



**NEIL YOUNG** ON THE ROAD  
ACCESS ALL AREAS!

"So don't you say a word/Or reveal a thing you've learned..."

# UNCUT

**SIOUXSIE  
TOM PETTY  
OTIS REDDING  
BEACH BOYS  
THE STRYPES**

**40 PAGES OF  
REVIEWS**



**ROBBIE ROBERTSON  
EXCLUSIVE!**

**"It was pure, from the source"**

# THE BAND

**» Music From Big Pink *The inside story* «**

**THE ROLLING  
STONES**  
HYDE PARK '69  
REVISITED

**NICO & THE  
MARBLE INDEX**  
BY JOHN CALE

**RAY MANZAREK**  
R.I.P.

**PLUS**  
JOHN MARTYN  
JOHNNY MARR  
ANDY KAUFMAN  
RICHARD HELL

**AND**  
MICHAEL CHAPMAN  
SCUD MOUNTAIN BOYS  
DEVENDRA BANHART  
GRANDMASTER FLASH





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Devendra Banhart

# Are we rolling?



**W**HEN IT'S ANNOUNCED that The Rolling Stones are planning a free concert in Hyde Park on July 5, 1969, we decide we have to be there. There are four of us, 16-year-old school friends, music a common bond between us. We get an early train from South Wales to London and by mid-morning we're at Paddington. We don't have to ask for directions or try to make navigational sense of the A-Z one of us has, a tatty thing rescued from the back of a drawer that looks like it might date back to before the Great Fire, last referred to by someone in a periwig and bloomers. No, we just join a huge crowd with whom, by the look of them, we share a common destination. Many thousands of us walk through Sussex Gardens, onto the Bayswater Road. The crowd gets bigger as we move along, people pouring into it from side streets, coming up from the tube stations at Marble Arch, Lancaster Gate and Queensway. There are hardly any police around, just a few Bobbies in shirt sleeves looking a bit stunned by this enormous drift of people towards the Serpentine, which is now in sight. We can see a stage, a banner over it, the whole thing rickety compared to what you see at such events today. There are speaker stacks on either side of it, some sparse decoration, what looks like a palm tree.

In the pictures I've just been looking at, you can clearly see where we ended up, slightly to the left of the stage as we're looking at it, under the first bank of trees, the ground in front of us sloping gently down towards some makeshift barriers manned by Hells Angels, who look less the strutting desperadoes of legend than a motley bunch of lags in fancy dress. The crowd continues to grow around us. Every time you turn to look, the audience seems to have doubled, more and more people arriving by the minute, no end to them. The crowd goes on for what seems like forever and if it isn't quite the quarter of a million of popular estimate, it's still a lot of fucking people.

We're all sitting down, of course, because that's what you did in

those days. You went to a gig anywhere and sat cross-legged on the floor and, you know, dug the music. There's none of the shrill hysteria that these days attaches itself to festival crowds, no mosh-pit full of flailing bodies, no heaving surges, jostle or crush. There's a marked absence of drunken loutishness, too, since there's nowhere to buy booze. There's nowhere to buy anything, in fact. There are no facilities at all, including toilets, which I strangely don't remember being a problem. It's blisteringly hot, because back then we had actual summers, and the prevailing mood speaks of nothing but good vibes, which on reflection may have had a lot to do with the amount of dope being smoked. Whatever, it's all very groovy.

In many versions of the day's narrative, as told to Peter Watts in the terrific feature he's contributed to this month's issue, the Stones when they appear are an anti-climax. This doesn't seem to me to be the case at all. They are admittedly ramshackle at times and often the guitars are out of tune, but who really cared? This is the first time they've played since the police persecution that almost saw Mick and Keith behind bars, Mick Taylor is making his debut and Brian Jones has just died. In the circumstances I am inclined to think they are positively heroic, even if it is slightly creepy to see Keith Richards in daylight.

In Peter's article, which starts on page 22, Mick is ridiculed for his reading of Shelley's poem *Adonais* – "Peace, peace! He is not dead..." – in tribute to Brian. But to me this seems a genuinely emotional moment, nothing ridiculous or pretentious about it at all, a highlight of an amazing day.

If you were there, tell me about it at the usual address.

Jagger reads Shelley at Hyde Park '69



MIKE RANDOLPH/REX FEATURES

*Marjorie*

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# INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring SCUD MOUNTAIN BOYS | ANDY KAUFMAN | FUCK BUTTONS

FIRST LISTEN

## SOLID HEIRLOOMS!

**The unheard JOHN MARTYN:  
*Uncut's* sneak preview of  
a revelatory new 18CD boxset...**

**A**T FIRST, IT seems like a typical early John Martyn live show, a stripped-down and intimate set of folk/jazz originals, with the occasional detour into other artists' songs, like Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right". But then, after leading his small audience through a hearty singalong of "Singin' In The Rain", Martyn straps on an electric guitar...

It's May 1972, and Martyn is about to do something bold, arguably as bold as when Dylan went electric for the first time at the Newport Folk Festival seven years earlier. Launching into "I'd Rather Be The Devil", the subdued folkie makes a radical shift from the contents of his first five albums, adding reverb and feedback via an Echoplex effects pedal.

The Echoplex would make its full studio bow on the following year's *Solid Air* (after a brief appearance with acoustic guitar on 1971's *Bless The Weather*), but this show in Richmond, London, was the first time fans were introduced to a new John Martyn, and it features in full on the forthcoming *Island Years*, an expansive 18-disc boxset covering Martyn's 20 years at the label.

"The Hanging Lamp was a Monday night folk club in the crypt of a church in Richmond that John first played in 1968 and returned to several times up until the early '70s," says John Hillarby, Martyn's longtime archivist, who's been working on the boxset for the past 12 months. "It was a few doors down from another folk club, but this was the big one in the area, and this was a really significant gig in John's history."


Hillarby reckons less than 100 fans attended the show, but luckily one of them kept a high-quality recording straight from the mixing desk, and it now forms part of the five discs of previously unreleased material on the box, in addition to the dozen studio albums made for Island.

"It's an incredible find; very few of John's fans were even aware there was a tape of the gig," says Hillarby, who has been running the official Martyn website since the late '90s. "There's always been a healthy trade in bootlegs of John's stuff, although trade is probably the wrong word. For the most part it's fans exchanging stuff rather than offering it for sale."

**"The buzz  
is finding  
these versions  
no-one's heard  
since the day they  
were recorded..."**







John Martyn at his  
Hastings home with  
adopted son Wesley,  
September 8, 1971



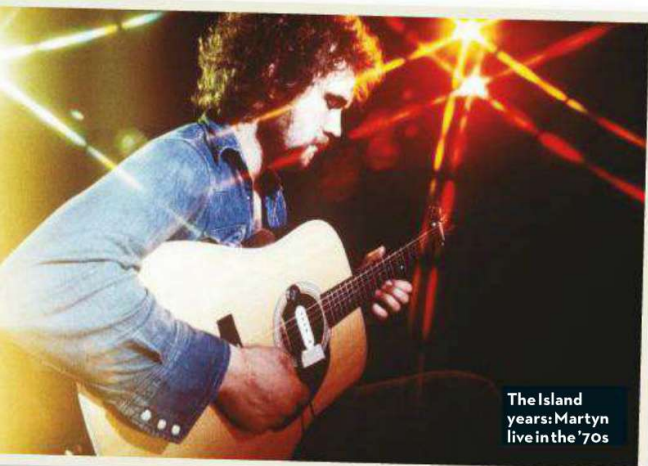
Hillarby is still readying the box for its September 9 release and estimates the final running order will be "somewhere in the region of 300 tracks. We've included the 12 Island albums in their entirety, but not many of the extras that were on the deluxe reissues of things like *Solid Air* or *Grace And Danger*. We wanted to put those to one side and focus more on tracks that haven't been heard before.

"There are a few things even Island didn't realise they had because they were hidden away on the other side of reel-to-reel tapes and forgotten about. That was the real buzz for me, finding these versions no-one's heard since the day they were recorded. There's a couple of very nice takes of 'Small Hours' that I wasn't previously aware of."

In addition to the Hanging Lamp gig, the set will also include a 1977 show from Sydney, not heard since it was broadcast on Australian radio at the time, and a reupholstered version of 1975's *Live At Leeds* including tracks left off the original vinyl.

Hillarby and Martyn, who died in 2009, became close friends working on the website, so the boxset has been a labour of love. "John still means so much to me, his music speaks to me every day. Putting this set together has been like having a whole bunch of new conversations with him."

TERRY STAUNTON



The Island years: Martyn live in the '70s

## LET THE GOOD THINGS COME

### INSIDE OUT!

Three unheard treasures to be found in John Martyn's *Island Years* box...

#### BLACK MAN AT THE SHOULDER

An 18-minute freeform jam of a song Martyn first recorded for *One World* in 1977, but which Chris Blackwell ordered removed from the album. The Island boss feared the lyric's satire on racism ("Ain't you scared... he's gonna steal your woman away?") might be misinterpreted by listeners, or even the label's black signings. "The National Front were on the news every night, and Chris worried they might adopt it as a campaign song," says Hillarby.

#### HI-HEEL SNEAKERS

Tommy Tucker's 1964 R'n'B standard was the first record the teenage Martyn ever

bought. His own version, an outtake from sessions for 1980's *Grace And Danger*, is "much jazzier and more Martyn-ified than the original".

#### THE APPRENTICE

The entire 1987 album vetoed by Blackwell, subsequently released in a re-recorded version, funded by Martyn, on an independent label two years later. "That was the parting of the ways with Island, they were expecting something a bit more jazzy and they really weren't happy with it. The label had pretty much let John do what he wanted before, but now his contract was up he decided it was time to move on."

The green Garden Stage at End Of The Road



## TOP OF THE BILL

# UNCUT COMES TO THE END OF THE ROAD!

Don't worry! We're just helping out at our favourite festival this August...

As a rule, we're a little wary of the sort of marketing talk that gets used when magazines hook up with festivals. This month, though, we really are genuinely thrilled to announce that *Uncut* have entered into partnership with the UK event that best reflects our own tastes and philosophies – End Of The Road Festival.

End Of The Road takes place, as usual, at the rather idyllic Larmer Tree Gardens in North Dorset, this year between August 30 and September 1. Typically, the bill is full of artists dear to our hearts, including Belle & Sebastian, David Byrne & St Vincent, Eels, Dinosaur Jr, Matthew E White, Mark Mulcahy, Parquet Courts and Sigur Rós.

At least some of our attention, though, will be focused on the rustic and intimate Tipi Tent, which we'll be hosting this

year. Among the artists confirmed to appear there are Caitlin Rose (who we've interviewed for next month's issue), Dawes, John Murry, Mike Heron & Trembling Bells, The Barr Brothers, William Tyler and Julianna Barwick (as you can see, it's pretty obvious why we've got involved). There'll be secret late-night sets, and we also have plans for a few Q&A sessions with some of the acts, which we'll reveal a bit nearer the event.

In the meantime, tickets are still available for £175. To buy them, and for full details of what promises to be a fantastic weekend, have a look at [www.endoftheroadfestival.com](http://www.endoftheroadfestival.com). We'll see you by the cider bus in a few weeks' time...



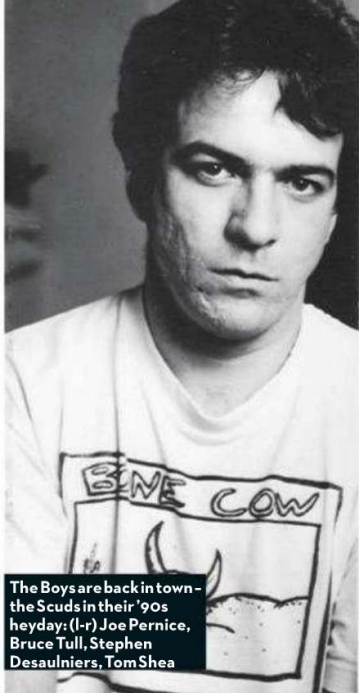
END OF THE ROAD FESTIVAL

10th AUG - 1st SEPT 2013 LARMER TREE GARDENS, NORTH DORSET

Caitlin Rose: heading for idyllic Dorset







The Boys are back in town—the Scuds in their '90s heyday: (l-r) Joe Pernice, Bruce Tull, Stephen Desaulniers, Tom Shea



# Return To Scud Mountain

Hello again, JOE PERNICE's SCUD MOUNTAIN BOYS; Americana trailblazers, back in gear after 14 years away

**W**HEN *UNCUT* SPEAKS to Joe Pernice, he is holed up in his workshop, rebuilding a vintage mountain bike for his Toronto neighbour, Norman Blake of Teenage Fanclub. "I have my little room at my house, where I have my guitars and my bike stuff, and I just move around. I work on a bike, work on a song, work on a bike. I'm drinking my coffee, I have my radio on, and I'm thinking, 'What have I ever done to deserve this?'"

If all of this sounds like glorious semi-retirement, it isn't. Though Pernice has slowed up in recent years, with a dalliance into fiction writing, he now finds himself with three albums scheduled in six months. His band with Blake, The New Mendicants, will release their debut LP in January 2014. The Pernice Brothers have a set slated for autumn. More immediately, Pernice's first band, The Scud Mountain Boys, return with a new album, *Do You Love The Sun*, plus *The Early Year*, a 2CD reissue of their first two albums.

The Scuds' reunion is perhaps the most surprising. Formed in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1991, they released three albums of elegant Americana before Pernice quit in 1997, tired of the limitations of their sound. Pernice hadn't spoken to the other members – Stephen Desaulniers, Bruce Tull and Tom Shea – for 14 years, until the death of a mutual friend led him to consider a reunion. After some tentative emails, Desaulniers and Shea joined him at a Pernice show, and the enmities melted away.

"I grabbed my balls, and those guys were big dudes about it, and they showed up. Within minutes we were just beyond all of the bullshit. We were back and having a great time. It was one of those rare chances where you really do get a chance to mop shit up."

In their first incarnation, the Scuds were labelled alt.country; a misnomer for a group more fixated on Jimmy Webb than Hank Williams. "I can understand that, back then, if someone heard a mandolin or a pedal steel and acoustic guitars on



Joe Pernice in 2013

songs then it was an easy label," says Pernice. "That was just the times."

Musically, the Scuds now seem less out of time, and Pernice is delighted that the chemistry with his old bandmates is intact. "There's an undeniable sound, an undeniable vibe, between the players. I don't think that stuff goes away."

Meanwhile, Pernice and Blake have been freewheeling towards a musical understanding, with an EP, and some tentative live dates, to be followed by a "fuller, but still mellow" album. "We toured Australia. It was just the two of us, so there was a lot of singing. I've always wanted to sing with Norman, he's got a great voice. It's a thrill for me every day we played 'Everything Flows', Norman's song off of *A Catholic Education*. Oh my God, what a song! To be able to play it stripped down, and sit back and sing that with him, it tears me up every night."

ALASTAIR MCKAY

*The Scud Mountain Boys' The Early Year* is released by *One Little Indian* on July 8, as is *The New Mendicants' debut EP, "Australia 2013"*. *Do You Love The Sun* follows on August 26

Picture caption

## A QUICK ONE

➤ "Every year the promoters start calling and offering us piles of money to get together again," Tommy Stinson told *Uncut* last year, "but it's never gonna happen unless we feel it's the right time." Which it is now, apparently. Stinson and Paul Westerberg will be reforming the mighty **Replacements** for festival shows at Riot Fest Toronto (August 24-25), Riot Fest Chicago (September 13-15) and Riot Fest Denver (September 21-22).

➤ After his US summer stretch with **Wilco** and **My Morning Jacket**, the inexhaustible **Bob Dylan** returns to the UK for soirées at Glasgow Clyde Auditorium (Nov 18, 19, 20), Blackpool Opera House (22, 23, 24) and London's Albert Hall (26, 27, 28).



Depeche Mode

➤ "You fuckin' idiot! You've gone too far!" Gentle advance warning that our next *Ultimate Music Guide* is on the rich subject of **Depeche Mode**. The usual routine: in-depth new reviews, alongside intense and lurid old features from the **NME** and *Melody Maker* vaults. Find it in UK stores from July 31.

➤ Visit [uncut.co.uk](http://uncut.co.uk) for daily news updates, reviews, blogs and the best features from the *Uncut* archives.

## CHEWING THE SCUDS... How to buy the Mountain Boys on CD



### PINE BOX

CHUNK, 1995

The Scuds recorded a full studio version of their debut, but decided the four-track versions recorded around Bruce Tull's kitchen table were better. "Luckily," Pernice says, "at the time, doing things lo-fidelity was getting acceptable."



### DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

CHUNK, 1995

Also recorded in Tull's kitchen, now packaged with *Pine Box* as *The Early Year*, this is Pernice's least favourite Scuds album. "We were just thinking of getting our songs out to more people."



### MASSACHUSETTS

SUB POP, 1996

A masterclass in whacked-out melancholy and maudlin wit. The arrangements are more self-assured, but true to the kitchen table ethos. A great album, Pernice suggests, "at the risk of sounding like a jerk".



# "Now, Andy did you hear about this one?..."

Uncovered three decades after his death; the strange, unheard comedy of ANDY KAUFMAN

**I**N THE WORLD of Andy Kaufman, nothing is quite as it seems. A comedian who famously contended that the moon landings were faked (a position developed by REM in "Man On The Moon", their song about him), in his work, Kaufman was preoccupied by hoaxes, and ways in which everyday life could be given an edge, or have its assumptions challenged.

"We'd be driving down the street in the car, people would pull up next to us, and he'd roll down the windows and start choking me," explains his widow, Lynne Margulies. "And I would go, 'Help! Help!' and we would speed away. It was purely for his own entertainment, and to shock people – that's what he considered fun."

This month, some of Kaufman's conceptual, confrontational humour becomes available for the first time on a comedy album called *Andy And His Grandmother*. The verifiable truth of the thing is this: in the 1970s, Kaufman's friend and co-conspirator Bob Zmuda worked for a writer he called "Mr X" (most probably the bipolar screenwriter Norman Wexler), who had Zmuda record everyday events on a microcassette recorder. Kaufman was delighted with the possibilities the machine presented in his own

work and, inspired by Steve Allen's prank phone calls, began taping. At his death, there were around 40-50 hours of tapes: featuring surreal improvised riffs in taxicabs, arguments with an ex-girlfriend called Beverley, and a recording of Kaufman (in character as "Norman") being beaten up by a security guard in a movie theatre for refusing to leave when the credits rolled. This one, particularly, sounds like a spoof, but it isn't at all. "He pursued that," says Margulies. "He went so far as to sue the theatre for not letting him watch the credits and for kicking him out. I have the affidavit."

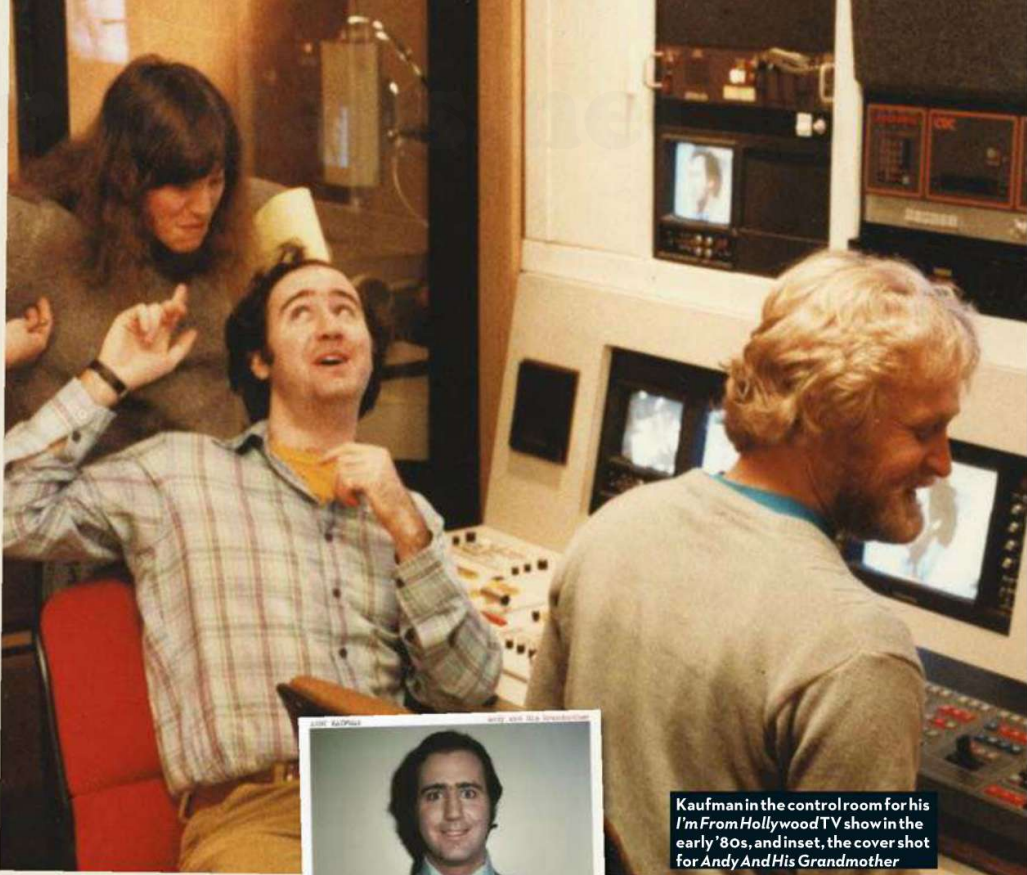
It's an extremely odd album, but it has a great depth and cumulative effect, which inclines you to support Kaufman's view of himself as something more than just a comedian. In the UK, we probably know him best from his role as Latka Gravas in *Taxi*, but in his own work, Margulies feels Andy was proudest of his wrestling project – in which he challenged the women of America to wrestle him. After writing him extraordinary letters, they often

did. The project reached a surreal conclusion when pro-wrestler Jerry Lawler decided to teach Kaufman a lesson on *Letterman* in 1982, an incident you must

YouTube right now. Suffice to say, the truth of the situation was more complex.

Since he worked a lot with hoaxes, Kaufman's death from lung cancer in 1984 was for his more extreme fans, perhaps inevitably, not the end. The last track on the album provides more fuel for this, finding Kaufman discussing with Bob Zmuda the notion of faking his own death. But for his widow, is the whole "faked death" idea not simply distasteful? "It can get a little tiring. I have someone emailing me now who thinks I'm a part of every plot out there," says Margulies. "But what's great about the world of Andy is, the more I deny something, the more they believe it. And Andy would have loved that." **JOHN ROBINSON**

*Andy And His Grandmother* is released July 15 on *Drag City*



Kaufman in the control room for his *I'm From Hollywood* TV show in the early '80s, and inset, the cover shot for *Andy And His Grandmother*

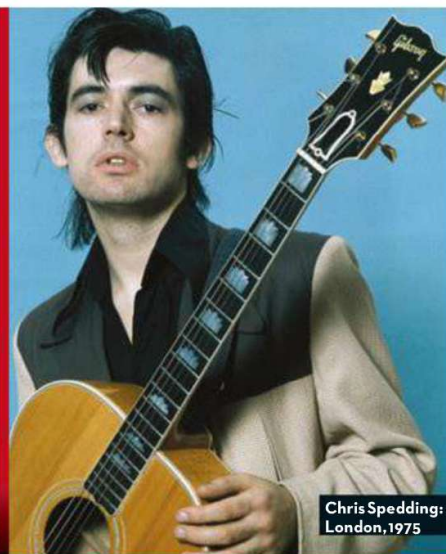
## AND ON GUITAR... CHRIS SPEDDING

### UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

► Derbyshire-born Spedding's first major session was for Jack Bruce (in 1969), followed by Harry Nilsson and Rodriguez. Spedding then formed the short-lived Sharks and was scheduled to audition for the Stones but, by the time Jagger called him, he'd signed up for Roy Harper's backing band, Trigger. Spedding also recorded and played live with John Cale, produced demos for the Sex Pistols, had a 1975 solo hit with "Motor Bikin'", and played guitar with The Wombles. In the late '70s he moved to NYC and worked with

rockabilly singer Robert Gordon. He toured with a reformed Roxy Music, and currently plays with King Mob.

**KEY SESSIONS:** Jack Bruce's *Songs For A Tailor* and *Harmony Row*, Harry Nilsson's *Nilsson Schmilsson*, Rodriguez's *Coming From Reality*, Elton John's *Madman Across The Water*, Brian Eno's *Here Come The Warm Jets*, Roy Harper's *HQ*, John Cale's *Slow Dazzle*, Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds*, Joan Armatrading's *Me, Myself, I*, Paul McCartney's *Give My Regards To Broad Street* and Tom Waits' *Rain Dogs*. **PHIL KING**



Chris Spedding: London, 1975







Surprising themselves:  
Fuck Buttons' Andrew  
Hung and Benjamin Power

WE'RE NEW HERE

# FUCK BUTTONS

Recommended this month: the noisiest, unluckiest stars of the 2012 Olympics...

**"T**HINKING ABOUT THIS stuff is interesting," says Benjamin Power, brow furrowed in puzzlement. Power is Skyping *Uncut* from a Spanish villa, where he's spending a few days' downtime following a show by his group Fuck Buttons at Barcelona's Primavera Sound festival. Four years separates the duo's second album, 2009's Andrew Weatherall-produced *Tarot Sport* and its follow-up, *Slow Focus*. Plenty of time to consider the thematic content of one's work, you might think. But when talking about Fuck Buttons' music, it's in Power's nature to evade knotty theorising, preferring the language of colour and texture.

"There were a lot of greens, earth tones on the last record," he thinks. "But this one is a little more sophisticated. The palette is refined. When I hear it, I see golds and blacks."

Live, Power and musical partner Andrew Hung face each other across a chaotic musical spread: keyboards, modular synths, floor toms, even a toy microphone from a Fisher-Price karaoke machine. They aren't quite a dance duo, or a noise duo. Instead, their music is euphoric and melodic, saturated and loud, like a fusion of the alien synth kosmische of Tangerine Dream and the sustained white-outs of My Bloody Valentine circa *Loveless*.

"People might look at our equipment and think it looks pretty shitty, that it'll make an awful sound," says Power. "But once it's integrated into the system, it all fits."

Both hail from Worcester, but met properly while studying in Bristol: Power took illustration, Hung fine art. Their early live performances caught the attention of Barry Hogan of promoters All Tomorrow's Parties, who would release their 2008 debut, *Street Horrrsing*, on ATP Recordings. Today, they self-record in their studio, Space Mountain – a characteristically celestial title for the refurbished room

beneath Power's East London home, a converted dairy. *Slow Focus* was carved out here live, jamming face to face through practice amps. "That way you're able to gauge ideas as you write," says Hung. "You throw ideas at one another and get immediate reactions as to whether they're any good."

It's an approach that's paying off. The pair caught the ear of Rick Smith of Underworld, who beamed the Fuck Buttons songs "Surf Solar" and "Olympians" – plus music from Power's solo synth project Blanck Mass – to a worldwide audience of 900 million at the Olympics Opening Ceremony. Power calls it "an honour – if a strange and unexpected honour", but he's not too cool to dismiss it. "I actually went past the Olympic Stadium, while it was being built, and the sentiment feels apt," he grins. "But of course we had no plans to take it there."

*Slow Focus* isn't, however, out to milk post-Olympics positivity. Tracks like "Brainfreeze" and "Stalker" paint in a darker hue, perhaps a consequence of the duo's current listening, which includes techno brutalist Mika Vainio and gloom soundscaper The Haxan Cloak. "There's melody in there, still a playful feel," says Power. "But there's a slight violence to it that's not really apparent in our other records."

"It's more internal," reckons Hung. "It gets inside you a bit more."

"Andy and I aren't depressive people, far from it," says Power. But, he explains, nothing Fuck Buttons do is preconceived. The sounds lead the way, he says, and everything else follows: "We still like the idea we might surprise ourselves."

LOUIS PATTISON

**I'M YOUR FAN**  
"Their music was used during some crucial moments in the Opening Ceremony... there's a passion and directness in their work"  
**Rick Smith, Underworld**



*Slow Focus* is released by ATP Recordings on July 22. Fuck Buttons play the Green Man Festival, Black Mountains (August 15-18) and the ArcTanGent Festival, Bristol (August 31), before embarking on a full UK tour between September 8 and 17.

## THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

### TY SEGALL

**Sleeper** DRAG CITY

So much for the year off... The garage-rock hit machine chills out with a set of dreamier, folkier pop songs in the vein of early Bolan or Michael Chapman.

### HANS CHEW

**Life And Love** UNKNOWN

The NYC pianist and longtime *Uncut* favourite returns with a second, rockier solo set of roistering bar-room jams.

### VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Scared To Get Happy**

CHERRY RED

A compendious 5CD study of the rise and fall of British indie-pop, 1980-1989. *Uncut*'s Picture Researcher Phil King (right) has some connection to roughly half the 134 tracks.



Bassace Phil King  
(Apple Boutique,  
The Servants, etc)

### JULIAN COPE

**Revolutionary Suicide** HEAD HERITAGE.

A relatively poppy 2CD set from the ever-righteous Archdrude. Involves Odin, "hard drugs" and an outstanding song about "The Armenian Genocide".

### DAWN OF MIDI Dysnomia

High-concept, maximum virtuosity, ultra-compelling jazz trio organically construct electronica-like grooves out of piano, bass and drums.

### SAMUEL PURDEY

**Musically Adrift** TUMMY TOUCH

Lost since the late '90s: Brighton duo meticulously recreate the sound of the Doobies and Steely Dan. Now fit for purpose in a post-Daft Punk world.

### LACE CURTAIN

**Falling/Running EP** MEXICAN SUMMER

Grizzled Aussie garage-rock vets reinvent themselves as an impeccable sleek post-disco act, worthy of the classic '80s Factory roster.

### CIAN NUGENT & THE COSMOS

**Hire Purchase** MATADOR

A very desirable one-off single from the Irish guitar prodigy and his discreetly psychedelic new band.

### KANYE WEST Yeezus

A pseudo-transgressive, sometimes vile album designed to generate the maximum number of online thinkpieces. Some of the tunes (cf "Black Skinhead") are very good.

### LOW

**Do You Know How To Waltz?**

WWW.SOUNDCLOUD.COM/DRONE-NOT-DRONES

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# THIS WHEEL'S ON FIRE

Your guide to this month's free CD

## 1 DAUGHN GIBSON

### The Sound Of Law

Quite a dramatic opening to the CD this month, courtesy of a stentorian ex-trucker from Philly. Gibson has a radical, electronically adjusted take on Americana (Mark Lanegan's *Blues Funeral* is perhaps its closest relative), while his baritone is similar to that of '70s Scott Walker.

## 2 ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF

### Liturgic Of Light

Sustaining the fairly ominous mood, Von Hausswolff is a singer-songwriter from Gothenburg with a grandiose, borderline-gothic musical vision pitched somewhere between Kate Bush and alt.country. While Gibson operates in the earthiest terrain, Von Hausswolff provides vaulting, ethereal contrast.

## 3 LUMERIANS

### Dogon Genesis

An Oakland five-piece, Lumerians are the sort of droning psych bands who have, one suspects, a fair few Spacemen 3 and Suicide LPs in their collections. From their third album; worth filing alongside those by Bay Area kindred spirits Wooden Shjips.

## 4 ALELA DIANE

### The Way We Fall

A highlight of the fourth solo LP of chamber-folk by Joanna Newsom's old Nevada City schoolmate. *About Farewell* is plainly a divorce album, but one in which Diane retains a calm dignity rather than falling into spite and recrimination.

## 5 GRANT HART

### Shine, Shine, Shine

Since the demise of Hüsker Dü some



Lightning Dust

25 years ago, Hart's career has been rather erratic. How better, though, to return to action with a new record deal (from Domino, no less), and a concept album based on an unpublished William Burroughs remake of *Paradise Lost*? *The Argument* is our pick of the month, reviewed on page 61.

## 6 THE DEL-LORDS

### Flying

Something of a great lost New York bar band from the 1980s, The Del-Lords make a surprise return to action after a two-decade hiatus in 2010. The consummately crafted "Flying" is plucked from *Elvis Club*, their first new album in 23 years.

## 7 BP FALLON & THE BANDITS

### The War To Fight For Love

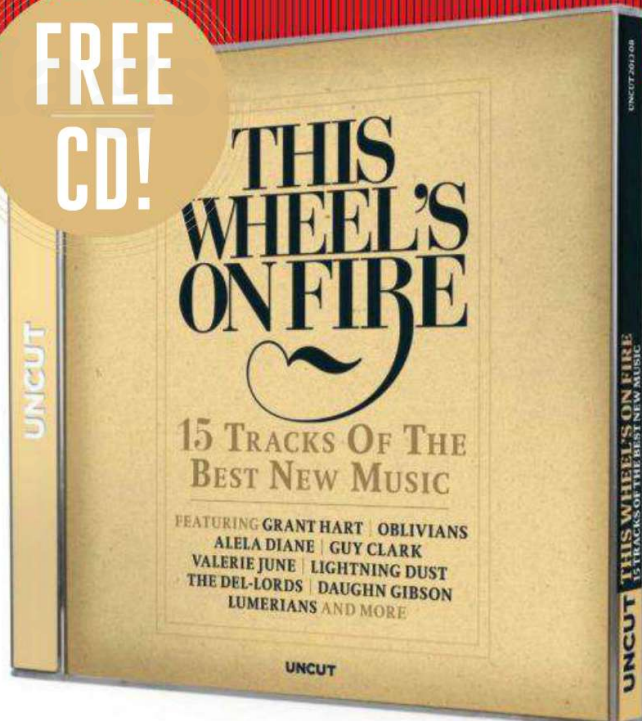
The inimitable Irish hypemaster and spin doctor (previous clients: Marc Bolan, Led Zep, U2) belatedly makes his debut as a rock frontman. A mantric, poetic song-spiel with '70s NYC blood ties, not least because The Bandits feature Blondie's classic rhythm section.

## 8 GUY CLARK

### Rain In Durango

Much of My Favorite Picture Of You

FREE CD!



concerns Clark's recently deceased (and, some might suggest, long-suffering) wife. "Rain In Durango", though, is a rueful and romantic tale of a girl whose "heart got broke by a banjo man/Now she's had all the bluegrass she can stand."

## 9 LIGHTNING DUST

### Loaded Gun

An unexpected electro upgrade for the Vancouver duo, on their third album away from the Black Mountain collective. An effective transition, too, not least because the usually forlorn Amber Webber now sounds spookily like Karin Dreijer Andersson (Fever Ray/The Knife).

## 10 FIELD REPORT

### Taking Alcatraz

Justin Vernon's tireless work this year has involved fronting new albums by The Shouting Matches and Volcano Choir, as well as a guest shift on Kanye West's *Yeezus*. Oddly, though, the solo debut of Vernon's old bandmate Chris Porterfield sounds closer than any of them to Bon Iver (Vernon, it should be noted, produces).

## 11 VALERIE JUNE

### You Can't Be Told

A swaggering choice cut from the Tennessean singer, produced and co-written by Black Key Dan Auerbach (that's possibly him playing the Link Wray-ish guitar, too). Roughly akin to a juke joint Amy Winehouse, if you like.

## 12 SCOTT & CHARLENE'S WEDDING

### Jackie Boy

Ostensibly the project of New York resident Craig Dermody, the music of Scott & Charlene's Wedding still betrays his Australian roots, being

buzzy, overdriven indie-pop that would've sat neatly next to The Go-Betweens on a mid-'80s double-header... No mean praise, obviously.



Diana Jones

## 13 DIANA JONES

### Satan

Since it's only been two years since the last Gillian Welch album, we probably shouldn't expect another one any time soon. Fine compensation, though, comes in the shape of Jones, another Nashville artist with an uncanny knack of finding fresh ways to re-imagine traditional music. *Museum Of Appalachia Recordings* is our Americana Album Of The Month, reviewed on page 68.

## 14 OBLIVIANS

### Call The Police

One more auspicious reunion this month: Memphis garage-punk legends the Oblivians. Here they apply their ferocious shittkicking skills to a Stephanie McDee modern zydeco rave-up. "I'm a beer-drinking zydeco lover, BRING IT ON!"

## 15 BLACK BOOKS

### The Big Idea

An epic closer, here, from a Texan quintet new to us. Similarities to early Band Of Horses, perhaps, though our reviewer nailed it best: "A real stunner, like The Flaming Lips covering Lift To Experience..."



Daughn Gibson



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# Richard Hell

**Interview:** Michael Bonner

**Photograph:** Inez Van Lamsweerde & Vinoodh Matadin

**The co-founder of Television, the Heartbreakers and the Voidoids talks punk, drugs, Madonna, and the afterlife: "Death in the first person doesn't exist!"**

**"I**

FEEL LIKE I'M lucky as a rule," says Richard Hell. "It was pretty much luck I survived this long." Hell is looking back on his time at the forefront of the '70s New York scene, as a founder of Television, the Heartbreakers and the

Voidoids. It was a time of exciting musical achievements, eventually marred by heroin, bad business deals and betrayals of trust with Tom Verlaine and Johnny Thunders, and Hell has now chronicled this period in his memoir, *I Dreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp*. Here, he answers your questions, ranging from his memories of touring with The Clash to playing Madonna's dead boyfriend – including an unusual one from Thurston Moore. "You can always count on Thurston for the unexpected," laughs Hell.



Blankboys, the Voidoids: (l-r) Hell, Ivan Julian, Mark Bell, Robert Quine

Did I ever know her when she was coming up through the New York scene? No, not really. By that time, like the early '80s, I was pretty much withdrawn. Otherwise engaged? Yeah.

## STAR QUESTION



**Given the combination of great, innovative songwriting by Richard Hell And**

**The Voidoids, and the sheer brilliance of Robert Quine's guitar work, was there ever a golden moment when you thought 'We'll rule the world'?**

**Anthony Bourdain**

Even in those days, I never took enough drugs to feel that way. Yeah, sure, Robert was a terrific guitarist. In retrospect, I realise I didn't fully appreciate him in the very earliest stage. But it was partly because he was a little inhibited, because it was a new environment to be in this band that had this local reputation where there was all this frenzied action at this little club on the Bowery. He was just dropped in from an anxious few years of uncertainty about where his life was going to go. So he was a little tentative in his playing at the start because he didn't know what was expected of him or what he could bring to that material. When we were recording that first album and doing our earliest rehearsals, it was pretty volatile and exploratory. I would have to insult him to get him angry enough to play as wildly as I wanted him to. But in the long run, he forgave me, because he was really happy about the results.

## STAR QUESTION



**Do you believe in the afterlife?**

**Thurston Moore**

Do I believe in the afterlife? I think it's all afterlife. Can I expand on that? I was afraid you'd ask that. Afterlife means that you have to have died, right? Well, in a certain sense there is no such thing as death, because you don't get there. By definition, we're alive. So death in the first person doesn't exist. It only exists for everyone else.

**I saw you at CBGBs with The Feelies and The Dead Boys in 1977. Two stunning evenings. Always wanted to know about the best title in rock, "Love Comes In Spurts". Were you determined to write a classic with that title?**

**Roger Nelson, Manchester**

It wasn't a matter of writing a classic... There's always an element of seeing yourself as being in the ring

with everybody who had come before. In a certain way that "Blank Generation" was my version of a generation song, which was kind of a genre, I knew I was kind of making my challenge to the previous versions. But I wasn't thinking in terms of writing a classic. It was always immediate. It's happening in the present, it's not like you're foreseeing something. You just wanna assert yourself. With that song, the arena was love songs, and certainly at that time love songs were all gooey, clichéd sentiment and I was offering a different perspective. It was fun to do that because at that time it was pretty radical.

**What was your impression of Britain and the British punk scene when you first came over for that tour in 1977?**

**Bernard Hook, Dorset**

I found England really oppressive and depressing. The whole place seemed demoralised. Everybody was ashamed of themselves. But then, you know, that's a lot of what contributed to and allowed the Sex

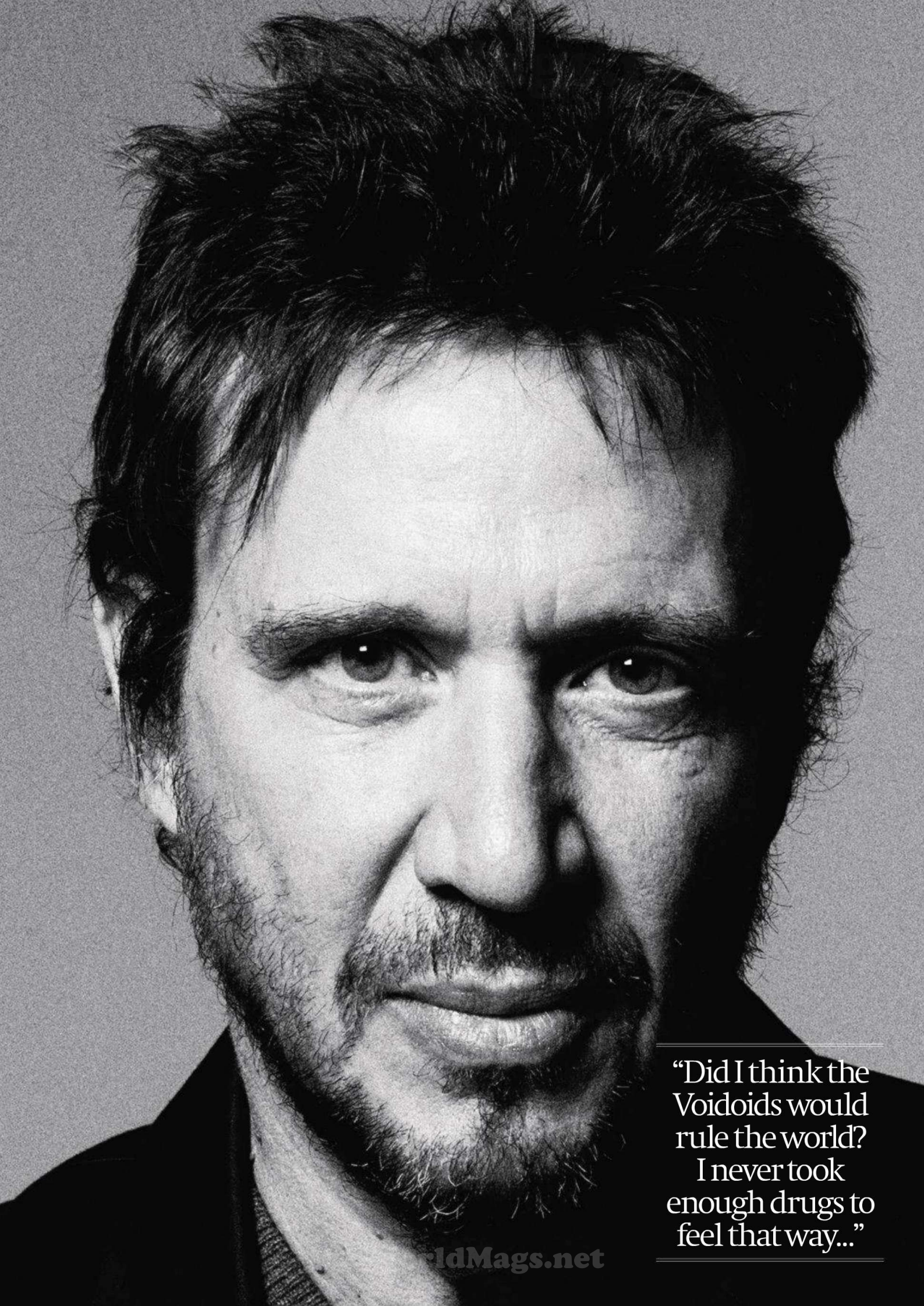
Pistols to be so exciting and stimulating and create such euphoria in the kids. At the same time, it was alienating to me, too, for a few reasons. For one thing, the headbanging part of it was obnoxious. And there was this anti-American thing built into it, like The Clash's "I'm So Bored With The USA". But there was also this defensive strategy on some level to make everything that those bands were doing – primarily the Sex Pistols – seem to be entirely their creation, when they'd gotten a lot of ideas from New York. My memories of touring with The Clash? They were sweethearts. You had to love all those guys. Their hearts were in the right place.

**You played Madonna's dead boyfriend in *Desperately Seeking Susan*. How do you remember Madonna from that time?**

**Jim Willars, Shenfield**

Pretty much what you'd expect. She was supremely confident and always had to be the centre of attention. She was a kind of diva.



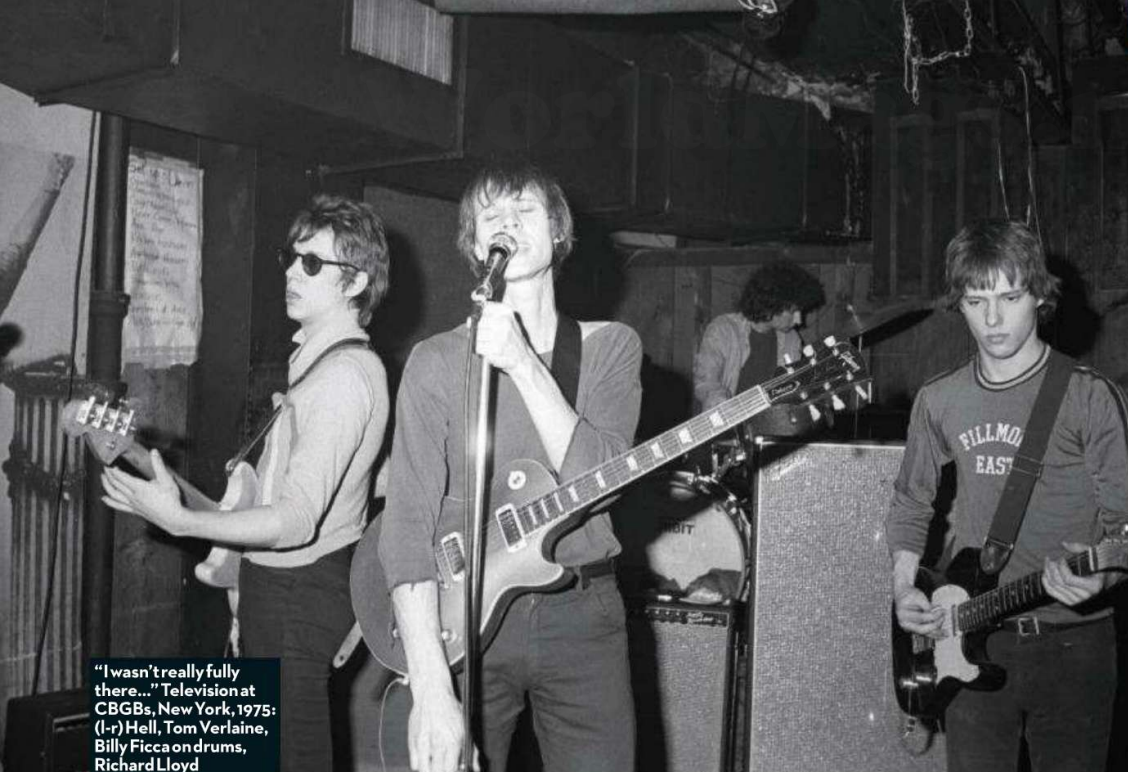


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“Did I think the  
Voidoids would  
rule the world?  
I never took  
enough drugs to  
feel that way...”

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"I wasn't really fully there..." Television at CBGBs, New York, 1975: (l-r) Hell, Tom Verlaine, Billy Ficca on drums, Richard Lloyd

## STAR QUESTION



**Richard, you spoke so eloquently in your book about our first rehearsals and that feeling was exactly my**

**own experience, like we were hobo alien children with guitars from outer space, or from the distant future, like the "children of the damned". Did you know then the impact we would have on the history of rock music, as I believed and knew without doubt, or what did you think would become of us?**

*Richard Lloyd, ex-Television*

That wasn't my arena, the history of rock music. I hoped to have an immediate effect, that's what I had in mind.

**A couple of years ago, you re-recorded your vocal parts for the Richard Hell And The Voidoids album *Destiny Street* and put it out as *Destiny Street Repaired*. Why did you do that?**

*Tony Lawrence, Sheffield*

I always had regrets about that record. I don't usually have regrets about stuff, I'm pretty philosophical about whatever I've been through, whatever I did, and it's meaningless to wish it could have been different. But that record, I thought was good. In many ways the songs, just as compositions, were better than the ones of *Blank Generation*, but the execution was inferior, because I was so messed up at that time, I didn't give it the attention I should have. So this opportunity arose to do it differently. The means for re-doing it were compromised because what I had to work from was a cassette tape we made as we were recording, just

for reference... we were laying down the rhythm tracks, drums, bass, two guitars. What were missing were the vocals and the guitar leads. But they made it possible for me to redo the guitar soloing. The problem with the originals was the way, in this misbegotten and crippled effort to make the record as powerful as it could be, I just kept having the guitar players lay down more and more guitars until it became a morass. So when I found these tapes it made it possible to go in and keep it clean. I'm happy with the results. I want to get the original back out there, too.

**You write harshly but also poignantly about Tom Verlaine in your book. Do you still feel connected to him in some way?**

*Brendan McCann, Belfast*

If you're talking about in the present, it's really ethereal. What level of connection there is, is just some kind of inevitable consequence of the friendship that we once had. I don't even know what he does now. I never see him or talk to him, and after my book I'm sure that's even less likely. But, yes, sure, there's a connection in the sense that we spent so much time together and did so many things together in a period that was really crucial for me. He is just necessarily built into who I am. I have seen him from a distance. We share enough in neighbourhoods that it's inevitable we'll get a glimpse of each other every now and then, but I've not locked eyes with him.

**It seems there are loads of "rock stars" writing memoirs now. Are**

**there any other autobiographies by musicians that you admire as a writer?**

*Charlie Gaines, Newcastle*

Yeah, the jazz guys are the best ones. Charles Mingus is good. Art Pepper's *Straight Life* is really great. For pop music and rock'n'roll, nothing really comes to mind. Did I read Dylan's *Chronicles*? You know, I couldn't finish that. When I read the first few pages I was like, 'Wow! This is spectacular, he's really pulled it

off.' But after a few pages, it started feeling like schtick to me, it was just like a vaudeville routine. He has that side to him. The delivery and the attitude just seemed like a formula of a tone he adopted that I got bored with.

**After leaving Television, you then**

**hooked up with Johnny Thunders to form the Heartbreakers, but then quit. Did you walk away, or were you pushed?**

*Alan Robinson, Tyne & Wear*

I totally walked away. In fact, they kind of resented it. For a few years, they dismissed me and said angry things in interviews. But for me, there were no bad feelings. I didn't walk away because I lost respect for the Heartbreakers, or it wasn't about me being unhappy with them – it was just I wanted to try some things that wouldn't interest them. They were really straight-ahead rock'n'roll and I wanted to expand a little bit. It wasn't even conceivable that they had any interest in these little exploratory tendrils I wanted to send out. So I knew I needed to put together a band where there were just more areas for exploration.

**When you were starting out in New York, you and Tom Verlaine worked together in a movie-buff bookstore called Cinemabilia. Were you helpful young assistants?**

*Shane Henshaw, Leicester*

Most of the time, I was packing books. But towards the end I did get an assignment, it was specific. I was the person at the stills desk, they had a huge collection of old movie stills that was part of their business. I think I was really talented [laughs]. A lot of that had to do with fetishists. People would come in and they would want pictures because they were really excited by the particular stars, or the kind of implications of a given photo. I would have to work out what it was from their halting descriptions. How did we meet [director] Nicholas Ray? Terry Ork, who was our backer at the very beginning, was a film freak and acquainted with him. He came to two or three rehearsals. He was an impressive person. Tall and rugged with this black eye-patch and big, bright, white pompadour haircut. He was like a pirate.


**Brian Eno famously produced an early demo for Television. What are your memories of Eno and that whole experience?**

*Marty Johns, New York*

You know, at that time I was so alienated from everything that was going on in Television, it was just kind of going through the motions. I wasn't really fully there. I wasn't engaged with it because I didn't really play any role that had any meaning for me. Apart from that, I can't really even remember anything about it. Literally, I can't. Actually, Quine ended up being friends with Eno later. But my contact with him, my relationship with him at that time was so distanced because I wasn't really present in any way except as a robot. I don't really have any memories of it.

**Did you ever imagine being Richard Hell at 63?**

*Alison Love, Broomhill*

Back when I was publishing my first novel, *Go Now*, which was 1996, I considered reverting to my original name, Richard Meyers. I've used that name in a few different capacities over the years. But I decided to stick with Hell because I felt like it kind of still applied. 

*Hell's autobiography **IDreamed I Was A Very Clean Tramp** is published by Ecco*



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# THE DAMAGE DONE

Review: John Mulvey  
Photographs: Julie Gardner

For the past year, NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE have traversed the world on the wild, compelling and divisive Alchemy tour. Photographer JULIE GARDNER has been embedded with the Horse crew, and we present her intimate and exclusive shots over the next few pages. Plus: we review the astonishing climax to Crazy Horse's fractious week in the UK.





# NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE

Neil Young & Crazy Horse at the start of the O<sub>2</sub> gig: (l-r) a 'mad scientist' roadie, Young, Frank 'Poncho' Sampedro, Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina



LIVE  
REVIEW

## NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE

O<sub>2</sub> ARENA, LONDON | JUNE 17, 2013

ON AND OFF for the past 11 months, Neil Young, Crazy Horse, a road crew disguised as mad scientists and construction workers, a selection of mammoth fake amps and national flags, a wooden statue of a Native American, and an excellent photographer named Julie Gardner (whose pictures fill these pages) have been trundling round the world on what Young christened, early on, the Alchemy tour. It's been a long enough jaunt, one would've thought, for people to use the miracles of 21st-Century communication to divine what was coming their way.

Apparently not. On June 15, the band finished a lively week with a show at the RDS Arena in Dublin. Apparently startled by electric guitar workouts, feedback and songs recorded after 1972, there had been pockets of disgruntlement at the preceding UK shows. In Dublin, however, the

bewildered section of the audience manifested themselves with boos and desertions, and found a champion in Kevin Courtney of *The Irish Times*. "Instead of 'Heart Of Gold', 'The Needle And The Damage Done' and 'Rockin' In The Free World'," wrote Courtney, "the crowd got 20-minute-long guitar jams and only a handful of songs that you could consider classics... Rock'n'roll may never die, but last night it certainly had a long, loud

Whether we choose to swallow the spectacle is beside the point; it's ridiculous, but thrilling

snooze." One disappointed fan described the evening, piquantly, as "aural sodomy".

It is tempting to dwell on what, exactly, people were expecting of those renowned interpreters of *Harvest*, Crazy Horse, and on the vexed question of which 'hits' Young might have played instead of "Powderfinger", "Cinnamon Girl", "Mr Soul", "Hey Hey, My My" and "Cortez The Killer": Young, after all, has had one Top 30 hit in the UK to date ("Heart Of Gold", No 10 in February 1972).

Two days later, though, and about two and a quarter hours into his show at London's O<sub>2</sub> Arena, Young is confounding the expectations of his most informed and indulgent fans. After what seems to be an exemplary "Like A Hurricane", he talks at unusual length about the consolations of children, and the bittersweet prospect that not all of us will be here when they pass through again, before claiming, "Frankly, a lot of times tonight we kinda sucked. But, with what we do, that happens."

One can understand the second part of Young's statement: controlling such wild and capricious music is a necessarily tricky business. But what

Backstage at MusiCares, Los Angeles, with Young's LincVolt car behind him, February 8, 2013





Backstage during the Global Poverty Project soundcheck, Central Park, NYC, October 1, 2012



constitutes a non-sucking show for Neil Young? It's hard to recall, from my relatively limited experience, one of his shows that has been simultaneously so ominous, joyful, ambitious and – a real shock, this, considering the unsteady reputation of Crazy Horse – tight. Perhaps a good night for Young resembles prickly evenings like the one in Dublin, when the catcalls might have added satisfyingly cacophonous depth to the end section of “Walk Like A Giant”?

Perhaps the generally delighted response that “Walk Like A Giant” receives here – after 15 minutes of whistled refrains, exploded verses and grandly tumescent solos, then 10 more minutes of brute-shaped feedback – riles the staunchly contrarian Young. It's possible, though, that a reasonable percentage of the crowd are a little schooled in the noise-rock that Young to some degree inspired, but at least affects to be mostly ignorant of (in *Waging Heavy Peace*, remember, he claims kinship with Mumford & Sons).

So “Walk Like A Giant”'s coda fleetingly recalls My Bloody Valentine's “holocaust” jam on “You Made Me Realise”, but soon enough moves on to a less intense, more abstracted place; closer, maybe, to the dissonant drift found in some extended pieces like “Expressway To Yr Skull” and “The Diamond Sea” by Young's one-time touring partners, Sonic Youth.

Crumpled balls of paper are blown across the stage like tumbleweed. Rain falls and lightning crackles on the PA (at least in part sampled from the *Woodstock* movie: “Please keep away from the towers!”), in sync with the feedback. There is a sense that Crazy Horse are huge and elemental, transcending their barn-band notoriety. Much of these Alchemy tour shows, fitting for the arenas they're played out in, seem predicated on an idea of music as a force of nature, describing and confronting environmental catastrophe. On “Like A Hurricane”, Frank ‘Poncho’ Sampedro plays an organ suspended on wires, rocking back and

forth as if buffeted by the song's lyric. One of two unreleased songs, “Hole In The Sky”, makes the ecological theme explicit, as the calm after the storm of “Walk Like A Giant”.

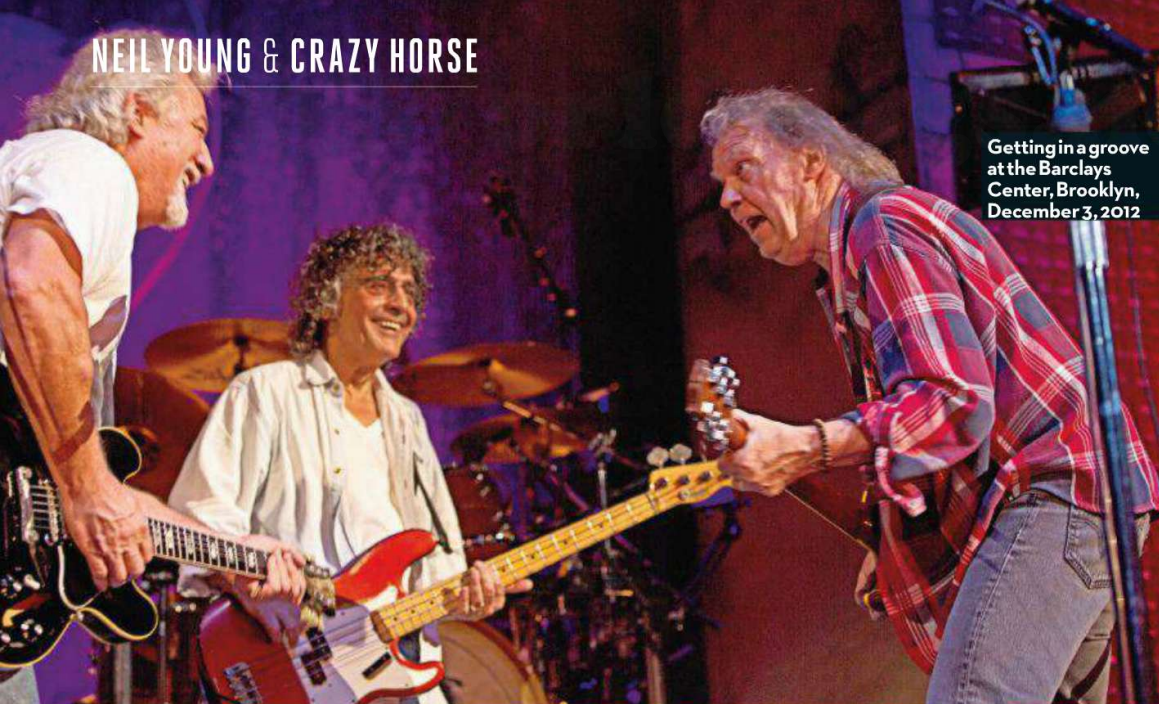
“Hole In The Sky” acts as a prelude to Young's acoustic set in London, a mostly solo affair apart from a little harmony from Ralph Molina and some backup acoustic from Poncho when Young switches to piano on “Singer Without A Song”. There's a *Harvest* feel to that last new song, which conceivably signals which Dublin-pleasing direction Young may move in for his next album (that it's been eight years since *Prairie Wind* suggests that facet of his music is due to be revisited). Even on “Comes A Time”, a portentous “Blowin' In The Wind” and an exceptionally lovely “Red Sun”, however, he stalks the stage with his guitar, harmonica and radio mic, rarely facing up to the audience, seemingly engaged in face-offs with an array of ghost accompanists.

