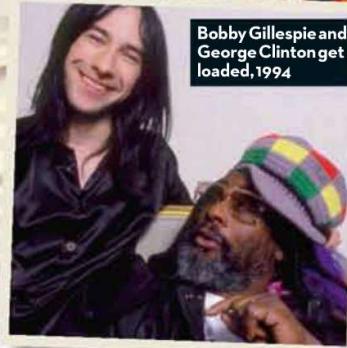


Blond ambition:
space cowboy
George Clinton
onstage in 1979



Tailormade:
Clinton today

"Our gigs now are like the Grateful Dead for old-school black folks. We call it Hoodstock!"



Bobby Gillespie and George Clinton get loaded, 1994

UNCUT: You have a new single out, "The Naz", recorded with Sly Stone. How did that happen?

CLINTON: Sly and I have been working together for a bit, over the years. That comes from when he used to DJ on the radio, he'd do that Lord Buckley bit, "The Naz". So he did that, and I got together with friends of mine from London, Rob [Manzoli] from Right Said Fred, remember them? Rob was the guitar player. He and I have been working together for years – he came to Tallahassee in Florida, we did a lot of stuff. He took Sly's performance of "The Naz", took it back to London, and put music behind it, and we tweaked it. The other side of it is "Nuclear Dog" [an upgrade of Clinton's "Atomic Dog"], with Blackbyrd McKnight. Those are the first two tracks of the new deal we have.

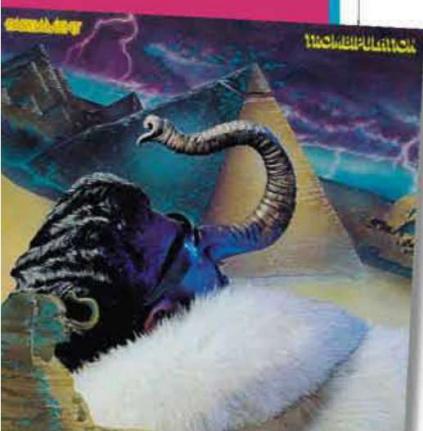
I see you've been given an Honorary Doctorate by the Berklee College Of Music. That was one of the best feelings I've had. That was in February 2012.

So now you literally are Dr Funkenstein! What was the ceremony like? They had a P-Funk Orchestra, I worked with them there for a few days, and we performed a bunch of our songs. They performed from "Lonely Island", from back in the '60s, all the way up to "One Nation..."

Did you have to wear the robe and mortar-board? Yeah, they gave me the robe and everything. And after that, I did something in Memphis at the Stax Academy. They have this thing in conjunction with Berklee, so they gave me an award down there.

You recently donated the Mothership stage prop to the Smithsonian Institute, too. It's part of the Smithsonian Museum dedicated to the African-American experience. They have a lot of memorabilia from the Afro-American music scene, and art. The building opens in 2015, and the Mothership is supposed to be in there, next to the Tuskegee airmen's plane.

Sun Ra once explained to me his notion of space-jazz as space being the only place that black people could be truly free, that he had never suffered prejudice from any little green alien. Was the P-Funk Mothership mythology something similar? As a matter of fact, if anything, you're in charge of your own destiny out there, y'know? We come from the Dog Star, the planet Sirius, they call us the Dogons, so it's relative – we're from there, we're from here – this whole galaxy, this universe, is seeded with different forms of life in different places at different times in different frequencies, different planes. We're free, but if you ain't free in your mind, then fuck it.





Clinton's iconic 'mothership', which debuted at gigs in 1976

You started out harmonising in a barbershop. That's what we did to subsidise us becoming singers: we all needed to get our hair done, so as soon as we got out of high school we all got us jobs in barbershops. The 'in' thing then was straightening hair, pompadours and things, and we did pretty good at that. Little Richard, Little Anthony, they all had the big pomps. Look at some of the pictures of us in those days, we all had Temptation Hair.

Judging by the contestants on TV talent shows, it sounds like the church is still an important incubator of black music. Was that the way in your day? Yes, and it still is, right now. The church is where you goin' to find most of the funky music. Most R&B singers take from the church, and now the church is doing it in reverse – you got a lot of churches that sample psychedelic P-Funk grooves the same way as hip-hop. Kirk Franklin went and did "One Nation Under A Groove", which is weird – within one year, both Kirk Franklin and Ice Cube used "One Nation"! The same song!

You were one of the first black groups to attract a white audience, certainly in the UK. Was it the same in the States? Yes. In '68 we came over there, did the *Maggot Brain* and *Free Your Mind...* albums; and it happened the same over here: after "Testify", we started doing the psychedelic stuff, and the audience did change into a white rock audience; but now it's both, it's back and forth – it's like the Grateful Dead for a black and white audience, for old-school black folks. We call it Hoodstock! Playin' ghetto metal!

You recorded the *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow* album on acid – can you remember anything about it? Oh my God, no! Just jammin', and the engineer not wantin' to put his name on the record! Then after the record came out and everybody sort of liked it around the area, he then got a job over at Motown. That's when Norman Whitfield started doing "Psychedelic Shack", "Cloud Nine" and all of that. So then the guy became a superstar, but he wouldn't put his name on *Maggot Brain* or a lot of the *Free Your Mind...* stuff.

Norman Whitfield got "Ball Of Confusion" from you... Yes, that 'da-da-da-da-dadl-um-da', that was a typical P-Funk intro to the stage. We got used to him being in the club, the 20 Grand, listening to us. Norman would come down to the 20 Grand and have his tape recorder, and he'd cop lines for "Runaway Child", "Cloud Nine", and "Ball Of Confusion" – that was our theme song, our stage song. Melvin [Franklin, Temptations' bass singer] called us up, said, 'Hey man, y'know that vamp you do, I just want to let you know, 'fore y'all hear from someone

GETTING DEEP

BOOTSY'S BASS TONE

One of the most distinctive aspects of the P-Funk sound is the unique bass of Bootsy Collins. Let George Clinton explain...

He has three different tracks of bass, highs and lows on different tracks, all on the same instrument. So you can't just lift his parts and put 'em somewhere else like you can do most things. You have to put each track back individually, unless you want to mix them together first, which would be sacrilege. A lot of it was echoplexed, and to put it back just where it echoed on a different track – uh uh, that's difficult. Each string had its own track: the high's over here with a wah-wah on it, the low's here with a Mu-tron on it, and the mid's got whatever he used to put that through. He'd be playin', and he'd hit a gadget and this track here would go wow-wow-wow, and he'd still be playin', he could cut the instrument off, play that string again, and the echo would still be repeatin'... he's playin' along with it."



else, Norman copped that thing and dubbed us in on it this morning.' We didn't care, we was just playing hours and hours of music. We didn't want to take it pop, 'cos we was doing what wasn't going to be right for 15 years. We did a record, *Osmium* [cover below], that was way off of line for a black group; it was way off of line for a white group, we did all kind of styles on it – country, bagpipes... it was like a Beatles record!

You've worked with several white rock bands... the Chili Peppers, Thomas Dolby, Primal Scream...

What was it like working with them? The Primals? Man, Bobby was so hard to understand!

Well, he is Scottish... But when you get fucked up, he's really hard to understand! And both of us being fucked up, there was no chance! But we had so much fun working together. I worked with some techno guys last night, the Soul Clan. They had a dance track, and I put a typical abstract P-Funk song on it, called "In The Car": "Oilspill, makin' a killin', drillin' in the oilfield/Pipe it, pump it, truck it and fuck it".

Going from being a cult thing to massive commercial success in the '70s must have brought huge problems.

Was it difficult to handle at the time? Yeah, it was. You had personal relationships, I was stretching it out so the Family was getting bigger, they was the same people, but they was bigger. Like, Bootsy was number one, then when the Brides started becoming important, that started taking away from Bootsy and my other relations. The same with the other members – as it became bigger, other label executives and lawyers and managers wanted to carve themselves a piece of it, and started snatchin' players away on the side. But it was the chemistry among all of us, that's what fuelled the thing and made it work.

There were 16 P-Funk members inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame – that must be the most from one band inducted at the same time. It is. And there were still some important people left out. We didn't choose it, but they were trying to get a bit of all the important stuff in there to round it off. We wanted to get the P-Funk All Stars inducted, so they could include all the rest of the people involved.

Drug culture was once positive, useful for creativity, then it turned to being a bad thing. The minute the Vietnam War was over, it was right back to two cars and a swimming pool. Any kind of war produces money, y'know what I'm sayin'? So they get a war on drugs, get 40 million dollars to fight it in this city, 30 million to fight it in another city, they get allocations, and they don't really want to catch anybody but somebody with a half a gram up their ass, they don't want to catch the person that's selling the drugs or causing the deaths, otherwise they would really get on the pharmaceutical companies for stuff like that, too. There's more profit in pretending we're stopping it than in selling it. If they can sell you protection, they ain't gonna stop it, they're just gonna get it slowed down enough for you to stay scared of it. That's the way the system works, they sell us protection on every level. The most important part of the President's campaign was about Obamacare, how his people were going to get their meds; but drugs is still the number one evil, because it's used like that.

You've always used music to talk about taboo things in a forthright manner. What would be the subjects you'd be dealing with now, if you were just starting out? It would be about the monopoly of the record industry, how they've destroyed hip-hop by not paying people, going under the table with each other, trying to change the copyright laws. We're just finding

THE BEST OF GEORGE CLINTON

FUNKADELIC
MAGGOT BRAIN

(1971)



One of the most diverse P-Funk offerings, including some of the best early contributions from keyboardist Bernie Worrell and guitarist Eddie Hazel, the band's own in-house Hendrix.

7/10

PARLIAMENT
MOTHERSHIP CONNECTION

(1975)



The most sampled album of all time, thanks to mighty grooves like "P-Funk (Wants To Get Funked Up)". Introducing one of the keystone notions of P-Funk mythology – essentially, pimps in space – it was also the first to feature JBs hornmen Fred Wesley and Maceo Parker.

9/10

PARLIAMENT
FUNKENTELECHY VS. THE PLACEBO SYNDROME

(1977)



Another cosmic masterpiece from Clinton's fevered brain, this one dealing with the dangers of consumerism, and the rise of gutless disco. As

out how it works – this is the first year people are supposed to get their stuff back, and we're fighting like hell now, trying to keep "One Nation" and "Knee Deep". There's this lawyer suing me for copyright ownership, for a million and a half dollars, and he got the judge to put interest on the lawsuit, so I would never ever be able to pay it back, the way they got it set up.

You used to have a lot of copyright problems... We're still having them! The entire band is having them, my entire Family, we just sent a request to the President of the United States to save the funk. We got a list of names, my entire family, to BMI requesting all our cheques. Other artists are

counter-examples, it contains "Bop Gun" and "Flash Light", two of the greatest P-Funk grooves.

9/10

FUNKADELIC ONE NATION UNDER THE GROOVE

(1978)



By now, there seemed no stopping the flow of P-Funk classics. Besides the title track, this one also featured the Michael Hampton guitar showcase "Who Says A Funk Band Can't Play Rock?!".

9/10

GEORGE CLINTON
COMPUTER GAMES

(1982)



Clinton's first solo album modernised the P-Funk sound to be more in line with the burgeoning techno trend, most emphatically on singles "Loopzilla" and "Atomic Dog".

8/10

PARLIAMENT
TEAR THE ROOF OFF 1974-1980

(1993)



The best one-stop collection of all the greatest Parliament cuts, a double-album stuffed with psychedelic funk genius.

10/10

GEORGE CLINTON & THE P-FUNK ALLSTARS
HOW LATE DO U HAVE 2B4UR ABSENT?

(2005)



The best late-period P-Funk offering, a vast, 148-minute opus confirming Clinton's Zappa-esque skill as ringmaster of the P-Funk circus, blending doo-wop, deep soul, funk and rock with characteristic bawdy humour, and featuring guest turns from Bobby Womack, Billy Preston and Prince.

8/10



'Pimps in space', Parliament, in the '70s

involved in it, too. We gonna have us a Twitter Army! You can bet we know how to use the media, and the stage. I'm doing a reality show with my family, with my son Tracy, my six grandkids, Scott Thompson, Brandi – it's a big family thing.

Is it going to be like *The Osbournes*? A bit like that, but most of them are, like, musicians, rappers and everything – it's what we call our C Kunspyrhzy: I see conspiracy all around me, y'know, with all the copyright stuff? We got to come up with new ways to get the music across, so we're doin' this reality show. So we can expose all the noses out there, stealin' the copyrights and takin' people's music and money. This is all gonna be part of the reality show, the copyright fight, plus we still kicking ass onstage. We exposes the noses!

It's a similar situation to that faced by the families of Hendrix and Marley. I'm having problems with the same people that did the Hendrix case, the same lawyers that brought the case and then got sued by his family for overcharging them. I'm in court with this guy charging me a

million and a half dollars for my own songs. All the lawyers and all the record companies banding together, because all of them have samples. It's a cartel, and its long arms reach to the copyright office, BMI, ASCAP, all of them, so we have no choice but to go straight to the President. Hopefully the President danced to the music at one time. We seen him singin' Al Green, we know he has some funk! And he used the phrasing from "One Nation

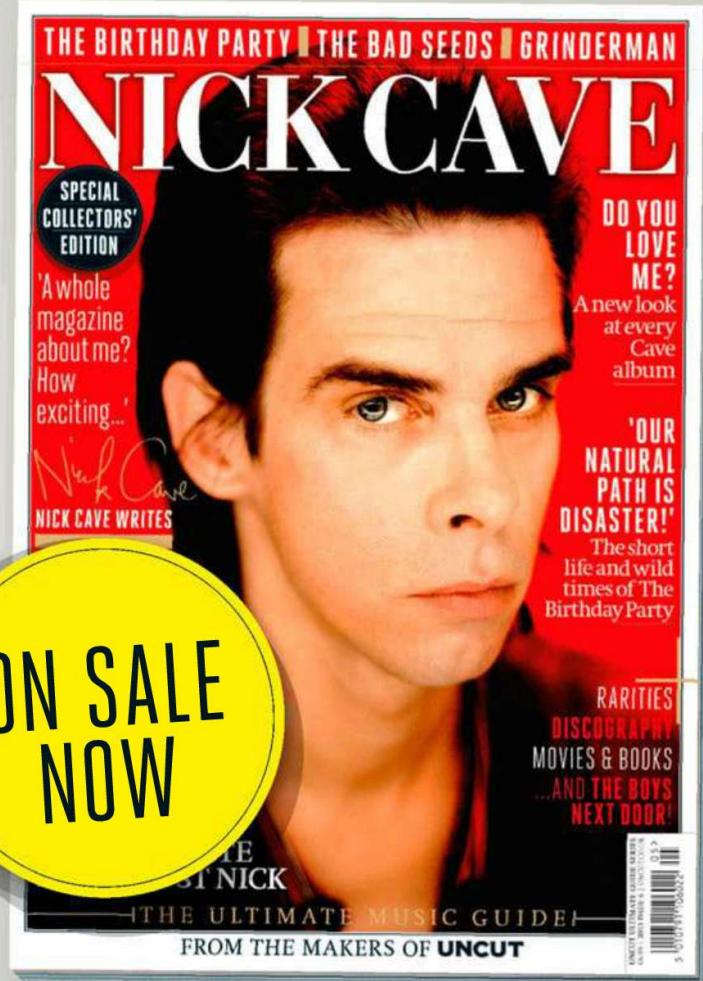
Under A Groove" quite some bit in his speeches. We're trying to keep it isolated to one record, but I'm really talking about all of them: Snoop Dogg, Puffy, Dre, Jay-Z, Public Enemy,

Eminem, Michael Jackson. I'm talking about all these records for the past 25 years, we had samples on all of that, and we don't get a penny from any of it.

Really? I imagined you were making more from samples than from your own record sales. Well, *Mothership Connection* is the most sampled record in the world. But I'm telling you, these labels, they've got together in a way that they take all this money. With one forged document, and the lie that I filed for bankruptcy, which did not happen, the judge awarded it all to them. We're asking for a federal investigation into the whole thing, because they are effectively a monopoly, they back each other up on all these court documents and shit.

The band used to make donations to the Negro College Fund and the NAACP... Yes, we made the promoters give 25 cents out of every dollar to the NAACP. And right now we just adopted a school in Plainfield, New Jersey, where the band originated, the Obama Green Charter School, we've given it 25 per cent of the ownership of "One Nation", "Knee Deep", "Hardcore Jollies" and "Electric Spanking". That's the case that's in court now, the guy's suing me for a million and a half dollars, trying to take it back from the school. All of that's part of the story coming out in the reality show, the book. We leanin' on that so much, we makin' T-shirts with the court documents on there. We call it legal briefs! We got underwear on sale with motions to come to court on therel! ☺

The Funkadelic featuring Sly Stone single "The Naz" is available to download now from iTunes. Parliament Funkadelic play London's Clapham Grand on July 19



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ALBUM BY ALBUM

Robyn Hitchcock

English psych-rock's piper discusses his crustacean-encrusted career

I'M UNADULTERATED, neat '60s vintage – Château Hitchcock..." While the singer-songwriter might trace his artistic lineage back to his adolescence filled with Dylan, Barrett and The Beatles, his unique body of work – distinguished by ghoulish humour and surreal imagery of decay and aquatic life – has proved him to be more than just a curator of his influences. From his days as leader of psych-punks The Soft Boys, and on into his solo career (working with the likes of Peter Buck and John Paul Jones), Hitchcock has always prized the 'album' as an artform. "By 15 I didn't want to be a songwriter so much as make albums," he tells *Uncut* on a wet West London afternoon. "I remember thinking, 'Rod Stewart must be really happy, 'cause he makes albums', not because he has a life strewn with garlands of pleasure..."



Robyn Hitchcock in The Soft Boys, 1980: "We just wanted to eat cucumber sandwiches and experiment with angular riffs..."; and right, a regal Robyn today



THE SOFT BOYS UNDERWATER MOONLIGHT

ARMAGEDDON, 1980
After their angular art-rock debut, *A Can Of Bees*, Hitchcock hatches

into a more erudite, melodic songwriter, and spawns a neo-psychadelic classic. We'd all grown up with music which was mostly non grata in 1977 – The Beatles, The Byrds, The Beach Boys, Dylan, Barrett and Beefheart in my case. Punk was full of public schoolboys in drag – but we didn't bother with much drag, we didn't even cut our hair, so we were not wanted, which gave us a sort of terrible freedom. It was odd, because two years before, everyone had been sitting on the floor in greatcoats getting stoned. And suddenly they spat at you if they liked you and they spat at you if they didn't. We avoided getting into fights, though – we were soft boys, we just wanted to eat cucumber sandwiches and experiment with angular riffs. *Moonlight* was me learning to write songs, and it was also The Soft Boys benefiting from a lack of funds, because we made a lot of it on four-track at Alaska Studios under the arches of Waterloo. Pat Collier recorded us like the early Beatles, while our friends The Psychedelic Furs were being produced by Steve Lillywhite, with a snare sound you could land a plane on. Perhaps that's the ultimate accolade for a record, that it sounded better than we were. [Bassist] Matthew Seligman and I were convinced Reagan and Brezhnev would start a nuclear war, and I remember Matthew saying, "I think we're all gonna die next year, but at least we made a great record", so we felt as much as anything was gonna last, *Moonlight* was.

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



ROBYN HITCHCOCK BLACK SNAKE DIAMOND RÔLE

ARMAGEDDON, 1981

With The Soft Boys no more, Hitchcock lets loose on his solo debut – a mix of sinister Barrett-esque whimsy and quicksilver Telecaster assaults, with songs about lizards, birds and menacing policemen...

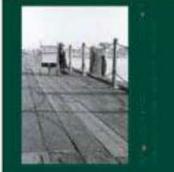
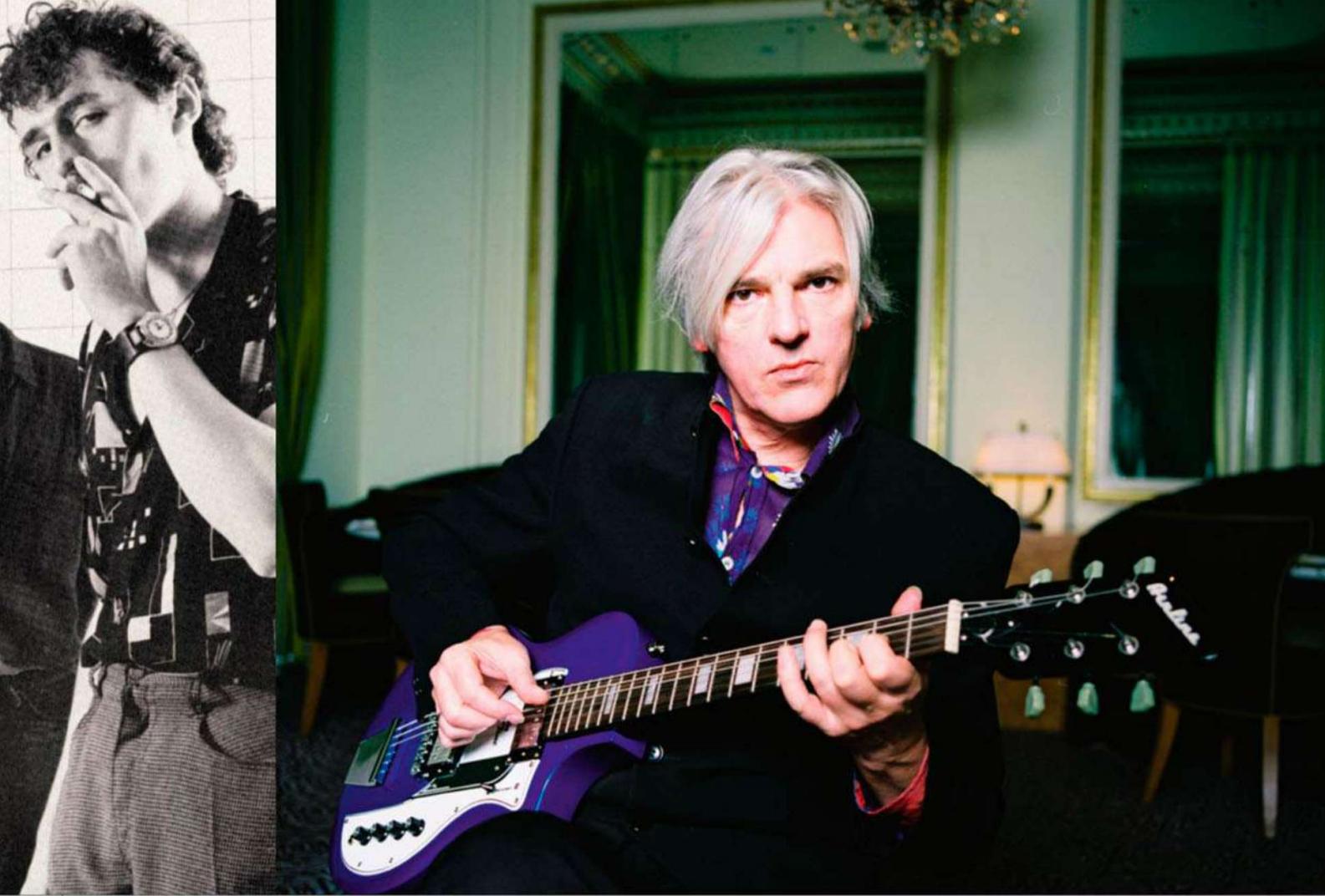
The Soft Boys wasn't one of those groups where people fought. "You cunt, you've taken my cheese roll," it was all full of subtle unspoken resentments. Kimberley [Rew, guitar] is a songwriter, he had "Walking On Sunshine" somewhere inside him and he wanted to do his own songs. I didn't see myself headlining 'the Garden', and you'll notice I've taken great pains to avoid doing so. But I wanted whatever it was next to be under my name rather than The Soft Boys.

Richard Bishop, who'd formed Armageddon Records specifically in order to release *Underwater Moonlight*, had hoped we were going to make another Soft Boys album. So I just hit on the device of not having all of The Soft Boys playing on any one track, and I started to bring in my superstar friends, like Vince Ely, the drummer from the Furs, and he had to work at Alaska without Steve Lillywhite's sound. We also got Knox from The Vibrators, and Matthew came and brought Thomas Dolby, who was then Tom Dolby.

It's a bit more informal than *Underwater Moonlight*, 'cause the songs weren't very worked out. It's more of a – in the old sense of the word – garage rock band record.

Uz's *Boy* had come out, and somebody in the Armageddon office said, "Ooh, why don't you have that silver edge round it, and put some silver on it?" We were going to have a pink, green, purple psychedelic wash in the background, but that never happened, so we got this. But I'm very fond of it. A Syd Barrett-y record? Well, there's a surprise. That was definitely the template in which I saw myself. The myth of rock loves people who follow the muse over a cliff, and Barrett was the one I latched onto. I'm sure there were similarities between us, though, it's not like I'd have been Springsteen if I hadn't heard Syd.

My favourite track is "Acid Bird". I'd just got hold of a wah-wah pedal – I was the only person in the UK in 1980 who used a wah-wah pedal – and I didn't realise it but the wah-wah was on when I overdubbed the guitars, so I got a thin, spindly sound with a lot of attack. And I doubletracked it. I love the guitar sound on "Acid Bird". On one level, it's Syd meets The Byrds, but why not?



ROBYN HITCHCOCK I OFTEN DREAM OF TRAINS

MIDNIGHT MUSIC, 1984

Retired from the music

industry, Robyn writes and records this collection of quintessentially English acoustic psych-folk for his own amusement – somehow it becomes arguably his best-loved...

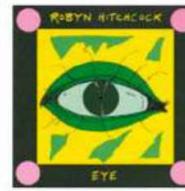
My solo albums had come out and I didn't even have the backup of The Soft Boys to perform live, music seemed to be going into an ever more artificial place. I was nearly 30 and feeling menopausal, so I just thought, 'Fuck it, I can't be bothered', and I said that to someone at the *Melody Maker*, who then announced I'd retired, so I thought, 'OK, well, I've retired, then.' My hero Bob Dylan, practically the first thing I remember him doing is having a bike crash and disappearing. So I thought, 'Wow, I'm just going to start a band and then vanish.' Of course, what I had neglected to consider was that by the time Dylan disappeared, he had made a considerable impact on the world. All I had done was have The Soft Boys. I was gardening and writing lyrics for Captain Sensible, but I was still writing songs even though I couldn't see any point in it. I'd got hold of this four-track, so I thought, what if I don't work with anybody, what's pure me? And the answer was *I Often Dream Of Trains*. In Alaska Studios, if you stand with your guitar at a certain angle, there's a whine that comes out of the pickups, because of the current from the railway overhead. And on "I Often Dream Of Trains", you can hear this just before I play. So the trains really were going directly into that song.



ROBYN HITCHCOCK AND THE EGYPTIANS GLOBE OF FROGS

A&M, 1988

Major-label debut featuring Peter Buck's first appearance with Robyn, as well as some especially surreal songs riffing on freakish sea creatures, houmous and plane crashes. I had got a major-label deal after 10 years and I had to record something, and I had great players, but maybe I hadn't really got a lot to say at that point. My stuff sort of spirals between being morose and being silly, and then inbetween – the sort of spring and autumn, if you like – is where the stuff with a bit more resonance comes in. And I don't think, "Chinese Bones" aside, that the songs on *Frogs* have a lot of resonance. Peter Buck's on this – I met Peter in 1984 at the Highgate Cat Protection League while he was doing *Fables Of The Reconstruction*. I was trying to protect a cat. Whose cat? I guess it was ours, I don't know actually. Peter was just really quick at picking things up. He played on "Chinese Bones" and "Flesh Number One (Beatle Dennis)", he does to this day in fact. By that stage the Egyptians were a trio, just bass, guitar and drums, so it was nice having another guitarist. Peter has said that he plays what he thinks I would play if I had 20 fingers. Our sound does mesh in an extraordinary way, when we're playing I can't tell which is me and which is him. I'd be interested to mix it so you have both the guitars in the middle, but the bass and drums on either side, so you just have this clanging thicket in the centre.



ROBYN HITCHCOCK EYE

TWIN/TONE, 1990

A second acoustic album, this time inspired by Hitchcock's troubled personal life. Still his favourite set of his own songs.

By this time, I'd become quite well-known in certain areas in the States. We never sold a lot of records, but we had an awful lot of publicity. I was like an alternative to Morrissey or Julian Cope, another exotic Brit. So my professional life was in the States, but I was still based here – suffice to say that by the end of 1988 I was breaking up with two people at once. I was sort of traveling 4,000 miles to see somebody for the weekend. I wasn't really here and I wasn't really there. Although I was quite old, I was for the first time vaguely successful, which was not necessarily that easy to deal with, being a focal point for other people, people coming up to you at airports – it's true that fame gets you a table at restaurants, but it also means that everybody stares at you! That all washed away in the early '90s when I was about 40, and normal service was resumed. This is my favourite collection of songs of mine, I play more songs off *Eye* than from anywhere else. By the time we were doing *Eye*, the records with the Egyptians had got very slick. *Eye* was another attempt to get rid of all the undergrowth and overgrowth and see what was there. I grew up listening to folk records my dad had, but also *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, so there's a side of me that's always liked recordings with just voice and guitar. Maybe I like *Eye* because the songs are so bare – I think I like the more painful ones, like "Linctus House".



Robyn Hitchcock & The Venus 3 in 2006: (l-r) Buck, Hitchcock, Rieflin (seated) and McCaughey



ROBYN HITCHCOCK & THE VENUS 3 OLE! TARANTULA

YEP ROC, 2006

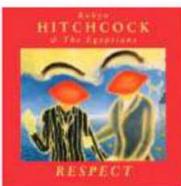
The first of several albums recorded with Peter Buck, Scott McCaughey and Bill Rieflin - in "Adventure Rocket Ship" and "Cause It's Love...", this featured some of Hitchcock's sprightliest songs for years.

I think this is a pretty good collection of songs. My father wrote a book called *Venus 13*, the climax being two people attempting to have sex in space... and they succeed, I think. So I thought the name Venus 3 would be a nice tribute. We recorded the bulk of it in Seattle in September 2005. I got Kimberly Rew and Morris Windsor to cameo on it too. I actually wondered what [2004's *Gillian Welch/David Rawlings collaboration*]

Spooked and *Olé! Tarantula* would have sounded like the other way around. Gil and Dave would have made a great job of *Olé!*. I don't write with the musicians in mind - I just go up to the roof with the guitar and sing above the traffic of the incoming motorway. Peter Buck had terrible backache at the second session, he managed to pass out for half an hour. I was running through "Red Locust

"I was consumed by Bob Dylan... I'd wanted to be Doctor Who, then suddenly I had this whole other being..."

Frenzy" with Bill and Scott, and it was sounding nice, so we woke Peter up. Peter picked up his guitar and played as the tape rolled. He'd never played that song before, he'd been listening to it in his sleep and worked out some counterpoint guitar, it was extraordinary. He's not a big man for rehearsals, but this was really something.



ROBYN HITCHCOCK AND THE EGYPTIANS RESPECT

A&M, 1993

A last hurrah for the Egyptians and Hitchcock's major-label career, and the beginning of a more experimental, reclusive time.

I moved to the Isle Of Wight completely in late 1990. A lot of the songs from *Element Of Light* to *Respect* were actually written on the island, off-season. I'd be the only person in the pub. *Respect* was recorded in my house. We hired the BBC mobile studio and it was parked on a side street in Yarmouth. It was as if it had come to mate with the house, or suck its brains out - this great, thick cable oozed down the steps and in the front door. We couldn't lock the front door at night, but it didn't matter, it was just the island off-season. Sometimes the late-night constabulary would come and sit in the control room with John Leckie for a chat. *Groovy Decay*, *Respect*, *A Can Of Bees* and *Perspex Island* are all records I think didn't make it. They may have some good songs, but they're not records I'd recommend to anyone interested in my stuff. "Railway Shoes" is good, though, as that sounds more like we actually did then - it doesn't disappear into a keyboard wash. On "Driving Aloud (Radio Storm)", Morris Windsor is playing kitchen utensils, quite literally the kitchen sink. But we might as well not have bothered giving him the spatula, 'cause he makes the spatula sound like a snare drum.



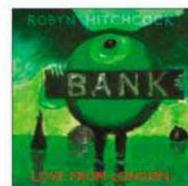
ROBYN HITCHCOCK ROBYN SINGS

EDITIONS PAF!, 2002

Rare, self-released double CD of Hitchcock performing live versions

of his favourite Dylan songs - includes "Visions Of Johanna", Hitchcock's favourite song...

One disc was a live recreation of what used to be known as the Albert Hall concert at the end of his world tour in 1966, just before he disappeared. It starts with "Tell Me Momma", which was never released by Dylan, and goes up to "Like A Rolling Stone", with the whole "Judas" intro. That was my first attempt at doing a whole album of other people's. And the other disc, I found I had a lot of recordings of myself performing Dylan songs. I could easily do another two volumes! I heard "Like A Rolling Stone" when I was 12 or 13, in a completely different world, this strange, all-male school, and I think Dylan replaced my parents, really. If a child sees a wolf in the forest it will think the wolf is its parents. Of course, the wolf may then eat the child, but then you might be eaten by your parents anyway, so who knows what's the better deal. And in a way I was consumed by Bob Dylan, like many people from that era. I'd wanted to be Doctor Who or Bertie Wooster, and then suddenly I had this whole other being... After about six months of hearing "Visions Of Johanna" I obviously wasn't going to do anything else with my life. And "Visions..." is everything I think a great song should be. It's the philosophical nub of my universe.



ROBYN HITCHCOCK LOVE FROM LONDON

YEP ROC, 2013

A mature collection of love songs to Robyn's beloved capital, with heaps of piano and at times a glossy texture akin to Roxy's *Avalon*.

This record was made in [producer] Paul Noble's bedroom. I've never been a fan of click tracks, but I thought, let's give it a go. You don't want to keep making the same record. Scorsese's supposed to be making a film of *The Snowman*, which is my favourite of Jo Nesbø's novels. So I wrote a couple of songs to submit, one of which is "Harry's Song". I'm an extremely spidery pianist - Paul spent two days getting my piano track in time. Jenny Adejayan [cello] is on the album - she's a bit of a secret weapon. She can mimic the theremin at the end of Beefheart's "Electricity" perfectly! And Anne Lise Frøkedal, from the Norwegian bands Harrys Gym and I Was A King, sings on "Be Still" and "I Love You". Of all the people I've ever played with, I think John Paul Jones is the one you can go furthest with [the duo perform as Biscotti]. If you're jamming with some people, you've got to stay in the same key or rhythm, hence all those awful funky jams in the early '70s. But you can wander around with John. I'd love to record with John in the future, but he's working on his opera, which is due next year. ☺

JOHN GRANT



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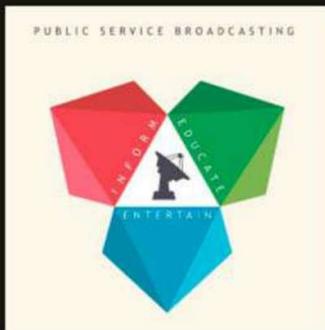
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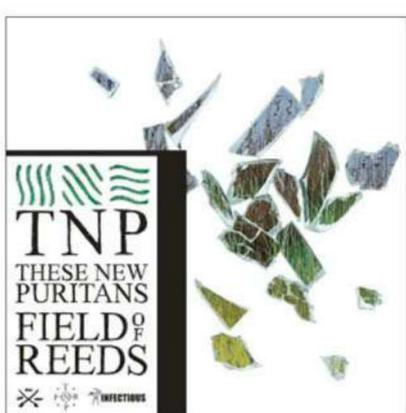
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THIS MONTH: BLACK SABBATH | MARK MULCAHY | QOTSA & MORE



WILLY VANDERPERRE



TRACKLIST

- 1 The Way I Do
- 2 Fragment Two
- 3 The Light In Your Name
- 4 V (Island Song)
- 5 Spiral
- 6 Organ Eternal
- 7 Nothing Else
- 8 Dream
- 9 Field Of Reeds

THESE NEW PURITANS

Field Of Reeds

INFECTIOUS MUSIC

Tough to make, astonishingly realised: Southenders' melodic third raises their game again, says Piers Martin

8/10

WHEN NEWS OF These New Puritans' third album began to circulate at the end of April, the announcement felt more like a warning. Be prepared, sit up straight, and wipe that smile off your face, it insinuated, *Field Of Reeds* is not to be taken lightly. A short video showed the band driving at night and hard at work in various studios, rehearsing brass ensembles and playing expensive percussion. We glimpsed them in their element – vexed, curious, disciplined – and were reminded that These New Puritans are unlike any other British band in recent memory.