When those duelling partners are flesh and



Young with Crazy Horse and the full crew at the Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne, March 15, 2013





Getting in a groove at the Barclays Center, Brooklyn, December 3, 2012

● blood – Sampedro and Billy Talbot – there are long sections when Young seems pointedly oblivious of the 20,000 people watching his every move. The show begins with theatrics: scurrying scientists and technicians (one wonders if Elliot Roberts runs an internship programme for mature jobseekers who want to join the sprawling crew?), The Beatles’ “A Day In The Life”, and a po-faced standing to attention for “God Save The Queen” (better understood as a typically daft whim rather than anything profound).

But as the Union Jack drops and the Crazy Horse flag takes precedence, a less obvious stagecraft takes over. Young begins “Love And Only Love” in a stomping head-to-head communion with his bandmates, in a rut he’ll stay close to for much of the next two-and-a-half hours. The giant fake amps appear to be contributing spectacle and scale, but actually they serve to shrink the stage, keeping Crazy Horse in tight proximity to one another. This is big music made by small and fallible human beings, is the apparent subtext, even though they aspire to walk like – and often, miraculously, sound like – giants.

And, for all the monolithic lurch and feedback, there’s a tenderness and aesthetic prettiness to Young’s performance that’s not acknowledged as much as it deserves to be.

He sings beautifully, for a start, high and strong, whether it be finishing off “Blowin’ In The Wind” a cappella, or harmonising with an uncommonly drilled Crazy Horse between powerchords at the end of that momentous “Love And Only Love”. Before “Walk Like A Giant” devolves into its clangorous finale (as extreme as anything on *Arc/Weld*, if not more so) with Young manhandling an FX box inside one of the fake amps, he makes an eloquent further case for the song as a new classic in his repertoire.

“Psychedelic Pill” remains less potent, even if familiarity and roadwork have given it more gonzo charm. In one of the usual multitude of baffling decisions, Young appears to be playing “Psychedelic Pill” every night and never going anywhere near a much stronger song from last year’s album, “She’s Always Dancing”. The real *Psychedelic Pill*-era keeper, though, feels like “Ramada Inn”, in which Crazy Horse’s strength is turned in on itself, so that the heaviness adds depth and detail to the fragile narrative, instead of overpowering it. The delicacy is remarkable, and it’s

After two and a half hours... the O2 finale



## SETLIST

- 1 Love And Only Love
- 2 Powderfinger
- 3 Psychedelic Pill
- 4 Walk Like A Giant
- 5 Hole In The Sky
- 6 Red Sun
- 7 Comes A Time
- 8 Blowin’ In The Wind
- 9 Singer Without A Song
- 10 Ramada Inn
- 11 Cinnamon Girl
- 12 Fuckin’ Up
- 13 Mr Soul
- 14 Hey Hey, My My...
- 15 Like A Hurricane
- 16 Roll Another Number
- 17 Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere

melodic rush, before it devolves into a gurning, camp and, to be honest, slightly over-extended vamp with Poncho. Laughing uncharacteristically, it’s here that Young most vigorously asserts his persona for the current project – the goofy, albeit stubborn, guy fucking around with his long-suffering, kind-of friends. Whether we choose to swallow it is beside the point; the spectacle is ridiculous, but thrilling.

At the end of Los Lobos’ excellent support set, David Hidalgo dedicates a song to Danny Whitten and then begins to play something that sounds audaciously like “Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere”, but actually turns out to be a site-specific, Horse-style re-reading of “La Bamba”. Three hours later, Young finishes up a gorgeously cranky “Roll Another Number”, baits the management with some rhetoric about fines and curfews, and lunges into “Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere” itself.

“I think I’d like to go back home, and take it easy,” he sings and, for a while, that’s presumably where he’s heading. On July 11, however, Alchemy begins again in Luxembourg. Radical rethinks seem unlikely. But, if you’re feeling brave, Crazy Horse return to the UK at Liverpool Echo Arena on August 18, then are back at the O2 in London on August 19. Tickets, at time of writing, are still available. 11

Helping hand: heading back to the tour bus, outside the Metro Arena, Newcastle, June 10, 2013



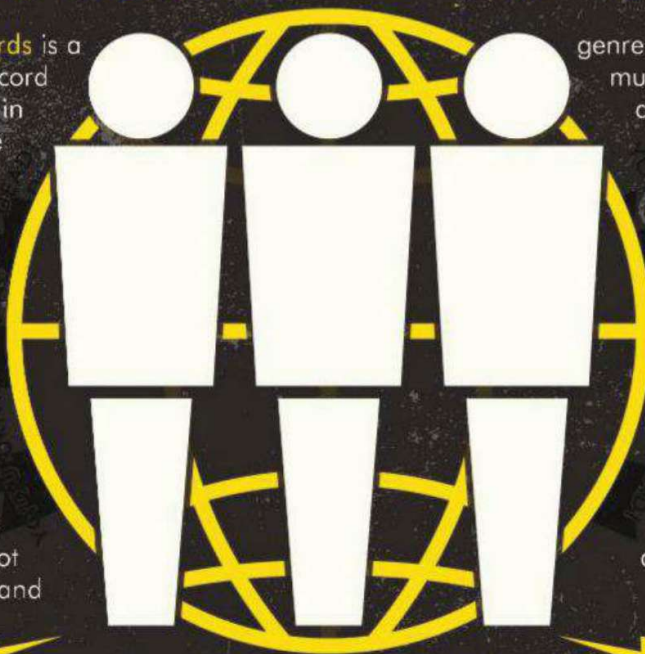


# THIRD MAN RECORDS

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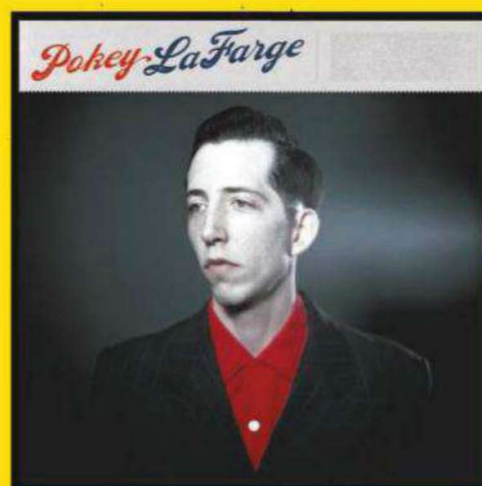
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“It was a beautiful day, everybody was out on boats on the Serpentine and there was the sweet smell of marijuana in the air...”

On July 5, 1969, THE ROLLING STONES held a free concert at London's Hyde Park. It was to be their first public performance in two years and an opportunity to introduce their new guitarist, Mick Taylor. Instead, the show became a tribute to Brian Jones, who had died two days earlier. Here, the organisers, bands and audience members tell all about exploding hotdog stands, sleepy butterflies and the travel arrangements of the Hells Angels. “It was the biggest picnic you’ve ever seen...”

Story: Peter Watts

Photograph: Alan Messer



WorldMags.net





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Jagger turned park keeper:  
'Oh, me and Marianne, we  
love the park, we always take  
the dogs for a walk there...'"



# THE ROLLING STONES

P

**PETER JENNER, Blackhill**

**Enterprises, promoter:** I was walking across Hyde Park with my wife in the spring of 1968 and saw the bandstand. We'd read about the free concerts in San Francisco and I said, "Wouldn't it be great to do a free concert?" So I wrote to the Ministry Of Public Building And Works.

**ANDREW KING, Blackhill Enterprises, promoter:**

The park was very anti-commercial. The only thing they allowed were sheep dog trials and country dancing.

**JEFF DEXTER, DJ:** Pete and Andrew bagged the park through Jennie Lee, who was arts minister. Works and culture worked hand in hand in those days.

**PETER JENNER:** It just happened that my grandfather had an affair with Jennie Lee in the 1930s before she married Aneurin Bevan, so in my letter I mentioned who my grandfather was. I never got an acknowledgment but I got a call from the park offering to help. They suggested an area called the Cockpit, which was like an amphitheatre. It was a lovely spot and we proceeded to do concerts there. The next summer, in June 1969, Robert Stigwood said he wanted to launch Blind Faith at Hyde Park.

**SAM CUTLER, MC:** Mick Jagger was at Blind Faith and he was curious about how it was organised. I remember seeing his furtive little brain ticking over.

**PETER JENNER:** The Stones approached us to put on a show. They said they wanted to launch their new single and them going back on the road. We thought it was a good idea. There weren't any big gigs like this and the fact it was free meant you didn't have to worry about ticket sales.

**ANDREW KING:** We asked the parks people and they were a bit nervous. I got a call from a civil servant who said he'd need to meet Mr Jagger about it. I'm sure he only did it so he had something to tell his grandchildren. I went down to his office with Jagger in his white Bentley listening to these Motown seven-inches. Jagger was amazing – "Oh, me and Marianne, we love the park, we always take the dogs for a walk there." They gave it the OK.

**PETER JENNER:** It all began to happen so quickly, but a month was a long time in those days. Jagger persuaded Granada to film it for *World In Action* and we thought, "Aha, we can really make some money here." We charged £3,000. That went on the stage and a fucking great party afterwards in the café by the Serpentine. That was all the money we got. All the bands played for free. We forgot to ask for any



The Stones at the Hyde Park press conference, June 13, and above, the crowd on July 5...



percentage on the film but we put a big banner above

the stage to get some product placement. But on the film you couldn't read Blackhill Enterprises, just 'Ackhill Enter'. We couldn't even get that right.

**ANDREW KING:** Ian Knight, the stage manager from the Roundhouse, did a lot of the work. He came from a theatre background. Quite a few people came from theatre to rock and did well on the technical side.

**PETER JENNER:** After we got the go ahead, we began to put the bill together. We put on mainly Blackhill bands. Then we were offered King Crimson and didn't want them. David Enthoven said he really needed it.

**ANDREW KING:** Jokingly, I said they could have it for £500. A few minutes later a courier arrived with £500 in an envelope.

**PETER JENNER:** Andrew and I were so embarrassed. You can't take a bung when you're playing the Queen's park!

**DAVID ENTHOVEN, King Crimson manager:** I will not deny I tried to bribe my way on to the bill. They sweetly gave it back. I'd mortgaged the house to make *In The Court Of The Crimson King* and had nothing to show for it. The band said, "You've got to get us on." I didn't know what else to do.

**MICK FARREN, vocalist, The Deviants:** We heard it was happening through Blackhill and asked if The Deviants

## "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN..."

### The Stones' Hyde Park setlist

I'm Yours, She's Mine

Jumpin' Jack Flash

Mercy Mercy

Down Home Girl

Stray Cat Blues

I'm Free

No Expectations

Loving Cup

Love In Vain

Satisfaction

Honky Tonk Women

Midnight Rambler

Street Fighting Man

Sympathy For The Devil

## Rolling Stones to give free Hyde Park show

RAY CONNOLLY

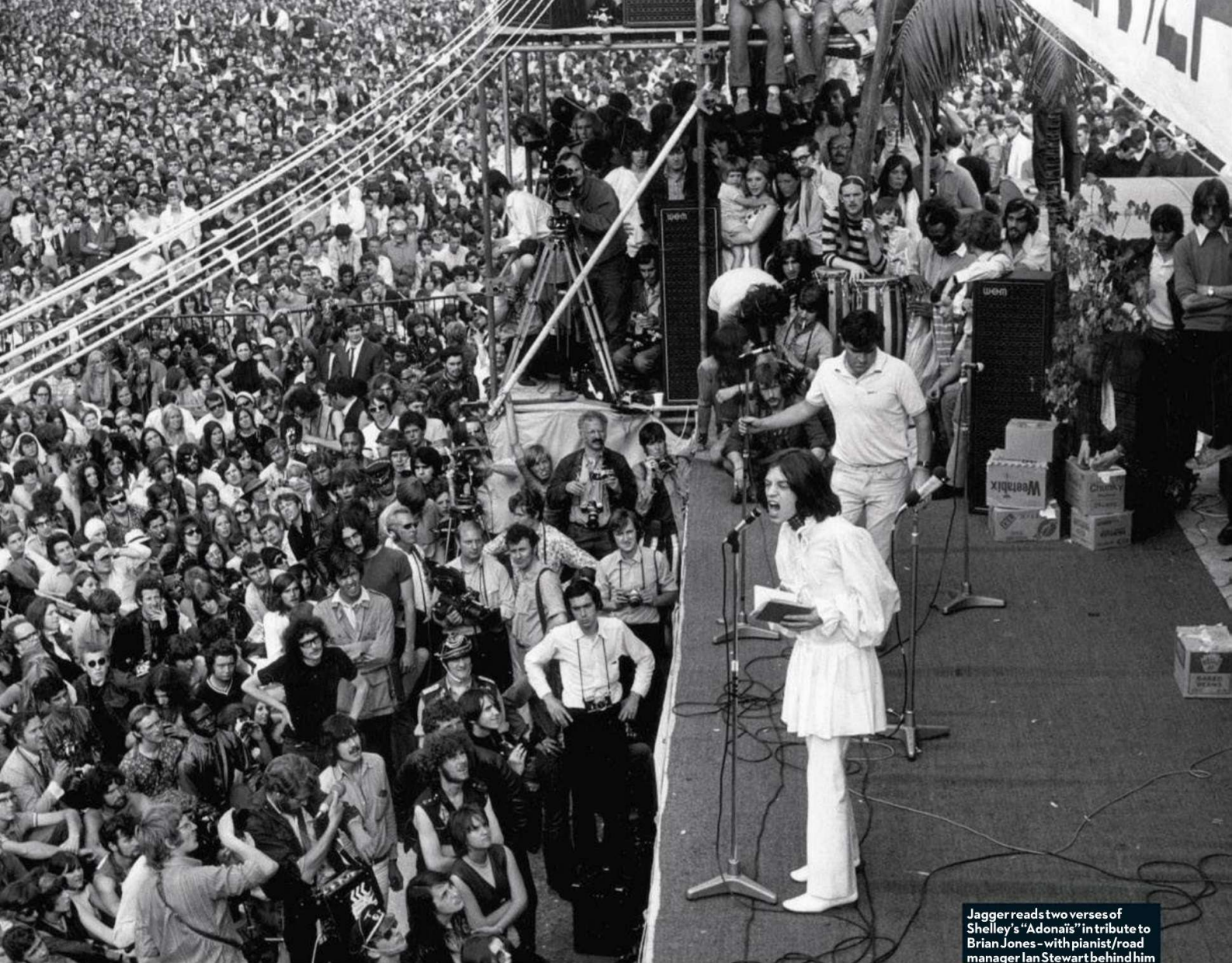
The Rolling Stones are to make their stage debut at a free open air concert in Hyde Park on Saturday. It will be the first of a series of free concerts in the park.

## Bids roll in for Stones park film

RAMSDEN GREIG

A 50-minute show with a cast of over half a million and made for a million more, the Rolling Stones are to make their stage debut at a free open air concert in Hyde Park on Saturday. It will be the first of a series of free concerts in the park. A statement for publication said today that the Public Building Corporation had given permission for a free concert in Hyde Park on Saturday, July 5. No final arrangements have been made for the concert.





Jagger reads two verses of Shelley's "Adonais" in tribute to Brian Jones - with pianist/road manager Ian Stewart behind him

could play. We were vetoed. It was probably Jagger. Everybody said I wouldn't behave myself and start rabble rousing, which was fair enough.

**PETER JENNER:** There was that and also the fact The Deviants were a rotten band. I really like Mick [Farren], but they were a rotten band who smashed instruments onstage. Our event wasn't 'kick out the jams, motherfucker', it was 'let's have a joint and a buttercup sandwich.'

**MICK FARREN:** We'd heard about what was happening at Golden Gate Park and wanted to eclipse that. We wanted to keep it pleasant, a nice day in the sun. When we have a riot we have a riot and this isn't a riot, it's the biggest picnic you've ever seen. On the day, the coppers weren't in evidence. There was a truce. You got that a lot with Blackhill. I don't know how.

**ANDREW KING:** There was a police station in the park. We always sent them a bottle of whisky at Christmas.

**PETER JENNER:** Watkins Electric Music provided the PA. They gave it for free. Everybody was into the spirit of it, doing it for fun.

**ANDREW KING:** Charlie Watkins was a lovely man, but the PA system was pretty fucking primitive. We just had piles of speakers. The Americans had PA systems based on cinema sound systems, but the UK was way behind.

## "The Stones' minder had a gun, in case of some loony revenge attack for Brian"

*Andrew King, promoter*



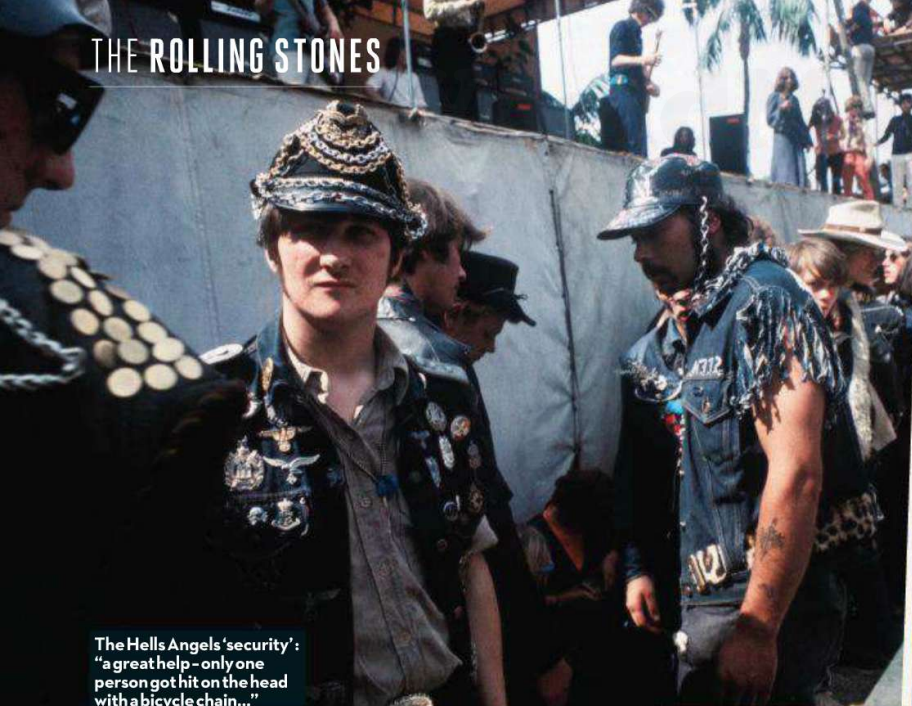
**PETER JENNER:** In a way, the Stones were yesterday's news, and they were aware of that. They'd disappeared up their arses. Mick realised they had to get in with that underground stuff.

**SAM CUTLER:** The Stones hadn't played for a long time, they were sick to death of Brian. Keith was lost in the fog. Mick was looking to reinvigorate the band because he knew they'd lost touch. There was a danger of them not happening anymore.

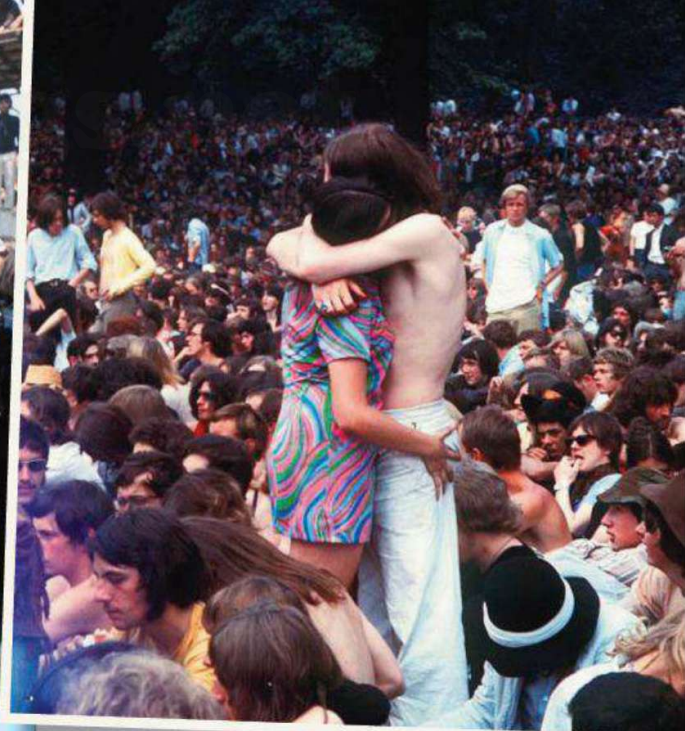
**MICK FARREN:** Brian was sacked on June 9 and word got out they were looking for a new guitar player. Ronnie Wood was mooted, Jeff Beck was a possibility. They even talked to Wayne Kramer. Mick Taylor was a strange choice, but Keith wanted a support guitarist who was better than Brian and wouldn't make waves. He'd be a hired help and keep his mouth shut.

**ALAN MESSER, photographer:** I was a freelancer from Dezo Hoffmann's studio. On June 13, I went to photograph the Stones at Hyde Park. It was to introduce Mick Taylor and announce the Hyde Park gig. The band turned up in their cars and were pretty jovial. They sat down on the grass for some pictures. Mick was amazing, he made sure the band looked at every photographer while they were taking their pictures. He called out the name of each photographer and got the band to all





The Hells Angels 'security': "a great help - only one person got hit on the head with a bicycle chain..."



● look in the right direction. I was impressed by his professionalism. Then we went into the bandstand and took more pictures. I don't remember any questions from the press, it was a photoshoot more than a press conference. They were doing a lot of press. I photographed Mick Taylor at the Stones office on Maddox Street shortly after. Taylor was elated that he'd joined the Stones. He couldn't believe it.

**ANDREW KING:** Towards the end of June, they were rehearsing in the basement at Apple on Savile Row. I went to a couple and met Mick Taylor. He was very quiet, a pretty geek and lovely guitarist, very different to Brian Jones.

**KEITH ALTHAM, NME journalist:** I was in Olympic Studio in Barnes with the Stones on July 3 when they brought in the news of Brian's death. Tom Keylock, one of their minders, came in and there was a huddle and Mick was called over. There were very long faces and then they got on with recording. Marianne [Faithfull] came over and told me what had happened. Mick was quite angry, he knew in some ways he'd be held to account. It looked like suicide and they thought they'd sorted everything out for him. I got a chance to talk to Mick and I asked, "What happens now?", meaning the recording session. But he thought I was talking about the concert and said, "It goes on." He was very sure about that. The concert was made into a tribute to Brian. They thought that was the right thing to do.

**MICK FARREN:** Nobody was surprised when Brian died. He'd been in terrible shape. He'd blown himself out. His ideas had gone silly. They'd put Brian in the corner and not turn the mic on. Mick and Keith had done a powerplay but never expected it to get that far. They thought Alexis Korner would look after him and Alexis did his best but Brian was pretty fucking hopeless.

**ANDREW KING:** Jagger is tough as old boots. Nothing was going to put him off, but there was a lot of tension at the rehearsals. It was the only time I saw anybody carrying a gun in the music business in England. The Stones had a minder and he had a gun. They were concerned there might be some loony revenge attack for Brian.

**CHRIS WELCH, Melody Maker journalist:** Even 24 hours before it happened they were debating about whether it was going to go ahead. They seemed worried about a bad reaction after Brian's death - what would the public think?

**ANDREW KING:** On the morning of the concert, Sam Cutler and I were the first people on site. There were these Hells

## ALSO APPEARING...

### WHO WERE SCREW?

**T**HE HYDE PARK bill was remarkably eclectic, beginning with the Third Ear Band at 1pm. King Crimson were followed by Screw. Jeff Dexter remembers them as a 'semi-underground pop band'; Richard Neville, in his 1970 memoir *Play Power*, says they performed "as though they were



disappearing through a meatgrinder". Paul Conroy agrees they were terrible. Roy Harper played a short set, and then came Alexis Korner's New Church, a triumphant Family and finally Battered Ornaments, who had sacked founding member Pete Brown just the week before.

Angels around. But London Hells Angels were very nice. They travelled on the bus. We said, "Will you stop people climbing over the fence?" and they said, "Sure." They were a great help. I think only one person got hit on the head with a bicycle chain.

**SAM CUTLER:** I talked to Jo Bergman, a very confident American chick who ran the Stones' office. She was reporting back to us things like, "Mick wants plants on the stage," and we had to sort them out. Somebody, I think it was Ian Stewart, had got these big pictures of Brian looking completely out of it, so they went up.

**JEFF DEXTER:** I was there from about 10am to 2.30, but I was running backwards and forwards to the Royal Albert Hall with PA systems. It was already busy, people had been camping out since Thursday night. The Ministry of Works kept the gates open to let people in, they never normally do that.

**NIC KNOWLAND, Granada Television cameraman:** There were six cameramen, and because I'd already worked with [director] John Sheppard, I filmed the interview with Jagger for *World In Action*. Mick was sitting in a lovely wicker armchair in John's flat in Chelsea. Then we followed him to the hotel where the band were meeting [the *Londonderry*, now the *International*, on Park Lane]. They were all pretty chilled out, but there was a definite sadness around, a feeling of melancholy. It was the first event of that sort to be filmed. It was cut together incredibly quickly to be screened a few days after.

**MARK COOPER, audience member:** It was like we all suddenly surfaced in the centre of London out of tubes. The freaks had taken over. There were people who weren't part of the counterculture walking past in a state of absolute amazement. Who were all these people, where had they come from and why did they look like that? There was an absolute distinction between the freak world and the straight world, and this was a gathering of the clan.

**PAUL CONROY, audience member:** It was a beautiful day, everybody was out on boats on the Serpentine and there was the sweet smell of marijuana in the air. Much as I wanted to see the Stones, I adored Family and I'd booked King Crimson for one of their first gigs, so knew how good they were.

**MICK FARREN:** I was on a date with Germaine Greer. These two 12-year-old coppers wanted to search us because, get ●



“Once the police realised the Stones could draw 500,000 people, they backed off...”  
*Sam Cutler, MC*

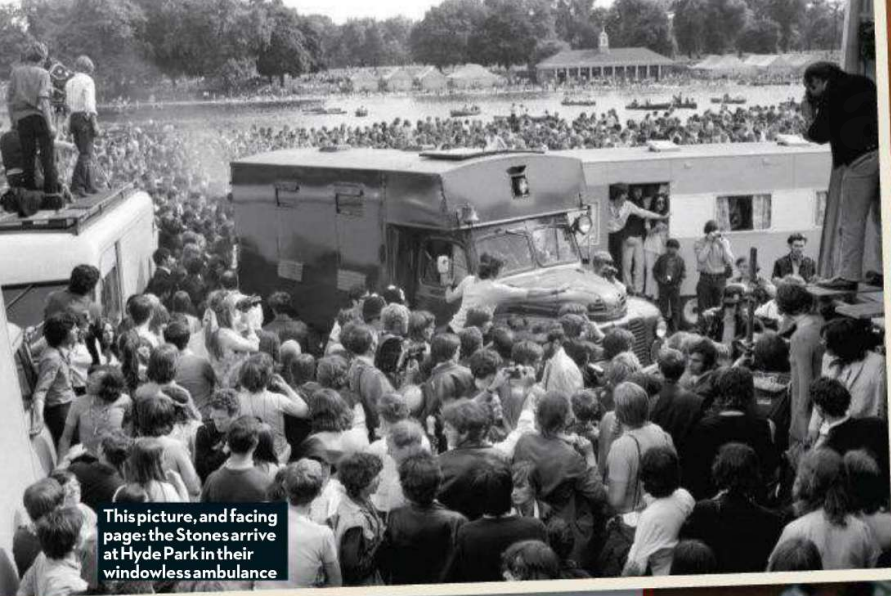
## COSTUME DRAMA

**M**ICK JAGGER DEBUTED the frilly white outfit he wore at Hyde Park at a party thrown by Stones accountant Prince Rupert Loewenstein the day after Brian Jones' death. At Prince Rupert's White Ball everybody was expected to wear white. Marianne Faithfull, however, was all in black.

Jagger's costume had been made for Sammy Davis Jnr by Michael Fish, who ran the Mr Fish boutique in Mayfair and later designed the frock coat David Bowie wore for the *The Man Who Sold The World* sleeve. According to biographer Philip Norman, Jagger had intended to wear an Ossie Clark snakeskin suit at Hyde Park, but decided that would be too hot. Instead, he wore a studded dog collar and the puffy white shirt. Even today, Pete Jenner cringes at “the most embarrassing dress anybody has ever worn”.







This picture, and facing page: the Stones arrive at Hyde Park in their windowless ambulance

• this, “two men answering our description had been seen with drugs.” At which point Germaine, having been called a man, got incredibly annoyed.

**KEITH ALTHAM:** I remember Germaine getting searched: “Excuse me sir, have you got any drugs on you?” Her response, as I recall, was “Why, do you want some?”

**JEFF DEXTER:** I’d MC’d all the free festivals, but this time I was already booked for The Who and Chuck Berry at the Albert Hall. A lot of people went there after Hyde Park, including the Stones. We had a riot between the Rockers and The Who’s road crew. Peace and love, man.

**CHRIS WELCH:** Sam Cutler was MC. I was impressed by him. He seemed very businesslike, organised, articulate, a great compere. Just what you needed at a vast event like that. I think the Stones felt it was in safe hands.

**SAM CUTLER:** I spoke to the crowd, told them what was happening, advised them about heatstroke, asked them to keep out of the trees: “trees have got rights”, it was rather embarrassing when I heard that one a few years later.

**PETER JENNER:** We started with the Third Ear Band around one-ish, very hippy stuff to keep people happy.

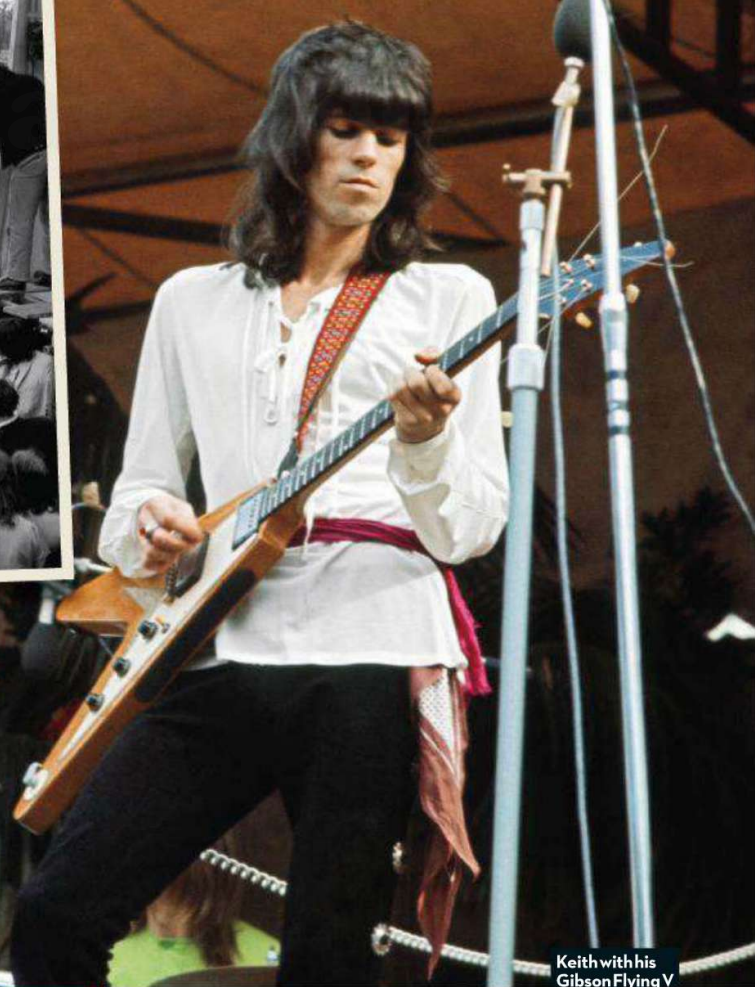
**ANDREW KING:** Paul Buckmaster of the Third Ear Band called me the morning of the gig. He’s very posh and he said, “Andrew, shall I wear a dark suit?” He was a classical musician. He thought it was like playing Wigmore Hall.

**PAUL BUCKMASTER, Third Ear Band cellist:** I don’t think anybody in the Third Ear Band ever wore a suit! We were an acoustic four-piece with oboe, cello, violin and hand drums covered in goat-skin. It was a sort of imagined sound of Ancient Egypt and Druids, with an implication of leylines and UFOs. We’d opened for Blind Faith and we were told the Stones had asked us to be the opening act because they didn’t want a screeching electric act, they wanted to keep the crowd docile.

**ROGER CHAPMAN, Family vocalist:** King Crimson were fantastic, what they were doing was so new. It was like jazz-orchestral in a four-piece rock band.

**GREG LAKE, King Crimson bassist/vocalist:** I went onstage and they’d erected this huge picture of Brian Jones. It fell on my head. It was like being hit by a ghost. I thought, ‘Shit, that’s not a good omen.’

**IAN McDONALD, King Crimson saxophonist:** I kept a diary that year. For July 5 it says: ‘Up morning. Got bus to Hyde Park for Stones concert. Half a million people there.



Keith with his Gibson Flying V

## KEITH SPEAKS!

“Hyde Park? Yeah... I can’t stop dreaming about it. It had to be the biggest crowd I’ve ever seen. They were the stars of the show: like some massive religious gathering on the shores of the Ganges. I was a bit shaky at first, but then I started enjoying myself and it was just like it was two years ago.”

**KEITH RICHARDS, NME, 1969**

Did 35-minute spot. Great. Stones not too good. Walked to Notting Hill for meal.’ The next day we went back to the Marquee and the place was packed. We basically came out with that show. There were no monitors then, so you’re just playing into the open air. I remember how wide open the stage felt. It seemed like we were miles apart.

**DAVID ENTHOVEN:** I set off an air-raid siren under the stage at the end of “21st Century Schizoid Man” which seemed to surprise everybody. I didn’t expect the reception. It was phenomenal. The whole crowd just stood and cheered.

**ROY HARPER, singer-songwriter:** I played about five of the festivals. I was at the very first one in June 1968, with Pink Floyd, when I told the audience this was a moment in their life they should treasure. At the Stones show, I don’t know if I was on the bill, but I performed. I played “I Hate The White Man”. A lot of things happened that day that confirmed that the brilliant time of 1967/’68 was over. It felt like we’d gone back to the old world. A lot of that was down to the way the security around the Stones was regimented. There were 10 or 20 bouncers and it was meant to be a free gathering. The Stones got in and out very quickly. They made a quick getaway. They didn’t want to hang around at an event they had helped to percolate.

**ROGER CHAPMAN:** When Family went on, we had no special equipment, the gear was put up by the promoter and had nothing to do with us. Now bands are more involved in what equipment they use, but then you didn’t even think about it, you just went onstage with your own amps and whatever PA or monitors they provided. I know we went down very well. I don’t remember any nerves, we were all a bit stoned. After I came offstage, I spoke to a bloke called Dr Sam Hutt. He’s now Hank Wangford. He said, “If you need help coming down from your acid trip, I’m a doctor.” I was probably on a little bit of acid. I mean, it was a sunny day.

**SAM HUTT, backstage doctor:** I was friends with Pete Jenner and roped in as the doctor. They didn’t really need





The Stones' driver and fixer, Tom Keylock, releases some "cold" butterflies

## "THEY WEREN'T DEAD!"

Andrew King reveals the truth about the butterflies...

**"J**AGGER WANTED TO release these white butterflies so I had to liaise with a butterfly farm in the West Country and the parks people, who were concerned the wrong sort of butterflies might upset the ecosystem of the park. Early on the morning of the concert I went to Paddington to collect boxes of butterflies. I peeped inside and as far as I could see it was full of dead butterflies. I called the farm in a panic and said, 'They're dead!' And they said they're not dead, they're cold, they are sleeping, you've got to warm them up. How the fuck were we going to warm them up? We had these hot plates, the sort that students use to heat baked beans, and so we put the boxes on them. I think one caught fire. When Mick opened the boxes, some of the butterflies flew away, but most dropped senseless to the stage. They weren't dead, they were cold. They only died when they got trodden on."

a doctor so I was just hanging out, standing at the side of the stage watching. When Roger was singing he did this odd bleating thing, like a speed freak. So my memory was asking him whether he was on speed, not acid.

**PAUL CONROY:** Nobody did long sets. Family were on fire that day, Roger Chapman was one of the great frontmen. Crimson were fantastic, too. They were so well rehearsed. I don't think many people in the park had heard a Mellotron before. Screw were dreadful. But it was all so novel. It really opened up that idea of open-air concerts.

**CHRIS SPEDDING, Battered Ornaments guitarist:** Battered Ornaments got the prime spot just before the Stones. We had this old Army ambulance. It was perfect to get around incognito and somebody from the Stones camp saw it and decided to use it. I was really pissed off because I was suffering from hay fever and wanted to get out of the sun. I'd taken refuge in the ambulance, feeling terrible, then the Stones came and kicked me out. I got back in afterwards and spent the whole of the Stones set sheltering in the van.

**NICK KNOWLAND:** We all squeezed into this van with no windows and drove into the park. John Sheppard stuck his head out the top said, "Nic, you've got to take a shot of this man, it looks fantastic." So I put my head out into a wonderful, misty, beautiful smelling, golden, sunny park, thick with smoke and people.

**ANDREW KING:** There was no food, there was no water. Everybody in the crowd was promised a record if they picked up their rubbish. It being the Stones, whether they ever got their seven-inch is another matter. Were there loos? I have a horrible suspicion there weren't.

**SAM CUTLER:** We didn't provide one toilet. God knows what happened. It was the great English buttock clench. A remarkable testament to the stiff upper prostate. But the place was left spotless. There were a couple of old ladies from the St John's Ambulance under a parasol. Anyone who

fainted got a cup of tea and a biscuit. The cops didn't show in the hope it would go pear-shaped, but this was a magic time. Everybody was stoned and dressed in Regency dandy mode, but still very English, very polite.

**PETER JENNER:** There was no backstage security. All we had were the Angels. There was very little police presence. It's amazing nothing happened. The worst we had was some of the photographers climbing up the stage got chained by the Hells Angels. There were so many people on the stage, climbing the racks, getting in the way. There were these towers holding the PA and people were climbing them because there was nobody to stop them. It was me and Andrew, looking around and worrying it was OK. If it hadn't been, we wouldn't have had a clue what to do.

**ROY HARPER:** The day started with the crowd sitting down, but the pressure forced them to stand up. There were some frightened people, bodies were being passed over the crowd. You could see a couple of years down the line towards events that were too big to handle, that were frightening. There were only around 10,000 at the front who knew what was happening, as you went further and further back it was people who had turned up to an event that was really just a massive rumour.

**ROB WALLS, freelance photographer:** I had a couple of media passes, which got me and a friend into a position about eight or 10 rows back from the stage in the relatively uncrowded media enclosure. The media area was a corral at the front with a waist-high steel fence that spanned from the left to right of the stage and out about 10 metres back from the stage. Entry was controlled by the Angels, who would later in the day carry the occasional young woman who had passed out over the top of the heads of the crowd to the front. Whether the fainting women were genuine or just chancers who saw a way of getting to the front, I don't know. There's no way that light steel, waist-high barrier would have kept back a modern, more aggressive crowd. By the time the Stones came on, a lot of the more athletic fans had climbed to the top of some of the larger trees to get a view.

**ROGER CHAPMAN:** The Stones turned up in some sort of antique security truck, which was funny. We never saw them, there was a security blanket around them and we were kept apart.

**SAM CUTLER:** When I introduced them, it was the first time I used the phrase "the greatest rock'n'roll band in the world". The following day, the Stones offered me the job of tour manager.





Ginger Johnson's African Drummers join the Stones for "Sympathy For The Devil"

● **MICK FARREN:** I was at the back of the stage. I saw these geezers carrying two huge boxes. They said they were full of butterflies. We said you must be putting us on, and he said no. Marianne was sitting there looking fucking dreadful. Mick opened the box and some butterflies flew out. Then he tipped over the boxes and a large pile of dead butterflies fell on the stage. Then he read some Shelley and away we went.

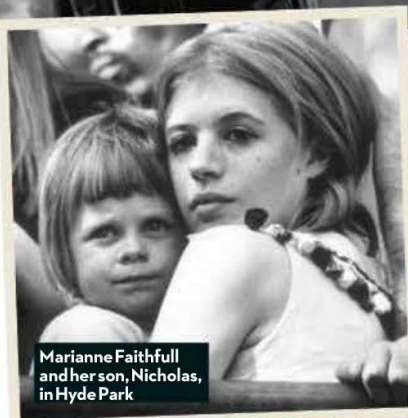
**CHRIS WELCH:** Mick was nervous about reading Shelley because he was worried there would be jeering. But the audience were on his side.

**ROGER CHAPMAN:** The death of a million fucking butterflies. I know he meant well in his acidic way. Some fluttered about a bit and the rest fell in everybody's drinks in the front row. A bit like Brian Jones, really. I don't know about the crowd, but the Shelley went down like a fucking lead balloon with us. He was completely out of his box, droning on and on.

**KEITH ALTHAM:** My toes curled when he read that tribute to Brian. I know it was meant to be an emotional farewell, but it was pretentious to the highest degree and then he proceeded to dance up and down on dead butterflies in his little Greek frock.

**MARK COOPER:** There was something utopian about Mick in his white Mr Fish smock. He read those Shelley verses and they were quite profound and metaphysical. Poetry was part of the counterculture and, far from feeling pretentious, it seemed logical – why not turn to the most radical of Romantic poets to pay tribute?

**PETER JENNER:** When they started playing, the sound was pretty ropey but it wafted along and people could hear it all over the park. The band didn't have a soundcheck, so that's why it was out of



Marianne Faithfull and her son, Nicholas, in Hyde Park

"It was almost Biblical, so many people gathered together peacefully in one place"  
*Greg Lake*

tune. And it was seriously out of tune, you can hear it on the film.

**RICHARD HAVERS, audience member:** They started with "I'm Yours, She's Mine" and I assumed it was a new Stones song. I later found it was a Johnny Winter song. I loved "Midnight Rambler", loving the blues it was a great opening that got me from the off. I do remember "Satisfaction" as being a bit of a mess, all rambling boogie with none of the attack of the single. "Jumping Jack Flash" was great. I don't even remember "Honky Tonk Women", it went in one ear and out the other. For "Sympathy For The Devil" they brought on all these African drummers. It started well and it degenerated into a bit of a jam.

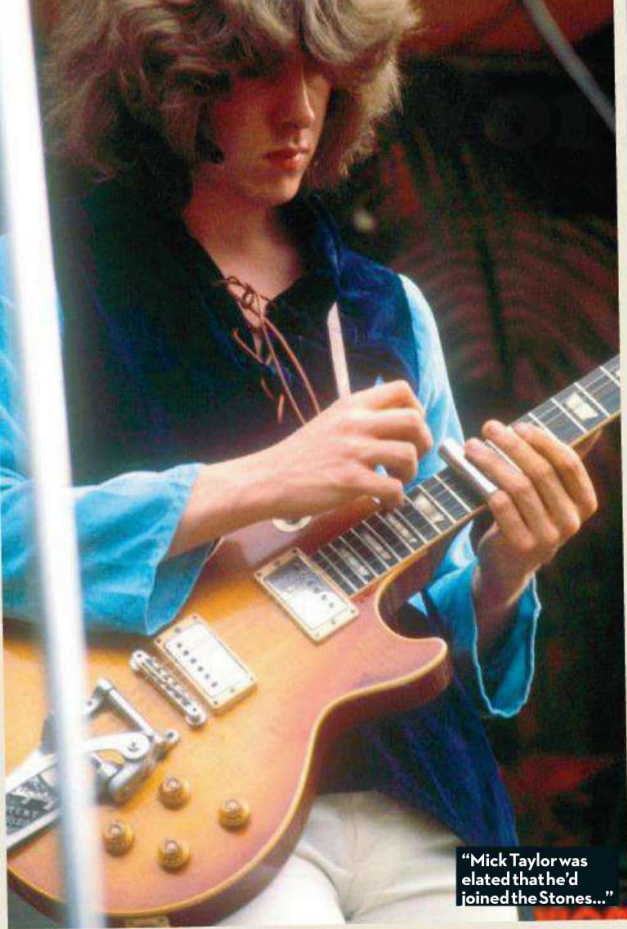
**GW SHARK, audience member:** We were down from South Wales for the day and about 70 yards back with a good view of the stage. It was a buzz to see the Stones. There were some good parts of the show, but it was erratic. It meshed sometimes but a lot of the time it didn't. "Love In Vain" was great. "Jumping Jack Flash" had its moments and there was some lovely stuff at the end of "Midnight Rambler" which showed what the whole concert could have been – if it was all that intensity and quality playing it would have been a gas.

**CHRIS WELCH:** They were definitely out of tune, but the crowd were hearing the riffs, the songs they liked, things like "Satisfaction" and "Street Fighting Man". Mick Taylor was nervous, they all were. It was a lot to cope with, making a tribute to Brian, introducing a new member and dealing with an unpredictable crowd with very little security. They had no idea what the reaction would be and it was quite a tense day, until the music got going.

**MICK FARREN:** To be quite honest, we'd never really heard the Stones before. This was the first gig I went to where they had enough amplification to carry over the noise of the







"Mick Taylor was elated that he'd joined the Stones..."

PARKS & RECREATION

# PINK FLOYD! BOLAN! EDGAR BROUGHTON!

A guide to the free festivals in Hyde Park

**T**HE FIRST HYDE Park free concert was on June 29, 1968, with Pink Floyd, Tyrannosaurus Rex, Roy Harper and Jethro Tull. There were three more that summer (July 27, August 24, September 28) with Traffic, The Nice, Fleetwood Mac, Fairport Convention, The Move and The Action. The following June came Blind Faith, with support from Donovan and the Edgar Broughton Band.



Tyrannosaurus Rex at Hyde Park, June 29, 1968

screaming girls. At Hyde Park there were no screaming girls and I'd like to have walked back 100 yards and heard it from there. It was a bit ragged, but the Stones were always a bit ragged up until the 1970s. Apart from Charlie, they weren't the tidiest of bands.

**GW SHARK:** It was generally the slower numbers that worked. It was all pretty much held together by Charlie, Bill and Mick Taylor. Keith didn't distinguish himself and didn't meld well with Mick Taylor. Jagger talked to the audience a few times. He said, "You all look so beautiful," which is the sort of platitude you got from him at the time and another time he said, "At least it's not going to rain on us." It was a beautiful day.

**RICHARD HAVERS:** They were a bit rambling, I think they ran out of steam. They'd not played a set that long since they were at the Crawdaddy. They'd usually have played half-hour sets, all the singles. This was more like 55 minutes. Bill Wyman told me that after this show the band realised they had to tighten up if they wanted to start touring again.

**GW SHARK:** The pacing of the show was a problem but "No Expectations" has some really nice slide from Taylor, who was a class player. He looked nervy, he rarely looked at the audience, but he was always like that. I saw him with John Mayall in '67 and he didn't look up from his fretboard.

**ROB WALLS:** Mick Taylor played well, but his fairly reserved personality meant he was in the background to Mick's more flamboyant persona. The Stones' playing was rough, but I think the set was carried along by the goodwill of the fans, who were willing to forgive anything just to see their heroes live. The band really seemed to get it together at the end when they were joined by those African drummers for "Sympathy For The Devil". Being so close, my level of enjoyment was probably higher than the less fortunate fans at the back of the crowd. The technology of the day was barely up to providing decent audio for a crowd of that size.

**GW SHARK:** The stage filled up with Ginger Johnson's African Drummers and then the Stones kicked in with

After the Stones, the festival moved to the area near Speakers' Corner, starting with Soft Machine in September 1969. In July 1970, Floyd and Harper returned, and September brought Canned Heat. Then it all changed. "The Tories couldn't believe anybody would put these on without making lots of money," says Pete Jenner. "They didn't allow for me and Andrew, two of the world's most incompetent businessmen. We are the people who chose Syd Barrett over Pink Floyd, who turned down David Bowie. So the Tories put it out to tender and that was the end. We never bothered to compete and they didn't ask us."

Taylor playing a James Brown riff and Keith on some pretty ordinary lead. Jagger went and sat at the lip of the stage and began enticing the hippy chicks at the front. Mick Taylor came and sat next to him after a while. It wasn't exciting for anybody except the girls at the front who kept trying to grab Jagger's nuts. When he stood up, about three of them pulled themselves onto the stage and were grabbed by bouncers and hauled offstage, kicking and screaming.

**SAM CUTLER:** They'd been persecuted like fuck and it's very significant that after that show, when half a million people turned up and behaved impeccably, the Stones were never bothered by the English police again. The police thought everybody thought the Stones were a bunch of disgusting hairy hippies, but the police are sensitive to public opinion. Once they realised the Stones could draw 500,000 people they backed off. It wasn't good politics.

**PETER JENNER:** The only accident the whole day was a hot dog stand that blew up. There were a few about. We didn't get any money from them either.

**MICK FARREN:** A quarter of a million people showing up was an amazing show of force. It sent out a message. Don't forget, the previous year there'd been the riot in Grosvenor Square and Jagger was there. Jagger was as close to the counterculture as he ever got. Young people watching the Stones was more of a tinderbox than one might imagine.

**ANDREW KING:** It rejuvenated the Stones. We were utterly surprised by the numbers. They say a million people passed through the site, it was jammed all the way to Bayswater Road and people came and went throughout the day.

**GREG LAKE:** I'd never played at anything like that. It was almost Biblical, so many people gathered together peacefully in one place. There were people hanging from the trees like plums. It was unnerving. In your mind, crowds that size were associated with trouble. It felt unstable, but the underlying ethos was peace and love. It was an extraordinary event, but it was also very peculiar.

**PETER JENNER:** I don't think we got 250,000. Nobody has any idea how many people were there, but I suspect there were far less than we think.

**JEFF DEXTER:** It was never 250,000. Sam got excited and kept adding 50,000 to the crowd every 30 minutes. The Met Police helicopter estimated the crowd at its busiest time to be 14,000 people.

**SAM CUTLER:** If you know you can put 40,000 on a football field, you can do the maths. Nobody knows how many there were, but it was a lot of fucking people.

**CHRIS WELCH:** It felt like a historic moment. It couldn't not be after all that had gone on in the weeks before. The national press were always talking about the Stones in a pejorative way, how they were nasty and shocking, but the evening papers all had colour supplement souvenir editions. They recognised it was a big thing and wanted to celebrate it.

**MARK COOPER:** It felt like life and death. The band were in transition, a group between two identities, but what was dominant was the sense of occasion. We found a common identity in the Stones and in each other and there was this expanding sense of a culture building its own values, finding new ways to live. It felt like it was going to be the future. 📌

*The Rolling Stones play Hyde Park, London on July 6 and 13*

WERE YOU THERE? EMAIL YOUR MEMORIES TO ALLAN.JONES@IPC MEDIA.COM



# The Message

## GRANDMASTER FLASH & THE FURIOUS FIVE

How the pioneering hip-hop single, that brought the problems of the streets to the dancefloor, had more in common with The Monkees than you'd imagine... "That record broke up the group!"

I

T'S WELL-KNOWN THAT "The Message" presented new directions for hip-hop, pointing away from the boasting and partying of the genre's early milestones toward harsher territories

that would be further explored by Public Enemy, BDP and NWA. What's less appreciated about the most famous song by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, however, is that it wasn't by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five at all. Flash – the pioneering turntablist who formed the group on the streets of the South Bronx in the mid-1970s – had no part in the writing or recording. Only one of the Five – Melle Mel – was involved, and admits he took part without much enthusiasm.

The truth about the song, held up as a landmark of "urban authenticity", is that it was the product of a system reminiscent of any old-school Brill Building hit factory. It was conceived, written and largely performed by Ed "Duke Bootee" Fletcher, a studio percussionist who played alongside the Sugar Hill label's house band. The recording progressed under the direction of label boss, Sylvia Robinson, a canny music industry veteran who then chose Flash and the Five as the perfect faces to front the song for sale. In some respects, it has more in common with The Monkees of "Pleasant Valley Sunday" than The Last Poets.

The resulting tensions helped precipitate the group's breakup. But in the process, an undeniable classic was created. "It wasn't necessarily an 'urban' song," Melle Mel says today. "It wasn't necessarily even a hip-hop song. People compared it with Bob Dylan, with Stevie Wonder's 'Living For The City', with The Temptations' 'Masterpiece'. Great songs with the same bloodline. It was bigger than Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five.

It was bigger than hip-hop. It was everybody's song." DAMIEN LOVE

**MELLE MEL:** Flash became our neighbourhood DJ in the early days, when hip-hop was being formulated in the Bronx. Me, Scorpio and my brother, Kidd Creole, we were Flash's little breakdance crew, then the first MCs. When we started, DJs were the important thing, not rappers, so the group was called "Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five". When we started making records, we had the option of changing to "The Furious Five featuring Grandmaster Flash". But our attitude was, it would be Hollywood to change. Looking back, we should have. People think Flash is Gladys Knight, and The Furious Five were The Pips. Personally, I think I was Gladys. Flash was The Pips. We originally signed with Enjoy Records, owned by Bobby Robinson, no relation to Sylvia at Sugar Hill. His claim to fame was having people before they became famous. He sold us to Sugar Hill. But we did a single, "Super Rappin'", at Enjoy, and I'd later use a rhyme from that on "The Message".

**SKIP McDONALD:** I'd played at a company called All Platinum, owned by Sylvia, and later became Sugar Hill. Around The Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" we came back: myself, Doug Wimbish on bass, Keith Leblanc on drums. We became the Sugar Hill band.

**JIGGS CHASE (co-producer):** I first went to Sugar Hill trying to get a deal for an artist. I'd done this nice arrangement for her. They didn't like her.

### KEY PLAYERS



**Melle Mel**  
Vocals



**Ed "Duke Bootee" Fletcher**  
Vocals, keys, perc

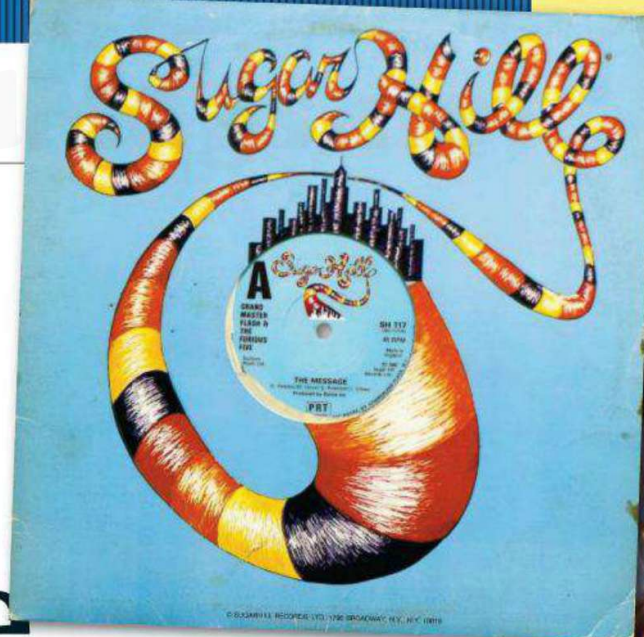


**Skip McDonald**  
Guitar

band to Sugar Hill, and get Skip and them fired. But those guys were so good, he gave that up. But he still brought me in.

**McDONALD:** The usual Sugar Hill method was, they'd go out nights to discos to see what people were dancing to, then take pieces from different records, isolate one portion, and use that as a springboard for the rappers. Sylvia would be instigator. "Rapper's Delight" is the classic example: a direct take from Chic's "Good Times". It was like pre-sampling: we'd learn the groove and physically play it. But "The Message" was different. That music was Ed Fletcher.

**FLETCHER:** "The Message" started when we were working on something else. I went outside for a break, and I was beating this rhythm on an empty plastic bottle while I got water. Sylvia heard it, and said, "Hey, I want to record that." Sylvia's ears were always open. So, I recorded: just percussion, this water-bottle track. It languished, until a period when Sylvia wasn't hot on anything, and Jiggs said, "You should do







Colourful pioneers... Back row: The Kidd Creole, Cowboy, Rahiem, Mr Ness/ Scorpio; front row: Melle Mel, Grandmaster Flash

something with that track." He came to my house, we worked on it. I came up with the lyrics then.

**CHASE:** I said to Ed, "C'mon, come up with something." Ed thinks out the box. He was just laying on the couch, smoking, nonchalant, then, from the top of his head: "*Don't push me, 'cause I'm close to the edge. I'm trying not to lose my head.*" Then: "*It's like a jungle sometimes, makes me wonder how I keep from going under.*" I thought, "Uh-oh." I rushed back to Sylvia. She thought the same: there's something here.

**FLETCHER:** The things I describe in the lyrics were, not in my house, but around the environment. I'm not political. I just wanted to hold a mirror up.

**MCDONALD:** "The Message" was originally intended as a Sugar Hill Gang record.

**MEL:** Sylvia always tried tracks on multiple groups. When we did "Freedom", that was supposed to be Lovebug Starski, but Sylvia didn't like him on it. Sugar Hill Gang didn't want to do "The Message". We didn't want to do it, either.

**CHASE:** It wasn't the usual boasting thing. It was about the streets, and it didn't turn them on.

**MEL:** It was just too serious. At that time, we were making party tracks, y'know, and wanted to

keep in the same lane. Nobody wanted that song.

**FLETCHER:** None of them liked it. They walked out. Flash said, "Look: people don't wanna take their problems to the disco." But Mel came back.

**MEL:** Well, thing was: Sylvia wanted to do it. So I knew it was going to be the next song coming out, and I'd rather be on it than not.

**CHASE:** What Sylvia says goes.

**MEL:** Nobody understood the impact it could have, other than Miss Sylvia. We were, like, "Hey. If you say so..."

**MCDONALD:** We recorded a very different, heavy, almost African-percussion version first.

**CHASE:** This percussion groove, with the water bottles. That might be where the "jungle" lyric

came from, trying to go in that direction. That version was all right, but it wasn't knocking us out.

**FLETCHER:** I didn't think it was commercial.

**CHASE:** Then Ed came up with that simple thing.

**FLETCHER:** Zapp had just done "More Bounce To The Ounce". I loved that, and the Tom Tom Club's "Genius Of Love". Also,

we'd been listening a lot to Brian Eno and David Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. Musically, "The Message" is kind of a combination of those.

**CHASE:** It was right to the point. Skip added

some stuff. And we knew: that's it.

**FLETCHER:** I did some tricky things – like slipping the track around and playing percussion backwards. But otherwise, I kept it simple. I was into what I call "trance music", I didn't want any bassline changes. Skip was the only other player. It was the first Sugar Hill track where Skip, Doug and Keith didn't play together. It's a DMX drum machine, me on Prophet 5 synthesiser, my percussion, Skip's guitar. Then the vocals.

**MEL:** Sylvia chose who'd get what verse: Duke on the intro, me on the first and second rhyme, Duke third and fourth, my rhyme last.

**FLETCHER:** Initially, I just did a reference vocal, expecting someone else to do the finished song. I wasn't a rapper. But Sylvia loved it. And she tried all The Furious Five. I thought Rahiem, who mimes to my voice in the video, would wind up doing the vocal. But Sylvia heard something in my voice I didn't hear. I've had Snoop tell me how much my voice influenced him, because it was different from everybody else's. There was no "Throw ya hands in the air!" It was just plain: here it is.

**MEL:** We took the "a child is born..." rhyme from "Super Rappin'", and tried it on the end. That became the song everybody knows.

**FLETCHER:** Sylvia bought Mel's old rhyme from Bobby Robinson at Enjoy – she took him to dinner, handled business. Great rhyme. The only piece I didn't write. Mel is still the best rapper ever. Mel was truly a phenomenon.

"There was no  
'Throw ya hands in  
the air!' It was just  
plain: here it is"

ED FLETCHER





Flip your wig: Melle Mel and Grandmaster Flash

## FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Ed "Duke Bootee" Fletcher, Melle Mel, Sylvia Robinson, Clifton "Jiggs" Chase
- **Performers:** Ed Fletcher (vocals, synth, percussion), Skip McDonald (guitar), Melle Mel (vocals)
- **Producers:** Ed Fletcher, Jiggs Chase, Sylvia Robinson
- **Recorded at:** Sweet Mountain Studio, Englewood, New Jersey
- **Released:** July 1, 1982
- **UK chart position:** 8
- **US chart position:** 62

● **MCDONALD:** Sugar Hill records were done very quickly. Sometimes we'd cut a record Monday, and hear it on the radio Friday.

**FLETCHER:** Sylvia, Jiggs and I mixed "The Message". As we faded it down, it came out at 7 minutes 11 seconds. We made ridiculously long records. When Sylvia saw that, she said, "Oh my God. We have to get this to the radio as soon as possible." Sylvia was very into numerology, and seven and 11 are considered the two luckiest numbers. Next day, it was in heavy rotation.

**MCDONALD:** First time I actually heard the finished record was on radio, WBLS.

**FLETCHER:** I remember driving home, hearing it on the radio for the first time. I'd heard things I'd played on before on radio, but to hear myself as percussionist was nothing. To hear my vocals, though, I had to stop and think.

**MEL:** First time I heard the finished article, Sylvia came to Fever, where the early hip-hop crowd hung out. She played the record. I didn't think it was going to get much response. Fever was really a dance club. But people kept dancing. That's when I knew it had legs.