Pitched awkwardly on the hinterland between rock, pop and classical, they closely resemble an

indie outfit – six years ago they were teenage contemporaries of fellow Southend-on-Sea tearaways The Horrors – and their music is framed and presented in a pop context. This made sense for their 2008 debut, *Beat Pyramid*, an itchy, urgent post-punk racket bristling with precocious ideas – YouTube the brilliant “Elvis” – but now seems inadequate to cater for *Field Of Reeds*, with its great sweeps of brass and woodwind, its lush, crepuscular mood and hazy, murmured vocals. No choruses here, let alone obvious singles, and yet its mellow nature and real-ale warmth contrive to make this their friendliest – or least threatening – collection. Even so, this must be a nightmarish proposition for any record label, you’d →



These New Puritans: (l-r)
Elisa Rodrigues, Thomas Hein,
Jack and George Barnett

imagine, with sales what they are, but their devoted fanbase is large and in a surprise move following a protracted legal wrangle, TNPs have switched from Domino and Angular, the label that nurtured them, to Infectious Music, becoming labelmates with last year's Mercury Prize winners Alt-J. *Field Of Reeds* seems a safe bet for this year's shortlist. Unmarketable it might be, but there's no cooler album to be associated with.

Led by the 26-year-old Barnett twins, Jack and George, These New Puritans were last spotted in public two years ago patrolling the stages of

London's Barbican and the Pompidou Centre in Paris. There they performed their ambitious 2010 album *Hidden* in full – a treatment usually reserved for classic albums by newly reformed groups at Don't Look Back events – accompanied by the Britten Sinfonia, a children's choir, 10-foot taiko drums and a Foley rig with melons which, when hit with a hammer, suggested a human skull being smashed in, like a scene from *Berberian Sound Studio*. It didn't matter that they'd never attempted anything on that scale before. TNPs are not ones to shrink from a challenge.

Original and bold, particularly when you consider its authors were 22 years old, *Hidden* took the band and the listener out of their comfort zone. With that record, Jack Barnett, TNPs' de facto leader, singer and main creative force, wanted to unite the ephemeral qualities of pop with the broader themes of classical music. He went about this by fusing the icy precision of hip-hop rhythms and the digital swagger of dancehall in a pastoral hymn to Benjamin Britten's Thames Estuary heartland, a region the group share with the composer. Not long after, Barnett embarked on, and then abandoned, a

SOWING THE SEEDS OF... FIELD OF REEDS

Four challenging records by pop artists...



TALK TALK *Laughing Stock*

VERVE, 1991

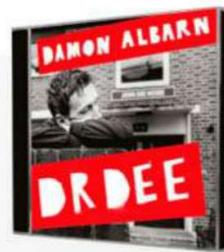
Extricated from EMI after *Spirit Of Eden*, Talk Talk's elegant swansong was Mark Hollis' conscious effort to move further away from conventional songwriting towards a jazzier style. Like TNPs' Jack Barnett, the perfectionist Hollis tended to make life as difficult as possible for all concerned in the studio to get results.



BJÖRK *The Music From Matthew Barney's Drawing Restraint 9*

ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2005

This OST to her husband's film – set on a Japanese whaling vessel carrying a 25-tonne petroleum jelly sculpture – allowed Björk to soar beyond the pop form. The blend of throat-singing, Japanese percussion and swampy brass will make sense if you've seen the visually stunning film.



DAMON ALBARN *Dr Dee*

PARLOPHONE, 2012

Between Gorillaz and Blur, Damon Albarn found time to compose an opera based on the eventful life of Elizabethan polymath Dr John Dee. Musing on the idea of Englishness, Albarn's songs marry medieval and African instrumentation, and feature choral and minimalist pieces conducted by André de Ridder, who worked on *Field Of Reeds*.



SCOTT WALKER *Bish Bosch*

4AD, 2012

Six years after *The Drift*, Walker's last-minute Xmas gift to fans alluded to Hieronymus Bosch and Nicolae Ceaușescu on obtuse tracks composed using rams horns and tubax. A panoply of theatrical ideas presented in a severe manner which suggested only the author could truly derive satisfaction from such narcissism.

musical project about the 12 islands of Essex. Easy to admire though hard to really love, *Hidden* impressed enough to rank high in many end-of-year charts, including *NME*'s No 1, but you'll struggle to find a milkman whistling anything off it.

In order to correctly score *Hidden*, Barnett taught himself classical notation, and would compose every note of *Field Of Reeds* in this way. When it came to arranging *Hidden* for the live shows, he recruited the renowned German conductor André de Ridder, whose involvement seems to have had an edifying effect on Barnett and an influence on the softer, harmonious sound of *Field Of Reeds*. To capture that particular Puritanical mood that swerves between anxiety and euphoria, Barnett again turned to Bark Psychosis and Boymerang veteran Graham Sutton, who reprised his *Hidden* role as co-producer and almost gave himself a heart attack during one of the band's famously intense recording sessions in the Cotswolds.

Barnett's perfectionism demands that his players perform for as long as it takes to get the piece right. For example, a drum track on "Fragment Two" played by his brother George, whose part-time modelling for Paris fashion houses funds the band's videos, was take No 76, and they spent a whole day smashing panes of glass to achieve the desired

effect for "The Light In Your Name" – yet it's barely audible in the mix. Barnett has no interest in using soft-synths or preset sounds. He'd much rather create the sounds from scratch, even if that means hiring a hawk to flap around the studio for hours.

Another plausible explanation for the record's sense of dreamy intimacy, aside from the title's reference to the ancient Egyptian notion of heaven, stems from Barnett's fascination with the great American songbook. A field recording of a vaguely recollected rendition of Herb Alpert's "This Guy's In Love With You" is submerged beneath piano at the beginning of opening track "The Way I Do". When his

vocals overlap with those of Portuguese singer Elisa Rodrigues during the discordant climax of "The Light In Your Name", each singing lyrics from their perspective, Barnett admits to borrowing this device from Stephen Sondheim's "Send In The Clowns". There's no reason not to believe him, but it is difficult to decipher what they're actually saying.

Elsewhere, wrapped around a suspiciously jaunty piano figure, "Fragment Two" is the album's most orthodox song, with Barnett half-singing, half-mumbling lines such as "In crushed glass by the train line, there is something there" like a drunk trial witness. On "Organ Eternal", a lovely descending organ melody cascades into swirling strings and rasping brass. The tone-drone of "Dream", which features Rodrigues, is one of those tracks you'd barely tolerate on a Björk record, but the closing title track, a blast of basso profondo so stickily resonant it sounds almost synthetic, sprinkled with woodwind and windchime, is quite remarkable.

Never less than interesting, These New Puritans have raised their game once again. A tough one to make but astonishingly realised, *Field Of Reeds* is further evidence that they're out there, on their own.

SLEEVE NOTES

Producers: Jack Barnett and Graham Sutton
Recorded at: Studio P4, Berlin; Modern Sound, Tetbury; Snap, London

Personnel: George Barnett (drums, perc, glass), Thomas Hein (bass, singing), Jack Barnett (piano, organs, singing, bass, vibraphone, gongs, perc, magnetic resonance piano, sound design), Elisa Rodrigues (singing), André de Ridder (classical conductor), Michel van der Aa (classical composition), Professor Andrew McPherson (magnetic resonator piano)



Q&A

Jack Barnett on making life difficult for others, smashing glass and recording a bird of prey in a confined space

When did you start work on the album?

I was writing it when we did those *Hidden* live shows with large-scale ensemble during 2011. With *Hidden*, we started recording as soon as we'd finished touring the first record, but for this, we had more time.

You're now labelmates with Mercury winners Alt-J on Korda Marshall's Infectious Music – was there pressure to compromise?

No, they've completely left us to our own devices. They didn't hear the album until it was finished, which has always been the case with us – we're lucky enough to be in that position.

Yet this sounds like your most orthodox set.

Yes, even though I'm anticipating people to say this music is weird, it's by far our most melodic and harmonic music. *Hidden* is a lot to do with sounds and rhythm, whereas this is very melodic.

Does the title refer to the ancient Egyptian concept of heaven?

Yes. I always like to start with a title and have something to work towards. It's from the *Egyptian Book Of The Dead*, their equivalent of heaven, but it's more a sort of place where things continue as they are now, forever.

You credit a hawk handler – what role did the bird play? We wanted to get the sound of the bird taking flight. We were recording in the Cotswolds and we thought we'd get in this hawk. It was very difficult. That's the thing with our albums, they're a nightmare for everyone involved because there's a lot of stuff that's difficult to organise. A lot of the people we contacted were reticent because they were concerned about the welfare of the birds. One of the studios refused to let us record the bird, but then we found this pest controller who has this bird who's a genuine predator, not a show bird. It's a terrifying animal. The assistant engineer was scared out of his wits setting up microphones around this bird on its tether, squawking around him.

How did you record it? Underneath the wings there's a lot of air pressure but because it's so big you can't do that, you have to get above it. It's used in "Field Of Reeds" – you can hear it in the transition section when it goes into the outro. It sounds great, and it's all for the sound. We don't do anything for the sake of it. I could listen to it all day. What's funny is that day was very eventful. The girl who sings on the album was going back to Portugal, Graham thought he was having some kind of heart attack so had to go to hospital, and then two blokes turned up with a hawk in a jeep.

What other unusual recording methods did you use? We did a day of smashing glass for the climax of "The Light In Your Name". It's easy to use a sound effects library but we want to get our own sounds and do it properly. But aside from that it's quite a traditional album. A lot of it is people playing their instruments and the sound of their instruments in a room. Performance became important for us, and the irregularities of performance is what makes it effective.

Mark 'Spike' Stent (Lady Gaga, Springsteen) has mixed the album. It was him or us. I said to

the label I couldn't imagine handing it over to anyone other than two or three people in the world and we sent him the rough mixes and he agreed to do it. Clarity is one of the things we are always after, and he's the man for that.

"The hawk we recorded was a genuine predator, not a show bird. It's a terrifying animal"

the glamour of the studio in Tetbury. It was decorated like a young offenders' institution. We worked 12 hours a day – if it takes a day to sing one word then we'll work that day to get that one word perfect. A lot of people would have been pissed off but she worked hard and can get an amazingly pure, expressive tone. We've driven people mad with this album. I don't enjoy irritating people but it's worth it for the sake of doing something good. *INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN*



THE SHOUTING MATCHES

Grownass Man

MIDDLE WEST

Justin Vernon's trio of old compadres play Southern blues-rock under jazz conditions. *By Alastair McKay*

7/10

JUSTIN VERNON HAS not said much publicly about

The Shouting Matches, his collaboration with Megafaun's Phil Cook and Brian Moen of Peter Wolf Crier/Laarks. But the little he has said, via Twitter, is eloquent enough. As the album was released, he Tweeted a note of thanks from "Brian and Phil and I's band" adding the hashtags #trio, #notasideproject, #beenaaroundlongerthanb on. Later, as early reviews appeared, he added, sarcastically, "I love being in a band with three people in it, but really I'm the only one."

So, to be clear. *Grownass Man* is not a Bon Iver record (the title is a clue). It is not Justin Vernon's Tin Machine. It is a collaboration in a career full of collaborations (see Volcano Choir, Gayngs, Anaïs Mitchell). And, it's a reunion of sorts. The Shouting Matches do predate Bon Iver. They flickered for an evening in 2006. Moen was the second person to hear Bon Iver's debut album *For Emma, Forever Ago* when he visited Vernon's Wisconsin cabin for a Shouting Matches rehearsal. Cook also laboured in Vernon's pre-Bon Iver outfit, DeYarmond Edison.

But it is hard to resist the suggestion that Vernon's

TRACKLIST

- 1 Avery Hill
- 2 Gallup, NM
- 3 Heaven Knows
- 4 Mother, When?
- 5 Seven Sisters
- 6 Milkman
- 7 New Theme
- 8 Three Dollar Bill
- 9 I'll Be True
- 10 I Need A Change



Q&A

Phil Cook



To what extent did The Shouting Matches exist before? We threw together a single show in an afternoon, then went straight to the venue and played a set, as the three of us. That was seven years ago. Brian and Justin recorded an EP as a duo, but they wanted this to be the original lineup, man!

How was the album done? A year ago, we did a week in the studio, nothing written. We worked from the gut. We arranged it real simple – we decided if we play just the three instruments we pick, and don't overdub anything but vocals, then it will be more accurate live. It's a good challenge.

Where does the blues flavour come from? In high school we were obsessed with music from the South. The Allman Brothers were my preferred band. That was a big leap for me. There's lots of stuff in there, it's a good old gumbo.

Justin talked about DeYarmond Edison having experiments, where you'd write in different genres. Is it like that here? I can see that. We went through a really creative phase where we didn't plan the feel or the key of a song. We just improvised as people who grew up with jazz and were steeped in it. Part of the spirit of making a record like this is: just say "yes" to each other.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY

distortion. "Heaven Knows" is ZZ Top at 16rpm. The closing ballad, "I Need A Change", could, just about, fit on a Bon Iver record, though the lyrics are more generic, and there's a playful Prince impersonation halfway through.

Generally, the playing is under-rehearsed and agreeably rough. It's a jam. Moen's drums don't drive the beat so much as shuffle sideways, and Cook's organ adds a playful note, pitched somewhere between the church and the carnival. The biggest surprise, at least for listeners who only know Vernon through his work with Bon Iver, is the guitar. True, there's a hint of Fleetwood Mac's "Albatross" circling around the standout track, "Gallup NM", but the guitar break is exhilarating and beautiful.

The song itself explores the poetry of place names – maybe it's a road song – but Vernon's solo drives it. You can hear a bit of Neil Young in there, and that's a name worth remembering in any consideration of the shape of Vernon's career. Respecting the muse is clearly more important to him than sticking to the grid.

What's it all about? Well, on the surface, it seems as if The Shouting Matches are primarily about the underrated joy of making music with friends. But it's also similar to the experiments Vernon and Cook used to employ in DeYarmond Edison, where they would select a genre, and perform in that vein: today's dish being Southern blues. It's rock'n'roll, played under jazz conditions: spontaneous, under-thought, fast. At most, it's a sketch for a concept which is unlikely to be fleshed-out. It's nostalgic, and frivolous, and surprisingly endearing.

decision to reunite with his old compadres is a reaction to the success of Bon Iver, and the expectations aroused by it. Bon Iver's second, self-titled album was every bit as personal as that cabin-recorded debut, though Vernon employed a private language to mask his intentions (or, more charitably, to make them universal). It won him two Grammies, and made him a mainstream star, an unlikely outcome for a musician whose approach is almost anthropological, even when he's goofing around. (And, contrary to the public perception, he likes to goof).

But this is a trio, a band with three people in it. And if *Grownass Man* doesn't sound like Bon Iver, it doesn't sound like Megafaun either. Or Peter Wolf Crier. On first impressions, which are misleading, it sounds like a bar band in Clarksdale, Mississippi playing for beer. Generically, it is blues-rock, though over the full span of the album, that definition is stretched to include bursts of Afro-pop ("I'll Be True") and fairground Northern Soul ("New Theme"). Vernon chooses not to employ his falsetto, falling back into a soulful growl or, when he does go high (on "Three Dollar Bill") delivering the vocal through a hail of

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Shouting Matches

Recorded at: April Base Studio, Fall Creek, WI

Performers: Justin Vernon, Phil Cook, Brian Moen

A to Z

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

p70 BLACK SABBATH

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p79 QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

p81 THEE OH SEES

p82 MARK MULCAHY



ANVIL
Hope In Hell
SPV/STEAMHAMMER

Bless 'em. But on no account listen to 'em
Sacha Gervasi's 2008 documentary *Anvil!*

2/10

The Story Of Anvil was a great film about rock'n'roll, ambition, failure and friendship. The only impediment to enjoying it was the certainty that it would encourage its hapless subjects to make more records. *Hope In Hell* is Anvil's second post-*Anvil!* album, following 2011's *Juggernaut Of Justice*, and is entirely dreadful, a grim farago of frenzied riffing and belligerently adolescent lyrics (titles include "Bad Ass Rock'n'Roll" and "Shut The Fuck Up"). Anvil's puppydogish guilelessness endures, however, and only the most flint-hearted churl would not wish them well with it.

ANDREW MUELLER



AKRON/FAMILY
Sub Verses
DEAD OCEANS

Pastoral psych-out from Portland, Oregon sonic ramblers
Much like Devendra Banhart, Akron/Family

6/10

were mentored early on by Michael Gira of Swans, who employed them as backing band while touring his more folk-inherited project, Angels Of Light. Six albums in, they remain fond of that very Swans pursuit of ecstasy through repetition, opener "No-Room" commencing as a hippyish chant of rolling toms and Zep-like guitar but ascending, gradually, to a squalling white-out. This tendency is neatly balanced by a melodic lightness of touch: the four-part harmonies of "Way Up" and "Sand Talk" gesture to Animal Collective's tumbling campfire rounds, while "When I Was Young" dials things back to a dazed doo-wop carried downstream on languid horns.

LOUIS PATTISON



BLACK SABBATH

13

REPUBLIC/MERCURY

Back from the grave. The first Sabbath album with Ozzy for 35 years. By John Robinson



7/10

OVER 40 YEARS since their formation, the question Black Sabbath asked on the first line of the first track on their first album remains a valid one: what is this that stands before me? Purportedly, this is Black Sabbath in its original and most

potent form, in which the downtuned guitar riffs of Tony Iommi soundtrack the apocalyptic visions of Terry "Geezer" Butler, as vocalised by the siren wail of Ozzy Osbourne. It's not punk, it's not prog, and it's not disco, but it assuredly is one of the defining sounds of the 1970s.

And sure enough, that is what the trio, working with producer Rick Rubin, have set out to recreate here. If he was making an album with Jesus Christ, Rubin, as we know, is the guy who would say: "I appreciate your input, but I'm really more a fan of your early work." Here, this means Rubin has attempted to isolate and redeploy the band's classic

qualities. Chiefly, this means Tony Iommi's riffing (opener "End Of The Beginning" recalls the electric soup of *Master Of Reality*). The quiet "Zeitgeist", meanwhile, nods dreamily to the jazz and bongos vibe of *Paranoid*'s "Planet Caravan". Ozzy's vocals throughout 13 are double-tracked in convincing homage to the classic 1970s works, and the album ends with the heavy rainfall and depressing church bell chime that began their debut album.

The elephant in the room, or rather not in it, is Bill Ward. Although present at early stages of the reunion negotiations, the absence of the band's original drummer (Ozzy's closest friend in the original band; the one who in 1979 had to inform the otherwise oblivious singer that he had recently been sacked from the group) is a major loss to the project. Rage Against The Machine drummer Brad Wilk, who sits in, is a fine technician, but Black Sabbath's historic footprint derives not just from their enormously heavy boots, but also from their paradoxically agile swing, to which Ward's contribution was pivotal. 13 on occasion still manages to brew some of this elusive quality, but the key word here is probably "consistency".

This is a long and solid album (like *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*) rather than an erratically brilliant one (like *Volume 4*). On "Age Of Reason", Ozzy lets go a whoop of "All right, yeah!", but this cues up more mid-tempo riffing rather than an expected guitar meltdown. "Live Forever", a song about seeing life flash before your eyes when dying unleashes a "Children Of The Grave"-era galloping riff but still updates things lyrically: "I don't want to live forever/ But I don't want to die," Ozzy bellows. "I may be dreaming/But whatever..." "Loner", a good riff, reprises the strangely positive message that was lurking under the surface of "Paranoid". It finds Ozzy addressing a hypothetical outsider and urging

them not to surrender to their darkest side. Throughout, one imagines the band throwing in elements specifically to please their core audience rather than cravenly trying to grow a new one.

Which is just as well. Loyalty is as big a deal to a hard rocker as it is to the Mafiosi; still no wise band imagines an audience's patience is infinite. Penultimate track "Damaged Soul", the best thing on here by a long way, repays the waiting time in full. Proceedings open with downtuned riffing, and the description of a hopeless soul in purgatory ("I'm losing the battle," Ozzy sings, "between Satan and God..."). There is an odd, compelling harmonica/vocal tune at about one third through, followed by an hors d'oeuvres of Hendrix guitar solo. At around six minutes, things really begin to shake, and for what occurs at the seven-minute mark, you should clear the room, and give yourself up to air guitar.

It's a truly great moment, although it arrives a little late in what is a long album (there are eight tracks on the regular edition, most of them over seven minutes; the Deluxe Edition adds three additional shorter ones, including one called, preposterously, "Methademic"). The closing "Dear Father", a topical tirade against abusive priests, fathers, and ultimately God, is certainly a sinister point of departure: "You knew what you were doing," it goes, "You left my life in ruins..." An appropriate moment for the bell to peal and the torrential rain to fall.

In principle, at least, this is very nearly the bereft, godless place where we came in 43 years ago, the band setting themselves up in harsh opposition to the anodyne, utopian chart pop that surrounded them. Of course, Black Sabbath can't fully turn the clock back to the beginning – but they can still do a pretty good job of sounding like the beginning of the end.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Rick Rubin; mixed by Andrew Scheps

Recorded at: Shangri-La Studio, Malibu; additional recording at Tone Hall, Warwickshire

Personnel includes: Ozzy Osbourne (vocals), Tony Iommi (guitar), Terry "Geezer" Butler (bass), Brad Wilk (drums)



BEADY EYE

BE

BEADY EYE/COLUMBIA

Producer Dave Sitek introduces Liam Gallagher's gang to modern music

7/10

18th-Century revolutionary polemic read by *Fonejacker* comedian Kayvan Novak. "Flick Of The Finger", the opener to Beady Eye's second album, couldn't make the radical effect TV On The Radio's Sitek has had on Oasis-without-Noel any more clear. Liam Gallagher's own "Don't Brother Me" holds out a somewhat thorny olive branch to Noel. But it's the album's deft balance between Sitek's freewheeling and darkly ambient aesthetic and the familiar sub-Beatles melodies that makes *BE* a bold leap forward in the mould of Paul Weller's recent psych-inspired reinventions.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



THE BEVIS FROND

White Numbers

WORONZOW

Nick Saloman's one-man psychedelic punkeroo continues

7/10

A master musical forger, it took Nick Saloman until his thirties to become the enfant terrible of the record-spod scene, with his East End-West Coast vision little dimmed as he turns 60. A 40-minute guitar wig-out at the end of the immense *White Numbers* – filling two CDs or three LPs – will delight Bevis Frond fetishists, but the toytown pop of "More Chalk" and teary madrigal "She's Just Like You" better showcase the cottage industrialist's skills. Saloman has come no closer to stardom than a 1991 appearance on *Countdown* (on which his version of the show's theme tune was played), but in his own idiosyncratic corner, he remains the champion of champions.

JIM WIRTH



BLACK BOOKS

Black Books

BELIEVE RECORDINGS

The Texan five-piece mix dream psych with mesmerising hooks

6/10

This Austin band's debut album falls between adventurous space-rock and their love of huge, catchy hooks – which can leave them sounding somewhere between My Morning Jacket and Coldplay. When it all comes together, though, the results can be sensational – centrepiece "The Big Idea" is a real stunner, like The Flaming Lips covering Lift To Experience – while lesser pieces like the expansive fuzz of "Favorite Place" and the deft, languorous "Paradise" still have much to admire, filled with enticing melodies that befit the generally amiable tone of the record.

PETER WATTS



BOATS

A Fairway Full Of Miners

KILL ROCK STARS

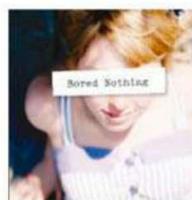
Canadians assert their right to quirk Until recently, Boats mainman Mat Klachefsky spent five months of every year working at children's summer camps; illuminating, given the sense of giddy desperation that hangs over the Winnipeg band's third LP. Of Montreal strident and Cardiacs intense, *A Fairway Full Of Miners* ponders incipient maturity with barely disguised terror, from the prospect of being "reliable friends with reliable cars" ("We Got Pillows And Blankets") to being ignored on one's sickbed by nurses chuckling at LMAO emails ("Animated GIFs"). The dentist-drill whine of Klachefsky's voice will scare off all but the hardy, but Boats rock regardless.

JIM WIRTH

7/10

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JIM WIRTH



BORED NOTHING

Bored Nothing

COOPERATIVE

Young Australian breathes new life into bedsit indie-rock

7/10

Sounding like the sort of fuzzed-up guitar-jangler who dominated the pre-Oasis Creation label 20 years ago, Fergus Miller graduates from lo-fi busker to full-blooded one-man-band on this stylistically rich debut, which pools the best from a deep archive of tunes previously aired and shared online. The Melbourne-based Miller somehow mines freshness and intimacy from an overworked genre, touching tender nerves with the shoegazing sludge-rock beauty "Just Another Maniac", the waltz-time loud-quiet oddity "Bliss", and the sinister ghost-folk of "Get Out Of Here". With echoes of everyone from Big Star to Elliott Smith, Bored Nothing have sufficient promise to be really something.

STEPHEN DALTON



BOSNIAN RAINBOWS

Bosnian Rainbows

CLOUD HILLS

First from US avant rock pals with pedigree With The Mars Volta on indefinite hiatus, songwriter and guitarist

6/10

Omar Rodríguez-López has emerged with Bosnian Rainbows, who feature ex-colleague Deantonio Parks and are "a group where everyone's writing. Everyone is an engineer. Everyone's a producer." Admirably democratic, but a few dictatorial vetoes might not have gone amiss. This mix of mannered and gothy vocals (from Teri Gender Bender, of Mexico's Le Butcherettes), abrasive post-punk guitars and '80s coldwave is a familiar one, while the anguished lyrics grate. Wonky workout "Turtle Neck" and a driving epic closer save the day. But only just.

SHARON O'CONNELL



RANDALL BRAMBLETT

The Bright Spots

NEW WEST

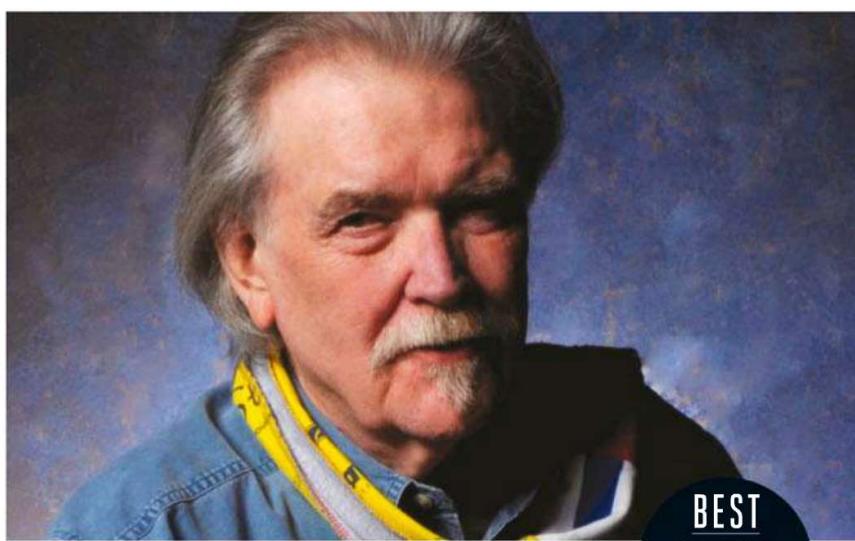
Classic blues, boogie and soul from Allman Brothers/Winwood band veteran

8/10

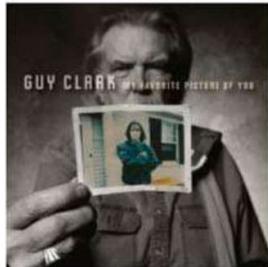
With his relaxed, silky-soft sound and husky, unassuming singing voice, Bramblett isn't particularly adept at flash or immediacy. But his sprawling compositions, some oddly (latter-day) Dylanesque in relying on, yet sporadically expanding, basic blues/R'n'B vocabulary (cf. the spare, haunting "All Is Well", the Little Feat-ish boogie rocker "Roll"), unspool in their own sweet time, revealing tidbits of wisdom on the way to old-age. Highlights from this seamlessly executed disc include "My Darling One", an ethereal love song marked by ghostly keyboards, and the dark, slinky "Trying To Steal A Minute", shades of Tom Waits.

LUKE TORN

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



8/10

GUY CLARK
My Favorite Picture Of You

DUALTONE

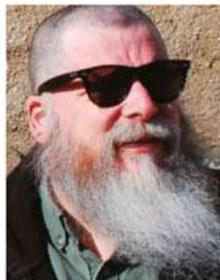
Deeply personal return for seasoned Texan

Guy Clark's first studio offering in four years comes at a bittersweet time in his life. Starry tribute *This One's For Him*, stuffed with covers by fans like Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Steve Earle and Emmylou Harris, was voted best album at last September's Americana Awards in Nashville. Clark chose to mark this major recognition of four decades of craft by playing a new tune, "My Favorite Picture Of You". It was written for his wife and fellow songwriter Susanna, who'd passed away just three months earlier.

The song forms the emotional heart of the album itself, which is adorned with a photo of Susanna during one of her frostier moments. Taken outside the Clark homestead in the '70s, she'd just stormed out after finding Guy and Townes Van Zandt inside, drunk as baboons. Over simple acoustic and trilling mandolin, the track finds Clark addressing the image directly: "You've got your heart on your sleeve/A curse on your lips/But all I can see is beautiful".

Not that *My Favorite Picture...* is mawkish or overly sentimental. Instead this is Clark, now in his 72nd year, as the rumpled poet of American folk-blues, imparting these semi-brisk, string-driven tales with his own unique brand of sad, funny wisdom. With the exception of Lyle Lovett's "The Waltzing Fool", the songs are all co-written with some of Nashville's more underrated talents, most notably Shawn Camp. There are mean Mexican border rats, broken soldiers, cornmeal dancefloors and poisoned fiddle players. Though perhaps the choicest pick is "I'll Show Me", in which Clark and Rodney Crowell lay out the delusional interior life of a ne'er do well who sees himself as a young Richard Burton or bullfighter, but whose actual domain is ladies' night at the Blue Gazelle.

With his health in steady decline over recent years, it's hoped this isn't the last we'll hear of Clark. Though it's edifying to know that the quality of his songwriting remains resolutely firm. *ROB HUGHES*



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Lord knows it's been a long time coming, but late summer marks the return of broody US collective, **Willard Grant Conspiracy**.

Ghost Republic, issued on Loose and their first album proper since 2008's *Pilgrim Road*, finds Robert Fisher (pictured) and David Curry essaying the story of a forgotten town left to the spooks. "Oh We Wait" is previewing at willard-grant-conspiracy.blogspot.co.uk, while the record itself will be accompanied by an extended film. They're due to tour these isles in June, with support from **Thalia Zedek**.

Other unmissable tours that month include veteran US roots mistress **Bonnie Raitt**, who plays nine countrywide dates,

winding up at the Royal Albert Hall. And **Lucinda Williams**, who starts off at London's Barbican and finishes at the Coliseum in Aberdare. Prior to that, **Steve Earle** swings across the UK on the back of new LP, *The Low Highway*. Minnesota folk-country artist **Charlie Parr**, whose credits include the Black Twig Pickers and fellow Duluth residents Low, is also on the road in late May/early June, promoting the terrific *Barnswallow*. A documentary, *Meeting Charlie Parr*, is due this summer.

On the recorded front, the My Proud Mountain label follows up last year's *Songs Of Townes Van Zandt* with a second volume, due later in 2013. Baroness singer-guitarist John Baizley, Nate Hall from US Christmas and YOB's Mike Scheidt are among those "approaching their favourite songs in their own personal way". *ROB HUGHES*



CAMERA OBSCURA
Desire Lines

4AD

More heartache from Glasgow's queen of Instagram indie-pop

8/10

A sulky siren call of unquenchable yearning, Tracyanne Campbell's honey-drenched voice is Scottish pop's ultimate weapon of mass seduction. CO's fifth album clothes Campbell's vignettes of thwarted romance in increasingly sophisticated arrangements, with My Morning Jacket and REM producer Tucker Martine deploying lush strings and slide-guitar Americana to bolster the group's pastel-shaded sound. Campbell attempts Spector-ish melodrama, languid country confessional and music-hall raunch, with varying success. But the Afro-pop guitar and romantic uplift of "Every Weekday" add up to one of the finest things these underrated Glaswegians have ever recorded.

STEPHEN DALTON



SLAID CLEAVES
Still Fighting The War

MUSIC ROAD

Texas-based troubadour's latest blends Lone Star sentiment and Rust Belt anger

6/10

The toll taken on working-class lives in the military (title track) and by the economic downturn ("Welding Burns") provides the most compelling strand on the latest album by the reliably engaged Cleaves. Delivered with conviction and defiance these timely tunes benefit from the input of longtime pal and collaborator Rod Picott. Cleaves compositional craft excels elsewhere with his barbed observations of relationships. "Whim Of Iron" and the glowering atmospherics of "In The Rain" duly deliver – although trite homilies ("Texas Love Song") soften the blow.

GAVIN MARTIN



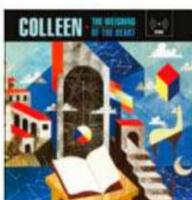
LLOYD COLE
Standards

TAPETE

Commodity yours: a rocking, reinvigorated return

The reunion here of Fred Maher and Matthew Sweet, the sterling rhythm section on Lloyd Cole's 1990 solo debut, gives the game away. This is an NYC rock'n'roll record – references abound to mid-'60s Dylan, Velvet Underground and Lou Reed, while the terrific "Opposites Day" shamelessly lifts from "Marquee Moon" – but it's also vintage Cole. "Women's Studies", a dense campus narrative set to a zinging chorus, is both archetypal and superb, as is the slow, somewhat haunted "Myrtle And Rose". In fact, from "It's Late"'s gorgeous country-pop strum to the wry generation-gap reportage of "Kids Today", *Standards* has pretty much everything you could want from a Cole album.

GRAEME THOMSON



COLLEEN

The Weighing Of The Heart

SECOND LANGUAGE

Stargazer's precious

folk experiments
Colleen's Cécile Schott
was last spotted five
years ago touring *Les*

7/10

Ondes Silencieuses, her third album of serene collages of electronically treated acoustic instruments. Shortly after, she admits, she ran out of steam, moved from Paris to the northern Spanish seaside and took up pottery. Furnished with vocal pieces and orthodox arrangements, *The Weighing Of The Heart* marks a fresh start for Schott, whose decision to sing brings a warmth and intimacy to her music-box miniatures: "Cat woke me up with his dreaming", she purrs on "Humming Fields". Elsewhere, on the rousing "Raven" and "Moonlit Sky", her muse has been willingly unshackled by nature.

PIERS MARTIN



HUW COSTIN

Something/ Nothing

SPECIAL SOUND UNIT

Elaborate odes to
disintegrating
relationships

7/10

Nottingham-based Costin's second album builds on the promise of his *Regrets* debut, a dizzying swirl of grandiose chamber pop, tragic-comic folk and doom balladry. The confessional singer-songwriter elements reference Mark Lanegan (with whom he's worked), Joni Mitchell and Jeff Buckley, albeit with a cinematic overview that flits between naked introspection and self-mockery. "December" plays it straight in terms of expressions of love, but darker forces permeate the cynicism of the title track and the fatalistic opener "Doomed". The rich harmonies create a beautiful ambience, although he's perhaps most emotionally effective on the reserved acoustics of "Butterfly Girl".

TERRY STAUNTON



CSS

Planta

SQE MUSIC

Wounded Brazilians
struggle on

Bassist Adriano
Cintra's acrimonious
split from São Paulo
nu-rave survivors CSS

4/10

in 2011 robbed the band of the one member who could play and write songs, but his absence is undetectable on an album as forgettable as the last two. The four remaining women in the group decamped to Los Angeles to record *Planta* with David Sitek, who does his best with a collection of vanilla indie-pop that paints a portrait of a group clinging on rather than pushing forward. Highlights include Rancid's Tim Armstrong riffing on "Hangover" and awkward Lovefoxx lines such as "The Hangout's "What's your name? Woah-oh/ I'd like to know the number of your phone".

PIERS MARTIN



DAFT PUNK

Random Access Memories

COLUMBIA

Wildly anticipated
return for droid duo

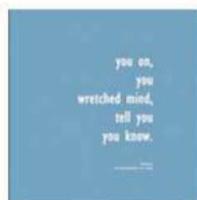
This is an event album that swims against the prevailing tide of a dance culture that Daft Punk helped to globalise – rather than being frazzled electro, they take previous Punk preoccupations like yacht rock, disco and prog, and fashion an old-school, coke-dusted collaborative studio LP. Pharrell and Nile Rodgers seal the glorious funk tracks, Panda Bear and Todd Edwards bring the Hall And Oates vibes, Giorgio Moroder does a monologue about his craft, Julian Casablancas goes AutoTune, and, most ridiculously, '70s songwriter Paul Williams crafts a kind of Lloyd Webber techno-utopia on "Touch". Silly and overblown, but wittily, brilliantly so.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

8/10

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BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



DALHOUS

An Ambassador For Laing

BLACKEST EVER BLACK

Unnerving debut
from Edinburgh
electronica duo

6/10

Marc Dall and Alex Ander formed as industrial group

Young Hunting, but re-emerged late last year as Dalhaus – same lineup, but utilising a more electronic palette. They're fond of philosophical underpinnings: the debut Young Hunting LP explored Freud's Oedipus Complex, while this record considers radical psychiatrist RD Laing. "He Was Human And Belonged With Humans" recalls Aphex Twin in its dreamy disquiet, rattling hi-hats drenched in watercolour synths, while "Dalhaus" slithers beats over horns and jazzy bass. In places it feels somewhat opaque, as if these soundscapes merely gesture at greater things; but there's something quite noble about the pair's commitment to sonic contemplation.

LOUIS PATTISON

REVELATIONS

Lloyd Cole gets excited about his New-York-rock'n'roll record



► "People that I trust are more excited about it than anything I've done for 20 years," says Lloyd Cole about his new record. "I'm excited about it, too. It's a development of something I've been doing for 30 years."

Standards found its shape after Cole was commissioned to review Bob Dylan's *Tempest*. "I listened to that record and I thought, 'Jesus, if he can do this when he's 73, maybe I shouldn't be resigning myself to being a quiet music artist just yet.'"

Working eight hours a day for two months, he came up with songs like "Women's Studies", the kind of ur-Cole composition he admits he thought "might just belong to my past. At the end of my major-label relationship I did step back and make music which was clearly not competing with the music I made before. I think I liked the idea of aging with some grace a little too much! Now, I don't care if I make a fool of myself."

And are we right to detect a certain swagger in the album's ambiguous title?

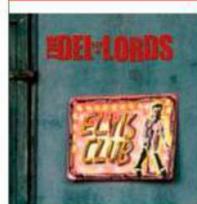
"Yes, absolutely. Basically, I wanted to make it clear that I still only look up to Prince."

GRAEME THOMSON

THE DEL-LORDS

Elvis Club

GB MUSIC



'80s NYC twang/garage rockers return with a record worth their name For their original run circa 1982-'90, NYC's Del-Lords combined everything that

8/10

made rock'n'roll great: a driving, tough-as-nails guitar sound; multiple lead singers; blue-collar songs brimming with love, justice and passion. Guitarist Scott Kempner, veteran of proto-punks the Dictators, penned the lion's share of *Elvis Club*, while producer extraordinaire (and onetime Black Heart) Eric Ambel reclaims the group's trademark gritty sound (some early records were overproduced). Pounding opener "When The Drugs Kick In", the workaday wonder of "Everyday" (written with Dion "Runaround Sue" DiMucci), and a churning, blistering cover of Neil Young's "Southern Pacific" highlight a fine return to form.

LUKE TORN



JULIE DOIRON

So Many Days

APORIA

Canadian singer-songwriter's triumphant 13th solo album Completing a trilogy of albums produced by Doiron's former Eric's

Trip bandmate Rick White, *So Many Days* is both disarming and convincing. Doiron presents tales of hard-won experience in the persona of a faltering ingenue ("Homeless") and her songs twinkle with sly mischief and frazzled resolve. Unveiling trials of the heart in sweet and spiky settings, she invokes favourable comparisons to both Mary Lou Lord and Julian Hatfield, while White's production, foregrounding intimate vocals and joyfully gonzo guitar breaks ("Our Love"), gives a cornucopia of musical flavour and impressive emotional reach.

GAVIN MARTIN

MARK KOZELEK & JIMMY LAVALLE

Perils From The Sea

CALDO VERDE

Electronics, click tracks... rap?
Kozelek goes 21st-Century.
By Ben Beaumont-Thomas



8/10

showreel of a Scandinavian interior design firm. There's beauty, yes, but very little jeopardy. Kozelek meanwhile is an incisive and empathetic songwriter, but he can still be prone to rather less incisive bitching and moaning.

As it turns out, this collaboration actually catalyses some of their best ever work. Lavalle's first sounds on the opening track "What Happened To My Brother" are chiptune beeps, a highly unusual backing for Kozelek who has rarely incorporated electronics, especially not tones as starkly digital as these. But they, and the basic drum programming throughout, galvanise his singing into a completely new form. The overdriven slowcore guitars and fingerpicking country blues of his work in Red House Painters and Sun Kil Moon allow him to freewheel across the plains with a kind of tumbleweed logic; here, the steady pulses take him from dirt tracks to freshly laid macadam.

Kozelek's delivery is relentless, lyrics scanning in steadily perfect rhymes that occasionally run across bar divides before switching back on track. It's a mesmerising style that recalls rap greats like Rakim, whose genius lay not in high-speed syllabic fireworks but rather a constant forward-motion. One wonders what awkward drama he could one day add to R&B or dance production, just as Antony did with Hercules And Love Affair or Thom Yorke with Flying Lotus.

As ever, his preoccupations are love, death, family, friends and a honeyed poignancy that hangs between them all. The album's cast of characters struggle with cancer, mental illness, single parenthood and loss, often from a first person perspective – apparently some of it is fiction, much of it is biographical, and there's a vivid mystery in telling which is which. The murderous domestic violence of "You Missed My Heart" is a retelling of a nightmare Kozelek had, its horrors skewered by the album's sweetest, most sentimental melody. But "Caroline", an overwhelming ballad whose beautiful reminiscence of a day with a lover – "...watching a movie or watching a fight like when Manny Pacquiao had an easy night of Ricky Hatton and I rolled over and kissed your neck and smelled

IF EACH PLAYED to their weaknesses, Mark Kozelek and Jimmy Lavalle could make some pretty bad music. Lavalle's releases as The Album Leaf feature pleasant, clockwork electronics wrapped in autumnal instrumentation, perfect for the



your skin..." – feels too searing to be anything but drawn from memory.

As he did on the magnificent *Among The Leaves* album of last year, Kozelek makes psychogeographic travelogues out of his tour. So, on "Caroline", a list of hotels, their gyms and pools rated, strangely enhances the song's reverie; the album's other masterpiece, "By The Time That I Awoke", begins with a rather voyeuristic appreciation of Korean Air stewardesses and moves through an Asian tour and an almost-romance, all of it triggering a reflection on his artistic growth and once being a "lost, flockless bird".

His blend of technical excellence and emotional authority gives the album its strength, and some of

SLEEVE NOTES

➤ Recorded at: (music) Jimmy Lavalle's home in Los Angeles; (vocals) Mark Kozelek's home in San Francisco, by recording engineers Nathan Winter, Aaron Prellwitz and Gabe Shepard
➤ Produced by: Jimmy Lavalle and Mark Kozelek
➤ Personnel: Jimmy Lavalle (music), Mark Kozelek (vocals), Vanessa Ruotolo, Marcel Gemperli and Peter Broderick (strings on "Somehow The Wonder Of Life Prevails")

Lavalle's backing, which also takes in more traditional instrumentation, would take lesser songwriters into sappiness. But Lavalle also uses boldly subtle touches like tissue-thin guitar draped across the backs of songs, and brings out a refreshingly minimalist side to his work – a techno rattle underpins "He Always Felt Like Dancing", but is paired with lamplit chimes and organ in a weightless production. This could so easily have been a redelivery of The Postal Service's recently reissued album –

whimsical, family-friendly electronics and journal entries. It's so much more: encapsulating those paradoxical moments of spiritual stillness as you hurtle through life travels.

Q&A

Mark Kozelek



You've previously stayed away from digital tones – why did you want to work with that palette now?

I looked at it from a perspective of Jimmy being a great musician – I didn't think about the electronic aspect.

There was some discussion about whether to use live drums, or whether I should play guitar, but I didn't want to break up the momentum.

Are you attracted by other contemporary production styles?

I'm appreciating a lot of different types of music.

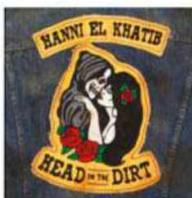
I was in a cab recently and there was this amazing music playing. I asked the guy who it was and he said Drake. I couldn't name one song by the guy, but it was really good.

What are you now drawn to writing about?

I write about whatever is on my mind. When you're a writer, all experiences have value. I can walk to the studio with no lyrics, but I'll show up and write some words about my walk. I just write.

What are you working on next?

I'm just finishing a record with Desertshore [the band featuring Red House Painters' Phil Carney]. If I didn't reach out to Jimmy, *Perils From The Sea* wouldn't have happened, and if Phil Carney wasn't my friend, I wouldn't have just sang 10 songs with Desertshore – you gotta get out of the house. *INTERVIEW: BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS*



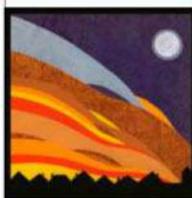
HANNI EL KHATIB
Head In The Dirt
INNOVATIVE LEISURE

Nuggets-style hotrod rock, with Black Keys mainman riding shotgun

8/10

Dan Auerbach has demonstrated advanced production chops on LPs for Dr John, Jeff The Brotherhood and Bombino, but garage rocker El Khatib is right in his sweet spot. Working with a four-piece studio band, including Auerbach on lead guitar, the Cali native blasts through 11 no-nonsense originals typically containing little more than colloquialisms ("Pay No Mind", "Nobody Gets Hurt", "Can't Win Em All") over standard chord changes, but delivered with such an adrenalised rush that they hit like gut punches. Naturally symbiotic, El Khatib and Auerbach pull off their modest yet elusive goal – to make a kickass record from start to finish – with brutal elegance.

BUD SCOPPA



NANCY ELIZABETH
Dancing
THE LEAF LABEL

Cleverly layered third album from Lancastrian avant-folk siren

8/10

At first glance, the music of Wigan's Nancy Elizabeth might be broadly described as "folky" – she sings dark nursery rhymes, in a well-enunciated English accent, over acoustic instruments, with no drums. But the accompaniment – electronic drones, multi-tracked voices, repetitive patterns played on piano, harp or zither – is cleverly layered to create something that sounds both spookily medieval and terrifyingly futuristic. "Simon Says Dance" is a stately plainsong set at a disco ("To each other's heartbeats/We quantised our feet"); "Debt" is a wonderful collision of Joni Mitchell and Steve Reich. This is space-age folk music from an elaborate sound sculptor.

JOHN LEWIS



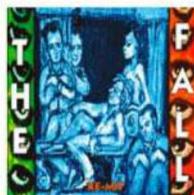
EMPIRE OF THE SUN
Ice On The Dune
ASTRALWERKS

Eclectic Aussies work some *Tron* moves into follow-up to leftfield hit

8/10

The part-time duo of Luke Steele (The Sleepy Jackson) and Nick Littlemore (Pnau) is now being labeled as an EDM act, and there's plenty on the new album to back up that assertion. Nearly every track is powered by a room-rattling disco groove, while Steele's textural guitar work, prominently featured on their 2008 debut *Walking On A Dream*, is all but buried under Littlemore's cascading electronic keyboards. But what makes "DNA", "Alive", "Concert Pitch" and the title song so irresistible is the way their silky melodies resolve into super-saturated Technicolor chorus hooks. In essence, *Ice On The Dune* is pure pop with a twist – like a modern-day 10cc, or ELO using synths instead of strings.

BUD SCOPPA



THE FALL

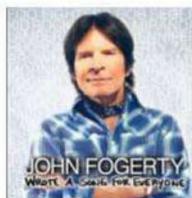
Re-Mit
CHERRY RED

Fall-ow spell for Prestwich's finest An oily lurcher barking at the *Nuggets* compilation, the 30th

6/10

Fall album is their fourth with the Smith/Poulou/Melling/Greenway/Spurr lineup, marking an unprecedented period of stability for indie's longest-running soap opera. Mark E Smith remains, as he mumbles on "Jam Song", "a permanent irritant", and *Re-Mit* stakes out familiar territory ably enough, from the lugubrious ("Hittite Man") to the incendiary ("Loadstones"). LCD Soundsystem's mainman, meanwhile, may be left to wonder how he earned his idol's wrath on "Irish" ("James Murphy is their chief," glowers Smith. "They show their bollocks when they eat"). Not wonderful, but certainly frightening.

JIM WIRTH



JOHN FOGERTY

Wrote A Song For Everyone
COLUMBIA

Foos, Keith Urban, Kid Rock join Fogerty in tribute to himself

7/10

Fogerty's self-created musical position (Cali suburbanite assumes Deep South persona) means that there's never been any baggage of "authenticity" to his work, for all its perceived bayou mud. As such, a nakedly commercial concept like this, where he reboots his material in the company of big stars from rock and Big Hat country represents no real dent to his credibility. Opener "Fortunate Son" is clobbered with the Foo Fighters, and MMJ wring emotional mileage out of "Long As I Can See The Light", but the nicest moments come when his simple structures are allowed to do their thing. "Lodi", in which Fogerty choogles in company no more famous than that of his own sons, is one of the best.

JOHN ROBINSON

REVELATIONS

Fiery Furnace Eleanor Friedberger on her second solo outing



► Eleanor Friedberger makes intimate, '70s-flavoured art-pop that feels like Sunday conversation with your bohemian best friend. Freed from her brother Matthew's tendencies to graft left-turns and obtuse strategies onto her pop instincts within the pair's cult band The Fiery Furnaces, the Illinois-raised and Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter follows 2011's solo debut, *Last Summer*, an LP of teen reminiscences, with the forthcoming *Personal Record*. "I had the title in my back pocket for a while," Friedberger chuckles, "and it's either the worst title ever, or completely brilliant. I wrote these songs with someone else and I liked the irony of my least personal record being called *Personal Record*."

The someone else is musician/novelist Wesley Stace, who initially approached both Friedbergers to write songs that could soundtrack his upcoming novel about a rock band. *Personal Record* also continues Friedberger's collaboration with producer Eric Broucek, a graduate of New York's DFA dance academy. Again, Friedberger appreciates the irony in her music's lack of banging electronic beats. "The DFA's Plantain studios is known for their synth collection and here I was making a '70s singer-songwriter album of warm sounds," she laughs. "But I hope it doesn't sound retro. I wanna be open to making a noise record next time around... but I don't know how realistic that is." GARRY MULHOLLAND



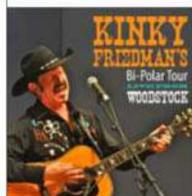
ELEANOR FRIEDBERGER

Personal Record
MERGE

Fiery Furnaces chanteuse continues to swap fire for sunshine

Brooklynite Friedberger's first solo album, 2011's *Last Summer*, seemed to celebrate a freedom from brother Matthew's more obtuse instincts for The Fiery Furnaces. This follow-up is lighter still, housing Friedberger's gorgeous voice and diary-entry love songs within a freewheeling sound that bounces around the late '60s and early '70s, looking for classic pop clues. Perhaps the charming lesbian love story of "When I Knew" isn't autobiographical, but the references to Soft Machine and "Come On Eileen" make it feel true, warm and happy-sad, much like the rest of this adorable record.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



KINKY FRIEDMAN

Bi-Polar Tour: Live From Woodstock
CONTINENTAL COAST

Old favourites and a dark new offering

Maverick Jewish cowboy troubadour and redneck pulp novelist arguably makes Friedman country music's most intriguing hyphenate, and this stripped-down live set goes a long way to explaining his enduring appeal. Trademark dry wit with a social conscience is delivered in spades on paeans to prejudice ("We Reserve The Right To Refuse Service") and mass murderers ("The Ballad Of Charles Whitman"), but there's a more sombre tone to the one new song in Friedman's repertoire, "The Ballad Of Kevin Barry", about the teenage Irish Republican executed by British soldiers in 1920 – a curiously strait-laced and serious detour for America's primo saloon bar satirist.

TERRY STAUNTON

New Albums



FUCHSIA

Fuchsia II: From Psychedelia... To A Distant Place

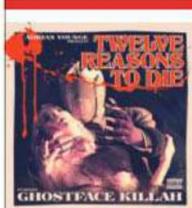
SOUND PRACTICES

Cult prog-folkies return after 40 years

7/10

Reclaiming the name, though none of the personnel of his early '70s prog-folk band, lead vocalist and principal writer Tony Durant has acted upon recent interest in Fuchsia's eponymous 1971 album by reprising their amiable, tuneful brand of English eccentricity. There are shades of Robyn Hitchcock, latter-day Lilac Time and pastoral-psych Floyd (one – pleasingly meaty – track is called "Piper At The Gates"), while Durant sounds oddly like Neil Tennant at times. It lacks any great sense of adventure, but several songs are excellent, notably "I'll Remember Her Face", a slow, chest-heaving waltz, the Fairport "Rainbow Song", and the jaunty "Melancholy Road".

GRAEME THOMSON



HOSTFACE KILLAH & ADRIAN YOUNGE

Twelve Reasons To Die

SOUL TEMPLE

7/10

Wu-Tang man pulls on the black leather gloves

Twelve Reasons is more interesting for the less familiar of its creators. Younge is something of a polymath: a law professor, musician and filmmaker who's worked with The Delfonics and scored blaxploitation flick *Black Dynamite*. Here, he's conceived a plot steeped in Italian *giallo*, and composed a soundtrack to match. Ghostface takes on the starring role, spitting crime parables over high-strung strings, jazz drums and a portentous choir. Ghost's raps are more Staten Island than Sicily, but the likes of "Enemies All Around Me" recall the smoky dread of early RZA productions, which means the whole conceit more or less hangs together.

LOUIS PATTISON



THEA GILMORE

Regardless

FULFILL

Prolific singer-songwriter's chamber-pop upgrade
After 14 albums in as many years, even the best singer-songwriters can grow

predictable. Credit to Gilmore, then, for a brave reinvention in which the folk guitars and earnestly wordy songs have given way to a glossier, more symphonic approach that casts her as the new Dido. Assisted by Pete Wingfield's exquisite string arrangements, songs such as "This Is How You Find The Way" deal with the life-changing onset of motherhood. It's a difficult theme to work without descending into 'yummy mummy' banality, but Gilmore carries it off with aplomb, exploring both the simple joys and the darker complexities with a winning combination of intelligence and populism.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



GRIM TOWER

Anarchic Breezes

OUTER BATTERY

Excellent dark folk-drone from Canadian duo

This superb collaboration between Black Mountain's Stephen McBean and

intriguing guitarist Imaad Wasif was written in 2011 but only sees the light of day now. It's a sometimes magnificent beast of superior psychedelia, recalling McBean's occasional side project Pink Mountaintops in its combination of drone and folk but adding Wasif's interest in esoterica. This satanic edge propels it close to brilliance on songs like the chiming Zep-quoting opener "Soft Seance", epic addled rocker "All The Beautiful Things" and a great cover of Jonathan Halper's "Leaving My Old Life Behind", originally written for a Kenneth Anger film.

PETER WATTS

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PETER WATTS



JAMES HOLDEN

The Inheritors

BORDER COMMUNITY

Born-again boffin rewrites the electronica rulebook

A former teenage trancerevive artist who was

remixing Madonna and Britney in his twenties, James Holden then shunned the soft option of superstar DJ fame to launch his left-field electronica collective Border Community, earning great acclaim for his debut solo album, *The Idiots Are Winning*, in 2006. This belated sequel is an even more ambitious and multi-layered, a patchwork of electro-organic drones, clanking mechanical rhythms and avant-prog textures. Though it contains faint echoes of everyone from Can to Aphex Twin to Radiohead, especially in fissile techno-jazz-punk ear-twisters like "Delabole" and "Gone Feral", *The Inheritors* is ultimately a fiercely original feast of experimental sound.

STEPHEN DALTON

8/10



JON HOPKINS

Immunity

DOMINO

A night out with Eno and King Creosote collaborator

Mercury Prize-nominee Hopkins' fourth solo album aims to reflect the euphoric

curve of long nights partying, with their associated highs and lows. "We Disappear"'s glitchy electronica provides a suitably low-key warm-up, while "Open Eye Signal" and "Collider"'s crunching beats, reminiscent of Moderat's 2009 debut, represent an evening's giddy peak. The inevitable comedown is soundtracked by soothing excursions (albeit oddly interrupted by more abrasive tracks), with "Abandon Window" cushioning serene piano amid shimmering Harold Budd soundscapes. *Immunity*'s greatest rapture, however, lies in Hopkins' welcome reunion with King Creosote for the title track's glistening melancholy.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

8/10



TRILOK GURTU

Spellbound

MOOSICUS

Tabla player extraordinaire finds focus on album paying tribute to the trumpet and Don Cherry

Trilok Gurtu is so prolific and so dedicated to 'music without frontiers', that his distinction is easily lost amid his sheer output. Here the Indian percussionist returns to his early fusion forays with the late trumpeter Don Cherry, to whom the record is dedicated. Compositions by Cherry, Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie nestle alongside Gurtu's own, and are played by a variety of hornmen. Classical virtuoso Matthias Hofs steals the show, however, but Ibrahim Maalouf catches Cherry's offbeat vision on "Universal Mother", and Paolo Fresu and Nils Petter Molvær add quality to a thrumming trio.

NEIL SPENCER

7/10

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NEIL SPENCER



MATTHEW HERBERT

The End Of Silence

ACCIDENTAL

Electronic experimentalist drops conceptual bomb

Two years ago, Matthew Herbert, the avant-garde

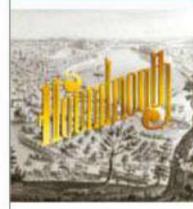
conceptualist known for finding music in unlikely places, received an email from the photographer Sebastian Meyer containing a 10-second recording of the battle of Ras Lanuf in Libya. On it, a plane is heard flying overhead, a warning whistle goes off and a bomb is detonated. Having studied the recording, Herbert went in to a studio to deconstruct and then recreate these same sounds over and over with terrifying clarity. The three tracks here aren't so much musical compositions as a series of nightmarish yet powerful sound installations. Once heard, they are not easily forgotten.

FIONA STURGES

8/10

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FIONA STURGES



HOUNDMOUTH

From The Hills Below The City

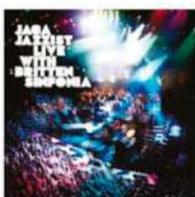
ROUGH TRADE

Patterson Hood-approved roots-rock newbies

Young Indiana quartet Houndmouth are

refreshingly upfront about their inspirations – chiefly, *Music From Big Pink* and *On The Beach* – which is just as well, because there's really no denying them. But this lean and folksy, country-rock debut dodges the pitfalls of homage and imitation rather better than the band's peers and labelmates, Alabama Shakes, due to its contemporary Americana/blues edge and garage-rock swing. Their voices are terrific when both soloing and harmonising, and they convince whether pitching at melancholic glory ("Come On, Illinois") or edging into White Stripes territory on "Casino (Bad Things)". It's a fine effort in a heavily populated field.

SHARON O'CONNELL



JAGA JAZZIST Live With Britten Sinfonia

NINJA TUNE

Jazz-rock goes orchestral in kaleidoscopic live collaboration

8/10

sound that incorporates jazz fusion, post-rock and cinematic electronica. Recorded in London last summer, this live orchestral collaboration clothes the group's sleek systems-music grooves in lush swirls of strings and splashes of brass – think Michael Nyman meets Lalo Schifrin, with a hint of David Axelrod. Timid tastefulness can dampen such collaborations, and there are a few mushy avant-muzak moments here. But the sole new composition, "Prungen", is a funked-out blast of galloping synth arpeggios, while the terrific "Music! Dance! Drama!" fires up a cyclotron of raucous electro-punk fanfares and weapons-grade xylophone riffs.

STEPHEN DALTON



JBM Stray Ashes

FARGO

Consumption concocted in a cabin in the Catskill Mountains

7/10

first contemplative songwriter to have retreated to the woods to commune with his muse. And he's not the first to return from his pastoral retreat with a sombre, rueful reflection on loss and mortality, carried by half-muttered vocals and gently strummed strings. But at its best, JBM's follow-up to his 2008 debut, *Not Even In July*, transcends its self-imposed clichés. The Lambchop-like "Crooked Branches" sighs along to sumptuous pedal steel, and the splendidly titled (and, yes, Bon Iver-ish) "On Fire On A Tightrope" is a show-stopping torch ballad struggling to get out.

ANDREW MUELLER



VALERIE JUNE Pushin' Against A Stone

SUNDAY BEST

Arresting country-soul from west Tennessee

This terrific LP, produced by The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, finds the

ukulele-wielding, Medusa-haired singer-songwriter Valerie June seesawing between the decades as she balances classic soul with her love of old-time blues and Appalachian folk. With tales of hard-working women ("Workin' Woman Blues"), feckless men ("You Can't Be Told") and long and lonesome nights ("Somebody To Love"), these songs brim with heartache and disappointment. Combined with June's remarkably careworn vocals – The Carter Family by way of Billie Holiday with a hint of The Shangri-Las – they suggest that the young Tennessean has been around the block more than once.

FIONA STURGES



MILES KANE

Don't Forget Who You Are

COLUMBIA

Liverpool's latest son is too retro for his own good

5/10

Once the less famous half of Last Shadow Puppets, Miles Kane's stock has risen after a decent-selling debut LP and, more recently, a spot on the *NME* tour. He's clearly broadened his social circle, too, having persuaded Paul Weller and XTC's Andy Partridge to help him on songwriting duties on this second LP. Moving from glam rock to Britpop and back again, the result is both catchy and sadly predictable, reflecting Kane's desire to build his own myth – "My time is now", he announces hopefully on the title track – while making guitar music hip again. If he's going to manage it, he'll have to do better than this.

FIONA STURGES



POKEY LAFARGE

Pokey LaFarge

THIRD MAN

Fifth LP – first for Jack White's label – from eclectic St Louis roots ambassador

8/10

Like an old-timey radio signal set to "Roaring '20s" and blasting out jump blues, western swing, primordial jazz, ragtime and string-band tunes on the ol' Philco, Midwesterner Pokey LaFarge infuses would-be moribund styles with rare vigour, though lyrical concerns (especially on "Close The Door", where the protagonist would just as soon die as pay the doctor's bill) are anything but nostalgia. With his clipped, nasal voice – think likeminded singer Paul Burch – and attention to texture (everything from washboard to kazoo), highlights like "The Bowlegged Woman" and the magnetic opener "Central Time" crackle with the dynamism of long-dormant forces reawakened.

LUKE TORN

WE'RE NEW HERE

Valerie June



The singer-songwriter Valerie June was in her late teens when she realised she shared her name with a country legend, the woman born Valerie June Carter, later known as June Carter Cash. "The first thing I did was call my mother," says June. "I said, 'Woah, Mom, did you name me after June Carter?' She was, like, 'Who on earth is that?' Turns out she named me after a character in a soap opera. But I'm taking it as a sign, anyway."

For June, country music isn't just in her name, it's part of her heritage. Born in Jackson, Tennessee, she notes: "Country was everywhere and it still is. You can hear Hank Williams, Johnny Cash or Taylor Swift coming out of every bar, every shop, every gas station."

Her new LP, *Pushin' Against A Stone* – her fourth since 2006, but her first for the UK label Sunday Best – sets songs about hardship and heartbreak within a framework of old-time blues, country and soul. The album's name comes from June's sense "that there is a negativity, a weight in every day. There's always this stone. The only thing you can do is work around it or learn how to push against it. It's a point of life. Well, it is for me, anyway."

FIONA STURGES



LANDSHAPES

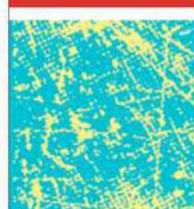
Rambutan

BELLA UNION

An equally weird and mannered debut from the gloomy folk quartet Before they signed to Bella Union to release their debut, London's

Landshapes were known as Lulu And The Lampshades, an awful name that implied (inaccurately, it turns out) high levels of twee in the quartet's music. In fact, the creeping, slow bass and sighing slump of opener "Racehorse" align it with Low's slowcore ilk, while their rustic, confrontational climaxes and clearly enunciated female vocals fall halfway between the freak-folk of CocoRosie and the polite West London scene that birthed Noah And The Whale. Landshapes are best when they're incensed, as evinced by the civil war snares and screams of "Night So Strong", but their haunted approach to mopey folk is compellingly eerie.

LAURA SNAPES



ALAN LICHT

Four Years Older

EDITIONS MEGO

NYC polymath, last spotted with Lee Ranaldo, in full-on destructo mode

8/10

In the two decades since Licht's defining work, *Sink The Aging Process*, he's become a lead guitar gun-for-hire, a wickedly astute cultural commentator, and a music critic par excellence. But those of us longing for another head-scratching solo guitar side from the man have been waiting some time. *Four Years Older* fills that gap brilliantly, an ass-blasting slab of guitarism that disintegrates the instrument's received wisdoms, again, reassembling the six-string as an electronic divining rod. It's unrelenting, but the miracle is Licht's control of process – everything is exquisitely fierce, the surface grind revealing a coarse-grained but articulate interrogation of modern minimalism.

JON DALE

New Albums



LUMERIANS The High Frontier

PARTISAN

Cali psychonauts' whacked-out British debut

This Oakland five-piece have released a couple of hard-to-find albums in the US, but this fine effort is described as their 'formal' UK debut. Their busy, luminescent sound mixes Krautrock with a 1960s Bay Area vibe, combining slinky percussion and mesmeric sonic oddities with fat doses of wah-wah guitar and understated – often entirely absented – vocals. There's variety, too, from rocky piledrivers like "Dogon Genesis" to the ethereal, spooky "The Bloom", the tip-tapping dynamic weirdness of "Smokies Tangle" and the Japrocking curio "Koman Tong". It's hypnotic and mind-altering, like a fruitful collision between Boredoms, Neu! and the Grateful Dead.

PETER WATTS

7/10

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PETER WATTS

MAGIC ARM Images Rolling

SWITCHFLICKER/PEACEFROG

Manchester-based one-man-band's fine second album

Before starting work on the home-recorded *Images Rolling*, multi-instrumentalist Marc Rigelsford – who records as Magic Arm – taught himself to play the piano. That instrument dominates the album even when he isn't playing it thanks to Rigelsford's decision to write on piano rather than guitar. Piano cascades through the Phosphorescent-like "Great Life" and embellishes the gorgeous, woozy, "Strawberry Fields"-esque "Warning Sign" but also underpins the organ-heavy rave-up "Is History". There are also hints of Mercury Rev, Ennio Morricone and The Smiths – often simultaneously, as on uptempo opener "Put Your Collar Up" – as Rigelsford demonstrates he is a talent with real musical depth.

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PETER WATTS

MELT YOURSELF DOWN Melt Yourself Down

THE LEAF LABEL

Acoustic Ladyland's Afrobeat side project Melt Yourself Down feature saxophonist Pete Wareham and bass guitarist Ruth

Goller from the London punk-jazz outfit Acoustic Ladyland. This sextet takes their shtick – Goller's finger-bleeding basslines and Wareham's staccato tenor sax riffs – and adds a curious Africanised twist. Tenorist Shabaka Hutchings doubles up with Wareham to create martial, Fela Kuti-ish horn salutes. Three drummers – Tom Skinner, Kushal Gaya and Satin Singh – add a pounding, polyrhythmic urgency that lurches between Afrobeat and Jaki Liebezeit's tribal psychedelia, while producer Leafcutter John injects electronic squelches. The result is a pulsating, itchily funky brew, pitched somewhere between Pigbag and Can.

JOHN LEWIS

8/10



THE MEMORY BAND On The Chalk (Our Navigation Of The Line Of The Downs)

STATIC CARAVAN

UK folk-rockers engage in psychogeographic ordinance survey

Stephen Cracknell's outfit have plodded for several years through some worthy but colourless homages to late-'60s Pentangle/Fairport-era folk-rock. With *On The Chalk* they have moved into a different league, celebrating the drifting spirits and ancient trackways of Old England through an engaging weft of historic spoken-word samples, elegiac piano and found sounds, and programmed rhythms that occasionally attain a Neu!-like momentum. That's appropriate for a record that sets out to chart the disappeared Harrow Way, and its digital patchwork feels like an authentically contemporary response to a vanishing folklore.

ROB YOUNG

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ROB YOUNG

HOW TO BUY... PAT METHENY

Jazz-fusion guitarist and composer



PAT METHENY GROUP Offramp

Jazz purists will recommend *Rejoicing* – a more straightahead post-bop set recorded in 1983 with Billy Higgins and Charlie Haden. But *Offramp* is the definitive example of the strong melodies and gentle beats that Metheny has explored with his fusion quartet, in particular the slow-percolating Latin groove of "Are You Going With Me".

7/10



PAT METHENY/ ORNETTE COLEMAN Song X

GEFFEN, 1986
Many of Metheny's best albums have been collaborations – with the likes of Charlie Haden, Brad Mehldau and Derek Bailey, not to mention the wonderful Electric Counterpoint with Steve Reich. But *Song X*, a muscular and unlikely quintet session cut with sax legend Ornette Coleman, remains his rumbling, ecstatic free-bop masterpiece, Metheny and Coleman freaking out in unison.

9/10

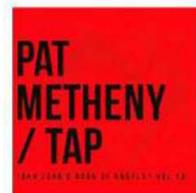


PAT METHENY No Tolerance For Silence

1994, GEFFEN
When it comes to solo Metheny, 2011's *What's It All About* is a rather lovely collection of '60s pop ballads, played on acoustic guitars. *No Tolerance...* is the complete opposite, a faintly terrifying collection of bluesy free improv, and a favourite of Thurston Moore's. Metheny's even had to deny that it was a deliberately uncommercial contract breaker with Geffen.

9/10

JOHN LEWIS



PAT METHENY/ TAP

John Zorn's Book Of Angels Vol. 20
NONE SUCH/TZADIK

Jazz-rock guitarist pays homage to John Zorn

7/10

When not fronting thrash-metal bands or freaky improv outfits, John Zorn has written more than 500 songs as part of his ongoing *Masada* project. They provide an extensive inventory of Jewish folk themes, and have been merrily mutilated by various Zorn outfits over the past 20 years. Here Pat Metheny performs six of them, multi-tracking himself on guitars, sitar, piano, accordion and horns as he duets with percussionist Antonio Sánchez. The excursions into Hawaiian-shirted lift muzak can get a bit glutinous, but the acoustic moments ("Albim", the first half of "Tharsis"), the Reich-ish minimalism ("Mastema") and the Cecil Taylor-ish improv ("Hurmiz") are sublime.

JOHN LEWIS



MOTORPSYCHO Still Life With Eggplant

RUNE GRAMMOFON

Rattus Norvegicus alert! Long-serving Scandinavians get heavy

8/10

You never quite know what to expect from a new Motorpsycho album, and the Norwegian rock outfit celebrate nearly 25 years by teaming up with Dungen guitarist Reine Fiske for an explosive, heavy record whose roots are largely in late-'60s/early-'70s British prog/acid/psych. "Hell, Part 1-3" opens with lumbering ferocity, while "Barleycorn (Let It Come/Let It Be)" grows from its acoustic intro to a Gentle Giant stomp. "Ratcatcher"'s 17 minutes yaw between Police-style vocal harmonies and pummelling free rock breakdowns. A sparkling cover of late Love track "August" is thrown in for good measure.

ROB YOUNG



MOUNT KIMBIE Cold Spring Fault Less Youth

WARP

Second LP by London wallflowers

Like their friend and collaborator James Blake, Mount Kimbie fold the bass weight of dubstep and the pulse of techno in with classic songwriting, on rhythmically charged but often quite impressionistic tracks. The memory of Plastikman's "Spastik" hovers around "Made To Stray", and "Sullen Ground" broods and throbs on the edge of the dancefloor, but there are also moments that recall DJ Shadow's early dusk-set work or Tortoise's guitar jazz. Two tracks feature young social unrealist King Krule, whose elastic-vowelled raps lope through the shapeshifting structures. All the hustle, serendipity and moments of beautiful clarity that characterise urban life are here in nuanced, very modern song.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

...Like Clockwork

MATADOR

Cali-rock titans return with their difficult sixth. By *Sharon O'Connell*



7/10

went through a particularly dark period in the last couple of years, trying to figure out what it all means and how to get through all that. Artistically and mentally, it was like waking up in the middle of nowhere. This record was finding a way out from there."

The "all that" refers to the difficulties of picking up a premier-league band again after so long an absence, and how a group as distinctive as QOTSA might tackle album number six. The process can't have been made any easier by their move from Interscope, or the departure during recording of long-term drummer Joey Castillo, whose stool was then occupied by Dave Grohl and Jon Theodore, formerly of The Mars Volta. Homme's comments imply that this record is as much about process as end product, but process doesn't shift copies or secure high-rotation airplay. QOTSA's glowering, fat-free hybrid of alt. metal, riff-centric heavy rock and desert blues has always done both very successfully, so keeping those demands in mind while they felt their way in the dark might explain why ...Like Clockwork (the title is

IT OPENS WITH a clunk, and the rattle of chains being cast off. An overly literal metaphor, maybe, but fitting for the liberation finally won by Queens Of The Stone Age with their first album in six years. As singer/ songwriter/guitarist Josh Homme described the recording, "We

surely ironic) is the sound of the band oddly, albeit entertainingly unsettled.