**FLETCHER:** I knew we had something different going on when the white audience picked up on it. It went gold in 11 days.

**MCDONALD:** Does Sylvia deserve credit as co-writer? That's hard. In terms of writing: no. In terms of organisational skills: yes.

**MEL:** What Sylvia did is no different to what James Brown or George Clinton did: she'll tell you, "Play so-and-so," or "Don't say so-and-so, say this instead..." That song wouldn't have existed without her. No-one else believed in it.

**FLETCHER:** There's always a protocol at any institution. If you wanted your record released on Sugar Hill, you were going to have to give Sylvia a cut. Jiggs also has a co-writer credit; I gave him a cut because he brought me there, he was my man, he deserved a cut. He's still getting cheques. I don't regret that one instant. I knew the protocol. And I'm still getting paid.

**CHASE:** Was crediting it to "Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five" a marketing thing? I guess. We were looking for a song for them. They had a name, they were popular. Sylvia had the reins. She knew what she was doing.

**MCDONALD:** That record broke up that group. You could tell the same story about The Jackson Five, The Monkees. Groups who, on the studio

side, it would be one crew, and in live performance, or selling the record, it would be another. It starts getting mixed up.

**MEL:** What led to the breakup was, first, everybody's attitude, and second, the business behind Sugar Hill. The group could have stayed together. But Flash wanted to go to court. They went to court. I went back and wrote "White Lines".

**FLETCHER:** Sylvia carries a certain edge with all of us. She was like a mother to us – but she was also a businesswoman. And you learned business from her.

**MEL:** Flash is known to be bitter about Sugar Hill. But out of that entire situation, Flash gained most. He didn't have anything to do with "The Message", yet he's still getting acclaim for it, because his name is up front on there. He's in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame because of "The Message" and "White Lines" – and he had *nothing* to do with either.

**FLETCHER:** It became an anthem. That's not because I'm any genius. There were other people in rap trying to say socially relevant things

at the same time, even though a lot of it was just who's got the most money and the biggest dick. The genre was growing. But it's who gets there first, with that right combination of song, artist, label.

**MEL:** It resonated. We were six young guys from the ghetto, and people were, like, "Uh-huh, this is the struggle of the oppressed from the inner cities..." Well, OK, that's one side. But this could have been *anybody's* song. That's what worked.

**MCDONALD:** Those lyrics, that situation is still apparent. "People pissing on the stairs, they just don't care..." A lot of songs of the time weren't about the time; they were about a good time, a nice car. That song was about what was going on. Even more now. Everybody's broke. Everybody's on the edge.

**FLETCHER:** People are always on the edge. Even the most sedate-looking situation. For me, the metaphor is when I came to the UK in 1979 with Edwin Starr, just when Thatcher got in. Riding from the airport, I saw this guy in a suit, looking very straight-laced. He was riding a bicycle. But he had this basket. And as he rode past stores, he was pulling out bricks and smashing the windows. Boom.

**MCDONALD:** It's a reflection of society. That's why it has stood up so long.

**CHASE:** And it's a hell of a groove. 🎧

*Grandmaster Flash will DJ in the UK in August*



## TIMELINE

**1974-75:** Grandmaster Flash (aka Joseph Saddler) builds a formidable reputation as a DJ in the South Bronx. His breakdance crew begin rapping, later expanding to The Furious Five

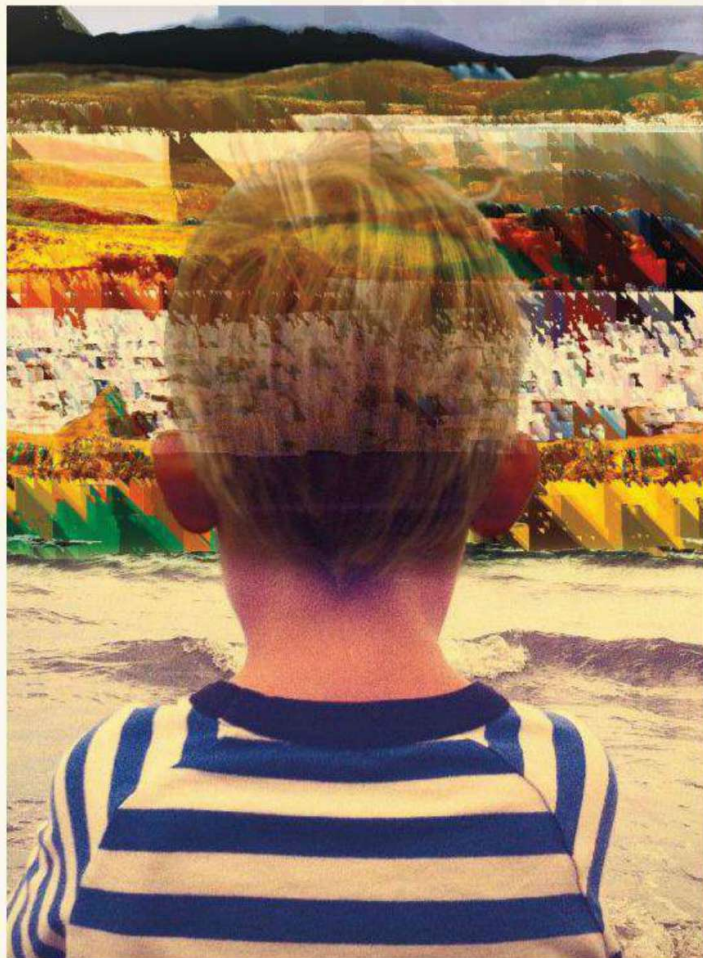
**September 1979:** Sugar Hill releases the breakthrough single, "Rapper's Delight"  
**1980:** Debbie Harry writes Blondie's "Rapture", introducing Flash's name to the mainstream. Flash &

the Five release "Super Rappin'" on Enjoy  
**1981:** Third Sugar Hill single, "The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel", is a landmark in sampling. The group

are booed opening for The Clash in New York  
**July 1982:** "The Message" is released  
**1983:** Tensions over royalties, the recording process and the growing focus on Melle Mel as frontman sees

the group splitting. Flash attempts to sue Sugar Hill for \$5 million. Sugar Hill releases Mel's "White Lines (Don't Do It)" under the misleading credit: Grandmaster Melle Mel.





# VILLAGERS { Awayland }

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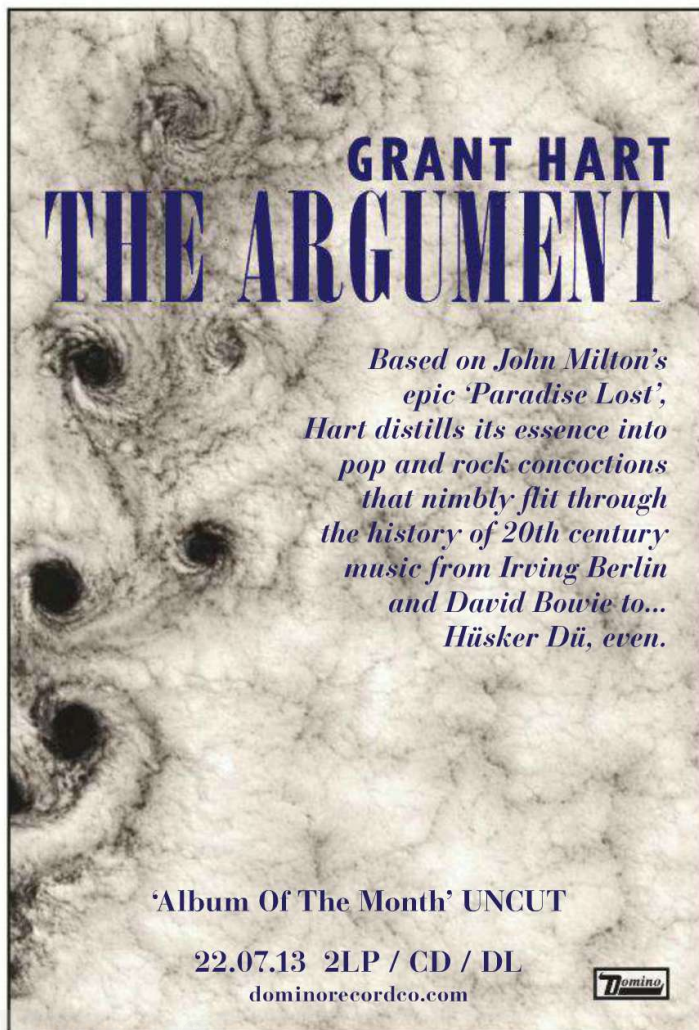


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ELLIOTT LANDY/RED PEARNS

Country gents: (l-r) Richard Manuel, Robbie Robertson, Rick Danko, Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, at Rick Danko's brother's farm, Ontario during the 'next of kin' photo session that would appear inside *Music From Big Pink*



A photograph of three men dressed in 1930s sharecropper attire, standing in a field. The man on the left wears a grey suit, a grey fedora, and has a mustache. The man in the center wears a brown suit and has a beard. The man on the right wears a dark suit and has a full beard. They are all looking towards the camera. The background shows a rustic wooden structure and bare trees.

# If your memory serves you well

“People were like, ‘What kind of music is this? Where in the world did this come from?’” Forty-five years ago, THE BAND released *Music From Big Pink*, an album that drew on the richest musical traditions of America – “From the Ozarks to the Mississippi Delta to the dustbowl,” ROBBIE ROBERTSON tells *Uncut*. Five miles out of Woodstock, we reconstruct the story of a landmark album with the help of its surviving players... A tale of five young men (and an illustrious neighbour), dressed as sharecroppers, going back to the source – and changing the future of music in the process...

Story: Graeme Thomson

Photographs: Elliott Landy

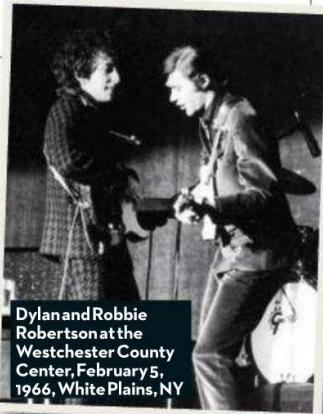


**I**N THE MOUNTAINS to which they had lately retreated, the roar of the changing world they'd just escaped was much reduced. Elsewhere, psychedelic tumult prevailed. It was 1967, the age of Aquarius and all that. The year, that is, of *Sgt Pepper*, *Are You Experienced*, *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, *Absolutely Free*, *Smiley Smile*, *Strange Days*, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, *Safe As Milk*, *Surrealistic Pillow*, *Forever Changes*, *Disraeli Gears*. The airwaves were full of acid rock. Music was getting louder, more complex, experimental. It was a time of hippy rebellion, free love, be-ins, freak-outs, LSD, peace marches, anti-war demonstrations, utopian politics and drum solos.

Up there in the Catskills, though, on the northeastern end of the Allegheny Plateau, many things were much as they always had been. The changes rocking America were barely noticed here, where the pull of the past was still keenly felt and where in that notable summer Bob Dylan's former backing band, once known as The Hawks, four road-hardened Canadians and a kick-ass Arkansas farmboy, were working on a record that found virtuous inspiration in the music of an older America and would turn out to be one of the great game-changing albums of that or any era.

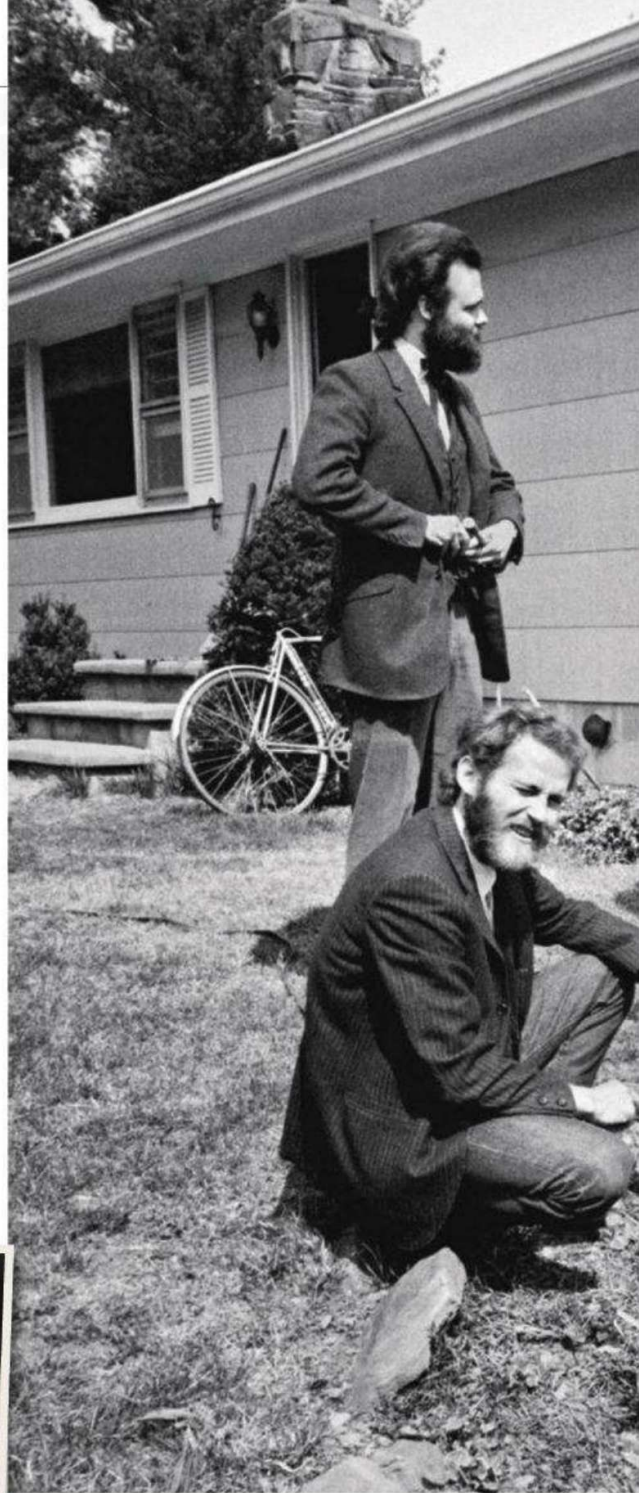
*Music From Big Pink*, The Band's 1968 debut, has become such an ingrained and influential part of our musical landscape it's difficult to imagine a time when it didn't exist – or how shockingly against-the-grain it was when it first arrived. In *Big Pink*, a modest tract house in the mountains of upstate New York, those five men blended their hard years on the road, their rapidly changing lives, and their love of mountain music, gospel, spirituals, roadhouse blues, Stax soul and early rock'n'roll to create a magical new strain of American music.

"It was pure, from the source," Robbie Robertson tells *Uncut*. "These were things that grew right out of the ground in the places that we had played, from the Ozarks to the Mississippi Delta to the dustbowl. You've got to gather before you give, and we had gone out there and learned this stuff. We had been together for seven years, it wasn't like we had just been given instruments for Christmas, and these pieces we'd gathered along the way we were incorporating



Dylan and Robbie Robertson at the Westchester County Center, February 5, 1966, White Plains, NY

"Once we were in Woodstock, there was a real feeling of artistic freedom"  
*Robbie Robertson*



unconsciously into what we were doing – and, well, it all added up to something that didn't sound like anything."

It wasn't just the music that seemed utterly out of time. On the inside cover of the record they looked like a gang of turn-of-the-century train robbers: sombre suits, short hair, a palpable air of unbreachable unity. The beards weren't groovy, but rather the unkempt face furniture of the mid-west sharecropper. Even their name – a mere afterthought which nonetheless spoke volumes – was a cultural anomaly, its plain understatement resonating in the age of Quicksilver Messenger Service and Frumious Bandersnatch. Everything about *Music From Big Pink* was radically antithetical to the prevailing mood of the times.

"When it came out people were like, 'Where in the world did this come from? What kind of music is this?'" says Robertson. "People acted like we were from another planet. That shocked me, but it was a good thing, because it made me feel that we were doing something that had our own character to it. It taught us a lesson: you need to take your own vibe with you. That idea had a tremendous influence." In the 45 years since its release, those lessons, and that influence, have simply grown ever more potent.





Exiles on Stoll Road:  
The Band outside  
Big Pink, April 14, 1968

**R**EGARDLESS OF THE true seriousness of Bob Dylan's motorcycle accident at the end of July 1966, it was a matter of life and death for his backing group. After Dylan went into retreat, The Hawks were stranded. With the cancellation of 60 tour dates scheduled for the rest of the year, they were left kicking around New York, scratching for the odd session, a road band who had abruptly run out of road. "We were scrounging around and it was not very productive," confirms Robertson. "The other guys were going back and forth to Canada and it built to a boil: we gotta do something."

Dylan was squirreled away with his new wife and young family in Woodstock. Two hours north of New York, the town and its environs had long been a haven for writers, painters, actors and avant-garde musicians. Dylan was working there with Howard Alk on an edit of *Eat The Document*, the fractured documentary of his fractious '66 tour. He invited Robertson, then later the rest of the band, to visit his rambling cedarwood house and take a look. Hawks drummer Levon Helm, having quit the Dylan tour in 1965, was off-radar, working on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico.

"At the time Woodstock was a lovely, low-key little art

## "A CHARMING LITTLE ART COLONY..."

How The Band and Dylan changed Woodstock

**A**LMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER The Band and Dylan relocated to Woodstock, the area became a Mecca for musicians: Fred Neil (right), Tim Hardin, Richie Havens, Van Morrison, John Martyn, Peter Yarrow and Paul Butterfield were just a few of the artists who could be found up in the hills. The Band appeared at the Woodstock Festival in August 1969, the same year Albert Grossman



opened the Bearsville recording studio. The impact was largely negative. "It went from being a charming little art colony to this hippy haven, which the locals resented," says Robertson. "Volkswagen buses as far as the eye could see. The festival did that, and there was no turning back. Eventually I wanted to get out. It became something else - and we were partially responsible for that. It

all started at Big Pink." Even so, The Band retained links with the area. Helm built his complex in Woodstock, where he held his Midnight Rambles, while Hudson lives locally. Helm and Danko are both buried in Woodstock Cemetery.



colony,” explains Robertson. “Once we were up there, there was a real feeling of artistic freedom in the air. It had its own thing and everybody gravitated to it. We went on a mission to find a place where we could work and which could be our little clubhouse, and then Rick found Big Pink.”

Early in 1967 Hawks bassist Rick Danko came across a four-bedroom house at 2188 Stoll Road in the backwoods of West Saugerties, five miles from Woodstock and “out in the middle of nothing”, according to The Band’s mercurial organist, saxophonist and accordion player Garth Hudson. It was hidden down a narrow track, surrounded by maples, pines and meadow, with views onto Overlook Mountain. Painted an unlovely shade of salmon mousse, the locals had nicknamed it Big Pink. The rent was \$125 a month and in the spring of 1967 Danko, Hudson and piano player Richard Manuel moved in, while Robertson and his future wife Dominique took a house on the estate of Dylan’s manager Albert Grossman just down the road.

Big Pink was functional. It was “furnished, but not in a very glamorous way,” says Robertson. “There were leather couches, a dining table, beds in the bedrooms, just like a regular family home. Your basic needs were there.” The primary attraction was a long basement room with bare breezeblock walls running the length of the house, where they could install a basic recording set-up: an Ampex 400 tape recorder, two mixers and some microphones.

“This was something I’d wanted to do for a long time,” states Robertson. “We got a reel set up, got a rug in there. This was very unusual back then, people did not have home recording facilities. We didn’t know what we were doing, so I asked a recording engineer we knew to take a look at it, and he said, ‘Well, this is the worst situation I have ever seen.

You’ve got concrete walls, a cement floor, and a big steel furnace in the middle of it. This is all wrong. Whatever you do, don’t do anything recording here because it’s going to be awful.’ This was very discouraging but it was too late – we didn’t have any choice. We’d already rented the place.”

Soon after they settled, Dylan began dropping in from his house on nearby Camelot Road, arriving late morning and playing music until late afternoon. At

## WELL-COVERED

### A HEADY LOAD

Five classic versions of Big Pink’s most famous song, “The Weight”

#### THE STAPLES SINGERS (SOUL FOLK IN ACTION, 1968)

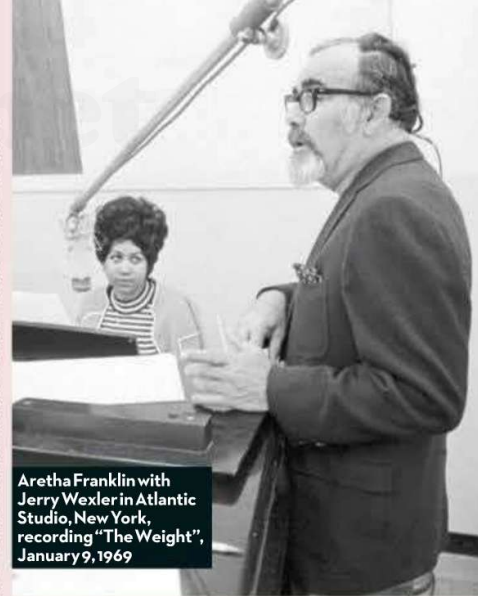
Reclaiming the song’s original gospel impetus, the Staples take it to church on their first Stax album. The version with The Band on *The Last Waltz* is pretty fine, too.

#### ARETHA FRANKLIN (THIS GIRL’S IN LOVE WITH YOU, 1970)

Recorded at Jerry Wexler’s suggestion (he hated the results, oddly), a live-in-the-studio soul stomper with explosive backing vocals, punchy horns and stinging slide guitar.

#### JOE COCKER (MAD DOGS & ENGLISHMEN BOXSET, 1970)

Barnstorming live version released on the six-disc Complete Fillmore East Concerts edition of Cocker’s classic album.



Aretha Franklin with Jerry Wexler in Atlantic Studio, New York, recording “The Weight”, January 9, 1969

#### RICKIE LEE JONES (THE DEVIL YOU KNOW, 2012)

Deconstructed voice and piano reading from last year’s covers album. The weight never seemed quite so heavy.

#### THE BLACK KEYS & JOHN FOGERTY (COACHELLA, 2012)

Performed at last year’s festival as a tribute to Levon Helm, who had died days earlier. A winning combination of grit and grace. Check it out on YouTube.

“You could go outside and scream to the top of your lungs and nobody would ever hear!” *Robbie Robertson*



religion,” explains Robertson. “They carried these big chillums and would pound on these things – there would be flames shooting out of them! They were from another planet. They didn’t speak a world of English and they loved us.” Levon Helm was fascinated by the khrmack, an inverted bongo with two gut strings on the inside. They ended up making a record – *The Bengali Bauls At Big Pink* – in the basement, watched by The Band and recorded by Hudson.

first the loose basement sessions roamed over the songbooks of Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and John Lee Hooker, as well as numerous traditional tunes, sea shanties, Irish ballads and nonsense verse. It was a reconnection to historic musical traditions that led, in turn, to a burst of original creativity. Scores of newly written pieces merged with ancient songs until it was hard to see the join [see panel]. “Bob would come

every day and only leave to go home and have dinner with his family,” recalls Robertson. “He was out there five or six days a week and he was really loving what was happening. It was just a joyous, free feeling. I don’t know if I’ve ever seen Bob Dylan in a more relaxed state of mind.”

The Hawks had always possessed a Zelig-like quality. Whether in the earliest days with Ronnie Hawkins, or as Levon & The Hawks, or backing Dylan through his vitriolic electric tours, each time they adapted their style to suit. The one constant was amplified rock’n’roll. “The last time I’d heard them play was when they were on the road with Bob in ‘66,” says their tour manager at the time, Jon Taplin. “That was very brash, loud, lots of solos.”

It would be hard to recognise the group of musicians convening at Big Pink from that description. “Now we were in this basement, with all those hard surfaces, our usual style became a little irritating on the ears,” says Robertson. “So we ended up playing in a way that we had a balance amongst us. If anybody was playing too loud it was really obvious because you couldn’t hear the singer. That became a bit of a standard of us in a circle, playing to one another.” Hudson talks about each member “accompanying the words. When the singer was singing the guitar would play something that would complement it. That’s also how I saw my job: texture, the occasional solo, little fills. It’s simple. In the basement, we were all close together, it was an acoustic approach, and I think when you listen to *Big Pink* you hear that. Nobody tries to jump in and take over.”

## BIG PINK BENGALIS

### GREAT BAULS OF FIRE!

Introducing The Band’s favourite Bengali musicians...

ONE OF ALBERT Grossman’s more esoteric discoveries, the Bauls belonged to a centuries-old tradition of “madcap” Bengali travelling musicians, and came to Woodstock from the streets of Calcutta. During their visit they played the Fillmore in San Francisco and Town Hall in New York, and became frequent visitors to Big Pink. “They never wore shoes and it was winter,” says Robertson. “But they felt very comfortable at Big Pink.” For breakfast they would have yoghurt mixed with marijuana. On the mantelpiece there was a pastoral scene that could be plugged in to make it look like the water was moving. The Bauls would watch it transfixed for up to an hour. “Smoking hashish was part of their



Down in Rick Danko's basement, Woodstock, 1969: (clockwise from bottom) Manuel, Robertson, Helm, Hudson, Danko





Rock of ages: The Band pose for a shot in West Saugerties, New York, 1968



## HOME SCHOOLING

## THE ROOTS OF MUSIC FROM BIG PINK

How Bob Dylan and their heroes helped The Band on their way

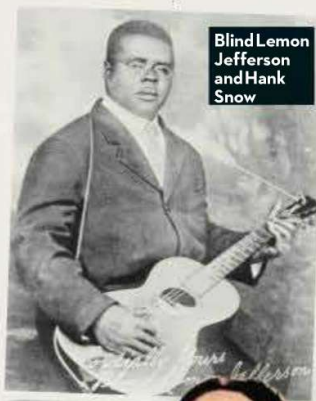
**T**HE SONGS ON *Music From Big Pink* were partly informed by what became known as *The Basement Tapes* – over 120 songs recorded by Dylan and The Band at Big Pink between June and October, 1967. As Dylan told *Rolling Stone*: “That’s really the way to do a recording – in a peaceful, relaxed setting – in somebody’s basement. With the windows open... and a dog lying on the floor.”

Along with their own compositions, many songs reconnected Dylan to his roots, believed ‘lost’ after he turned electric. There’s a Southern prison work song ‘Ain’t No More Cane’, sea shanties

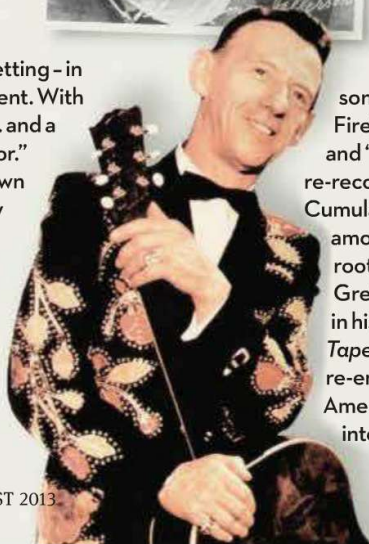
like “Bonnie Ship The Diamond”, Appalachian ballad “Come All Ye Fair And Tender Ladies”, “Nine Hundred Miles” – made famous by Woody Guthrie – and songs recorded in the 1920s and ’30s by Blind Lemon Jefferson (“See That My Grave Is Kept Clean”) and the Skillet Lickers (“(They) Gotta Quit

Kicking My Dog Around”). They also worked up songs recorded previously by Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley and Hank Snow alongside new songs that would be covered by Peter, Paul & Mary (“Too Much Of Nothing”), Manfred Mann (“The Mighty Quinn”), Julie Driscoll & Brian Auger (“This Wheel’s On Fire”) and The Byrds (“You Ain’t Goin’ Nowhere”). Three

songs – “This Wheel’s On Fire”, “I Shall Be Released” and “Tears Of Rage” – were re-recorded for *Big Pink*. Cumulatively, the sessions amount to “a discovery of roots and memory”, as Greil Marcus described them in his book on *The Basement Tapes*, *Invisible Republic*: a re-engagement with older American traditions that fed into *Music From Big Pink*.



Blind Lemon Jefferson and Hank Snow



● In these quieter surroundings the voice became king, especially after Helm returned to the fold, having got wind of what was happening in the hills. The hair-raising combination of his hardscrabble holler, Manuel’s tortured falsetto and Danko’s emotive sob had “parallels in a lot of raw Appalachian and Delta music,” says *Big Pink* producer John Simon. “It sure ain’t city stuff.” It reflected what they were listening to: the Staple Singers, The Carter Family, Otis Redding, New Orleans jazz, gospel, Delta field recordings, all a million miles away from the trends of folk songwriters, underground rock and psychedelia.

“It was a combination of mountain music and spirituals, and we started to get an appreciation for harmonies that we would hear from Johnnie & Jack, or the Louvin Brothers,” admits Robertson. “Mountain music! And we were up in the mountains, so it all seemed like it fit together. There was something so pure about it. It was pure American – and so is rock’n’roll. It all came together, but when you’re in it, you don’t dissect it, you’re following your gut feelings.”

They were also reacting to changes in Dylan’s writing. The quicksilver edge of *Blonde On Blonde* had been replaced with a phantasmagorical mix of woody traditional textures and words centring on myth and fable, often apparently imparting some coded moral lesson. The bleed between the basement songs and *Big Pink* is a fine one. “Some of those songs got incorporated into what we were doing,” confirms Robertson. “Richard wrote ‘Tears Of Rage’ with Bob, Rick wrote ‘This Wheel’s On Fire’ with Bob, I was off writing songs like ‘To Kingdom Come’, ‘Chest Fever’, ‘Caledonia Mission’, and it was all starting to come together.”

The five men were a “functioning democracy”, according to *Big Pink* producer John Simon, listing their attributes. Danko was “a very melodic bass player and a lot of fun to hang with”. Helm was “a born musician, who sang with the tradition of those generations-ago singers of sincerity and conviction in his subconscious”. Hudson was – and is – a “genius with a Cartesian mind” and Manuel was simply “The Singer”. Robertson, meanwhile, was the director figure, overseeing the entire picture, “paying special



attention to how all the elements in the arrangement fit together, including his guitar parts”.

Although he would not fully emerge as The Band’s principal songwriter until their second album, the guitarist was already “the architect of their sound”, says Simon. On “Caledonia Mission” and “Chest Fever”, principally sung by Danko and Manuel, respectively, he would sing their lines to them to let them know exactly what he wanted, and they would copy his phrasing. “It was casting on my part,” says Robertson. “Who could pull off these songs the best?” The sense of character and emotional authenticity was key. Robertson imbued his new songs, and others such as “The Weight” and “Yazoo Street Scandal”, with a tangible sense of place and personal history which came to define The Band’s music. “It was all stuff gathered subconsciously playing the Chitlin’ circuit,” he says. “Going from Canada down to the Mississippi Delta, it overwhelmed me and got under my skin. All the names of the places – there really was a Yazoo Street! I started putting them up in my attic, and years later I went in and pulled these things out.”

**B**IG PINK AND the surrounding atmosphere became integral to the richly textured character of the music. “You could go outside and scream to the top of your lungs and nobody would ever hear,” says Robertson. “Coming from New York City there was a tremendous freedom to that.”

All the hard, straight edges left their music as the pace of life settled into an agreeable routine. In the late morning they would get up, drink a little coffee, and start gathering in the basement to play music. In their downtime they would throw around a football, or take Danko’s giant poodle, Hamlet, up into the woods for a walk, or play checkers in the living room. Helm was the most competitive while Manuel, John Simon recalls, “used to play ‘backwards checkers.’ It was all about sacrifice. The first to lose all his pieces won. Richard was a champ at that.” There were two typewriters set up in the house. Dylan would write on one when he was around, often running downstairs as soon as he had finished a lyric to see if anyone had any suitable music to go with it: “Tears Of Rage” and “This Wheel’s On Fire” were both written this way. The other typewriter was there so “anybody who had a

thought could just put it down before they forgot it,” says Robertson.

“The idea of domesticity was part of the vibe of Big Pink, rather than being an asshole rock musician with your shirt open,” says Taplin. “They were all very close, very funny together. Especially Richard and Levon, they had a really interesting humorous thing, mainly about women and booze.”

“It was a lifestyle,” admits Robertson. “The people, the house, the grounds, everything played a part. There was a kind of experienced innocence. Everyone went with that feeling.”

The bucolic ideal of life at the house has to contend with the reality of four young male musicians living together.

There were no housemaids or live-in help. They fended for themselves. It was, says Taplin, “like a college dormitory more than anything else – there was always dirty dishes in the sink. I think Garth was probably more domestic than anybody else.” Hudson recalls the merest hint of a rota. “We each did things to do with the cooking, cleaning,” he says. “Richard cooked. Sure! He was quite good. I think I had something to do with the rest of the house – making sure the rugs were straight and all that.”

“In the kitchen someone was always making little snacks,” says Robertson, but it was no place for the gourmand, more somewhere “you would grab breakfast and coffee,” says Taplin. On warmer days they’d cook outside on the barbecue, with mixed

results. Hudson recalls Manuel “pouring some lighter fluid in it. Well, the thing exploded and the flame shot out and burned his ankle. Oh, they were frightening times.”

Visitors would come and go. “You’d get up in the morning, and think, ‘Oh no, Allen Ginsberg just pulled in with Peter Orlovsky, and he’s bringing his harmonium,’” explains Robertson. “Or Charles Lloyd would come up and we’d jam with him.” The Bauls of Bengal were among the more exotic guests. A family of itinerant street troubadours that Grossman had met on a visit to India and had invited to stay in a converted barn in Bearsville, they recorded an album

“I was aware of sounds on records... and I think we knew we were doing something new”  
*Garth Hudson*



George Harrison and Bob Dylan onstage at the Concert For Bangladesh, Madison Square Garden, NY, Aug 1, 1971

## A BEATLE MEETS BOB AND THE BAND

**H**AVING BEEN BOWLED over by Big Pink, shortly after finishing ‘The White Album’ George Harrison and his wife Pattie Boyd visited Woodstock in November 1968 at the invitation of Robbie Robertson. “He wanted to see what was real,” remembers Robertson. “He wanted to hang out with us and have some of this rub off on him.” Harrison met up with Dylan on the visit, though it was a somewhat stilted affair. “Absolute agony,” says Pattie Boyd. “Bob just wouldn’t talk. I don’t know whether it was because he was shy of George, but it was agonisingly difficult.” The Harrisons were invited to Thanksgiving dinner at Dylan’s house on November 28, where the guests included author Mason Hoffenberg. It was, says Jon Taplin, “kind of stiff and formal”, until after dinner Hoffenberg suggested that we ‘get all the boys over on this side, and all the girls over on this side. The first couple to get their clothes off and screw wins.’ While in Woodstock, Harrison wrote “All Things Must Pass”, heavily influenced by “The Weight”, and he and Dylan also wrote “I’d Have You Anytime”. Both songs appeared on his 1970 album *All Things Must Pass*. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship, and a creative partnership which led to the *Traveling Wilburys*.



Another music from a different kitchen... The Band in Big Pink on Easter Sunday, 1968



in the basement. Two Bauls, Luxman and Purna Das, are pictured with Dylan on the cover of *John Wesley Harding* [see panel]. Among the artists, oddballs and occasional superstar, “there were local people we knew who’d come to fix the screen doors, or remove the flying squirrels in the attic,” says Robertson. “There was all sorts of people coming and going, but you had to know where this place was. It was hard to find.” Hudson suggests that uninvited guests weren’t always welcome. “This one guy came up to the house but I frightened him,” he says darkly. “I won’t say how. Or with what.”

Nightlife was limited. Woodstock offered a couple of bars, as well as Café Espresso and Deanies, a restaurant which became the hub of their social activity. They generally made the best of it. “It was subdued in a lot of ways, but we were dealing with men in their early twenties,” states Robertson. “Not so much for me, or Bob, but the other guys would go into town and pick up chicks and come back and party all night long up there.”

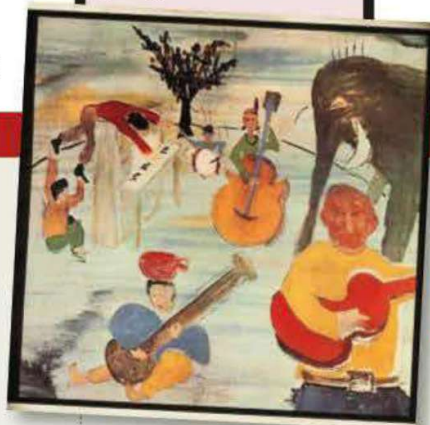
“People would smoke pot and drink beer,” confirms Taplin. “Richard would drink hard liquor, but nobody was getting totally plastered. It was quite well behaved compared to what happened later. Rick Danko and Bobby Charles later wrote a song called ‘Small Town Talk’, which was about Woodstock – the point being, if you live in a small town and you act like an asshole, everyone is going to know, including the cops. The cops would go have dinner at the same restaurant The Band would eat at. So Richard had to behave himself, although eventually he was the first one to begin to drink too much.”

**D**URING OCTOBER AND November Dylan went off to Nashville to make *John Wesley Harding* and The Band honed their songs. Grossman had secured a record deal with Capitol, after a little initial confusion about what was on offer. “Albert said, ‘Do you want to do an album of Dylan instrumentals or something?’” recalls Robertson. “I said, ‘No! We’re going to do something else.’”

To produce, they called on John Simon. He had recently worked with Leonard Cohen and Simon & Garfunkel, but it was the record he’d made with Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium Is The Massage*, that got him the gig. A gifted musician, Simon played a significant role in arranging the songs and, he says, “got so assimilated

## COVER STORY!

**D**YLAN HAD OFFERED to play on *Big Pink* but, wisely, The Band felt his presence might overshadow the music. Instead, they accepted his painting of six musicians (and an elephant) for the cover. Dylan completed it before he’d heard any of the music, but its inscrutable playfulness only added to the album’s aura. Capitol even devised a promotional campaign to name the piece, much to The Band’s chagrin. The iconic group photo by Elliott Landy, meanwhile, designed to cause a reaction in the age of flower power, also showed, says Robertson, “the way we all looked everyday. The work people in Woodstock had beards and hats, so you just went with it.” To say it countered fashion trends for musicians in the late ’60s is putting it mildly. Robertson was once pulled over by police. The cop leaned in and said, “Well, rabbi, you were going just a bit too fast...”



that’s it’s rare when any of us can point to any one element and say, ‘So-and-so came up with that.’”

“He was brilliant and imaginative,” explains Robertson. “Here’s a guy who can adapt to anything, because we’re making up new rules here. He comes to the basement and he says, ‘Oh my God, this is what I’m looking for! This is fantastic, this is real.’ He really gravitated towards it. We did as much as we could at *Big Pink*, but we didn’t have the microphones or the board that you needed. These were field recordings.”

In January they went into A&R’s four-track Studio A in New York. Honouring, as Hudson puts it, the “old carpenter’s ethos: measure twice, cut once,” they had rehearsed their songs to a fine point so they could record live in the studio, with few overdubs. The major concern was retaining the free spirit of *Big Pink* in a commercial studio seven flights up in the heart of the city. “Playing in the basement taught us that going into somebody else’s place, where they don’t go past six o’clock, there are union rules and everybody is watching the clock – that’s not the way to make music,” says Robertson. “We said we need to bring the situation so it fits us, rather than vice versa.”

At first it was a struggle. “They had the drums go over here, they spread us all out so there was no leakage,” remembers Robertson. “We were just doing what we were told because this huge room was famous for getting a fantastic sound. After a while we said, ‘We can’t do this. We’ve got to get in a circle like the basement, we’ve got to play to one another. We’re speaking a language. This doesn’t work.’ The engineer is like, ‘What? What are you talking about?’ But he said, ‘All right, let’s give it a shot, but it’s not going to sound too good.’” They formed a tight circle and switched to Electro Voice RE15 mics “that don’t pick up much unless you’re right on them. We put them on everything, because they served our purpose.”

The first song recorded was “Tears Of Rage”, *Big Pink*’s audacious opener which seems to encapsulate everything daring and heretical about the album. The pace is not so much stately as funereal; Manuel’s extraordinary vocal lends fathoms of emotional depth to Dylan’s mournful, allusive lyric, with Danko’s harmony bolstering the effect on the chorus. The overdub of soprano sax and baritone horn adds an old-time sepia tone, and once you start focusing on Helm’s deadened tom-toms,

## THE MASTERPIECE

### MUSIC FROM BIG PINK

Track by track through The Band’s debut album

**TEARS OF RAGE:** One of music’s great opening statements: strange, slow and heavy, its unearthly beauty announced *Big Pink*’s radical agenda from the first note.

**TO KINGDOM COME:** Robbie Robertson’s only lead vocal, and his last until 1976’s “Knockin’ Lost John”. Biblical imagery, karmic reflection, and the knockabout energy of *The Basement Tapes*.

**IN A STATION:** Hudson’s sweet clavinet dominates Manuel’s ode to Woodstock: “Once I climbed up the face of a mountain/And ate the wild fruit there”.

**CALEDONIA MISSION:** Robertson’s terrific story-song shifts between stately glory on the verse and a dirty country-funk chorus. And is that a dig at acid culture?: “Did you trip, or slip, on their gifts/You know were just a con?”

**THE WEIGHT:** An enigmatic American fable, peopled by real

characters: Helm knew “young Anna Lee”, “Carmen” and “Crazy Chester” from his home turf. Its effortless blend of country, folk and gospel quickly became archetypal.

**WE CAN TALK:** All three lead vocalists have a ball on one of Robertson’s most joyously soulful songs, on which the essence of life at *Big Pink*

shines: “One voice for all/Echoing across the hall”.

**LONG BLACK VEIL:** Cover of Lefty Frizzell’s 1959 sex-and-death country hit. Hudson’s Lowrey

rattles ominously and Manuel’s piano flows. The rest is a little ponderous.

**CHEST FEVER:** *Big Pink*’s heaviest moment. Hudson’s variation on Bach’s “Toccata And Fugue In D minor” leads into a mighty, protean groove, incorporating a drunken horn interlude.

**LONESOME SUZIE:** Manuel’s exquisite tale of

solitude works as a self-portrait of sorts. Tender organ, horns and guitar fills frame his heart-wrenchingly exposed falsetto.

**THIS WHEEL’S ON FIRE:** Already a hit for Julie Driscoll & Brian Auger, The Band up the tempo and bring their full repertoire of sonic flourishes to the disquieting imagery.

**I SHALL BE RELEASED:** An understated ensemble performance for another basement song, perfectly serving Dylan’s moving hymn of emancipation and Manuel’s sweet vocal.



## WHAT HAPPENED TO BIG PINK?

The house that spawned it all...

**A**FTER THE BAND moved out of Big Pink in 1969, it became home to a variety of tenants, including a custom guitar maker. In 1977 the house was sold by its original owner, Otto Gramms, to Michael Amitin, who rented it to Parnassus Records, a label specialising in classical music. Robbie Robertson revisited Big Pink during this time. "I found the basement filled with rare records, old 78s and things," he says. "I liked that. But the place was exactly the same, which was quite spooky."

Big Pink today



In 1998, at an asking price of \$149,000, Amitin sold the house to musicians Don and Sue LaSala, who still live there and record in the basement. According to their website - [www.bigpinkbasement.com](http://www.bigpinkbasement.com) - with the intention of "keeping alive traditions of creativity and convivial spirit, we continue making and recording original music." They are happy for fans to drive by discreetly to take a look at the house, although the number of unambiguous "No Trespassing" signs down the old Stoll Road (now renamed Parnassus Lane) suggest some of the neighbours are getting sick of sightseers.

ELLIOTT LANDY/REDFERNS; DON LASALA

The Band (with Hamlet the dog) reveal the inspiration for their beards during a photo session for *Music From Big Pink*, 1968

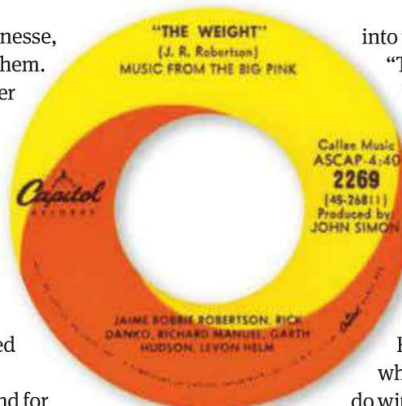
tuned down and played with gentle finesse, it's hard to drag your ears away from them. Hudson's Lowrey organ, preferred over a more conventional Hammond, set the music even further apart from anything remotely contemporary. "I was aware of sounds on records, and I didn't hear much of anything we were doing," says Hudson. "I think we were aware we were doing something new."

"We listened back to it and it sounded fantastic," says Robertson. "It was a whole revelation of recording for us and for a lot of people. What we were doing was exactly what we had been doing at Big Pink, but in a place where the sound was controlled. That was the only difference."

They quickly cut five songs in New York, recording from early evening through the night. There were, says Simon, "no disagreements. It was joyous! There was only one painful moment. Because of some bad mic'ing, the snare drum on 'This Wheel's On Fire' got lost so Levon had to go in and overdub it. Afterwards, he said to me, 'Don't ask me to do that again.'"

The last song recorded was "The Weight". Robertson had written it as a homecoming gift for Helm, who had returned to find all the lead vocals already assigned to Danko and Manuel. "I thought, Jeez, I want to write a song that Levon can sing better than anybody, 'cause I knew his abilities," says Robertson. "He was my closest friend and I wanted to do something really special for him." Even so, its magnetic, timeless quality only revealed itself in the studio. "It was on the back burner," adds Robertson. "Like, if these other ones don't work out I have something else we could go to. I didn't realise what it was until we recorded it and listened back."

Capitol were so pleased with the results of the sessions they offered The Band free use of their eight-track studio in Los Angeles to finish the album. They retrieved Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" from the basement, and also cut Manuel's "Lonesome Suzie" and "In A Station". Robertson recalls "it was a little trickier, technically," in LA, although some of the struggle may have been self-inflicted. "We went



into the studio and cut one song," says Simon.

"Then, basking in the sun, staying at the Chateau Marmont, we didn't go in again for another month until Capitol said, 'Hey, what's up with you guys?'"

The engineer was a "Gary-Cooper type" called Rex Updegraff who smoked a pipe and told the band he thought their music 'darn cute'. Back in Woodstock in the spring, Dylan's reaction was more expansive, says Robertson. "He couldn't believe that that's what we do when we're not doing what we do with him."

**"They blended Americana styles and regurgitated it with their own sound"**  
*Richard Thompson*

the brief notes provided no information about what each band member did. "No-one had any idea who was singing what and it didn't matter at all," says Joe Boyd, who was working at the time with a number of British folk bands, including Fairport Convention. "It was just 'the band.'"

Happenstance also played its part. Having planned to tour the album, Danko broke his neck in a car accident - in his own words, "a little too drunk, a little too high" - and so their live debut was postponed. Instead, they hunkered down in Woodstock and the mystique grew. "People were like, 'What are they doing up in those mountains?'" says Robertson. "Nobody quite knew what to make of it." Al Kooper, the keyboard player who had performed with

**M**USIC FROM BIG PINK performed only modestly when it was released in July 1968, reaching the Top 30 in the US, while "The Weight" got to No 21 in the UK. Capitol hyped the various angles of the Dylan connection, but it was a slow burn. There was some confusion with their name, which seemed hardly to be a name at all. On their record contract they had called themselves The Crackers, a throwaway joke that made it on to some early acetates.

The sense of mystery, even confusion, was intrinsic. Some of it was planned. The cover art was an oblique painting by Dylan, with a photo of Big Pink on the back [see panel]. The black and white band photo could have been taken anytime in the past century and was not captioned. Similarly,



members of The Hawks backing Dylan, wrote the first major review of the record for *Rolling Stone*. "It couldn't have been more unexpected based on The Hawks' previous discography," he says. "No-one thought they were capable of making this kind of record."

The most profound impact was felt by fellow musicians. *Music From Big Pink* was so extraordinarily, immediately potent it actually hastened the demise of other groups. Eric Clapton heard a pre-release tape and almost instantly decided to call time on Cream. An awestruck George Harrison became even more determined to leave The Beatles, but before he did, on songs like "Don't Let Me Down", the Fabs had a stab at being The Band.

"I just recently got a message from Donald Fagen," Robertson laughs. "He was listening to *Let It Be... Naked* and he said, 'Oh my God, were these guys ever influenced by The Band?'"

Them and everybody else.

Even the flagbearers of West Coast psychedelic rock, the Grateful Dead, heard *Big Pink* and detoured into a more rootsy style, with lyricist Robert Hunter expanding on Robertson's fascination with American mythology. Elton John's obsession with The Band is all over his early LPs. Joe Boyd recalls that *Big Pink* hit the UK scene "like a ton of bricks. It was an unexpected, perfect bridge between the working-class roadhouse music of the South and the folkies studying American roots music like a thesis."

What was so compelling? Richard Thompson told *Uncut*: "We loved the rootsiness. They seamlessly blended Americana styles – blues, country, rock, R'n'B, Appalachian – and regurgitated it all with their own unique sound. I think there was considerable cultural impact for us too. These guys had short hair and suits, totally against the fashions and styles of the day."

That "rootsiness" was significant. Moving the focus from the city to the country spoke also of a willingness to embrace the past. Numerous musicians, from a variety of genres, picked up on the notion of exploring their own sense of history and tradition. Says Boyd: "My belief is that *Big Pink* guided Fairport away from 'American' music as they had been doing and forced them to create something as 'British' as *Big Pink* was 'American'."

The unhurried pace, too, was new in rock. The slow roll of "The Weight" and dragging drama of "Tears Of Rage" and "Chest Fever" were formative in progressive rock, an unlikely inspiration for, among others, Pink Floyd.

"That one record changed everything for me," Roger Waters told the *Dallas Morning News* in 2008. "After *Sgt Pepper*, it's the most influential record in the history of

rock'n'roll. It affected Pink Floyd deeply, deeply, deeply. Philosophically, other albums may have been more important, like Lennon's first solo album. But sonically, the way the record's constructed, I think *Music From Big Pink* is fundamental

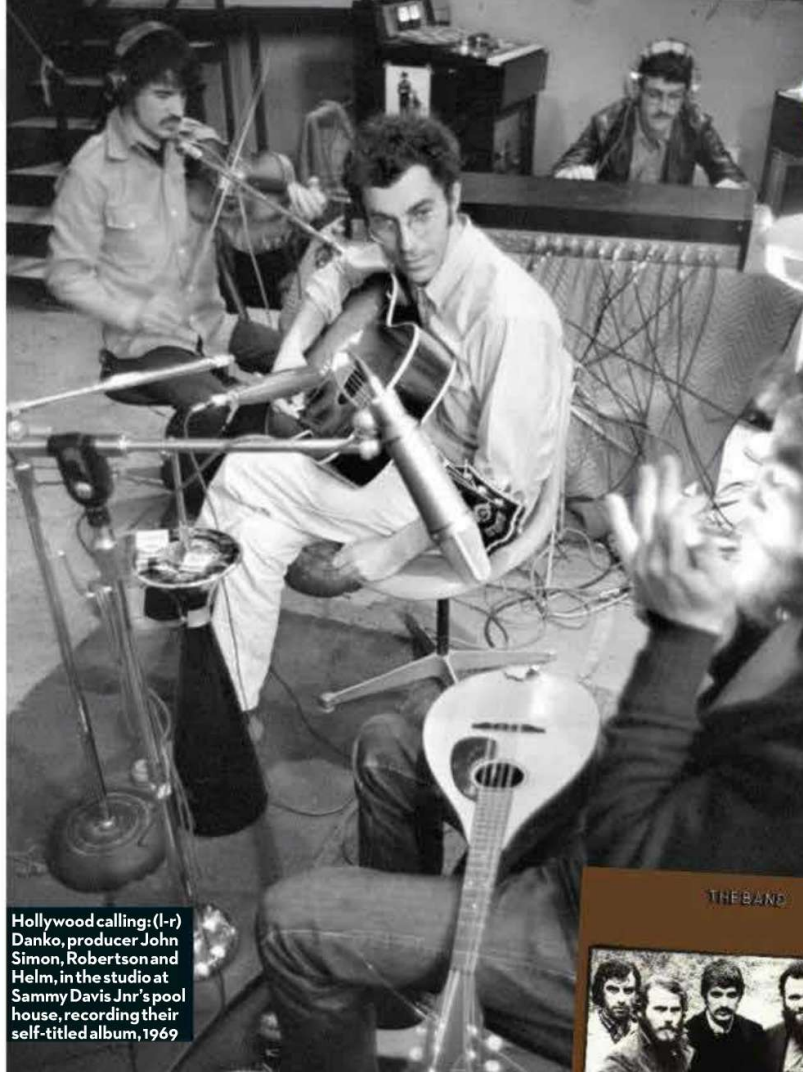
to everything that happened after it."

It has gone on changing the musical weather ever since. Its fusion of down-home styles and lack of flash was intrinsic to the British pub-rock scene of the '70s. REM – a democratic, instrument-swapping, triple-harmony threat – perhaps got closest to evolving The Band's many-hued music. Countless others have tried. In particular, the group ethic, the harmonies, the vivid sense of history and place, the lack of virtuoso flash, the palpable emotion – for all the joy of its creation, this was often heartbroken music – were all catalysts for the Americana movement. "I recently heard a cut by Wilco on the radio," says John Simon. "The Band influence was obvious."

It's hard to think of another record that has been more influential, yet which remains so essentially unique and indefinable. "*Big Pink* became its own category," says Al Kooper. "People still say about other bands, 'That sorta sounds like The Band,' and I always reply, 'Yeah, sorta!' But no-one else has ever had the writing, arrangement or similar vocal prowess to really compete with it."

According to Robertson, the key to its enduring success is simple. "It was just fun," he says. "We had lots of laughs. When I think about it now, it's really the way music-making should be."

**"No-one else has ever had the writing or vocal prowess to compete with *Big Pink*"**  
**Al Kooper**



Hollywood calling: (l-r) Danko, producer John Simon, Robertson and Helm, in the studio at Sammy Davis Jnr's pool house, recording their self-titled album, 1969



## NEW ADVENTURES

## AND THE BAND PLAYED ON...

What the group did next

**T**HE FOLLOW-UP to The Band's debut, 1969's equally stunning *The Band*, was conceived in Woodstock but recorded in an acoustically superior upgrade of Big Pink: the poolhouse at Sammy Davis Jnr's old Hollywood home. The first album sowed the seeds but the second marked the full flowering of Robbie Robertson's writing, the results encompassing bawdy sexual adventures ("Up On Cripple Creek", "Rag Mama Rag"), rollicking historical narratives ("Across The Great Divide"), stately evocations of Southern pride ("The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down"), and an empathetic life study of the union farmer ("King Harvest").

By January 1970 they were on the cover of *Time* magazine, celebrated as The New Sound of Country Rock. Five more albums followed

(*Stage Fright*, *Cahoots*, *Rock Of Ages*, *Moondog Matinee* and *Northern Lights - Southern Cross*), as well as a reunion with Dylan on *Planet Waves* and *Before The Flood*, the document of their joint 1974 tour, before The Band split in 1976, their farewell captured in Scorsese's film of their last show, *The Last Waltz*.

When they reformed in 1983, going on to release three more albums, it was without Robertson: Helm voiced grievances over songwriting credits and what he considered Robertson's past domination of the group. In 1986 Manuel committed suicide following years of drug and alcohol addiction, Danko suffered heart failure in 1999, and Helm died in 2012, but not before a remarkable late flourish, his Grammy-winning albums *Dirt Farmer* (2007) and *Electric Dirt* (2009) recalling the classic sound of The Band's earliest records.



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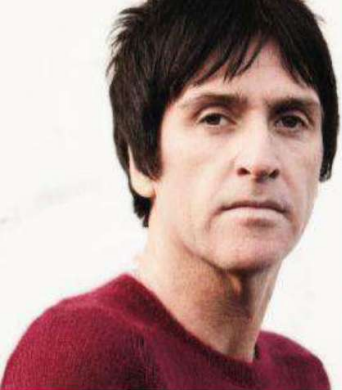
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CH-CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

# Johnny Marr

"I was looking for a job and then I found a job..." And then another job...  
The remarkable career of a wandering guitar genius



## MANCHESTER, 1978

Who's this fella? I was 14, and I'd bunked off school to go hanging around town. Around that time I saw Patti Smith, and that was a life-changer. It was one of the reasons I just walked out of school, because what was going on outside was a world of promise. I was very aware that it was good to be young. Pop gave me an obsession. And in terms of it being the life I was going to lead, I decided that around the time of this photograph.



## MANCHESTER, 1984

This is around the time of the first Smiths album. Songs were pouring out of us. It reminds me very much of finding out all about Rough Trade, and the people in it, and the ideology. It's nice to reminisce about those things. As I remember, most people who came on board were also fairly young, and our success was so explosive that it was contagious to fans, crew and band alike. It's a nice picture, because it looks very celebratory.



## MANCHESTER, 1987

That was near the end of the *Strangeways* sessions. We were very serious about what we were doing, and you can see there's a weightiness about the group. We transcended being a pop band by then. We meant something different. I've always been very proud of the fact that we were heavy, lyrically and musically, and live. And you can tell in that photo. It was a shame the way things ended. But we were all very young, still. There was a lot at stake, and it's understandable.



## LONDON, 1989

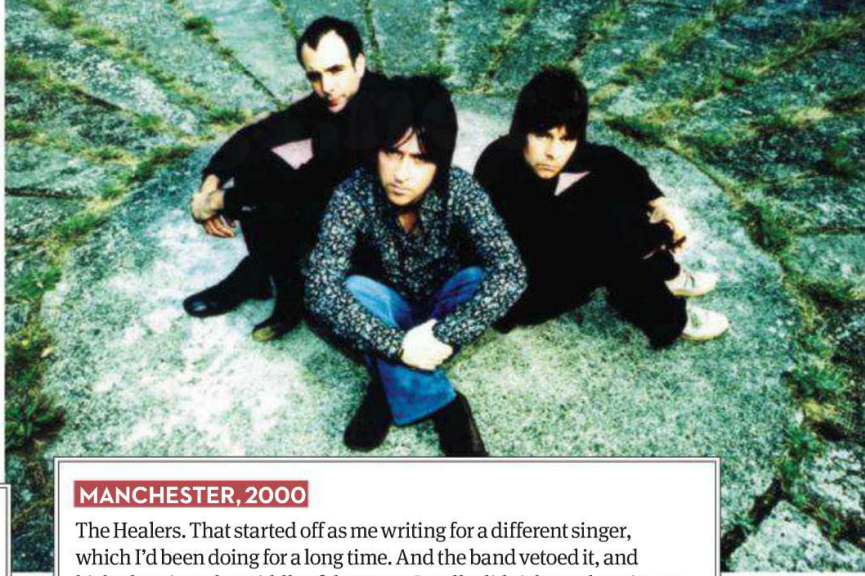
The The was my next full-time band after The Smiths. For Matt [Johnson, right] and I, it was natural because we'd known each other since 1980. It really felt like a forward move for me personally, as well as musically. Matt turned me onto Gore Vidal and esoteric things, a lot of philosophy, books from Norman Mailer to William Blake, and really serious political thinking. He just had this incredible appetite for the modern world and a certain kind of culture. I loved it.





#### MANCHESTER, 1991

Electronic. You can see that the music world is getting a bit different. Bernard had asked me to do something with him in '87, and we'd get together in my studio most weekends. I was still very young at that time – 24, 25 – so I wanted to be involved in my times, and if you were in Manchester, what was going on was all-pervasive. Bernard was my full-time partner for nine years – no wonder he liked Prozac for a bit...



#### MANCHESTER, 2000

The Healers. That started off as me writing for a different singer, which I'd been doing for a long time. And the band vetoed it, and kicked me into the middle of the stage. I really didn't know how it was going to go. But I knew the responsibilities to your band of going out front. And in some ways it felt easier, because you've got a more direct connection to the audience. By that time, I knew people were actually coming out to see me.



#### LONDON, 2000

With Bernard Butler and Bert Jansch. Growing up, Bert was a complete enigma. The most obvious tribute in my playing is the start of The Smiths' "Unhappy Birthday", and he'd vanished at that point. I was nervous as hell when I met him. And one of the greatest times of my life was when he came to stay with me, and took his guitar out and we started playing in my kitchen. It was the most amazing sound. Bert's like Bryan [Ferry], they're both diffident, with genuine bohemian cool.



#### ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON, 2007

Modest Mouse. I knew their records, and they were brilliant and unfathomable to me, and Isaac Brock's invitation was a very blunt and serious one to actually join the band. I went to Portland to see if it would work, and the very first night was an intense, high-volume, crazed, all-night jam between me and Isaac, during which we did "Dashboard", which became that year's most-played indie record on US radio. I changed my plane ticket, and moved to Portland.