Purist fans of their self-styled "robot rock" should resist the temptation to hold a glittering guestlist responsible. If any other band were to call in Sir Elton John and Jake Shears as well as the more usual suspects – in QOTSA's case, Mark Lanegan, Alex Turner, Nick Oliveri and Trent Reznor – it would suggest an attack of constitutional nerves, but Homme has always been a big fan of the broad collaborative mix. And several of these new songs are very different in structure and approach, as well as detail. The brutally clipped rhythms, seductive, saw-toothed melodies and grungey textures still figure, but they don't define the record, which exposes far more of their looseness and feminised swing. "I Sat By The Ocean" and the reverb-heavy "If I Had A Tail" especially revel in the laidback glam boogie of Homme and Jesse Hughes' Eagles Of Death Metal.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Josh Homme

Recorded at: Pink Duck Studios, Burbank, CA

Personnel includes:

Homme (guitar, vocals), Troy Van Leeuwen (guitar, perc, keys), Dean Fertita (keys, guitar, perc), Michael Shuman (bass), Joey Castillo, Dave Grohl, Jon Theodore (drums, perc), Sir Elton John (keys, piano, vocals), Jake Shears, Alex Turner, Mark Lanegan, Nick Oliveri, Trent Reznor and Brody Dalle (vocals)

begins like a Bill Withers ballad and develops into a Queen/Fantomas/Ziggy mutant – an example of the new sound Homme calls "this trancy, broken thing" that emerged while the band were rehearsing

Q&A

Troy Van Leeuwen



Why was this such a difficult album to make?

In the past, it's always been easy – *Lullabies To Paralyze* took six weeks to make. We're used to being able to bust them out, but the finished product you're hearing wasn't easy and making sure the music was right was a kind of wrangling. You can't expect that it will always just fly out of you, and we might have been a little spoiled over the years. The reason it's called ...Like Clockwork is because it did not go that way.

How was it to lose Joey part way through the recording?

The Queens has always been a place where it's understood that you spend time together and make the best of it, but sometimes you grow apart. And that's kind of what happened. We're grown men and at the end of the day, we're all friends. But in the middle of making a record – no, it was not an ideal time.

What's with the collaborative wild cards?

The Elton John thing was just a random connection between people that we all know. He called Josh one day and we thought it was a joke, but lo and behold... And we made him play on a rock song together with us, live. It was one of those bucket-list things – playing with one of my heroes. Oh, no big deal!

INTERVIEW: SHARON O'CONNELL

for their self-titled debut album tour in 2011. That slightly dazed quality is evident on "The Vampyre Of Time And Memory", where squirts of electronica are added to a backdrop that taps Eric Clapton, Queen and early-'70s Elton, and over which Homme croons, "I survived, I speak, I breathe, I'm alive – hooray." Issues of uncertainty, resilience and control are also at the heart of the closing track, a watery ballad with a real emotional wallop that connects Harry Nilsson, Derek And The Dominos and Frank Ocean. He's recognised by both his fine falsetto and his muscular, Cali-rock drawl, but the bruised baritone Homme employs for the chorus ("most of what you see, my dear, is purely for show, because not everything that goes around comes back around, you know") reveals a striking new vulnerability.

Homme once claimed that his initial aim with QOTSA was to establish a band whose sound could be recognised within three seconds. It won't exactly spook the horses, but ...Like Clockwork might take just a little longer.

New Albums



WILLIE NILE

American Ride

RIVER HOUSE

Eighth album from streetwise NYC songwriter Even endorsements from Springsteen and Pete Townshend haven't

8/10

resulted in much commercial success for Nile, who was reduced to asking his small-but-devoted fan base to fund his latest release. The lack of wider recognition is a mystery for at 65 he's still writing songs that brim with intelligence and passion. The title track is a state-of-the-nation epic, including namechecks for Elvis and Al Green. "This Is Our Time" rocks like the Ramones and Strummer's ghost invigorates "People Who Died". By gentle contrast, Gram Parsons might've been proud of the aching "She's Got My Heart". Nile's river of song runs as deep as it's wide.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



PAN AMERICAN

Cloud Room, Glass Room

KRANKY

Labradford spin-off create songs from the hundredth floor

7/10

for many years now, and *Cloud Room, Glass Room* includes percussion from Steven Hess (Locrian, Innodle) as well as Bobby Donne's bass. These urbane ambient tracks feel right for the air-conditioned, soundwalled experience of America's city architecture: something for the headphones as you gaze over Chicago from the top of the Skydeck or you whizz up the side of a hotel in a glass elevator. On "Project For An Apartment Building", tiny hi-hat gestures are dubbed into an expansive nimbus of fluttering texture while pearly synth tones tick over in the background. Hermetically sealed but beautiful.

ROB YOUNG



PARLOUR FLAMES

Parlour Flames

CHERRY RED

Bonehead's back. Indifferently, maybe Former Oasis second guitarist Paul 'Bonehead' Arthur is one of Britpop's

4/10

great characters, but this drab, psych-whimsy-garnished exercise in English indie classicism stretches his goodwill. The music is solid enough, jangling in all the expected places, but vocalist Vinny Peculiar has a voice like a wet, flat Wednesday. You could pass that off as characterful if the words weren't also excruciating; the album opens with the line "Manchester rain, falling from the sky/Heavenly tears land in your eye". Really. Odd touches of The Auteurs creep in, but as they might have been parodied by Mark and Lard's Shirehorses. So... era-appropriate, at least.

EMILY MACKAY



PEALS

Walking Field

THRILL JOCKEY

Ambient debut from two post-punk mainstays As members of Baltimore's Future Islands and Double Dagger, respectively, William Cashion and

8/10

Bruce Willen play strange, theatrical post-punk. They've united as Peals on the side, and launched the project by offering 16 separate ambient MP3s online that always sound serviceable whatever order you play them in. Their logo is an infinity sign, all of which wrongly makes them sound like noodling dullards. In fact, their debut, *Walking Field*, plies gorgeous meditative guitar and chimes, tracing a lineage from Leo Kottke's frantic picking to David Pajo's Papaap M and ex-Ponytail guitarist Dustin Wong's crystalline refractions. Its eight songs are distinct and stirring.

LAURA SNAPES



ROSE WINDOWS

The Sun Dogs

SUB POP

Seattle septet's compelling, doom-folk first

You'd imagine that the likes of Black Mountain, Dead Meadow and Sleepy Sun might have America's psych-rock/prog-folk territory staked out, but Rose Windows have managed to claim a patch to call their own. They've cleared the path to their original folk sources, then added pedal-steel and Eastern strings to the template of Sabbath-styled heaviness, spooky flute and swirling keys. Rabia Shaheen Qazi is their vocal powerhouse, central to both the simple "Season Of Serpents" and irresistible head-banger "Native Dreams". Talk of golden snakes, white hands of grief and stalking vultures is somehow steered clear of quasi-mystic cliché, marking out Rose Windows as promising contenders on the psych-folk block.

SHARON O'CONNELL

SAVAGES

Silence Yourself

MATADOR/POP NOIRE

Maybe she should Sioux...

You want to fall in love with Savages. For their matt black style, their fabulous cheekbones

5/10

and for opening their debut album with dialogue from Cassavetes' *Opening Night*. But this much-hyped all-girl London band's debut is a disappointing triumph of retro-goth style over substance. A re-recorded version of early single "Husbands" is still a thrilling rush of righteous anger punched home by pulsing rhythm and lacerating post-punk guitar. But elsewhere singer Jehnny Beth's blatant Siouxsie-isms accentuate the lack of light, shade and melody, and the closing piano-led drama of "Marshal Dear" comes too late to disturb the mood of contrived angst.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



PHILDEL

The Disappearance Of The Girl

DECCA

Darkly gripping songs from London-based songwriter

7/10

You've probably heard Phidel's music during television ad breaks – her songs have accompanied campaigns by Marks & Spencer and assorted washing powder brands – but don't let that fool you into thinking that her music is about nothing more than getting your whites whiter. There's a crushing darkness and sorrow at the core of these pretty, Regina Spektor-ish ditties that stem from their author's isolated and psychologically abusive childhood. "Holes In Your Coffin" and "The Wolf" betray rage at a nameless oppressor while the discomfiting "Funeral Bell" ("Oh brother, I long for sleep") finds her toying with the notion of suicide.

FIONA STURGES



PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Inform - Educate - Entertain

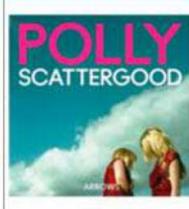
TEST CARD RECORDINGS

Sample-happy Londoners trip back in time

7/10

PSB are the corduroy-clad guitarist and sampling wizard J Willgoose Esq and a drummer and pianist known simply as Wrigglesworth. Their USP lies in their assured threading of post-war archive material from StudioCanal, the BFI and old propaganda reels through Avalanche-style musical collages. "Signal 30" cautions against disobeying the rules of the Highway Code, drawing on an American public information film, *None For The Road*, while the unexpectedly moving "Everest" uses audio from a 1953 documentary about Sir Edmund Hillary and co's ascent of the world's highest mountain, each of them "carving steps into the roof of the world".

FIONA STURGES



POLLY SCATTERGOOD

Arrows

MUTE

Brit School grad's synth-pop second When Polly Scattergood first stepped into the spotlight, it was as a

quirk-pop singer-songwriter with a diarising compulsion, whose love of Tori Amos and Kate Bush was rather too close to the surface of her 2009 self-titled debut. But rousing, retro-synth codas and a glossy sheen have always offset the dark theatricality of her songs, and she repeats that recipe on her follow-up. Scattergood's voice – an exaggeratedly cracked stutter that's shorthand for suffering on "Miss You" – may be an acquired taste, but she works it skilfully, and the pumped "Subsequently Lost" and Goldfrapp-style electro of "Wanderlust" are more soundtracks to emotional recovery under the mirror ball than solitary bedroom suffering.

SHARON O'CONNELL



SIGUR RÓS Kveikur

XL

Icelanders go from

glacial to granite

If last year's *Valtari* showcased Sigur Rós at their most unhurried and placid, *Kveikur* is a considerably more muscular proposition. Now a trio after the departure of Kjartan Sveinsson, the sound has shifted from glacial to granite. Both the title track and "Brennisteinn", the latter framed by abrasive shards of noise, churn and roar-like dark water hitting solid rock. The clanking "Hrafnitnna" broods epically, and the slow-burning "Yfirborð" becomes almost literally volcanic. After *Valtari*'s extensive non-vocal passages, Jónsi's ethereal voice is a constant, set high in the mix on the tribal-pop of "Ísaki" and "Blápráður". All in all, a neat side-stepping of expectations, and a timely one.

GRAEME THOMSON

7/10

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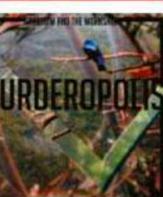
JAMES SKELLY & THE INTENDERS Love Undercover

SKELETON KEY

Wirral whizzkid's debut As frontman of The Coral, singer-songwriter James Skelly crafts a hook-studded, bittersweet blend of psych pop, soul, country rock, folk and Merseybeat that has distinguished the band from their peers while delivering a string of Top 10 albums. Their seventh is currently on hold due to various members' own projects, including Skelly's debut. *Love Undercover* swaps his usual spirited abstraction for more direct songs along classic soul-pop and country-blues lines, with an unforced feel-good factor and naturalism. There's no dazzle here, but that's precisely the appeal of the Glen Campbell-like "Searching For The Sun", "You And I" (Elvis Costello channels The Drifters) and the high-noon mariachi of "I'm A Man".

SHARON O'CONNELL

7/10



SPARROW AND THE WORKSHOP Murderopolis

SONG, BY TOAD

Words of love in
gritty packaging

The Glasgow trio's third album finds them trawling ever more choppy waters of melodramatic pop grandeur, dispensing dark odes from the most shadowy recesses of the heart. Singer Jill O'Sullivan is the secret weapon, possessed of a richly expressive voice that merges the rage of Polly Harvey with the sophistication of Nancy Sinatra. "Valley Of Death" and the visceral "The Faster You Spin" suggest an all-guns-blazing showdown between The Shangri-Las and the Bad Seeds, the persuasive eloquence of O'Sullivan tempering the sonic aggression of her fellow players. These are love songs wrapped in angry obituaries, most powerfully on the scornful folk of "The Glue That Binds Us".

TERRY STAUNTON

7/10



STATUS QUO

Bula Quo!

FOURTH CHORD

Soundtrack to a
Quo-starring caper
movie. No, I'm
not joking

The facts really
demand no embroidery.

2/10

Bula Quo! is the soundtrack to Status Quo's debut feature film, an action movie shot in Fiji, in which the Quo play themselves, opposite Jon Lovitz and Craig Fairbrass. As for the album, you'll never guess what it sounds like, etc, but it does contain moments of daffily irresistible charm, notably the surf-rock shuffle "GoGoGo". However, *Bula Quo!* also contains possibly the worst thing that the Quo have ever recorded, the cod-Hawaiian "Fiji Time", which resembles Black Lace covering Bill Wyman's "Je Suis Un Rock Star".

ANDREW MUELLER

HOW TO BUY... JOHN DWYER

Thee Oh Sees and other projects



COACHWHIPS

Bangers Vs Fuckers

NARNACK, 2003

John Dwyer's first great band makes their first great LP, 11 songs stomped out in 18 hot minutes. There are shades of Pussy Galore and The Gories to the metallic racket of "Pure Peekin" and "You Gonna Get It", but there's a delirious, good-times energy that shines through the muck.

8/10



PINK AND BROWN

Shame Fantasy II

LOAD, 2003

Posthumous collection from one of Dwyer's more art-damaged projects. Formed in the same Providence, Rhode Island loft scene that spawned Lightning Bolt, Pink And Brown offer a similar turn in spasmodic scatter-drumming, fretboard abuse and freaky masks. "Brown", aka Jeff Rosenberg, went on to play in Lavender Diamond.

7/10



THEE OH SEES

Warm Slime

INT'L RED, 2010

Thee Oh Sees began as acoustic-tinged side project OCS, but soon mutated into this: Californian beach bum psych on a brown-acid binge. *Warm Slime* kicks off with the title track, a 13-minute "Yoo Doo Right"-like chant, nods to "Surfin' Bird" on "Castaic Tackle", and takes a leaf from early Floyd on "Everything Went Black".

8/10

LOUIS PATTISON



STELLAR OM SOURCE

Joy One Mile

RVNG INT'L

Synth experimenter turns towards dancefloor

8/10

Source (along with labels like 100% Silk) as dilettantish, coming from the American underground to play with classic house tropes. But house has always been an underground form, and here Christelle Gualdi makes an appealingly raw and emotive interpretation of Chicago jack and acid. Pop vocal cut "Par Amour" could have made an assault on the charts in the early '90s if given a polish, "Trackers" is a ferocious 303 trip, and "Fascination" is an unspooling ribbon of psychedelic boogie. Techno master Kassem Mosse, who mixes and arranges, also files a killer remix of "Elite Excel".

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



THEE OH SEES

Floating Coffin

CASTLE FACE

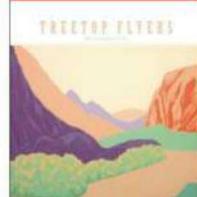
Ty Segall's San Francisco mentor strikes gold of his own

John Dwyer's path to notoriety has surely been complicated by his skittish artistic temperament: before Thee Oh Sees, there were groups including Coachwhips, The Hospitals and Pink And Brown, each one offering a different spin on breakneck garage-rock. *Floating Coffin*, though, feels like the apotheosis of his career so far. As ever, Dwyer and band play fast and loose with tempo and distortion – but it's the quintet's talent for sneaking in moments of surprising prettiness that makes their seventh record such a charmer: the flute that suddenly springs from the heads-down chug of "Tunnel Time", or "No Spell", a sort of Californian motorik chased by ghostly psych guitars.

9/10

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LOUIS PATTISON



TREETOP FLYERS

The Mountain Moves

LOOSE MUSIC

Intermittently compelling debut from UK Americanophiles

For their debut an homage to '70s West Coast rock, the London-based Treetop Flyers went straight to source, recording in a Malibu hillside studio. Produced by Noah Georges (Devendra, Joanna Newsom), The Mountain Moves reimagines the golden age knowingly but not slavishly. On opener "Things Will Change", the Reid Morrison-led quintet displays the earthy smoothness of the original America lineup, while closer "Is It All Worth It" evokes images of a campfire under starry desert skies. But there are too many sleepy stretches and not enough memorable songs between these handsome bookends, as a talented young band dredges the past in search of an identity.

6/10

MARK MULCAHY

Dear Mark J. Mulcahy, I Love You

FIRE

Influential former Miracle Legion mainstay breaks a long silence.
By Andrew Mueller



8/10

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM CONSOLES that a compensation for adversity is that it teaches you who your friends are. In September 2008, Mark Mulcahy's wife, Melissa, died suddenly aged 41, leaving Mulcahy the sole parent of three-year-

old twins. Without his prompting, or knowledge, a benefit album of versions of his songs, 2009's *Ciao My Shining Star* was recorded by luminaries including Thom Yorke, Michael Stipe, Vic Chesnutt, The National and Dinosaur Jr, among other peers and fans who wanted to ensure that Mulcahy was able to continue making records.

Dear Mark J. Mulcahy, I Love You is Mulcahy's first release since then – his first studio album, indeed, since 2005's weirdo pop epic *In Pursuit Of Your Happiness*. It largely finds Mulcahy reconnecting with the foundations that have underpinned his music ever since Miracle Legion were one of many groups of mid-'80s college janglers burdened by the allegation that they were the next REM. Mulcahy's songs, now as then, are defined by a refusal to go quite where one might expect, lyrically or musically: on *Dear Mark J. Mulcahy...* he negotiates their manifold quirks and veers armed with little beyond an acoustic guitar and his husky, worried voice. This is an album of complex songs, simply arranged.

There are traces both of the artists that might have inspired Mulcahy when he started out (REM, Warren Zevon, The Go-Betweens, the Modern Lovers) and the artists who have been inspired by him since (The Shins, The National, Frank Turner, The Decemberists). The two opening tracks, "I Taketh Away" and "Everybody Hustles Leo", share with The Go-Betweens circa "Spring Hill Fair" the charming, disorienting conceit of setting what are essentially acoustic pop tunes to a stomping glam rhythm section. The latter, the title of which appears to be borrowed from the screenplay of Robert Aldrich's 1975 film *Hustle*, is especially terrific, a giddy lollipop accompanied by handclaps and decorated by a breezy chorus and some characteristically oblique wordplay ("The first time is the worst time/The next time is the time before the third time/And so on, and so on").

The tracks on *Dear Mark J. Mulcahy...* were recorded quickly, Mulcahy and his musicians setting themselves the challenge of getting each one wrapped in a day. This sort of pre-planned spontaneity can go badly when things end up sounding forced, but everything here radiates the refreshed sense of possibility that comes of doing something again after a lengthy interregnum of not doing it. The pretty, pastoral psychedelia of "She Makes The World Turn Backwards" is like sunlight falling through clouds. "He's A Magnet" is a Velvets-ish choogle incongruously embellished



SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Rub Wrongways, Northampton, MA
Produced by: Henning Ohlenbusch and Mark Mulcahy
Personnel: Mark Mulcahy (guitar, vocals, drums, whistling, glockenspiel), Henning Ohlenbusch (bass, keys, guitar/slide), Pasquale Dalbis (drums), Ray Mason (bass), Dave Trenholm (guitar, bass flute), Dave Hower (drums), Brian Marchese (drums), Ken Mauri (guitar, bass, keys), Dennis Crommett (guitar, lap steel), JJ O'Connell (drums), Gabrielle Athayde (cello)

with a flute. "Poison Candy Heart" is so joyously upbeat, its wry lyrical vitriol notwithstanding, as to include whistling.

The album has the unmistakeable lightness of a record which was easy and fun for everybody involved. Artists intent on summoning portentous truth, or giving the appearance of so doing, tend not to include Jonathan Richman-esque whimsy like "Let The Fireflies Fly Away", which begins with Mulcahy attempting to alert a waiter to a frog in his starter, and ends with a coda in the sort of falsetto induced by laughing gas, accompanied by a banjo which sounds like it's

learning the song as it goes. In the context, this observation is intended to be nothing but complimentary.

There are some more reflective moments providing ballast, and/or a reminder that Mulcahy the melancholic strummer of yore has not completely slipped his moorings. The bleakly beautiful "Bailing Out On Everything Again" suggests a wilfully lo-fi Radiohead, and "Badly Madly" has something of the earnest

melodramatics of Kevin Rowland's ruminative monologues. Mostly, however *Dear Mark J. Mulcahy, I Love You* sounds supremely happy to be here: it's an infectious feeling.

Q&A

Mark Mulcahy



You spoke back in 2009 about an album you were working on. Is this that album?

No. That's a troubled album. When I got back to making records, I wanted to make a record about where I am now. I love the other record, though. I hope to get it finished one day.

Why the title?

"It was a note I got from someone, and for some reason I took it as a note from everybody. I've had a lot of great luck with people over the last few years, and I wanted a way to sum up the record, and it appeared at what felt like the right time."

Were you wary of making a record that might be perceived as autobiographical?

"I think if I'd written songs about my own feelings and circumstances, that wouldn't have been a record I'd have wanted to make. Maybe I will one day, or maybe the chance to do that has passed me by – and maybe that's a good thing. But I've always liked writing about other people, other things, taking a break from the usual me."

Your songs still don't sound like anyone else's. Do you ever write a standard pop song and then stop yourself?

"They seem straightforward to me, but when we started rehearsing, I saw these guys who are super-competent musicians really struggling. I have recorded things that became too straight, and I hated them."

INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER



TUNNG

Turbines

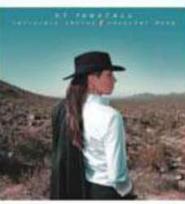
FULL TIME HOBBY

Folktronic Brits' fifth consolidates and breaks new ground After almost a decade, Tunng's founding folktronic ethos is hardly

8/10

headline news. They continue to make interesting sounds – savour how the swaying ska rhythms of "Trip Trap" dissolve into squelchy grooves – but the emphasis now falls on the songs, and their fifth album features some of their most direct and satisfying. "The Village" is crisp pop and "So Far From Here" a rolling pastore, while Becky Jacobs' and Mike Lindsay's clipped English voices weave a low-key but insistent spell, not least on the overlapping melodic lines of "By This" and the tight-knit "Bloodlines". Somehow, *Turbines* suggests both consolidation and progress.

GRAEME THOMSON



KT TUNSTALL

Invisible Empire// Crescent Moon

VIRGIN

A raw, melancholic exorcism, produced by Howe Gelb

8/10

of her father, KT Tunstall's fourth album was recorded in Tucson with Howe Gelb and certainly doesn't shy away from personal pain. Nor does it crowd it out: the largely acoustic sound is raw yet delicate, full of light and air. Occasional alt.country twangs and spaghetti western whistles betray Gelb's desert touch, but the wistful tone of "Crescent Moon", which wouldn't sound out of place on Kate Bush's *Aerial*, and the jazzy "How You Kill Me", built around a fantastically malevolent bass line, are more typical. A beautiful, rather brave album, and by far her best.

GRAEME THOMSON



ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF

Ceremony

CITY SLANG

Grand gothic by Swedish singer-composer

7/10

Anna Von Hausswolff has a huge, vaulting voice, the sort routinely compared to Kate Bush or Tori Amos. Hardly a rarity in this day and age, but she makes fairly sparing use of it. Approaching 10 minutes of her third LP have passed by before she breaks cover, erupting from a grand procession of church organ and slow-marching drums to head straight for the rafters. *Ceremony* feels appealingly gigantic as a result, Von Hausswolff indulging in swooping arrangements like "Deathbed", a doomy Earth-like lumber making good use of the hulking pipe organ from Gothenburg's Annedalskyrkan church. But there is lightness of touch, too, notably on the misty, Celtic-tinged "Funeral For My Future Children".

JOHN LEWIS



WAMPIRE

Curiosity

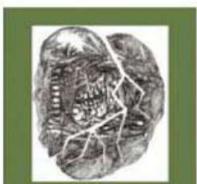
POLYVINYL

Frantic, experimental, exploratory pop from Portland debutants Portland two-piece Vampire combine an effortless ability to write

7/10

good pop songs with a determination to find new and interesting ways to sabotage them. That's right there from opening track "The Hearse", which bounds in with the eager-to-please nature of a new puppy, but then pulls the rug away to leave a sparse, discombobulating middle-eight before ending in out-of-kilter, sinister organ. Similarly, "Giants" oscillates confusingly between rockabilly, electropop and drawling psych, while "Train" mixes freakbeat organ and punkish attitude with a soulful shuffle before ending like a broken music box. It's chaotic then, but it's also packed with charm.

PETER WATTS



WOLF EYES

No Answer: Lower Floors

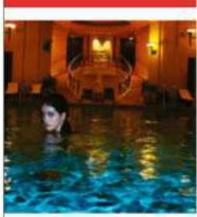
DE STIJL

Creepy but restrained return from Michigan's veteran noiseniks

7/10

Wolf Eyes made an unlikely sortie to the margins of the mainstream with a pair of mid-'90s LPs for Sub Pop, songs like "Stabbed In The Face" caustic cocktails of industrial grit and free jazz lurching forth on malformed beats. A lineage shuffle now sees core members John Olson and Nate Young joined by guitarist 'Crazy' Jim Ballo. The result is something abrasive but controlled. "Choking Flys" and "No Answer" wind droning, damaged electronics and Olson's squalling sax into something oddly musical; the 12-minute "Confessions Of The Informer", meanwhile, is a twilit creep through an abandoned junkyard, Young's vocals spasmodically interrupted, as though issuing through a bust walkie-talkie.

JOHN LEWIS



ANDREW WYATT

Descender

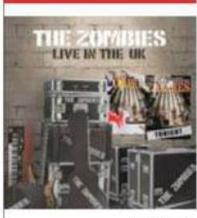
INGRID/DOWNTOWN/ COOPERATIVE MUSIC

Orchestral debut from Joan As Police Woman sidekick

7/10

Fully recovered from "drug issues", Andrew Wyatt is a New York-born multi-instrumentalist with impeccable alt.rock credentials, and his solo debut (recorded in Prague with a 75-piece orchestra) strives hard to gain hipster brownie points. The shifting time-signatures of "Cluster Subs" nod towards Sufjan Stevens, the quizzical miniatures like "In Paris They Know How To Build A Monument" recall John Cale, while the orchestral dissonance of "Descender" suggests György Ligeti. All are excellent pastiches, but the best moments come when Wyatt undoes his top button and reverts to the demotic, as on the lavishly arranged bubblegum pop of "Harlem Boyzz" and "And Septimus..."

JOHN LEWIS



THE ZOMBIES

Live In The UK

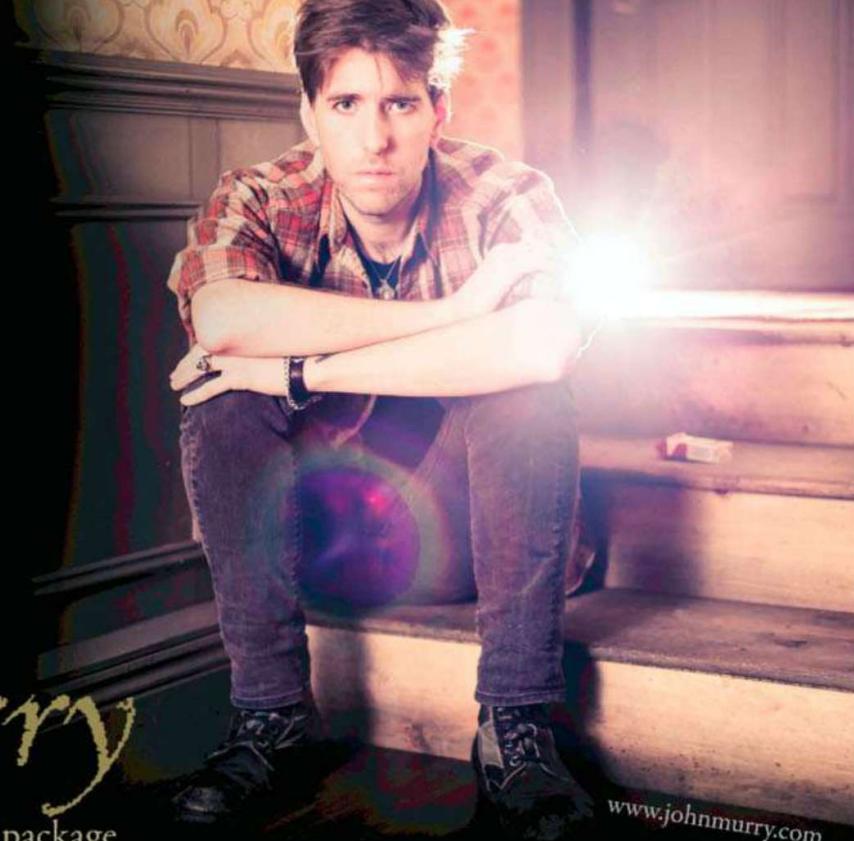
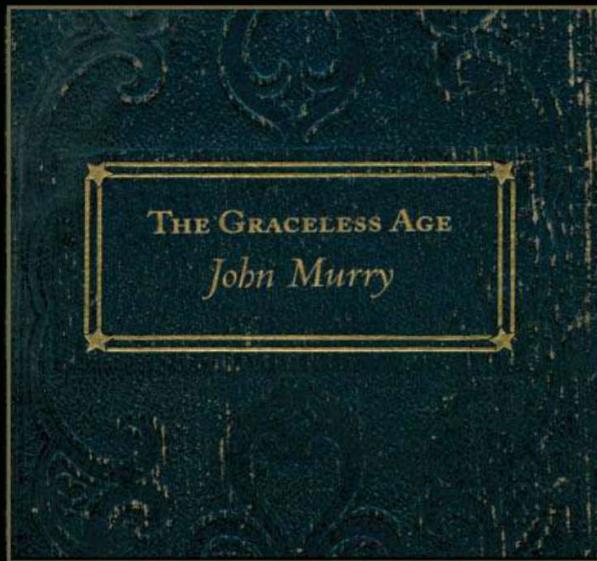
RED HOUSE/ABSOLUTE UNIVERSAL

Colin Blunstone, Rod Argent et al trawl through the hits

7/10

Most of these songs were revived at the 2008 concerts that marked the 40th anniversary of *Odyssey And Oracle*, but these 10 tracks – extracted from UK dates last year – have more of a swagger and polish. It's also a reminder of keyboard player Rod Argent's astonishing versatility, shifting from baroque filigree ("Breathe In") to jaunty vaudeville ("Care Of Cell 44") as well as getting into freakier extended Hammond workouts ("She's Not There", "Time Of The Season", "Hold Your Head Up"). There's no bells or whistles here – this is a fairly straightforward trawl through the favourites, but it does its job magnificently.

JOHN LEWIS



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9/10
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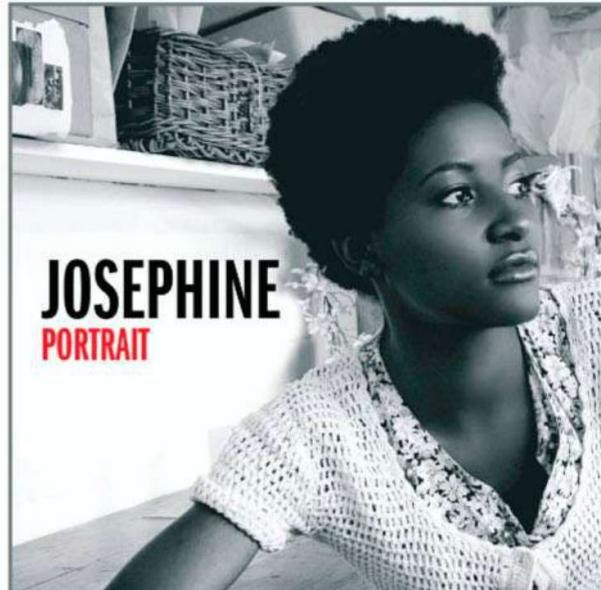
★★★★★
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ARK
RECORDINGS

RUBYWORKS

SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

10 Masterpiece

SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

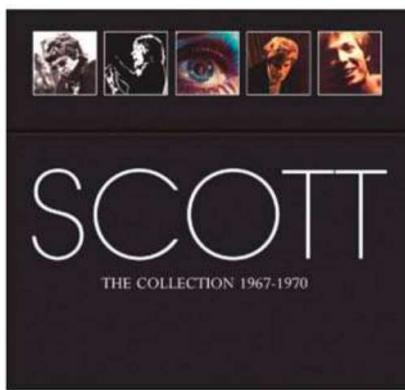
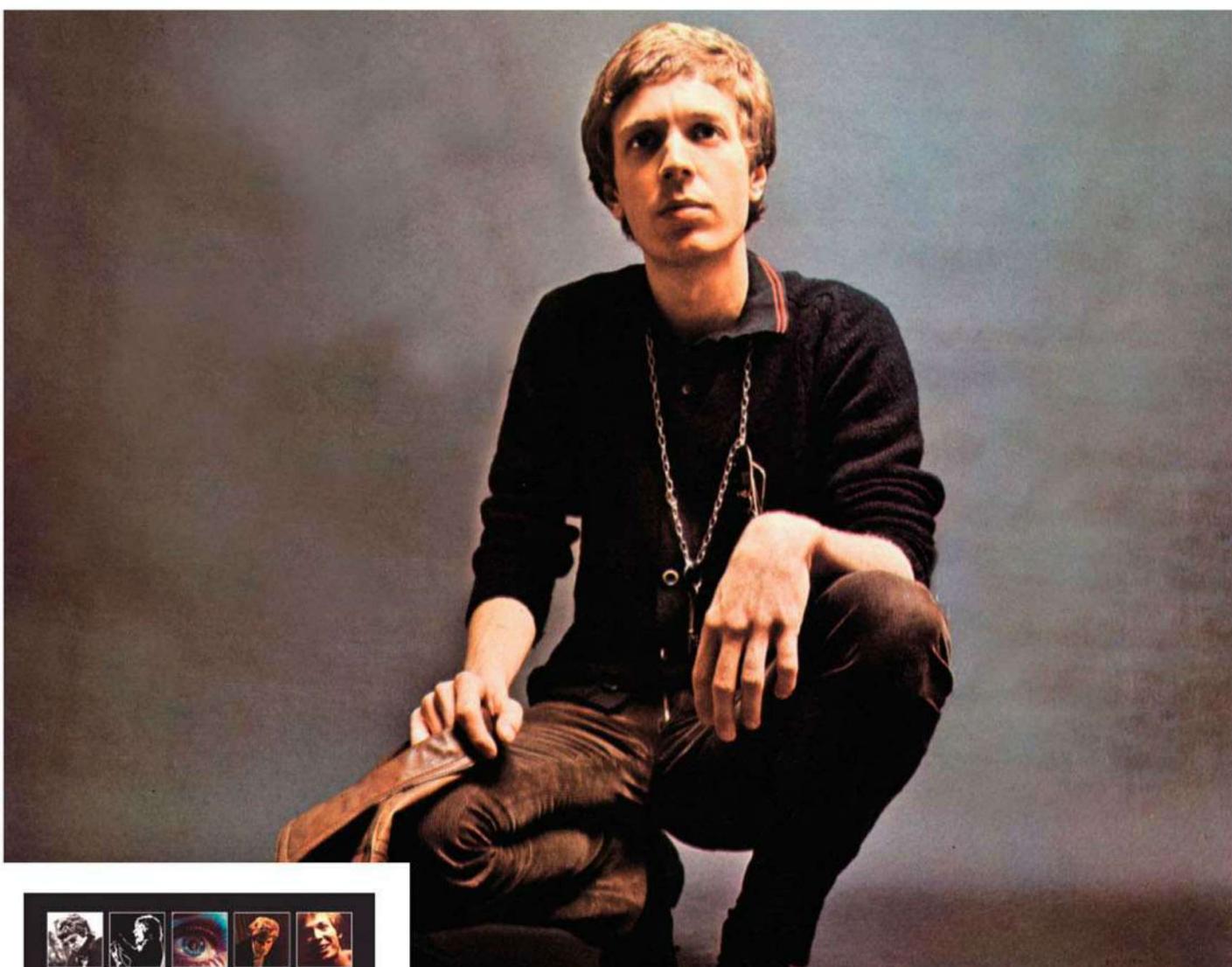
10 Untold riches

1 Poor!

1 Barrel-scrapings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



TRACKLIST

SCOTT (1967)

- 1 Mathilde
- 2 Montague Terrace (In Blue)
- 3 Angelica
- 4 The Lady Came From Baltimore
- 5 When Joanna Loved Me
- 6 My Death
- 7 The Big Hurt
- 8 Such A Small Love
- 9 You're Gonna Hear From Me
- 10 Through A Long And Sleepless Night
- 11 Always Coming Back To You
- 12 Amsterdam

SCOTT WALKER

The Collection 1967-1970

UNIVERSAL

Noel Scott Engel's journey from easy listening interpreter to fearless songwriter, remastered. *By David Cavanagh*

9/10

TO THOSE WHO knew him in 1966,

"loneliness is a cloak you wear"

(from "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine

Anymore") must have sounded like a line absolutely custom written for Scott Engel. Not only was it a snug fit for his heaven-sent baritone, but it was apposite, too, to his offstage moods of existential angst. Feeling imprisoned by the dreamboat wholesomeness of The Walker Brothers, the 24-year-old Engel was dubbed by *NME* "the man likely to be more miserable than most in 1967". Isolation being his best option, he struck out for a solo career that year.