#### MANCHESTER, 2010

I met The Cribs' Gary Jarman (second right) in Portland and struck up a friendship, and I ended up joining them and making an LP. I see them as being part of a lineage that is very important to me, that has the Buzzcocks in it, and The Smiths, and to some people the Arctic Monkeys, of street music – groups that can tell their story with great singles built around guitars and interesting British lyrics. And I know how to do that.



#### MANCHESTER, 2013

My band now. I wanted to put a group together that I could call up to play on a minute's notice and they'd be there. And that is an unusual situation, after all these years. We feel like this ideal that I had when I started out of how bands like Magazine operated. That could be a picture of one of the bands I was in when I was in my teens, where I was fronting them. I am really in many ways the same person.

*Johnny Marr plays The Isle Of Man Festival (July 6), Jodrell Bank, Macclesfield (7), T In The Park (11-14) and Kendal Calling (26-28). The single "New Town Velocity" is out this month*





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# O LOVELY APPEARANCE OF DEATH

Story:

Allan Jones

An out-of-tune harmonium, a collection of Wordsworth poems, a soupçon of heroin... and four days to make a masterpiece. Twenty-five years after NICO's death, arranger JOHN CALE, among others, recalls the fraught creation of *The Marble Index*.  
 "She hated fashion. She hated the idea of being blonde and beautiful. She wanted to do something more substantial..."

"THERE ARE VERY few albums that are truly unprecedented," says John Cale. "But *The Marble Index* is one of them. It's unique. No-one had heard anything like it before, which is why some people had a tough time making sense of it.

There were no easy reference points. It had nothing in common with anything. It wasn't folk music, it wasn't rock and it certainly wasn't pop. It was something else altogether. It took the listener to a place they'd never been before that was maybe a bit frightening and strange."

John Cale is talking to *Uncut* from Los Angeles, where in September 1968 he and Nico had come to record her second solo album, a deal signed with Elektra after the label's A&R legend, Danny Fields, had arranged an audition for her with Elektra head Jac Holzman. By then both were former members of The Velvet Underground, after separately falling out with Lou Reed.

"I think Nico saw *The Marble Index* as a chance to be taken seriously, which she craved, and be known for something more than her beauty," Cale goes on. "She thought that was a flimsy kind of fame. She hated it. That whole scene around The Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol she'd got into, she was really turned off by a lot of it and had walked away from it. She hated fashion. She hated the idea of being blonde and beautiful, and in some ways she hated being a woman, because she figured all her beauty had brought her was grief.

The superficiality of it all was something she found an annoyance. She wanted to do something more substantial, her own music.

"She'd done that first solo album, *Chelsea Girl*, and she'd hated the way it came out. It was very conservatively produced and arranged. She thought it was another example of the superficiality that attached itself to her. She felt used in a way, so there was always an undercurrent of anger in her – 'Look what the boys are making me do now!' She had a maternal

and had started writing poetry, and suddenly she had a harmonium and was writing songs, which is not something that had been encouraged when she was in the VU. Lou wasn't interested in the band being an instrument for her benefit. His attitude was, 'The Velvet underground is The Velvet Underground. Don't mess with it.' It was one of the reasons she left.

"What these new songs were like, I had no idea. I didn't even hear them until we were in the studio. She hadn't even finished writing the album yet. She had this small book with her poetry in and she would sit at the harmonium and work on songs all the time. She didn't talk about them or what they meant to her. Writing the songs and singing them, that was her responsibility. Explaining them was not her responsibility. So to an extent, I didn't know quite what I was getting myself into. I just got a call from Danny Fields, who was putting it all together, and then I was on my way to LA."

"She was defined by her need to be other than beautiful..."

*John Cale*

disdain for the male psyche. She knew she was better than *Chelsea Girl* and couldn't understand why that was the kind of album people thought she wanted to make.

"So *The Marble Index* was an opportunity for her to prove she was a serious artist, not just this kind of blonde bombshell. She'd had a hand in a couple of songs on *Chelsea Girl*, but where the songs for *Marble Index* came from I don't know. That's a mystery. I knew she'd latched onto Jim Morrison

DANNY FIELDS WORKED at Elektra originally as PR for The Doors. He later signed The Stooges and MC5 to the label and went on to discover and manage the Ramones. He had known Nico since she first appeared on the New York scene in 1963. Like Cale, he'd been disappointed with *Chelsea Girl*, which in his opinion had been blighted by producer Tom Wilson's bland folk-rock settings and disfigured by Larry Fallon's syrupy string arrangements.





The Velvet Underground and Nico, 1966: (l-r) John Cale, Nico, Lou Reed, Sterling Morrison, Mo Tucker

“There were some good songs on it, obviously, by Jackson Browne, Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, John and Tim Hardin,” Field says. “But it was OK rather than earth-shattering, like The Velvet Underground. Her singing was amazing, though, and what she did with Jackson’s ‘These Days’ was great. But to me, Nico was the sound of ‘All Tomorrow’s Parties’ and *Chelsea Girl* was more like a Judy Collins record. I knew she had more to offer and so did she. She wanted people to realise there was more to her than beauty. She hated being famous just for that. In fact, she came to hate her beauty. In her more difficult later days, she purposely became unattractive. In those days, she was the Moon Goddess. That was her nickname. She was unstoppably beautiful.

“But that wasn’t enough for her, it never was. She was desperate to be taken seriously,” Fields continues, echoing Cale. “She was defined by her need to be other than beautiful and so, I think it would have been the summer of 1968, she told me she wanted to make an album of songs she’d been writing. I had never thought of her as a songwriter, but from somewhere she’d got a harmonium – I think Leonard Cohen may have given it to her, or had something to do with her getting it – and she’d written these songs on it. She came around to my apartment and played some of them. I thought they were incredibly different, scarily so, and also wonderful.

“She came to Elektra and sang these songs with weird words and strange melodies... Jac Holzman just says, ‘Fine. Let’s make an album’”  
*Danny Fields*

“She already had a title for the album she wanted to make, ‘The Marble Index’. It was from a poem by Wordsworth she’d come across that was inspired by a bust of Isaac Newton that Wordsworth remembered from when he’d been a young man at Cambridge University. I thought it was incredible. I mean, who read Wordsworth in 1968? In 1968, people were reading Baudelaire and Rimbaud. They were the poets in vogue. Wordsworth hadn’t been fashionable since about 1779. But this Wordsworth poem, it had the lines, ‘Newton with his prism and silent face/The marble index of a mind forever voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.’

“I know how that must have resonated with her. It was a craving of hers to be alone. Alone for her was sexy, alone was interesting, alone made people curious and want to know more about you and alone made you magnetic. Whatever, she was clearly very serious about this. I was in good stead at the time with Jac Holzman at Elektra and I said I’d take her to see him.”

DANNY FIELDS HAD been very close to the Warhol crowd and had introduced Jim Morrison into that circle and he came to me and said, ‘I think you should listen to Nico,’” Holzman recalls. “Everybody knew who Nico was because of the Andy Warhol connection, of course. Warhol was a puppet master and Nico was one of the puppets who decided to break the strings. She wasn’t taken very seriously as far as I know as part of his ménage and I sensed she may be at something of a loose end. I had heard *Chelsea Girl*, her first album. It had a certain charm, but was very conventional. For me, that was a problem. I like to make records that shake things up and I thought *Chelsea Girl* was a very passive listening experience. This was an old voice singing young songs and although she did ‘These Days’ wonderfully well, I felt the uniqueness of her voice had been undervalued. I wanted to hear what more of what she had.

“So she came in, she brought her harmonium and just played. That’s how it happened. I listened to about seven tracks and I found it challenging. I didn’t think if we went ahead and made an album it was going to sell a lot of copies. I didn’t think it was going to sell at all. But I thought it would be worth making. Elektra was doing so well at the time that we were able to take risks and experiment. That’s what I did, took chances. People think record companies are only in it for the money. And yes, in order to keep doing what we were doing we had to make money. But it’s how you

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## THE SWEET LIFE

# FEMME FATALE

## Nico: The Early Years

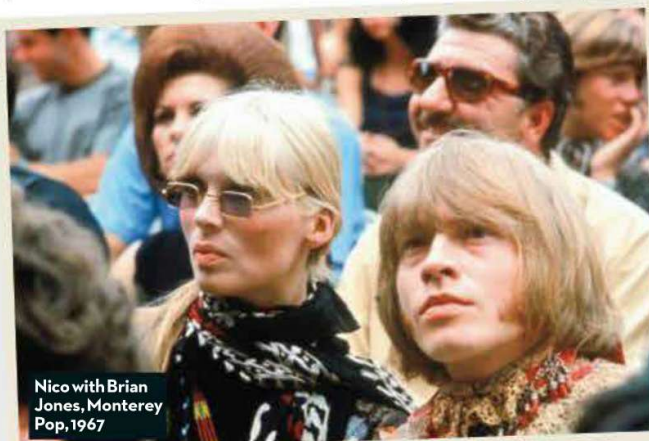
NICO WAS BORN Christa Paffgen – or Pafgens or Pfaffen – either in Cologne in 1938 or Budapest in 1943, growing up as Hitler’s Reich went up in flames. She became a successful model in post-war Berlin and from her early teens her life was one of rootless drift that took her to France, Italy, where she had a part in Fellini’s

*La Dolce Vita*, and to England where in 1965 she recorded a version of Gordon Lightfoot’s ‘I’m Not Sayin’” for Andrew Loog Oldham’s Immediate label. Jimmy Page produced the B-side, ‘The Last Mile’. She fell in with Brian Jones, one of many famous lovers, including French actor Alain Delon – with whom she had a



son, Ari – Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Iggy Pop, Jackson Browne, Tim Buckley, Lou Reed, John Cale and Jim Morrison.

By 1965, she was in New York, singing at the Blue Angel Lounge on East 55th Street and starring in Warhol movies. It was Andy of course who put her together with The Velvet Underground, persuading them as part of his patronage of the band to accept her as an eye-catching chanteuse, her striking Aryan beauty a sharp contrast to the group’s demonic surliness. Her featured songs on *The Velvet Underground And Nico*



Nico with Brian Jones, Monterey Pop, 1967

were “Femme Fatale” and “I’ll Be Your Mirror”, two toxic Lou ballads, and the towering “All Tomorrow’s Parties”, which she delivered with a perfect dead-eyed hauteur. She was sacked by the band almost as soon as the album came out. Her own

solo debut, the pretty but often vapid *Chelsea Girl*, was released in October 1967, and almost immediately dismissed by her, her disappointment with it quickly inspiring her to write the songs she would soon immortalise on *The Marble Index*.



## HIGH TOLERANCE

## 'HE WAS A MADMAN, BUT HE WAS MY MADMAN'

So who was Frazier Mohawk, *Marble Index* producer?

A lot of Nico and Cale fans saw that the album's production was credited to Frazier Mohawk and wondered if this was a pseudonym for Cale. Mohawk, however, was one of Jac Holzman's trusted engineers/producers.

Friends originally knew him as Barry Friedman, who after a spell in a circus briefly became an LA publicist, working with The Beatles in 1964. He was later involved with the



Janitors of lunacy... Lou Reed, John Cale and Nico at Le Bataclan, Paris, January 29, 1972

spend your money that's important."

"She came to Jac's office on Broadway, overlooking Central Park, took out her harmonium and sang her songs, these weird songs with weird words and strange melodies that went nowhere... Jac listens and when she's finished, he just says, 'Fine. Let's make an album.'"

Was Fields surprised?

"No. You kind of knew who the artistic aristocrats of the time were. And I was sure Jac would recognise Nico was part of that aristocracy. It wasn't like I'd found her selling matches on the subway. She'd been in *La Dolce Vita*. She'd been on a record with Jimmy Page, produced by Andrew Loog Oldham. She'd been in The Velvet Underground. She didn't come unannounced. But no-one could have been prepared for what she did that day in Jac's office. The nerve of that, to sit there and play that stuff no-one had heard was amazing. Jac realised this was someone who was going to make jaws drop wherever she went."

Holzman signed off on a budget of \$10,000 with a recording schedule of four days in LA. Fields and Nico had wanted John Cale to produce the album, but Holzman nominated Frazier Mohawk, one of his in-house engineers [see panel].

"The only thing I knew about Frazier Mohawk was that he'd been a fire-eater in a circus," Cale recalls. "But he was fine, pretty sharp and responsive to what we were doing. He usually left me alone to get on with it."

Cale chuckles, the only word for it, when he's told that Mohawk later said he'd spent most of the sessions getting high with Nico.

"That's funny. I wouldn't have known that because I was so busy. At least he kept her occupied."

How much of an impediment was her heroin use?

"Well," he says. "It's never easy when someone's using like that. You have to find the right tempo for doing things because they're working under the clock that heroin puts you on. You know in four hours or whatever things are going to get uncomfortable and will get increasingly uncomfortable until they get fixed up. But you know that going in and just get on with things."

They worked on a song at a time, finishing one track before moving on to the next, mixing the album as they went. They always started with Nico's voice and the harmonium that she evidently had to play while singing.

"That was a problem right there," says Cale. "The harmonium was out of tune with everything. It wasn't even in tune with itself. She insisted on playing it on everything so we had to figure out ways to separate her voice from it as much as possible and then find instrumental voices that



Danny Fields and Jac Holzman, Newport Folk Festival, July 1967

would be compatible with the harmonium track. We went in every day and did a lot of overdubbing after we'd recorded her. Some of the songs sounded fine for strings, so we'd do multiple viola parts, like a string quartet. Some of the songs were so short and so precise there was no room for embellishment. You just put a viola around them and that was it. Others needed a little more deliberation and pointing. For the more aggressive songs, the arrangements needed to be subtle but threatening at the same time.

As an arranger you're usually trying to take the songs and put a structure on them, but what I thought was valuable was when you took the centre out of the track and worked around the central core of the tonality and changes. That left you with a sort of floating free-form tapestry behind what she was doing, which is when things became more abstract.

"Most of the songs were based around one or two chords and my instinct was to keep the album away from drone and raga. It could easily have fallen into that very Eastern thing and she would have enjoyed that, I think. But I didn't want to go that way. The West Coast was full of music like that.

"You couldn't coach a performance out of her," Cale says of the sessions. "She could only do things her way. It was more about getting her comfortable. That was the most important thing. She was sometimes baffled by what was going on and upset by it and made insecure by it. She'd never been in this situation before and wasn't familiar with the recording process. She would just get lost, and this happened on every album we made together. She would lose track of where we were and if we spent any time trying to improve the balance between tracks she wouldn't understand what we were doing and get bored and become convinced we were ruining it. She was a woman of few words but she could lay into you pretty effectively if she thought you were letting her down in some way or betraying her sensibilities. I think it was a good thing we only had four days to do the whole thing. It happened so fast, before she could blink the record was done."

THE ALBUM WHEN it was finished comprised eight tracks and lasted barely 30 minutes, which was as much apparently as Frazier Mohawk, mixing and sequencing it, could stand without starting to feel suicidal.

"It is unrelenting," Cale agrees. "In places, it's ferocious," he goes on, perhaps understating things. *The Marble Index* gives voice to a psychic landscape of immense loneliness, a wintry place, lit occasionally by a haunting Alpenglow, but otherwise darker than anywhere rock music had ever been or in future would much care to venture. Forty-five years on, it



Troubadour, where he became friendly with Stephen Stills. When Neil Young was driving down Sunset Boulevard in his hearse and spotted Stills coming the other way, it was Friedman behind the wheel. He then managed Buffalo Springfield, before changing his name and producing records by The Holy Modal Rounders, Nico and more.

"Frazier had a high tolerance for unusual stuff so I thought he'd be perfect to produce," says Holzman. "Frazier was a madman. But he was my madman. Up until he died, he and I were very close. I used to visit him at his farm near Toronto where he sold advertising space on the sides of his cows. He was one of the world's great characters."



continues to startle and overwhelm, its occult power undiminished. Nico's voice is at the centre of things, surrounded by music that is all gale and gust, unholy buffetings, clangorous, anxious accumulations of menace and dread, great babblings, melodic chaos looking for tuneful order. There are moments when she might be singing into a headwind from the prow of a ship, battering its way around a southern cape, her voice holding fast in the oceanic pitch and yaw of Cale's tumultuous arrangements.

*The Marble Index* speaks of something more than mere melancholy, evokes a sadness deep in the bones of things, a burrowing hurt trapped in tangled roots, the aching gasp of someone looking at a past that has been obliterated, along with everyone you might expect to find there, every yesterday a ruin, consumed by fire or ice, nothing left in the world that doesn't call out for pity.

Such is its daunting atmosphere, *The Marble Index* has long had a reputation for being almost unlistenable, suffocated by gloom, wracked by despondency, as if it consisted of nothing more than the wailing of a Trojan widow and the amplified rattle of butcher's hooks.

"I'd be disappointed if anyone who listened to *The Marble Index* properly only heard the dismay," says Cale. "For me, it has a thrill about it. There is something going on that's inexplicable. You never know what's coming next. 'Evening Of Light' is thrilling, majestic in a way. It has the grandiosity of Carl Orff. *The Marble Index* makes more sense in terms of advancing the modern European classical tradition than it does as folk or rock music. I sent it to Aaron Copland," he says, referring to the great American composer who had helped get Cale a scholarship at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, where he studied Modern Composition. "I hadn't spoken to him in years but I was interested to find out what he thought about it in those terms. But his only comments were on Nico's voice, which he thought was 'gravelly'. I don't think he understood how it was done and how it was all improvised. Fortunately, when I played it to Jac Holzman, he got it immediately."

"My reaction to it when I first heard it was silence," says Holzman. "I just listened. It was unlike anything I'd heard. It was daring. It was daunting and it was haunting. There was no question of not releasing it. I knew it was going to be tough. It reminded me of a record I had made in my folk days, *O Lovely Appearance Of Death*, with a woman named Sally Wood, an entire album of songs about death, sung a cappella. Now that's a strange album for anyone to put out. I don't think we sold more than 1,000 copies of it, but that's not the point. The point is that

it was good. Whether people understood it or not didn't matter. The same went for *The Marble Index*."

"I was impressed," says Cale of Holzman's reaction. "I dropped it off and he called me and said, 'Come by and we'll talk about this.' He really liked it. I was shocked. He obviously had a really catholic palette. His attitude

was, 'Don't worry about the money. Concentrate on the art and the money will follow.' That's not a common attitude in any business, let alone the music business."

"Jac had such great taste, I was sure he'd want to put it out even if it only sold four copies," says Fields. "It was clearly a brilliant album and no-one had heard anything like it. That would have meant a lot to Jac. And there wasn't a lot of money spent on the album so nothing was at stake. Elektra had The Doors putting plenty of money in the bank. And there was no giant campaign behind it. It wasn't like they were launching a new Rihanna album."

"What I especially liked was that there was nothing else like it out there," says Holzman. "Yes, it's gloomy, depressing, not an easy listen. But so what? You were warned from the beginning of the album that you were going to be thrown in at the deep end and you would have to give yourself up to it. The people who do that understand an important truth about who this artist was and that she was trying to put into this world something that had not previously been there. It's an amazing record."

NICO NEVER MADE another album for Holzman, although she would record three more with Cale – *Desertshore*, *The End* and *Camera Obscura* – before she died, falling from her bicycle after a heart attack on Ibiza in 1988 aged 49.

Holzman had become increasingly concerned by her heroin use, which was on its way to becoming the full-blown addiction that would disastrously consume her.

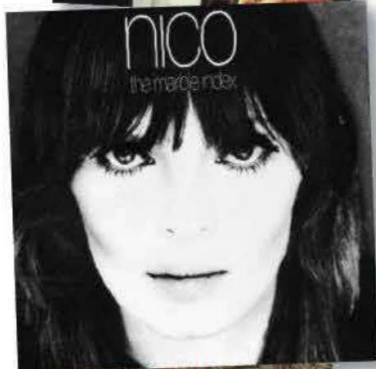
"Keeping her on the label became unlikely," he says. "What I was disappointed in was her inability to keep promises. She was irresponsible and difficult. It was just the way she was. Additionally, there were other influences in her life, shall we say, that made her at best unreliable."

Before she was officially dropped from Elektra, however, she vanished. There was some dreadful incident at the Chelsea Hotel. Nico, drunk, stabbed a woman in the eye with a broken wine glass. When Cale first told me about this many years ago,

I seem to remember in his account that the Black Panthers were somehow involved, dire retribution threatened for Nico's violence.

"My standard response these days to questions about that," says Fields, a witness, "is that the Warhol crowd spirited her away, put her on a plane to Cairo at five in the morning. No-one was killed or maimed for life, but let's just say she was wise to get out of New York."

"It was typical," says Cale of her flight into European exile. "She'd get somewhere she always thought she wanted to be and the next thing you knew she'd be somewhere else. That," he says, "was Nico all over." ❶



## MARBLE DISCIPLE

## 'HER SPIRIT WAS DEFINITELY THERE...'

Sharon Van Etten on Nico

ON JANUARY 16, John Cale presented 'A Life On the Borderline: A Tribute To Nico' at the Brooklyn Academy Of Music, where his guests included Mercury Rev, Yeasayer, Gregg Dulli, Kim Gordon, The Magnetic Fields and Sharon Van Etten, who performed "The Falconer" from Nico's album, *Desertshore*.

"It was an honour to be asked to be a part of the Nico



'Falconer' interpreter Van Etten

tribute. John Cale asked me when we met at the Jools Holland show. I immediately cancelled my New Zealand tour because I wanted to do it so bad. I knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I was really nervous. Nico's voice is so strong and cold. 'The Falconer' was a real challenge. I thought about doing my own take on it, but I felt it was more appropriate to capture her delivery as best as I could, given the arrangement John had prepared. I only hope she wasn't rolling over in her grave. I admire John Cale so much. His arrangements are always so beautiful – classical, yet minimal, eerie, spacious.

"*The Marble Index* helped take Nico away from relying on harmonium and using the strings to set her voice free. Her phrasing is so strange and counter-intuitive. The show at BAM was a beautiful rendition of the time John spent with her. Her spirit was definitely there, and everyone who performed paid their respects beautifully."



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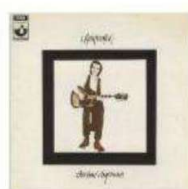


# Michael Chapman

**The ever-changing troubadour happily surveys his highlights – just don't call him a folk singer!**

**M**ICHAEL CHAPMAN HASN'T written a song for three years, but he's not worried. For one thing, as his vibrant recent releases show, he's alive to experimental new directions away from traditional songform. For another, having written over 300 songs already, if that should prove to be "all there is in the tank", then the Yorkshire songwriter-guitarist is sanguine. The majority of these compositions have found a home in the 40-plus instalments of his diverse albums catalogue. From his Northumberland home, Chapman proves to be a voluble guide, conducting *Uncut* through a selection of highlights, oddities and down some exciting new avenues. A complete survey, he concedes, would be a far lengthier undertaking. "It'd be a long job, wouldn't it?"

Northern grit: the iconic cover shot from *Pleasures Of The Street*, 1975



**RAINMAKER**  
HARVEST, 1969  
**The warm, expansive debut. Yorkshire photography teacher voyages to Cornwall and finds a new calling**

**as a troubadour, ditching his job and old life to take up robust but personal songwriting.** Someone spotted me playing in a club near Newquay. This guy was a talent scout for Essex Music, and they offered me a deal as a guitar player. Decca had Davy Graham doing instrumental guitar records and they wanted me to do something like that. But by the time we signed something I'd started writing songs.

They gave me Gus Dudgeon as a producer, whether he wanted me or not was a different matter. I had no idea what a studio or a producer could do and we came up with *Rainmaker*. The album cost £125. But then I wrote "It Didn't Work Out" and Gus took us into Trident, which billed itself as "the world's most expensive recording studio", which suited him, because he was ace at spending other people's money. So I finished up in Trident with Clem Clempson, Aynsley Dunbar... a lot of heavy duty superstars, playing my little train song. And that cost over £1,000 for an afternoon – so Gus was happy with that.

It's the only song on the album like that, with a heavy duty rock'n'roll band on it. I'm not clever enough to lie, so my songs are like a journal of my life with the names changed to protect the guilty! About three times in my life I've said, "I'll take time off and write an album," and nothing gets done. I write

anywhere: in the backs of cars, on planes. I can't be regimented about it – I've lived in chaos for the last 40-odd years, and I like it. I've never succeeded in pigeonholing what it is that I do – as long as people don't call me a folk singer.



**SOLO GUITAR**

ENGLISH STANDARD LIBRARY, 1968

**The first of Chapman's albums of guitar soli, released (and still in**

**use today) as a Library music album.**

That was when we were doing the *Rainmaker* album, but we were still at Regent B, which was a little four-track studio off the Charing Cross Road, which we could afford. As we were finishing up in Regent Sound, there was 35-40 minutes of studio time left. I don't like waste, and Gus said, "Just sit and play – it'll be fine." So I just sat and played stuff off the top of me head, and Gus took it back to Essex Music and chopped it up into a library album.

They cut it onto a disc and film companies who wanted some incidental music for some flowers blowing in the wind or something would just ring up. I did another one later. We used to go in when we weren't doing anything else and just play, and let Gus chop it up.

There was no plan, we just went in and did it. People can still use it – it's all been digitised now. I hear it sometimes when I'm watching a documentary on television. I think, 'Shit, that's me.' It took me 35 minutes in 1968 and I still get paid twice a year for it. It's great!



**WRECKED AGAIN**

HARVEST, 1971

**The final Michael Chapman album for Harvest. Features orchestra, kitchen**

**sink and a title track with the magnificent, self-referencing line, "Oh Michael, look what you've done..."**

Me and Gus had a big blow up at Rockfield. The guys in the band were getting session fees on top of what I was paying them, but I wasn't getting a bean. This made me a bit grumpy.

I said, "We should do this the way the Americans do – I get session fees and I get a leader fee." He said, "We're not doing that." So I said, "Well, I'm not playing another fucking note." Somebody calmed it down. I was skint, and we spent £22,000 – which was a lot of money in them days.

Back then, Rockfield was just a farm with some machinery – you had to knock off at 5pm because Kingsley, the owner, had to wash his cows. We were going to London to do the overdubs, and I said, "I've got to go on the road to earn a few bob."

Not long after, I got a call from Gus to come to AIR Studios. It was another expensive place, so Gus was in there like a rat up a drainpipe. I'd said, just put some brass on there, two tenors and a trumpet, Memphis-style. I go down there and there's 42 people from the London Symphony Orchestra playing on "Wrecked Again". I was just bowled over.

We took it in to EMI and said, "What are you going to do for promotion?" and they said, "We're not – you spent all the money."





Fully qualified survivor, live circa 1970



## MILLSTONE GRIT

DERAM, 1973

**Beginning a period of less lush, rockier albums. Contains roadworn, drink-filled**

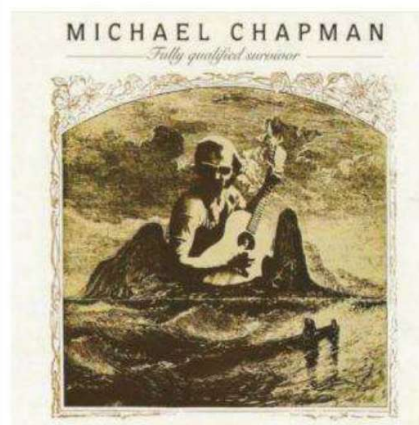
**compositions and customarily fine playing – this time generally on electric guitar.**

That was me producing myself. After *Wrecked Again*, I wanted something really stripped down again, something like *Fully Qualified Survivor*. The people I liked, Big Bill Broonzy, Mance Lipscomb and all these old blues guys – it's that simplicity and directness of the music that appeals to me. It's wonderful to think I once made a record with the London Symphony Orchestra, but my tendency when I'm producing is to go the other way.

"New York Ladies": that song is completely autobiographical. It's me stuck in the Chelsea Hotel, full of drink and drugs, waiting on the record company. I hadn't had a bean for five weeks in America. I said, "Unless you send \$2,000 to my room at the Chelsea by lunchtime tomorrow, I'm gone." They didn't send it, so I came home. Basically I was sat there in a foul mood in the Chelsea – the feedback at the end is me trying to imitate E 23rd Street sounds, the sirens, the car horns. It was my first attempt at musical impressionism.

When I met Thurston [Moore], he explained that it was my fault that he went down that road in the first place, because he loved that particular track. He said to me, "If you hadn't done that, I wouldn't have put Sonic Youth together."

## THE UNCUT CLASSIC



## FULLY QUALIFIED SURVIVOR

HARVEST, 1970

**A lovely exposition of several sides of Chapman: the staggering solo guitar player, the morose songwriter, the surprisingly hard rocker. Contains "Postcards Of Scarborough", contemporaneously much aired by John Peel.**

Mick Ronson lived around the corner when I was living in Hull. He was working as a gardener for the council at several girls' schools, so he didn't really want to move out of Hull. When you look like Ronson, you're the best guitar player for miles and you're surrounded by girls – what the hell else do you need? But anyway, he came down to London with us. I introduced him to Gus, Gus introduced him to David [Bowie] and that was it. People tell me that *Hunky Dory* is *Survivor* Part II, but I've never heard it. I've never heard a Pink Floyd record, or *Tubular Bells*. I've

managed to avoid all of them completely.

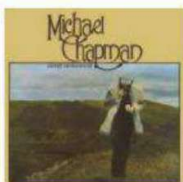
I had that thing [opening track "Aviator"], and Gus said, "You've got to do that song." We had Johnny Van Derek [violin] who I heard playing Django Reinhardt stuff in a pub in London, and Paul Buckmaster playing the cello – I knew they would get on. I'd developed this horrendous cold, and we only had one pass at it, as I could only sing it once. We tracked it straight off the floor, no rehearsal. I just showed them the chords and we were off. It's brilliant apart from the fact you can hear I've got a cold. In a way that's why a lot of people don't like working with me. I don't have committee meetings, I see what I want to do and I go and do it. Paul wrote for the string section. We used an old studio trick: "Lads, we've got a bit of a technical problem here – can you play it again?" So you got them to double-track it, without paying them the extra money. A producers' trick – it's supposed to be a secret.

It wasn't John Peel who picked out "Postcards Of Scarborough" – it was his wife, Sheila, she was from Scarborough. John liked it – but Sheila made him play it. Basically, when I was married, I had a naughty weekend in Scarborough with a very beautiful girl who I've now lived with for 40-odd years, and when I went back to Scarborough, she wasn't around. It's self-explanatory. I don't mind if it's the song people know me for – at the time, I thought they should have put it out as a single. I mentioned it to Gus, and he said, "You don't do singles." Because we were meant to be progressive – album artists. We did that LP in four days; it's astonishing when you think about it. It's never been out of print, and it's never stopped selling.





Chapman in 2012: searching for the lost chord



### SAVAGE AMUSEMENT

DECCA, 1976

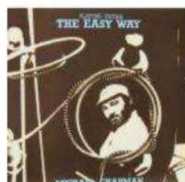
**Don Nix is shipped in from Memphis to Sawmills in Cornwall to produce. Drink, drugs and near**

**disaster is the norm. Result? Rocky revisits of early songs and strong new compositions.**

EMI was run by retired colonels – Harvest was this underground label, something they didn't understand which they knew they had to have. Decca paid for me to make the records I really wanted to make. I got Don Nix involved through John Mayall. He came over – he was in bad condition. It was a miracle we got anything done.

It was a pretty dangerous record to make. It was in the back of my mind to go over there, but we had some great players here, too. Don liked Rick Kemp's bass playing and said, "Come back to Memphis with me – we'll make a fortune." We did "It Didn't Work Out" again. A song is just like the foundations for a dry stone wall: once you've got those in, you can do anything. It's the basic structure.

[Drummer] Keef Hartley nearly died falling in the river – too much drugs and drink. He went for a walk at 3am. Rick [Kemp, bass] dragged Keef out single-handed. It was winter, his cowboy boots were full of water. It was a close run thing. That's why it says on the sleeve: "Keef Hartley: drums and underwater research."



### PLAYING GUITAR THE EASY WAY

CRIMINAL, 1978

**Among the singer-songwriter albums, a mid-career oddity. An instructional record, but with a difference – namely, there are no clear instructions.**

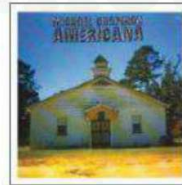
My manager at the time, Max Hole, said, "There's a market for instructional records." I said that the only thing I could instruct people on was different guitar tunings – to see whether, if you tune the guitar differently, like Joni Mitchell does, you can find different chords to help you write songs. So that's

why every track is in a different tuning.

I wanted to call it *How To Cheat*, but they wouldn't let me. The idea was, "I've tried this, why don't you have a go?" When I was learning guitar there were no books, or videos. Even my fingerstyle technique is

wrong. John Martyn was the same, he taught himself. I've never thought right-hand technique was important – as long as you're getting the notes you want. I play slide with my wedding ring – it's from my first wife and it just won't come off. I can only reach the top string with it, but I like to get that sitar-like kind of effect with it.

*"I just play atmosphere – I'm no guitar technician..."*



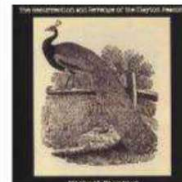
### AMERICANA VOLS 1 AND 2

SIREN, 2000/VOICEPRINT, 2002; COMPILED 2005

**From the bayou, to the deserts of the West. Two volumes of impressionistic, at times Fahey-esque guitar pieces. Vol 1 includes the superb "Swamp".**

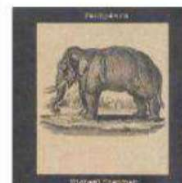
"Americana" to me is something from America that couldn't exist anywhere else. It's the unique essence. My missus

went on a road trip with a friend of hers who had been doing a thesis at Manchester University with particular reference to civil rights music. She said to my missus, Andru, "The only thing missing from my research is that I've never been there. Will you come with me?" And Andru said, "Of course I will." So they spent three weeks going around to Selmer, Montgomery, all those places. Later on, I said, "I've never been to the Deep South – come on, we're off." Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, down South in all the swamps and the bayou, I tried to get the atmosphere down there. I came back and I recorded that record. Then a couple of years later I went back and we did the high desert: Arizona, New Mexico, Northern California, Utah... and the music changed. It sounds like the high desert. I like those records, because I think I got it right. I just pick a guitar up and see what happens. These were just musical impressionism. I just play atmosphere – I'm no guitar technician. I could never make an LA record, because I can't stand the fucking place.



### THE RESURRECTION AND REVENGE OF THE CLAYTON PEACOCK

ECSTATICPEACE, 2011



### PACHYDERM

BLAST FIRST PETITE, 2012

**Chapman's discovery by a new generation of US guitarists leads to an interesting new direction.**

I've met some pretty

interesting people, particularly on the East Coast of America. People like Thurston, the No-Necks, Black Twig Pickers, Nathan Bowles – he's a monster. Tom Carter, a lot of abstract players – I admire the intellectual freedom of it, and I wanted to do it, but I wanted to add a more melodic point of view. With *Pachyderm*, because I'd been hanging out with drone players I wanted to see how many versions of one chord I could play. Unfortunately, I've found another two since I've done it! *The Peacock* and the *Pachyderm* albums – they took about eight hours apiece to make. I was hesitant about it. I went to Philly to play Jack Rose's memorial concert and Thurston was on the bill – we had abandoned projects on and off. He nagged Andru, saying, "Get him to make a noise album for me – I know he can!" It's not quite a requiem for John Fahey, but I couldn't call it... *Clayton Peacock* and not have Fahey in the back of my mind. 🐘

*Wrecked Again* is re-released this month on *Light In The Attic*



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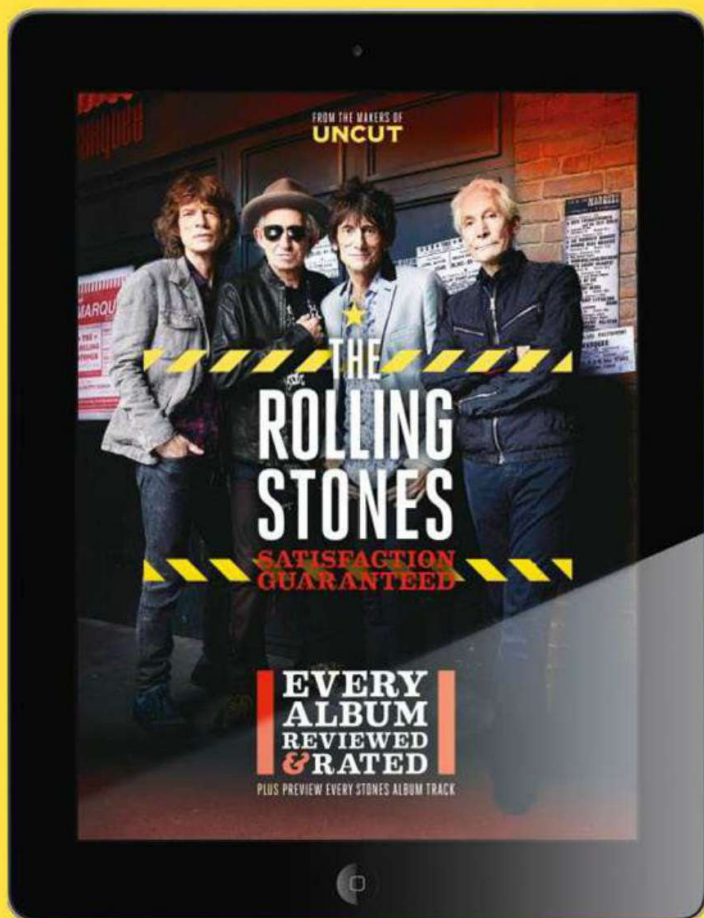
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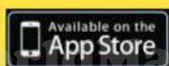


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## SIX BY SEVEN

LOVE AND PEACE AND SYMPATHY

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Six By Seven return with their best and most accessible album. Recorded live at the legendary Moles studio by Dan Austin after 4 months of rehearsing in a Nottingham hideout with new recruit, Steve Hewitt (Placebo). On tour in July.

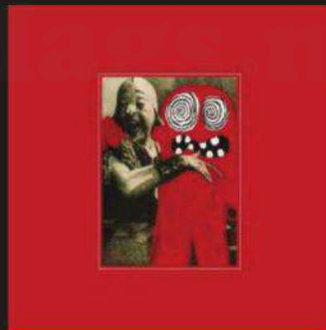


## PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

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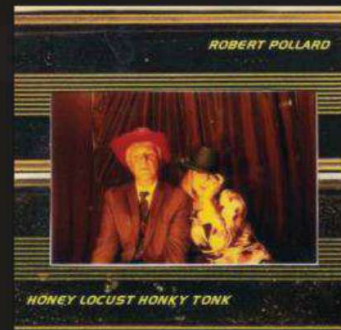


## SCOTT & CHARLENE'S WEDDING

ANY PORT IN A STORM

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This sonically charged take on the Lemonheads' ramshackle melodicism and Pavement's lo-fi drawl is fated to become your essential backdrop to the summer.



## ROBERT POLLARD

HONEY LOCUST HONKY TONK

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

A compact wonder and so varied, tuneful, graceful, magnificent and ebullient that you'll be forgiven for thinking that Robert Pollard has saved his best for his own album.

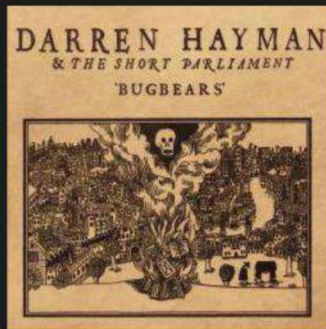


## TEHO TEARDO & BLIXA BARGELD

STILL SMILING

SPECULA RECORDS 2LP / CD

The sky above Roma & Berlin is a musical constellation where Neubauten, Teho Teardo, The Bad Seeds & Morricone watch us from above. They take what they need from the stars to make a unique nocturnal album of songs.



## DARREN HAYMAN & THE SHORT PARLIAMENT

BUGBEARS

FIKA RECORDINGS LP / CD

Bugbears" is an album of English Civil War and seventeenth century folk songs, in deluxe packaging on CD and heavyweight LP. It is an accompaniment to Darren Hayman's critically acclaimed album "The Violence".

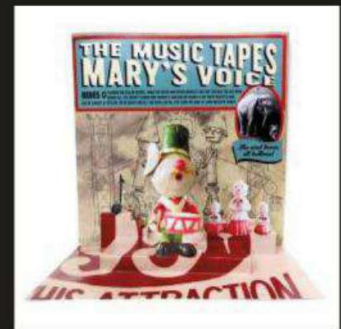


## JOHN LEMKE

PEOPLE DO

DENOVALI LP / CD

John's dedication to ignoring genre boundaries makes for a record impossible yet needless to categorise. For fans of FOUR TET, HAUSCHKA, THE NOTWIST.



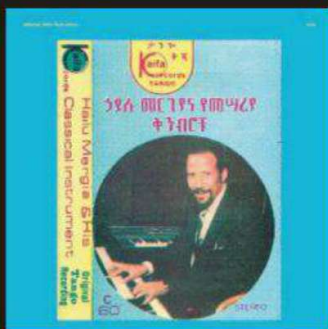
## THE MUSIC TAPES

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Limited-edition LP features pop-up artwork.



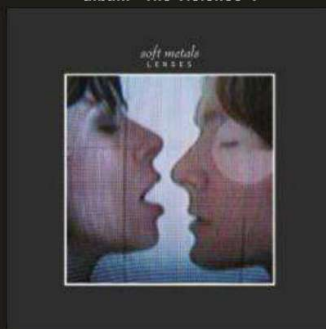
## HAILU MERGIA

HAILU MERGIA & HIS CLASSICAL INSTRUMENT: SHEMONMUANAYE

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Ethiopian multi-instrumentalist Hailu Mergia's synth excursions were recorded in 1985.

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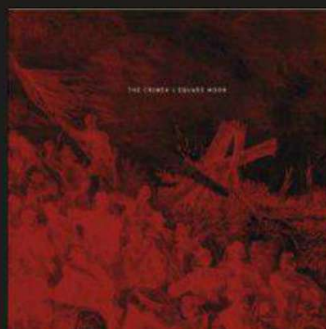


## SOFT METALS

LENSES

CAPTURED TRACKS LP / CD

July 15th will see the release of Soft Metals' next installment, Lenses; a continuation of their ethos aiming directly at your body and subconscious mind with an intimacy that only lovers can bring.



## THE CRIMEA

SQUARE MOON

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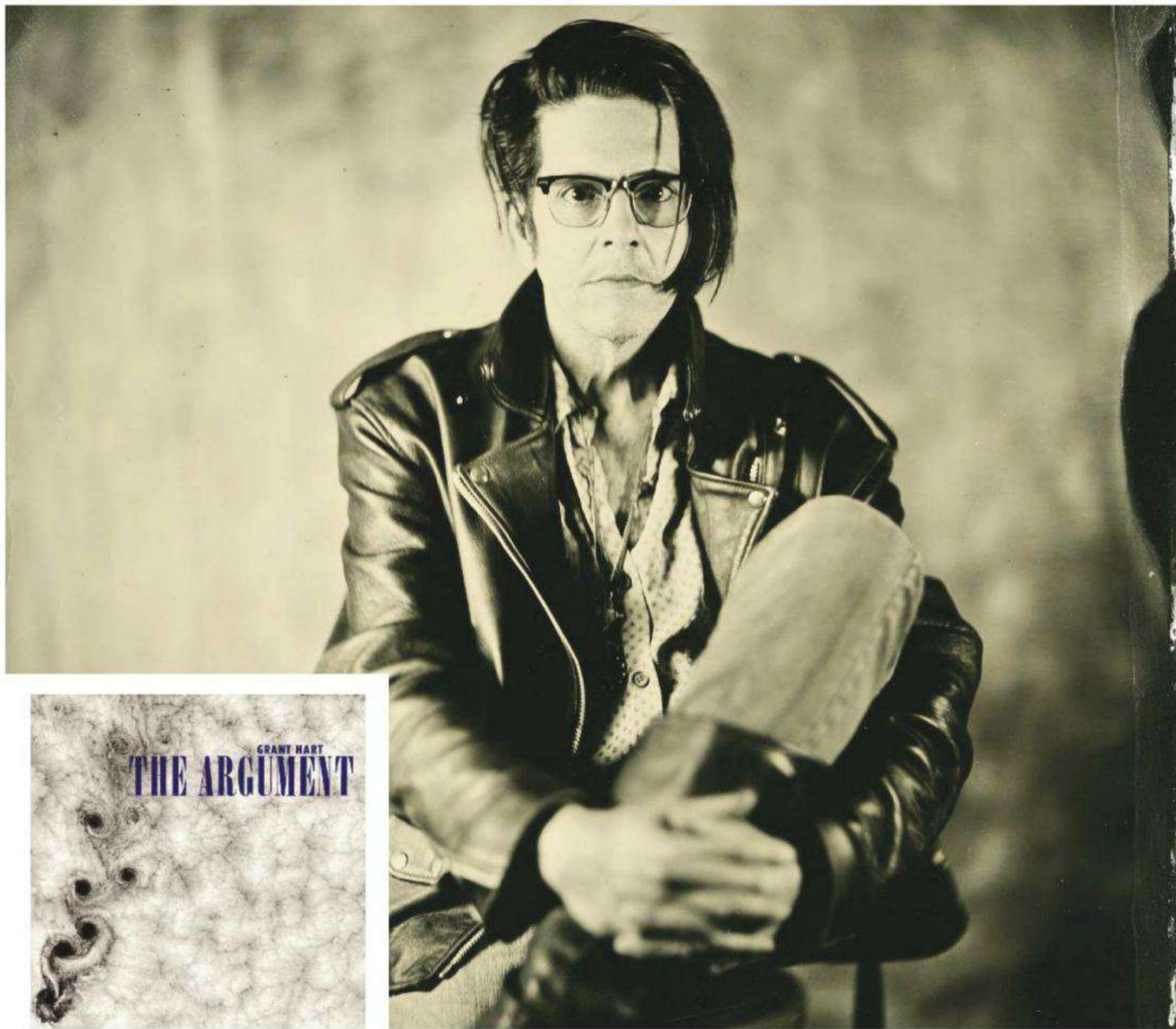


## OUR NEW SCORING SYSTEM:

10 Masterpiece 9 Essential 8 Excellent  
7 Very good 6 Good but uneven  
4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

# New albums

THIS MONTH: BEACH BOYS | MAVIS STAPLES | STEVE GUNN & MORE



ANDREW MOKOM

## TRACKLIST

- 1 Out Of Chaos
- 2 Morningstar
- 3 Awake, Arise!
- 4 If We Have The Will
- 5 I Will Never See My Home
- 6 I Am Death
- 7 Sin
- 8 Letting Me Out
- 9 Is The Sky The Limit?
- 10 Golden Chain
- 11 So Far From Heaven
- 12 Shine, Shine, Shine
- 13 It Isn't Love
- 14 War In Heaven
- 15 Glorious
- 16 (It Was A) Most Disturbing Dream
- 17 Underneath The Apple Tree
- 18 The Argument
- 19 Run For The Wilderness
- 20 For Those Too High Aspiring

## GRANT HART

### The Argument

DOMINO

Great snakes! After years in the wilderness, Hüsker Dü founder returns to the garden. *By Jim Wirth*

**8/10**

NO STRANGER TO wild imaginings, Hüsker Dü co-pilot Grant Hart nailed his bewildering colours to the mast with the Nova Mob's 1991 album, *The Last Days Of Pompeii*; an apocalyptic fantasy which wove together the eruption of Vesuvius, Nazi rocket scientist Wernher von Braun and Brer Rabbit. A long spell in self-released exile, it seems, has done little to temper his taste for the unconventional.

Taking its cue from an unpublished William

Burroughs remake of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which casts the angels as an alien race and characterises God as former US President Harry S Truman, his hour-long Domino debut, *The Argument*, weeds out the religious overtones from the 17th-Century original, reconfiguring Lucifer's fall from God's right hand, and Adam and Eve's exile from Eden as flesh-and-blood drama. "I like the big canvas, I guess," he tells *Uncut*. "You can fling the metaphors round a little more."







→ However, for all of the high-concept backstory, *The Argument* is no dry intellectual exercise – perhaps because those themes of sin, temptation, betrayal and exile are echoed so forcefully in Hart's life. During the album's genesis, his elderly parents were defrauded of most of their savings by a rogue care home nurse, and then his own house, in which his family had lived since it was built in 1919, burned down. He may be channelling Lucifer as he sings "I am looking to escape from, this decimated hellscape," on the mournful "I Will

Never See My Home", but the 52-year-old knows just how cruel acts of God can be.

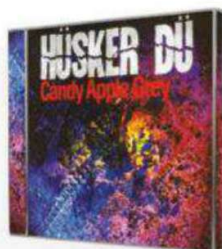
Certainly, Hart's fortunes since the demise of Hüsker Dü have been very different to those of Bob Mould. In his recent autobiography, *See A Little Light*, Mould asserted that Hart's heroin problem heralded the end of that band; a claim which rankles Hart. Whatever, at Hüsker Dü's peak, Mould and Hart drove each other on to extraordinary heights, with three unbelievable psychedelic hardcore records – *Zen Arcade*, *New Day Rising* and

*Flip Your Wig* – in the space of just 18 months.

An extraordinary writer, Mould is also an astute operator; whatever demons beset him, he remains on the move, and when – as with 2002's Auto-Tune frenzy, *Modulate*, and the clubbed-up *Long Playing Grooves* – he headed off at a tangent that his small 'c' conservative audience could not handle, he was quick to snap back to the formula. Hart, meanwhile, works much as he talks – slowly, and with long pauses for reflection. In contrast to Mould's focused productivity, Hart is a little more erratic, his work occasionally

## HOW TO BUY... GRANT HART

The best of the Hüsker Dü man on CD...



### HÜSKER DÜ *Candy Apple Grey* WARNER BROTHERS, 1986

Mould beat Hart on points on Hüsker Dü's epochal trio of mid-'80s LPs – *Zen Arcade*, *New Day Rising* and *Flip Your Wig* – but the countback favours the drummer on the band's major-label debut; groovy and nasty on "Dead Set...", strung out and soulful on "Sorry Somehow".

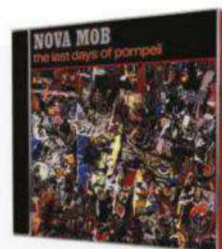
**8/10**



### GRANT HART *Intolerance* SST, 1989

Off heroin and high on inspiration, Hart played every instrument on his solo debut, which features his "Signed DC" ("The Main"), the smiley "Now That You Know Me", house anthem "2541" and a sly dig at Mould in "You're The Victim". Deceptively slight and more than slightly wonderful.

**8/10**



### NOVA MOB *The Last Days Of Pompeii* ROUGH TRADE, 1991

Pliny The Younger and the A-bomb find their destinies entwined on the first of Hart's two ensemble efforts with Nova Mob, taking in folk-rock on "Woton", moon-landing chatter on "Space Jazz", and much more indie rocket science besides.

**7/10**



### GRANT HART *Hot Wax* MVD AUDIO/ COND'OR, 2009

Despite feat. heavy friends from Godspeed You..., Hart's first LP in 10 years was more sunshine shindig than post-rock storm; toytown garage on "Narcissus...", open-top pop on "California Zephyr", lounge samba on "I Knew All About You Since Then". Vibrations: Largely good.

**7/10**



wanting a little polish. You don't get much sense of a masterplan.

Having come clean physically and emotionally on his homemade 1989 debut *Intolerance*, a showcase for his breezy, soulful voice and understated songwriting, whatever momentum was built up with two Nova Mob albums in relatively quick succession soon dissipated. It took 10 years for Hart to follow up 1999's *Good News For Modern Man* with the equally amiable *Hot Wax*, making the relatively swift arrival of *The Argument* – delirious but fully formed – a bolt from the blue.

Hüsker Dü aficionados will welcome “Morningstar” and the Buddy Holly-ish “Letting Me Out”, clearly plucked from the same tree of pop knowledge as past triumphs like “Every Everything” and “2541”, but foot-tappers are not *The Argument*'s stock in trade. Bolted to the story arc of Hart's storm in heaven is some of the most ambitious and downright incongruous music of his career. “Underneath The Apple Tree” may be the point when the weak cave in to the temptation to press the “off” button, especially the bit where the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band-influenced serpent offers Eve “*beautiful fruit, so lovely, pleasing to the eye – you can eat it off the vine or bake it up into a pie*”.

## SLEEVE NOTES

**Produced by:** Grant Hart and Mike Wisti

**Recorded at:** Albatross Studio, Minneapolis

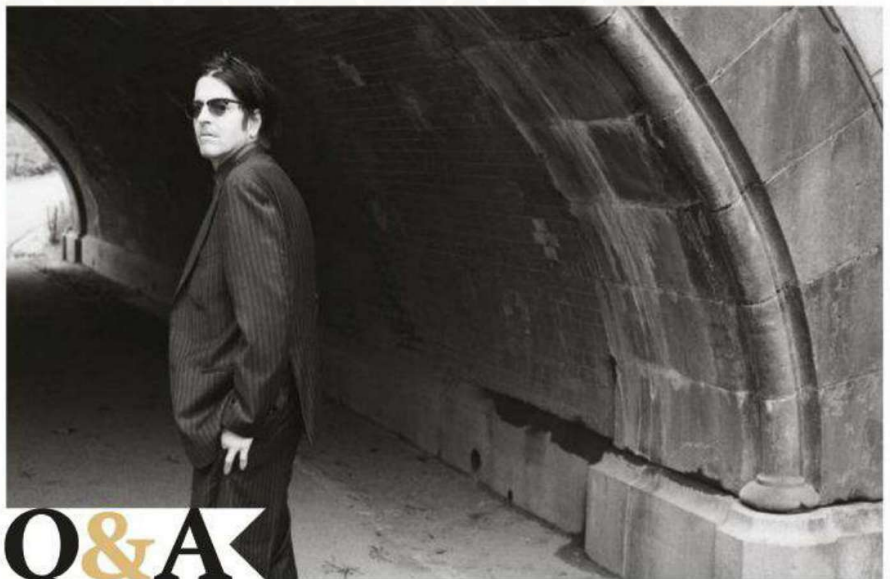
**Personnel:** Grant Hart (vocals, guitar, bass, drums, keyboards), Davin Odegaard (bass guitar), Peter Susag (upright bass), Aron Woods (drums)

Child's 1972 dramatisation of the Apocalypse of St John, 666.

Not all of the theatre is absurd, though. Gaunt and daunting, the title track hits a pitch that is bizarre but unequivocally compelling, Hart playing both innocence and experience as his characters engage in a rhetorical life-and-death-battle with just a wheezing harmonium and a set of windchimes for company. A magnificent lyrical double-helix, Hart chases his serpent's tail, the last words of each portentous utterance morphing into the first of the next; “...*Hands are unfamiliar to a snake/Snake why you tempt me, why the bother?/Bother not with laws I see right through them/Through them he has told us his demands/Demand to know exactly what's at stake...*” And so on for six riveting minutes.

Dire retribution is meted out in the frenzied “Run For The Wilderness”, but *The Argument* trails off on a stylish offbeat with the shoo-be-dooos and whoah-whoahs of the Bob Dylan-ish “For Those Too High Aspiring”, cosmic drama drawn down to mortal brass tacks. “*Every breath brings you closer to your death, what a laugh what a laugh,*” shrugs the Minnesotan, as he waves the first couple away. “*Smile you unhappy exile.*”

Burned out, maybe, but in no danger of fading away, Hart's eternally rudimentary musicianship means *The Argument* has been moulded from little more than a handful of dust and a spare rib, but there is something of the divine in its living, breathing whole. Rickety in construction, and occasionally ropery in execution, it holds up as a work of single-minded, lunatic conviction. Devilishly idiosyncratic, perhaps. But still on the side of the angels.



## Q&A

### Grant Hart discusses war in heaven, losing his home in a fire and being compared to Bob Mould

**T**HE ARGUMENT IS partly based on an unissued William Burroughs treatment of *Paradise Lost*. How did that connection with Burroughs and his assistant James Grauerholz come about?

We met through Giorno Poetry Systems when Hüsker Dü were asked to appear on the *Diamond Hidden In The Mouth Of A Corpse* compilation (1985). I didn't get a hold of *Lost Paradise* 'per se' but it was sitting on the table when I came over to visit James. It was barely more than an outline – just a few pages. It is like a science fiction take on Milton, where the fallen angels were people from another interstellar race and God was personified as Harry Truman. The atom bomb was part of the whole war in heaven scenario.

**Is *The Argument* more Burroughs than Milton?**

It's pretty evenly divided. The timeline is the same as Milton – I have kept the flashbacks where they should be – but what I was eager to do was to excise the religious content. I have turned it more into an interpersonal thing where Lucifer reacts too strongly to being rejected with God paying more attention to the new Christ rather than the old angels. Lucifer goes off because he is given to the opposite of love – he wants to destroy love wherever he finds it.

**Why is the story so compelling for you?**

Just the sheer drama of it and the archetypes you get to play with. The earliest songs that I wrote had to do with the expulsion from the garden and the lake of fire, and the reawakening of Lucifer as Satan. I felt *Paradise Lost* was going to be a nice vehicle for them. The white light golden moment was when I discovered the Burroughs manuscript. In a way it was real liberating having a thousand song topics just drop into your lap.

**After losing your home in a fire, did you feel there were parallels with that and Adam and Eve being driven out of Eden?** The events are there. In the album's dedication I have thanked those who rescued me from the lake of fire and helped me build my new Pandaemonium. Losing

your own private little museum can be liberating – the possessions you accumulate are kind of an exhibition devoted to yourself. Everyday I think of something and it's: ‘Oops, don't have it anymore.’ Is that liberating? Fortunately, yes.

**Who plays on the record?** It's mostly me. I was influenced by Roy Wood. He played far more instruments than I can – I play a lot of keyboards and rhythm guitar to make up for my inefficiency at lead guitar. I saw how you were able to do it pretty early on from the example of Roy Wood.

**What is the appeal of making concept albums?** I like the big canvas – you can fling the metaphors round a little more. You can use the same words twice!

**You have had a bit of a stop-start career. Do you feel you are on a more even keel after signing to Domino?** This is the first time since Nova Mob that I've signed a contract where there is the smallest glint of hope there will be a follow-up record. I do not function well in the world of the salesman, shopping a record to labels.

**You worked in record shops when you were younger. Were you a prog fan?** I was 14, had 1,500 albums and I think a couple of them were King Crimson. There was a Yes LP. *Brain Salad Surgery* – Emerson, Lake & Palmer – how prog can you get? Hardcore was more didactic – if you were listening to something else you were wasting time when you could have been listening to something local so you could be supporting your scene, man.

**Do you still think people compare you to Bob Mould?** People seem to think they can't like me and like Bob's music. There are these people who came on board around the time of Sugar who have heard there is this bad guy in Bob's past who was vanquished by Bob like a dragon. There's more productive people to compare myself to. Am I the Satan that fell from Bob's right hand? I'm a whole different kind of Satan... *INTERVIEW: JIM WIRTH*

*“Am I the Satan that fell from Bob's right hand? I'm a whole different kind of Satan...”*





## TRACKLIST

### DISC ONE

- 1 Do It Again
- 2 Little Honda
- 3 Catch A Wave
- 4 Hawaii
- 5 Don't Back Down
- 6 Surfin' Safari
- 7 Surfer Girl
- 8 The Little Girl I Once Knew
- 9 Wendy
- 10 Getcha Back
- 11 Then I Kissed Her
- 12 Marcella
- 13 Isn't It Time
- 14 Why Do Fools Fall In Love
- 15 When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)
- 16 Disney Girls
- 17 Be True To Your School
- 18 Little Deuce Coupe
- 19 409
- 20 Shut Down
- 21 I Get Around

### DISC TWO

- 1 Pet Sounds
- 2 Add Some Music To Your Day
- 3 Heroes And Villains
- 4 Sail On, Sailor
- 5 California Saga: California
- 6 In My Room
- 7 All This Is That
- 8 That's Why God Made The Radio
- 9 Forever
- 10 God Only Knows
- 11 Sloop John B
- 12 Wouldn't It Be Nice
- 13 Good Vibrations
- 14 California Girls
- 15 Help Me Rhonda
- 16 Rock And Roll Music
- 17 Surfin' USA
- 18 Kokomo
- 19 Barbara Ann
- 20 Fun, Fun, Fun

# THE BEACH BOYS

## Live - The 50th Anniversary Tour

UNIVERSAL

The reunited group's undeniably impressive peaks, blighted by band politics and Auto-Tune. *By David Cavanagh*

**6/10**

THESE ARE INTERESTING times to be a Beach Boys fan. Last year, after much speculation, Brian

Wilson officially rejoined the lineup – which also included David Marks from their 1962-'63 days – for an album and a 70-city world tour to mark their 50th anniversary. The tour was something of a triumph, a carnival of togetherness that would have been unthinkable a decade ago. The album (*That's Why God Made The Radio*) trundled along in a mood of easygoing nostalgia, but ended wistfully, it was noticed, as if the group sensed that autumn was foreclosing on their endless summer.

Then, after the tour's London finale in September, some bad feeling resurfaced. Mike Love announced that he would assert his legal rights to The Beach Boys' name for forthcoming appearances with Bruce Johnston, leaving Wilson, Marks and Alan

Jardine stranded and disappointed. Currently it's hard to know what's happening. The Love-Johnston Beach Boys are touring America, playing casinos, fairgrounds and wineries, but despite this bleak development, a new studio album featuring all five of them, with Wilson as the dominant songwriter, is apparently not out of the question.

The mystery deepens with *Live - The 50th Anniversary Tour*, recorded last summer at various unspecified locations believed to include Colorado, Texas and Japan. The 41-track setlist, divided across two CDs, goes back as far as their second single ("Surfin' Safari"), tackles all the obligatory hits ("I Get Around", "Good Vibrations", "Barbara Ann", "Help Me Rhonda"), touches briefly on the late '60s ("Do It Again"), pays a surprise visit to Holland in the '70s ("Sail On, Sailor", "California Saga") and mostly avoids the '80s ("Kokomo"). The Beach Boys





## Q&A

Bruce Johnston



**How did the 50th anniversary tour compare to previous Beach Boys tours?**

Well, it couldn't even come close, because there's no

Carl and no Dennis. I can tell you my favourite night was the Albert Hall (September 27), which would have made a great live album. We did all of two shows in England. I don't know what was in our brains. We should have done more, but you had the Olympics and it was a pretty big year for Queen Elizabeth.

**Was it the longest you'd ever toured with Brian?**

God, I've toured with Brian many times. But that was when he had his handlers and he was overweight and disconnected. This tour was really cool. We were on a bus going to an airport somewhere, and I went up to about four inches from his face and said, "I know you're in there." He laughed so hard! There's still a lot of pressure on him. When I joined the band [in 1965], I used to watch his behaviour. He was like Rachmaninoff as an army general. He was sharing his art and protecting it with his leadership skills. He was so red-hot, so hip. So young.

**Where do you stand on the issue of Auto-Tune?**

We don't use it onstage. You're telling me they used Auto-Tune on the album, after the fact? You know more than I do. I had nothing to do with the production of this album. Well, I'm sorry to hear it. We seem to be living in pitch-corrected times. Perhaps they should start a Grammy category for Best Pitch-Corrected Recording. But take it from the horse's mouth: we don't use it onstage. I generally think I have decent pitch. Of course, I still see a 30-year-old when I look in the mirror.

INTERVIEW: DAVID CAVANAGH

are backed by a nine-piece band, many of them strong singers in their own right, resulting in a potential 14-man spread of voices. Particularly delicious are the harmonies in "When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)", "Add Some Music To Your Day" (from the 1970 album *Sunflower*) and "In My Room", a delicate ballad that they handle like a child holding a butterfly.

The first disc, heavily slanted towards the early years, is a cavalcade of surfboards, hot rods, high schools and Hawaiian girls. It wasn't a terribly serious vision of the world back then and it certainly isn't one now (at least until "The Little Girl I Once Knew" brings a higher degree of musical complexity), but the 57 minutes roll by with ease and good humour. The second disc, beginning with the instrumental title track of *Pet Sounds*, takes a less travelled road – while still containing nine of the most famous songs in American history – with a long and satisfying sequence that includes "In My Room", "All This Is That" (from the 1972 LP *Carl And The Passions – "So Tough"*) and two selections, "Forever" and "God Only Knows", in which the present-day Beach Boys harmonise behind isolated vocal tracks recorded years ago by the late Dennis and Carl Wilson, respectively. You may feel it's cheesy, or even ghoulish, but it's more emotional than its sounds.

Produced by Brian Wilson and longtime studio partner Joe Thomas, *Live – The 50th Anniversary*

*Tour* does, however, have a major problem that will ruin the album for some listeners. Several songs are saturated in Auto-Tune, seemingly added at the post-production stage at Wilson's behest. The weakest voices in the band are those of Wilson himself and Mike Love, whose lead vocals – and between them they sing a lot of lead vocals – are treated by pitch-correction software to iron out what were presumably bum notes. This means, alas, that horribly metallic noises emerge from their mouths instead. It's so unfortunate. The pardonable human flaws of a 'naked' Beach Boys concert would have been far better than sitting, teeth clenched, through "Surfin' USA" or "Sail On, Sailor", which aren't so much Mike and Brian as Ralf and Florian. Bottom line: listen to samples before deciding whether this album is for you.

In the final analysis, fabulous music will prevail over robotic voices, as it does (just about) here. Even the usual corny monologues (Johnston is introduced to the crowd as a "Grammy Award-winning songwriter" – like they'd care) have an ironic charm. Everyone now sits tight for the six-disc, career-spanning Beach Boys boxset due in August. And hopes they get it right.

# AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

p66 DAUGHN GIBSON

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p79 WAXAHATCHEE



## ABOUT GROUP

### Between The Walls

DOMINO

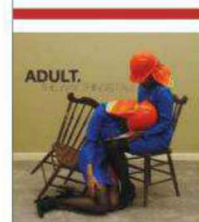
**Avant supergroup's enthralling third**

Together, John Coxon, Charles Hayward, Alexis Taylor and Pat Thomas blur the line between improv

7/10

and composition to highly entertaining effect, avoiding what Coxon admits some think of as "squeaky-door music" while determinedly pushing personal boundaries. AG's latest is again the sound of players from different worlds (artful electronic pop in Hot Chip chap Taylor's case, free jazz/avant rock/electronics in the others') with their creativity loosened, but not so loose it's running amok in (shudder) freeform jams. Tracks vary in emotional and sonic tone, sources, instrumentation and complexity, and it's a real thrill to hear "Walk On By" gradually emerge from a heavy improv raga, or just drift with the skronky flotsam of "Untitled".

SHARON O'CONNELL



## ADULT.

### The Way Things Fall

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

**Detroit electro duo's efficient comeback**

Adult.'s brittle gothic synthpop was all the rage during the electroclash

8/10

summer of 2002, leading this contrarian couple – Nicola Kuperus and Adam Lee Miller – to diversify, less successfully, into nihilistic new-wave and nosebleed punk. Fortunately, fourth set *The Way Things Fall*, their first following a six-year break to produce a horror film trilogy, shows they've mellowed with age by finally delivering the classic Adult. electropop album. From "Heartbreak" to "Tonight, We Fall" and "Nothing Lasts", this is full-bodied, tuneful and surprisingly friendly, with vocalist Kuperus toning down the swivel-eyed hysteria for some Siouxsie-styled elegance.

PIERS MARTIN

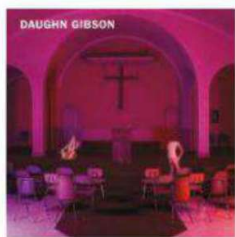


## DAUGHN GIBSON

### Me Moan

SUBPOP

Modern-day country star steps out of the shadows. *By Piers Martin*



8/10

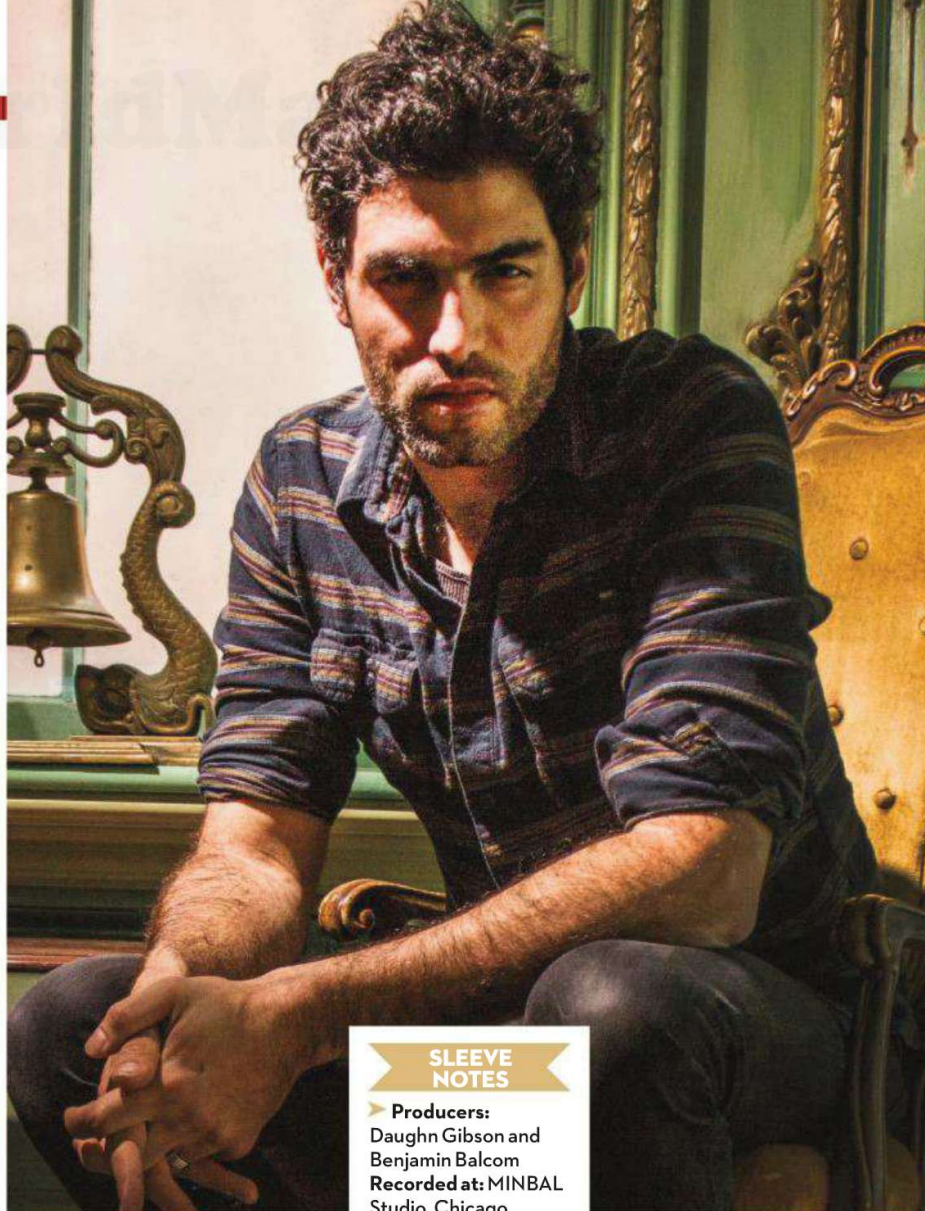
DAUGHN GIBSON HAD done the rounds before he realised he could sing. He'd been a truck driver hammering the Philadelphia to New York beat. Worked in an adult bookshop and as an outside news broadcast engineer, erecting transmitters and receivers. He'd

packed boxes in a warehouse and handled the sound in local Philly dive bars. He'd played drums in bands called Nokturnal Acid and Natal Cream and, notably, the Drag City stoner-rock act Pearls And Brass, back when he went by the name of plain old Josh Martin. More recently he roadied for his pals Pissed Jeans. All this, and he still hadn't found his calling.

When he decided to go it alone and came to record the first song of what would become his alluring debut album, last year's *All Hell*, he discovered he possessed a striking baritone akin to that of Scott Walker. In this tremulous, resonant croon, which also calls to mind the honeyed boom of Johnny Cash or even Elvis, Gibson proved to be quite the storyteller. And with a voice like that, those who heard him listened, bewitched, to *All Hell*'s small-town tales of corrupt cops and dysfunctional families as he unveiled a sleepy psychodrama every bit as compelling as his music, this readymade mongrel hoedown constructed from hotwired country and Americana tethered to loops of beat-up dub-techno.

Released on Pissed Jeans' frontman Matt Korvette's White Denim label, *All Hell* was barely promoted, but those who did come across Gibson online tended to latch on to certain qualities such as his old-school authenticity, honesty and black humour. Word soon spread of this strapping 6'5" troubadour from the backwater of Carlisle in central Pennsylvania whose rugged good looks made it easy to believe he was playing the lead role of the flawed romantic in his own cinematic songs. Like Ben Affleck cast as a lumberjack, you could strike a match on his stubble and swim in his eyes. In press shots he seemed to have difficulty doing up his plaid shirt. As an indication of that album's magnetism, it's worth watching a new short film inspired by Gibson and his music by the British director Saam Farahmand, who was so intrigued by the imagery and mood conjured by *All Hell* that he wrote, funded and shot *Another Hell*, in which Gibson stars as the disturbed protagonist sprinting through misty woodland.

Bearing all of this in mind, Gibson's second solo album *Me Moan* is still a remarkably potent brew that scrambles your thoughts for the first few listens as points of reference collide in unfamiliar ways, as if you've just huffed bath salts in the parking lot. Pedal steel abounds and Gibson sings like an old-time country boy (he's 32), yet his vivid stories unpick a murkier side to smalltown, rural America ignored in the patriotic bluster of the likes of Toby Keith and Tim McGraw. He tackles the same territory as *All Hell* – relationships, hopes and



#### SLEEVE NOTES

**Producers:**  
Daughn Gibson and Benjamin Balcom  
**Recorded at:** MINBAL Studio, Chicago  
**Personnel:** Daughn Gibson (vocals, various instruments), John Baizley (guitar), Jim Elkington (guitar)

dreams – but this time the songs are realised in brilliant high-definition, the choruses almost euphoric. Gibson's confidence at the computer allows for wild risks – slathering a field recording of bagpipes across "Mad Ocean", an ode to his wife, for example, or dicing vocals like a house track on the lolling "You Don't Fade" – to the extent that you cannot predict how a song will unfold.

Gibson's sleek style of electronic production is influenced by his love of British shapeshifters such as Shackleton and Demdike Stare, but the digital doesn't dominate *Me Moan*. Rather, these textures

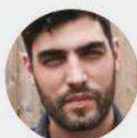
embellish the woozy soul of "The Pisgee Nest" or build atmosphere on The xx-ish "Franco", the tale of a husband trying to help his wife get over the suicide of their son. At its

slinkiest, "Phantom Rider" is the kind of drowsy disco that other neo-cowboy Matthew Dear would kill to write.

Traditionally, country music and club-derived electronics make for awkward bedfellows, but it's a testament to the strength of Gibson's strange vision that *Me Moan* might well become a touchstone of modern-day Americana.

## Q&A

Daughn Gibson



**Your sonic palette is incredibly broad. When starting a song, how do you know which style to begin with?**

The most fun part of this is starting somewhere and ending somewhere completely different. I never know where I'm going to end up. It's a lot like cooking – keep tasting until it's good. It's all accident. If it makes me blush a little bit or makes me feel slightly embarrassed, that's when I know it's a great-looking accident.

**Why the title, *Me Moan*?**

I like the idea of a primitive confession. What it

would be like if I was an early subhuman who had discovered religion, a channel for my bad vices and guilt? I thought, how would the caveman or neanderthal express that?

**You used to be a truck driver. What's the allure of that job?**

It really is like the embodiment of the American troubadour, I guess, and that's what attracted me to it when I was a kid. I just wanted to get out there on my own and do my own thing and not have a boss. Turns out it's lonely and provokes a mild form of insanity.

**Mixing electronics with country – kind of James Blake meets Johnny Cash – is not common, possibly with good reason, but you pull it off. It's not easy to explain to people what music I do. Country and techno? Oh, that sounds terrible!**

INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN





**MATIAS AGUAYO**  
**The Visitor**  
CÓMEME

**Chilean wildcard's rambling third album funks up the rhythm**  
Matias Aguayo has dedicated much of the

four years since his last album, *Ay Ay Ay*, to cultivating his idiosyncratic Cómeme label, a Euro-Latino dosshouse for disco waifs and strays. For *The Visitor*, named after his five-country recording peregrination, Aguayo enlists the gonzo skills of his Cómeme crew as he celebrates the primitive pleasures of language, funk and rhythm. Aguayo always has heaps of ideas, some of which work brilliantly – the chorus of rolled Rs on “RRRR”, for example, and the jagged boogie of “Las Cruces” – but more often than not, he finds himself stranded in a groove, unsure where to go next.

PIERS MARTIN

**7/10**



**EMILY BARKER & THE RED CLAY HALO**  
**Dear River**  
LINN

**Aussie singer-songwriter looks homeward**  
The themes of roots and exile are the hardy

perennials of songwriting, and Emily Barker, an Aussie based in London, has fashioned a characterful collection from that well-worn source. Produced by Calum Malcolm (Blue Nile, Prefab Sprout), Barker's fourth album has a clean, rootsy feel, her voice recalling Natalie Merchant on the rousing title track and doleful “Letters”, but finding a more ethereal purity on “The Cormorant And The Heron”. The acoustic band template is at times overly polite but allows for a pleasing variety of approaches, notably the urgent folk-funk of “Everywhen” and “The Leaving”, which kicks off like a down-home reinterpretation of Cee Lo Green's “Fuck You”.

GRAEME THOMSON

**7/10**



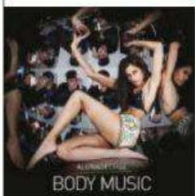
**BATHS**  
**Obsidian**  
ANTICON

**Follow-up to acclaimed 2010 chillwave debut visits dark side**  
The summery feel of *Cerulean*, LA native Will Wiesenfeld's debut

as Baths, is bumped aside on this sequel. Understandably – the classically schooled, sampling sophisticate had an intimation of mortality when he was laid low by the E. coli virus at the start of recording. But the fatalistic (“Worsening”) and darkening gothic moods (“Ossuary”) bring out some of the shiniest elements of his prodigious talent and imagination. “Ironworks”, for example, captures a sense of pining loss, but with the exuberantly active backdrop of Wiesenfeld's keys, feathery strings and restlessly active beats, the breadth of his expressive capabilities remain impressive.

GAVIN MARTIN

**7/10**



**ALUNAGEORGE**  
**Body Music**  
ISLAND

**R&B duo's sugary, hit-rich debut**  
Barely 12 months after they debuted on New York cyber-goth label Tri Angle, future-garage nippers

Aluna Francis and George Reid find themselves sleekly remodelled as a chart-scaling power couple, the Topshop pop option to Disclosure's club-ready bangers. Perhaps inevitably, *Body Music* has the feel of an album rushed out for the summer, but it's already furnished with an abundance of hits (“You Know You Like It” and “Attracting Flies” to name just two), largely because Francis' Lily Allen-ish lyrics and delivery almost always complement Reid's sparkling synthwork and gloopy basslines. Of the new batch, “Bad Idea” and “Lost And Found” should keep things rolling 'til Christmas.

PIERS MARTIN

**6/10**

## REVELATIONS

**Matt Berry – comedian, actor and... serious musician**



➤ A few years ago, the comic Matt Berry was best known for his roles in the cult Channel 4 sitcoms *The IT Crowd* and *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace*. These days, however, while he still earns a fair crust from acting and voiceover work, Berry is becoming recognised as a serious musician.

“I'm not making pastiche records,” he says, sounding surprisingly fresh after a night out with Queens Of The Stone Age. “It would be a lot of effort for one joke.”

The 39-year-old is an analogue synth connoisseur – he loves Jean-Michel Jarre and Giorgio Moroder – while his tastes lean towards vintage English psych and *Wicker Man* folk.

This all leads quite naturally to his two albums of pastoral pop for Acid Jazz, 2010's *Witchazel* and his latest one, *Kill The Wolf*, a meditation on temptation and the cycle of the seasons, which he recorded in his home studio by the Thames, playing every instrument bar drums. And when Berry performs with his band The Maypoles, the audience is there for the vibe, not for laughs. “There's no catchphrases being shouted out anymore,” he says. “Thing is, I never know if they're my catchphrases or someone else's, so it's a waste of time.”

PIERS MARTIN



**BELL X1**  
**Chop Chop**  
BELLY UP

**Arty Irish outfit go minimal**  
This bijou Dublin outfit have become quietly big in America after having their arty anthems played

on shows like *The OC* and *Grey's Anatomy*. Their seventh studio album, helmed by The National's producer Peter Katis, removes some of the widescreen electronica and replaces it with a more stripped back, acoustic vibe that rather suits them. On piano-led slow-burners like “A Thousand Little Downers”, “Starlings Over Brighton Pier” and “Diorama”, they resemble Elbow; on “Drive By Summer” and “The End Is Nigh”, it's Springsteen fronting Talk Talk; while lyrics like “people cry at the strangest things/ Mine's the Venezuelan national anthem” retain their quizzical bent.

JOHN LEWIS

**6/10**



**BARENAKED LADIES**  
**Grinning Streak**  
FONTANA

**Canadian folk-pop japesters' silver jubilee set**

Perhaps still most celebrated in the UK for

their theme song to TV's *The Big Bang Theory*, the Ontario four-piece have nonetheless racked up sales of 14 million albums worldwide, and mark their 25th year together with another solid collection of semi-acoustic pop that invites the tag “quirky”. Typically lightweight wit runs through “Off His Head” and “Odds Are”, although “Did I Say That Out Loud?” and the impossibly catchy “Gonna Walk” boast comparatively more serious declarations of love. Most of these frothy confections would sit just as well on any of the band's previous 11 long players, the unassuming mantra being, if it ain't broke don't fix it.

TERRY STAUNTON

**7/10**



**MATT BERRY**  
**Kill The Wolf**  
ACID JAZZ

**Actor's enchanting folk whimsy**

When comedians turn to song it can be hard to divorce the actor

from the artist. Not so with Matt Berry, whose funny business seems a necessary financial distraction from his true calling as some lusty star-crossed minstrel. More *Wicker Man* than Hammer Horror, his fourth album, *Kill The Wolf*, is another ruralist fantasy furnished with tales of witchcraft and maypoles, the songs billowing, early-'70s English psych numbers laced with mistletoe, oboe and Moog. It's pleasant stuff – “Solstice” and “October Sun” are suitably heady – but you wish the voice of Absolute Radio would more vigorously indulge his Dionysian urges.

PIERS MARTIN

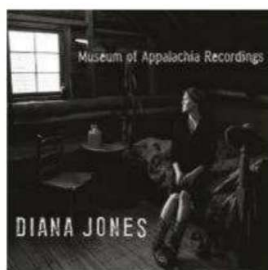
**7/10**



## AMERICANA



BEST  
OF THE  
MONTH



### DIANA JONES **Museum Of Appalachia Recordings** PROPER

**Stripped mountain music – recorded in a cabin, in a museum** ‘Authenticity’ is an ambiguous concept in popular music. But if you’re serious in its pursuit, a restored homesteader’s cabin in a museum devoted to preserving the rustic folk traditions of old Tennessee isn’t a bad place to set up the mics and let the tape roll. Recorded over two days in December 2012, like its predecessors, *Better Times Will Come* (2009) and *High Atmosphere* (2011), the latest set from the Nashville-based singer exquisitely channels the weathered but deathless heritage of American mountain music.

You might imagine that songs with titles such as “O Sinner” and “Drunkard’s Daughter” are redolent with history – and in a sense they are. Yet these are not antique memories salvaged from the Harry Smith anthology, but Jones’ own vibrant compositions.

Just as Kate Rusby has mined English folk idiom with such conviction that her compositions sound like they’ve been plucked from another time, Jones’ immersion in Appalachian tradition is so absolute that the argot of her songs has become indistinguishable from the antique styles that inspired her. Every note, played on guitar, fiddle, banjo and mandolin without overdubs, might’ve sounded familiar to the Carter Family. Similarly, all references to contemporary life have been stripped from her lyrics. Yet what’s left is far from anachronistic or ersatz – these are songs which emphasise that the most profound aspects of the human condition remain unchanging. “Ohio” is about a relative who committed suicide. “Satan” deals with temptation. “The Other Side”, written to sing at her grandmother’s funeral, works as timelessly as “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”.

The obvious comparison is with Gillian Welch, and both were adopted at birth, which perhaps explains a mutual search for identity in the roots of Americana. But Jones is a unique voice, breathing new life into a tradition that is far too vital to gather dust in a museum. **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**

9/10



## THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Plenty to shout about with the announcement of this year’s Americana Music Association Awards. The LA nominations ceremony saw performances by **T Bone Burnett**,

**Buddy Miller** and **The Milk Carton Kids**, the nominees led by country-punk duo **Shovels & Rope** (pictured, whose four nominations included Album Of The Year for *O’Be Joyful*). Also in line for gongs are **John Fullbright**, **Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell**, and **The Lumineers**. Artist Of The Year is a scramble between Emmylou, Buddy Miller, Dwight Yoakam and Richard Thompson. Winners will be declared at Nashville’s Ryman Auditorium

on September 18. If you’re in town for the awards, you might fancy a trip to the new **Johnny Cash Museum**. Founder Bill Miller has sifted through hundreds of artefacts to “create authenticity and present something to people to make them feel as if they knew Johnny”. The items on display range from Cash’s school report cards to a Crucifixion ring given to him just before he died. US folk-country siren **Dawn Landes** has revealed she’s putting the finishing touches to a new album, featuring “very special guests”. It’s likely to include “Try To Make A Fire Burn Again”, which Dawn’s been playing live lately. Also busy in the studio are Nashville’s **Cory Branan**, recording a follow-up to last year’s terrific **Mutt**, and **Lydia Loveless**, whose 2011 LP **Indestructible Machine** was a big favourite round these parts. **ROB HUGHES**

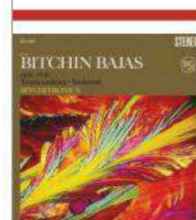


### BIG DEAL **June Gloom** MUTE

**Second album from are-they-aren’t-they grunge-poppers** Big Deal appeared in 2011 with the sort of backstory that provoked curiosity.

5/10

He, Kacey Underwood, was a Californian guitarist with a string of alt.rock bands on his CV. She, Alice Costelloe, was a pretty English girl fresh from her A-levels. Together, they smouldered through bare, husky grunge songs that worked to make a virtue of simplicity. Sadly, *June Gloom* increasingly suggests their self-imposed limitations are precisely that. Their habit of singing in close harmony can be pretty (see “Little Dipper”) but leaves little room for interesting vocal interplay, and when they lurch into noisy shoegaze – see “Teradactol” – they more evoke also-rans like Seafood or Llama Farmers than any masters of the form. **LOUIS PATTISON**



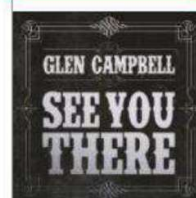
### BITCHIN BAJAS **Bitchitronics** DRAG CITY

**Zoned-out vibrations from Chicago** For an act who specialise in stinky, sleepy kosmische, Bitchin Bajas seem very industrious:

7/10

this is the Chicago outfit’s fourth album in as many years, while mainman Cooper Crain also knocks out heavier gear with Cave. Using three reel-to-reel tape machines to soak up their sonorous keyboard sessions, which are then looped and edited on other tapes, Crain and his accomplice Dan Quinlivan fashion an intoxicating rainbow psychedelia with *Bitchitronics*, that’s best realised on “Transcendence”, 10 minutes of flowing Terry Riley minimalism pierced by a blistering guitar riff. Anyone who’s still mourning the passing of Emeralds should shack up with these druids.

**PIERS MARTIN**



### GLEN CAMPBELL **See You There** SURFDOG

**The stricken country-pop legend reworks his greatest hits**

7/10

Since being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2011, Glen Campbell has reinvented his legacy. The *Ghost On The Canvas* album gave him a Rick Rubin-esque makeover, The Goodbye Tour was a bittersweet triumph, and now current mentors Dave Darling and Dave Kaplan have compiled a new set from *Ghost...* offcuts and new vocal takes on the classics that made Campbell’s name in the ‘60s and ‘70s. No-one can actually improve on the perfection of “Wichita Lineman”, but the version of “Rhinestone Cowboy” included here, stripped down to grunge guitar and a Willie Nelson-esque vocal, is bold and definitive. **GARRY MULHOLLAND**





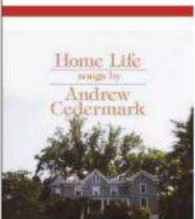
**CORNELL CAMPBELL & SOOTHSAYERS**  
**Nothing Can Stop Us**  
STRUT

**7/10**

Smooth collaboration between JA legend and UK group

Campbell's larkish falsetto is one of the hallmark voices of roots reggae, still remarkably well preserved from his 1970s heyday. This pairing with the UK Soothsayers collective proves an easy fit, framing Campbell's precise, melodic vocals with intricate horn-led arrangements and adding judicious dub effects. The mood is defiant and joyous – "Conqueror" and "We Want To Be Free" are standouts – with the odd love song ("With You My Heart Belongs") for ballast, while an uptempo remake of the classic "Jah Jah Me No Born Yah" soars brightly on its Moorish melody. Delightful.

NEIL SPENCER



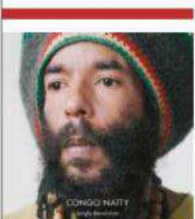
**ANDREW CEDERMARK**  
**Home Life**  
UNDERWATER PEOPLES

**8/10**

Stubborn Americana anthems from ex-Titus Andronicus guitarist  
Andrew Cedermark's second album opens with

an interpolation of Bill Withers' "Lean On Me" that seems to echo "The Star-Spangled Banner". The motif repeats during *Home Life*, which roams a barrel-aged heartland following the forlorn fringes the ex-Titus Andronicus guitarist explored on his debut, *Moon Deluxe*. Vocally, he conjures Silver Jews' David Berman twisting Springsteenian portraits of post-industrial disillusionment (Cedermark worked as a copy editor at a New Jersey daily), and while he's capable of rousing like Japandroids covering REM, he's equally prone to shambling clangour. Amid the murk, there are still magnetic, rough-hewn fight songs about heartache and ambition.

LAURA SNAPES



**CONGO NATTY**  
**Jungle Revolution**  
BIG DADA

**6/10**

Soundssystem stalwart's dubwise jungle  
Congo Natty's Michael West – the Rastafari Rebel MC – has been

a fixture on the UK's roots reggae scene ever since he scored a pop hit in 1989 with "Street Tuff" aged 23. Best known today for his gravelly drum'n'bass toasting, on *Jungle Revolution*, West and his Congo crew hook up with On-U Sound's Adrian Sherwood for a familiar set that marries reggae spirituals to the fortified jungle of the soundsystem. At his stage in the game, you'd imagine that West would avoid surprises, but this is a lively affair underscored by dubstep retoolings of dancehall shakers such as "Jah Warriors" and "London Dungeons".

PIERS MARTIN



**TIM COSTER**  
**A Moment's Ornament**  
ROOM40

**9/10**

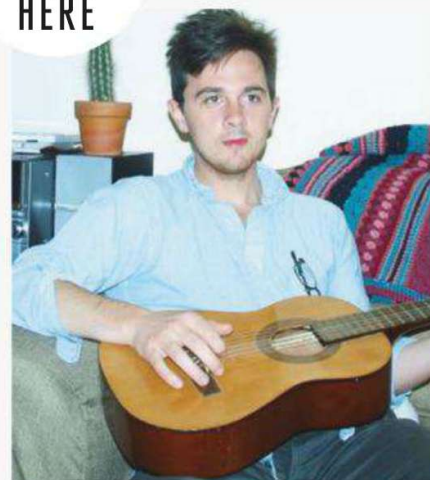
Modular miniatures for synth dreamers  
Since moving from Auckland to Melbourne, Tim Coster has been on

a roll: his last few releases were beautiful long-form drone-dreams. But *A Moment's Ornament* is Coster's masterpiece so far, a gorgeous set of 20 miniatures patiently sketched out via his modular synth set-up. Coster has a rare skill for graceful melody and textural pliability, and although these tracks rarely pass the two-minute mark, they're still structurally rigorous – listen to the way "Bit" and "Cafe" slow-bloom into precise floral configurations. Even when dealing in churchy melancholy, as on "Age", Coster is careful not to overplay the trace elements.

JONDALE

WE'RE NEW HERE

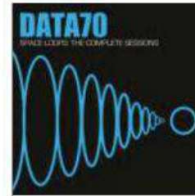
**Andrew Cedermark**



➤ To date, there are 13 ex-members of New Jersey patriot-punks Titus Andronicus, three of whom play on the second solo album by Andrew Cedermark, himself among their number. Four years ago, Cedermark quit as Titus' guitarist because he disliked touring – he's now in graduate school to "give me some kind of a grasp on a sustainable adulthood that includes music".

Since then, he's moved from Virginia, to New Jersey, to New York, releasing a debut, *Moon Deluxe*, that swum with the same blizzard-like intensity as The Microphones' *The Glow Pt 2*. Many of those songs had haiku-form lyrics and waltzing rhythms, all part of his "firm stand in my art against anthemic rock music".

"*Home Life* is more an album of questions, about the words," says Cedermark. It partly deals with his time living in Charlottesville, Virginia, after college. There, he worked as a copy editor for a local paper, which "helped me tune in to a poetry of thoughtlessly used language; thinking about mostly prosaic things, something is bound to strike you as lovely or sad or in some other way worth noting if you are open to it." The job supported him as he made the album. "And it was really lonely, which gave me something to be dramatic about." LAURA SNAPES



**DATA 70**  
**Space Loops: The Complete Sessions**  
ENRAPTURED

**8/10**

Analogue retro-electro duo compose their own Radiophonic archive  
An inspired collaboration between childhood friends

turned fanzine editors and techno artists Jon Chambers and Bob Bhamra, the Data 70 series comprises 50 short sketches evoking the vintage electro-mechanical sounds of a lost retro-futurist age. Originally released as cultish vinyl singles, they're all collected together on this CD. From the deep-space distress signals of "Original Transmission" to the space-jazz oscillations of "Cocktail 500" and the glitchy Warptronica of "In Focus", almost every one is a pure and lovely miniature. Recommended to fans of the BBC's fabled Radiophonic Workshop, plus analogue electronica pioneers like Raymond Scott and early Kraftwerk.

STEPHEN DALTON



**DISCLOSURE**  
**Settle**  
PMR

**8/10**

Brothers Lawrence breathe new life into old rave  
When the "Voodoo Ray"-tributing "White Noise" crashed into the UK

singles charts at No 2 earlier this year, it marked the moment when the urban underground funky house scene finally emerged as the cutting-edge pop of the day. Young Surrey siblings Guy and Howard Lawrence's debut long-player features plenty of hip pop guests including London Grammar, Jessie Ware, Jamie Woon and "White Noise" collaborators AlunaGeorge. But it is raw, retro nouveau, deep house bangers like "When A Fire Starts To Burn" and "Stimulation" that make this a perfect Brit companion piece to Daft Punk's recent rebootings of disco history.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



**EDITORS**  
**The Weight Of Your Love**  
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

**5/10**

More of the same from Birmingham's stadium-friendly depressives  
Singer Tom Smith has described Editors' fourth

album as "having a foot in that alt.rock/Americana world", which would certainly be an interesting diversion for a band which, eight years ago, found itself saddled with the "new U2" tag. But it's hard to find anything out of the ordinary here beyond the usual blend of angst rock and stadium bombast. While there are some big tunes here – "Bird Of Prey" and "Sugar", in particular – the whole project is undermined by typically OTT lyrics such as "*We built this city, now we tear it to the ground*" ("What Is This Thing Called Love?") which just make them sound silly.

FIONA STURGES

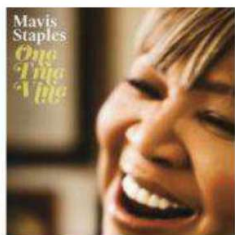


## MAVIS STAPLES

### One True Vine

ANTI-

Gospel legend and Jeff Tweedy rebond for sequel to 2010 Grammy-winner. *By Neil Spencer*



7/10

**THE VALEDICTORY** ALBUM from the artist of advancing years has become a feature of modern times. Johnny Cash's 'American' albums set the standard, nodding to his past while embracing numbers by U2, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy et al. Since then,

Kris Kristofferson and Glen Campbell have made similarly stark, mortality-aware records.

Although Mavis Staples remains a sprightly 73, she's been engaged in a comparable act of summary and relocation. 2007's *We'll Never Turn Back*, produced by Ry Cooder, returned her to the Civil Rights activism of the 1960s, when she and her gospel family, The Staple Singers, stood side by side with Martin Luther King, the group becoming an icon of black pride when they joined Stax Records to record anthems like "Respect Yourself".

More unexpected was 2010's *You Are Not Alone*, an alliance with Wilco's Jeff Tweedy that presented her intact vocal powers in a fresh, semi-acoustic context, setting spiritual pieces alongside numbers by the likes of Randy Newman and Allen Toussaint. It went on to bag a Grammy for Best Americana album, a reminder that the vogueish tag may apply to more than updates of old-time string bands.

*One True Vine* is a seamless sequel. Again, Tweedy produces and plays almost everything on the record, with drums ably provided by his 17-year-old son, Spencer. Not that there are many instruments present. Tweedy is content to provide low-key guitar parts, letting Mavis blaze centrestage, supported by a loud vocal chorus.

The pairing seems an odd one, but Staples has always been open to working with others – witness 1993's Prince-produced *The Voice* – while the two have Chicago roots in common. Crossing town to Tweedy's Loft home studio was an enticing task once the singer was convinced Wilco's mainman knew her history back into the 1950s when Mavis started out, an admiration that began with Tweedy's teenage years in a record shop. One might also reflect that the Staples' pre-Stax output was mostly adorned by little more than the rolling guitar lines of her father. Tweedy is no Pops Staples, but he knows how to drive a song gently but insistently.

Pops' "I Like The Things About Me", which Mavis sang with him at the Wattstax festival, is one of the 10 offerings here in a selection that is unabashedly religious but which takes some unexpected turns. Among them is Funkadelic's "Can You Get To That", a song about marital funds but with a sharp moral spike, "The debts you make you have to pay". It's rendered true to the original, funky but steeped in church roots.

The straightforwardly devotional numbers are a mixed bag. Opener "Holy Ghost", a halting declaration of faith, was written by Low's Alan Sparhawk. "Far Celestial Shores", a sprightly look



#### SLEEVE NOTES

**Recorded at:** The Loft, Chicago  
**Produced by:** Jeff Tweedy  
**Personnel:** Jeff Tweedy (guitars, bass, keys), Spencer Tweedy (drums), unknown (backing vocals)

ahead to the "valley of crystal waters" on the other side of death, was penned by Nick Lowe. "Jesus Wept", a more troubled prayer, was written by Tweedy, who was also responsible for the title track, a song formerly on a Wilco B-side. No proclaimed Christian, Tweedy has nonetheless tussled with religion throughout his career on tracks like "Theologians", and here embraces the "one true light".

More predictable origins attend other songs. "Woke Up This Morning (With My Mind On Jesus)" comes from country bluesman Fred McDowell, a

moan of release from suffering in its original but bright and uptempo here. "Sow Good Seeds" is a similarly joyous, call-and-holler clapalong from gospel troupe Doc McKenzie & The Hi-Lites, while "What Are They Doing In Heaven Today?" was written in 1901 by Charles Tindle, a noted black preacher. Much covered, the song can

be rendered ironically as a critique of religion's 'pie in the sky' attitude (check the versions by Jorma Kaukonen and Mogwai) but Mavis delivers it with no such doubts. Listening to *One True Vine*, one can believe along with her.

## Q&A

### Mavis Staples and Jeff Tweedy



**What was your idea for the album?**

**MAVIS STAPLES:** When you start a new CD, you just pray that it will be good and that people like it, and with Jeff Tweedy, I don't have a lot of doubt. I feel comfortable with him, and I feel like whenever we get together we're gonna make good music.

**JEFF TWEEDY:** Mavis puts an unbelievable amount of trust in me. We started off feeling pretty connected, it seems like. For some reason, she embraced me, and it feels wonderful.

**How does Jeff produce, Mavis?**

**MS:** He asks, 'Mavis, you all right to do this one?' And he lets me go in my corner in the Wilco Loft. I put my headphones on, he stays in the engineer room. I start singing, and he don't bother me, unless it's something he wants me to say different. He doesn't try to tell me how to sing.

**How did you choose the songs?**

**MS:** You have to choose carefully, because you want your songs to make a difference. Pops used to tell the writers – if you want to write a song for The Staple Singers, read the headlines.  
**JT:** The central focus of the record is this connection to the past, and knowing that Mavis has a lot of people in her life that aren't here any more, that have meant a lot to her.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY





## FIELD REPORT

### Field Report

PARTISAN

**Magnificent debut from Justin Vernon bandmate. Vernon produces**  
Chris Porterfield disappeared after the 2006 demise of DeYarmond

8/10

Edison, the shortlived Wisconsin group that included Justin 'Bon Iver' Vernon and future members of Megafaun. These personal yet universally resonant songs show time away has been well spent. Acoustic strummed backdrops, masterfully accented with spare but thoughtful instrumentation and synthesiser washes, are matched to words that bring compellingly deep and dense scenarios to life. The Paul Simon-alike "Taking Alcatraz" and the depression-confronting "Circle Drive", with its image of "calcium road salt cut with ashes", both stay true to subject matter while expanding songwriting form.

GAVIN MARTIN



## FUCK BUTTONS

### Slow Focus

ATP

**Self-produced third from London 2012 stars**  
Cultish electronicists Benjamin John Power and Andrew Hung found themselves shoved onto the

8/10

biggest of world stages when their "Olympians" and "Surf Solar" featured in the London Olympics opening ceremony. A freakish choice perhaps, but the vivid colours and high contrast of Fuck Buttons' cosmic house/futurist techno made them a perfect fit. Previous records proved their skill in describing highly particularised alien landscapes, but *Slow Focus* throws up images of unknowable galaxies and fantastic lifeforms at a hyper-accelerated rate, recalling John Carpenter and Clark without sounding much like either. Its compact, often menacing strangeness has its own beauty, too, notably in "Year Of The Dog" and fizzy epic "Hidden XS".

SHARON O'CONNELL



## FUTURE BIBLE HEROES

### Partygoing

MERGE

**Magnetic Fields man's droll synthpop side-project**

Since the last Future Bible Heroes album in 2002,

7/10

Stephin Merritt has written at least four musicals, five albums and a couple of film soundtracks. His capacity for slightly sozzled soliloquies knows no bounds, and *Partygoing*, his third collaboration with longtime producer pal Christopher Ewen and Magnetic Fields vocalist Claudia Gonson, contains a handful of vintage Merritt moments. Parties being the theme, boozing and cruising figure prominently in "A Drink Is Just The Thing" and "Drink Nothing But Champagne" ("It makes life shorter/Than drinking water"), while Gonson's turn on the serene "Digging My Own Grave" is reassuringly sardonic.

PIERS MARTIN



## GOGOL BORDELLO

### Pura Vida Conspiracy

ATO/PIAS

**Spittle-flecked shanties from the gypsy-punks**  
The hot-blooded, vodka-soaked, folk-punk,

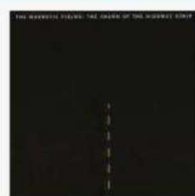
7/10

wedding-band racket of Gogol Bordello is best experienced live, where their preposterously hairy Ukrainian singer Eugene Hutz's explosive energy and loose-cannon charisma help excuse his thunderous lack of subtlety. The New York-based collective's sixth LP covers a familiar spectrum from table-thumping anthems to torrid speed-polkas and booze-punk shanties. But it also features agreeably surreal humour and occasional tender interludes, notably the jaunty romantic chanson, "I Just Realized", and the restrained closing number, "We Shall Sail", that Hutz croons in an unpolished rasp reminiscent of vintage Joe Strummer.

STEPHEN DALTON

## HOW TO BUY... STEPHIN MERRITT

More magnetic attractions



## THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

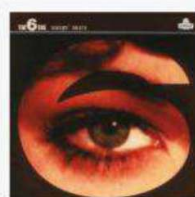
### The Charm Of The Highway Strip

VIRGIN, 1994

One imagines travelling anywhere would be rather

tiresome for Merritt, but the notion of motion fuels this third Magnetic Fields LP. Delivering all 10 songs in his lugubrious baritone, the young and jaded songwriter struggles to contain his general disappointment - "In the game of life we were playing to lose" - yet his evergreen synthpop makes the journey fly by.

8/10



## THE 6THS

### Wasps' Nests

FACTORY TOO, 1995

For The 6ths' bittersweet debut, Merritt assembles an all-star cast of guest vocalists that reads

like a second XI of mid-'90s transatlantic indie. The likes of Lou Barlow, Amelia Fletcher, Mitch Easter and Dean Wareham engage in some of the prettiest entries in Merritt's songbook, not least "Heaven In A Black Leather Jacket" and "Here In My Heart".

9/10



## THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

### 69 Love Songs

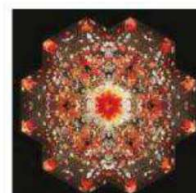
PIAS, 1999

A 3CD rumination on love and the modern condition, as well as a Stephen Sondheim-

inspired exploration of the love song. Very much a love letter to the musical, this is the epic by which all Merritt's work tends to be judged, even though in places it's a little too sentimental for its own good.

9/10

PIERS MARTIN



## GOLD PANDA

### Half Of Where You Live

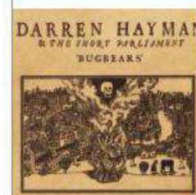
NOTOWN/GHOSTLY

**Oriental, sophisticated big beat from globe-trotting producer**  
Gold Panda is a 33-year-old Essex boy called

7/10

Derwin, who studied at SOAS, lived in Japan and is now based in Germany. His second long-player, at its most basic, works as sophisticated big beat, melding plinky-plonky toytown electronica and thumping house beats, with the hook lines provided by disembodied vocal samples. But it's overlaid with a wonderfully disorientating orientalist vibe. The rhythm tracks are built up from finger bells and clicking wooden percussion, while each track is overlaid with wisps of koto or zither, which shimmer appealingly over the top, adding a touch of global gravitas.

JOHN LEWIS



## DARREN HAYMAN & THE SHORT PARLIAMENT

### Bugbears

FIKA

**Folk's answer to Simon Schama exhumes England's musical past**

8/10

Hot on the heels of last year's LP, *The Violence*, about the Essex witch trials, the ex-Hefner man Darren Hayman returns to the 17th Century with a series of folk songs composed during one of England's most politically unsettled eras. Set within a simple framework of banjos, accordion and acoustic guitar, they include "Martin Said", a drinking song sung by Royalists during the Civil War, "Bold Astrologer", about a serving maid's attempts to outwit a fortune teller, and "I Live Not Where I Love", which looks forward to a time when "all living things shall cease to die". Pretty, poignant and educational, too.

FIONA STURGES



## I SEE HAWKS IN LA

### Mystery Drug

BLUE ROSE

**Seventh album from under-rated West Coast traditionalists**

7/10

The terrific "I Fell In Love With The Grateful Dead" from the Hawks' last album remains a pretty defining statement from the west coast band. Here, a mesh of weeping pedal steels and psych guitars predominates, which blithely ignores the more outré shores of contemporary Americana in favour of retracing the California bloodlines of classic '70s country-rock. If *Workingman's Dead/American Beauty* are obvious references, an even closer analogue on "Oklahoma's Going Dry", "Yesterday's Coffee" and the splendid "Stop Driving Like An Asshole" might be New Riders and early Poco. Nothing new, but mined from a rich and inexhaustible seam.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON





## LAKI MERA Turn All Memory To White Noise

JUST MUSIC

**Polished shoegazing meets polite melancholy**  
Glaswegian electro-folk mood merchants Laki Mera recorded their second

**6/10**

album in strained circumstances, with singer and lyricist Laura Donnelly ending her long-term relationship with multi-instrumentalist/songwriter Andrea Gobbi. But if this trauma coloured the songs, the bruises come veiled in poetic imagery and polished arrangements. On the darktronica of "Come Alone" and the waltz-time lament "Leave A Burn", Donnelly's voice radiates some of the sultry melancholia of Lana Del Rey. Though a prim politeness prevails, there are pleasingly dramatic digressions like "In The Tunnel", a chunky disco-rock torch song woven with spoken-word fragments and heavily treated vocal effects.

STEPHEN DALTON



## LA YEGROS Viene De Mi

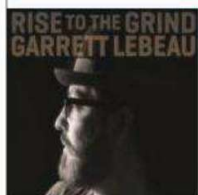
ZZK

**Shimmering debut album from Argentina's queen of 'Nu Cumbia'**  
Buenos Aires label ZZK has been cooking up

**7/10**

an ingenious version of Andean cumbia for a couple of years, blending its loping rhythm with dancehall and lashings of electronica. La Yegros is their breakout artist, the sinuous "Viene De Mi" having proved a huge hit across South America. An effortless singer, she also has a gifted producer (her husband, Gaby Kerpel, who also performs under the name King Coya) and an exuberant stage presence. Cumbia's trademark accordion spars with her raps on "Iluminada", "Vagar" explores deep dub beats, and wheezy organ enlivens the shuffling strut of "El Bendito". Coming soon to a festival near you.

NEIL SPENCER



## GARRETT LEBEAU Rise To The Grind

MUSIC ROADS

**Soul splendour on Shoshone tribesman's assured debut**

**8/10**

Though raised on Wyoming's Wind River Indian Reservation, six years after moving to Texas former construction worker Lebeau has completed this first album. It's been worth the wait: the heavy lidded pace and spare but elegant approach of a small select combo, framing supple vocal lines with mentholated B3 organ lines, presents a singular talent. Stylistically, Al Green, Boz Scaggs and Aaron Neville's honeyed plaints come to mind but, at times drawing inspiration from his reservation upbringing ("Darkness"), Lebeau's tender heart-baring songs give added substance all his own. Wonderful.

GAVIN MARTIN



## LIGHTNING DUST Fantasy

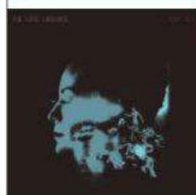
JAG JAGUWAR

**Canadian couple's ever-changing moods**  
Lightning Dust's Vancouver duo Amber Webber and Josh Wells –

**6/10**

mild-mannered members of sleeping giant Black Mountain – like to keep their fans guessing. After one album of wispy folk and another of West Coast AOR, their third record, *Fantasy*, deals in stripped-down, introspective electropop. It's a change of tack that brings out The Knife in the pair – on "Mirror", Webber's yowl pirouettes around Wells' generic programming, while the full-blooded "Loaded Gun" has a certain sex-dungeon swagger – and exposes the quality of their songwriting. In common with a lot of records called *Fantasy*, this is ultimately a pretty pedestrian affair.

PIERS MARTIN



## THE LOVE LANGUAGE Ruby Red

MERGE

**North Carolina lo-fi savant embraces sound for sound's sake**

**7/10**

On his third album under this nameplate, Stuart McLamb obsessively shoehorns sonic information into each track, as if he were trying to squeeze the 20 or so contributing musicians into a Mini Cooper. Subsumed into the mix, McLamb's urgent vocals are swept along in a sea of guitars, human and programmed beats, synths, strings, keys and virtual chorales, everything awash in reverb. The album moves along like a series of weather systems, howling squalls ("Calm Down") giving way to moments of summery beauty ("Golden Age") until the final, glorious sunset ("Pilot Light"). Immersive and claustrophobic, *Ruby Red* seems designed for solitary listening under headphones.

BUD SCOPPA



## LUCKY BONES Someone's Son

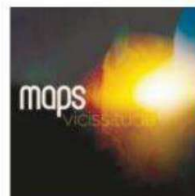
LUCKY BONES PROMOTIONS

**Mapping the Irish/Texas broken heartland**  
Following 2011's solid and emotive, session-men-accompanied debut album, *Together We Are*

**6/10**

*All Alone*, Dublin singer-songwriter Eamonn O'Connor has returned to Texas with an Irish-bred band. The added empathy allows his keening, compassionate voice to go deeper into his wounded vignettes, where spiritual and societal destitution are constants. The influence of Townes Van Zandt looms heavy in existential tales of lovers abandoned and bereft, as on the chilling "She Don't Know". Capable of summoning epic, widescreen effects, the rich musical palette leavens the harrowing insights ("Won't Be Coming Home"). Bleak but accomplished.

GAVIN MARTIN



## MAPS Vicissitude

MUTE

**Lush third falls short of a shake-up**

Having explored digital nu-gaze and neo disco with his Mercury-nominated debut, *We Can Create*, and

**6/10**

2009's *Turning The Mind*, respectively, Maps returns, ostensibly in more robust mental health. "The whole album is about change," James Chapman has said. "It's about dealing with a struggle and ultimately coming through it." That personal acceptance is reflected in "Adjusted To The Darkness", but musically, it's a case of minor tweaks, not a sea change. The title track flirts with minimal techno and "Nicholas" opens with a funky clatter, but Maps' narco-pop trademarks – plush synths, sepulchral keys and heavily aspirated vocals – dominate, recalling M83 and a defrosted Ladytron. It's seductive enough, but rather short on bravery.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## JOE MCKEE Burning Boy

BIG SHIP

**Change of direction for the former Snowman singer**

**6/10**

An Aussie with a dark, baritone voice who writes brooding, storytelling songs laced with grace and danger – but forget Nick Cave comparisons, for McKee's solo debut is cut from quite different post-rock cloth. Drums are banished and beats replaced with a pulse, orchestral strings float dreamily in and out and McKee's hypnotic voice echoes like Scott Walker at his most experimental. "Am I losing touch with reality or am I waking from some lucid dream?" he sings on the opener "Lunar Sea". The question remains unanswered, but it encapsulates the album's ethereal shimmer. Intriguing and hauntingly lovely, if almost totally one-paced.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## BACHAR MAR-KHALIFE Who's Gonna Get The Ball From Behind The Wall Of The Garden Today?

INFINÉ

**7/10**

**Arabic avant-garde from Beirut-born composer**

Like his father, the secular Lebanese oud player Marcel Khalife, Bachar Mar-Khalife is dedicated to a fusion of traditional Arabic music with more modern sounds. Ethno-dance hybrids so often veer towards well-meaning mulch, but a strong sense of process underpins Mar-Khalife's work, often political and delivered with conservatoire precision. Singing in Arabic and French, his piano is shadowed with percussion, loops and shifting plateaus of sub-bass. There is steely certitude here, too: see "Marea Negra", a reworking of an Arab Spring anthem by Ibrahim Qashoush, a Syrian poet later found dead with his vocal cords severed.

LOUIS PATTISON





## MASTER MUSICIANS OF BUKKAKE

**Far West**  
IMPORTANT

**6/10**

**Puns and psychedelia, wrapped up with a new-prog bow**  
Seattle's Master Musicians

construct their music from psychedelia's detritus – overdriven synths, mantric percussives, guitars tangled like driftwood, elegant, exotic riffs. With *Far West*, they're pushing things even further than the preceding *Totem* trilogy, really heading out to other planes of where. It definitely doesn't all gel: songs like "γη-νομος/Gnomi" and "Cave Of Light" feel a bit too portentous at times, a little too much like hammy prog-lite. But when they're drawing on all their resources and spinning their instruments out into orbs of repetitive grace, as with album centrepiece "Arche", *Far West* heads for the hills.

JONDALE



## MERCHANDISE

**Totale Nite**  
NIGHT PEOPLE

**8/10**

**Smiths-meets-psychedelia three-piece mix it up**  
This Florida trio celebrate the jangle, hooks and yelp of '80s indie, but

mix it with space-rock guitars, disorientating keyboards and drum machines. It's fascinating territory and Merchandise sound like a band still exploring their huge potential as *Totale Nite* veers from the distorted harmonica that introduces febrile opener "Who Are You?" to the nine-minute supercharged tuneless jazz-jam of "Totale Nite". The album peaks with the seven-minute "Anxiety's Door", which sounds like something accidentally left off *Strangers With Candy*..., with buzzing guitars and incessant percussion combining with arch vocals to produce a song that is repetitive, enchanting and hugely exciting.

PETER WATTS



**U-ZIQ**  
**Chewed Corners**  
PLANET MU

**7/10**

**Avant-dance pioneer returns: remember, it's pronounced mu-sick...**  
Alongside Aphex Twin and Squarepusher, Mike 'u-ZIQ' Paradinas was one of the

prime movers of '90s electronica, muddling the dance with beats that tested the footwork of the most capable clubber. The first u-ZIQ album in six years feels largely insulated from modern trends, with occasional contemporary touches – notably, the strobe-speed rhythms employed by US juke and trap producers – leaking in. Portentous synth melodies form a watery canvas, over which Paradinas splashes echoey '80s drumfills. "Mountain Island Boner" nods to the electro-pastoral sounds of Boards of Canada, while "Twangle Melkas" is Eurythmics' "Sweet Dreams" retooled with sonar pulses and an unearthly synth choir.

LOUIS PATTISON



## THE NEW MENDICANTS

**Australia 2013**  
ONE LITTLE INDIAN

**7/10**

**Fannie + Pernice brother = good vibes**

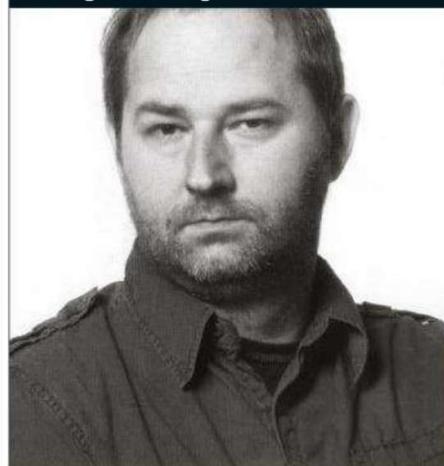
This six-song mini-album marks the first fruits of a collaboration between

Teenage Fanclub's Norman Blake and Joe Pernice. Though honouring the loose creative spirit of the project's conception – think late nights around the kitchen table and low-key gigs in the pubs of Toronto – their rough-and-ready acoustic pop-craft yields some stellar stuff. Of the three new songs sharing space with pared-down versions of the Fannies' "I Don't Want Control Of You", the Pernice Brothers' "Amazing Glow" and an unlikely but finely wrought cover of INXS' "This Time", the delicate "Follow You Down" and the rolling loveliness that is "Sarasota" share the plaudits.

GRAEME THOMSON

## REVELATIONS

The various bands of Oblivians' Greg Cartwright



➤ Although *Desperation* is the first studio album Oblivians have released in 16 years, it's not as if Greg Cartwright has spent the intervening years slacking around. This is a man who has formed several of the best garage rock bands of the past two decades (Compulsive Gamblers, Reigning Sound) and who currently plays in three of them at the same time – the soulful Reigning Sound, punky Oblivians and swaggering Parting Gifts.

Oblivians were formed in 1993 and have been 'playing sporadically' ever since, but the trio decided they wanted to put out a new LP as "they didn't want to be an oldies act".

So how does Cartwright juggle three acts at once? "I would say it's not hard," admits Cartwright, who lives in Memphis. "The dynamic with the different people makes for a different sound. It's not a conscious effort to change gears, just a natural side effect."

Cartwright is a brilliant songwriter and having three bands to work with helps him mix-and-match the perfect song with the right band. As he explains, "I don't write songs specifically for one band or the other. Sometimes I might try a song with different groups and just see where it fits best."

PETER WATTS



## DAVID MURRAY INFINITY QUARTET

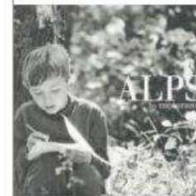
**Be My Monster Love**  
MOTÉMA

**7/10**

**Iconic tenorist features singers Macy Gray and Gregory Porter**

This veteran tenor saxophonist has appeared in countless settings since the early '70s – Albert Ayler-ish free jazz, Ellingtonian swing, Afropop and so on. Returning to the US after many years in Paris, he now features pianist Marc Cary in a propulsive American quartet, but this album's USP remains the guest singers. Macy Gray rasps through the vampiric title track ("My neck is yours/Suck me 'til I'm anaemic"), but the highlights are the three secular gospel anthems with Gregory Porter. The lyrics are wretched, so it's just as well that Porter's honeyed baritone could sing the phone book and make it beautiful.

JOHN LEWIS



## MOTORAMA

**Alps**  
TALITRES

**6/10**

**The Russian invasion begins here...**

A prequel rather than a reissue as it's never been properly released before, *Alps* was

recorded before last year's international debut *Calendar*, which earned the Russian indie quintet favourable comparisons with The National, New Order and '80s jangle-pop. Recorded in 2010, these dozen songs carry the hallmark of similar influences, but less self-consciously so. Frontman Vladislav Parshin's heavy-accented English lend his thick baritone a sinister edge, which contrasts deliciously with the carefree jangle of tracks such as "Northern Seaside" and "Ghost". There's an obvious homage to The Police on several of these songs, too. Unfashionable, perhaps. But rather endearing.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



## OBLIVIANS

**Desperation**  
IN THE RED

**9/10**

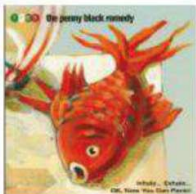
**Memphis punk-garage sensations are back with a bang**

It's been three years since Greg Cartwright (Reigning Sound, Compulsive

Gamblers) released an album and 16 since he recorded with the Oblivians, but *Desperation* is as refreshing as it is welcome. The bassless three-piece still play live regularly and here they hurl themselves into 14 tracks of rough-edged garage-soul with gusto. There are terrific new tunes – Cartwright's hollering rumble "Oblivion", Jack Yarber's bubblegum "Little War Child", Eric Friedl's hardcore "Woke Up In A Police Car" – and electrifying covers, like their delicious, fuzzy take on Zydeco party tune "Call The Police", all channelled through an anything-goes thrill-seeking garage pop filter.