Engel still records under his Walker Brothers stage name, although God knows there aren't many similarities between *Bish Bosch* and *Scott 2*. These days his music is all about machetes and raw meat, like the soundtrack to an abattoir. But on his early albums, five of which are collected in this boxset (on CD and vinyl), Walker and his arrangers aimed for something highly sophisticated: a romantic, majestic, orchestral pop inspired by Nelson Riddle's richly tonal arrangements for Frank Sinatra and by the innovative film scores of Morricone and John Barry. Hoping to establish himself as an important songwriter, Walker put alienation →

TRACKLIST (continued)

SCOTT 2 (1968)

- 1 Jackie
- 2 Best Of Both Worlds
- 3 Black Sheep Boy
- 4 The Amorous Humphrey Plugg
- 5 Next
- 6 The Girls From The Streets
- 7 Plastic Palace People
- 8 Wait Until Dark
- 9 The Girls And The Dogs
- 10 Windows Of The World
- 11 The Bridge
- 12 Come Next Spring

SCOTT 3 (1969)

- 1 It's Raining Today
- 2 Copenhagen
- 3 Rosemary
- 4 Big Louise
- 5 We Came Through
- 6 Butterfly
- 7 Two Ragged Soldiers
- 8 30 Century Man
- 9 Winter Night
- 10 Two Weeks Since You've Gone
- 11 Sons Of
- 12 Funeral Tango
- 13 If You Go Away

SCOTT 4 (1969)

- 1 The Seventh Seal
- 2 On Your Own Again
- 3 The World's Strongest Man
- 4 Angels Of Ashes
- 5 Boy Child
- 6 Hero Of The War
- 7 The Old Man's Back Again
- 8 Duchess
- 9 Get Behind Me
- 10 Rhymes Of Goodbye

'TIL THE BAND COMES IN (1970)

- 1 Prologue
- 2 Little Things (That Keep Us Together)
- 3 Joe
- 4 Thanks For Chicago Mr. James
- 5 Long About Now
- 6 Time Operator
- 7 Jean The Machine
- 8 Cowbells Shakin'
- 9 'Til The Band Comes In
- 10 The War Is Over (Sleepers)
- 11 Stormy
- 12 The Hills Of Yesterday
- 13 Reuben James
- 14 What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life
- 15 It's Over



→ and realistic grit into his poetry, drawing his characters against a harsh metropolitan backdrop. "Such A Small Love" (*Scott*, 1967) was about a woman being eyed scornfully at a funeral by a friend of the deceased who knew him more intimately than she did. "Montague Terrace (In Blue)", on the same album, had the echo-laden grandeur of The Walker Brothers' hits, but its residents lived life on a humbler scale, rattling around their bedsits with only their dreams and the sounds of their neighbours to connect them to the human race. Rather aptly, for *Scott*'s American release, it was retitled "Aloner".

Those two songs – and others such as "The Amorous Humphrey Plugg" (*Scott 2*), "Big Louise" (*Scott 3*) and "The Seventh Seal" (*Scott 4*) – are regarded now as classics. It's strange to think of them being disdained as filler by some fans at the time, who preferred him to drape his voluptuous tonsils around smooth, middle-of-the-road love songs. What unifies Walker's two distinct personae of 1967-9 – the reclusive intellectual and the cabaret crooner – are his brilliant arrangers (Wally Stott, Reg Guest, Peter Knight) who make sure we can't see the join. This is no easy matter when, for example, Walker's hallucinatory rooftop epic, "Plastic Palace People" (*Scott 2*), is followed by "Wait Until Dark", a tune from a popular Audrey Hepburn movie. There should be glaring incongruities, or at least grinding gear-changes, but there are none, even when Walker sings something like "The Big Hurt" (a 1959 Billboard hit) or "Through A Long And Sleepless Night" (from

a 1949 film). His solo career remained for some time a fascinating push-and-pull between High Art and Light Entertainment. One moment he's singing about a "fire escape in the sky". The next, the BBC give him his own TV show like Cilla Black.

To complicate the picture further, there were the songs of Jacques Brel. Nine of the Belgian's action-packed tales are spread across *Scott*, 2 and 3, including "My Death", "Jackie", "Amsterdam" and "Next". Teeming with opium dens and bordellos, cackling whores and bawdy sailors, Brel's literacy and fearlessness slaked Walker's craving to produce serious music and effectively changed his life. The influence on his writing was enormous. The barmaid in "The Girls From The Streets", who "slaps her ass" and "shrieks her gold teeth flash", could never have existed without Brel. Nor could "fat Marie" and the urine-stained cobblestones in "The Bridge". Walker's imagery is wildly overwritten in his coltish desire to out-Brel Brel, and his sentiments are not always plausible, but look at it as he surely did: how liberating to immerse yourself in coarse, potent language when the public have you pegged as the next Tony Bennett.

The frosted-up windows of *Scott 3* take us into winter. The easy listening ballads and movie themes have gone. Only two songs have a swagger or an exploit they want to boast about: Walker's "We Came Through" and Brel's "Funeral Tango". Otherwise there's an eerie stillness in the freezing city, where Wally Stott's violins and harps fall gently and magically like snowflakes. Deeply melancholy, *Scott 3* could be seen as a Sinatra-esque rumination on love lost, but it's also about what happens to

Cabaret crooner or sensitive intellectual?
Scott Walker in the late '60s

Q&A

Reclusiveness, orchestras and self-inflicted brick injuries: Scott Walker in the late '60s by those who knew him...



KEITH ALTHAM
(journalist, publicist):

"I really felt for Scott. He was a tormented soul. A reclusive, rather screwed-up individual, you'd have to say. Some people are just ill-suited to fame. Scott now is exactly where he wants to be, with his avant-garde music. He always wanted to be Stockhausen. It was a pity, because people really appreciated the other things that he could do. What he hated was the teen-scream adulation, because he knew how false it was. After the novelty of fame wore off, he wanted to move into a more adult and artistic area. Jacques Brel was a huge influence, obviously; I think Scott recognised another tormented soul. What Brel did with his lyrics was an exercise – or exorcise – in confronting his demons, and Scott related to that. He wanted to be a recluse. He would disconnect his doorbell and use the ploy of telling you he had a phone that could only make outgoing calls. I didn't delve too deeply, but possibly there was something in his childhood. He was very close to his mother. I got the impression his dad had left early on.

"He had managers who didn't really understand him. Maurice King and Barry Clayman. They'd seen this golden goose called The Walker Brothers and that was all they wanted to promote. And that was exactly the thing that Scott didn't want to be. He had a horror of being compared to Sinatra or Tom Jones. He had an emotional quality to his voice like Sinatra, but that meant he was in a cleft stick because he knew that that romantic age had gone. There was a quality in the timbre of his voice that was extremely relatable-to. A sadness that was very appealing if you were in that melancholic mood. But Scott just didn't want to sing those songs. He didn't want to do trivia. He was always a perfectionist, always very serious about things. I think he saw through the hippy thing a lot quicker than maybe some people. The British tended to romanticise California as a hippy Disneyworld, but Scott had lived in California and knew it for what it was.

"He was difficult but lovable. You felt sorry for him. He was terrified of live appearances. Terrified of audiences, really. It was almost agoraphobic. He had a fear of crowds – not good if you're going to be a successful celebrity. It got to the stage where I had to fake a car crash for him, to stop him going onstage at Blackpool. We were doing his PR. He drove up with my partner in the car, while I manned the phones in the office. They gently ran the car into a tree to dent it. I think Scott even hit himself with a brick to make it look more realistic. They went off to A&E and I phoned in this dramatic story about how Scott had had a car accident, so that

he could get out of the contract. We didn't let Clayman and King know. Scott swore us to secrecy.

"I wrote some timeless prose about Scott for the *NME* [laughs], but for God's sake don't read the sleeve notes for *Scott 3*. I'd probably had too many pints at lunchtime. The whole bloody thing should be in *Pseuds Corner*."



HERBIE FLOWERS
(bass, *Scott 4*):

"There was no doubt that he had the most exquisite voice, and he was obviously a very handsome guy. But he was incredibly shy. I think that's maybe because in a studio,

they're baring their soul, aren't they? I mean, Dusty used to shake in her shoes at the thought of letting rip in front of other people. We were just session men. Johnny Franz was the producer, a genius, a gentleman. He wore a pinstriped suit and loved the gee-gees. He would rush to get out of the studio at one and go to Ascot. If you worked with a producer and he had a hit, you'd be flavour of the month. You'd get to the studio and there's the riff-raff – the guitar, bass and drums, with our amps in little fur-lined cabinets – and then a huge barrier

with the orchestra behind it. You'd sight-read the song and within 10 minutes be expected to come up with an acceptable performance. Then Wally Stott or Peter Knight would come in and say, 'Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Song number one, please.' 'The Old Man's Back Again' would have

been recorded with three or four other tracks that morning. They'd have wanted that sound on the whole session. Each time you'd run through it, you'd get a bit bolder. People tell me the bass-playing is an integral part of that record, but I don't think that gives me any right to claim any credit for it. Just the wages will do."

"I had to fake a car crash to stop Scott going onstage at Blackpool..."

KEITH ROBERTS (arranger, *Scott 4*): "It was done at Olympic Studios. I used to do quite a few arrangements for Philips. Johnny Franz usually worked with Peter Knight and Wally Stott, but he asked me to arrange four pieces. I had a bit of consultation with Scott; he had a very placid manner. I hear it's seen as quite an outstanding album now. One of the guitarists on it was Bryan Daly, a big fellow. You can see Scott talking to him in one of the photographs. Bryan went on to write the music for *Postman Pat*."

SCOTT WALKER: "I want people to face the realities of life and not escape from them. I want them to know there are disappointments, unkindness and heartbreak." ('*Scott Walker Hides Away In A Gloom-World*', *NME*, September 30, 1967)

INTERVIEWS: DAVID CAVANAGH

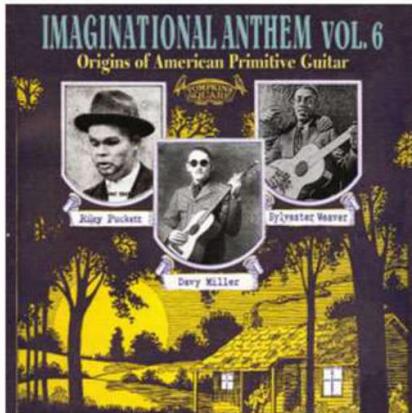
forgotten people when memories are all they have left. Writing with a sensitivity beyond his years, Walker introduces us to the lonely Rosemary ("suspended in a weightless wind" with her photograph and clock), the even lonelier Louise ("she's a haunted house and her windows are broken") and a pair of elderly tramps ("Two Ragged Soldiers") who've suffered life's bitterest blows but still take comfort from their friendship.

As the Ohio-born Walker applied for British citizenship (which he was granted in 1970), *Scott 4* seemed to remind him of the land he'd emigrated from. There are glorious Jimmy Webb panoramas ("The World's Strongest Man") and some bourbon-soaked C&W ("Duchess", "Rhymes Of Goodbye"). "The Seventh Seal" is the loftiest of starts, summarising the chess game between the knight and Death in Bergman's film, but despite its solemn conceits, *Scott 4* is equally celebrated for its bass-playing by Herbie Flowers, some of the finest and funkiest ever recorded. There's nothing quite like hearing Flowers cut loose on "Get Behind Me". If only more people had heard it; instead, *Scott 4* saw Walker's fanbase desert him and the fifth album in this box, *'Til The Band Comes In*, is an uneasy compromise between his own material (some of it excellent) and the vanilla MOR standards he felt obliged to sing for a living. The prisoner was once again trapped, a slave to his own voice.

AUDIO NOTE: Mastered from original tapes, *The Collection* gives 1-4 a relaxed, room-to-breathe sound. Previous CD editions may seem over-loud in comparison. Differences are less striking between *'Til The Band Comes In* and its 1996 BGO reissue.



Left to right: Davy Miller, Sam McGee and Frank Hutchison



TRACKLIST

- 1 Guitar Rag - Sylvester Weaver
- 2 Buck Dancer's Choice - Sam McGee
- 3 Darkey's Wail - Riley Puckett
- 4 Cannon Ball Rag - Davy Miller
- 5 Way Down Yonder Blues - Lemuel Turner
- 6 Hutchison's Rag - Frank Hutchison
- 7 Frisco Blues - Bayless Rose
- 8 Fuzzy Rag - Riley Puckett
- 9 Knoxville Blues - Sam McGee
- 10 Guitar Blues - Sylvester Weaver
- 11 Jailhouse Rag - Davy Miller
- 12 Tramp Waltz - Lemuel Turner
- 13 Franklin Blues - Sam McGee
- 14 Jamestown Exhibition - Bayless Rose

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Imaginational Anthem Vol. 6: Origins Of American Primitive Guitar

TOMPKINS SQUARE

Frequently astonishing, visionary rags and blues from the early 20th Century, chipped off the shellac. By Jon Dale

8/10

TOMPKINS SQUARE'S *Imaginational Anthem* series of guitar soli compilations walks a good walk, bumping modern six-string artisans up against their forebears, the better to have the two generations in aesthetic dialogue. There's something seriously right-on about a remit inclusive enough to have Christina Carter of Charalambides sharing disc space with Robbie Basho, Sharron Kraus with Michael Chapman, Cian Nugent with lost Takoma legend Mark Fosson. But with the sixth volume in the series, label owner Josh Rosenthal, and co-producer Christopher King, have crawled deeper into history's maw, digging out 'originary' players on six strings, from the first half of the 20th Century, whose playing, moving outward from the turn-of-the-century parlour guitar tradition, left some

serious marks on guitar soli legends like Basho and John Fahey. Indeed, it does a great job of opening out said history, and feels much like the next step in the trajectory Fahey and Dean Blackwood were plotting with their *Revenant* imprint during the '90s and noughties. King's curatorial premise for Volume Six is tight and smart, and each of the recordings he's selected illuminates something about the 'pre-history', as such, of guitar soli.

Some of these recordings come with spoken asides, none more endearing than Rockmart, GA's Riley Puckett imploring the listener to "now pay attention to these runs". So we do, and Puckett reveals himself, on "Fuzzy Rag", as a player who can chase the tail of a phrase to its chordal conclusion with style. It's all the more astonishing on discovering that Puckett lost his sight at an



Q&A

Christopher King



How did you research this compilation?

Most of the recordings and artists found in this collection have been in my head for over 20 years. Around the same time as I juked a beat copy of "Way Down Yonder Blues" by Lemuel Turner, I heard my first John Fahey album, *I Remember Blind Joe Death*. I was struck by how faithfully Fahey stayed to the melodic line and feeling of the piece when he played these tunes that were obviously derived from old 78s by Sylvester Weaver, Sam McGee and Lemuel Turner.

What was your guiding aesthetic during this process?

Primarily I selected only those recordings that I knew were accessible to the most influential players of American Primitive Guitar. That being said, I narrowed it down to those that exist in clean condition and were the most "authentic" in the sense that they were firmly tied to the late-19th-Century phenomenon of parlour guitar.

And what was the narrative you were looking to thread together with this compilation?
 The real story I was trying to flesh out is one of an earlier American folk phenomenon, that is, the story of parlour guitar music and rural American guitar and how it became commercialised in the 1920s and early 1930s. It was only after it was captured and sold on 78rpm discs that this music became frozen in time and capable of being preserved and passed down through the ages to people like Fahey and [Jack] Rose. **INTERVIEW: JON DALE**

early age, according to Christopher King's elegant liner notes, "from the improper application of a sugar-of-lead solution". Puckett's three contributions are all fine examples of following the thread of melody borne from a single string. Another player with a similar skill is West Virginia's Frank Hutchison, though he's rather more erratic, and his one contribution here, "Hutchison's Blues", plays out with a kind of confusing narrative arc that reminds of self-styled saboteurs like The Red Krayola's Mayo

Thompson: there's the same unpredictability, with Hutchison playing almost as a cut-up of himself at times, keeping the pacing mutable. It's a shame this is the only Hutchison piece here: it would have been great to hear more than his 'ragtime'-style picking.

Elsewhere, Louisville's Sylvester Weaver works solo slide guitar with patience, his "Guitar Blues" spare and dark, the not-so-quiet hum and click of the 78rpm shellac smothering the track in a blanket of dull hiss, which unsurprisingly ups the spectral quotient of the performance: Weaver really sounds as though he's moaning, via his slide, from the other side. But maybe the most compelling player here is Lemuel Turner, who only recorded four sides in 1928, and of whom little more is known. Turner's biography can't help but lend a little weight to

In the first half of the 20th Century, these players left serious marks on guitar legends like John Fahey

the two pieces included here, but it's easy enough to hear that he's a gifted slide player. "Tramp Blues" is woozy and rough-housing, winding between chords with ghostly footsteps, while "Way Down Yonder Blues" is seriously zoned, Turner pausing the forward motion for micro-seconds between glides, holding the melody's breath captive, the better to wring all the emotional import he can from its graceful flow. But each of these players (the compilation also features Bayless Rose, Davy Miller and Sam McGee) has their own approach to the instrument, their own logic conveyed through the complex interaction of flesh, bone, muscle and string, and their characteristic playerly tics and expressives. You can see how some of these 78rpm recordings, dubbed to tape and circulated among collectors and their acolytes, making their way into the hands of

mid-20th-Century revenant musicians and scholars, would have exerted a huge influence on anyone with ears. Caught up in the wave of energy that swept along players like Basho, Fahey and Fosson, who were busy freaking the source material into hyper-personal 'guitar soli' movement, the players on *Imaginational Anthem Vol. 6* still shine through, talismanic, singing out their secret music.

TANDYN ALMER

Along Comes Tandy

SUNDAZED



Basement demos from the JD Salinger of '60s pop

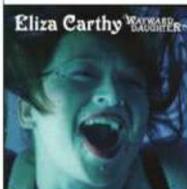
9/10

"Along Comes Mary", the clever pop smash for The Association in 1966, was songwriter Tandy Almer's main claim to fame, and despite dozens of further composing credits, his legacy is slippery. He shared co-writes with Beach Boy Brian Wilson ("Marcella", "Sail On Sailor"), and deep-garage fanatics will know him for collaborations with Curt Boettcher's Sagittarius. But Almer largely walked away from music around the 1970s. Presented here are 15 publishing demos from that 1965-'66 LA sunshine-pop/folk-rock pocket, just before things went psychedelic. If the performances – strong but unpolished renditions by studio players – are sometimes fuzzy, the songs are uniformly sharp. Almer's lyrically dense works are playfully subversive, with complex internal rhyming and double meanings atop beguiling melodies sporting darkly gripping pop hooks (The Bangles would have had a field day with "You Turn Me Around"; "Bring Your Own Self Down" has Hüsker Dü written all over it).

Among the more fascinating cuts: "Where Will They Go", a strange meditation on utopia; the imagistic rush of "Face Down In The Mud"; and "Sunset Strip Soliloquy", Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth" turned inside-out.

EXTRAS: Rare photos, historical and contextual notes from Parke Puterbaugh.

LUKE TORN



ELIZA CARTHY

Wayward Daughter

TOPIC

Imperious 31-track retrospective from folk's reigning queen: bend the knee

8/10

Is 'wayward' the right word for Eliza Carthy's torrential talent? No child could be more dutiful to parents – Eliza has nimbly skipped in the hallowed footsteps of folk dows Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson and played with them extensively. Her career, beginning at 13, encompassing nine solo albums, a dozen with the clan and more collaborations than you can shake a morris stick at, has in part been a family affair. Yet Carthy has always been her own woman, from piercings and pink hair to her scorching fiddle playing and keenness to update tradition as well as honour it. She's a more fearsome performer than Mum or Dad, or, indeed, anyone else on the folk scene she's helped galvanise.

Partnering her like-titled biography, *Wayward Daughter* proves an arresting distillation of her output, juxtaposing early outings like the spirited "Jacky Tar" with self-penned recent works like the drunken lurch of "Blood On My Boots". A live "Colourblind" turns Irving Berlin's song into a squeezebox shanty, "Grey Gallito" matches her rich vocals with Salsa Celitca's Latin backing, while "Adieu Adieu" is from the trip-hop experiments of 1998's *Red*. A rich primer of a singular career.

EXTRAS: None.

NEIL SPENCER

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



THE BOYS

The Boys/Alternative Chartbusters (reissues, 1977/78)

FIRE

8/10



9/10

I still like Elvis, though, and refuse to hold it against him. We were in a better place than him at the time." Their first two albums – remastered for these 35th anniversary editions – demonstrate why The Boys impressed the likes of Paul Weller, whose guitar on the back of *All Mod Cons* sports a

Boys sticker, and Marc Bolan, who wanted to book them on his TV show shortly before he died. On *The Boys*, the band ignored fashionable punk politics, preferring to write about throwing up ("Sick On You") and having sex ("First Time"). They loved rock'n'roll, incorporating Chuck Berry riffs ("I Don't Care") and Jerry Lee piano lines ("Soda Pressing") into their songs.

On the even better *Alternative Chartbusters*, they sound like a cross between Johnny Thunders and the Buzzcocks with songs like the Spectorish "Brickfield Nights", the ballad "Heroine" and the Ramones-riffling "Neighbourhood Brats". While this sort of flippancy and creativity may have been acceptable in Manchester or New York, it didn't go down well in London and *Alternative Chartbusters* did no better than its predecessor. They split in 1982. "We were never tempted to be more political because there were already too many po-faced bands out there taking that direction," says Dangerfield. "We were more concerned with enjoying life and having fun."

EXTRAS: Demos, B-sides, unreleased songs, Christmas singles (released as The Yobs) and sleeve notes.

PETER WATTS

I'M YOUR FAN

"The Boys are a great band - great teenage anthems, guts and spirit, fun and exciting dedication."

JOEY RAMONE, 1980



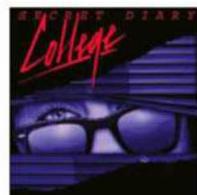
COLLEGE

Secret Diary (reissue, 2008)

INVADA

Debut from *Drive* soundtrack dude

It's hard to imagine how the retro synth-pop field could become any more



7/10

overcrowded, but the number of cookie-cutter acts with an analogue gear fetish doesn't look like decreasing any time soon. Frenchman David Grellier, though, has certainly earned his place. He has form as head of Nantes art/music collective Valerie (also the name of his own record label) and a member of electro act Sexy Sushi, but it's under the College alias that he's really made waves. "A Real Hero" from College's 2009 EP was picked up for the soundtrack of Nicolas Winding Refn's acclaimed *Drive*. That movie's stylised modernism, use of saturated colour and exaggerated noir-isms inform this debut, reissued hot on the heels of his third album, *Heritage*. *Secret Diary* is a darkly groovy, motorik set in debt to Kraftwerk, John Carpenter, Moroder and Tangerine Dream, drenched in a sensual nostalgia and with an affecting melancholy at its core. Conjuring a narrative as it plays is tempting and it's easy to see how the sci-fi comics Grellier devoured as a kid played their part, but the epically pulsing and psychotic "Something Wrong Tonight" and spangled "Burning By The Stars" stand well enough alone, without pictorial prompts.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL

COME

Eleven: Eleven (reissue, 1992)

GLITTERHOUSE

Boston alt.rockers' Matador debut, reissued with extras

8/10



None of Come were rookies when they came together in New York in 1990. Singer/guitarist Thalia Zedek had served time in the No Wave group Live Skull, while second guitarist Chris Brokaw had rubbed shoulders with Liz Phair and Tortoise's John McEntire at Oberlin, played briefly with GG Allin, and drummed in overlooked slowcore group Codeine. Come, though, felt like realisation of their talents.

Backed by bassist Sean O'Brien and drummer Arthur Johnson, Come's tumultuous alternative rock was both very much in the early '90s style, but harking back to something earlier. Zedek's raw-throated drawl marks her out as heir to Patti Smith, while her and Brokaw's guitar interplay – parts meshed intricately, neither playing lead or rhythm but contributing to a furious whole – had something of the supernatural group mind of Television's Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd. *Eleven: Eleven* is equal part downbeat and raging. Highlights include the desolation of "Brand New Vein", the scorched Sonic Youth churn of "Off To One Side", and a cover of the Stones' "I Got The Blues" (the B-side to "Fast Piss Blues", also included here) that's apparently played without a jot of irony.

EXTRAS: Disc Two presents an eight-song set from Sub Pop's Vermonstress Festival in 1992; 22-page booklet with sleeve notes.

LOUIS PATTISON



THE DICTATORS Go Girl Crazy! (reissue, 1975)

FLOATING WORLD

5/10

'Handsome' Dick Manitoba and co's debut album reissued

Comic New York rockers, with an ear for a

borrowed riff and liberal baiting lyrics, The Dictators were always better in theory than practice. Despite future Clash producer/Blue Öyster Cult founder member Sandy Pearlman at the controls, their much-hyped career entrée flopped commercially. And though there was a warm welcome from contemporary US critics, in retrospect the band's influence on the burgeoning punk movement sounds negligible. Dick and his henchmen make a fair fist of channelling Lou Reed on opener "The Next Big Thing". But thereafter the songs are embedded in cod-metal sluggishness, lacking the incision and ingenuity of, say, the Ramones – a point illustrated by the take on surf-pop staple "California Sun" included here, which suffers by comparison with the Ramones version. The lunges for humour on "Back To Africa" and "Master Race Rock" add to a tired and bereft, conviction-free zone that has dated badly – appearing to be more anathema to, than influence on, punk to come. With a battalions of their hometown counterparts in the wings waiting to take flight, The Dictators were little more than the (luke)warm-up act.

EXTRAS: None.

GAVIN MARTIN



DR FEELGOOD Taking No Prisoners (With Gypie, 1977-1981)

EMI

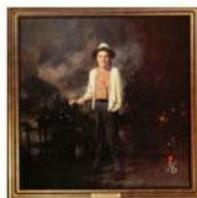
8/10

Life without Wilko, but there's still a lot to offer

Following on from last year's *All Through The City*, this second multi-disc box of goodies covers the Feelgoods' immediate post-Wilko Johnson years, the band soldiering on without both a powerful visual component and their chief songwriter. John 'Gypie' Mayo takes over on guitar, and is arguably more reliant on power chords than the dexterous fretwork of his predecessor on 1977's *Be Seeing You*, but settling into a more flexible, fluid style for the subsequent *Private Practice* and *Let It Roll* releases. With Wilko gone there's an increased dependency on covers – although "Milk And Alcohol", Mayo's co-write with producer Nick Lowe resulted in the band's only Top 10 hit. Lowe was in the producer's chair again for the last studio album included here, 1980's *A Case Of The Shakes*, by which time Mayo had established a four-way writing partnership with singer Lee Brilleaux and the rhythm section, deftly recapturing the energy of the band's early days on "Jumping From Love To Love" and "Punch Drunk". The live *As It Happens* album also features here, along with a DVD of BBC clips (*Sight & Sound In Concert, Top Of The Pops*) and singles promos.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON



IAN DURY Lord Upminster/ 4,000 Weeks' Holiday (reissues, 1981/84)

SALVO

6/10

'80s albums that did little for Dury or his label

On a downturn from the punk-era highs of *New Boots...*, the early 1980s were dispiriting times for Dury. Fractious relations with his soon-to-be-ex-band The Blockheads (and most other humans) and a looming 40th birthday soured his mood. A songwriting reunion with



6/10

Chaz Jankel and a jaunt to Nassau and hit-meisters Sly & Robbie promised an instant fix for new label Polydor, but one unmet by the JA duo's routine production, or by Dury's half-finished material. *Lord Upminster* finds Dury sputtering over S&R's metronomic rhythms, enlivened only by Jankel's funk guitar chops. Its great triumph, "Spasticus Autisticus", was a revolt against disabled marginalisation that would wait until 2012's *Paralympics* for recognition of its righteous wit and anger.

4,000 Weeks... is more desperate still, with its second-rate band, cheesy synths and lyrics that verge on self-parody. "Peter The Painter", an homage to Peter Blake, is the standout.

EXTRAS: Both LPs come remastered, annotated and extended; a 1981 interview offers a taste of their troubled, gifted creator.

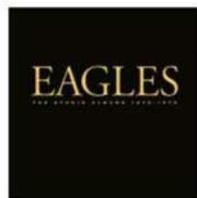
NEIL SPENCER

REVELATIONS

Ian Dury at Compass Point



► It seemed a good idea at the time. With Dury on the outs with the Blockheads but back on terms with songwriting partner Chaz Jankel, what better way to reinvigorate his act than jet to the Bahamas to record with Sly'n'Robbie – newly installed lords of Chris Blackwell's Compass Point Studios? The studio had recently hosted the Stones (for *Emotional Rescue*) and AC/DC (for *Back In Black*), while Sly'n'Robbie were on a roll with Grace Jones, Robert Palmer et al. Alas, Dury had only a half-conceived set of material, and was frantically scribbling lyrics on the plane. Far from being a laid-back environment, Compass Point proved a pressure cooker, with S'n'R in production line mode, while Dury got "too taken with the local refreshment" [JA collie weed] for the duration. The singer's mood was foul, his aggression turned on the long-suffering Jankel. "Sly and Robbie didn't know what to make of this nasty little man," recalls photographer Adrian Boot. "They were flabbergasted at his attitude. Ian was out of his comfort zone and the sessions were flat..." NEIL SPENCER



EAGLES

The Studio Albums 1972-1979

WARNER MUSIC/RHINO

One redeeming feature of bare-bones boxset – it fits in a very small space

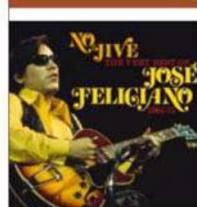
6/10

Four decades after their heyday, the Eagles

continue to polarise, but there's no arguing that they belong in the rock pantheon. The archetypal SoCal soft-rock band, the primary popularisers of country rock and poster boys for the decade of excess, the Eagles fashioned an indelible body of work as well as a hugely influential harmony-based vocal sound. In short, no completist's CD collection should be without their 1970s LPs. To that end, this no-frills boxset containing those six studio albums is a bargain: it's being sold on Amazon for £17.79 (or \$22.99 in the US). That's a fraction of the cost of Rhino's 2005 boxset, *Eagles*, on which the new version is based. The budget package eliminates the 2CD *Eagles Live*, a ninth disc containing the 1978 single "Please Come Home For Christmas"/"Funky New Year" and reproductions of the original vinyl sleeves. Neither version contains bonus tracks, and both reportedly use the 1999 remastering. If the new set's value has less to do with aesthetics than with practicality, the fact remains that the box houses all of their essential recordings. If you hate them, that means nothing, and if you love them, you already own this stuff. For everybody else, here's a relatively painless way to pick up a significant slice of rock history.

EXTRAS: None.

BUD SCOPPA



JOSÉ FELICIANO

No Jive: The Very Best Of, 1964-75

SALVO

40-track summary of the maestro's glory years

7/10

The always sage rule about not judging the past by the standards of the present is especially useful in the case of José Feliciano. Were the works collected here to be issued today, Feliciano would be largely appreciated or derided as a purveyor of knowing '60s-vintage easy-listening kitsch, a kindred spirit of Mike Flowers and Austin Powers, all novelty cover versions and flowery shirts. The truth, of course, is that Feliciano is precisely the reason that flowery shirts and languid reimaginings of rock standards are part of the palette of '60s clichés. Not all of his signature covers have aged well – there's a sense that after the success of his reading of The Doors' "Light My Fire", he found it rather too easy to knock off similar swipes at The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction", The Mamas & The Papas' "California Dreamin'", The Flying Burrito Brothers' "Hot Burrito No 1", etc. However, the stuff that emphasises Feliciano's guitar playing is enduringly astonishing: his instrumental take on The Beatles' "And I Love Her" and his counter-intuitively mellow "Little Red Rooster" are both casual demonstrations of the impossible.

EXTRAS: None.

ANDREW MUELLER



STEVE FORBERT

Alive On Arrival/ Jackrabbit Slim

BLUE CORN MUSIC

Troubadour in the big city: Forbert at ground zero

9/10

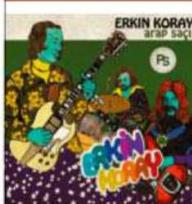
'70s punk heyday, Steve Forbert played the role with panache – smart songs of self-awareness, wisdom and insight, a youthful blast and harmonica trill just when the singer-songwriter motif seemed all played out. *Alive On Arrival*, especially via the sly-yet-worldweary “Goin’ Down To Laurel”, the slice-of-life observances of “Steve Forbert’s Midsummer Night’s Toast” and the joyous rocker “You Cannot Win If You Do Not Play” retains a rare immediacy. *Jackrabbit Slim* was the strong, if slightly compromised, follow-up, headed up by chart-topper “Romeo’s Tune”. But the album’s strongest track, the reflective “January 23-30, 1978”, was a spiritual throwback to his debut.

EXTRAS: The true revelation on this essential

9/10 twofer (sleevenotes by *Rolling Stone*’s David Wild), though, is the strength

of 11 session outtakes (plus a fiery, live “Romeo’s Tune”): “House Of Cards”, a piss-and-vinegar, shoulda-been-a-hit meditation on Elvis Presley’s death, and the brilliant cinematic sweep of “Song For The South”, for example, glimpse unseen depths to Forbert’s songwriting and a solemn-yet-somehow-catchy melodic pop sense not always evident in his official canon.

LUKE TORN



ERKIN KORAY

Arap Saçı / Elektronik Turkuler

PHARAWAY SOUNDS

Turkish delight

Koray was the frontrunner of the Turkish rock scene from the '60s onwards, often misleadingly described as ‘the Turkish Hendrix’, although he was one of Turkey’s first and most outlandish electric guitarists. He even fronted a full-throttle power trio, Ter. Arap Saçı combines Koray’s eponymous debut (for a collection of singles for the Istanbul label, 1966-

’73) and the ’76 comp *Erkin Koray 2*. As such, it’s a much-needed anthology, marred only by a lack of track detail. It’s a blazing hotch-potch of styles ranging from a Turkish “Land Of 1000 Dances” to fuzzed-out Anatolian psych-pop. *Elektronik Turkular* (1974) was Koray’s real debut where he broke the shackles of the 7” format. Five of the eight titles are re-animated Turkish folk tunes. Koray fuses them with wild Western rock that reaches the heights on “Turku” with its thundering, Can-like propulsion and “Cemalim” on which Koray’s snaky, quivering guitar work recalls John Cipollina. Further clues to Koray’s sound might be found in the Third Ear Band’s age-old textures or the Eastern jams of David Lindley’s Kaleidoscope although, in truth, this really sounds like nothing else.

EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON

8/10



9/10

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EXTRAS: None.

MICK HOUGHTON



THE MOODY BLUES

Timeless Flight

UNIVERSAL

All you need – and rather more than you don’t – spread over 17 discs

6/10

Not for the faint-hearted, this vast trawl through the career of the Brummie prog-veterans amply reveals why the band’s trademark mix of over-earnest Justin Hayward ballads and pseudo-mystical pretension has so often earned derision. Yet it also reminds us that between 1967-’69, they produced some lysergic-laced classics. Drifting on Mike Pinder’s pioneering Mellotron, the likes of “Legend Of A Mind” (about Timothy Leary), “Have You Heard” and “The Best Way To Travel” are as druggily enticing as anything else from the era in similarly hallucinogenic vein. But the chronological approach means the standouts are confined to the first two discs – which leaves an awful lot of chaff, as repetition and the laws of diminishing return kick in.

EXTRAS: 90 tracks from 15 studio albums are

8/10

compressed into the first five discs. Then it’s Extras all the way with a further nine discs of previously unreleased/rare material, including live recordings, outtakes and long-deleted 5:1 mixes, plus three DVDs of TV and concert footage. Best of the bonus bonanza is a 1969 Albert Hall concert, which captures the Moodies at their creative peak, although struggling to recreate the Mellotron majesty of the studio in the cavernous space.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



SCOTT MORGAN

Three Chords And A Cloud Of Dust

EASY ACTION

Stirring testament to Michigan’s original unsung hero

8/10

Taking in The Rationals, Guardian Angel, Sonic’s Rendezvous Band, Scots Pirates, Powertrane and countless other unknowns, this is a systematic trawl through Morgan’s chaotic career beginning with The Rationals in 1965. Their initial Brit-Invasion inspired singles were typified by a reverential mod-soul cover of “Respect”. Morgan’s vocals were up there with Terry Reid or Steve Marriott and The Rationals toughened up by ’69’s blazing “Guitar Army”. It’s how the MC5’s tame *Back In The USA* should have sounded. The 5’s Fred ‘Sonic’ Smith and The Stooges’ Scott Asheton joined Morgan in Sonic’s Rendezvous Band, releasing only one furiously intense single, 1977’s “City Slang”; four further live recordings here all square up to the MC5. As one after another of Morgan’s bands simply burnt out, often leaving no official recordings behind, it’s hard to grasp the full extent of his work. So this triple-disc set is essential in picking up the pieces; an acoustic “City Slang”, *Raw Power* outtake “I Got A Right”, or a Sub Pop single with Swedish rockers The Hellacopters. If you want combined high-energy Detroit mayhem, wham-bam R’n’B and blue-eyed soul, look no further.

EXTRAS: Comes with exclusive EP for early

6/10

pre-orders – bundled with a T-shirt.