PETER WATTS





## THE PENNY BLACK REMEDY

### Inhale... Exhale... OK, Now You Can Panic!

SOUNDINISTAS

6/10

London-based festival favourites hit cross-cultural sweet spot

On the follow up to TPBR's 2009 debut, *No One's Fault But Your Own*, Keith M Thomson's deadpan compositions often recall the wry worldview of Loudon Wainwright. Emboldened by hearty live shows, the dynamically primed arrangements blend music hall, folk and Balkan influences in a swishly calibrated fashion. The archness in some of Thomson's topical observations is offset by the sprightly tempos and welcome brushes of colour. Mellifluous Croatian singer Marijana Hajdarhodzic adds warmth to Thomson's world-weariness. A diverting, nicely rounded cabaret that emphasises the personalised approach.

GAVIN MARTIN



## DUANE PITRE

### Bridges

IMPORTANT

Just Intonating, brother – beautiful modern minimalism

Duane Pitre's career trajectory is fairly unique – from professional

8/10

skateboarder through to minimalist composer is a big leap in some respects, though both do share a love of, to paraphrase minimalist guru La Monte Young, 'drawing a straight line and following it'. On *Bridges*, Pitre works the mathematical precision of the Just Intonation tuning system into two side-long, gorgeously free-floating compositions, full of arcing, swooping strings that accumulate and disperse like tides of fog. His move from New York to New Orleans has obviously done him the world of good, opening his music to the seductive properties of relative quietude.

JONDALE



## PURE X

### Crawling Up The Stairs

MEROK/ACEPHALE

Austin psych wanderers get lost in music

At a time where psychedelic rock is being made over in rugged

7/10

fashion by Ty Segall, Thee Oh Sees, et al, Pure X seem content with being out of time and out of phase. Their second album, *Crawling Up The Stairs*, takes a spacier, more ambient approach, a lava-lamp swirl of effects-soaked guitar and bubbling electronics through which frontman Nate Grace's falsetto floats untethered. It is a wispy thing, not always easy to grip. But its more soulful moments can be quietly transcendent: the languid jazz-funk bassline that undercuts the zonked acid babble of "I Come From Nowhere", or the excellent "I Fear What I Feel", a sort of tie-dye cousin to The xx's "Infinity".

LOUIS PATTISON



## PET SHOP BOYS

### Electric

X2

Veterans christen new label by taking Springsteen to the disco

A splashy reboot to launch their own x2 label, *Electric* finds Neil Tennant and

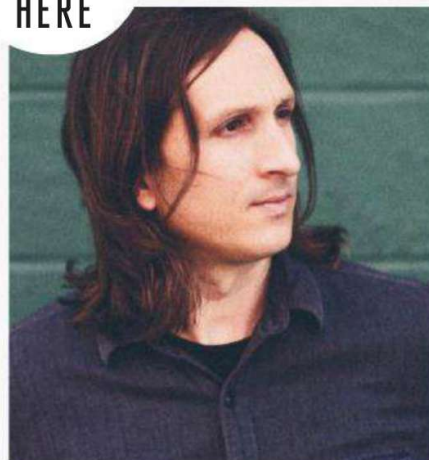
8/10

Chris Lowe working with former Madonna producer Stuart Price, who turbocharges these club-friendly tunes with analogue synths, fuzzy Vocoders and amped-up digital euphoria. Price's maximalist approach is largely successful, producing vivid, neon-lit dancefloor monsters like "Axis" and "Fluorescent". Tennant also indulges his signature brainy wit on "Love Is A Bourgeois Construct", a heady cocktail of lush techno, classical samples and tributes to Tony Benn. Even the potentially satirical disco-tronic cover of Springsteen's "The Last To Die" exudes real passion, invoking the Bruce-meets-PSB sound of The Killers.

STEPHEN DALTON

WE'RE  
NEW  
HERE

Duane  
Pitre



➤ "I feel the essence of skateboarding, at a fundamental level, consists of seemingly 'unseen' elements such as pressure and finesse," reflects Duane Pitre, American skateboarder-turned-minimalist-composer. "And very minute changes in either can change the results of one's skateboarding. The same can be said of music that is rooted, in some way or another, in minimalism."

Pitre's transition from wheels to strings was a long, slow process – most appropriate for someone whose music rewards the long haul. "I started skateboarding in 1985, [but] I turned pro for Alien Workshop in 1991. The owners of the company certainly helped shape how I'd view the world, and art. Compared to the rest of the skateboard world, they were into far-out approaches to creating a skateboard company, their own ways that had nothing to do with the trends at the time."

After Pitre hung up his board in 1997, he spent almost a decade playing in experimental bands, but a shift in approach in the noughties had him studying modern composition, which led to his recent, gorgeous string of albums. "I wanted to write pieces that involved 'classical' string and wind instruments," he recalls, "I felt I needed to learn how to speak their language."

JONDALE



## SAM PHILLIPS

### Push Any Button

LITTLEBOX

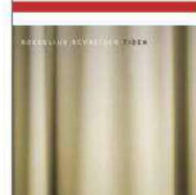
Dream-pop throwback: LA chanteuse's recording career enters its fourth decade

Surfacing from TV score work and her digital,

7/10

subscription-only recording efforts of recent years (aka "Long Play"), California-born Phillips here rounds up beaucoup ace LA sessioneers – including string ensemble The Section Quartet and Heartbreaker Benmont Tench – in winding through a batch of moody, grey-day pop. It's an insinuating set, bordering on morose in places, but best on "When I'm Alone", which, with its choppy beat, staunch independence and magnetic melody, turns Brill Building-style songwriting convention upside down, "You Know I Won't", channeling Nancy Sinatra, and the creamy, atmospheric "See You In Dreams".

LUKE TORN



## ROEDELIOUS/SCHNEIDER

### Tiden

BUREAU B

More sci-fi lullabies from generation-spanning Krautrock duo

Two years after their first collaboration, *Stunden*, the

7/10

78-year-old Krautrock veteran Hans-Joachim Roedelius reunites with Stefan Schneider of ambi-tech texturalists Kreidler and To Rococo Rot for another pan-generational assemblage of agreeably soporific New Age lullabies. Though billed as a more focused affair, *Tiden* follows much the same formula of Satie-esque piano sketches nestled in softly lapping rhythms, muted electro shadings and vaguely lysergic drones. Stand-outs include "Umstunden", a canopy of melody that conceals a scuttling menagerie of digital noises, and "Toast", an ambient confection that unravels into electronic twinkles and jittery tropical percussion.

STEPHEN DALTON



# ALELA DIANE

## About Farewell

BELIEVE

Diane gives away a lot more with a lot less, says *Andrew Mueller*



7/10

THE WORLD, ONE might reasonably observe, is not presently parched by shortages of either ruminative heartbreak ballads or acoustic troubadours from the Pacific northwest. In parts of that region, indeed, such creatures are thicker on the

ground than the buffalo before the white man came, grazing in vast gingham-clad herds, their whimsical lo-fi lowing audible for miles.

*About Farewell*, Alela Diane's fourth album, might therefore seem an unenthalling prospect. It is, unmistakably and unabashedly, a collection of introspective love-gone-wrong laments, composed in the choppy wake of divorce; the titles which weep from the sleeve include "The Way We Fall", "Nothing I Can Do", "I Thought I Knew" and "Before The Leaving". And Alela Diane is, unmistakably and unabashedly, a quirky singer-songwriter from Portland: she personally drew and sewed the sleeves of her first self-released albums, is generally photographed in impeccable vintage apparel, is by her own admission given to hobbies including "collecting old things to arrange in the house" and "making soup", and dwells in Oregon's hipster Jerusalem with a cat named Bramble Rose.

In such circumstances, the sensible reaction is generally to gather some perishing vegetables and limber up the throwing arm, but *About Farewell* swiftly neutralises and overwhelms scepticism. It helps that Diane is a proper singer, as opposed to a twee warbler – though this will not be news to owners of her previous works, which demonstrate a voice as easy with Gillian Welch-ish croons as it is with Sandy Denny-esque trills.

It helps more that Diane relates and arranges these confessionals with a commendably light, cool touch. While heartbreak can indeed inspire great art, it is also a peculiarly personal calamity, one which will never be half as interesting to the world as it is to you, not that you'll realise this at the time. There's a distance, even a diffidence, about these songs – which, rather counter-intuitively, makes them all the more gripping.

The exemplary generosity with which the departing paramour is waved off in the title track is characteristic: "I heard somebody say/That the brightest lights cast the biggest shadows/So honey, I've got to let you go." The music behind this leave-taking is also emblematic. "About Farewell" is – this observation applies to both song and album – as pretty and brittle as sculpted icing, a confection of gentle guitar arpeggios and mourning flutes representing a substantial scaling down from the more orthodox backing band she fielded on her previous outing, 2011's *Alela Diane & Wild Devine*. The approach suits her, and it suits these songs, which remain understated even when ambitious. The five-minute/two-movement "The Way We Fall" segues unobtrusively from Suzanne Vega-ish deadpan observation to a country-folk ballad which

would not disgrace any given Emmylou Harris album. "Nothing I Can Do" is a terse, unsentimental rebuke to the folly of attempting to save someone from themselves. "I Thought I Knew" is nonetheless a highlight for its brevity, the tune swooping gracefully across a backdrop of sobbing strings, the words a bleakly amusing summary of the struggle between optimism and experience: "I took to the sky/With that knowing, sinking feeling".

Diane's judgement is not altogether infallible. "Hazel Street" feels rather less than it might have

### SLEEVE NOTES

**Recorded at:** Flora Recording, Portland and Playback, Portland  
**Produced by:**

John Askew  
**Personnel:** Alela Diane (vocals, guitar), Heather Woods Broderick (flute, keyboards), Ben Landsverk (viola), Kelly Christ (viola, violin), Galen Cohen (cello), Holcombe Waller (string arrangements)

been, the melody keeping her voice on too short a leash, swerving away only briefly when there might have been an opportunity for a soaring middle-eight. Closing track, "Rose & Thorn" is a disappointingly ineffectual conclusion, limply thrashing what must be the most overused metaphor

in the lexicon of romantic vexation. But these mis-steps are so jarring largely because they're so unusual. *About Farewell* is a gentle, rueful, often beautiful record. She should get divorced more often.

## Q&A

*Alela Diane*

**Why pare the sound back so far?** It was very circumstantial. I made the record going through a divorce, and my ex-husband was in my band. I didn't want to share the process of making the record with everyone we'd been touring with.

**How nervous were you about revealing so much about something so personal?** I wrote most of it before I left my husband, hiding in a corner of our house singing these songs, praying he couldn't hear. It was like the lyrics were telling me my own truth about how I was feeling – like the songs were telling me I needed to get a divorce. They were part of the process of realising I had to leave.

**Has your ex-husband heard it?** He has. But only very recently. We've managed to remain friends. He said it was hard to hear, but he was proud of me. He's in a country band in Portland, called Denver, and a lot of theirs are about me. You can hear it in his songs; clearly he wanted out, as well.

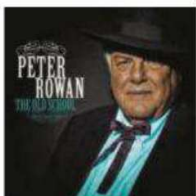
**You should do a duets album. There's a vacancy, now that George has gone to join Tammy.** We discussed a double-A-side. I think we were joking.

**Did you find making the album cathartic?** Definitely. Some people might not believe the songs are as autobiographical as they are. You have to let go, let the stories be what they're gonna be for people to gather what they will. But when I sing them, they still hurt.

INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER







## PETER ROWAN The Old School

COMPASS

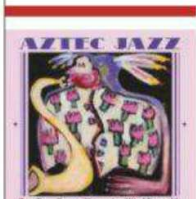
**All-star ensemble back up a bluegrass legend**

As a member of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys, and early '70s

**7/10**

supergroup Muleskinner (with the late Clarence White of The Byrds), Rowan is a veteran of both old and new school bluegrass. At 70, he's certainly been around long enough to see his generation's innovations absorbed into the tradition. Here, he gathers an impressive cast of players from both sides of the fence. Del McCoury adds wiry tenor to "That's All She Wrote", and the hard-working ethic of Monroe's generation is alluded to in the opening "Keepin' It Between The Lines". "Pick it clean, play it true," Rowan implores. They did; he does.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## TOM RUSSELL Aztec Jazz

PROPER

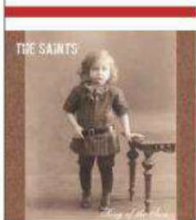
**Architect of Americana revisits copious back catalogue – with an added horn section**

**7/10**

Recorded in concert in Halden, Norway in

May 2012, Russell and his gruff poetic visions share the stage with guitarist Thad Beckman and the 32-piece Norwegian Wind Ensemble. The resetting doesn't engender a wholesale transformation – the orchestra enriches the material rather than transforms it – but the oboes, trumpets, saxophones, French horns and trombones provide a vibrant backdrop for some of Russell's greatest songs: "Nina Simone" has rarely sounded better, "Goodnight, Juarez" gets a full-blown Mariachi treatment and the ensemble kick up a real fuss on "East Of Woodstock, West Of Vietnam".

GRAEME THOMSON



## THE SAINTS King Of The Sun

HIGHWAY 125

**Australian avatars of post-punk march back in**

**7/10**

Co-founder Chris Bailey recently forsook The Saints for rhythm section

duties with the French band H-Burns. This first album in seven years suggests that the distraction did him good. Bailey sounds regenerated, leading the new-look trio through a persuasive set of folk-blues songs that draw power from the emotive heft of his steely voice. Particularly worthy are the Napoleon-referencing title track and psych-leaning epic, "Mini Mantra Part 1", whose burning guitar is a throwback to The Saints of punk legend. A bonus disc of reworked oldies includes "Just Like Fire Would", a song that was recently covered by Bruce Springsteen on his Wrecking Ball Tour.

ROB HUGHES



## GREGOR SCHWELLENBACH

**Gregor Schwellenbach Spielt 20 Jahre Kompakt**

KOMPAKT

**7/10**

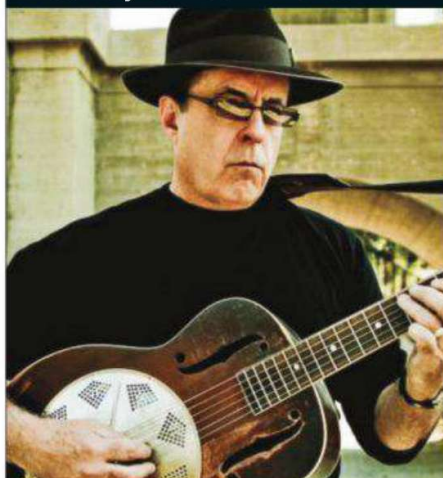
**Influential Cologne electro label celebrates**

With projects like its Pop Ambient comps and Wolfgang Voigt's Gas, Kompakt have regularly strayed from their minimal house and techno blueprint. Reflecting this, composer Schwellenbach's 20th-birthday gift rearranges 20 of the label's highlights in a neo-classical style. Co-founder Jürgen Paape's "Triumph" is transformed into a treated piano banger, while Kaito's "Everlasting" is given a Steve Reich Six Marimbas makeover. Elsewhere, the likes of Mayer/Voigt's "Unter Null" receive more formal solo arrangements that recall recent Nils Frahm. Though hardly essential, this is still an imaginative tribute.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

## REVELATIONS

**Tom Russell, architect of that "dumbly termed" Americana**



➤ "I've had this odd career, it's been building very slowly," says Tom Russell, who alongside Dave Alvin is often cited as one of the progenitors of Americana. Not that he'll thank you for pointing it out. "It's a dumb term," he says. "It's kinda bullshit, a grab bag where they throw people who don't fit anywhere else." Instead, Russell prefers to be "outside of any box". A musician, painter and novelist, he's been making "cowboy records, songwriter records, concept records" since the mid-'70s, his work covered by the likes of Johnny Cash and kd lang. Lately he's been on a roll. His last two records, *Blood And Candle Smoke* and *Mesabi*, both featuring Calexico, stemmed from his relocation to El Paso, where he writes "border-type songs" about the Spanish West and the Mexican drug wars. *Aztec Jazz* accentuates this smoky flavour with the help of the Norwegian Wind Ensemble. The results are "a new form", he says. "A rootsy singer-songwriter, hardcore songs, and horns at the back. It works. I hear Morricone, *Sketches Of Spain*, mariachi. It makes the songs bigger, but doesn't impede them." He coughs out a laugh. "Hell, I just did my usual thing and it came out so good, it sounded like a record."

GRAEME THOMSON



## SCOTT & CHARLENE'S WEDDING

**Any Port In A Storm**

FIRE

**7/10**

**Aussie slacker drawls on the mean streets of New York**

Since recording (recently re-released) debut *Para Vista Social Club* two years ago, Craig Dermody – who plays as Scott & Charlene's Wedding – has relocated to New York. That city provides not just the narrative but also much of the atmosphere for *Any Port In A Storm*, with its natural hustle skewing the native Aussie's careworn approach. Dermody is a master of the literate drawl and on tracks like "Lesbian Wife", the poppy "Jackie Boy" and the wonderfully morose "Spring St", he combines a fondness for Lou Reed-style New York street theatre with anti-folk and '80s out-of-tune jangle to scintillating effect.

PETER WATTS



## NADINE SHAH Love Your Dum And Mad

APOLLO

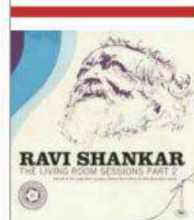
**Tyne & Wear troubadour's striking debut**

**8/10**

It opens with the compelling and forcefully

dramatic "Aching Bones", all iron foundry clanging, furiously strummed guitar and doomy, single-picked piano notes, Shah's muscular voice providing the charge. She's showed her talent for crafting darkly glittering songs of personal foreboding, yet with a high hook-count, via two EPs, but this full set of curdled jazz-blues should make Shah an underground star. PJ Harvey, Shara Worden and Pinkie Maclure are clearly kindred spirits, but there's something dangerous in play, too, à la Marianne Faithfull or Diamanda Galás. Subtle electronics and the creation of desolate, 3-D spaces is the icing on a seductively ruined cake.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## RAVI SHANKAR The Living Room Sessions Part 2

EAST MEETS WEST

**Final offering from sitar colossus**

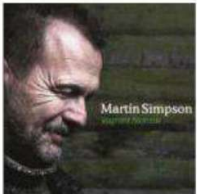
The 2012 Grammy Award bestowed on Part 1 of *The Living Room*

**8/10**

*Sessions* (for Best World Album) was surely honouring Shankar's lifetime achievements as much as the record itself. Recorded at his Californian home, neither it nor this sequel has the dazzle of his earlier work. Yet the three mid-tempo ragas included here have an understated beauty, with Shankar picking and sustaining his notes like an old bluesman (he was 91 at the time of recording). Indeed, through much of "Sindi Bhairavi", Shankar obsesses over a handful of notes in a distinctly funky style at times reminiscent of John Lee Hooker or Miles Davis. A wonderful exit.

NEIL SPENCER





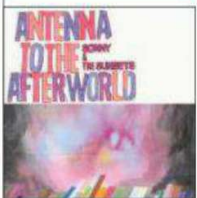
**MARTIN SIMPSON**  
**Vagrant Stanzas**  
TOPIC

Classy, intimate solo mix from the folk veteran

**8/10**

Martin Simpson went into the studio with the imperative of his friend Richard Hawley in his ears: 'Remember the kitchen table!' He did – the 14 tracks here capture the intimacy of a home session, yet are both exquisitely played and delivered. Simpson draws on all his years for the repertoire, as at home playing a banjo version of a Child Ballad ("Lady Gay") as resurrecting Dylan's "North Country Blues" and Cohen's "The Stranger Song". There are a couple of new songs included too, one celebrating an overlooked WW1 hero, the other about a US roadtrip, plus four lovely instrumentals.

NEIL SPENCER



**SONNY & THE SUNSETS**  
**Antenna To The Afterworld**  
POLYVINYL

Art-pop with more smart ideas than great tunes

**7/10**

One of several musical projects fronted by the prolific San Francisco-based author and artist Sonny Smith, the Sunsets play an engagingly scruffy kind of garage rock, as evidenced by the artfully sloppy jangle-pop cover of Lennon's "Imagine" they released on Record Store Day in April. Smith's songwriting here encompasses Jonathan Richman-style comic whimsy in the nostalgic adolescent memoir "Natural Acts" and Springsteen-esque Americana in the gruff-voiced "Girl On The Street", but mostly he favours psychedelic indie-rock peppered with trippy effects and goofy boy-girl conversations. While the ideas are sometimes thin, the delivery is invariably wry and charming.

STEPHEN DALTON



**THE SUDDEN DEATH OF STARS**  
**Getting Up, Going Down**  
AMPLE PLAY

French sitarists with 1960s hooks

**7/10**

Ample Play hosts, Cornershop, were attracted to this six-piece from Brittany by the sitar playing on "Supernovae", the droning, melodic anthem which opens their debut album. They would surely have noticed a debt to The Velvet Underground too (the tambourine), and detected a fondness for le shoegaze and les rythmiques répétitives. The group offer scant biographical information (they were known by numbers, not names, for a while), but the music unfurls slowly to reveal broader influences. "Free & Easy" is like Bryan Ferry singing The Byrds' "I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better", while "Song For Laika" takes the sitar on a gloriously pastoral astral trip.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



**SWIM DEEP**  
**Where The Heaven Are We**  
CHESS CLUB/RCA

Pals of Peace continue Midlands goldrush

**7/10**

In the past few months, Birmingham has found itself an indie goldrush town, with first Peace and now pals Swim Deep being signed to major labels. Fans of this band's hooky take on 1990s indie pop (at times they sound like James or the pre-dance Farm) can rest easy – their callowness remains intact. This is still very much a young band's album. It begins with an unnecessary intro, ends with Eno-esque dithering, and Austin Williams' vocals on songs like "Make My Sun Shine" underline the floppiness of the composition. When they get into their stride on "King City" and "Honey", however, they display an exuberant charm that's thrashy and infectious.

JOHN ROBINSON



**TEHO TEARDO AND BLIXA BARGELD**  
**Still Smiling**  
SPECULA

Italian composer orchestrates for the former Bad Seed

**7/10**

Nick Cave once described Blixa Bargeld's voice as "a sound you would expect to hear from strangled cats or dying children". High praise, of course, coming from Cave – but it should be noted that Bargeld's voice has weathered nicely over the years, his husky chansons as scarred and pitted as old wood. Two years in the making, *Still Smiling* sees Bargeld backed by electronic beats and a string quartet. He's in whimsical mood, Mae West-flirtatious on "Come Up And See Me" and booming that "I'm smiling/From the bottom of my fair-trade soul" on the title track. Meanwhile, a delicate cover of The Tiger Lillies' "Alone With The Moon" is dispatched with a rich sonority.

LOUIS PATTISON



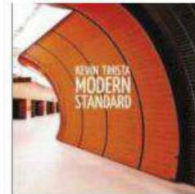
**THE LEE THOMPSON SKA ORCHESTRA**  
**The Benevolence Of Sister Mary Ignatius**  
AXE ATTACK

Madness sax man's heartfelt tributes

**8/10**

The ska records that inspired the young Madness play an even more prominent role in Thompson's bouncy and vibrant labour of love, with his day job's bassist bandmate Mark Bedford and sundry session pals along for the ride. The aim was to recreate the crucial vibes of Jamaica's Studio One in the '60s and '70s, and Lee nigh on scores a bullseye, with effervescent takes on tracks he first heard via Desmond Dekker, Byron Lee and John Holt. King Curtis' "Soul Serenade" sparkles in its ska makeover, as does the Allman Brothers' "Midnight Rider" and Dekker's "Fu Man Chu", the latter with lively guest vocals from Bitty McLean.

TERRY STAUNTON



**KEVIN TIHISTA**  
**Modern Standard**  
BROKEN HORSE

The 21st-Century Elton, with gags

**7/10**

On first listen, you could be forgiven for thinking this the work of some obscure early '70s singer-songwriter – these are brilliantly crafted songs, all Jackson Browne piano, Brian May guitar and heavenly harmonies. But Chicago-based Tihista, an amusingly miserable, self-declared failure, injects a pitch-black, *Flight Of The Conchords*-ish comedy that suggests these pastiches need to be cloaked in irony. "I wanna take my wife to the opera/My mistress to a rock'n'roll show", he says on the swinging "The City", while "Try The Veal" outlines a compromising sexual trise between the narrator and his landlady. Silly but compelling.

JOHN LEWIS



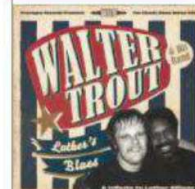
**THUNDERCAT**  
**Apocalypse**  
BRAINFEEDER

Flying Lotus protégé blends razzle-dazzle jazztronica with flimsy whimsy

**7/10**

Between bass-playing gigs for a notable gallery of famous friends, including Erykah Badu and Snoop Dogg, Stephen "Thundercat" Bruner launched his debut solo album, *The Golden Age Of Apocalypse*, in 2011. With a confusingly similar title, this sequel is again produced by Bruner's label boss Flying Lotus and again combines silky-falsetto R&B with psychedelic fusion-jazz and cosmic electronica. At its best, as on "Tron Song" and "Heartbreaks & Setbacks", this album sounds like a laptop Prince jamming with Brian Wilson. But the knotty, punky, Squarepusher-style edges of its predecessor have been smoothed down, with a little too much perfumed whimsy in the mix.

STEPHEN DALTON



**WALTER TROUT**  
**Luther's Blues: A Tribute To Luther Allison**  
PROVOGUE

Former Canned Heat guitarist tips his hat to an idol

**7/10**

Luther Allison, who died in 1997 aged 57, was the blues guitarist's blues guitarist, despite an eccentric career trajectory: an apprentice of Muddy Waters and Elmore James, and one-time sideman to Howlin' Wolf, he was also at one point signed as a solo artist by Motown – reportedly the first blues artist on the label – and spent much of his life living in France. Walter Trout's homage is straightforward and affectionate, but certainly meets the challenge of doing justice to Allison's sumptuous solos: the version of "Cherry Red Wine" is especially stirring.

ANDREW MUELLER



## STEVE GUNN

### 'Time Off'

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

Slithery guitar from the Fahey school, with added architecture.

By Alastair McKay



8/10

OVER THE PAST 15 years, Steve Gunn has established a reputation as a fine guitarist in the vein of American primitives such as John Fahey, exploring folk stylings with an added dusting of jazz, minimalism and raga. Google, and you'll probably find

him listed as a player in Kurt Vile's band. Go deeper, and he'll be referenced as an improvisational, blues-based player. The word "deconstruction" may appear, which is always worrying.

Gunn, it's true, is an exploratory guitarist. His style is restless, even when it is soothing (it is often soothing). It is dynamic, even when it is walking in circles, and many of his tunes are Olympian in their pursuit of circularity. "Trailways Ramble", for instance, orbits relentlessly, with only slight variation, until the entrance of a scratchy cello after three minutes. "Water Wheel", as you'd expect, keeps on turning. Repetition? He digs repetition.

At his best, Gunn is understated, an attitude which could also be applied to his career. Many of his records have been (very) limited editions of 500 or less. His 2009 album, *Too Early For The Hammer*, was restricted to 378 copies. The LP pressing of 2009's *Boerum Palace* was capped at 823 copies (though Three Lobed Records have just thrown caution to the breeze and re-pressed another 500 on purple vinyl). His recent Record Store Day collaboration with Hiss Golden Messenger (as Golden Gunn) ran to an extravagant 995 copies, and is recommended as a playful entry point to the music of both Gunn and HGM, though it doesn't sound quite like either.

But *'Time Off'* does mark a progression of sorts. It shows that Gunn has recalibrated slightly, focusing his energies on songcraft, where previously he appeared to be more interested in improvisation, and continually fanning the creative spark. He is also exploring the dynamics of a group, though his regular collaborators, drummer John Truscinski and bassist Justin Tripp, know enough to leave the guitar audible.

Gunn lists Phil Spector as an influence, but don't expect lacquered harmonies and a wall of sound. The Philadelphia-raised, New York-based guitarist's trademarks are precision and restraint. He doesn't do riffs, exactly. He has a balmy, effortless voice, and his tunes unfurl like bales of wire rolling down country roads.

JJ Cale is an obvious comparison, as is the atmosphere of Bert Jansch's (slightly) countrified 1974 album, *LA Turnaround*. Michael Chapman's first three albums are an acknowledged inspiration. Maybe there is a hint of John Cale's corner of The Velvet Underground in the seasoning of a song such as "Old Strange", but the vocals are closer to one of Paul Weller's more bucolic moments. The song itself is a rumination on death, and a tribute to Jack Rose,



#### SLEEVE NOTES

**Recorded at:** Black Dirt Studio, Westtown, New York

**Produced by:** Jason Meagher

**Personnel:** Steve Gunn (guitar, vocals), John Truscinski (drums), Justin Tripp (bass), Helena Espvall (cello), Jason Meagher (flute), Tyson Lewis (piano)

the late Pelt guitarist, whose solo work blazed a similarly eclectic trail. (Gunn recorded the song previously with the Black Twig Pickers, and it's interesting to compare the two versions. With the Twigs, the song was thick with smoke of a hillbilly campfire; here, it's mournful and pained.)

And then there is "Lurker". Previously released as "The Lurker Extended" on a whole side of *Not The Spaces You Know, But Between Them*, Three Lobed's 10th anniversary boxset (2011), it was a gorgeous, meandering tune, all wire and sunlight, dedicated to the "street lurkers" of Brooklyn's Boerum Hill. Here, it's trimmed to a mere eight

minutes of graceful slitheriness from the Fahey school. At first, the mathematical precision of the song seems to work against it; even the production seems to favour the geometry of the tune, rather than

the soulful guitar, buried somewhere in the left channel. But after a time, it starts to click. And click. And click.

Yes, *'Time Off'* is a technical record. Generically, it's improbable: progressive folk, with psychedelic swirls, delivered with so much confidence that it sounds like dispassion. At times, it's like an architectural drawing. But the repetitions soothe and tease, and then you start to hear the leaves.

## Q&A

Steve Gunn

#### How was it playing with Kurt Vile?

Kurt and I come from the same small town, a suburb outside of Philadelphia. I've been a fan of his music and we have a lot of mutual friends. He heard *'Time Off'* and extended the invitation of me being the opener for his first gigs supporting his new album. We hit it off and he asked me if I wanted to sit in with his band. Of course I was up for that.

#### What was the idea for the album?

It's a culmination of everything I've been gathering over the past 10 years or so. It's pulling from all

directions. I've been concentrating on songwriting, but the musicians are old friends and have played with me in different projects. It all came together when I presented these songs. The other stuff I do - instrumental guitar work and avant-garde improv stuff - all of that had its role.

#### Is there a different aesthetic from your earlier work?

The album I made before was more a solo bedroom-style album. I wanted to get away from that and flesh the songs out, but not in a rock or indie-rock way. Not many people are attempting that these days. The three of us in this band are appreciators and record collectors. We wanted to make an album we would want to listen to.

INTERVIEW: ALASTAIR MCKAY





**TRUTH & SALVAGE CO.**  
**Pick Me Up**  
MEGAFORCE

**8/10**

LA-born, Nashville-based neoclassicists throw out the playbook Truth & Salvage Co. defy expectations on their second album, as opener "The Bad Times" builds toward a big harmonised payoff that never happens – the song closes with a lone, hushed voice. Eschewing perceived hipness, they flirt with mock-tropicalia on "Islands", un-ironically cover Joe South's "Games People Play" and adopt the glossy production values of modern-day Nashville on retro country rockers like "Silver Lining". What's more, four of the members take turns singing, relying on shit-kicking exuberance rather than a distinct vocal identity. This approach results in an infectious, self-assured LP from a refreshingly free-spirited band.

BUD SCOPPA

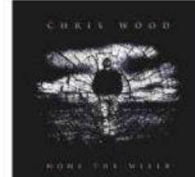


**WAXAHATCHEE**  
**Cerulean Salt**  
WICHITA

**7/10**

Alabama gal's stronger, fuller second Self-conscious confessionalism is now a too familiar element of the singer-songwriter's craft, but Katie Crutchfield diarises so directly and simply that you take her honesty as a given. She arrives on the back of success at this year's SXSW festival with her second LP, which sees her plugging in her guitar, leaning on a fuzz pedal and adding extra players (sister included) to round out her intimate songs. The effervescent punk-pop of The Breeders is a touchstone, as is Kimya Dawson's ramshackle honesty, but "Lips And Limbs" affects a subtle country twang, while on the terrific "Blue Pt. II", skeletal acoustics and frank lyrics ("we wake up sober two weeks later") document a stagnating love affair.

SHARON O'CONNELL



**CHRIS WOOD**  
**None The Wiser**  
R.U.F.

**6/10**

Abrasive home counties folkie edges into 'estuary soul' Chris Wood can be relied on for tart social comment, and the title track of his fourth album, gathered from observations on a 50-date British tour, is an uncomfortable snapshot of the nation, while "The Sweetness Game" contrasts personal love with "all the suits, all the ties, all the Old Etonian lies". Elsewhere he's doleful rather than wry, with William Blake's "Jerusalem" delivered as a dirge, and John Clare's "I Am" suitably dejected. A move into electric guitar, Hammond organ and bass brings mixed results, atmospheric on "A Whole Life Lived", overbearing on the bilious "Thou Shalt".

NEIL SPENCER



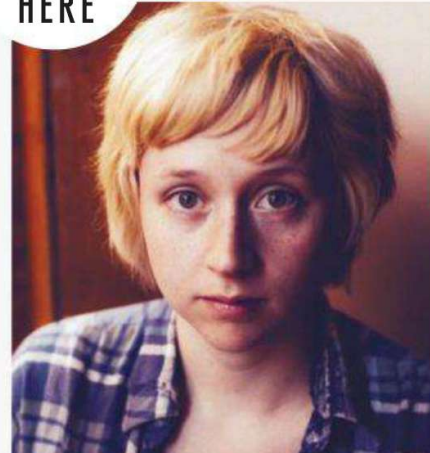
**JOZEF VAN WISSEM**  
**Nihil Obstat**  
IMPORTANT

**8/10**

Graceful longform works by maverick Dutch lutist Active since 2000, Jozef Van Wissem has built up an estimable body of work, running to a dozen solo LPs and collaborations with everyone from experimental guitarist Gary Lucas to the director Jim Jarmusch. No country-fayre traditionalist, Van Wissem defies the hey-nony connotations of his instrument in favour of a hypnotic, circular style, drawing lines between baroque music and the classical minimalists; Reich, Glass, etc. *Nihil Obstat* (Latin for 'nothing hinders') is built around a core of patient, meticulous repetitions, but careful structuring and an ear for elegant melody imbue "Apology" and the 11-minute "Where You Lived And What You Lived For" with a sense of emotional resolution.

LOUIS PATTISON

**WE'RE NEW HERE**  
**Waxahatchee**



Katie Crutchfield started writing songs when she was still at grade school and she's a touring veteran at just 24, having co-anchored The Ackleys, PS Eliot and Bad Banana with her twin sister, Allison. Sis isn't a full member of Waxahatchee, so drumming boyfriend Keith Spencer helped flesh out her songs in the original recording of *Cerulean Salt*. Yes, it was re-recorded. "The plan was originally for it to be crunchy and lo-fi," the singer-songwriter/guitarist says, "but it didn't translate the way we wanted it to, so we decided to re-record it, making it sound bigger and cleaner. I've made impulsive decisions about putting out records in the past and I didn't want to release it unless it was just right." As to its themes, "it's all about recalling your childhood, and realising that it's over. Most of my previous songs have been centred on relationships, but I wanted to branch out from that."

Is the name Waxahatchee a means to this differently creative end? "It's the name of a creek in Alabama that I used to go to. There's no cell-phone service there, which makes it a good place to work on creative projects. I feel like every band I've ever had, I've ended up hating the name after about a year. But I don't completely hate Waxahatchee yet. Although, one of my roommates calls me 'Wax' and I hate that!"

SHARON O'CONNELL

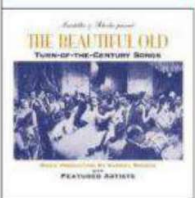


**JAMES YOUNGER**  
**Feelin' American**  
LIGHT ORGAN

**6/10**

English songwriter with American ambitions James Younger was born in Manchester, but clearly wishes he wasn't. His debut album of polished '80s radio-friendly pop-rock is the most pronounced identification of an Englishman's desire to be born American since Tony Blair started hanging out at George Bush's ranch. Although there are traces of The Strokes ("Running Wild", "Simple Things"), Modern Lovers ("We Are Lovers") and Eagles ("Never Easy", "Do It Again") in his clean, melodic, yearning sound, Younger also shows an understandable fondness for Springsteen's top-down anthems with the likes of "Two Of A Kind" and the rollicking anthem "Here & Gone".

PETER WATTS



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**The Beautiful Old**  
DOUBLOON

**6/10**

Edwardian parlour hits tenderly resurrected by Austin producer and guests Forget back-to-analogue, here we're whisked back to the era when sheet music ruled. Austin producer Gabriel Rhodes oversees a cast that includes Richard Thompson, and Christine Collister, the backings for its winsome waltzes and wistful ballads cleaving to period instrumentation with rippling piano (usually by The Band's Garth Hudson) at its centre. Thompson's "The Band Played On" (1895) is a stand-out, but lesser names like Heidi Talbot and Simone Stevens are more authentic, while Dave Davies' "After The Ball" (1892) and Graham Parker's "The Flying Trapeze" (1867) supply cockney music-hall squawks.

NEIL SPENCER



**ZOMBY**  
**With Love**  
4AD

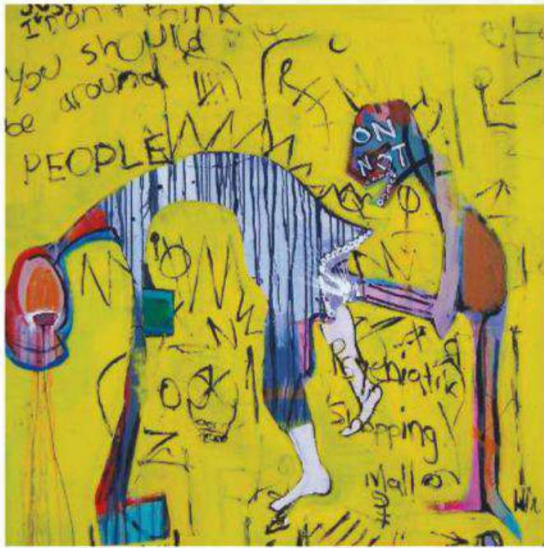
**4/10**

Melancholic, mask-wearing producer underwhelms on fourth LP Zomby's latest album is a big canvas painted with a series of miniatures. Short-form explorations of jungle and grime music are theoretically interesting – communal dance culture recast as a personal scrapbook – but the execution is consistently weak. The melodies feel reluctant, like he had to fill up the space with something, so it might as well be this, and many are rap instrumentals desperately in search of a rapper. It's the kind of thing that tens of producers sling up for free on DatPiff every day, but only Zomby has the hubris to turn them into a lavish double album.

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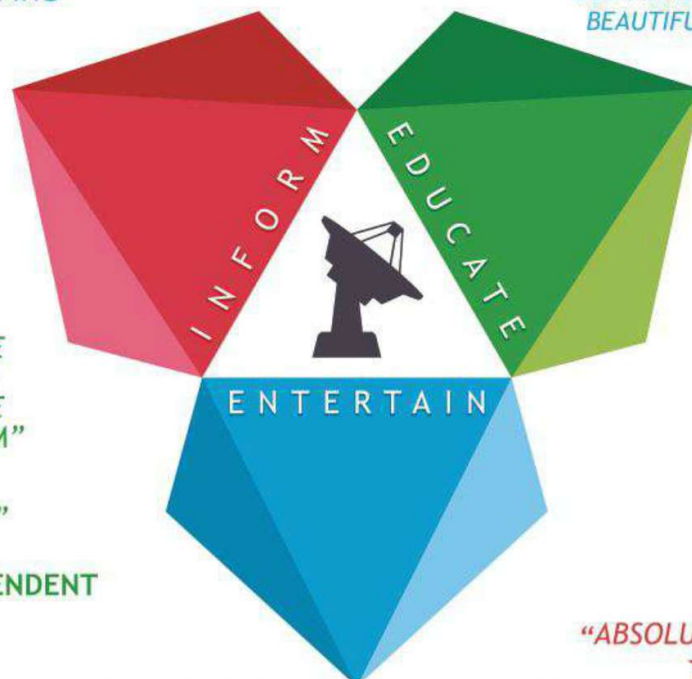
★★★★★  
MOJO

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SENSATIONALLY  
BRILLIANT”  
BBC 6MUSIC

“AN EXTRAORDINARY  
DEBUT... PSB MAY WELL BE  
THE UK'S BEST NEW BAND.  
YOUR 2013 JUST WON'T BE  
COMPLETE WITHOUT THEM”  
8.5/10 THE 405

“A SAMPLADELIC DELIGHT”  
★★★★★  
SIMON PRICE, THE INDEPENDENT

★★★★★  
DAILY EXPRESS



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★★★★★  
THE GUARDIAN  
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GQ

“BRILLIANT”  
Q MAGAZINE

“A TRULY EXCITING,  
ORIGINAL AND  
INNOVATIVE BAND”  
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## TRACKLIST

### DISC ONE

- 1 These Arms Of Mine
- 2 Hey Hey Baby
- 3 That's What My Heart Needs
- 4 Mary's Little Lamb
- 5 Pain In My Heart
- 6 Something Is Worrying Me
- 7 Come To Me
- 8 Don't Leave Me This Way
- 9 Security
- 10 I Want To Thank You
- 11 Chained And Bound
- 12 Your One And Only Man
- 13 That's How Strong My Love Is
- 14 Mr Pitiful
- 15 I've Been Loving You Too Long (To Stop Now)
- 16 I'm Depending On You
- 17 Respect
- 18 Ole Man Trouble
- 19 I Can't Turn You Loose
- 20 Just One More Day
- 21 Satisfaction
- 22 Any Ole Way
- 23 My Lover's Prayer
- 24 Don't Mess With Cupid

## OTIS REDDING

### The Complete Stax/Volt Singles Collection

SHOUT! FACTORY

The soul legend's stunning career charted through his ever-evolving 45s. *By Richard Williams*

**9/10** WITH HIS SWEAT-stained sharkskin suits and his tireless cries of "gotta-gotta" and "sock it to me", Otis Redding became a stereotype, even a caricature, almost as quickly as he became famous. He was The Soul Singer: a template for all those Geno Washingtons who reduced his approach to a set of mannerisms. That's the debit side, and it's easily overshadowed by the contents of these three discs, which contain the A- and B-sides of every single released by the Stax family of labels during his lifetime and in the aftermath of his death. Together they present all the testimony anyone might need to demolish a belief that Redding was superior to his imitators only by a matter of degree – as well as some of the evidence for the prosecution.

Redding was born in Dawson, Georgia in 1941. While a schoolboy he sang in doo-wop groups and

acquired a rudimentary ability on drums, piano and guitar before joining the Pinetoppers, a band led by the guitarist Johnny Jenkins, as the lead singer. By the time he cut his first sides in Memphis for Stax's Volt subsidiary in 1962 he had already made his first recordings, for the small Finer Arts and Alshire labels during a trip to Los Angeles (where he washed cars to keep body and soul together) in 1960 and for Confederate in Macon the following year.

His Stax/Volt debut, in October 1962, was with "These Arms Of Mine", cut in the time left over at the end of an unsuccessful Jenkins session. His own composition, it was a model for the kind of country-soul ballad that would become the staple diet of Southern soul singers for the remainder of the decade. Otis' unaccompanied voice starts it off, quickly joined by doo-wop-ish piano triplets (almost certainly played by Booker T





Otis Redding in the control room of FAME Studio A, with owner Rick Hall in the mid '60s

## TRACKLIST (Continued)

### DISC TWO

- 1 Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)
- 2 Good To Me
- 3 Try A Little Tenderness
- 4 I'm Sick Y'All
- 5 I Love You More Than Words Can Say
- 6 Let Me Come On Home
- 7 Tramp - Otis & Carla
- 8 Tell It Like It Is - Otis & Carla
- 9 Shake (Live)
- 10 You Don't Miss Your Water
- 11 Glory Of Love
- 12 I'm Coming Home
- 13 Knock On Wood - Otis & Carla
- 14 Let Me Be Good To You - Otis & Carla
- 15 (Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay
- 16 Sweet Lorene
- 17 Lovely Dovey - Otis & Carla
- 18 New Year's Resolution - Otis & Carla
- 19 The Happy Song (Dum-Dum)
- 20 Open The Door
- 21 Amen
- 22 Hard To Handle
- 23 I've Got Dreams To Remember
- 24 Nobody's Fault But Mine

### DISC THREE

- 1 White Christmas
- 2 Merry Christmas, Baby
- 3 Papa's Got A Brand New Bag (Live)
- 4 Direct Me
- 5 A Lover's Question
- 6 You Made A Man Out Of Me
- 7 When Something Is Wrong With My Baby - Otis & Carla
- 8 Ooh Carla, Ooh Otis - Otis & Carla
- 9 Love Man
- 10 Can't Turn You Loose
- 11 Free Me
- 12 (Your Love Has Lifted Me) Higher & Higher
- 13 Look At The Girl
- 14 That's A Good Idea
- 15 Demonstration
- 16 Johnny's Heartbreak
- 17 Give Away None Of My Love
- 18 Snatch A Little Piece
- 19 I've Been Loving You Too Long (Live)
- 20 Try A Little Tenderness (Live)
- 21 My Girl
- 22 Good To Me

Jones), Johnny Jenkins' guitar and the MG's rhythm team of bassist Lewis Steinberg and drummer Al Jackson Jr. So basic that it could have been recorded as a demo, it is distinguished by the restrained passion of Otis' vocal performance and by the way the inherent rawness of his voice adds impact to the pleading of his delivery. The hint of emotional abandon on the fadeout provides a pre-echo of the never-ending crescendos to come.

It scraped into the R'n'B Top 20 and the pop Hot 100, which for a little independent label represented a sign of hope. His next three A-sides - "That's What My Heart Needs", "Pain In My Heart" and "Come To Me" - were from much the same mould. "Pain In My Heart", written by Allen Toussaint, was the biggest success, gaining the accolade of a cover version on The Rolling Stones' second album.

Not until the release of the fourth single, "Security", in April 1964, was Redding's voice surrounded by the mature Stax sound, featuring the grainy Memphis Horns and Steve Cropper's bluesy Fender Esquire in partnership with Duck Dunn's bass and Al Jackson's rat-tat-tat snare. His voice, too, was becoming more and more distinctive, his countryfied tone and diction offering an alternative to the urban sophistication of singers based in New York, Chicago and Detroit.

The single barely crawled into the Hot 100, and with the next release, "Chained And Bound", Otis returned to the formula of the early singles. But

"Security" had laid the foundations for the release that finally established his name in the public mind. A Roosevelt Jamison ballad titled "That's How Strong My Love Is" provided an early definition of deep soul and re-established him in the R'n'B charts, before the designated B-side, "Mr Pitiful", stormed the discotheques, becoming easily his biggest hit to that point. Here is the

Stax sound in its pomp: an opening horn fanfare, the chopping guitar, Dunn's riffing bass, and a title borrowed from the nickname bestowed on Redding by an admiring radio DJ.

"I've Been Loving You Too Long (To Stop Now)", jointly written by Otis and Jerry Butler, the former lead singer of The Impressions, dives even deeper into the

dark waters of Deep Soul, and performed even better. Again Otis begins alone, as he had done on "These Arms of Mine", before the arrangement rises and falls through a series of distraught climaxes before going out with the singer

whimpering over a blare of horns and Jackson's implacable snare.

Next came "Respect". Released in August 1965, this may be one of the most significant pop records ever made, even though its memory was largely eclipsed two years later by Aretha Franklin's remake. On the intro and the choruses Jackson uses his snare

drum to emphasise all four beats of the bar, rather than just stressing the traditional backbeat, thus giving birth to the even four-on-the-floor rhythm that powered

*"Respect" gave birth to the rhythm that powered Northern Soul, disco and dance music*





## HIDDEN TREASURES

## THE BEST OF THE B-SIDES

The cream of Otis' flip sides

## DON'T LEAVE ME THIS WAY

*B-side of "Come To Me"*

Recorded at Otis' first Stax session in 1962, but not released until 1964, this is a song co-written with his manager, Phil Walden, and distinguished by a fine guitar solo from his then-employer, Johnny Jenkins. "Play the blues," Otis shouts, and Jenkins responds. It was supposed to be his session, after all.

OLE MAN TROUBLE *B-side of "Respect"*

If there was a song before "Dock Of The Bay" in which Redding's true creative potential could be glimpsed, it was this anguished and beautifully constructed ballad, also included on *Otis Blue*, a near-perfect 1965 album and an instant favourite with mods up and down Britain.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS, BABY

*B-side of "White Christmas"*

Originally a hit in 1947 for Johnny Moore's Three Blazers, this song has been a perennial favourite with the classier sort of artist, from Berry to Elvis to Springsteen. Otis' version, released a year after his death, has a jaunty charm: "Santa came down the chimney/At half past three, y'awl..."

## GOOD TO ME

*B-side of "Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)"*

So slow that time seems to stand still and the world holds its breath, this one of the most affecting performances of Otis' entire career. On this glorious, self-written, blues ballad he avoids personal clichés and allows his fine control of tone and phrasing to match that of the horns and rhythm.

Northern Soul, disco and dance music all the way to Daft Punk.

With the next single, "I Can't Turn You Loose", Redding started to turn into the caricature of a soul-singing wind-up doll, a process accelerated by a cover of the Stones' "Satisfaction", where the tempo became more hectic and the delivery more frantic, every hole filled by a "gotta-gotta". This became Otis' onstage schtick, lapped up by soul fans who attended the Stax-Volt tour of Europe in 1967 and the hippies at the same year's Monterey Pop Festival. Among the songs he performed at Monterey was "Try A Little Tenderness", an elaborate arrangement of a 1930s standard that, in its studio-recorded 45rpm form, evolved from gospel-drenched soul ballad to arm-flailing stomper in three minutes and 20 seconds flat.

Then came the pop hits with Carla Thomas – remakes of "Tramp" and "Knock On Wood" – and, on December 10, 1967, the plane crash outside Madison, Wisconsin, that killed him and five others. And straight away, with an almost unbearable poignancy, came the introspective "(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay", a posthumous No 1 that presented a grieving world with a clue to the direction he might have taken, had he lived: a move away from the formulaic "Mr Pitiful" ballads and "Love Man" stompers towards a more varied, considered, sophisticated musical eloquence. Then again, in another posthumous hit from those final sessions, the gorgeous "I've Got Dreams To Remember", he suggested that there might still be life left in the old tricks.

**EXTRAS:** None.

## Q&amp;A

Zelma Redding recalls the first impressions of her husband: "He always knew he was going to be a great singer..."

**Z**ELMA AND OTIS Redding were married in August 1961, six months before Otis' first recording session at Stax. Still in their teens at the time of their wedding, they had first encountered each other two years earlier when Otis performed at a talent show in their hometown of Macon, Georgia. Having raised their three children, today Zelma still lives at the Big O Ranch, outside Macon, which they bought when Otis was approaching the height of his fame, and where she administers the children's educational foundation set up in his name.

**What was your first impression of Otis?**

Not a great one. We just had some words. I was 15, he was 17. But we got to know each other a couple of weeks later. We both lived on the west side of Macon.

**So your second impression was a little better?** Oh yeah. Much better. Not a problem at all.

**You were married when you were 17 and he was 19?** That's exactly right. When we got married we had to live with my granny. Then we got a little apartment, and in 1963 we bought our first home. We bought the ranch in 1965 and moved in a year later.

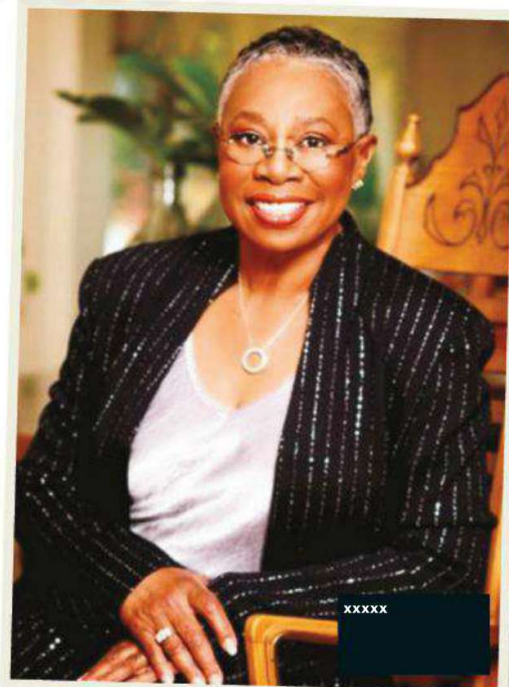
**Was he an ambitious young man?** Very ambitious, very confident of himself. Knew what he was going to do, knew how he was going to do it, and thank God he succeeded in doing, I would say, over 100 per cent of what he wanted to do. He always felt good about himself. He knew that he was going to be a great singer and he lived to prove that. He's still living it. He's just not visibly here.

**In the early days, did you have to work to support the young family?**

Oh yes. He was doing a little gigging, but not for a lot of money. I worked at a dry cleaner's and at a barbecue place. I did several jobs because he was doing what he wanted to do and I knew it was going to work, so you pull together.

**Did you spend much time in the studio with him?** I didn't go often, because of the kids, but when he thought that I was just tired of being home and he was on the road all time, he'd say, "You come to the studio with us." The kids and I were there when he recorded "Dock Of The Bay".

**Was the atmosphere at Stax exciting?** They were coming out with something that they thought was going to be the hit sound of the time and that's what you saw in those guys. It was so



different to how it is today. There was so much love and respect. It was a family environment.

**What did he tell you about his two visits to Britain?** He was really excited about it.

The audience was mixed, better than the audiences in the States – you had the black kids and the white kids over there, and they had so much love and respect for him. He felt good about it, and he knew that it was always going to be one of his major markets. And it still is today.

**We loved those silk mohair suits he wore on stage. Where he did get them?** He had a tailor in Texas that made his clothes. As far as I can remember his name was Johnny Burton. I think he was in Dallas. Great clothes.

**Unlike most artists of his era, he obviously thought about the business side of music.**

That was his dream, to take control of his destiny – to own his publishing company, to have his own recording studio and label. He was already discovering artists, like he did Arthur Conley. We can't say where Otis Redding would be today if he'd lived, but he'd probably be huge, a megagiant of a record company or a production company or a studio. He said he wasn't going to get old on the road.

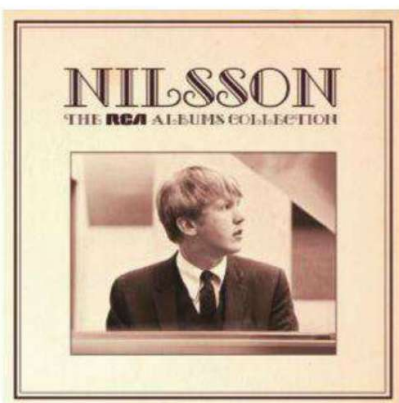
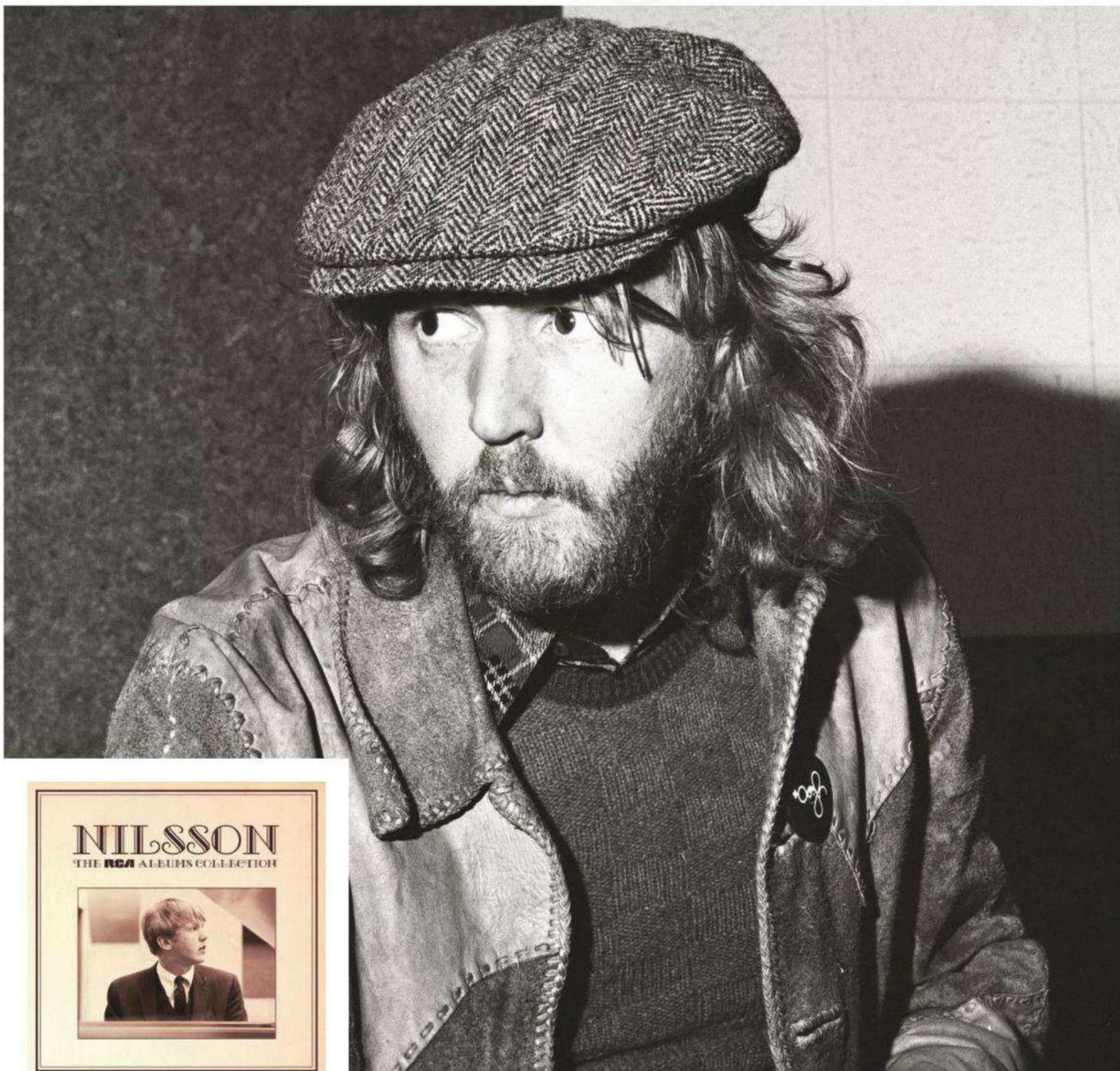
**Which is your favourite of his records?** When people ask me that, I always say I love them all.

But "These Arms Of Mine" is where it all started.

**What's your last memory of him?** The call that I got that Sunday morning at around 7.30 when he was leaving Cleveland on his way to Madison. He called home four or five times a day. We spoke that morning. He wanted to talk to the kids. Otis III was the only one up, so I said, "You talk to him, because Dexter and Karla are asleep." He said, "I'll call you when I get there." He never made it.

INTERVIEW: RICHARD WILLIAMS





## ALBUMS INCLUDED

**Pandemonium Shadow Show** 1967  
**Aerial Ballet** 1968  
**Harry** 1969  
**Nilsson Sings Newman** 1970  
**The Point!** 1971  
**'Aerial Pandemonium Ballet'** 1971  
**Nilsson Schmilsson** 1971  
**Son Of Schmilsson** 1972  
**A Little Touch Of Schmilsson In The Night** 1973  
**Pussy Cats** 1974  
**Duit On Mon Dei** 1975  
**Sandman** 1976  
**... That's The Way It Is** 1976  
**Knnilsson** 1977  
**Nilsson Sessions** 1967-1968  
**Nilsson Sessions** 1968-1971  
**Nilsson Sessions** 1971-1974

## NILSSON The RCA Albums Collection

RCA/LEGACY

A second chance to go wild about Harry. *By Bud Scoppa*

**9/10** WHILE THE STONED and tie-dyed hordes were overrunning the West Coast during 1967's Summer Of Love, Harry Nilsson was holed up in Hollywood's RCA Studios with Jefferson Airplane producer Rick Jarrard and an assortment of top LA session musicians working on his debut album. The 26-year-old was one of an elite coterie of literate, relatively short-haired iconoclasts that included Randy Newman and Van Dyke Parks.

These were the true radicals of the era, beholden to no trends or movements, each conjuring up his own visionary world while simultaneously keeping alive the values and conventions of American musical tradition from Stephen Foster to Tin Pan Alley. But even among these buttoned-down renegades, Nilsson stood apart, with his three-and-a-half octave vocal range and childlike sense of wonder, his refusal to be ingested into any genre or to perform in public. This studio rat



was rock's Wizard Of Oz, enchanting listeners from behind a shroud of mystery. He comes into focus as never before on *The RCA Albums Collection*, which contains the 14 LPs he recorded for the label between 1967 and '77 in accurate reproductions of their original sleeves, adding 123 bonus tracks, 55 of them previously unissued, the whole of it filling 17 discs.

That first album, *Pandemonium Shadow Show*, and the two that followed, 1968's *Aerial Ballet* – containing his first hit, a shimmering cover of Fred Neil's "Everybody's Talkin'" that was memorably used in the film *Midnight Cowboy*, along with his signature song "One" – and 1969's *Harry*, form a pop trilogy as facile, melodious and inviting as the early works of McCartney and Elton John, while predating both by several years. Listening now to his wildly clever Beatles medley titled "You Can't Do That" on the first album, followed two songs later by a spot-on cover of "She's Leaving Home", it's easy to see why John and Paul named Nilsson as their favourite artist and favourite band during a 1968 press conference.

He then threw three straight change-ups – *Nilsson Sings Newman*, his exquisite LP of Randy Newman songs, with Newman accompanying him on piano; the resolutely whimsical soundtrack to his animated TV movie *The Point!*; and *Aerial Pandemonium Ballet*, a radical reimagining of his first two albums – before aiming his next pitch right down the middle. For *Nilsson Schmilsson*, he cannily turned to commercially successful producer Richard Perry, resulting in his best-selling album and lone chart-topping single, a nearly operatic rendering of Badfinger's "Without You". *Schmilsson* streamlined the qualities of his earlier records, presenting them more directly, alternately appealing to the listener's heart ("I'll Never Leave You"), head ("Gotta Get Up"), sense of rhythm ("Jump Into The Fire"), sense of whimsy ("The Moonbeam Song") and funny bone ("Coconut").

But on 1972's *Son Of Schmilsson*, the follow-up to his biggest commercial success, he began the pattern of self-sabotage that beset his later work in what some critics saw as an act of self-loathing, like a petulant child carefully making a series of drawings, only to scribble all over them. The abrupt shift in tone and intent was exemplified by the refrain of "You're Breakin' My Heart" ("...so fuck you") and the close-mic'd belch that opens the kickass rocker "At My Front Door". To be sure, the LP has its share of Nilsson's trademark romantic/ironic refinement, including the

gorgeously elegiac "Remember (Christmas)" and the Newman-like ballad "Turn On Your Radio", but bad-boy humour and hardcore cynicism drive most of the songs and performances. The change transformed Nilsson almost at once from a major recording artist into an oddity – a sideshow to the main stage of popular music.

*A Little Touch Of Schmilsson In The Night* (1973) – his sublime album of standards, arranged by Sinatra stalwart Gordon Jenkins and produced by Nilsson's Beatles connection Derek Taylor – gave way to the confused, largely abrasive Lennon-produced collaboration *Pussy Cats*, recorded during the ex-Beatle's 18-month "lost weekend" in LA, his once-angelic voice sounding ravaged by the abuse he put it through. Then came *Duit On Mon Dei*, an album's worth of largely uninspired originals, which arranger Van Dyke Parks ornamented with the requisite marimbas and steel drums.

Two more wayward and maddeningly self-indulgent albums in *Sandman* (1975) and ... *That's The Way It Is* (1976) followed. Owing RCA one more album, Nilsson pulled himself together, reined in his latter-day tendency to go off the deep end lyrically and vocally, and made the most accessible, least off-putting LP since *Schmilsson*. *Knmillsson*'s 10 songs were self-written, their keys comfortably in his mid-range where the vocal damage was less apparent, the arrangements centred on elegant strings. The overtly romantic "All I Think About Is You", the achingly candid "I Never Thought I'd Get This Lonely", the big-hearted, irony-free "Perfect Day", were genuinely beautiful, and he sang them with the understated sophistication he'd

perversely abandoned four years earlier. But this inviting, sophisticated and redeeming record appeared too late for RCA, for the fans he'd let down and for his career as a whole, the wayward years in effect eradicating the collective memory of the great ones.

Nilsson died of a massive heart attack in 1994 at the age of 54, having recorded nothing

of note after leaving RCA. But he left an enormous amount of music in those 10 years, the bulk of it gathered in this much-needed career overview of the forgotten solipsistic genius of rock's golden age, in which the strike-outs turn out to be as fascinating as the home runs.

**EXTRAS:** Demos, alternate takes, 8/10 single mixes, outtakes, mono versions, Italian-language versions, studio banter, radio spots.

## A much-needed career overview of the forgotten solipsistic genius of rock's golden age



## BURT BACHARACH Anyone Who Had A Heart: The Art Of The Songwriter

UNIVERSAL

7/10

**Lavish 6CD boxset from pop's master craftsman**

Still touring at 85, with his autobiography freshly published and his songs still permeating the ether, Bacharach deserves a mammoth boxset. Several things astonish; the sheer volume of hits he's penned, the cleverness of their composition (odd metres, insinuating melodies) and their invasion of so many genres. Disc Six's jazz covers, for example, has Bill Evans playing "A House Is Not A Home", Roy Ayers with "Raindrops Keep Falling" and so on. An alternate collection might have chosen Northern Soul anthem "Long After Tonight Is Over" by Jimmy Radcliffe, Love's "My Little Red Book" (which Bacharach hated) and cult reggae side "Rain From The Skies" by Slim Smith. As it is, the versions here aren't always the best – only three cuts from Dionne Warwick, Barbra Streisand doing "Alfie" instead of our Cilla, Dusty not Gene Pitney sobbing through "24 Hours from Tulsa". Discs Two and Three are a 1960s treasure trove nonetheless, while Disc One shows Burt learning his craft with hits like Perry Como's "Magic Moments". Discs Three and Four major in MOR (Presley, Tom Jones), and Disc Five has Burt pouring orchestral syrup over his favourites. Fascinating, but there are better, more abbreviated compilations.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
NEIL SPENCER



## BIG STAR Nothing Can Hurt Me: OST

OMNIVORE

**Original producer unearths revelations from the archives for new rock documentary**

9/10

Drew DiNicola's doc feature bears the imprimatur of Ardent Records/Studios founder John Fry, who executive-produced the film and compiled the soundtrack with head of Omnivore Cheryl Pawelski. The two had jointly overseen the 2009 Big Star retrospective, *Keep An Eye On The Sky*, while Pawelski was working at Rhino, and their OST doubles as a companion piece to the boxset. These 20 tracks – alternate and rough mixes, one demo and a half dozen mixes made for the movie by Fry and engineer Adam Hill – function much like the mixes for The Beatles' *Let It Be... Naked*, presenting familiar recordings free of the studio gloss of the final versions. It's startling, for example, to discover the sighing of a pedal steel beside the stoically strummed acoustics on the movie mix of Chris Bell ballad "Try Again", while alternate (presumably earlier) mixes of Chiltonian crunchers like "Feel" and "Don't Lie To Me" sound even more raw and explosively desperate in their less refined states. The lone exception is the Bell solo classic "I Am The Cosmos", on which Fry and Hill went for – and achieved – shimmering godhead. To listen to this LP is to be reminded of the magical qualities these tracks contained the first time we encountered them. And there's undeniable value in that.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
BUD SCOPPA



# Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



## CHANCE

**In Search (reissue, 1981)**

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

7/10

**A long-lost 'countrydelic' masterpiece from a sideman to the stars**

Chance Martin has lived many lives, and goes by many names. His first proper job was cue-card man on *The Johnny Cash Show*, and he graduated to lighting and stage design on the Man In Black's world tours. Currently, Martin is professionally known as Alamo Jones, sidekick to "Cowboy" Jack Clement on a Nashville-based satellite radio station. But in 1981, working as Chance, he released the uncategorisable *In Search*, which went unnoticed, because it was out of tune with the disco era. Actually, it exists in an era of its own, though the Paradise Of Bachelors label has defined it as countrydelic. It sounds, at times, like Isaac Hayes lollygagging with Captain Beefheart.

Chance cites the Allman Brothers as an influence, while also suggesting that the presence of Jimi Hendrix in Nashville may have had some significance. "I liked Bob Seger and the Stones. But we still tried to create our own sound, which is the hardest thing to do. When I recorded it, country music was 90 per cent of the things that were being done in Nashville. What really keyed all this in, for me as a writer, was my lead guitar player, Don Mooney. He was a nobody and he'd never been in a recording studio, but I thought he was a genius. He'd say, 'Chance, I hear something here we could do backwards', and they hadn't been doing that here, except perhaps Hendrix."

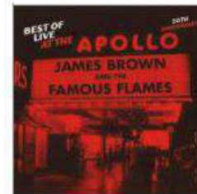
The sessions took place at midnight on full moons, over a period of five years. Just 1000 copies were pressed. "Disco hurt me," says Chance. "I didn't sell any, I kept them to myself." A sequel, *The Search Is Over*, was equally ill-starred, due to a few artistic differences with some Miami mobsters, but Chance is encouraged that his original vision has emerged intact after 32 eventful years. "I've been on world tours with Johnny Cash," he says, "and the most fun I've had in my life was the five years I spent working on this album."

ALASTAIR MCKAY

## I'M YOUR FAN

**"Guitar fuzz, Beat poetry, nightclub moves and hi-tech possibility. It's an album for the stoned midnight cowboy."**

WILLIAM TYLER



## JAMES BROWN

**Best Of Live At The Apollo - 50th Anniversary**

UNIVERSAL

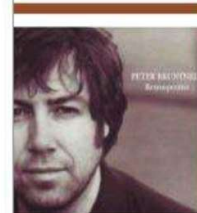
6/10

**Three live albums by the Godfather cut into one**

Recorded in October 1962, *Live At The Apollo* became both one of the great live albums and a key signifier for James Brown, a testament to his fiery live act that caught black American music in transition from R'n'B to soul and sold by the truckload. Little wonder that in 1967 Brown revisited the Harlem venue for a double *Vol II* that highlighted his move into funk, and again in 1971 for *Revolution Of The Mind*, by when he and the JB's had established the template for a new decade. This truncation of three records into one compilation thus has an evolutionary arc but still diminishes its primary sources. There are non-stop delights – the celebrated 1962 introduction of Brown as 'the hardest working man in showbusiness' and a frantic "Night Train", the jittery work-out of *Vol II*'s "There Was A Time", a manic 1971 "Sex Machine" – but the record refuses to gel into a whole.

**EXTRAS:** Two unreleased cuts, "Hot Pants Road", an instrumental warm-up, and a blurred "There It Is" add little and beg the question why there's just 40 minutes of music from a wellspring of two or three hours.

NEIL SPENCER



## PETER BRUNTNELL

**Retrospective**

LOOSE MUSIC

**Atlantic-crossing Brit singer-songwriter's best**

Cherry-picking the highlights of Bruntnell's 18-year recording career

8/10

can't have been an easy task when compiling tracks for a single disc, but while his devoted – if cult-like – following may feasibly gripe about the omissions it's a sturdy box-ticking overview for those taking the plunge for the first time. Sequenced chronologically, we're introduced to British-born Bruntnell's alluring slacker Americana on late-'90s offerings *Cannibal* and *Camelot In Smithereens* ("Bent Out Of Shape", "Have You Seen That Girl Again?"), before a beefier country rock mindset permeates the songs of *Normal For Bridgewater* and *Ends Of The Earth*. By this time Bruntnell was making tangible waves in the US, boosted by regular touring with Son Volt, his writing more daring and ambitious ("By The Time My Head Gets To Phoenix"). The songs from *Ghost In A Spitfire* and *Peter And The Murder Of Crows* find him exploring psych folk avenues with grace and elegance, the introspection of his earlier lyrics often taking a back seat to a wider but equally weary worldview. The one new track sees him sharing a mic with Rumer on the small-town-in-decline lament "Played Out", first heard on 1999's *Normal...*, the pair's sun-scorched harmonies bringing to mind the golden glow of the early-'70s Laurel Canyon scene.

**EXTRAS:** None.

TERRY STAUNTON





## CAMEO Knights Of The Sound Table (reissue, 1981)

SOUL BROTHER

Few chances to "shake your pants" on transitional LP

5/10

Cameo's place in the popular imagination will likely be forever limited to the strutting chunk of novelty electro funk that is "Word Up!" – for which Larry Blackmon's voice was recorded through a transistor radio – and his one-man campaign to popularise the PVC codpiece. *Knights Of The Sound Table*, however, arrived a full five years before that era-defining single, number seven in a series of dancefloor-friendly, soul-funk/R&B albums whose DNA is dotted along a line that connects Earth, Wind & Fire and The Gap Band to Prince. The governorship of Blackmon – who plays drums/percussion and produces as well as sings lead vocals – is key, but there are signs that trying to capitalise on the Top 30 Billboard success of 1980's *Cameosis* while edging toward the "21st-century bebop" of 1983's *Style* was proving a challenge. "Knights By Nights" and the single "Freaky Dancing" are a great pair of JB's/Bootsy Collins-informed party-starters, and it's easy to imagine closer "I Like It" segueing into "Wordy Rappinghood" at Studio 54, but in between lies an unappetising spread of cheese-filled funk pop and syrup-drenched balladry that not even the '80s can be expected to shoulder the blame for.

**EXTRAS:** None.

SHARON O'CONNELL



## MICHAEL CHAPMAN Wrecked Again (reissue, 1971)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

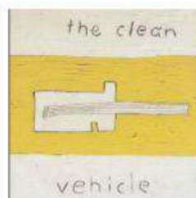
Reissue of resurgent singer-songwriter's final Harvest album

8/10

Hot on the heels of acclaimed reissues of *Fully Qualified Survivor* and *Rainmaker*, and capitalising on the interest of a new generation of music-makers, comes this remastered release of the 1971 album by the Yorkshire singer, songwriter and guitarist. Recorded in a fug of bad vibes and all but ignored at the time, it stands up beautifully today. More stylistically varied than previous albums, the off-kilter folk, rock, blues and soul manoeuvres are held together by Chapman's grainy slur of a voice and the interplay between his mercurial guitar and Rick Kemp's inventive bass, a relationship at its most rewarding on the haunting "Night Drive" and the heavy soul of "Fennario". There's light relief to be had on the eccentric instrumental "Polar Bear Fandango", the laid-back "Time Enough To Spare", and the jugband shuffle of "All In All", but mostly this is introspective stuff. The bleak note-to-self "Back On Your Own Again" and the glorious title track are malevolent yet bereft, the grandeur of the latter enhanced by Paul Buckmaster's fine orchestrations. "Indian Queens", meanwhile, is a premonition of John Martyn's folk-jazz forays. Produced by Gus Dudgeon and now remastered, *Wrecked Again* can only bolster Chapman's welcome critical rehabilitation.

**EXTRAS:** None.

GRAEME THOMSON



## THE CLEAN Vehicle (reissue, 1990)

CAPTURED TRACKS

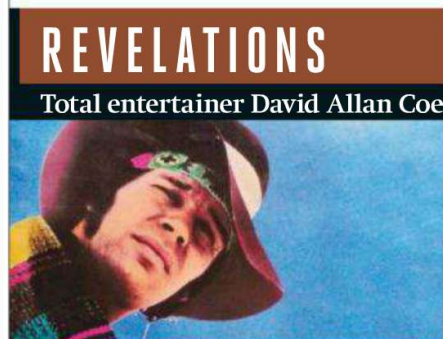
Debut album from fitfully recording New Zealand trio

8/10

The Clean formed in 1978, and put out a few singles before disbanding for much of the '80s – they finally released their debut LP, *Vehicle*, in 1990. The punk, psych, folk and glam that managed to get to their native New Zealand by air mail filters into a unique configuration, of shoegaze without the seriousness or fog, and indie-pop without the cloying cuteness. Instead, rollicking rhythms and country-rock flourishes cohere around quite relentlessly melodic songs, that make you want to dash to the beach in a car with wonky suspension. There are three Donovanish acoustic numbers included, but the real winners are irrepressible tracks like "Big Soft Punch" and "Diamond Shine" that, like Yo La Tengo, use organ and a sort of PG-rated shredding to create guitar pop unencumbered with pretension or angst – it's no surprise that Stephen Malkmus has long been a fan.

**EXTRAS:** The "In-A-Live" EP, consisting of five tracks recorded live at the Fulham Greyhound in 1988 – Geoff Travis of Rough Trade was there and signed the band to make *Vehicle*. There's a heavier, more anthemic Krautrock vibe on show here, with motorik rhythms and even rather aggressive guitars – a refreshingly butch Mr Hyde to *Vehicle*'s jolly Jekyll.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



➤ When country legend David Allan Coe appeared in Nashville in 1967, living in a hearse near the Ryman, he took the Cash/Haggard bad-boy image to bizarre new heights. "You know," he explained, "I went to reform school when I was nine, and I grew up in institutions, so probably my ideals and my values are different from most people's. I believe in realism a lot more than they do. My morals are different."

And that's how it's been for country music's most risqué outlier – from songs of prison, sex and drug abuse, to his biker-garbed, beard-braided, fuck-off appearance. "My hair is in dreadlocks down to my waist," he once cracked. "Waylon Jennings said, 'Goddamn, boy, you look like one of them New York pimps.'"

But Coe's charted 63 songs (Johnny Paycheck's "Take This Job And Shove It" tops the list), testifying to a persistent, proven talent: "I'm not outlaw country," he humbly barked in an interview. "I'm not progressive country, I'm not redneck-rock. I'm David Allan Coe! I can sing blues, rock'n'roll and jazz. I can sing 'My Funny Valentine' with a 500-piece orchestra. Or I can sing 'Fuck Anita Bryant, Who The Hell Is She?' It's like I'm a total entertainer." LUKE TORN



## DAVID ALLAN COE Texas Moon (reissue, 1977)

REAL GONE MUSIC

Nashville's nightmare: Outlaw obscurity from country music's definitive hardcore rebel

7/10

With his personal history of mayhem and incarceration trumping even the early outlawry of Merle Haggard, Akron, Ohio's David Allan Coe was a new breed country singer in the 1970s – a long-haired, heavily tattooed, Telecaster-ringing, Harley-riding madman as liable to stir up a riot as lean into a George Jones weeper. On *Texas Moon*, truly lost 1973 sessions that only barely leaked out on Shelby Singleton's Plantation label in 1977, Coe (mostly) abandons his own compositions (the swampy, Allman Brothers-style "Fuzzy Was An Outlaw" is an exception) for an interpretive turn. He pulls his punches on sturdy-but-staid covers of country standards ("A Satisfied Mind", "Give My Love To Rose"), yet turns in a subtle, shockingly credible take on Jackson Browne's "These Days". Kristofferson's "Why Me" is pure, autobiographical gut-punch (as in, lost-soul seeks redemption), while a soulful, Bakersfield-style version of Mickey Newbury's "Why You Been Gone So Long" and a blistering run-through of Billy Joe Shaver's "Ride Me Down Easy", with its raucous blast of growling, crying guitars and sawing fiddles, show Coe, at this early date anyway, to be an overlooked figure within Outlaw Country circles.

**EXTRAS:** None.

LUKE TORN



## PETER JEFFERIES The Last Great Challenge In A Dull World (reissue, 1990)

DE STIJL

Rough diamond of the Kiwi cassette culture underground

8/10

*Dull World* has been out of print for a good chunk of the time that has elapsed between its release on New Zealand tape label Xpressway in 1990 and the present day, but it hasn't been forgotten. Here and there, musicians have popped up to praise its recalcitrant maker's genius; Amanda Palmer is a recent disciple, while Cat Power covered "Fate Of The Human Carbine" on 1996's *What Would The Community Think*. By 1990, Jefferies had served time in post-punk groups around his native New Plymouth, but his debut album has the feel of a man's muse sliding into view. A document of personal turmoil translated into raw sound, it finds Jefferies backed by a procession of NZ experimental royalty (The Dead C, Alastair Galbraith, David Mitchell of The 3Ds). Noisier moments recall the slanted garage discord of The Velvet Underground ("Guided Tour Of A Well Known Street") or The Stooges ("The Other Side Of Reason"). But spiritually, *Dull World* feels closer to loner outposts such as Nick Drake's *Pink Moon* or Smog's *Wild Love*; see "On An Unknown Beach", a piano lament through which Jefferies' voice floats, sublime in its surreal fusion of beauty and dread.

**EXTRAS:** Adds two songs from non-album 5/10 seven-inch "Fate Of The Human Carbine"/"Catapult".

LOUIS PATTISON





## JELLYFISH Stack-a-Tracks OMNIVORE

Superficial fun and games

Over the course of just two albums, *Bellybutton* (1990) and *Spilt Milk* (1993), Jellyfish came close to

setting out the parameters of powerpop, taking in the cool craftsmanship of Badfinger and Big Star alongside the more flamboyant rock of Queen and Kiss. Jellyfish achieved greater commercial success than contemporaries like the Posies and Wondermints, thanks to insanely catchy songs such as "Baby's Coming Back", "The King Is Half-Undressed" and "The Ghost At Number One", minor UK hits that went way beyond mere pastiche. Jellyfish were never averse to employing gimmicks, whether it was lavish 3D sleeves or promo cassettes cased in milk cartons. Such shameless tactics belied the quality of their recordings, here stripped back to their instrumental bones. Emulating The Beach Boys' 1968 album, *Stack-o-Tracks*, both Jellyfish albums are presented without the intricate lead vocals to distract from what's going on behind. Devotees can now drool over previously hidden sonic detail but for anybody else, this smacks of pure self-indulgence. *Stack-a-Tracks* is designed for serious fans; anybody who bought the Not Lame 4CD boxset *Fan Club*, which included B-sides, oddities and the complete demo renditions of *Bellybutton* and *Spilt Milk*, may now feel their life is complete.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
MICK HOUGHTON



## ANDY KAUFMAN Andy And His Grandmother DRAG CITY

"I'm making an album for Columbia Records..." Kaufman's final hoaxes, revealed

Among Andy Kaufman's favourite ideas (and one expanded on in a conversation here with his pal Bob Zmuda) was of faking his own death. This audio resurrection, nearly 30 years after his death from lung cancer in 1984 is probably delightful to him on whichever plane he now resides. There is hilarious stuff here, as, in character as an innocent rube, Andy converses with hookers ("You wanna go bowling? Get a pizza?"), and records himself getting beaten up by a security guard in a cinema ("Fuck YOU, baby..."). This (amazingly, his only comedy album) is a selection from many hours of vérité microcassette recordings from 1977-1979. Of these hours, many find Kaufman talking to a not enormously bright girlfriend in a series of provocative telephone conversations. "I have to go," he tells her at one point. "My cereal's getting cold." The girlfriend wants possession of his tapes. "You can't have them," he tells her. "They're evidence!" And indeed they are – of a perverse and contradictory individual, whose talents ran from gentle-hearted impressions ("Paul"), to skits and more confrontational work. Kaufman couldn't cheat death – but his conceptual comedy can still surprise and delight, even from beyond the grave.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
JOHN ROBINSON



## KILLING JOKE The Singles Collection 1979-2012 SPINEFARM

Iconoclastic post-punks' career condensed

Jaz Coleman's fiery, post-punk messengers of the apocalypse, who first rode out of Notting Hill in 1979, show few signs of easing off as they age. In 2012 they released a new album that proved their original dark potency was intact, thus excusing the odd, ill-judged shot at Foo Fighters' pop metal. Now, a hefty (3CD) overview of their history, in all its visceral and socio-politically provocative glory. The collection works both as a primer for newcomers and a map of their career trajectory, beginning with debut single "Nervous System" – which betrays their west London, dub-punk roots – moving through synth-pop, electronic and industrial-metal incarnations and closing with last year's "Corporate Elect". What's most striking is KJ's ongoing influence; the distinctive pile-driving rhythms, clamorous guitar and doomy vocal exhortations, plus dub-heavy production, are echoed in acts as diverse as Metallica and Factory Floor. Lesser-known recent singles feature and 1988's panned *Outside The Gate* is also represented, alongside the peaks of *Revelations* and *Fire Dances*, affording a perspective many similar compilations don't.

**EXTRAS:** The best of the "bonus rarities disc" is three previously unreleased songs from the sessions for 2010's *Absolute Dissent*, KJ's first with their original lineup in 28 years.  
SHARON O'CONNELL

## HOW TO BUY... KILLING JOKE The righteous dark lords on disc



**Killing Joke** EG, 1980

The cover of their self-produced debut album – adapted from a photo by Don McCullin of youths escaping a teargas attack in Derry during the Troubles – set out Jaz Coleman's fervent, socio-political stall. Features "Requiem" (later covered by Foo Fighters) and "Wardance", which have since become emblematic of the band's incendiary righteousness.

**8/10**



**Night Time** EG, 1985

The Joke's fifth. Some were sniffy about the shift into goth-rock/industrial territory from tribal post-punk, eg, "Love Like Blood", "Kings And Queens" and "Eighties", but all are darkly compelling.

**8/10**



**Pandemonium** BUTTERFLY, 1994

Founding member Youth returns for the Joke's first in four years. There's much to admire in the tech metal-buffed power of "Millennium" and "Whiteout", while Coleman's developing interest in the trance elements of Arabian music is evident throughout, providing melodic lift for the thunderous guitars.

**7/10**

SHARON O'CONNELL



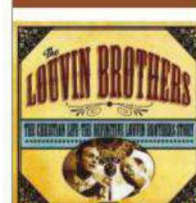
## LONDON POSSE Gangster Chronicles: The Definitive Collection (reissue, 1990)

TRU THOUGHTS

**7/10** Seminal 1990 Britrap reissued and remixed

London Posse came together when Mick Jones of The Clash asked London human beatbox Sipho to form a band to support Big Audio Dynamite on their 1986 US tour. By the time the resulting Posse made this, their only officially released album, Sipho had moved on and the Posse comprised rappers Rodney P and Bionic with producer Sparki. It's an album that deserves its reputation as a game-changer for UK rap, as Rodney and Bionic rejected the vogue for fake American accents and bitter moans about the music biz, and told authentic tales about inner-city London, dispensed with wry humour over beats that fused New York and Jamaica. Talk of *Gangster Chronicles* being the best UK rap album ever in a world where Roots Manuva and Dizze Rascal exist is an exaggeration. But it does remain one of the most influential.

**EXTRAS:** The two-disc version adds 17 extra tracks to the set, including singles, a few previously unreleased originals and a host of remixes, including respectful treatments by Wrongtom, The Nextmen and Steve Mason. Best moment is LP's final 1996 single "Style", a syncopated, bass-driven dancehall slammer that sounds like grime in-the-making.  
GARRY MULHOLLAND



## THE LOUVIN BROTHERS The Christian Life: The Definitive Louvin Brothers Story PROPER

**9/10** All your Louvin, boxed

There are any number of Louvin Brothers compilations out there at any given time, but few can top this latest set. Charlie and Ira's story is fanned across four CDs, each roughly themed to reflect their preoccupations with rural life, the Good Book, spiritual struggle and the lure of the open road. A key factor in their enduring appeal is their ability to satisfy a variety of tastes. As stylists, songs like "Knoxville Girl" and "The Kneeling Drunkard's Plea" took the components of gospel, folk and bluegrass and churned them into salve for everyone from Cash to Kristofferson, Parton to Parsons. But much of the Louvins' allure, especially to more modish types like Devendra Banhart and Will Oldham, lies in their embrace of the dark fatalism of country tradition. Their version of oft-covered murder ballad "In The Pines" is still powerful enough to slip a chill down the spine. While "Satan's Jewelled Crown" and "The Great Atomic Power" are as much trials of faith as they are straight commentaries on everyday life. Above all, the brothers' deft picking and unsurpassable harmonies – Ira invariably going high, Charlie staying low – ring out as forcefully today as they ever did.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
ROB HUGHES

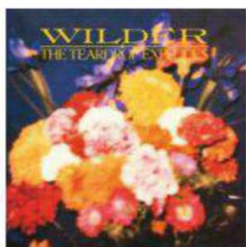




# THE TEARDROP EXPLODES

**Wilder (reissue, 1981)** UMC/ISLAND

Julian Cope and co's overlooked second is a classic, says Garry Mulholland



**8/10**

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES were victims of one of pop's weirdest years. Their leader, Julian Cope, began 1981 as an unlikely pop beefcake, vying with Simon Le Bon and David Sylvian for the hearts and wallets of a new glammed-up teen audience after

the huge January success of the brass-driven "Reward" single. Then, while Cope, guitarist Troy Tate and drummer Gary Dwyer toured America, and entered George Martin's Air Studios to make their second album, British pop went gloriously nuts.

The Specials had hit No 1 with an Arabic reggae protest song that soundtracked the summer's riots. What followed was not more of the same, but a lurch into archly synthetic escapism, care of New Romantics, synth-poppers, white disco and gender-bending. Meanwhile, U2 and Echo And The Bunnymen, the latter led by Cope's former bandmate and bitter rival Ian McCulloch, were quickly finding a way to transform post-punk's anti-macho anxiety into a new kind of arena rock.

By the time The Teardrop Explodes released *Wilder* in November, their record-collector mix of Beatles and Love-quoting '60s psych, discreet funk and military brass sounded like four bookish hippies on magic mushrooms adrift in a nightclub full of narcissistic peacocks on ecstasy. *Wilder* bombed spectacularly and The Teardrop Explodes never made another album.

Of course, *Wilder's* commercial failure never made it a bad record. This is its second reissue – the first was in 2000 – and Cope's long journey from pop eccentric to modern antiquarian and national

treasure has only increased the cult cachet of his first magnificent failure of a band. But it's still some shock to rediscover just how great, brave and strange *Wilder* sounds now, free of the desperation to cross over that even post-punk puritans like Scritti Politti and Gang Of Four fell for at the time.

*Wilder's* melodies sound timeless and deliciously free of conventional logic. Its rhythms, inspired by the returning David Balfe's love of David Byrne and Brian Eno, embark on adventures in syncopation and globe-trotting experiment. Its lyrics – packed with in-jokes about the Liverpool scene, Ian McCulloch's sister, and Cope, McCulloch and Pete Wylie's legendary six-week band The Crucial Three – are full of dark winks and unlikely connections between Palestinian freedom fighters and characters from *David Copperfield*... and that's just within the prowling "Like Leila Khaled Said".

"Bent Out Of Shape", "Passionate Friend" and "Colours Fly Away" are flawed, fabulous attempts to emulate "Reward". "Tiny Children" and "The Great Dominions" are the show-stopping ballads, Cope at his man-child best on the latter, somehow making the "Mummy, I've been fighting again" refrain poignant rather than pathetic, as Balfe's Prophet 5 synth throbs ominously beneath him.

Conflict and breakdown are the album's themes, as Cope's band, drug-addled brain and first marriage were collapsing simultaneously. But Cope is quintessentially English, so the mood is stoic, playful, self-mocking.

In popstastic 1981, *Wilder* made little sense. In 2013, where the musical landscape is full of well-read Dirty Projectors and Wild Beasts and Vampire Weekends, artily fusing psychedelic mindsets and world music motifs, The Teardrop Explodes' final album sounds entirely contemporary and reveals itself as way ahead of its time. But the clincher is its embrace of the sadness of ending things, and our knowledge that Cope would leave Liverpool and The Teardrop Explodes far behind and go on to bigger adventures. "I could make a meal/Of this wonderful despair I feel", Cope croons, soft and throaty, on "Tiny Children". *Wilder* does exactly that, and then swallows, belches and looks to the future.

**EXTRAS:** Excellent second disc comprising B-sides, 7/10 the posthumous "You Disappear From View" EP, and BBC sessions. Plus revealing, self-deprecating sleeve notes from Tate, Balfe and Cope.

## Q&A

David Balfe



**Were the *Wilder* sessions as acid-fried as legend insists?**

No! Acid was hovering in the background and influencing a certain adventurousness. But you can't live your life on it.

**In your sleeve notes for the reissue you state that *Wilder* isn't as good as debut album *Kilimanjaro*. Why?**

We were trying to fuck about with things and throw funk in with trumpets and cinematic concepts of music, and I don't know whether we pulled it off. I went on to spend the next 20 years

being an A&R man [Balfe mentored Blur and was the subject of "Country House"] and I look at a song like "Bent Out Of Shape" in terms of adding this and taking away that and it could've been a big hit single.

**Is it true that you locked Julian Cope and Gary Dwyer out of the sessions for the third album? Or that Dwyer chased you through the grounds of Rockfield Studios with a loaded shotgun?**

No. One of the things Julian does – which I admire enormously – is mythologise everything.

**Julian has always been adamant the Teardrops will never reform. Is this a good thing?**

I think he's totally right. The part of me that'd love to get onstage and play those songs with me old mates would quite like to do it. But I do admire Julian's integrity. **INTERVIEW: GARRY MULHOLLAND**



# CHEAP TRICK

## The Complete Epic Albums Collection

SONY/EPIC

Powerpop-rock heaven tonight, with a few hiccups. *By Terry Staunton*



7/10

THE STORY OF Cheap Trick's early days could feasibly be re-told by replacing the band's name with Peter Frampton's. A handful of albums garner critical acclaim but sell poorly, a jittery label wonders when and from where the breakthrough might

come, before a game-changing live release provides the catapult to Top 10 glory.

Ultimately, the multi-million sales and year-long chart residency of 1978's *Cheap Trick At Budokan* (originally only intended for the Japanese market) was relatively small beer compared to the juggernaut of *Frampton Comes Alive* two years previously, but it was the making of this quartet of Illinois anglophiles. Like The Raspberries and Todd Rundgren before them, Cheap Trick worked from a powerpop template; in thrall to The Beatles but imbuing their own music with the broader rock hues favoured by American FM radio.

The past tense is misleading, as the band continue to tour and record today, but this box is a celebration of their major-label output, an impressively prolific dozen albums between 1977 and 1990. Road-hardened by a minimum of 200 gigs a year, the first few releases were recorded quickly, though attempts to capture their stage vitality on record brought mixed results; studio versions of "I Want You To Want Me" and "Clock Strikes Ten" merely whispered where the subsequent *Budokan* readings roared.

*Heaven Tonight* remains the high-water mark of the '70s albums, singer Robin Zander and the melodic power chords of guitarist Rick Nielsen forging radio-friendly anthems at will ("Surrender", "Takin' Me Back"). 1979's *Dream Police*, recorded before *Budokan* but held back until after promotion of the live album, signalled the start of a change, the swathes of synths on the title track suggesting a shift from bars to arenas, although the minor-chord splendour of "I'll Be With You Tonight" kept a foothold in the group's pure pop past. Perhaps ironically, the hiring of George Martin as producer for 1980's *All Shook Up* took these Beatles fans further away from the sound that first inspired them (in the same year that Nielsen and drummer Bun E Carlos would take part in demo sessions for Lennon's *Double Fantasy*). Bombastic and overblown, Martin's grandiose tricks were unsuited to the sprightly rock'n'roll of "Just Got Back" and "I Love You Honey", but strong songs were few and far between anyway.

The rest of the decade saw Cheap Trick only intermittently catch sight of their earlier benchmarks. Producer Todd Rundgren gave their backside a kick on *Next Position Please* (1983), "You Say Jump" and "Heaven's Falling" recalling the fiery



### ALBUMS INCLUDED

- 1 **Cheap Trick** (Expanded)
- 2 **In Color** (Expanded)
- 3 **Heaven Tonight** (Expanded)
- 4 **At Budokan: The Complete Concert** (2 CDs)
- 5 **Dream Police** (Expanded)
- 6 **Found All The Parts**
- 7 **All Shook Up**
- 8 **One On One** (newly remastered for this box)
- 9 **Next Position Please** (Authorized Version)
- 10 **Standing On The Edge** (newly remastered for this box)
- 11 **The Doctor** (newly remastered for this box)
- 12 **Lap Of Luxury** (newly remastered for this box)
- 13 **Busted** (newly remastered for this box)

attitude of his own work with Utopia, but the albums that book-ended it (*One On One*, *The Doctor*) suffered from weak material and coldly clinical period production.

After six years away, bassist Tom Petersson returned to the fold for 1988's *Lap Of Luxury*, and though the band were initially unhappy about Epic persuading them to work with outside professional writers (including Diane Warren on the cheesy power ballad "Ghost Town") the likes of "Let Go" and a flirtatiously camp cover of Elvis' "Don't Be Cruel" contained enough echoes of what went before to keep the customers satisfied. Throughout the period covered by these albums, Cheap Trick's bread-and-butter was the live stage, the goodwill earned from the energy and enthusiasm of the first few releases, the now iconic

*Cheap Trick At Budokan* especially, carrying the requisite clout to forgive them their missteps. Certainly, their 21st-Century setlists are still dominated by songs from their first half-dozen years together, while not entirely saddling them with the tag of nostalgia act.

It could be argued that theirs is a story of promise only partially fulfilled, a lack of consistency that saw their accomplishments dwarfed by those of contemporaries like Tom Petty, or even Huey Lewis. Some of these albums don't warrant too intense a revisit, but others remain shining examples of how joyful guitar-based pop-rock can be.

**EXTRAS:** Four-track 1980 EP "Found All 5/10 The Parts".

## Q&A

Tom Petersson



**How much of a turning point was ...At Budokan?**

It changed everything, but originally it wasn't going to be a global release, Epic in America had nothing to do with the

record. The show was recorded for Japanese TV and the album was just supposed to be souvenir for the home market. But about 300,000 import copies flooded into the rest of the world, and the American label was kind of forced to put it out.

**Is it fair to say that you were struggling somewhat before the album hit big?**

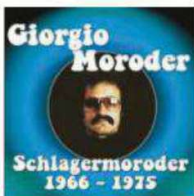
Up to that point we hadn't had any success anywhere except Japan, but we were getting great reviews. Our second album, *In Color*, got five stars in one of the biggest-selling issues of *Rolling Stone*, the one with Elvis Presley on the cover just after he died, so presumably people were reading about us but just not buying us. We would probably have been dropped if it wasn't for the reviews.

**As rabid Beatles fans, how was working with George Martin on *All Shook Up*?**

It was a huge thrill for us, but we tried to keep the Beatles questions to a minimum. It wasn't always easy, though, and I still call up Geoff Emerick [engineer] whenever I've got a Fabs-related query.

INTERVIEW: TERRY STAUNTON





**GIORGIO MORODER**  
**Schlagermoroder/  
 Son Of My Father/  
 On The Groove  
 Train Volumes 1 & 2**  
 REPERTOIRE

6/10 6/10  
 7/10 8/10

Electro-disco pioneer's less-known work  
 Italian-born Moroder was a beneficiary of the '60s Eurobeat boom, touring the continent before settling in Germany in 1966. The first two collections here, often featuring Moroder as frontman, demonstrate that the path to the soft porn disco of Donna Summer's 1975 global smash – "Love To Love You, Baby" – was often arduous, dependent as much on perspiration as inspiration. The marshalling of a fearsome studio band (The Munich Music Machine) and his collaborations with writer Peter Bellotte would be key in Moroder making his indelible mark. Both volumes of the *Groove Train* sets present ample evidence of how his 'German Motown' setup sculpted influences as diverse as chart pop, Beethoven (on Brian Evans' "Lonely Lovers Symphony") and synthesised backdrops to varied performers such as jazz sophisticate Chris Bennett or 4-to-the-floor dance-rock pioneer Keith Forsey. In the absence of Moroder's most famous work, rarities take pleasing precedence. Donna Summer's Dutch-only 45 "Virgin Mary" and Pete Bellotte, as porn star lookalike Tracey Dean, presenting his best Feargal Sharkey-alike warble on "Moonshiner" just some of the treats to be rediscovered.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
 GAVIN MARTIN



**CARL ORFF  
 & GUNILD  
 KEETMAN**  
**Music For Children  
 (Schulwerk)**  
 (reissue, 1957) TRUNK

8/10

Rare English recording of cult German spookfest  
 Developed in 1930s

Germany, "Schulwerk" was part of an educational programme to get children to sing, chant and beat out simple rhythms, pioneered by *Carmina Burana* composer (and possible Nazi sympathiser) Carl Orff. German-language recordings of these haunting songs have long been popular in English-speaking countries – the xylophone passage "Gassenhauer", aka "Street Song", was used to great effect in Terrence Malick's *Badlands*, while you often hear excerpts used in adverts and TV trails. So it comes as a surprise to find that there was a version recorded in English in 1957 which has been out of print for more than 50 years before being uncovered by hauntological crate-digger Jonny Trunk. Instead of using German folksong as the basis for these chants, music teacher Margaret Murray got her stage-school charges to work with English nursery rhymes: "Pat-a-cake", "Bobby Shafto", "Three Blind Mice" and so on. These chants might lack the Teutonic otherness of the *Musik For Kinder* recordings, but the instrumentals – a riot of xylophones, recorders, glockenspiels and hand percussion – still have the power to haunt. Moreover, one would hope these minimalist constructs might provide the basis for some inspired sampling.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
 JOHN LEWIS



**THE PIRATES**  
**Land Of The Blind**  
 (reissue, 1998)  
 ANGEL AIR

6/10

Late flowering from Britain's first great guitar hero  
 Mick Green's seemingly uncanny ability to chop

out driving chords and stinging lead lines simultaneously influenced guitarists from Pete Townshend to Wilko Johnson. The legendary reputation earned with Johnny Kidd & The Pirates even survived seven years backing Engelbert in Vegas, and he re-emerged in the mid-'70s as a proto-punk hero with the reformed Pirates. Originally released in 1998, *Land Of The Blind* contains pleasing evidence that in later years he was more than just an axeman extraordinaire. The choppy R'n'B brilliance of Green compositions "Danger Zone" and "Sex On Legs" sound as irresistible as the Feelgoods in their prime. "Shattered Glass" could've been one of Clapton's more affecting mid-tempo ballads and a potent retooling of Billy Fury's "Wondrous Place" is a fine tribute to early days. The album made no commercial impact on its release. But it helped to re-establish Green with his peers as he spent the next decade recording and touring prolifically with Paul McCartney, Bryan Ferry and Van Morrison, prior to his death in 2010.

**EXTRAS:** Three live tracks recorded in '96  
 5/10 with the same power trio, proving that sounding like he was playing two guitars at once was not studio trickery.  
 NIGEL WILLIAMSON



**THE NO-NECK  
 BLUES BAND**  
**Recorded In  
 Public And  
 Private (reissue, 1994)**  
 DE STIJL

8/10

Back to the start for NY freak crew, now their catalogue's gone digital

It's an admirable public service on the part of freak culture imprint De Stijl, making almost the entire recorded history of The No-Neck Blues Band available digitally. No more trawling the back-roads of charity blogs or bidding for rare junk on eBay. And what stranger, better place is there to start than *Recorded In Public And Private*, NNCK's first shot into the void? Back when this was originally released in 1994, as part of Thurston Moore and Byron Coley's Ecstatic Yod Ass Run series, it was pasted up in a sleeve that paid tribute to '70s French free jazz and improv label Actuel, which made plenty of sense: back in the mid-'90s there were precious few collectives picking up on the fertile energy of those times. *Public And Private* goes the full hermetic hog, cloaked in layers of buzz and clatter, with tentative musical forms dissolving before your ears into a beautiful scrum of low-level improv-unit sound. Also well worth checking out: its follow-up, the sea-sick *Hoichi*; the brilliantly unhinged drama of *A Tabu Two*; the frazzled commune jams of *Live At Ken's Electric Lake*; the rooftop drone-dream sonatas of *Letters From The Earth... The whole lot, actually.*

**EXTRAS:** None.  
 JON DALE

**HOW TO BUY...  
 LATE ELVIS**  
 The King's last hurrahs



**Elvis Country RCA, 1971**  
 In late 1970, Nashville lightning struck, Elvis shaking off all cobwebs to reconnect with myriad base impulses – country, folk, rockabilly, gospel, western

swing, bluegrass. His singing is spontaneous, all heart. See, to cite just one, an epic rendering of Ernest Tubb's "Tomorrow Never Comes".

7/10



**Promised Land RCA, 1975**  
 On his strongest LP of the '70s and perhaps last true studio hurrah, Elvis laid down one of his best rockers (Chuck Berry's "Promised Land"), and tapped

one of Nashville's finest young songwriters, Billy Joe Shaver, for a galloping "You Asked Me To". The swirling, ghostly swell of "It's Midnight" is heartbreak on tape.

8/10



**From Elvis Presley Blvd, Memphis, Tennessee RCA, 1976**  
 This tossed-off mishmash from the depths of downward spiral cuts deep. Elvis pours his heart

into "Danny Boy" and on 1961 Timi Yuro smash "Hurt", he takes his haunted, anguished voice to newfound, scarifying heights/depths.

7/10

LUKE TORN



**ELVIS PRESLEY**  
**Elvis At Stax**  
**[Deluxe Edition]**  
 RCA/LEGACY

7/10

Elvis in the wilderness: gems from the King's downward spiral  
 As the '70s passed, the lustre of his peerless

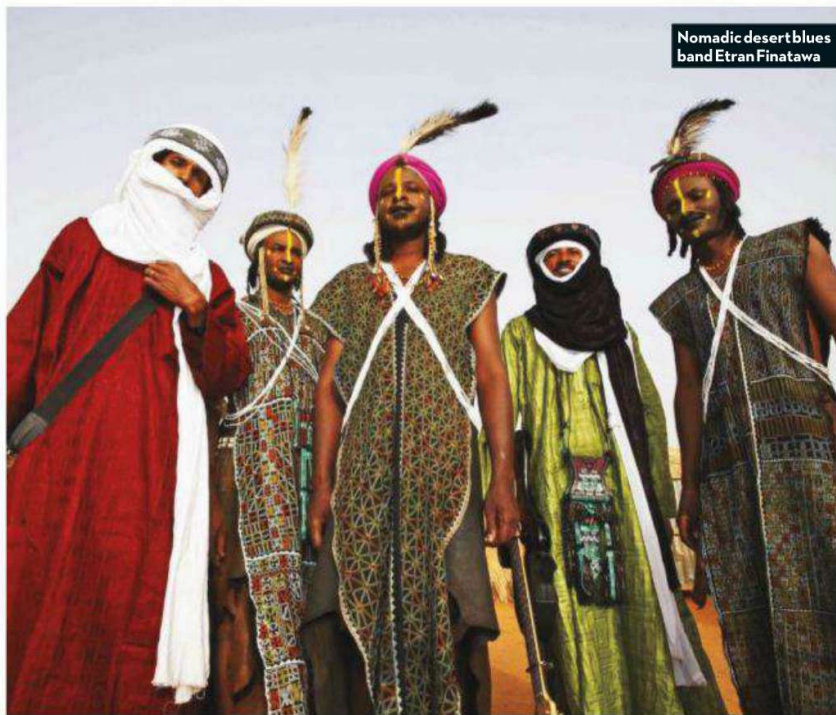
comeback years fading, Elvis found himself increasingly tangled in a web of poor health and drug abuse, bad business decisions and artistic dead-ends. Recording sessions became haphazard affairs, RCA releasing anything bearing his name or likeness. Well-intentioned revisionism takes precedence on *Elvis At Stax*, producers rifling through 1973 session tapes, attempting a coherent narrative: 55 tracks over three discs cut at Memphis' famed studio, though in truth this grab-bag of would-be pop standards, stale "in-house" Elvis material, and a few honest-to-goodness rock'n'roll nuggets bears faint resemblance to the label/studio's classic Southern-soul sound. While you may have to be a serious Elvis scholar to stomach cornball like "Three Corn Patches" or multiple takes of syrupy dreck like "Mr Songman", Chuck Berry's "Promised Land" (all three takes!), fired by spot-on vocals and brilliant James Burton guitar, belongs in Elvis' upper echelon. And so it goes – schizo-style – from scintillating to off-the-charts lame. When he connects with younger writers – eg, Tony Joe White, Dennis Linde and Danny O'Keefe, Elvis proffers a plausible artistic path, one that regrettably never quite materialised.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
 LUKE TORN



## The Specialist

Africa



► THE BIGGEST STORY in African music over the last year has been its suppression by Islamist militants in northern Mali, a barren desert region that has long been a rich source of the continent's finest music, via the likes of Ali Farka Touré and Tinariwen. Thankfully, French troops have now routed the extremists and the musicians have re-emerged from exile or hiding. We're also now getting to hear some extraordinary protest music made during the crisis and fired by a potent mix of anger, sorrow and fear. Take **Etran Finatawa**, a nomadic desert blues band in the Tinariwen tradition, from just over the border in Niger. Their fourth album, **The Sahara Sessions** **RIVERBOAT** 8/10, sets aside their customary snaking electric guitars for an unplugged session, recorded under a canopy of stars in a tent in the desert. The opener, "Matinfá" ("What Is This For?") is a plea for help in the face of the troubles convulsing the region. Campfire guitars, hand percussion and keening voices weave mysterious, smoky moods on a set of songs about survival, steeped in the deep, mournful blues of the desert. But the record brims with a contagious freedom, too. The response of Timbuktu's **Samba Touré** to the troubles, **Albala** **GLITTERBEAT** 7/10, was produced by Chris Eckman (Walkabouts)

and Hugo Race (ex-Bad Seeds). The title translates as 'danger' and there's an intense, even sombre mood to his resonant voice and bluesy guitar on songs such as "Ago Djamba" ('Life Betrays Us') and the unity plea "Awn Bè Ye Kelenye" ('We Are All

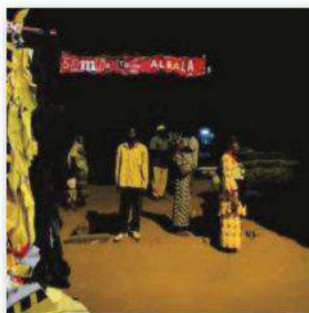
Maliens'), much in the style of his mentor, Ali Farka Touré.

While in Bamako to produce Touré, Eckman and Race also recorded their own album under their **Dirtmusic** flag. **Troubles** **GLITTERBEAT** 6/10 features many of the same Malian musicians and offers a rockier take on the theme, edited from a series of long jams, with Race's electronics lending a suitably dark undertow.

Mali, of course, doesn't have a monopoly on trouble in Africa.

**Jupiter & Okwess International** – led by Jupiter Bokondji, the self-styled 'rebel general' of Congolese music, and recently seen on Damon Albarn's Africa Express – have also seen their country destroyed by a barbarous civil war.

Hailing from the Kinshasa 'Congotronics' scene, their debut, **Hotel Univers** **OUT HERE** 7/10, is a vibrant set crackling with the kinetic energy often generated by struggle. Try "Bapasi", a brew of blaring sax and psych guitars somewhere between Sly Stone, Fela Kuti and Santana's "Soul Sacrifice". **NIGEL WILLIAMSON**



**PUBLIC IMAGE LTD**  
**First Issue**  
(reissue, 1978)  
LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Special edition of post-Pistols post-punk

8/10

"Public Image is a put-down of them, what's left of them," John Lydon withers towards the Sex Pistols in a fascinating (if shambolically directed) interview with Radio 1 that accompanies this reissue of PiL's first LP. "It's called progression – I don't deal in de-gression." And it's progression indeed – taking that tinny white sleet of guitars and redeploying it with undulating bass to create a nihilistic funk. The Pistols saw the mythic power of slogans, and PiL added the sensuality of groove, all of it designed to infiltrate culture at a mass level; on the cover Lydon is in a suit surrounded by clean font, and at first glance his impassive stare could be that of a brainwashed corporate zombie, but the ghost of a smirk tells you that PiL are here to worm their way into the machine. That's not to say it's an easy listen (its compressed anthems are still overwhelmingly claustrophobic), but its influence is brilliantly clear: Keith Levene's seasick guitar assault was mimicked by industrial and punk groups right through to Fugazi, and Jah Wobble's bass simply defines post-punk.

**EXTRAS:** The 2CD set features B-side "The 6/10 Cowboy Song", the BBC interview, and two stickers; the deluxe LP features those above, plus posters, replica tabloid ads, a full sticker set, and a download card.

**BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS**



**RODAN**  
**Fifteen Quiet Years**  
TOUCH AND GO/QUARTERSTICK

Overdue celebration of Kentucky alt.heroes

Despite their short (1992-'95) career and the fact that they released just one album (*Rusty*), Louisville

8/10

quartet Rodan made quite an impact on the US underground. Their hybrid of math/post-rock and post-hardcore won them a devoted following that tracked through members' subsequent cultish bands – Rachel's (guitarist/vocalist Jason Noble and drummer Kevin Coultas), June Of 44 (guitarist/vocalist Jeff Mueller), The Sonora Pine (bassist/vocalist Tara Jane O'Neil and Coultas) and The Shipping News (Noble and Mueller). This collection is a tribute of sorts to Noble, who died in 2012 of cancer, and is an excellent reminder of Rodan's mastery of space, dynamics and amplitude, as well as of their ability to kick serious ass. It features six tracks from 1993's "Aviary" demo cassette, plus the hitherto unreleased Peel Session of 1994, which includes the monstrous "Big Things, Small Things". With its clenched-buttock riffs and lunging heaviosity, it recalls The Jesus Lizard and Shellac (whose Bob Weston engineered *Rusty*), but elsewhere, there are echoes of Sonic Youth's art-punk scrawls ("Exoskeleton") and Slint's slo-mo melancholy ("Sangre"). Extra points here for avoiding a simple retread of *Rusty*, however fine.

**EXTRAS:** Ten live tracks, chosen by band 7/10 members from their own archives.

**SHARON O'CONNELL**





## TOM ROBINSON BAND

**The Anthology 1977-1979**

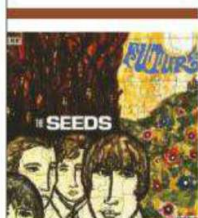
PARLOPHONE

**Complete recordings remastered, plus radio sessions**

8/10

The emergence of new wave was a convenient marketing shirt-tail on which to catch a ride, but TRB were always a more straight-down-the-line rock group happy to embrace the old guard. That was certainly true of their second and final album, *TRB2* (produced by Todd Rundgren, lead single "Bully For You" co-written by Robinson and Peter Gabriel), and even calling-card hit "2-4-6-8 Motorway" owed a bigger debt to the stomp'n'sky punching of Slade or Status Quo than it did the sneer of punk. This collection brings together both long-players, sundry EP tracks and B-sides, nine previously unreleased radio recordings and a bonus disc of TV appearances, and it's Robinson's more politically slanted articulate lyrics that stand out. "Glad To Be Gay" and "Up Against The Wall" are master classes in pop-minded calls to arms, while laconic Steely Dan-like jazz hues offer a paradoxical backdrop to the chilling reportage of "Blue Murder", about Little Towers, the amateur boxer who died in police custody. The sloganeering of "Don't Take No For An Answer" and "Right On Sister" may veer too close to crowd-pleasing toy town radicalism, but "The Winter Of '79" offers a more pointed snapshot of bleak Britain.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
TERRY STAUNTON



## THE SEEDS

**Future (reissue, 1967)**

ACE

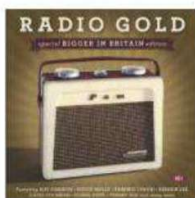
**Instrumentally embroidered flower power lunacy**

8/10

The Seeds' third album was launched in 1967 off the back of three hits – "Pushin' Too Hard", "Mr Farmer" and "Can't Seem To Make You Mine" – two of which had taken a year to chart. By then, Seeds leader Sky Saxon wanted to expand the group's sound beyond insistent, melodic garage punk and his trademark sneering vocals. *Future* was to be Saxon's grand psychedelic statement; his *Sgt Pepper*. Instead he created his very own *Satanic Majesties*. Cue fanciful acid-inspired imagery, wide-eyed, childlike naïveté, and inappropriate multiple overdubs. Virtually a parody, it has divided even the group's staunchest fans. Its mixed reception was further fanned by a blaze of publicity claiming The Seeds were 'originators of the Flower Generation'. This was the brainchild of self-proclaimed Lord Tim Hudson, the same PR guru who later tried to turn Ian Botham into a swashbuckling Errol Flynn. For those who don't buy into Sky Saxon's increasingly irrational trip, *Future* is laughable at times, but few other albums so perfectly capture the idiocy of proto-hippy philosophy or period charm of a group musically striving to blow people's minds.

**EXTRAS:** Mono mixes and an entire second disc of backing tracks and early takes without the extensive overdubs.

7/10  
MICK HOUGHTON



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Radio Gold: Bigger In Britain**

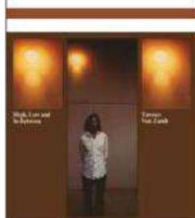
ACE

**UK hits less heralded back home**

6/10

Archive specialists Ace's ongoing 'Radio Gold' series continues to mine oldies but goldies in a kind of mopping-up exercise, collecting together yesteryear hits that might struggle to find space on more specifically themed compilations. The hook here is that the 24 tracks all fared better in the UK charts than they did when first released in the US. Thus, we get the likes of Roy Orbison's "Blue Bayou" (No 3 in Blighty, just shaving the Top 30 back home) and Gene Vincent's "Pistol Packin' Mama", which failed to make the American charts at all. Informative liner notes speculate on why certain tracks may have underperformed in their birthplace; Bobby Darin's "Multiplication" clearly suffered from a partial US radio ban from playlist compilers uneasy with the (albeit tame) sexual subject matter, a similar fate to that suffered by Frankie Lyndon's bad-boy ode "I'm Not A Juvenile Delinquent", while Freddie Bell & The Bell Boys' "Giddy Up A Ding Dong" found greater favour with British audiences arguably because they were one of the first rock'n'roll acts to tour over here. Elsewhere, country stars like Jim Reeves and Conway Twitty get a look-in purely because their homegrown appeal was restricted to the Southern states, as opposed to being nationwide stars.

**EXTRAS:** None.  
TERRY STAUNTON



## TOWNES VAN ZANDT

**High, Low And In Between/The Late Great Townes Van Zandt (reissues, 1972)**

OMNIVORE

10/10

**Much-missed Texas bard in his prime, remastered**

These two LPs, dead-on-arrival in their day, form the cornerstone of the Townes legend. "Pancho & Lefty", "If I Needed You", "To Live Is To Fly", classics all, debut here, while Kevin Eggers and Jack Clement's mostly unfussy production – getting him away from

the prettification of the Nashville factory and into LA circles – is the most sympathetic of Townes' career. That hardly meant he had abandoned his roots, though: gospel hymns mix with Hank Williams covers, Vassar Clements' silky fiddle with Townes' deceptive storytelling, resulting in a dazzlingly unique take on Cosmic American Music. Between the lines, much of this repertoire cuts right to the bone: from experimental trips ("Silver Ships Of Andilar") to the playfully traditional ("Heavenly Houseboat Blues") to the wrenching ("You Are Not Needed Now"), Van Zandt was, almost invisibly, breaking new ground; not least on "Mr Mudd & Mr Gold", the wildest narrative of his (or anyone else's) career.

**EXTRAS:** Biographical/historical liner notes

6/10 by Colin Escott.

LUKE TORN

# COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ AUGUST SEES THE return of two *Uncut* favourites whose workrate is only equalled by their top-quality achievements. **Ty Segall**, as we know, is no slacker, having run to

albums last year with *White Fence* (cool songs; Kraut-punk jams), and a couple with his touring band and solo (cool songs; rowdy garage punk; great guitar soloing). His new one, *Sleeper*, finds the man going a different direction, a mellower, acoustic-based kind of thing, reminiscent at times of Michael Chapman, at others of second-album Supergrass.

Following her opening volley of two allusive and involving albums (*Ekstasis* and the earlier *Tragedy*), **Loud City Song** (her first for Domino) finds **Julia Holter** creating again a dramatic and minutely controlled environment for her songs. As evinced by opening track "World", these inventive electronic arrangements never amid their cleverness lose sight of essential tunefulness. As urbane as she is ethereal, Holter is here said to be examining her relationship to her hometown, Los Angeles, which she does with a worldview as original as Joni Mitchell or Nilsson.

After lots of rather unnecessary teasers in this column, the album by **The Rides** (that's Stephen Stills, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Barry Goldberg), *Can't Get Enough*, is finally coming out on August 26.

JOHN ROBINSON

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# Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

*Sofia Coppola robs the rich, Noah Baumbach and Greta Gerwig chronicle the life of an East Coast intellectual, the Civil War is psychedelised and Status Quo get their own action film...*

**THE BLING RING** Sofia Coppola has always had an uneasy relationship with celebrity. Her last three films – *Lost In Translation*, *Marie Antoinette* and

*Somewhere* – explored the toxifying effects of fame on privileged individuals – movie stars, French aristos – but with *The Bling Ring* she argues that today's celebrity culture means that anyone can become famous – irrespective of merit or accomplishment.