MICK HOUGHTON

SINEAD O'CONNOR

Sean-Nos Nua (reissue, 2002)

IML

Solid roots project with an impressive supporting cast

8/10



With a title that translates as ‘Old Songs Made New’, O’Connor’s collection of traditional Irish music finds her in the company of some of the country’s most revered A-listers. Christy Moore, Donal Lunny, Sharon Shannon and Steve Wickham all make their presence felt, but this is undeniably Sinéad’s show, the clarity of her voice and perfect diction bringing a palpable warmth to the material. There’s a healthy respect for heritage so as to not alienate purists, yet the production, shared between O’Connor, Lunny and Adrian Sherwood, retains a modern sheen. “The Singing Bird” and “The Moorlough Shore” are especially expressive, bringing to mind Sandy Denny’s more delicate work with Fairport, although the wail of “Paddy’s Lament” veers close to histrionic. Narratives of tragedy and rebellion feature heavily, most emotively on the duet with Christy Moore, “Lord Baker” (which Moore first cut with Planxty 30 years ago). Although it is, at its most basic, an LP of great interpretative singing, it also reveals the MO behind O’Connor’s own self-penned records, giving clues to how she first sought to adapt traditional phrasing for a broader pop/rock template. In that respect, it should be regarded as a cornerstone of her back catalogue.

EXTRAS: None.

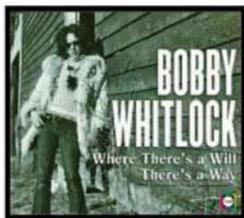
TERRY STAUNTON

BOBBY WHITLOCK

The Bobby Whitlock Story: Where There's A Will, There's A Way

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

It's not only who you know, it's what you know, too. By Bud Scoppa



8/10

sounds of the choir at a nearby black church. Already an accomplished pianist by this teens, Whitlock became a fixture at Stax studios, where he learned the nuances of R'n'B from the masters, released a couple of singles and hung with Steve Cropper and Duck Dunn. When the latter brought Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett to Stax to record what would be their first album, *Home*, for the label, early in 1969, Whitlock was enlisted as the first of Delaney & Bonnie's Friends.

Later that year, Eric Clapton became so taken with the band that he brought them to the UK for a tour, becoming an unofficial bandmember and persuading George Harrison to jump on board as well. Following the run of dates (documented on 1970's *On Tour With Eric Clapton*), the whole crew contributed to Clapton's self-titled first solo album, after which D&B&F splintered, several of them joining Mad Dogs & Englishmen while Clapton grabbed Whitlock, bassist Carl Radle and drummer Jim Gordon and formed Derek And The Dominos. After playing on George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, they headed to Miami and recorded the one-off masterpiece *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs*, Whitlock co-writing and harmonising with Clapton as well as playing keys.

Booking studio time at London's Olympic Studios in April 1972, the month before Derek And The Dominos were scheduled to record their second album at the facility, Whitlock cut his self-titled solo debut (which shares a single disc with follow-up *Raw Velvet* on this reissue) in front of a mind-blowing studio band: Clapton and Harrison on guitars, Gordon on drums and Beatles buddy Klaus Voormann on bass, with Andy Johns co-producing. Fronting a band for the first time, the expat Southerner unleashes his rich, fervent, gospel-rooted baritone on the soulful rockers "Where There's A Will" (written with Bonnie Bramlett) and the made-up-on-the-spot "Back In My Life Again". He's even more striking as an R'n'B balladeer on tracks like "A Game Called Life" (featuring a flute solo by Traffic's Chris Wood) and "The Scenery Has Slowly Changed", which recaptures the dusky melancholy of his *Layla* closer "Thorn Tree In The Garden". After finishing the album in LA, Whitlock turned it in to his label, Atlantic, which rejected it

BOBBY WHITLOCK'S STORY is a classic rock'n'roll saga about a guy who was in the right place at the right time and made the most of it. The son of a preacher man, the Memphis native would sneak out of his father's services to revel in the ecstatic



despite the record's all-star cast. It was picked up and released in the US by ABC Dunhill but sank without a trace.

That wasn't the only disappointment for Whitlock, as Clapton pulled the plug on the sessions for the second Dominos LP. Determined to turn around his recent run of bad luck, Whitlock formed a new band in LA with lead guitarist Rick Vito (who'd be on the Stones' shortlist following the departure of Mick Taylor and would later briefly replace Lindsey Buckingham in Fleetwood Mac), bassist Keith Ellis and drummer David Poncher, and went right back into the studio with Stones producer Jimmy Miller. They emerged with *Raw Velvet*, a far more uptempo record overall than its predecessor, featuring the guitar interaction of Vito on lead and Whitlock on rhythm. They revisit *Layla* with a blistering "Tell The Truth" and summon up the intensity of the Dominos

on "Write You A Letter" and "If You Ever", all featuring jaw-dropping solos from Vito, who also plays a rhapsodic, Clapton-esque slide on the yearning "Dearest I Wonder". Slowhand himself, Gordon and the Bramlettes appear on Delaney and Mac Davis' rousing "Hello LA, Bye Bye Birmingham", which sounds like an outtake from *On Tour*. The album closes with "Start All Over", Whitlock wailing on Leslie guitar and singing his heart out, though hardly anyone would hear him do so. He had no choice but to start all over following his brush with fame – playing music was the only thing he knew how to do, and he's continued making records in semi-obscurity over the decades. But or those three remarkable years, Bobby Whitlock was swept up in history, serving as an essential, if unsung, participant in its making.

EXTRAS: None.

Q&A

Bobby Whitlock



You actually made up "Back In My Life Again" on the spot?

We had done two songs that day, and George said, "What's next?" I didn't have anything else, and he said, "Why don't you just make something up?" Here I am with a Beatle and Eric Clapton, just an innocent kid. So I looked at Andy Johns on the other side of the glass – he was foolin' around with my girlfriend, Paula Boyd, Patti's sister, and I knew about it. So I looked at Andy and these words tumbled out – the story of that crazy woman who was my girlfriend and turned out to be his wife for many years.

What do you think the reissue of these two albums reveals?

Listening to those records now, I realise that I did have an important role in everybody's life that I was involved with musically, even though I was the baby. All these greats I'd played with were on my records, and still people weren't that interested, because I wasn't the big out-front star. But there's a thread in all the records I was part of, and the knot is tied right after my first two solo records. And the very best thing that could've ever happened to those records was to have them go into complete obscurity.

Why is that?

Because had I achieved superstardom, I wouldn't have been able to handle it then, for sure.

INTERVIEW: BUD SCOPPA

ZZ TOP

The Complete Studio Albums 1970-1990

RHINO

100 tracks from the first 20 years of "that little ol' band from Texas". By Luke Torn



6/10

AS HIGH-MINDED concepts from low-aiming modern primitives go, ZZ Top, the blues-and-boogie trio that arose from the ashes of the Texas garage/psych scene at the dawn of the 1970s, are a wonder of nature, a genuine pop culture phenomenon. Simple to the extreme

– not to say simplistic – the group (singer/guitarist Billy Gibbons, bassist Dusty Hill, drummer Frank Beard) has parlayed a penchant for amped-up John Lee Hooker rhythms, gonzo guitar, and a rare knack for reinvention into four-decades-plus of sustained, often absurd, madness and mayhem.

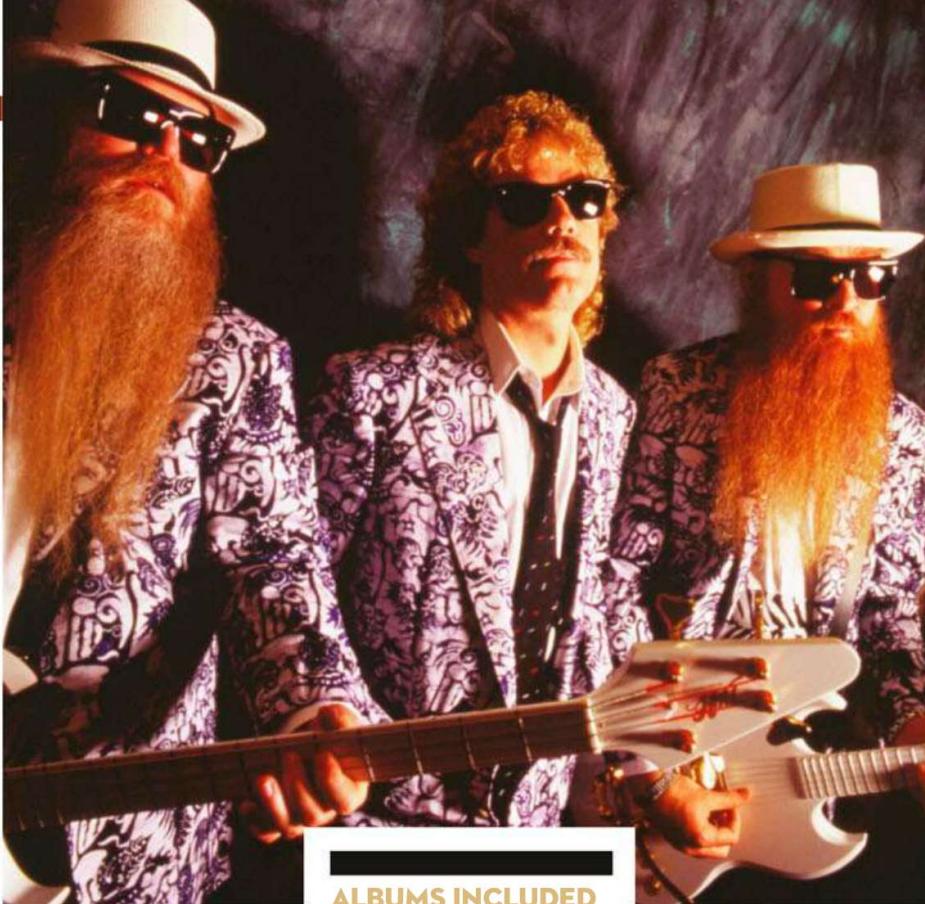
The Complete Studio Albums conveniently collects ZZ Top's signature work – their first 10 albums – reverting to long-unavailable original mixes for three titles (first two albums, plus 1976's *Tejas*), cutting out in time to skip their sketchier, post-Warners era.

Arriving just as '60s social upheaval was bisecting into '70s introspection and hedonism, proto-Top headed decidedly in the latter direction, greasily riffing on the popular power-trio approach of the day (cf. Cream, Jimi Hendrix Experience, Grand Funk Railroad), attaching teenage lyrics of drugs, booze, and wild, wild women to filthy electric blues templates laid out by the aforementioned Hooker, Elmore James, Slim Harpo, T-Bone Walker, Albert King, and so on. Other than Gibbons' teeth-rattling guitar, they were unflashy purists, harbouring few concessions to pop ornateness. Oddly enough, ZZ Top might have been most notable – circa their '80s arena-rocking prime – for everything they weren't.

"Brown Sugar", a sprawling, raucous bloozer from their 1970 debut, is as accurate a Top blueprint as any: leering sexuality (see also: sexism, misogyny), Gibbons' slurred, drunk-as-a-pirate vocals, grimy guitar blasts reverberating through the song's midsection, and a roiling rhythmic undertow. Then there's "Backdoor Love Affair": See above, but string it tighter, and push the tempo a bit. Repeat when necessary.

As they evolved – a relative term here – they sharpened their stubborn individualism, carving out comic portraits, as on *Tres Hombres*' "Waitin' for The Bus", of sad-sack characters beaten down by the system, just trying to get by. But mostly their protagonists, sad sacks or not, just wanted to get drunk, high and laid. As such, ZZ Top proved the perfect elixir. You really didn't need to think, other than where the next joint and tequila shot were coming from. And in this, ZZ Top excelled: endless sex-and-drug double entendres and catchy sing-song slogans – stretched out in exalted redundancy via boogie-til-your-eyeballs-fall-out stomps.

Their sonic trademark for the next decade set, ZZ Top set about sharpening up their repertoire. 1972's



ALBUMS INCLUDED

- ZZ Top's First Album 1971
- Rio Grande Mud 1972
- Tres Hombres 1973
- Fandango! 1975
- Tejas 1976
- Degüello 1979
- El Loco 1981
- Eliminator 1983
- Afterburner 1985
- Recycler 1990

thumpa-thumpa, liberally spiked with heretofore undetected comic distance and self-deprecating humour. Signature songs, FM staples – "Dark Sunglasses", "I'm Bad, I'm Nationwide", "Pearl Necklace", "Tube Snake Boogie" – were duly minted, extending their raunchy repertoire, and proving a weird theory: the more ZZ Top dumbed it down, the more

beloved they became, the more their legacy grew.

This revelation came in handy: *Eliminator* and its cheap knockoff *Afterburner* were stoopid taken to new heights; see, especially, "TV Dinners", "Velcro Fly", "Woke Up With Wood" for God's sake. But within their nefarious mix of bludgeoning, metronomic hi-tech beats, synth washes, machine-cut guitar licks, and hairy, cartoon videos, were irresistible, airwave-ready hooks, escapist fodder for the MTV minions: "Sharp Dressed Man", "Gimme All Your Lovin'", "Legs", "Sleeping Bag", raced up the charts, monuments to '80s cheese. Ultimately, the stereotype backed them into a corner; 1990's *Recycler* completed the trashy trilogy, but barely registered – an afterthought – beckoning yet further new-look incarnations.

HIDDEN GEMS

FRANCENE

Atypical ZZ Top because (1) it diverts from standard blues for a rare piece of driving, Chuck Berry-esque rock'n'roll, and (2) bassist Dusty Hill takes a rare lead vocal. "Francene" (from *Rio Grande Mud*) showed what they could do with outside material, ie, a four-on-the-floor rocker by Marty Cordray and Steve Perron of San Antonio's finest psychsters, The Children.

MOVE ME ON DOWN THE LINE

Close your eyes, add a smidge of imagination, and this deep cut from 1973's *Tres Hombres* becomes one of the greatest songs the Stones never wrote – *Exile or Some Girls* division;

derivative, but fun aplenty. Gibbons' fluid, serpentine guitar lines scoot things along nicely.

DUST MY BROOM

Generally ZZ Top's tributes to elders came in thinly veiled rewrites and transmogrifications. Here, via 1979's *Degüello*, they live up to the great Elmore James (or maybe Robert Johnson) with his trademark song, Gibbons' twanged-out slide pushing with atmosphere and oomph.

MY HEAD'S IN MISSISSIPPI

Even hardcore devotees had to be bummed about *Recycler*, a true-to-reality album title if there ever was one. But with its dark, grainy walls of guitar noise and Gibbons' Tom Waits-style vocal, "My Head's In Mississippi" manages to reconnect with the almighty spook of the blues.



RIP RIG + PANIC

God (reissue, 1981)

CHERRY RED

Free-jazzing post-punkers' squawk on the wild side

Best remembered for a fiery cameo on *The Young Ones* and as Neneh Cherry's first

band, Rip Rig + Panic's final resting place in the 1980s bargain bins was a measure, perhaps, of how bewildering the ex-Pop Groupers' ensemble vision was. Hepcat Sun Ra-heads with a thrilling sideline in Funkadelic anarchy and finger-clicking latino pop, their three albums for Virgin remain challenging listening – a result, according to core member Gareth Sager, of a mission to "break down the traditional Beatlesque blueprint for a band". Officially resurrected for the first time, channel-hopping 1981 debut *God* has aged oddly well, the freeform ensemble making valiant use of Mark Springer's wailing sax, while the late Ari Up does her inimitable Rhine-stoned cowgirl bit on "Change Your Life" and "Beware (Our Leaders Love The Smell Of Napalm)". "We were probably a groovy tax loss more than anything else," concludes drummer Bruce Smith in the sleeve note; true, but money elegantly wasted nonetheless.

EXTRAS: A slew of non-album tracks, not least 7/10 singles "Go! Go! This Is It" and "Bob Hope Takes Risks". Rip Rig's remaining albums, 1982's Don Cherry-heavy *I Am Cold* (featuring "You're My Kind Of Climate") and their more linear swansong *Attitude* receive similar treatment.

JIM WIRTH

8/10

RODION GA

The Lost Tapes

STRUT

Tran-sylvania Express: Romania's Kraftwerk unearthed

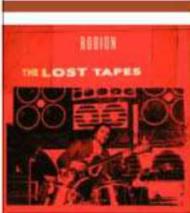
"I was a lunatic, but we pulled it off because I was talented," says Rodion

Roșca, reflecting on the remarkable music he made in austere circumstances in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The official output of the Cluj auteur's band, Rodion GA, amounted to two songs on 1981's state-sanctioned *Formatii Rock 5* compilation, but this collection of steam-powered space music showcases some extraordinary sounds made under the radar in Ceaușescu-era Romania. Fuelled by prog records scavenged from neighbouring Hungary, Roșca transcended his equipment's limitations with ecstatic leaps of the imagination to piece together the *Ralf And Florian*-like "Alpha Centauri" and fuzz thundercloud "Imagini Din Vis". "Everybody thought we had the coolest synthesisers in the country, but the truth is that those sounds were made with distorted guitar, with flanger and echo, with a Russian toy organ," recalled Roșca with pride. "The most powerful synthesizer was my mind." That musical intellect shines through on the Cluster-like "Zephyr" and the low-rent Pierre Henry of "Diagonala", tape hiss and distortion only serving to underline the parallels with the post-punk futurism of contemporaries from beyond the Iron Curtain like Robert Rental and the Human League.

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH

8/10



RODION GA

The Lost Tapes

STRUT

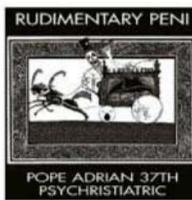
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EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH



RUDIMENTARY PENI

Pope Adrian 37th Psychristiatric (reissue, 1995)

SOUTHERN/OUTER HIMALAYAN

8/10

Ecclesiastical ambition from punk outsiders

Rudimentary Peni remain one of the most mythologised groups of early punk rock. The trio emerged from the ranks of black-clad punk groups that followed in Crass' wake, but by the time of their third full-length they had become something else entirely. *Pope Adrian...* is probably the strangest punk record of all time. Written while singer/guitarist Nick Blinko was detained in a Hertfordshire hospital under the 1983 Mental Health Act, it deals with the frontman's delusion that he was to become the next Pope. The entire album is played over a voice chanting "Papus Adrianus", and whereas early Peni songs erred towards the short sharp shock template, here they sprawl out, Blinko's guitar clenched into gothic shapes as the rhythm section loop in dirge-like patterns, or suddenly skitter at a strange homunculus gait. It is hard to make out much from Blinko's gnomic phrasing, but "The Pope With No Name" wrestles vainly with matters of the mind ("Closure confusion, it's so sad/Delusions of grandeur, she must be mad") while "Pills, Popes And Potions" finds him unfurling a prescription list in a Lydon-circa-Metal Box drawl. Stubborn, enigmatic, unflinching, and undoubtedly one of a kind.

EXTRAS: Remastered from original tapes, 8/10 16-page art book, poster (vinyl only).

LOUIS PATTISON

HOW TO BUY... COMMUNES & CULTS

You wouldn't want to live there



AMON DÜÜL

Paradieswärts Düüül OHR, 1970

It's easy to forget Amon Düül were a countercultural commune, with connections to other cells like Komune 1. Their earlier albums are classic 'drums'n'drones' commune blow-outs, but *Paradieswärts Düüül* is incredible, a hermetic acid-folk downer reminiscent of third-album VU.

9/10



TREES COMMUNITY

The Christ Tree

POMEGRANATE, 1975

Lovely Christian folk set from a time when more than a few communes were hunting the holy grail via spooked folk song. *The Christ Tree* is one of the most potent, a set arranged with tidal blooms of harp and flute, as girl-boy choruses chant down the stars in haunted tandem.

8/10



THE MANSON FAMILY SINGS

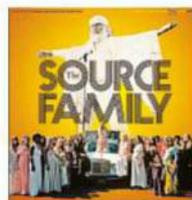
The Songs Of Charles Manson

NO LABEL, 1986

The fact remains, Manson was a fleetingly great songwriter, and the girl chorus on these 1970 versions of his tunes is seriously witchy. A key artefact of the '60s underground.

7/10

JON DALE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Music From The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack The Source Family

DRAG CITY

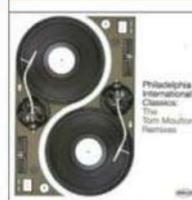
7/10

Freaky psych from '70s LA cult's house band

Up until he died in Hawaii in 1975, aged 53, after crashing his first hang-glider (having had no previous experience), James "Father Yod" Baker presided over a spiritual commune in Los Angeles known as The Source Family whose members wore white robes, grew their hair and practised vegetarianism and free love. Music was central to the cult, and Baker, a WWII hero and health-food restaurant founder who had the charisma of Jim Morrison and drove a white Rolls, spent \$30,000 setting up a studio. In '73, he installed himself as frontman for Family bands Spirit Of 76 and Ya Ho Wa 13, recording some 60 albums' worth of incantations and psych jams as ragged as his beard. Nine LPs were released on their Higher Key label. This is all explained in the new documentary *The Source Family*, the soundtrack for which draws on original Family tracks, making this OST a primer for a lot of mad-eyed rambling and surprisingly soulful nuggets. Between the chants and Yod monologues ("I'm the father you all wanted!"), the honky-tonk of "Penetration" and scat-funk of "I'm Gonna Take You Home", the overwhelming impression is of a group with no limits having a total blast. If this is brainwashing, sign me up.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Philadelphia International Classics: The Tom Moulton Remixes

HARMLESS

9/10

New and unreleased mixes from disco's master

Disco wouldn't be disco without Tom Moulton. In the mid-'70s, the New Yorker created the 12" single and developed the first extended mixes. For DJs, seeing his name on a record guaranteed quality. Now this sumptuous compilation, released as an 8LP boxset following last year's 4CD outing, shows his touch hasn't deserted him as he enters his eighth decade. It helps that Moulton is intimately familiar with the catalogue of Philly soul powerhouse Philadelphia International – is there anyone who hasn't swayed to all 11 minutes of his epic mix of MFSB's "Love Is The Message"? Moulton's pioneering 1977 mix package, *Philadelphia Classics*, set the standard for the remix LP, as he kneaded the likes of The O'Jays' "Love Train" and The Three Degrees' "Dirty Ol' Man" into sophisticated dancefloor fodder, adding intros and break sections. Remarkably, to that album's eight mixes, this set adds seven lesser-known mixes from that period alongside 16 new reworks. Moulton turned 70 in 2010, the year he submitted his 12-minute edit of "The Love I Lost" by Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes which, like the other 10 mixes, arrives reupholstered in silk and velvet. Whatever he did back in the day, he's still got it.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN

The Specialist

Motown



The Four Tops: a class act full of heartache

► AMONG THE MANY, mystique-laden components of the Motown Sound was the label's weekly 'Quality Control' meeting, where writers and producers decided which tracks were likely to crack the charts, with head honcho Berry Gordy having final say. The assemblage here shows the QC team almost always got it right. Few of its well-worn hits have 'B' sides that are more than generic products of Motown's prodigious production line.

Choices were complicated by the label's pecking order; The Supremes and The Temptations had first dibs on the hottest songs from Holland-Dozier-Holland and others, though The Four Tops were also favoured. With the rich tenor lead of Levi Stubbs wringing every drop of heartache from "Ask The Lonely", "It's The Same Old Song" et al, the Tops were a class act for whom the H-D-H team reserved especially poignant material.

There are few surprises in *The Four Tops' 50th Anniversary Collection The Singles 1964-*

72 MOTOWN. Still, its liner notes do reveal that Stubbs borrowed a touch of Dylan's drawl for "Bernadette" and "Reach Out I'll Be There", the latter also marking a quantum shift in Motown's arrangements, with its blend of flutes and oboes. Like other Motown

acts, the Tops' run of hits – a dozen over four years – didn't survive the departure of Holland-Dozier-Holland and more in 1968 – and the second half of the set is a portrait of slow decline, with lacklustre duets with The Supremes and duff covers ("MacArthur Park") mere shadows of former splendours.

The Vandellas were always second to The Supremes in Gordy's eyes and suffered discord that included onstage catfights, yet it's their "Dancing In The Street" that most embodies Motown's glory years. Martha Reeves infused the song with gospel urgency while its lacerating beat came in part from snow chains whipped on wood. Released in 1964 it became an anthemic feelgood echo of the bloody civil rights insurrections, its car factory video also marking the high point of Detroit's fortunes. "Don't forget the motor city," wailed Martha, but America did just that. *Martha & The Vandellas' 50th Anniversary Collection The Singles 1962-1972*

MOTOWN reveals the Vandellas hit other highs with similarly muscular sides like "Heat Wave", "Nowhere To Run", "Ready For Love" and more cutesy material like "Jimmy Mack", but the 84 tracks here are hardly a legendary catalogue, though you do get to hear "Nowhere" without the crucial 10-second edit of the Quality Control team. They got that right. NEIL SPENCER



VARIOUS ARTISTS

London Is The Place For Me: Volumes 5 & 6

HONEST JON'S

7/10

The latest instalment in an ongoing history of black British music

Since 2003, Honest Jon's have been ransacking EMI's Hayes archive to document the black British music that followed the arrival of the Empire Windrush. Like previous volumes, these two discs feature some Jamaican jazz and proto-Afrobeat but is overwhelmingly dominated by calypso. By the early 1960s calypso's subversive and political agenda had been reduced to exotica, but these 1950s singles by London-based Trinidadians see the UK becoming the exotic "other". The culture collisions create tightly plotted sitcoms: King Timothy sings of being harangued by fans of "the Arsenal, then the Newcastle" in "Football Calypso", and then playfully recounts being assaulted by his wife in "Ju Jitsu Calypso". Mighty Terror lusts after female police officers ("Women Police In England") and then, in the magnificent "Patricia Gone With Millicent", mourns that his wife has left him for a woman ("You may think that I'm jocular/But this really happened in Manchester"). Elsewhere there are topical ditties about cricket umpires, infidelity, meat-cooking, Marilyn Monroe, Joe Louis, Cuban mambo, American GIs shagging your missus and Lili Verona's saucy number about a bass-playing boyfriend with a "Big Instrument".

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Eccentric Soul: The Dynamic Label

NUMERO GROUP

8/10

Yee-haw! Unearthing Texas' '60s soul scene

Numero Group's extensive soul mining operation

continues with this handsome survey of San Antonio's Dynamic label, which burned brightly in the Lone Star State in the mid-'60s. Where Motown had Berry Gordy, Dynamic was one of a handful of labels run by local impresario, estate agent and record producer Abe "Abie" Epstein, who died last year aged 74 – but not before he'd negotiated a deal with Numero to reissue some of the 900 songs by local acts that he'd recorded at his General McMullen Drive studio. Streetwise and enthusiastic, Epstein was quick to latch on to the blossoming soul style and helped create San Antonio's 'West Side sound', a lush, reverb-heavy mix of rock'n'roll, doo-wop and R'n'B best exemplified by The Commands' blue-eyed "No Time For You", Dynamic's first chart hit in '66. Over the next two years, Epstein produced all manner of groups including all-girl outfit The Tonettes, whose textbook tearjerkers "I Gotta Know" and "My Heart Can Feel The Pain" feature, and Texas duo Doc & Sal, whose creamy cuts "Cry And Wonder Why" and "Laughing To Keep From Crying" always arouse Northern Soul nuts. Dynamic in name only, Epstein closed the label by '69, but this round-up of riches ensures its place in history.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Kenya Special: Selected East African Recordings From The '70s & '80s
SOUNDWAY

7/10

A 32-track overview of Kenyan funk

The third in Soundway's 'Special' compilation series, after episodes in Nigeria and Ghana, continues to show the raw side of African funk, where production is warm and grease-flecked, and the spiritual ruminations of the continent's desert blues singers are often foregone in favour of a more celebratory bent. The influence of the Arab world is less pronounced than in their Ethiopian neighbours, but there are intriguing flavours you never hear in West Africa: the almost Indian vocal style of Hafusa Abasi's "Sina Raha", or the lush multitracking of the Mombasa Vikings, where the wah-wah gets so layered it trips the light fantastic. But there's a simplicity to the repetition of polyrhythms and highlife guitar lines – the Eastern style seems to be built around shorter looped phrases than in the West, and when the songwriting is undercooked it can lapse into generic Afrobeat. But often it yields funk that's both taut and profoundly off-kilter: "Pelekani" by The Eagles Lupopo throbs with the cone-toasting power of Konono N°1, and the magnificently named Orchestra Super Volcano play "Mngeni Mali Yare Yore" with a constantly tripping rhythm smoothed by cacophonous brass and freeform guitar in a heart-swelling whole.

EXTRAS: None.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



THE WOODENTOPS
Before During After: Remasters, Remixes & Rarities 1982-1992
ONE LITTLE INDIAN

6/10

Indie-dance crossover pioneers get their due

With their electronic rhythms and flamenco flourishes, The Woodentops presented an opulent counter to indie-rock norms when they emerged from South London in the mid-'80s. Fronted by Rolo McGinty, formerly of The Jazz Butcher, they released two studio albums for Rough Trade, both included here in remastered form with a host of extras. Their still-fresh 1986 debut, *Giant*, mixed furiously strummed acoustic guitar with woodblocks, marimba, accordion and trumpet, and would prove a fertile base for a number of electronically propelled live performances and remixes, with Adrian Sherwood's Tropicália-inflected "Give It Time" a stand-out. Second album *Wooden Foot Cops On The Highway* features guest spots from Lee Perry and Bernie Worrell, but it often sounds rushed: gauche songwriting ("Stop This Car") and McGinty's colourless vocals would prove weak spots. This collection confirms that where they excelled was as a live act, their increasingly club-inflected performances finding a warm welcome in Ibiza's burgeoning Balearic scene.

EXTRAS: The rarities on CD3 are a mixed, 6/10 sometimes dated bag. But a raucous 1987 Glastonbury recording of "Get It On" is a fine testimony to their in-person presence.

GAVIN MARTIN



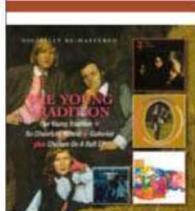
X RAY POP
Pirate! The Dark Side Of The X (reissue, 1985)
FINDERS KEEPERS

7/10
Madcap Gallic synthwave duo unearthed

Rummage around the fringes of the 1980s European synth scene and sooner or later the acutely French act X Ray Pop are bound to surface. Comprised of husband and wife performance artists Didier Pilot and Zouka Dzaza, the pair first circulated their beatnik take on Suicide in the mid-'80s – reportedly with 100 cassette copies of this record, *Pirate!* – and ended the '90s signed to the major label EastWest, who, perhaps understandably, struggled to market the couple's final, 11th album, 2001's 24-song *Surrealistic Pilot*, to a wider audience. For a debut, *Pirate!* is a provocative statement: 15 brief Dadaist chansons sung by Dzaza and smothered in Pilot's raw electronics that feed off the same energy that powered the Cramps or Add N To (X). Recorded in one day, *Pirate!* would become X Ray Pop's blueprint – polished versions of "La Mort", "Alcool (Gloups)" and "Funky Cat" turn up on later LPs – and lead to admiring glances from the Beastie Boys and Stereolab. Mixing trashy 60-second ditties "Gogol Le Mongol" and "Sexy, Absolutely Nice" with more elegant pieces such as "La Machine À Rêver" and "L'Eurasienne", X Ray Pop straddled the line between silly and profound, where they remained quite happily.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN



THE YOUNG TRADITION
The Young Tradition/So Cheerfully Round/Galleries/Chicken On A Raft" EP
BGO

9/10

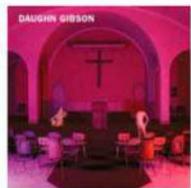
First time on CD
for complete recordings of influential Carnaby Street folk trio

The Young Tradition were Swinging London's response to The Watersons, and the whole Copper Family tradition of English folk harmony singing. Peter Bellamy actually grew up in Norfolk, where he was exposed to many local fishing and country songs, but after hooking up with Royston Wood and Heather Wood in 1965, they moved into a house with Pentangle and became the resident act for a Soho club named after them. Their rollicking renditions of tunes like "Daddy Fox", "Henry The Poacher" and "The Pretty Ploughboy", from their first two Transatlantic LPs, display incredibly tight unison skills, the voices piping open and shut like some bizarre organic air-pumped machine. As they developed, they showed a vivacious eclecticism: 1969's *Galleries* included an a cappella blues, "Extract: Stones In My Passway" and a "Medieval Mystery Tour". The group broke up shortly afterwards, but their legacy was to help introduce traditional repertoire to a younger, hipper audience who would find nothing unusual about playing Topic records while stoned. From there, Traffic, Fairport and psych-folk flowed.

EXTRAS: None.

ROB YOUNG

COMING NEXT MONTH...



► The shock of the new is a quality we're not afraid of here in the albums compound, and that's a quality that Daughn (you pronounce it "Don") Gibson

has in abundance. A strapping young lad with a salt-of-the-earth background in driving trucks and packing boxes, he may be as close as we get round here to pin-up material. Gibson's last album *All Hell* sounded like a kind of chillwave Bon Iver, but from the evidence available so far, Gibson's new one, *Me Moan*, marks his transfer to Sub Pop Records with a move into a slightly more interesting field. Album opener "The Sound Of Law" showcases a rockabilly twang and a majestic baritone, yet with a modernist production, as if Nick Cave or Chris Isaak had been given a radical systems update.

Elsewhere in the release schedule, **Glen Campbell** returns with a surprise sequel to his *Ghost On The Canvas* album. **See You There**, recorded at the same sessions, finds the country and western superstar and Wrecking Crew lynchpin revisiting old material. Sad to relate, but

Campbell's Alzheimer's Disease has now progressed to the point where he will never again play these live.

JOHN ROBINSON

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SCORING:

10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

THIS MONTH: NEIL YOUNG, PAUL McCARTNEY, FRANK ZAPPA & MORE

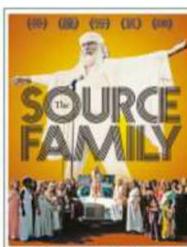


Jim Baker, aka Father Yod, and a selection of his female disciples

THE SOURCE FAMILY

DRAG CITY FILMS

An enthralling look at Father Yod's hippy cult and the psychedelic rock they produced. By John Robinson



8/10

from within an actual cult, a Los Angeles "spiritual commune" of as many as 150 members, known as the Source Family.

The music, from slow freak-rock ballads, to quasi-gospel anthems, to messianic psych jams, was improvised and recorded in the family's \$30,000 home studio, and is central to the evolution of this excellent documentary. Not only because it provides a great soundtrack to it, but because its quality has created a market for the film's wider story. The record collectors discovered it first, and it has since taken on a new life in the era of file-sharing blogs. Where did the music come from? *The Source Family* doesn't only provide an answer to that, it also helps makes sense of the confluence of Eastern philosophies, utopian dreams, adventurous rock music and psychedelic drugs that contributed to what we might call the "consciousness boom" of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this enterprise, directors Maria Demopoulos and Jodi Wille have been enormously aided by

WHEN WE THINK of "cult bands", we probably have in mind someone like Orange Juice or Pavement. Children Of The Sixth Root Race, The Spirit Of '76 and Yahowa 13, the utterly obscure early 1970s psychedelic/free rock groups led by a charismatic fiftysomething who called himself Father Yod were different – they derived

erstwhile Family members. Chief among these is a former Washington DC socialite called Charlene Peters, who became known as Isis Aquarian, and invented a role for herself within it as the Family's archivist – taking the photographs, making the home movies and recording the key "morning meditations" that provide the documentary verisimilitude within this enthralling film.

The other major component here is the interviews with former Family members. How bad could any cult have been, we ask ourselves, that produced someone as articulate as Magus Aquarian? Or as focused as Electricity Aquarian? These do not look like victims of some bearded charismatic. In fact, we become just as interested in discovering what time has brought these people in the 40 years since their leader's demise in a hang-gliding accident, as in the story of that leader himself.

That, however, is still one extraordinary story. Father Yod (more often "Father" or "Yahowa") was born Jim Baker. A handsome former serviceman and martial arts devotee, Baker was the kind of personality to fill a room, whatever size the room, and in the years after World War II, he set about a process of transforming and monetising himself. He became a fitness entrepreneur, briefly a monk, the proprietor of vegetarian restaurants, a spiritual leader, singer and – in his mind and those of his followers – a god. His philosophy for the Source Family, which evolved out of the meditation meetings at his hip LA restaurant, The Source, was "Do anything you want – as long as you are kind."

It doesn't sound too controversial, does it? Part of the skill of *The Source Family* is the way it makes a

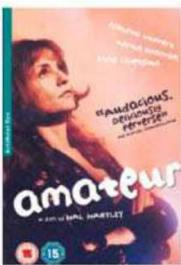
virtue of its moral relativism, acknowledging that in cults as in life, no-one is all good or all bad. Gradually, however, the evidence mounts to depose "Father" from his throne. Baker's policy of honesty in regard to his past life seems laudable enough, but it revealed a history of violence – the start-up capital for his restaurants was apparently provided by bank robberies he conducted; he had killed with a karate blow the husband of a TV actress with whom he became involved.

For all his professed love, meanwhile, "Father" could be heartless and without empathy. He had reinvented his life to the extent of abandoning a pre-Source wife and children; he then broke his new wife's heart by entering into commune polygamy. He had sex with underage girls. Adherence to the Family code meant insisting that its members (and their children) refused qualified medical care and prescribed medicine. And so on.

And yet – without giving anything very much away – this is not predominantly a story of wrecked lives and abused trust. The views of the participants are accorded a great amount of respect here, and as such there's a lingering suspicion that the filmmakers have eased off the gas at a couple of points in the investigation to spare their feelings. Just how members were persuaded to liquidate and donate their personal wealth and property to the Family is only briefly alluded to. One might have expected a bit more about the "sexual magick" that the cult latterly attempted to unlock. Given that it was the jumping-off point for the whole commune, some more about the actual food would have been welcome.

Ultimately, though, *The Source Family* expands its remit beyond the specifics of one charismatic leader of one commune/cult to uncover and explore one of the chief ironies of the period. Namely, how come a generation that declared itself in open revolt against the values of its parents still readily submitted itself to quasi-family structures led by father figures, not many of whom, it turned out, could actually be trusted.

EXTRAS: None.



AMATEUR

CURZON

Hal Hartley's cryptic crime thriller from 1994 holds up well

It can be easy to forget just how much of a noise director Hal Hartley's early films made on the late 1980s and early 1990s American independent

movie scene. A master of deadpan humour and crackling dialogue, 1994's poised, cryptic crime thriller *Amateur* is the director's most accessible film, with regular lead Martin Donovan playing an amnesiac involved with co-stars Isabella Huppert and Elina Löwensohn. A DVD/Blu-ray debut, along with *The Unbelievable Truth* (1989) and *Simple Men* (1992).

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER

9/10



ARNE DAHL

ARROW

Swedish crime series features traumatised cops and grisly killers

This series of taught thrillers takes its title from the original author's name alone, a fairly strong indication of just how celebrated Dahl (the nom de plume of novelist Jan Arnald) is in his

Swedish homeland. The five 90-minute stories follow the work of the crack A-Unit chasing grisly serial killers, and while less cinematic and closer to traditional police procedurals than the likes of *The Killing* or *The Bridge*, the generous running times allow greater opportunities to examine the impact the harrowing crimes (most shown in graphic detail) have on the cops' home lives.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

8/10

THE CHARLATANS

Mountain Picnic Blues

START

The making of the former baggy legends' '97 album, *Tellin' Stories*

A full 16 years on, The Charlatans revisit their *Tellin' Stories* album, a pivotal release from the band which not only

provided them with their biggest chart hit to date ("One To Another", see page 30), but was overshadowed by the death of keyboard player Rob Collins. Although not naturally comfortable interviewees, the band are candid enough, and bassist Martin Blunt has a wry wit. Tim Burgess aside, they all look strangely like Martin Freeman.

EXTRAS: The deluxe limited edition comes

6/10 with bespoke packaging and

unreleased photos.

MICHAEL BONNER

7/10



PAUL McCARTNEY AND WINGS

Rockshow

EAGLE VISION

Remastered Macca Mk II in full flight

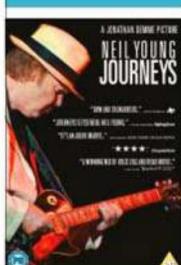
Wings' global trek throughout most of 1975 and '76 was McCartney's longest-running tour to date, including his days with The Beatles. This show, filmed in

Seattle, doesn't spend much time looking back (only five Fabs numbers feature in the 28-song set), focusing on *Band On The Run* and ...*At The Speed Of Sound*, yet predictably "Lady Madonna" and "Yesterday" are greeted with vociferous enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the pop-minded prog of "Jet" and "Let Me Roll It", and the anthemic "Let 'Em In" suggest a band looking forward and establishing a strong identity of their own.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

7/10



NEIL YOUNG

Journeys

SONY

Demme's third NY film focuses on *Le Noise* tour

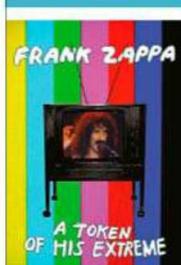
Following 2006's *Heart Of Gold* and 2009's *Trunk Show*, this is Jonathan Demme's third Neil Young concert film (though *Trunk Show* remains stubbornly AWOL in the UK). The bulk is Young performing solo at

Toronto's Massey Hall, closing 2011's *Le Noise* tour with a set drawing heavily on that album. Interspersed with scenes of him driving to the show from his Omemee, Ontario hometown, telling disarmingly inconsequential childhood tales. Wonderfully, if sometimes uncomfortably (a mic-stand camera that practically puts us inside Young's grizzling mouth) intimate.

EXTRAS: Demme and Young in conversation, **6/10** Making Of, trailer.

DAMIEN LOVE

8/10



FRANK ZAPPA

A Token Of His Extreme

EAGLE ROCK

Zappa in excellent form on West Coast TV show from '74

This "live in the studio" performance for LA TV in 1974 captures Zappa and his Apostrophe band in fine form, in spite of the efforts of the editor to

render it unwatchable with fast cuts. Zappa was a man of many parts, but this fan-favoured artefact shows many of them: guitar hero, zany raconteur, composer of infinitely irritating music. The broadcast also marks the debut of animator Bruce Bickford's collaboration with Zappa – a relationship that would endure for several years.

EXTRAS: Uncomfortable 1976 television

5/10 interview.

JOHN ROBINSON

7/10



BLOOD ON SATAN'S CLAW

ODEON ENTERTAINMENT (BLU-RAY)

Revitalising re-release for this classic '70s horror

"ARE YOU BENT on reviving forgotten horrors?" You could apply that line to pretty much the entire British horror genre, so obsessed has it been with the unearthing of powers that have lurked, dormant, ready to wreak havoc once released. And so it is at the

very start of Piers Haggard's *Blood On Satan's Claw*, when a camera tracks the gouging of a 17th-Century ploughman's blade through crumbly soil. Out of the earth emerges a grisly skull, with fur and a functioning eyeball. It promptly disappears, but its malefic influence begins to work in insidious ways upon the village. Fur patches appear on limbs; a claw bursts out of a floor; hysteria spreads as it becomes clearer that the Devil is attempting to incarnate himself on Earth.

Released in 1971, *Blood On Satan's Claw* is the second of the three movies which almost entirely constitute the mini-genre now known as 'folk horror'. Sandwiched between *Witchfinder General* (1968) and *The Wicker Man* (1973), the film shares the central theme of Christian forces struggling to suppress a pagan revival. The Satanic influence – which, unlike in *Witchfinder*, takes a grotesquely visceral form here – mostly afflicts the younger villagers, who retreat to the woodland deeps to conduct "their games" of sexual violence and sacrifice. The confrontation between Reverend Fallowfield (Anthony Ainley) and cult leader Angel Blake (Linda Hayden), in which she tries to seduce him in his chapel, is one of the most erotic sequences British horror has ever produced, one which enacts the potency of Britain's latent paganism in graphic terms. A scene in which a teenage girl is raped even feels over the top 40 years on – so brutal that Haggard has declared he'd have shot it differently today.

Cinematographer Dick Bush captured the rural landscape in a gorgeous swatch of leafy greens, terracotta and overcast skies, and frequently mounted the camera at ground level, literally rubbing your face in the mud. The frame often flickers with candlelight, and the period detail has a simplicity that feels more convincing than, say, one of Hammer's cookie-cutter sets. In this version, it has clawed its way to a new status as one of the great British movies of the era.

EXTRAS: Commentaries, Making Of, docs.

8/10 ROB YOUNG

Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Ray Liotta returns to the mob, Michael Douglas impresses as Liberace, The Stone Roses act as the backdrop to a retro love story, and Werner Herzog and Klaus Kinski get wild in the jungle...

THE ICEMAN reminds us that although it's been 18 years since *Casino*, it's impossible to make a period gangster movie without evoking the memory of Martin Scorsese and his motley gang of mooks, goombas and wiseguys. At some point during *Iceman*, I half expect to see DeNiro and Joe Pesci walk purposefully through the background of a shot, dressed in shiny suits, brows furrowed, on their way to whack some shoe-shine fuck who's crossed them. The casting of Ray Liotta, as Gambino crime family associate Roy DeMeo, immediately throws back to *GoodFellas*. But there's none of the glamourising of Scorsese's mob movies, none of the cinematic flourishes – no "Layla" montage – to embellish this, a true story about Richard Kuklinski, who killed over 100 people for the mob before his arrest in 1986. The film opens in 1964, where some ill-advised pool hall banter leads to a grim altercation in a parking lot. Kuklinski, we learn, has a history of violence. As Kuklinski, Michael Shannon delivers a performance of barely internalised rage that recalls DeNiro in his prime. The film, directed by Ariel Vromen, is at its best when allowing Shannon to explore the contradictions of Kuklinski's personality – a serial murderer who sends his daughters to Catholic school; a devoted husband who stores his victims in sub-zero temperatures to obfuscate the time of death. As Kuklinski's wife, Winona Ryder gets her meatiest role in years – though it seems impossible she never knew what her husband did for a living – and there's excellent support from *Captain America*'s Chris Evans as the bearded, freaky fellow hitman, Mr Freezy, who drives around in an ice-cream van. Elsewhere, *Friends*' David Schwimmer turns up as Liotta's unreliable lieutenant, with a moustache and pony-tail that reminds me scarily of David Seaman. But Shannon is absolutely terrific: cold, unreadable, monosyllabic, whacking his way through mid-level New Jersey mobsters.

► **Behind The Candelabra** reminds me a little of a Scorsese film, with Michael Douglas' toupe in particular bringing to mind the hairpieces worn by the elderly Midwestern crime bosses in *Casino*. This is Steven Soderbergh's frequently hilarious HBO biopic



about Liberace and his six-year relationship with younger lover, Scott Thorson. This is a world of palatial kitsch, excess and small dogs, Lear jets, plastic surgeons and 16-bar boogie woogie piano. Everything dazzles, from Liberace and Scott's white suits to the polished mirrored surfaces of their Palm Springs home and the harsh glare of the desert itself. Michael Douglas – never an actor I've been particularly bothered about – does tremendous work as Liberace, delivering lines like, "I personally support the entire Austrian rhinestone business" with more pride than camp. Matt Damon plays Scott with the right degree of youthful naïvety and sense of entitlement. Liberace, then 57, is looking for a surrogate son; Scott, a 17-year-old who's grown up in foster care, is looking for a father figure. This is the nub of their relationship, played out against a theatrical rhinestone-encrusted backdrop. Soderbergh finds much that's interesting and diverting here, especially in the characters orbiting Liberace and Scott – Rob

Lowe, as a plastic surgeon, gets a terrific cameo, Debbie Reynolds is on sprightly form as Liberace's mother, along with Dan Aykroyd as Liberace's blustery lawyer and Scott Bakula as the mutual friend who introduces Liberace to Scott. The film's second half darkens, as Scott becomes addicted to painkillers and Liberace drifts into a series of assignations with other young boys, his enormous appetite for sex undimmed by his advancing years and the cost it eventually takes on his life.

► **Spike Island** arrives only a few weeks after Shane Meadows' disappointing *Stone Roses* documentary. If Meadows' film intended to present the band as they are now, post-coming-back, then *Spike Island* is a celebration of the Roses then – or at least their music as it impacts on the lives of five young Mancunians over one week during May, 1990. The film is written by Chris Coghill, perhaps best known for playing Bez in Michael Winterbottom's *24 Hour*

Reviewed this month...



THE ICEMAN
Director
Ariel Vromen
Starring
Michael Shannon,
Winona Ryder
Opens June 7
Certificate 15
7/10



**BEHIND THE
CANDELABRA**
Director Steven
Soderbergh
Starring
Michael Douglas,
Matt Damon
Opens June 7
Certificate 12A
8/10



SPIKE ISLAND
Director Mat
Whitecross
Starring Elliott
Tittensor,
Emilia Clarke
Opens June 21
Certificate 15
5/10



**BEFORE
MIDNIGHT**
Director Richard
Linklater
Starring Ethan
Hawke, Julie Delpy
Opens June 21
Certificate PG
8/10



**AGUIRRE:
THE WRATH
OF GOD**
Director
Werner Herzog
Starring
Klaus Kinski
Opens June 7
Certificate PG
10/10



A world of excess, small dogs, Learjets and plastic surgeons: Michael Douglas as Liberace in *Behind The Candelabra*

Party People. His script is familiar rites-of-passage fare. Ironically, despite his cock-awful documentary, you wish for a little of the poignancy and heart Meadows brought to his original *This Is England* film. As it is, *Spike Island* resembles an extended episode of *Shameless*. Coghill's five lads – in their own band, of course, named Shadow Caster – are desperate to see the Roses at Spike Island, and the will-they/won't-they get into the show is what drives the film. In tandem, is another will-they/won't-they plot strand, hinging on whether Shadow Caster's singer Tits (Elliott Tittensor) will find love with local lass Sally (*Game Of Thrones'* Emilia Clarke). That the main character is affectionately known as "Tits" says much about the gruff Mancunian banter on display here – other characters are called Keith Teeth, Ibiza Steve and Dave.

Famous. Their moods can readily and variously be described as "top one", "nice one", "pilled-up", "bangin'" or "sound". Coghill attempts an unashamedly nostalgic romp through the era – and while lovers of detail will be delighted that the prevailing wind conditions on the day of the gig becomes a plot point, his shorthand telegraphing of plot and programmatic characters fail to leave much mark. Director Mat Whitecross, who previously made the Ian Dury

biopic, *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*, at least gives the film a momentum.

► **Before Midnight** is the third in Richard Linklater's intermittent catch-ups with Jesse and Celine, characters played by Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy who the filmmaker first introduced in 1995's *Before Sunrise*. It's now nine years since *Before Sunset*, and Jesse and Celine are now living together in Greece with their twin daughters. Whereas the previous instalments inhabited a kind of storybook romance, where Jesse and Celine met first in Vienna and then Paris to declare undying love and embark on serious discussions, this third film finds them struggling to deal with real-world obligations: jobs, family. "I miss hearing you think," Jesse tells Celine. The opportunity for rich, digressive conversations presents itself at a dinner party held by an elderly British writer (a lovely cameo from British New Wave cinematographer, Walter Lassally). Then it's pretty much into the walking-and-talking strategy of the previous films, with Jesse and Celine walking in long, single-take shots through the Greek countryside. He is sensitive, poetic; she is wry, intellectual. But *Midnight* digs deeper than its predecessors as Linklater asks what happens to the romantic ideals of youth when confronted with the realities of everyday life. Tensions between Jesse and Celine finally explode in a painful but brilliantly paced showdown in a hotel room. A wonderful, if draining film.

► **Aguirre: The Wrath Of God**

Launching a two-month retrospective of Werner Herzog's work at the BFI Southbank, this 1972 film has been digitally remastered ahead of a nationwide tour. *Aguirre* was the first film Herzog made with Klaus Kinski, and the story of its arduous, five-week shoot in the Amazon, with director and star coming close to murdering each other, has passed into cinematic lore. The story of the film is loosely based on the adventures of a group of 16th Century South American privateers who're searching for El Dorado in the Amazon and who are led deep into hostile Indian country by Lope de Aguirre, a conquistador who went mad during the journey round each bend of the river. As with *Apocalypse Now* seven years later in 1979, the shoot of *Aguirre* mirrored the madness and folly unfolding on screen. The crew went days without water, were besieged by insects and in genuine fear of losing their lives in the fast-moving river. Herzog built a ship 120 feet up in a tree to use for a 30-second shot. On top of that, of course, there was Herzog and Kinski, whose disagreements on every aspect of the film threatened to spill into violence. The film itself is an incredible monument to Herzog's ambition – a feat of high-wire cinema that the director only matched a decade later shooting *Fitzcarraldo*, which required his crew to manoeuvre a 320-ton steamship up

and over a 40° hillside in the Amazon. As Aguirre, Kinski – for all his mad yammering off-camera – has the deranged posturing of a mystical shaman, hallucinating ships in trees, while Popol Vuh's drone score adds to the fever dream atmosphere. From the opening sequence of the Spanish expedition descending through the clouds out of the Andes to the final shot of Aguirre, alone on his raft, ranting at the sky, this is fantastic, audacious cinema, well worth seeing on the big screen.

Michael Douglas, as Liberace, delivers lines about "the Austrian rhinestone business" with more pride than camp

Also out...

MADE OF STONE

OPENS JUNE 5

Reviewed last issue. Shane Meadows' doc about The Stone Roses fails to illuminate much; though fans will enjoy footage of Reni wearing a selection of hats.

AFTER EARTH

OPENS JUNE 7

M Night Shyamalan does sci-fi, with Will Smith and son Jaden stranded on an inhospitable future Earth.

THE LAST EXORCISM, PART II

OPENS JUNE 7

Does this now mean the previous film was *The Penultimate Exorcism*? Whatever, expect more gruesome horror porn goings-on.

MAN OF STEEL

OPENS JUNE 14

Superman – remember him? – gets the reboot treatment, after the last reboot tanked. Man of the moment, Michael Shannon, is General Zod.



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

OPENS JUNE 14

Joss Whedon takes time out from superheroes to tackle Shakespeare, casting a bunch of people from TV shows you might have seen on Five USA.

I AM BREAKING

OPENS JUNE 21

Documentary about Neil Platt, diagnosed with motor neuron disease at 34.

LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE

OPENS JUNE 21

Latest from Abbas Kiarostami, about a Tokyo prostitute who develops an unexpected connection with an elderly widower.

WORLD WAR Z

OPENS JUNE 21

Running zombies threaten to kill Brad Pitt and everyone else on the planet. Weren't zombies, like, 2009?

DESPICABLE ME 2

OPENS JUNE 28

The Minions are back. Hurrah! Along with *Monsters University*, one of 2013's must-see animated sequels. Gru must fight a super-villain, voiced by Al Pacino until he quit.

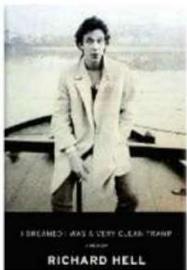
THIS IS THE END

OPENS JUNE 28

Paul Rudd, Seth Rogen, James Franco and Jason Segel are the celebrities playing themselves who have to contend with the end of the world. Meta-comedy.

Books

BY ALLAN JONES



I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp: An Autobiography

Richard Hell

ECCO

8/10

perhaps more sharply conscious of what she wanted to make of her life. Meyers was more prone to drift and a vague if keenly felt ambition, and likewise driven to escape the suburban confines of the America in which they were growing up and whose values Meyers especially was inclined to reject, presenting a rebellious front to a dull and conformist world. "My role at school was that of the sceptic and troublemaker and joker, the guy who didn't take any of it seriously and was always looking for illicit adventure," he writes. A series of delinquent scrapes, poor grades and a liaison with a truck-stop waitress that ended predictably badly, saw him packed off as a boarder to Sanford Preparatory School, near Wilmington, in Delaware. Which is where he became friends with a fellow student,

THREE ARE ENOUGH points of easy comparison between their early lives and careers to encourage an opinion of Richard Hell's *I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp* as something of a companion piece to Patti Smith's *Just Kids*. Both grew up in rural America – Smith in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Hell, born Richard Meyers, in Lexington, Kentucky, then Norfolk, Virginia.

Like Smith, the teenage Meyers was drawn to the arts, although Smith was

similarly a misfit, named Tom Miller, who shared his bohemian dreams, and with whom, years later in New York, he would eventually form Television, both of them charismatically renamed by then; Meyers as Richard Hell, Miller as Tom Verlaine.

Smith and Meyers arrived in New York within six months of each other, Meyers a little after Christmas, 1966, Smith in the spring of 1967. They found similar low-paid work, lived in the same kind of dingy digs, barely making a living, but mutually excited to be where they were, which in their shared sense of destiny was where they were meant to be, at the centre of things, where it was all happening, or seemed to them to be. Both, of course, would become key players in the New York punk and art scene that grew out of CBGB and the Lower East Side, home to a rabble of young writers, poets, musicians, artists and filmmakers.

Smith's elegant memoir, written with a more self-consciously literary flourish than Hell musters here, in retrospect somewhat mythologises aspects of their overlapping pasts. The pages of *Just Kids* often seem back-lit by a nostalgic glow, its tone inclined to the elegiac in ways that Hell's autobiography deliberately avoids. Smith looks at her past in *Just Kids* as if through an idealised misty drizzle that once settled makes everything she reflects upon sparkle. Even the grubbiest of events and circumstances are cleansed somehow by the manner of her return to them, which occasionally makes *Just Kids* seem romanticised and even sentimental.

Hell's book is more harshly lit and unsparing. It may seem to some consequently to be more honest, less carefully manicured, buffed and combed. It's raw stuff, on the whole, whose grip on the reader's attention survives even the passages that

sound like they've been either dictated to the author by an untalented therapist or copied out of a self-help manual. This is the language of the recovering addict, of course, a veteran of purging self-analysis, confessional group sessions and public unburdening. *I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp* is therefore admirably frank, although some readers might wish that Hell had turned down the candour on parts of his life. Perhaps particularly when they involve the who and how of his sexual history, which Hell seems keen to share in graphic detail, including a late-developing taste for sadomasochistic sex he quickly finds a tad too demanding. "Some years later when Kathy Acker wanted me to slap her while I fucked her in the ass, it was hard to work up the motivation," he complains wearily at one point, indulging simultaneously in rather grubby name-dropping (see also the sections on, for instance, Nancy Spungen and Paula Yates, among many others).

When Hell's focus shifts from his cock and who he's shared it with and lingers elsewhere, the music he started to make with Tom Miller, for instance, who by the end of 1968 was also in New York, *I Dreamed I Saw A Very Clean Tramp* is more readily recommended. They were at first inseparable, the closest of friends and collaborators. Hell's ambitions were largely literary – he'd already started publishing his own poetry magazine – but Miller, soon to be Verlaine, was more seriously obsessed with music and together they had soon formed The Neon Boys, with Verlaine on guitar, Hell on rudimentary bass, the pair of them writing songs together and individually (among Hell's earliest efforts, "Love Comes In Spurts"). Verlaine cared about nothing more than the music. Hell, however, was just as preoccupied by the way they looked and dressed, quickly developing a sartorial anti-style of torn clothes sometimes held together by safety pins, their hair brutally cropped, that would soon be much copied by British punks, whose beckoning notoriety Hell witnessed at a distance with a mix of approval and bemusement.

He's very good on the exciting early days of the band that became Television, the adventure that he and Verlaine had collaboratively embarked upon. The shock Hell subsequently felt at Verlaine's dictatorial takeover of the band is tangible, the festering rift between them growing into a bitter thing that 40 years later is barely healed. As much as Verlaine's estrangement from Hell may have been inspired by Hell's musical incompetence, he would also have surely been frustrated by his former friend's increasing drug use. Hell had always liked getting high, but under the influence of Television's original manager, Terry Ork, a Lower East Side scener, with a taste for young boys and opiates, Hell became a regular heroin user.

In fact, from his departure from Television in early 1975 to his retirement from music in 1984, at which point the book ends, heroin is the dominant factor in Hell's life. His addiction overshadows

everything he subsequently does and the music he makes first with Johnny Thunders in The Heartbreakers and then with his own often undervalued band, The Voidoids. The rest of what passes for his career in music is consumed by drugs, escalating calamity, ruinous business deals, betrayals of trust that make his admirers despair, among them Jake Riviera, co-founder of Stiff and manager of Nick Lowe and Elvis Costello, an unlikely benefactor who eventually gave up on him, as so many others had already done.

Hellboy: Richard Meyers as '70s punk progenitor

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SETLIST

- 1 Let's Go Crazy
- 2 Endorphinmachine
- 3 Screwdriver
- 4 She's Always In My Hair
- 5 Breakdown
- 6 I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man
- 7 Guitar
- 8 Plectrum Electrum
- 9 FIXURLIFEUP
- 10 I Like It There
- 11 When We're Dancing Close And Slow
- 12 Bambi
- 13 2Y2D
- 14 Cause And Effect
- 15 Let's Go
- 16 Crimson And Clover/ Wild Thing
- 17 Little Red Corvette
- 18 Purple Rain
- 19 U Got The Look

PRINCE

CITY NATIONAL GROVE OF ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA, MAY 7, 2013

“Do you love rock'n'roll?” The Purple One gets heavy...

JUST before Prince slinks onstage, a woman who resembles No Doubt-era Gwen Stefani rocks up to the mic. Yet rather than break into an Orange County ska-punk number, which wouldn't be too surprising given our So-Cal location and the presence of the band's bassist Tony Kanal in the crowd, she instead addresses the 1,700-capacity crowd with a firm warning. “We wanna see all your beautiful faces and not your cameras,” she states with a toothy California grin. “If you are caught by security, you will kindly be escorted from the building.” Of all the still-gigging legends,

Prince is perhaps the most protective of his image. To stop unauthorised shots making their way onto social media, he banned cameraphones at his South By Southwest show a few months back – though the gig was ironically sponsored by Samsung – and he's done pretty much the same on this current tour of US theatres.

Ever the trendsetter, where Prince went, others followed. The Rolling Stones asked punters to leave their phones and cameras at home before their tiny Los Angeles Echoplex show in April, while Yeah Yeah Yeahs and even post-punk newcomers Savages have pleaded with fans to keep their

smartphones in their pockets. The tide against seas of raised gadgets at gigs is in full turn, and on tonight's evidence, Prince is taking the whole matter very seriously indeed. Not long after the show begins a man gets pulled out of the pit for taking a snap on his iPhone. A look of panic crosses his face as he's asked to leave before security force him to delete the picture instead.

Luckily, such stern policing doesn't hamper the fun. If anything, the lack of glowing digital devices adds to the feeling of this being a proper, old-fashioned rock'n'roll show. Prince's old backing band, the vast New Power Generation, have been shunted out in

Still got it: Prince basks in adoration at the City National Grove of Anaheim



exchange for the imposing all-female 3rd Eye Girl. Made up of Donna Grantis on guitar, Ida Nielsen on bass and Hannah Ford on drums, each member was found online by Prince's management, via YouTube videos, suggesting that Prince's rather bold 2010 affirmation that "the internet is over" was a tad hasty. As a band they're taut, talented and stylish – a fitting match for Prince, who tonight spends most of the evening with a guitar strapped to his tiny frame.

"I got a question. Do you like rock'n'roll? Do you love rock'n'roll?" he asks to unsurprising whoops of joy. "Do you like your rock'n'roll funky, though? Let's see." Of course the vintage funk moan and soul slap is still present, but this is the most straight-up rocking Prince has been in years, as evidenced by the way he flamboyantly leans back on the outstretched hands of the front few rows when soloing to "Endorphinmachine".

Discarding his long white leather jacket to reveal a tight monochrome top that acts like a Bridget Riley painting, making him appear even slimmer than he is, he kicks

into his most recent single, "Screwdriver". With its "I'm your driver/You're my screw" refrain, it makes you question just how much he's cleaned up his formerly filthy, "Darling Nikki"-era lyrical act since becoming a devout Jehovah's Witness. His constant smirking also makes proceedings feel like a slightly more sophisticated take on a *Carry On...* film. For the record, there's absolutely no way to sound coy when you're crooning about "emotional ejaculate on the floor" as he does during a ribald "I Like It There", especially when it's accompanied by a cheeky raised eyebrow.

The true passion tonight, however, exists mainly between Prince and his instrument. "We love you California. Not like we love these guitars, though," he says by way of introduction to "Guitar". In fact, the entire show is something of a fervent billet-doux to the six-stringed axe. Relishing the opportunity to trade riffs with the animated Grantis – whose licks are every bit as incendiary as Prince's – the song slides into a Black Sabbath-style stomp. As the venue is bathed in a regal purple light, Ford takes things down to a throbbing drum solo. 3rd Eye Girl have more than proved their rock chops. "How about this band, y'all?" asks Prince later, beaming with pride.

Halfway through the show, two heavy church candles in gothic, metal-worked holders are brought in to flank our frontman, signifying the seduction portion of the evening and an affecting "When We're Dancing Close And Slow". It's followed a few songs on by the timeless, deeply satisfying riff of Tommy James & The Shondells' "Crimson And Clover", as lifted by everyone from Joan Jett to Jarvis Cocker. As Prince merges it seamlessly with "Wild Thing", it's clear we're now into 'hits' territory. A flawless "Little Red Corvette" is followed by "Purple Rain" which is, bizarrely, performed with Prince nowhere to be seen. One can only presume he's off serenading one of the many enraptured young women who were leaping about on the side of the stage for most of the set.

"It's better when we do it together, like everything else," his disembodied voice says of the 'woo-hoo' backing vocals being offered up by the audience.

Normally king of the curtain call, tonight Prince delivers a mere two encores. You're never usually quite sure when one of his shows are over – he came back out a whopping seven times at SXSW – but the fact that he's heading up another show tonight at the same venue limits the set to just under an hour and 45 minutes. As we leave, a man parking up for the next show shouts at us from his car, asking how long Prince was onstage for. "Is that all?" he cackles. "That's why we came to the later show, man!"

LEONIE COOPER

Loudon Wainwright

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON, MAY 3, 2013

Family ties abound, as the supremely funny, cutting singer-songwriter bares all

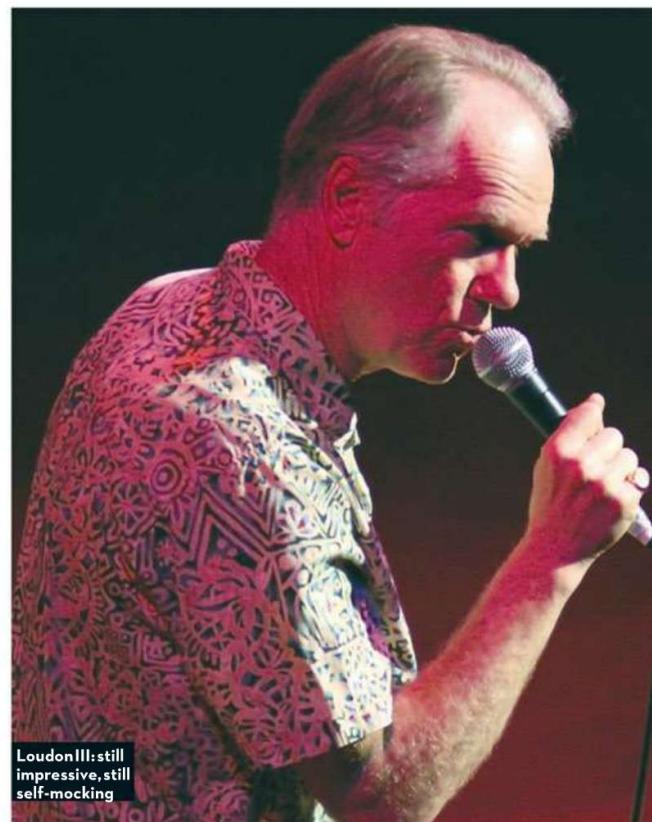
HERE'S ANOTHER SONG in C/With my favourite protagonist – me!" deadpans Loudon Wainwright III on "In C" – a rare excursion from guitar to piano – and there has been no shortage of autobiographical works over the 40 years of Wainwright's prolific career. Yet there are other presences flitting around the Festival Hall stage during this entertaining evening, principally that of his late father, the inspiration for last year's *Older Than My Old Man Now*, a black-humoured meditation on mortality, which is, like many LWIII songs, actually about the inescapable bonds of family.

Loudon's other parent shows up on "White Winos", his late ex, Kate McGarrigle, is present on their co-write, "Over The Hill", and daughter Lucy comes onstage for assorted duets, notably "All In A Family" and a cover of "Love Hurts". His other kids, Martha and Rufus, get namechecked for making Loudon a grandfather ("Rufus! Who knew?" he yells), not forgetting his dogs, who arrive on the hilarious talking blues, "Man With A Dog In The City" and in an overlong spoken paean to a childhood canine chum.

It's the spirit of his father, a *Life* magazine columnist, that's most present, though, with Loudon reciting a marvellous column about buying a Savile Row suit ("a miracle of waistcoat and grey worsted"), and concluding the evening with 2001's "Surviving Twin". There's a sprinkle of other oldies – "The Swimming Song", "You Can't Fail Me Now" – though what prevents the evening lurching into mawkishness is Wainwright's chat and humour, the latter to the fore on the self-mocking "I Remember Sex". At 66 he's still an impressive presence, dapper in chinos and tan shoes, but veering into alarming spells of eyebrow-arching, gurning and tongue-waving amid the strumming, picking and mordant lyricism. Mellowed he may be, but some of Loudon's demons remain happily in play.

NEIL SPENCER

JOHN HOPPER



Loudon III: still impressive, still self-mocking



Silver suit,
gold sounds:
Yeah Yeah
Yeahs' Karen O

I'LL BE YOUR MIRROR

ALEXANDRA PALACE, LONDON, MAY 4, 2013

Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Jon Spencer rip it up

ADD THE FACT that this event has been shorn of its original (now rescheduled) second day to the recent announcement that All Tomorrow Parties' two holiday-camp festivals later this year will be their last, and you have the potential for a rather subdued party. Not if King Khan & The Shrikes are among the early arrivals. Crammed onto a tiny stage, the garage rock'n'soul septet is fronted by an Indo-Canadian vocal powerhouse togged out in a gold-sequinned tunic and feathered headdress. Their loud and loose splicing of James Brown and Sun Ra with the *Nuggets* aesthetic may be limited, but whether he's testifying about life on welfare or going walkabout

among the assembled "freaks, faggots and junkies", King Khan's star status is obvious.

He appears later on the main stage, wearing a woman's wig and a surplice, to introduce longterm pals Black Lips, who power through a raucous set of garage blues/R'n'B, doo-wop and hillbilly punk. Guitarist and singer Cole Alexander is the focus, if only for his demonstrations of projectile spitting and the backwards roll – there's none of the nudity or urination that's made this band notorious. The raw power of "Dirty Hands" and "O Katrina" surfaces from a somewhat rattly mix as does set-closer "Bad Kids", for which King Khan joins them.

Watching from the side of the stage is Jon Spencer. His Blues Explosion are kindred spirits and tonight their

bass-free, blues-punk primitivism underlines just how far ahead of that curve they were, 22 years ago. Spencer is a master of the proselytising yelp and the single knee-drop, both of which get vigorous workouts via "Flavor" and a brilliantly absurd "Bellbottoms", proving that the band's showbiz swagger counts for as much as their incendiary songs. There could hardly be a more striking contrast to JSBE's theatricality than the measured Gallic pop of former Bad Seed Mick Harvey. The guitarist/singer-songwriter and band play through a selection of his interpretations of Serge Gainsbourg, drawn from his *Intoxicated Man* and *Pink Elephants* albums. These stylish and often wry songs (sung in English) draw on breezy jazz, cabaret noir

and bossa nova and see Harvey in a relaxed and jokey mood, despite the odd hesitation.

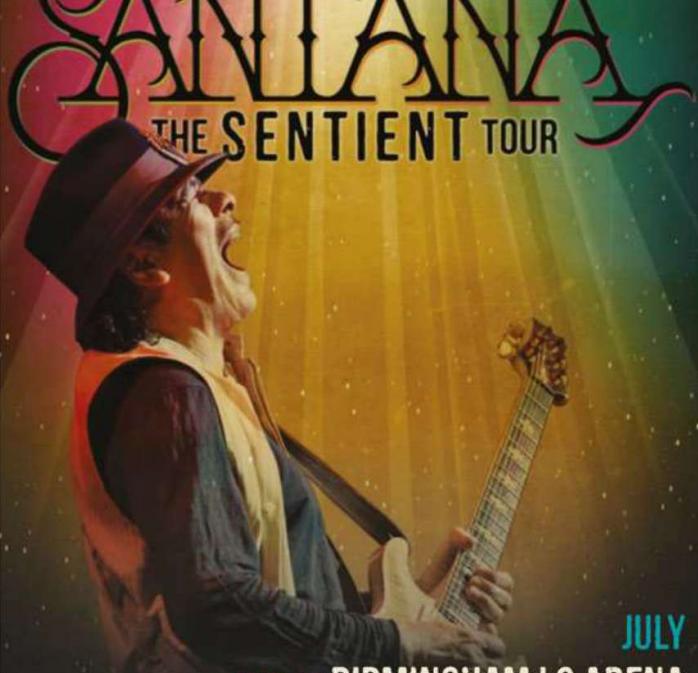
Anticipation for headliners Yeah Yeah Yeahs runs phenomenally high, as this is their first London show in four years. The trio jog onstage with touring bass/keyboard player David Pajo and launch into "Sacrilige", which is minus a gospel choir but no less a master class in synth-pumped dynamics for that. Only a third of their set is given to new album *Mosquito*; YYY know exactly what the feverish crowd wants and seem delighted to deliver it – drummer Brian Chase's broad grin especially must be visible from space. "Bang", "Soft Shock", "Zero", "Y Control", "Heads Will Roll"... the blowtorch hits pour out of them. Karen O – channelling a space matador by way of Inca mythology – is as ever the conductor of their sensual charge, and 75 minutes race by in a blur of glitter, pogoing, abrasive guitar and undisguised glee. Earlier, Cole Alexander had asked, "You know what's the worst part of rock'n'roll?" His own answer is echoed in "Date With The Night", YYY's raucous finale. "Nothin'." **SHARON O'CONNELL**

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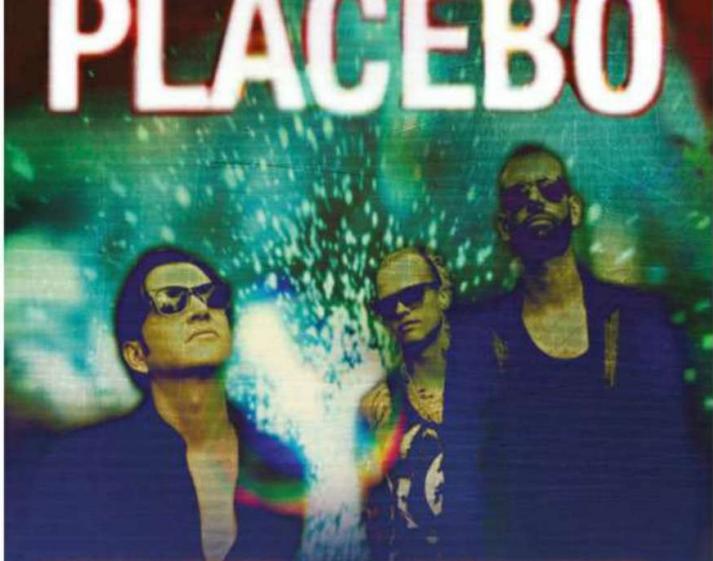
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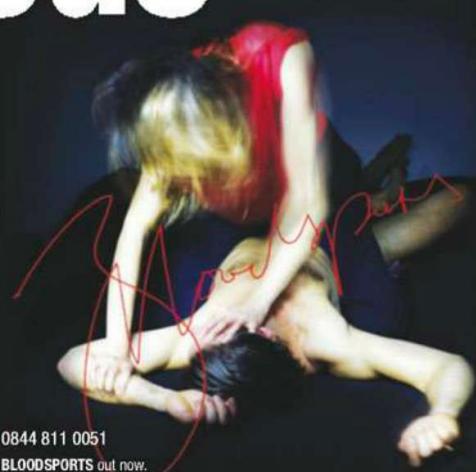
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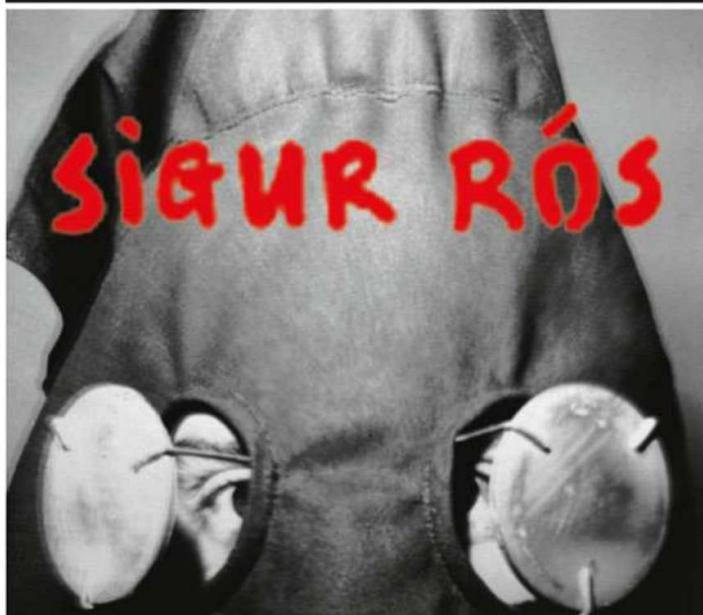
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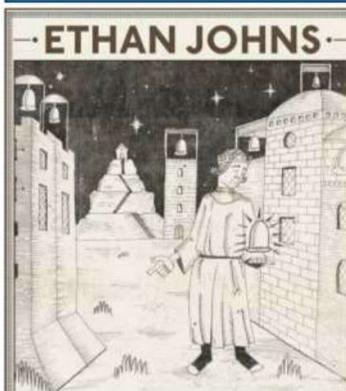
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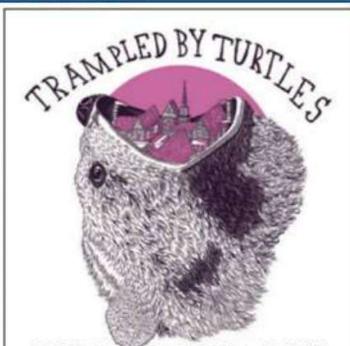
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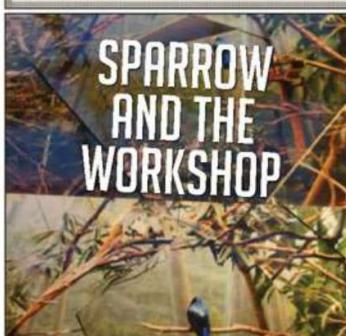
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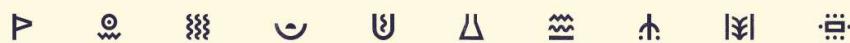
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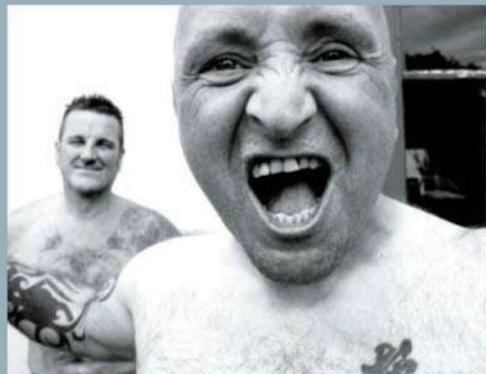
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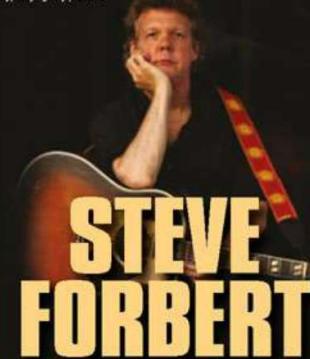
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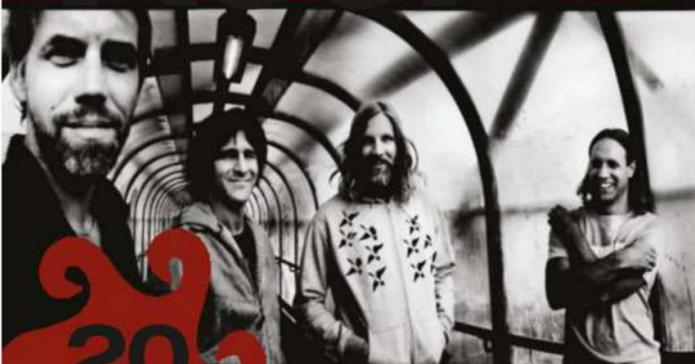
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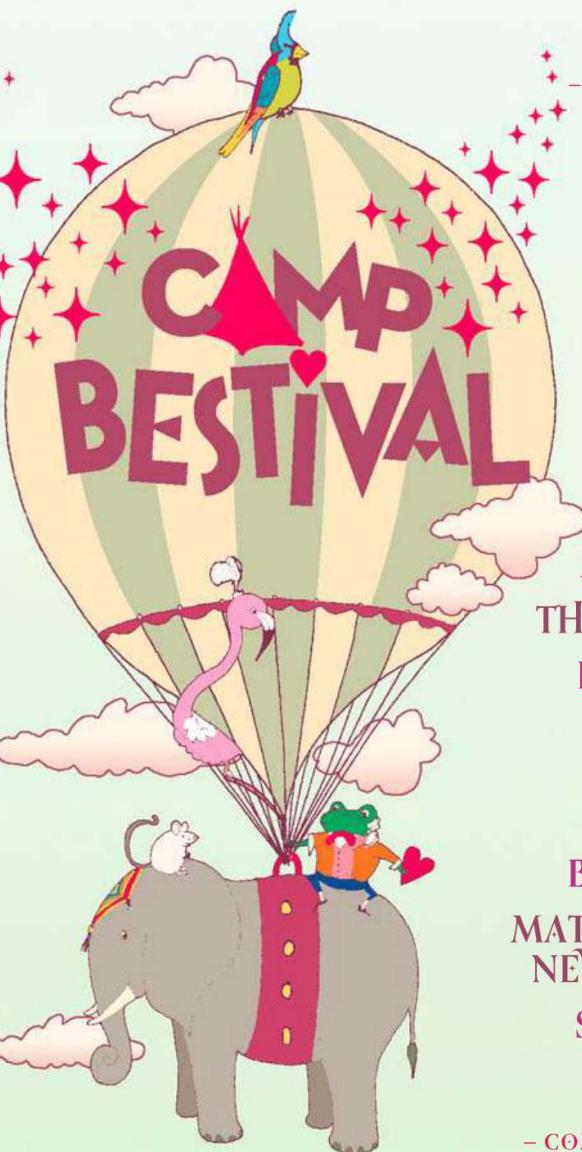
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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

RICHIE HAVENS

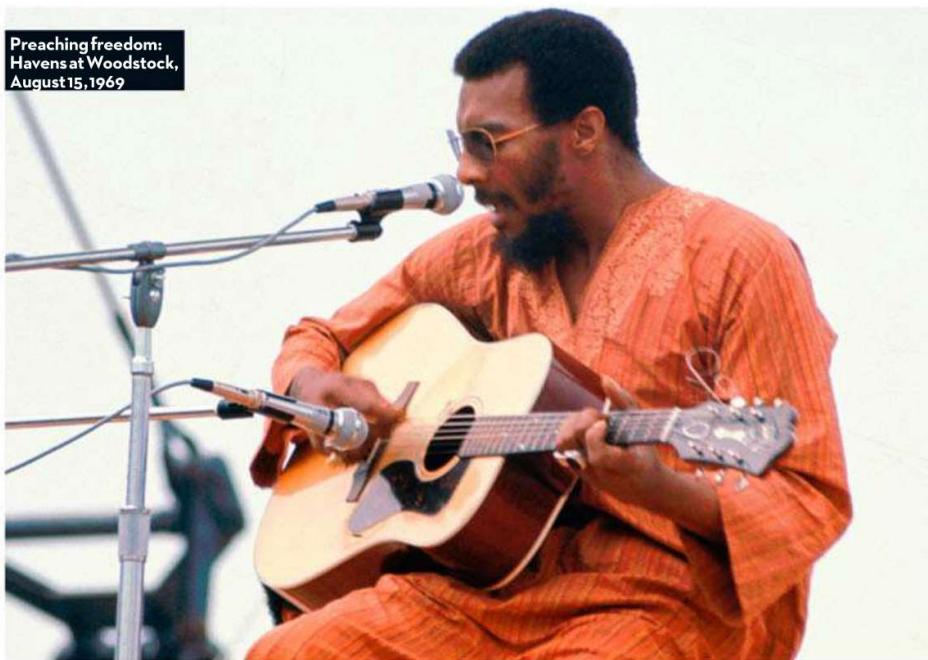
New York singer-songwriter and guitarist

1941-2013

RICHIE HAVENS' CAREER bridged five decades, but he'll forever be remembered as the opening act at 1969's Woodstock festival. In dashiki and sandals, his intense three-hour set, armed only with an acoustic guitar, was capped by an improvised version of the 19th-Century spiritual, "Motherless Child". The song morphed into "Freedom", an impassioned plea for liberty that was swiftly adopted by the US counterculture in the era of civil rights and Vietnam. Havens marvelled at "seeing something I never thought I'd ever see in my lifetime: an assemblage of such numbers of people who had the same spirit and consciousness."

Woodstock served as the jump-off point in his career. *Richard PHavens, 1983*, his third album, became the first to crack the Billboard Top 100. 1969 also saw him play at the Isle Of Wight and start his own Stormy Forest label. Two years later his bold, stirring rework of The Beatles' "Here Comes The Sun" landed him a US Top 20 hit and propelled parent LP, *Alarm Clock*, into the upper end of the album chart. His popularity was such that he became only the second guest (after Barbra Streisand) to appear on consecutive nights on Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show*. Yet Havens, whose gentle, amiable manner was in contrast to the soulful blaze of his vocals and the urgency of his guitar-playing, insisted: "I'm

Preaching freedom:
Havens at Woodstock,
August 15, 1969



not in showbusiness, I'm in the communication business. That's what it's about for me."

Havens had begun as a poet, hanging out in Greenwich Village as a teenager. But then came the early '60s folk movement. "The Village had a magical atmosphere," he told this writer in 2008. "I was hanging out with Allen Ginsberg and those guys. The next thing I know, I'm hearing all the singer-songwriters out there and they're singing songs that changed my life: Dino Valenti, Dave Van Ronk, Bob Gibson, Fred Neil." It was Neil who encouraged him to pick up a guitar.

Signed up by Bob Dylan's manager Albert Grossman, Havens' debut for Verve Records, *Mixed Bag*, landed in 1967. It set the template for the rest of his career: emotive original songs that melded blues, soul, folk and jazz, peppered with innovative and distinctive covers. In August 2009 he returned to Woodstock for its 40th anniversary, performing "Freedom" for a small audience in an open field. He retired from touring the following year, after undergoing kidney surgery.

GEORGE JACKSON

Soul singer and songwriter

1945-2013

He may have recorded over a dozen sides in his own right, but Jackson was better known as a songwriter. "Old Time Rock And Roll" was a hit for Bob Seger, while The Osmonds took "One Bad Apple" to the top of the charts in 1971. Huge success in the UK came in 1988, when "The Only Way Is Up", by Yazz And The Plastic Population, hit No 1. Hired by FAME and Muscle Shoals studios in the '60s, he also wrote for Wilson Pickett, Clarence Carter and ZZ Hill.

SCOTT MILLER

Game Theory singer-songwriter

1960-2013

As singer-songwriter for Game Theory, the underground band he

formed in California in 1981, Scott Miller delivered four albums of wry, smart powerpop that became cult treasures on the college rock circuit. The following decade he formed the more expansive The Loud Family, who issued six LPs up until 2006's *What If It Works*. Miller was also a cultural commentator, his collected articles of pop criticism eventually published in 2010 as *Music: What Happened?*. At the time of his death, he was preparing *Supercalifragile*, a follow-up to Game Theory's 1988 opus, *Two Steps From The Middle Ages*.

CORDELL MOSSON

Parliament/Funkadelic bassist

1952-2013

The elastic basslines of 'Boogie' Mosson were a key feature of the Parliament-Funkadelic collective for four decades. He officially

joined in 1971, also providing occasional rhythm guitar and drums. Mosson contributed to trance-funk classics like *The Clones Of Dr Funkenstein* and *One Nation Under A Groove* and became full-time live bassist when Bootsy Collins left for a solo career in the '70s. He was among 16 members inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 1997. George Clinton said Mosson could play "all the psychedelic stuff and the Motown and the James Brown... He was the heartbeat for a long time."

BRAXTON SCHUFFERT

Hank Williams collaborator

1916-2013

Braxton Schuffert was a driver for a Montgomery meat company when he delivered a drop-off at Lilly Williams' boarding house in 1938.

Picking up a guitar resting against a wall, he briefly began picking and singing, soon joined by the tones of Lilly's 15-year-old son, Hank. "It was a man's voice in a boy's body," recalled Schuffert. "Even then I knew he had a one-of-a-kind voice." Local musician Schuffert swiftly invited Williams onto his WSFA radio station show and served as guitarist on his first ever live performance. He also co-wrote Hank's "Rockin' Chair Daddy" and became an original member of his Drifting Cowboys band.

CHRISSEY AMPHLETT

Divinyls singer

1959-2013

Chrissey Amphlett, an MS sufferer who has died three years after being diagnosed with breast cancer, was best known as frontwoman for Australian rockers

STORM THORGERSON

Sleeve designer and video director

1944-2013

WE FIRST MET in our early teens," Pink Floyd's David Gilmour recalled of his friendship with illustrator and designer Storm Thorgerson. "We would gather at Sheep's Green, a spot by the river in Cambridge, and Storm would always be there holding forth, making the most noise, bursting with ideas and enthusiasm. Nothing has ever really changed." Such was the power of Thorgerson's surreal iconography, creating the timeless imagery for LPs like *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Wish You Were Here*, that the guitarist called him "an inseparable part of our work".

Thorgerson, who has died from cancer, created album covers for many other bands, too, but he'll forever be remembered for his association with Floyd. A schoolfriend of Roger Waters and Syd Barrett, in 1968 he and Aubrey Powell formed



design group Hipgnosis. Taking their name from graffiti daubed onto the front door of their Kensington flat, Thorgerson said the name offered "a nice sense of contradiction, of an impossible co-existence, from Hip = new, cool and groovy, and Gnostic, relating to ancient learning." The duo's first commission was the

Divinyls. Formed in Sydney in 1980, their biggest hit was 1991's "I Touch Myself", which went Top 10 both here and in the US. It embodied the provocative sexuality that Amphlett projected onstage, leading the band through five albums before the break-up of her relationship with co-founder Mark McEntee ended the band in 1996. She and McEntee reformed Divinyls for the Australian Hall Of Fame ceremony a decade later.

JEFF HANNEMAN

Slayer guitarist

1964-2013

The passing of Jeff Hanneman, who has succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver, has robbed the US thrash metal scene of one of its foremost figures. As co-guitarist with Slayer, late '80s albums like *Reign In Blood* and *South Of Heaven* pioneered a fearsomely technical marriage of heavy rock and hardcore punk velocity. Their impact was such that they shifted over 20 million albums. Among those who have paid tribute to Hanneman are Slash, Duff McKagan, Geezer Butler, Dave Mustaine and Slayer frontman Tom Araya, who called him "a lifeline of Slayer, he wrote so many of the songs that the band will always be known for".

CEDRIC 'IM' BROOKS

Ska/reggae saxophonist

1943-2013

Jamaican sax player Cedric Brooks began as a sessioneer in the '60s,

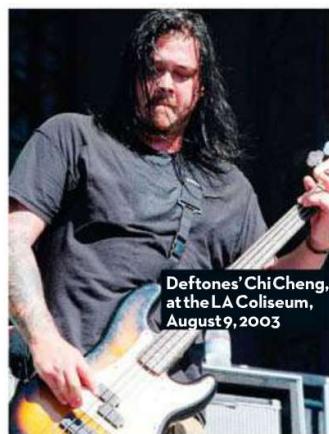
but soon grew into an influential figure on the Kingston scene. His first notable success came as one half of Im & David, where he and trumpeter David Madden issued instrumental hits "Money Maker" and "Mystic Mood" for producer 'Coxsone' Dodd. The early '70s found him teaming up with drummer Count Ossie as The Mystic Revelation Of Rastafari, before going on to form jazz-reggae outfit The Light Of Saba and eventually going solo with 1977's *Im Flash Forward*. In 1999 he replaced Rolando Alphonso in legendary ska pioneers The Skatalites.

CHI CHENG

Deftones bassist

1970-2013

The death of bassist Chi Cheng, who has died after complications from a coma-inducing car smash in 2008, comes as a huge blow to fans of California nu-metal band, Deftones. Cheng's punishing grooves were a foundation of the group's sound across five albums, including 2000's platinum-selling *White Pony* and 2003's self-titled



interstellar cover for Floyd's *A Saucerful Of Secrets* (1968).

Perhaps their most celebrated piece was 1973's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, whose lean, prism-pyramid design was a response to Richard Wright's request to produce something "smarter, neater and more classy" than previous works. Outside of Floyd, Hipgnosis also originated sleeves for T.Rex (*Electric Warrior*), Syd Barrett (*The Madcap Laughs*), Led Zeppelin (*Houses Of The Holy*), Wings (*Venus And Mars*) and Genesis (*Wind & Wuthering*), to name a few. They even branched into book covers, creating the imagery for *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, whose author Douglas Adams called Thorgerson "the best album designer in the world".

When Hipgnosis folded in 1983, he began directing music videos for the likes of Robert Plant, Rainbow, Paul Young and Bruce Dickinson. By the end of the '80s he'd launched his own design company, Storm Studios, for whom he produced sleeves for Muse, Biffy Clyro and The Mars Volta. Thorgerson himself explained that his mostly photographic images were often conceived "to mess around with reality just a bit".

effort that yielded the Top 20 hit, "Minerva". The last to feature Cheng, who joined Deftones in the late '80s, was *Saturday Night Wrist* (2006). His accident was followed by a series of benefit shows for Cheng, a practising Buddhist who also published a book and spoken-word album of poetry *The Bamboo Parachute*.

STEVE MARTLAND

Composer

1959-2013

The bullish, distinctly rhythmic style of Liverpool-born composer Steve Martland, who has died of a heart attack, leant itself to a career outside of the classical norm. 1983's sprawling orchestral work, *Babi Yar*, initially premiered by the St Louis Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic, was later issued by Tony Wilson on the short-lived classical arm of Factory Records. Martland also wrote many pieces for contemporary dance and ballet, while the five-minute "Principia" achieved a degree of wider popularity as the theme for BBC radio's *The Music Machine*. In 1998 he collaborated with Spiritualized on a commission for Edinburgh's Flux Festival.

BOB BROZMAN

Blues steel guitarist and world music explorer

1954-2013

Once described as "a walking archive of 20th Century American music", New York guitarist Bob

Brozman was a consummate interpreter of blues, jazz and ragtime, whose extensive travels led him to explore a highly diverse range of ethnic styles. His many collaborators include Hawaii's Ledward Kaapana, Guinean kora player Djeli Moussa Diawara and Réunion Island accordionist Rene Lacaille. Specialising in National steel guitar, Brozman also wrote books, made instructional videos and, in 1999, co-founded International Guitar Seminars, held annually in California, New York, and Canada. His most recent LP, last year's *Fire In The Mind*, was a broad cross-pollination of blues and world music.

JIMMY DAWKINS

US blues guitarist

1936-2013

Good friend and fellow bluesman Magic Sam was responsible for Mississippi's Jimmy Dawkins landing a deal with Delmark Records in 1969. That year's debut, *Fast Fingers*, not only provided Dawkins with a nickname, but also established a trademark guitar style that helped define the smoother, West Side sound of Chicago. It was the first of 21 albums, his last being 2004's *Tell Me Baby*, that earned him the fandom of more famous names like Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy and Stevie Ray Vaughan. The '80s saw him start his own label, Leric, while his CV as sideman included Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown and Luther Allison.

ROB HUGHES

Feedback...

Email allan_jones@ipcmedia.com or write to: Uncut Feedback, 9th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Or tweet us at twitter.com/uncutmagazine

FAREWELL TRANSMISSION

I just wanted to say thanks for Rob Hughes' lovely eulogy to Jason Molina. I was most upset to learn of his passing, a tragedy at such a young age. Like most *Uncut* readers I can testify to how the magazine has introduced me to so many astounding bands and their albums over the years. For me, one of the greatest finds was the music of Jason Molina and Songs: Ohia/Magnolia Electric Co. that you championed. The *Magnolia Electric Co.* album and *Didn't It Rain* in particular were a revelation – just the kind of heartfelt, dare I say it, downbeat Americana that I love. These have been among the few albums I have felt I can thrust upon friends over the last few years with fevered proclamations of how they will enrich their lives!

I was never lucky enough to see him live, let alone meet him, but I can certainly lament the untimely loss of a huge talent. Barely a week has gone by since 2003 that I have not listened to "Farewell Transmission" at least a couple of times. It now has an even greater power than before. May he rest easy.

Chris Henderson, Aberdeen

REMASTER? OH WELL...

First and foremost, thanks for *Uncut*. This is still the best music mag available. There is so much written about Fleetwood Mac at present, I wonder why nobody else ever raises the question regarding their masterpiece, *Then Play On*, from the Peter Green era, which is still only available on CD in dreadful quality. The original vinyl UK release was a masterpiece and the best album Peter Green ever made. His guitar playing is immaculate and he found a fantastic guitar and songwriting partner in Danny Kirwan. Although many songs are still blues-based it has a strong melodic pop sensibility and it rocks. The playing is impeccable and the album has a beautiful flow. The tracks are separate with very short pauses. They almost flow into each other. It is probably one of the last albums from the '60s that needs proper re-mastering and if so, in its original form, that is, without "Oh Well", but with the correct tracklisting.



Although "Oh Well" is a fantastic song from the same period, it doesn't really belong on *Then Play On* or if at all only as a bonus track at the end, probably along with "Man Of The World" and "The Green Manalishi". "Oh Well" was only included on the American release in order to push the album because it was hit single. Two tracks – "One Sunny Day" and "Without You" – were dropped and the running order was mixed up which really destroyed the album's flow. In addition, the sound of this CD is so poor the people responsible for its release should be put in prison. I can't stop wondering why it hasn't been remastered and re-released. Perhaps Peter Green burnt the tapes in his days of darkness and despair!

Matthias Wilde, Basel, Switzerland

WAY TO REVIEW

I was awaiting the arrival of *Way To Blue – The Songs Of Nick Drake* when the new issue of *Uncut* (Take 193), complete with a review of said album, arrived. Having been lucky to see the original showing of the *Way To Blue* concert on BBC4, then seeing it performed live at Liverpool Philharmonic, I was eager to have a recording of what I witnessed.

I was surprised to see the album

had only been given FIVE OUT OF TEN! Having listened to the album, I'm left wondering if the review copy that writer Jim Wirth had was the same as mine, or if he had actually listened to it. I understand his feelings about "wobbly bottom-lipped reinterpretations", having seen enough of these by various guitarists who hunch themselves over their instruments and whisper Nick's words into a mic in a reverential, but ultimately unimaginative way. But this album contains very few of those.

What I did witness was grown-up musicians performing Nick's music with sensitivity, but also a degree of imagination that expanded it in directions that haven't been taken by many, if any other artistes. Being curated by Joe Boyd, who was so instrumental in Nick's career, guaranteed that it was done with love and reverence that never spills over into the maudlin. The performances and the album are a true celebration of his music, keeping it very much alive, and not merely embalmed.

Interestingly, the one performer that Jim singles out for special mention, Vashti Bunyan, is the weakest performance on the LP for me, which just goes to show how different our feelings about this

record are. Lisa Hannigan's delivery of "Black Eyed Dog", for example, challenges the trembly lipped image that you paint, bordering as it does on defiance. Jeez, I could quote virtually every track as a rebuttal of the stereotype that the *Uncut* review portrays. Jim describes the rest as a "reasonably uninspiring lot".

Well, Jim, you may like to learn that on the strength of the BBC showing alone, I have since been inspired enough to learn more about Krystle Warren, Lisa Hannigan and Scott Matthews, having bought their albums, and been to several of Scott Matthews' gigs (as recently as this week). Luluc sound interesting enough to investigate further, too. Not a bad return for a 5/10 album. The rest of the cast list may not be considered stellar by many people, but that was never part of the premise for the project – just read the sleeve notes!

I understand that reviews are just opinions, and as such are very subjective, but I think this album may have just caught Jim on an off-day. I sincerely hope that anyone who was not lucky enough to have seen the concerts isn't put off buying this beautiful album. It'd be nice to think that if Nick were alive today, he'd approve

CROSSWORD

WIN!



...one of three copies of
John Fogerty's Wrote
A Song For Everyone

of these readings of his music.
I think he would.

Graham Kidd, via email

THE SESSION MAN

It was nice to see Bobby Graham remembered in the Guide To Rock's Greatest Session Players in last month's *Uncut*. I had the distinct pleasure of working with Bob as the producer of my (then) band Capricornus' second 45 in 1977. I remember his right-hand man Dave Anfield wielding a camera in the studio, but never got to see any of the photos. Going in, I didn't know about his impressive track record and I must say he wasn't big on tooting his own horn in this respect. I wasn't aware of most of his earlier works until I stumbled upon his site in the internet age and upon that, buying and reading his memoir, *The Session Man*.

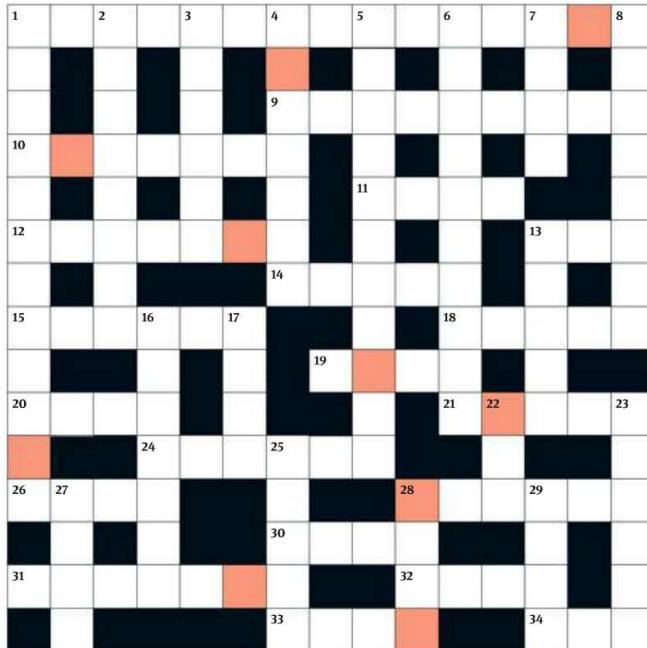
What he did tell about back then, however, was his session work for The Dave Clark Five. That huge drum sound on the early DC5 records was something he was really proud of, justifiably so, I'd say. So I found it a bit disappointing that there was no mention of "Glad All Over" or "Bits And Pieces" among the "Key Sessions". From what he told me and what I read in his book, those were his personal "key sessions" favourites.

Martin Bobbe, The Netherlands

DANCING WITH MR D

Allan Jones' review of Robert Gordon's Muddy Waters biography, *Can't Be Satisfied*, is a well-written account of a thoroughly interesting book [Take 193]. But isn't it time everyone sobered up and stopped believing every mythical account of meeting the diabolic Robert Johnson? Jones summarises the account that Muddy Waters gave of seeing Johnson at Friar's Point. "I got back in the car and left," says Muddy, presumably sensing the shadow of Mr D about to fall on the crossroads. "I crawled away and pulled out, because it was too heavy for me." Surely someone could have noticed that in his 1941 interview with Alan Lomax, released on *The Complete Plantation Recordings*, Muddy Waters flatly states that he never met Robert Johnson. When Muddy Waters met Alan Lomax in 1941, he surely noticed that the first educated white man to take an interest in his music was asking pointed questions about the legendary Johnson. A lot of subsequent fans of the blues went on asking Muddy the same questions. Eventually, he was smart enough to come up with an account that they all wanted to hear.

Mick Gold, via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Bruce Springsteen. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* July 2013 Xword Comp, 9th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: July 3, 2013. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 She was a well-built bird, possibly bald-headed. No, not Sinéad O'Connor, it's Laura Marling (4-1-3-2-5)
- 9 Heady sets turned out by Bon Jovi (5-4)
- 10 "I've got one art O level, it did nothing for me", 1980 (3-4)
- 11 (See 15 across)
- 12 Mott The Hoople coming up? Keep your foot down (5-2)
- 13 (See 31 across)
- 14 (See 20 across)
- 15+16A Spanish girls Baccara admitted they could dance to their own music (3-3-1-3-6)
- 18+22D Brix Smith's group that recruited three ex-Smiths; Gannon, Rourke and Joyce (5-3)
- 19 Austrians whose musical work was "Live Is Life" (4)
- 20+24A Song by Tom Jones, as he sadly got wrong (4-1-4)
- 21+32A "But you'd better listen, man, because the kids know where it's at", 1977 (2-3-4)
- 24 (See 15 across)
- 26 Ska saxophonist who has played with Prince Buster and The Beat (4)
- 28 "There's a _____ outside and it is ragin' / It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls / For the times they are-a-changin'", Bob Dylan (6)
- 30+34A Identical twins Nicole and Natalie Albino from New York could be of any skin, perhaps (4-3)
- 31+33A Prepared for the finish of Iggy & The Stooges after their new album (5-2-3)
- 32 (See 21 across)

ANSWERS: TAKE192

ACROSS

- 1 The Invisible Way, 9
- 2 Automatic, 10+36A Bayou Country, 11+20D Kate Nash, 12Lees, 13Moon, 15TRB, 17+35AI Believe I Can Fly,

19+16D Annie Lennox, 21

Leeds, 24+28A Laid Back,

25 Skin, 26 Green, 27+8D Fix

You, 31 Deja Vu, 33God.

DOWN

- 1+2D Thanks, I'll Eat It Here,
- 3Name, 4+23D In The Dark,
- 5Incesticide, 6La Bamba, 7

Way Down, 14Kiss, 18

Valerie, 22Emma, 27Fight,

28BRMC, 29Clan, 30Lulu,

31Dry, 32Arc, 34Day.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Odorono"

Compiled by: Trevor Hungerford

UNCUT

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IPC INSPIRE



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Nile Rodgers

Up all night to get lucky with the Chic maestro, and the records that changed his life...



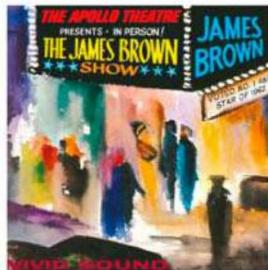
The first record I was ever given

Blue Suede Shoes

Elvis Presley 1956

This was given to me by my grandmother when I was five, and she gave me cute little blue suede shoes to go with it. She was a lindy hopper and could really, really dance.

I first put on the record and danced for her – like a performance. Music had already permeated my entire life, but to get music as a present was amazing to me. It made a massive impression.



A favourite teenage entertainment

James Brown Live At The Apollo

James Brown 1963

My cousin first played it for me when I was around 14, and I was like, "Wow!" You have to put this in context; in those days, we listened to music for entertainment, so the same way a person would play a hand of poker or a game of Scrabble, we listened to records – and we sat down to do it. But it was cerebral entertainment in that we were taking it in.



The first pop song I mastered

A Day In The Life

The Beatles 1967

This was the first song I learned to play on guitar. My transformation from R'n'B happened years earlier when I first heard "The End" by The Doors, but it wasn't as important

as actually learning "A Day In The Life". I was 16 and really struggling, but my mother's boyfriend realised the guitar was out of tune, and once he tuned it, I was able to sit there and play it perfectly.

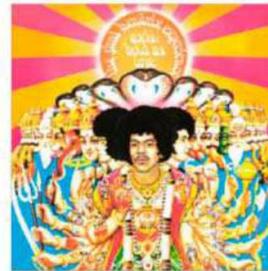


My revelation at the Fillmore East

Born Under A Bad Sign

Albert King 1967

I was at the opening concert for the Fillmore East, which was Big Brother And The Holding Company, Ten Years After and Albert King. It was the first time I'd heard him live and I was literally in tears. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up – all the clichés. I'd never heard a guitarist like that and the next day I ran out and bought the record.



My favourite Jimi Hendrix album

Axis: Bold As Love

The Jimi Hendrix Experience 1967

I can't tell you how many times I played this record from beginning to end, over and over again. The songs, the production, the lyrics... it was so powerful and engrossing as a beautifully crafted piece of work. I bought *Are You Experienced* before, but *Axis...* just changed me. I'm 60 years old now and have been a professional musician for over 40 years, and I still quote Hendrix all the time.



The album that changed my view of jazz

Bitches Brew

Miles Davis 1970

This is where I realised fusion meant exactly that; you could have jazz, rock, pop, folk, and as Miles called it, "new directions in jazz". He was saying that jazz, like any other artform, was limited only by your imagination. I considered myself a jazz purist, but when this came out, it made me realise that fusion was cool.



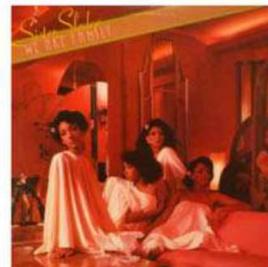
The record that cured my snobbery

Love To Love You Baby

Donna Summer 1975

It showed me that you could have sophisticated, jazz/R&B-style music and get people onto the dancefloor. I had become a jazz snob and used to look down on pop music,

but Donna Summer said, "Nile, it's OK to have people dancing to your music." With this, you could walk down the street with your head held high, and all your jazz guys would go, "Hey, man, I love what you got."



The song that revealed a unique skill

We Are Family

Sister Sledge 1979

Of all the songs I've written, it's the one where I first realised I could visualise an artist concept and translate that into music. I was able to imagine the concept of Sister Sledge, although I'd never met the girls before. It was about understanding who those people are – otherwise, Bernard Edwards and I couldn't write their music.

Nile Rodgers appears on Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories*, out now. **Chic** play Glastonbury Festival (June 28), Beat-Header Festival (July 5), Jazz FM: Love Supreme Jazz Festival (July 6), Birmingham Mostly Jazz Funk & Soul Festival (July 7), London Indigo2 (July 27), Bestival (Sept 5) and Portmeirion Festival No 6 (September 12)

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT:

"It wasn't kick out the jams motherfucker, it was let's have a joint and a buttercup sandwich..."

REKORDERLIG
CIDER

BEAUTIFULLY SWEDISH

ERIKA LINDBERG FREESTYLE SURFER



BRITISH SUMMERTIME IS HERE
#CELEBRATETHESUN