"The Bling Ring" is the name given to a real-life group of teens convicted of stealing more than \$3m in jewellery and clothes from a string of celebrities including Paris Hilton, Orlando Bloom and Lindsay Lohan during 2008/'09. Coppola's film – cool, elegant and brilliant – offers no particular motivation for their actions, nor does it pose any moral or sociological questions about the whydunnit. The film is surface-shallow – but only as the culture it reflects is arguably too superficial to withstand any analysis. In an astonishing piece of meta-textuality that says much about the nature of the culture, Paris Hilton allowed Coppola to recreate the real crimes that took place in her own home, to shoot her film in among the haute couture labyrinth of shoe wardrobes and clothes rooms that were violated in real life.

Coppola's *Bling Ring* are a bunch of narcissistic Valley girls (and one dude), possessed of righteous self-belief in their own entitlement – a modern-day *Heathers*, perhaps. We see little of their home lives – apart from a handful of scenes featuring Leslie Mann, absolutely terrifying as one gang member's maniacally upbeat New Age mother who feeds her children a diet of Adderall and self-improvement guff. The gang spend their days glued to celebrity websites and their nights clubbing; they have no interest in anything beyond their next Facebook status update. Emma Watson is the most prolific member of the gang's cast, delivering a perfectly judged performance of brittle, shiny mindlessness – like, ohmygod. Arrest turns the gang into mini-celebs in their own right, with Watson's Nicki having little time for reflection on the seriousness of her situation as she attempts to exploit her newly acquired fame by engaging an agent.

For all the superficiality of the subject, it looks beautiful – there's plenty of Coppola's favourite blues and greys on display. The burglaries themselves are shot almost as reportage by

cinematographer Harris Savides, who died during filming. One break-in at night, high up in the Hollywood Hills, is filmed by a static camera located some distance away from and above the property, so all you see through the building's huge glass windows is the gang going from room to room, the only sound a droning loop of feedback from composer Brian Reitzell.

➤ **Frances Ha** You suspect Facebook updates, Louboutin shoes and celebrity worship don't especially bother the arty, well-educated twentysomethings who populate *Frances Ha*, this latest film from writer/director Noah Baumbach. The son of a writer and a *Village Voice* critic, Baumbach's earlier films were erudite and chatty and usually centred around estranged and fiercely competitive families during a period of crisis. His last film, 2010's *Greenberg*, starred Ben Stiller as an introspective malcontent brooding his way round L.A. None of Baumbach's previous films have been funny particularly – though they have humour within them – but *Frances Ha* is certainly a comedy.

Co-written with Greta Gerwig – who plays Frances and who the director met when he cast her in *Greenberg* – *Frances Ha* has a warmth and lightness absent from Baumbach's earlier films, *The Squid And The Whale* (2005) and *Margot At The Wedding* (2007). A lot of that is down to Gerwig – incidentally, Baumbach's girlfriend – who essentially plays the same giddy, goofy character she always plays, most recently in Whit Stillman's *Damsels In Distress*. Both Baumbach and Stillman are avid chroniclers of East Coast intellectual life and equally partial to a joke or two about books. *Frances Ha* certainly feels a little Stillman, but a lot Woody Allen, too. After all, this is a black and white film set in New York featuring a ditzzy female lead who happens to be the girlfriend of the filmmaker.

Baumbach and Gerwig follow Frances as she drifts round apartments in New York, California and – briefly – Paris, caught in the awkward transitional point between the end of college and the realities of grown-up responsibilities. Frances wants nothing more than to spend her days with BFF Sofie (Sting's daughter, Mickey Sumner:



## Reviewed this month...



**THE BLING RING**  
Director Sofia Coppola  
Starring Emma Watson  
Opens July 5  
Certificate 15  
**9/10**



**FRANCES HA**  
Director Noah Baumbach  
Starring Greta Gerwig, Mickey Sumner  
Opens July 26  
Certificate 15  
**9/10**



**A FIELD IN ENGLAND**  
Director Ben Wheatley  
Starring Michael Smiley, Reece Shearsmith  
Opens July 5  
Certificate 15  
**9/10**



**BULA QUO!**  
Director Stuart St Paul  
Starring Francis Rossi, Rick Parfitt  
Opens July 5  
Certificate PG  
**4/10**



**MY FATHER AND THE MAN IN BLACK**  
Director Jonathan Holiff  
Starring Saul Holiff, Johnny Cash  
Opens July 12  
Certificate 12A  
**6/10**



Reece Shearsmith as  
Cavalier Whitehead  
in *A Field In England*



excellent) in their apartment, sharing little in-jokes and contriving to keep the real world at bay. The film is really a sweet piece about their friendship, set in the NYC boho milieu, and how it's tested as Frances – like Greenberg, a perennial under-achiever – spirals through ever-decreasing circles until she finds herself sleeping back at her old college (Vassar, of course), reduced to pouring wine for visiting dignitaries to pay her board.

► **A Field In England** Director Ben Wheatley's fourth film comes only a few months after *Sightseers* – a black comedy set around a caravan trail from Mother Shipton's Cave to the Keswick Pencil Museum. Occasionally, Wheatley's camera lingered on the northern countryside beyond them, capturing the bleak beauty of the Peak District and Lake District. Landscape also figures prominently in *A Field In England*, though this time the setting isn't the caravan parks of the present day but the English Civil War. Folk horror connoisseurs will be familiar with the period from *Witchfinder General*, *Blood On Satan's Claw* or Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo's little-seen docu-drama *Winstanley*, about 17th-Century radical Gerrard Winstanley. Wheatley channels all of these but brings his own psychedelic spin to the proceedings. The film follows three deserters who find themselves

caught in a scheme by a charismatic but dangerous alchemist, O'Neil, involving treasure of some description buried somewhere in a field in Monmouthshire. There are magic mushrooms, scrying mirrors, stolen manuscripts and unnatural forces. O'Neil, played by Michael Smiley – perhaps best remembered as the speed-addled cycle courier Tyres O'Flaherty in *Spaced* – is devious and chilling. Also very good is *The League Of Gentlemen*'s Reece Shearsmith, as Whitehead, a pompous Cavalier who provides a good foil to O'Neil. Wheatley shoots (in black and white) with an attention to landscape and natural lighting that, on occasion, recalls Terrence Malick. The score – a mix of discordant electronica, trad 17th-Century songs and eerie acoustic plucking – enhances the film's hallucinatory passages. By never showing us events beyond the confines of the field, Wheatley creates an uncomfortable sense that our deserters are already dead and this is in fact some kind of purgatory. "Open up and let the Devil in," indeed.

► **Bula Quo!** In the 1970s, when a successful TV sitcom was upgraded to the big screen, it was traditional that the action be relocated overseas – usually to a poorly equipped hotel in Spain, where mildly racist comedy based around language and cultural differences ensued. *Bula Quo!*, the first cinematic foray of Status Quo, falls broadly along similar lines. Here, the Quo have dates booked in Fiji, only to find themselves caught up with some local gangsters whose bad vibes include Russian Roulette, illegal organ trading and restaurant-quality cannibalism. Craig Fairbrass, as the Quo's manager, is required to beat up some bad guys. The members of Quo who aren't Francis Rossi or Rick Parfitt look like extras from *On The Buses*. Rossi and Parfitt keep the banter light. Says Parfitt, "You know what? I think we're about to witness a murder." "Not if we don't look we're not," replies Rossi with exacting logic. They make an easy double act, presumably barely required to do much more than be themselves and, despite the wonky script and travel brochure direction, they at least have a likeable camaraderie. There is a running joke that Rick Parfitt is, in fact, dead.

► **My Father And The Man In Black** In 2005, Saul Holiff committed suicide. Holiff had been Johnny Cash's manager from 1960 to 1973, during the triumphs of Folsom and San Quentin, his marriage to June Carter and conversion to Christianity. Holiff was also estranged from his son, Jonathan – absent during his childhood and then, after he left Cash's employment, a brooding presence at home, drinking heavily and tearing into his son every night. "You have brought no joy

to this household," Saul wrote in a letter to his son, "just confrontation and disrespect." After Saul's suicide, Jonathan Holiff undertook to try and better understand his father. He found keys to a storage locker – a trove of Cash arcana, including photographs, letters,

concert bills, diaries, audiotapes and other memorabilia. Through a mix of re-enactments, audiotapes and archive footage, we see Cash's rise in the early '60s, Cash's great unraveling – drugs, arrests, lawsuits – the conversion and the final split between Cash and Saul, a Canadian Jew who could never answer Cash's question: "Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, as prophesied by the Old Testament prophets? Do you believe in his divinity?"

*Three English Civil War deserters get caught up with a dangerous alchemist: cue magic mushrooms, scrying mirrors, unnatural forces...*

## Also out...

### THE INTERNSHIP

OPENED JULY 3

Desperate circumstances dictate that Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn become Google interns. Cue presumably hilarious jokes that were funny back in 2005.

### NOW YOU SEE ME

OPENED JULY 3

Jesse Eisenberg, Mark Ruffalo and Woody Harrelson – among others – as a group of con-men magicians.

### PUSSY RIOT: A PUNK PRAYER

OPENED JULY 5

Documentary on the Russian punk band and events since their protest performance in Moscow's Cathedral Of Christ The Saviour in February 2012.



### MONSTERS UNIVERSITY

OPENS JULY 12

What's not to love about the college years of Mike and Sully?

### PACIFIC RIM

OPENS JULY 12

Guillermo del Toro's blockbuster-in-waiting about alien invaders fighting giant robots. *Godzilla* meets *Transformers*, or similar.

### BREATHE IN

OPENS JULY 19

Guy Pearce is a retired music teacher who becomes involved with a young musician.

### THE WORLD'S END

OPENS JULY 19

Simon Pegg and pals (including Paddy Considine and Nick Frost) go on a pub crawl that is somehow caught up with the end of the world.

### ROMAN HOLIDAY

OPENS JULY 19

Plenty of reissues this month – don't forget the Herzog season at BFI Southbank. But top is this delightful comedy starring Hepburn and Peck.

### SPRINGSTEEN & I

OPENS JULY 22

Contains material supplied by fans to give their own personal viewpoint of The Boss. Ridley Scott produces.

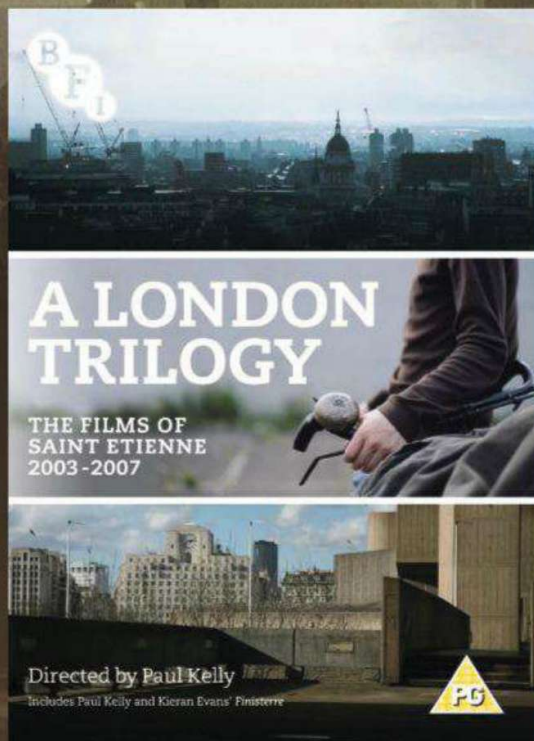
### THE WOLVERINE

OPENS JULY 25

The addition of the definite article ahead of his name suggests we should be wary of inferior imitations. This, surely, is not just any old Wolverine, but The Wolverine.



# THE FILMS OF SAINT ETIENNE

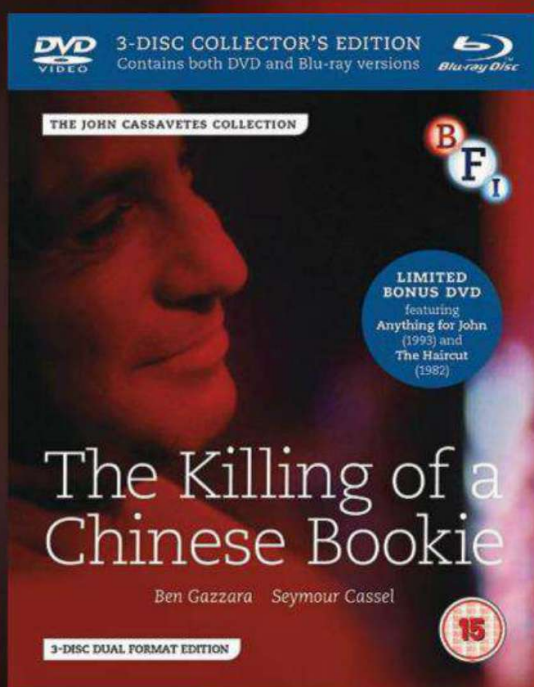


## DVD

Available on one DVD for the first time, three films made by the band Saint Etienne with filmmaker Paul Kelly (*Lawrence of Belgravia*).

Includes rare and previously unseen shorts.

# CLASSIC CASSAVETES



## 3-Disc Collector's Edition

First time on Blu-ray.  
Stars Ben Gazzara and  
directed by John Cassavetes.

Limited Collector's Edition  
includes the 1993 documentary  
*Anything For John*, and the rare  
1982 short *The Haircut* (starring  
John Cassavetes).



## THIS MONTH: PORTLANDIA, THE BEATLES, PARKS AND RECREATION

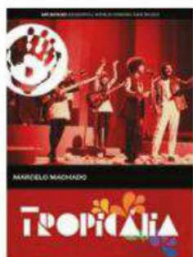
The leading lights of Tropicália, 1968: (c/wise from top left) Jorge Ben, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Rita Lee, Gal Costa, Arnaldo Baptista, Sérgio Dias



# TROPICÁLIA

MRBONGO FILMS

**Alegria, Alegria!** The brief, exhilarating history of a Brazilian musical revolution. *By John Mulvey*



7/10

WHEN UNPLEASANT right-wing governments seize control, a lot of wishful thinking often goes on among radical artists. Hard times, they speculate, will encourage a new counterculture; angry political art will flourish in the face of oppression. We heard a lot of this rhetoric from dissenters trying to put a positive gloss on the

election of David Cameron in 2010. But as yet, a cultural revolt against the Tories, if there is one, remains too underground to register on most radar.

In late-'60s Brazil, however, there was ample evidence of how inspiring – and messy – the political reactions of artists could be. A military coup in 1964 had overthrown a leftist government, and protest could be found on the streets, in art galleries, even at TV song contests. While many of the country's young musicians vehemently opposed the regime, they were not – as so often happens on the left – above squabbling among themselves.

At the TV Globo festival in 1968, Caetano Veloso provoked what, from the sound recordings and photographs in *Tropicália*, looks rather like a riot among the audience of left-leaning students. A year earlier, Veloso had colluded with other Brazilian artists to come up with a new movement that they named Tropicália. Their guiding principle was anthropophagy, or cannibalism: anything and everything – Brazilian folk music, American and British rock, the avant-garde, movies, philosophy,

surrealism – would be enthusiastically devoured and regurgitated in a new form.

For a couple of years, the Tropicálistas – chiefly Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Os Mutantes, Gal Costa, Nara Leão and Tom Zé – made a series of mostly terrific albums showcasing a fierce local interpretation of '60s rock. But as Marcelo Machado's new documentary illustrates, they had to contend with the opprobrium of both the military regime and most of the left-wing establishment.

That leftist opposition was suspicious of even the most subversive American music, prizing the sanctity of Brazilian indigenous forms. When Veloso, backed by Os Mutantes, performed what was ostensibly a feedback jam at the TV Globo song contest, the hardline audience were appalled by what they perceived as a manifestation of American cultural imperialism. In *Tropicália* you can see Mutantes turn their backs on the crowd's missiles, and hear Veloso ranting above the boos, "If you're the same in politics as you are in aesthetics, then we're done for." "We left the theatre a little frightened," recalled Veloso in his autobiography. "On the sidewalk out front people were screaming."

It's a compelling story, and one of many that Machado chooses to tell impressionistically in his movie. *Tropicália* begins with Gil and Veloso performing "Alfomega" together in 1969 and proclaiming, with typical contrariness, that "Tropicália as a movement doesn't exist anymore." From there, Machado unleashes a kaleidoscopic bombardment of music and images, while the major players provide rueful and (especially from Zé and the piratical theorist, Rogério Duarte) idiosyncratic commentaries. "The Tropicália aesthetic was the

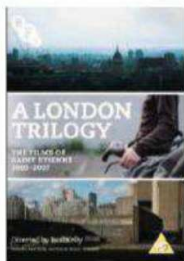
only one that could take my contradictions," claims Duarte. "Between the rogue and the man of culture... Between the European and the African."

Certain knowledge is assumed, or at least deemed unnecessary: "anthropophagy" is never quite explained. The richness of the subject matter means there is little room for some extraordinary tales, like that of Torquato Neto, the lyricist and "Bad Angel" who introduced marijuana to the scene before committing suicide in 1972. Os Mutantes could fill a film by themselves, and Machado interviews not only Sérgio Dias, the reformed band's sole original member, but also singer Rita Lee and, frustratingly briefly, Dias' brother, Arnaldo Baptista, whose life was derailed by a taste for LSD and a leap from a hospital window.

The focus, understandably, rests on Gil and, especially, Veloso; "A sort of civilising hero," says Zé admiringly of the latter. Machado documents the pair's 1969 arrest, imprisonment and subsequent exile in hippy London, and uncovers home movies that show them as part of an anarchic happening at the Isle Of Wight Festival. He's not afraid of letting a whole song tell its own story, either, so the doleful, hirsute Veloso is caught in close-up, playing "Asa Branca" on French TV, his words devolving into buzzes, clicks and rhythmic lip-smacks.

Finally, Machado runs an extended clip of the pair returning to their home state of Bahia in 1972. It begins with the ecstasies of Carnival, before Gil and his band kick into a wild version of "Back In Bahia". For much of the film, the director has kept his protagonists hidden, only using his new interviews as voiceovers. Now, though, he reveals Veloso and Gil watching the old footage of themselves, movingly singing along, reflecting on a brief but seismic period in their lives, and in the history of Brazilian music. In 1968, the artist Hélio Oiticica had printed the image of a protester knocked to the ground that became a flag of the Tropicália movement, emblazoned with the slogan, "Seja marginal, seja herói" ("Be an outcast, be a hero"). Soon enough, Gil and Veloso would become part of Brazil's musical establishment, but on their own, unusually fearless terms. **EXTRAS:** None.





## A LONDON TRILOGY

The Films Of Saint Etienne 2003-2007  
BFI

**Paeans to the capital**  
Released as a companion to Saint Etienne's 2002 album of the same name, Paul Kelly and Kieran Evans' film *Finisterre* is a stylish, idiosyncratic riff on underappreciated

8/10

aspects of London. Its poetic appeal is underscored by 2005's *What Have You Done Today, Mervyn Day?*, which celebrates the run-down area that was about to become the Olympic Park. 2007's *This Is Tomorrow*, on the Royal Festival Hall, is a more conventional slice of modernist nostalgia.

**EXTRAS:** Five shorts, including *Banksy In London* and *Today's Special* (on London cafés); booklet.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



## THE BEATLES

Help!  
UNIVERSAL

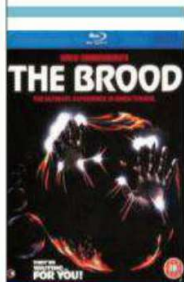
**Blu-Ray debut for the mop-tops' sophomore movie**  
*A Hard Day's Night* director Richard Lester's second Beatles film – the one with them all living in the same house and getting into trouble when a

8/10

sacrificial cult tries to grab Ringo's ring. It's not the landmark that the first movie was, but it's fast, sarky and brilliantly dumb, and includes Paul McCartney getting shrunk. Decent tunes, too.

**EXTRAS:** The Blu-Ray version replicates the 2007 DVD's extras: making-of, deleted scene, trailers, new interviews, 5.1 soundtrack, and a booklet featuring Martin Scorsese's appreciation.

DAMIEN LOVE



## THE BROOD

SECOND SIGHT

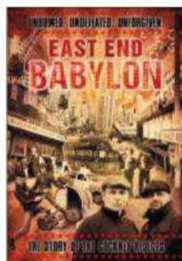
**Bad feelings = killer kids in David Cronenberg's 1979 nightmare**  
A restrained Oliver Reed heads a psychiatric institute devoted to "psychoplasms," a therapy through which disturbed patients develop external,

7/10

physical manifestations of their repressed rage. Mayhem begins when the institute's star patient Samantha Eggar's murderous feelings grow legs... An underrated, slightly hysterical example of how David Cronenberg generates chilly unease by setting extreme ideas against the most mundane backdrops.

**EXTRAS:** New cast and crew interviews, including Cronenberg on his early days.

DAMIEN LOVE



## THE COCKNEY REJECTS

East End Babylon  
CADIZ MUSIC

**Oi! City Confidential**  
The producers of the 2009 Dr Feelgood film *Oil City Confidential* may have less inspiring material to work with here, but like that earlier documentary the story

6/10

of Canning Town's Cockney Rejects doubles as a post-war social history of the region that spawned them. The band saw rock'n'roll as an escape from poverty, but unwanted audience elements (football hooligans, the British Movement) made major labels and concert promoters jittery, although they belatedly thrive on the 21st Century punk nostalgia circuit.

**EXTRAS:** Deleted scenes.

TERRY STAUNTON



## HOUSE OF CARDS

SONY HOME ENTERTAINMENT

**Glossy but gritty remake of a Brit classic**

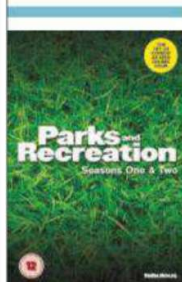
The US take on Michael Dobbs' '90s BBC political drama is a slicker affair than the original, especially the early David Fincher-directed episodes. Kevin Spacey plays

8/10

majority whip Francis Underwood as an old school Southern gentleman (retaining Ian Richardson's straight-to-camera narration from the Brit version), plotting to bring down the president while keeping his own hands free of blood. Robin Wright as Underwood's wife and Michael Kelly as his co-conspirator underling also stand out in an impressive ensemble cast.

**EXTRAS:** None.

TERRY STAUNTON



## PARKS AND RECREATION

Series 1 + 2  
FABULOUS FILMS

**Mockumentary sitcom a cut above the rest**

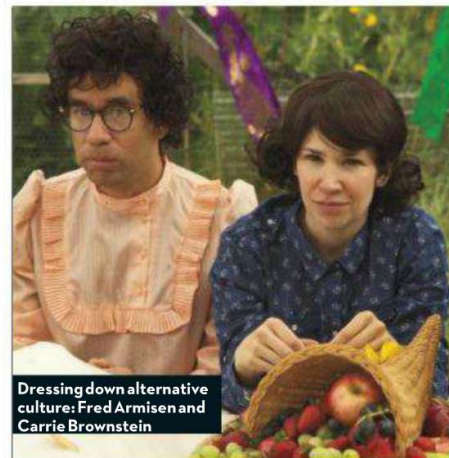
Set in the parks department in (fictional) Pawnee, Indiana, *Parks And Recreation* is a workplace mockumentary, ostensibly driven by Amy

9/10

Poehler's cheerful, can-do deputy director, Leslie Knope. But equally important are her colleagues, from the apathetic April to office wheeler-dealer Tom. Scenes are stolen, however, by Nick Offerman's department director, the inscrutable, magnificently moustached Ron Swanson. Sweet-natured, never snarky, with a genuine interest in the characters and brilliantly funny one-liners, this is the best show currently on television.

**EXTRAS:** None.

MICHAEL BONNER

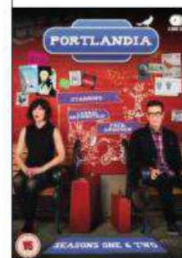


Dressing down alternative culture: Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein

## PORTLANDIA

Seasons One & Two

MEDIUM RARE



7/10

**US show takes affectionate aim at alternative culture**

*Portlandia* takes place in a version of the '90s where the Bush administration never happened, where vegan bakeries, feminist bookstores and artisan lightbulb companies thrive and where, according to the show's anthem "Dream Of The '90s", all the hot girls wear glasses, people aspire to attend clown school and the preferred mode of transport is the unicycle.

*Portlandia* – which is now on its third series – is the creation of former *Saturday Night Live* cast member Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein, guitarist/vocalist with Sleater-Kinney and Wild Flag. A sketch-based comedy, *Portlandia* is a satire on the hyper-local alternative culture that began in the '90s as a response to globalisation and which has now become as homogenous as the mainstream itself. Although notionally set in Portland, Oregon, *Portlandia* is familiar to anyone who's ever been to Broadway Market, Brighton or Williamsburg: hipster enclaves where a café is also an interactive art installation and Scandinavian deli.

In a *Portlandia* restaurant, diners require assurances about the provenance of the menu's "heritage breed, woodland-raised chicken". A couple set free a pet dog tied to a chair outside a restaurant – "Who puts their dog on a pole like a stripper?" – and the mayor plays bass in a dub band called King Desmond And The Accelerators.

Although many of the characters reflect the culture of hipster one-upmanship – my vintage artisan coffee roaster is more vintage and artisan than yours – it never feels like *Portlandia* is entirely mocking its subject. Perhaps because Brownstein was herself part of the '90s alt. culture, the show has good insider observation but doesn't feel as disdainful of its subject as *Nathan Barley*.

Armisen and Brownstein play most of the parts, with occasional guests – Kyle MacLachlan has a recurring spot as the mayor, while you'll also spot Gus Van Sant, Steve Buscemi, Eddie Vedder, Robin Pecknold, Joanna Newsom and Johnny Marr. But at the core of *Portlandia* is the acknowledgement that the '90s alternative dream failed. It's become as commodified as the culture it sought to escape from. It's all gone straight to hell in a vintage artisan handcart.

**EXTRAS:** Audio commentaries, bloopers, extended and deleted scenes, videos and featurettes. MICHAEL BONNER



NME SPECIAL COLLECTORS' MAGAZINE

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MYTHS

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# Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

"At some point, you'll realise I'm doing what I've never done before..."  
Siouxsie, a vision in PVC, at Meltdown 2013

## SETLIST

### SIOUXSIE

- 1 Happy House
- 2 Tenant
- 3 Trophy
- 4 Hybrid
- 5 Clockface
- 6 Lunar Camel
- 7 Christine
- 8 Desert Kisses
- 9 Red Light
- 10 Paradise Place
- 11 Skin
- 12 Eve White/Eve Black
- 13 Israel
- 14 Arabian Knights
- 15 Cities In Dust
- 16 Dear Prudence
- 17 Loveless
- 18 Face To Face
- 19 Careless Love
- 20 Here Comes That Day
- 21 Into A Swan

### YOKO ONO

- 1 Moonbeams
- 2 Don't Stop Me
- 3 (Waiting For The) D Train
- 4 Between My Head And The Sky
- 5 Moving Mountains
- 6 Calling
- 7 There's No Goodbye
- 8 Walking On Thin Ice
- 9 Rising
- 10 Yes, I'm A Witch
- 11 Cheshire Cat
- 12 Mind Train
- 13 Don't Worry Kyoko
- 14 Higa Noburu



## YOKO ONO/SIOUXSIE

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON, JUNE 14-15, 2013

Walking on thin ice... Yoko's Meltdown festival opens with good vibes, avant-garde activism... and *Kaleidoscope*

**E**VEN THOUGH WE admire her wry conceptual art and her thrilling experimental music, the true genius of Yoko Ono resides in her talent for marketing. As The Beatles owned "love", Ono and John Lennon effectively held the monopoly on "peace". As much as the pair's beliefs were sincere, their aims ambitious and multilateral, Ono's packaging of their message was so effective, "peace" has also become a signpost back to Lennon/Ono as much as it is an ongoing message of hope.

An endower of foundations, an initiator of ambitious projects as well as an artist, Yoko is obviously a prime candidate to curate Meltdown – essentially a music festival, but one where a conceptual unity is more important than bringing in the big names. Oddly, given her legend, influence, and longevity (she turned 80 this year), Yoko's own opening night

performance is not oversubscribed – as of a day before the show, tickets were still available. Perhaps in spite of all the free-thinking and feminist revolution she encouraged with her late husband, we are still so conservative as to find the idea of a Yoko Ono show a little too challenging.

Which is a bit of a shame. In lieu of a support act, Yoko screens her 1966 *Film No 4* ("Bottoms"), and a biographical movie of her life and career highlights. We see the affluent child, scion of a wealthy Japanese banking family; the mid-1960s vocal improviser; the instructional artist. Then John: "bed peace", assassination and afterwards. We are handed a white "Ono chord" torch to shine at moments of communal good vibes.

These prove to be in plentiful supply. Yoko herself (black cardie, blue jeans, very big wedge shoes) seems a little frail, but still commands proceedings, striking a series of idiosyncratic poses.

The band (led by Sean Lennon, and featuring members of Cibo Matto and other hipsters in fedoras) honour both the LCD Soundsystem afterparty that is Ono's music post-1980, and also take a fair tilt at the 1969-'72 freakouts ("Mind Train"; "Don't Worry Kyoko", which features guest vocals from Peaches). For this last number, torches are flashed, and a select band of adventurous boomers ("We love you, Yoko!") stand swaying and freakdancing in their shoulderbags at the front of the stage.

Rushing the stage, or at least abandonment of the Royal Festival Hall's traditional seating plan and heading to the front, is very much a measure of the polite and tasteful insurrection available at Meltdown. On the next night of this, the "Activism Weekend" (in which initiative is encouraged via the medium of ticketed daytime workshops and talks), Siouxsie Sioux's fans, duly empowered, charge the stage for a better look. For this





Eighty years young...  
curator Yoko Ono at  
the Royal Festival Hall

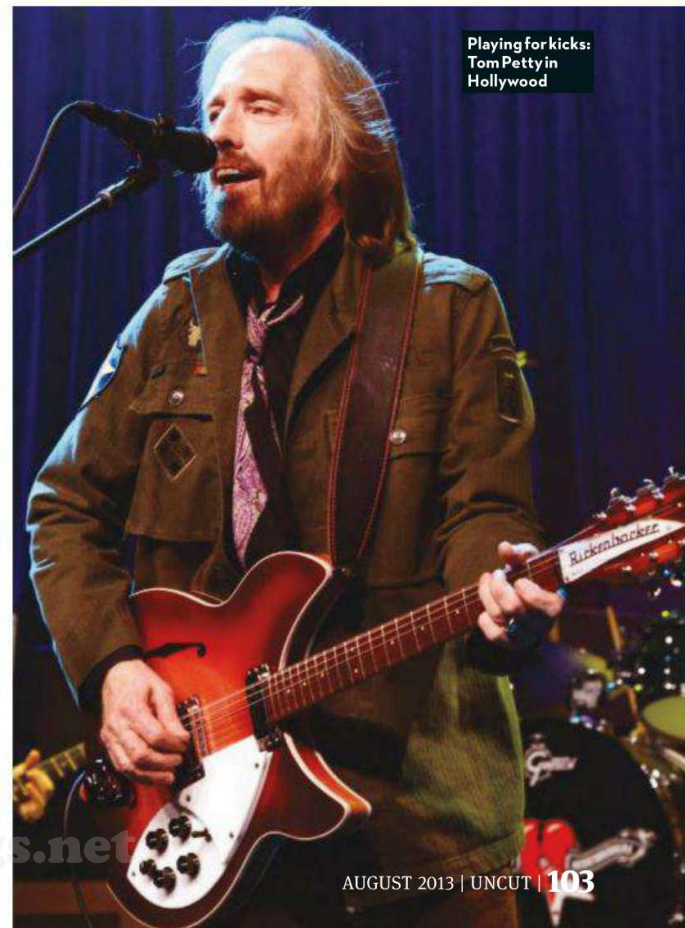
# Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers

THE FONDA THEATER, HOLLYWOOD, JUNE 3, 2013

A night of justified self-indulgence  
and "the ghosts of LA"...

**F**OLLOWING FIVE NIGHTS of deep cuts and covers at New York's Beacon Theatre, Tom Petty and his cohorts returned home to LA for a six-night stand at the 1,200-capacity Fonda, as a band with nothing left to prove – who can play whatever they want for their own pleasure and that of their core constituents. Like all the sets, this one begins with The Byrds' "So You Want To Be A Rock'n'Roll Star" (Mike Campbell lifting it into "Eight Miles High" orbit with his Rickenbacker soloing), while also containing "Love Is A Long Road" and *Hard Promises*' "A Woman In Love (It's Not Me)", *Southern Accents*' regional and romantic credo "Rebels" and the Dylan-Petty Wilburys collab "Tweeter And The Monkey Man", morphing into a Dead-inspired lysergic slow jam. There is also the unvarying big finish, kicking off with a Led-Zep-heavy "I Should Have Known It" from 2010's *Mojo*, followed by "Refugee", "Runnin' Down A Dream" and *Wildflowers*' You Wreck Me", before coming full circle with the regal jangle and hormonal urgency of their first hit, "American Girl".

The rest of these 20-song, two-hour sets changes from night to night, although Petty keeps coming back to Little Feat's "Willin'" (namechecking Lowell George as one of "the ghosts of LA" on night one at the Fonda) and the crowd-pleaser "Melinda", a murder ballad turned Allmans-style jazzbo workout that appears only on *The Live Anthology*. But this is Campbell's show as much as Petty's, the guitarist giving a viscerally elegant performance on at least a dozen guitars (and one electric mandolin), frequently causing the face of the generally tamped-down bandleader to light up in a smile as big as the Hollywood Sign. On this early June evening, Petty clearly revels in the knowledge that he has the best of everything, to namecheck one song they don't play – or, as he put it to me 25 years ago, the sheer joy of being in *this* band that makes *this* sound. **BUD SCOPPA**



Playing for kicks:  
Tom Petty in  
Hollywood

in its wake, would come goth, but the songs performed on the album by the original MkII Banshees (bassist Steve Severin, drummer Budgie, and notably by guitarist John McGeoch) mark the moment at which the band's Spartan two-note guitar figures gained a third note hitherto thought to be in sole ownership of Keith Levene, and hinted at a primitive, Byrdsian psychedelia.

This was still occasionally an uncertain, slightly ebbing and flowing music – an often ramshackle quality that is maybe missing from the performance tonight. Siouxsie's current band (drummer Rob Brian; bassist Joe Short and guitarist Steve Evans) play what you might call the indie disco versions of the songs – a steely-eyed professionalism and dedication to a pounding 4/4 beat replacing the occasionally rather teetering original performances. What it lacks in charm, it certainly makes up for in drive: as well as expected singles highlights like "Christine", fan favourite tracks like "Hybrid" are given a powerful reboot.

At times, it can all seem a little robotic and professional (one wonders, particularly, if Joe Short really needs to change bass guitar as many times as he does), but Siouxsie herself is an unexpectedly humanising presence. She pulls many of her historic moves, and imperious gestures, but equally has fun: she tries on a fan's sunglasses and poses in them ("Thanks..." she hams, "...but no thanks") before handing them back. Much as Yoko had, rather than drinking in the adulation, she is less aloof and rather more unguarded than you might think. It's as if she knows that she is among friends, and feels that is something that should not be taken advantage of.

After the album set, Siouxsie returns, having shed a layer of PVC skin, to play an encore set of hits: "Israel", "Arabian Nights", "Cities In Dust" and her recent songs from movie soundtracks. "Dear Prudence" is, fairly reasonably, dedicated to Yoko. There are a mere two songs from her most recent collection. "I suppose I'd better play something from *MantaRay*," she says, and sounds none too keen on the idea.

One wonders then, if having avoided it for so long, nostalgia might now provide Siouxsie with a new lease of life. As if, in the least punk rock way imaginable, going back might now be a productive way for her to go forward. **JOHN ROBINSON**

august venue, it is like punk actually happened. It has been six years since Siouxsie's last album, *MantaRay*, and expectations are high: she has instantly sold out two shows this week. Darkness descends, as does a backdrop of Venetian (oh, OK, Japanese) blinds.

"At some point," says Siouxsie, after the band play a faithful version of "Happy House", "you'll realise I'm doing what I've never done before." She is dressed, strikingly, in a flowing white PVC boiler suit/dress, which gives her the appearance of a post-punk Miss Havisham. This impression might not be entirely inappropriate: what she and her band are doing, it quickly turns out, is playing her album *Kaleidoscope* in its entirety.

The crowd (a rump of back-combed, chicken-dancing fiftysomethings; a smattering of second-generation fans) are delighted, but it's an interesting cause for celebration. On the one hand, we applaud the part that Siouxsie has played in helping a group of confused and alienated youth to articulate itself. On the other, for an artist that seems to have an amusingly wry sense of her own status (she addresses herself in the third person, that kind of thing), it seems a little odd that she should choose an adventurous forum like this to play a nostalgia show, and one appended by a second encore set of greatest hits, at that.

*Kaleidoscope*, released on August 1, 1980, remains a highpoint in the architecture of Siouxsie's contribution to post-punk. Later,



The Strypes:  
sharp-suited  
R'n'B with a  
dollop of Jam



# Club Uncut At The Great Escape

THE DOME STUDIO, BRIGHTON, MAY 16-18, 2013

In which *Uncut* and some of our favourite bands decamp to Brighton, and a gang of barely pubescent Irish boys bring it all back home...

**B**ECAUSE THEY'RE BARELY old enough to vote, drive or get served in a pub, seen-it-all-before cynics might be inclined to think of **The Strypes** as a novelty act, a bit of a gimmick, One Direction in Ray-Bans. This is bollocks, frankly. Opening the final night of Club Uncut at the Great Escape, hundreds of people locked out of the Dome Studio, they tear it up with an astonishing swagger, guitarist Josh McClorey and vocalist Ross Farrelly looking fantastic in the kind of clobber Dylan affected as a cool new look on the cover of *Bringing It All Back Home*.

They're commonly said to be a

throwback to the Stones and other powerhouse rhythm and blues bands of the mid-'60s, like Them or The Yardbirds, evocative therefore of a sharp-suited time before everyone started wearing kaftans and growing beards. There's a lot of that about them, yes, not least in their repertoire, which features stinging versions of classics like "CC Rider", "You Can't Judge A Book By The Cover" and "Rollin' And Tumblin'" alongside their own songs, of which "Blue Collar Jane" is a stand-out. Watching them, however, I'm transported somewhere sweaty like The Hope & Anchor 10 years later, the pre-punk days when Dr Feelgood

were a riotous alternative to the era's pomp rock. There's a whole dollop of early Jam in the mix, too.

I'm just thinking that if this was 1976, they'd be signed to Stiff, managed by Jake Riviera, with Nick Lowe as their producer, when they blast into a version of Nick's "Heart Of The City", played even faster than Rockpile used to do it. They're so good they threaten to make what follows slightly irrelevant. **Mary Epworth's** plucky performance, with its unexpected cover of "The Four Horsemen", by Aphrodite's Child, is totally winning, though. And both **White Fence** and **Woods**, when they crank things up, make a

formidable racket, although with the latter there's an awful lot of rather polite country rock to negotiate first.

On the previous nights, **Red River Dialect's** cultured Americana survives a series of technical problems, guitar maestros **Dean McPhee** and **C Joynes** dazzle, **Lord Huron** are typically stirring and gone too quickly, while **Charlie Boyer & The Voyeurs** sport the festival's worst haircuts and, like Heavenly labelmates **Toy**, are in thrall to the VU of "What Goes On". **Mikal Cronin's** headlining set on Friday night is becoming slightly predictable before it takes off for a spectacular final 30 minutes of guitar feedback and screeching electric violin. On the same bill, **Allah-Las** are as evocative as The Strypes of another musical era, but are likewise less pastiche than brilliant reinvention. The druggy new undertow of their performance is highly addictive. **Phosphorescent**, topping Thursday's bill, are magnificent, too. The recent *Muchacho* album provides early set highlight "Song For Zula", before Matthew Houck digs into his back catalogue for "Los Angeles", a guitar freak-out as delirious as anything Neil Young & Crazy Horse come up with a month later at London's O2. See you next year. **ALLAN JONES**



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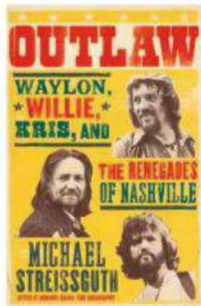
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# Books

BY ALLAN JONES



**Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, And The Renegades Of Nashville**

Michael Streissguth  
IT BOOKS

8/10

FROM ITS TITLE, Michael Streissguth's *Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, And The Renegades Of Nashville* sounds like it might be a somewhat lurid account of the careers of three of Nashville's most colourful and enduring legends, a compendium of riotous escapades, reckless adventures and generally hard living. There are plenty of great stories here – especially when Streissguth is writing about Waylon, who always had a hint of the mad dog shit-kicker about

him. On the whole, though, the book is less an anthology of boisterous hell-raising than a much more thoughtful and illuminating history of Nashville and the cabal of labels, producers, publishers, managers and agents who for decades pulled all the strings and orchestrated the 'Nashville Sound', holding the artists signed to them in a kind of bondage, denying them any individual say in their careers.

The country divisions of the major labels based in Nashville, principal among them RCA and Decca, respectively headed by Chet Atkins and Owen Bradley, were enormously powerful and wholly dictated to these artists what they recorded, who produced them, who played on their sessions, how they were marketed. It was the attitude of the labels and the people who ran them that their artists were by and large interchangeable, eventually unimportant, easily replaced if they stepped out of line, questioned the traditional ways of doing things, forgot their place or behaved with anything less than uncomplaining, cap-doffing servility.

Even the biggest-selling acts were expected to simply do as they were told, unquestioningly, with mute obedience. Maybe only Johnny Cash, by force of personality and simply because he was Johnny Cash and no-one wanted to fuck with him, was exempt from the total authority exerted by the self-serving and ultra-conservative Nashville establishment. That small but aggressive corporate clique had dedicated itself to the preservation of what they considered the true virtues of country music, which was something safely commercial, pandered to undemanding appetites for gloss and schmaltz, the syrupy and sentimental, and was stubbornly resistant to change of any kind. Even Cash, though, was eventually humbled. What by then was left of Nashville's old order no doubt smirked knowingly when Cash, who had loomed so imperially over the country music landscape, was forced in an attempt to rescue a rapidly unravelling career to record a novelty song in 1985 called 'The Chicken In Black' and make a video for it in which he appeared as 'Johnny Chicken', a super-hero fowl in a flowing cape, yellow tunic and baggy blue trousers tucked into galumphing black boots.

It was against the limiting strictures of Nashville orthodoxy that so stifled their creative freedom in the '60s that Willie and Waylon rebelled. There were others in Nashville similarly inclined towards independence from the Nashville assembly lines, among them producers like Fred Foster and Cowboy Jack Clement, but it was Nelson and Jennings who would become most synonymous with what as a partial consequence of their insurrectionary spirit became briefly known as Outlaw Country.



Willie and Waylon: kings of Outlaw Country

By 1965, Willie and Waylon, after years of honing their music in the honky tonks and dance halls of West Texas and Arizona, were both signed by Chet Atkins to RCA, where for most of the decade that followed they languished. No-one disputed Nelson's songwriting talent – in his first year in Nashville he delivered to RCA at least three country music classics in 'Crazy', 'Hello Walls' and 'Funny How Time Slips Away' which were widely and lucratively covered – but as a recording artist his career seemed stillborn, RCA not sure quite how to market him and usually drowning his records with inappropriate strings and cooing backing vocals very much at odds with the raw poetry of his songs and the stripped-down delivery he preferred. Waylon, too, suffered multiple indignities. In the bars of the Southwest, before fetching up in Nashville, Waylon and his band, The Wailors, had honed a tough country rock sound that RCA effectively neutered, Atkins supervising sessions that cast Jennings in a variety of increasingly unlikely musical settings, none of which flattered the rapidly frustrated Waylon, who as much as Willie became angry and disillusioned. Nelson's disenchantment eventually provoked him to quit Nashville altogether and move to Austin, which he established as an alternative country music capital and the centre of a thriving scene of young country songwriters like Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, Rodney Crowell and Steve Earle, likeminded Nashville exiles inspired by his example. Finally free of RCA's restraining clutch, Willie eventually signed to CBS and in 1975 released *Red Headed Stranger*, a record so stripped down it

caused palpitations at his new label (CBS boss Bruce Lundvall thought it sounded like it had been recorded in Willie's kitchen), but which would spend 120 weeks on the country charts, an equal to Johnny Cash's 1968 blockbuster smash, *...At San Quentin*. By then, Waylon too, was exercising unprecedented independence at RCA, whose savvy president Jerry Bradley (Atkins had retired, ill and worn down by his battles with Waylon) was inspired by Nelson's recent success to release *Wanted! The Outlaws*, a compilation of tracks by Willie, Waylon, Waylon's wife Jessi Colter and Waylon's partner in debauched carousing, Tompall Glaser. The album unashamedly exploited the rebel image that had attached itself to its two principals and appealed as much to rock fans as country's more traditional audience. It became the first certified million-selling country album and Waylon's career as a result took off like a rocket, both Willie and Waylon finding a new young crowd who idolised them.

Although he had arrived in Nashville later than Nelson and Jennings, Kris Kristofferson was successful before either, after being offered a publishing deal by Monument's Fred Foster, who also wanted him to record the first of a succession of albums that within a couple of years had made Kristofferson a superstar. Streissguth's descriptions of Kristofferson's scuffling early years in Nashville's West End, a bohemian enclave he compares with Greenwich Village, where hippies and young songwriters drank, smoked dope, partied and made music, are particularly well-evoked, a highlight of an often fascinating book.



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# Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

## RAY MANZAREK

Keyboard player for The Doors

1939-2013

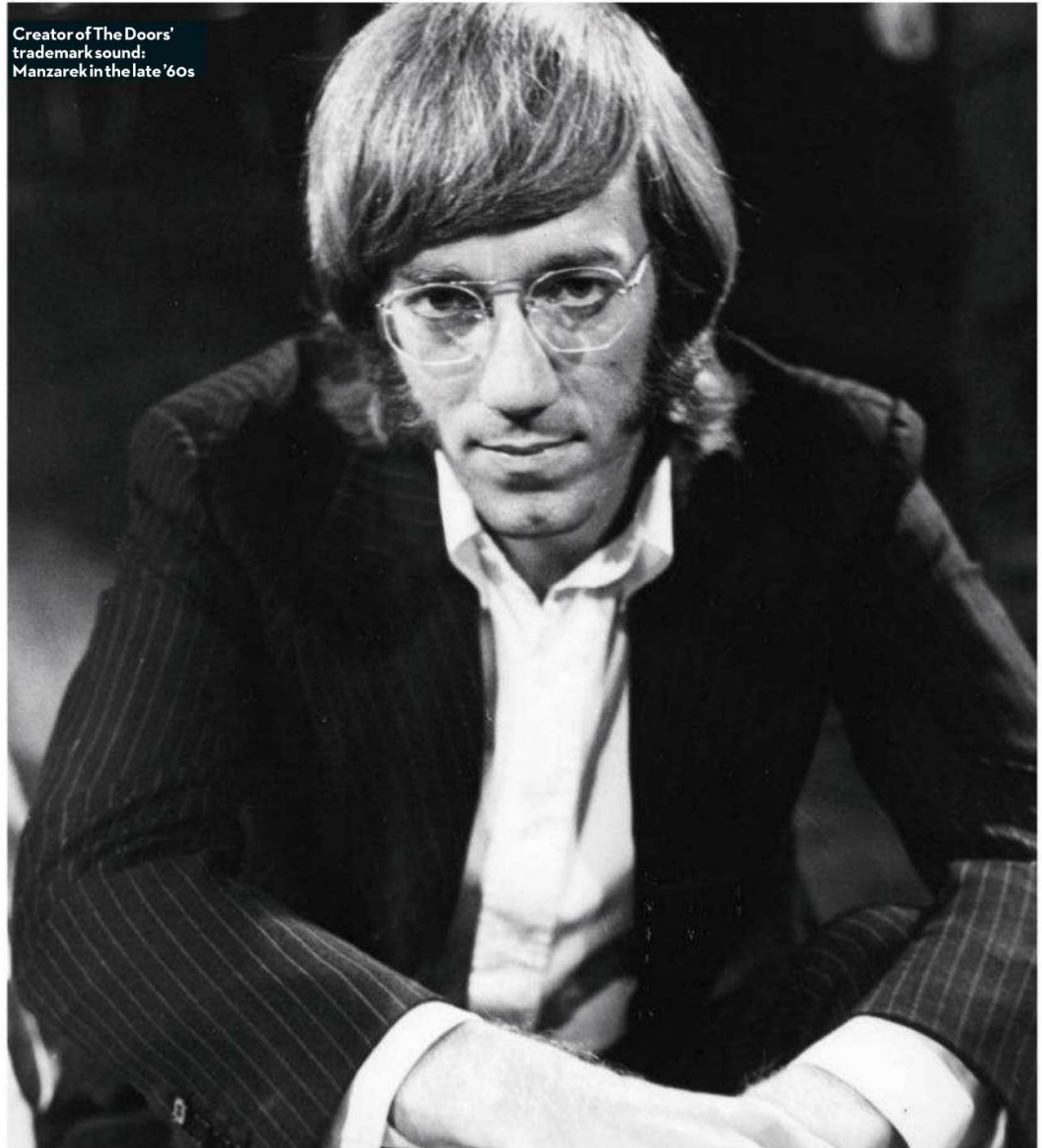
UCLA film school was a fortuitous place to be for Ray Manzarek. During his tenure from 1962-'65, he met future wife Dorothy Fujikawa and fellow attendee Jim Morrison, though it was only a chance encounter with the latter on Venice Beach, a month after graduation, that provided the impetus for the rest of his creative life. Morrison told him he'd written a few songs. When Ray asked what he had, he was treated to a rough cut of "Moonlight Drive". Manzarek immediately suggested they start a band.

The pair set about recruiting drummer John Densmore and, after recording a handful of demos at World Pacific Studios, ex-jug band guitarist Robby Krieger. Signed to CBS, The Doors began a club residency at the London Fog on Sunset Boulevard in early '66. Forgoing a bassist, the classically trained Manzarek preferred to play bass notes on a Fender Rhodes piano. The London Fog was mostly empty, save for a few drunks and the odd sailor. Manzarek later admitted, "It was a very depressing experience, but it gave us time to really get the music together."

The Doors pressed on. It was only when they were hired for a six-month stint at the Whisky A Go Go that their reputation spread. They were quickly snaffled by Elektra boss Jac Holzman on the recommendation of Love's Arthur Lee. "Ray was the catalyst, he was the galvaniser," said Jeff Jampol, most recently manager of Morrison's estate. "He was the one who took Jim by the hand and took the band by the hand and always kept pushing. Without that guiding force, I don't know if The Doors would have been."

Their signature sound was first heard on record on "Break On Through (To The Other Side)", issued in January 1967. A month later, The Doors' self-titled debut, marked by Morrison's allusive blues moan and Manzarek's quasi-

Creator of The Doors' trademark sound: Manzarek in the late '60s



baroque rhythms, now delivered through a Vox Continental organ, hit No 2 in the US album charts.

Across a further five studio albums until Morrison's demise in July 1971, Manzarek's playing became a cornerstone of The Doors' sound. "There was no keyboard player on the planet more appropriate to support Jim's words," offered Densmore. "It was like [Ray and I] were of one mind, holding down the foundation for Robby and Jim to float on top of."

Post-Morrison, the remaining trio limped on for two more albums, '71's *Other Voices* and the following year's *Full Circle*. Manzarek went on to co-found the short-lived Nite City in 1977, before rejoining his old

bandmates for the ill-advised *An American Prayer*. There, they provided uninspired backing for a selection of Morrison's poetry readings, which the singer had intended to be set to an orchestra.

Manzarek went on to produce *Los Angeles*, the first of four LPs with LA punks X. He also worked with Iggy Pop, Philip Glass, Echo & The Bunnymen and Bay Area poet Michael McClure, though The Doors were never quite history. He was savage in his criticism of Oliver Stone's 1991 biopic, in which he was played by Kyle MacLachlan. "Oliver Stone has assassinated Jim Morrison," he seethed. "The film portrays Jim as a violent, drunken fool. That wasn't Jim. When I

walked out of the movie, I thought, 'Geez, who is that jerk?'" In 1998 he published a memoir, *Light My Fire: My Life With The Doors*, and also wrote two novels.

Manzarek and Krieger attempted to revive their old band in 2002, when the pair toured as The Doors Of The 21st Century with different frontmen and drummers. After a lengthy legal dispute over use of the name, Densmore and Morrison's estate successfully sued. Most recently, the duo had been active as the Manzarek-Krieger band, promising a bunch of unheard recordings. Manzarek's final album, *Twisted Tales*, cut with slide guitarist Roy Rogers, was issued shortly after his death.



## ARTURO VEGA

'Fifth Ramone' and logo designer

1947-2013

THE DISTINCTIVE ICONOGRAPHY of the Ramones was the work of graphic designer Arturo Vega, who began his 22-year stint as the New York punks' artistic director in 1974. His best-known signifier was the band's American bald-eagle logo, a sly pastiche of the US Presidential seal emblazoned with the names of the classic lineup and ingrained with their 'Hey Ho Let's Go' call to action. Instead of the eagle holding arrows, Vega gave it a baseball bat (a nod to Johnny Ramone's obsession with the sport) and an apple tree limb in place of the olive branch (his reasoning being that the group were ultimately as American as apple pie). As he explained in Jim Bessman's biography *Ramones: An American Band*: "To me, they reflected the American character in general, an almost

childish, innocent aggression. Then the first time I went to Washington, DC, I thought the Great Seal Of The President Of The United States would be perfect for the Ramones."

Originally an actor and painter from Chihuahua in Mexico, Vega befriended the band while living in a Bowery loft near CBGBs. Joey and Dee Dee Ramone lived with him for some time, the place also doubling as a convenient rehearsal space, prior to the release of their 1976 debut album. His artwork adorns various Ramones sleeves, among them *Leave Home* and *Ramones Mania*. Though their record sales proved erratic over the years, Vega's merchandise, particularly his iconic silk-screened logo T-shirts, served as the band's most reliable form of income. He once confessed to having mixed feelings about it all, "because the problem is that the Ramones T-shirts turned out to be more popular than the music itself". In later years he managed their website and also became the Ramones' archivist. Vega claimed to have attended all but two of their 2,000-plus live gigs.



Arturo Vega (centre) with the Ramones, New York, 1976

## MARSHALL LYTLE

The Comets' bassist

1933-2013

LEGEND HAS IT that Bill Haley taught Marshall Lytle the basics of slap-bass in a 30-minute crash course in 1951. The teenage guitarist later recalled that "I gave it a try and said: 'Hell, I can do that!'" Initially signed up as part of the country-leaning Bill Haley & His Saddlemen, the band soon became the Comets. Lytle's jumping basslines, allied to a similarly kinetic stage presence, were a key element of the group's transition to rock'n'roll on songs like "Crazy, Man, Crazy", "Shake, Rattle And Roll" and 1954 signature hit "Rock Around The Clock". He quit a year later over a wages dispute. Reunited with the Comets in 1987, they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2012.

## HAZEL YARWOOD

Abbey Road engineer

1923-2013

ENGINEER HAZEL YARWOOD oversaw sweeping technological advances during a near-40-year term at Abbey Road Studios. Arriving at EMI in 1947, Yarwood presided over the transition from wax cylinder to reel-to-reel tape. She began by transferring classical discs, before going on to record Cliff Richard in the late '50s. Her main claims to fame were the invention of the diamond cutting

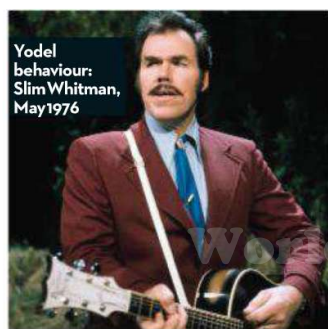
stylus, capable of lasting 75 times longer than the traditional sapphire version, and, in 1979, the creation of EMI's first digital recordings.

## SLIM WHITMAN

Country singer and songwriter

1923-2013

UNTIL BRYAN ADAMS trumped him in 1991, American country singer Slim Whitman held the record for the longest stint atop the UK singles chart. 1955's "Rose Marie" had stayed put for 11 weeks, a sign of his extraordinary popularity in post-war Britain. Discovered by Elvis Presley's manager 'Colonel' Tom Parker in the late '40s, Whitman became known for an easy demeanour, his romantic ballads offset by a reputation as everyone's favourite 'yodelling cowboy'. 1952's "Indian Love Call" was his first major international hit, the song later appropriated by Tim Burton for 1996 sci-fi flick, *Mars Attacks!*. During a career that spanned six decades, Whitman cut over 65 albums, the last being 2010's *Twilight On The Trail*, and shifted some 120 million records.



Yodel behaviour: Slim Whitman, May 1976

## ROMANTHONY

Singer and Daft Punk collaborator

1967-2013

THE PROFILE OF New Jersey DJ and producer Anthony Moore, better known as Romanthony, underwent a major spike in 2001 with the release of Daft Punk's *Discovery*. The French duo brought him in to provide vocals for "Too Long" and "One More Time", the latter reaching No 2 in the UK singles chart. He first appeared on record with 1992 EP "Now You Want Me", issued on his own Black Male label, and subsequently built a reputation as a purveyor of deep house and garage.

## KEN WHALEY

Man bassist and Ducks Deluxe co-founder

1946-2013

IT MAY HAVE only been brief, but Ken Whaley's time with the Welsh prog-blues outfit Man also coincided with the band's most successful years. Their eighth album, 1974's *Rhinos, Winos And Lunatics*, made the UK Top 30, though the bassist decided to leave shortly after the release of follow-up *Slow Motion*. Whaley had begun on the London pub rock scene as a member of Help Yourself, before forming Ducks Deluxe with Sean Tyla and Martin Belmont in 1972. He later worked as a journalist in Camden.

## MARVIN JUNIOR

The Dells' baritone singer

1936-2013

THE KEEN BARITONE of Marvin Junior was a defining feature of US doo-wop group The Dells. Initially formed as The El-Rays, their first hit single arrived with 1956's "Oh What A Night", which later became a million-seller. The following decade saw the release of 1968's *There Is*, the title track making the Top 20. Subsequent successes included "Stay In My Corner", "Always Together" and the medley, "I Can Sing A Rainbow - Love Is Blue". Junior toured with The Dells for over four decades.

## ANDREAS THEIN

Propaganda co-founder

1953/54-2013

Andreas Thein, who has died aged 59 after suffering from cancer, formed the German synthpop outfit Propaganda in 1982 with Susanne Freytag and Die Krupps' Ralf Dörper. Adding Michael Mertens and singer Claudia Brücken to the lineup, they were swiftly signed to Trevor Horn's ZTT label. The band's debut single, "Dr Mabuse", co-written by Thein, made the Top 30 in 1984, though he was asked to leave the band later that year. Thein went on to feature in cult new-wavers Rifi and Kino.



## TREVOR BOLDER

*Spiders From Mars and Uriah Heep bassist*

1950-2013

AMONG THE MANY tributes that followed the news of Trevor Bolder's death from pancreatic cancer was a touching one from a former employer. "Trevor was a wonderful musician and a major inspiration for whichever band he was working with," said David Bowie. "But he was foremostly a tremendous guy, a great man."

Bolder began working with Bowie in June 1971, replacing previous bassist Tony Visconti for an *In Concert* performance for John Peel's BBC radio show. The task of learning a dozen songs in 48 hours successfully met, by the following week Bolder was lining up alongside his old bandmates in The Rats, Mick Ronson and Woody Woodmansey, for the *Hunky Dory* sessions.

Bolder stayed with Bowie for the next two years, becoming one of the Spiders From Mars once its leader had adopted his Ziggy Stardust persona. Schooled in '60s R'n'B and a highly proficient trumpet player from his formative days growing up in Hull, Bolder's clever, agile basslines brought an extra dimension to Bowie's songs. "I never wanted to just be a bass player plonking away," he explained. "I always wanted to have the edge to the sound and be able to play with a

melodic feel." As with his fellow Spiders, Bolder adapted his stage look – stacked boots, big hair, satin and tat – to complement Bowie's glam-futurist image.

He remained through 1973's *Aladdin Sane* and *Pin Ups*, though by then he'd realised that he was surplus to requirements. "The bigger he got, the less we actually saw him," Bolder said of Bowie in 2003. "He separated himself from us towards the end. He was like a solo artist that didn't need us." Post-Bowie, Bolder played on Ronson's mid-'70s solo LPs *Slaughter On 10th Avenue* and *Play Don't Worry*, before recording a Spiders From Mars album with Woodmansey in 1976.

That year also saw the start of the second major phase in his career, when he replaced John Wetton in Uriah Heep. After four albums in as many years, the lineup temporarily disbanded, during which time Bolder joined Wishbone Ash for 1982's *Twin Barrels Burning*. By the following year, though, he was back with Heep, where he remained up until 2011's *Into The Wild*.



Man from Mars: Trevor Bolder in 1976

"Trevor was an all-time great," read a statement from the band, "one of the outstanding musicians of his generation, and one of the finest and most influential bass players that Britain ever produced."

## ALAN O'DAY

*Chart-topping songwriter/singer*

1940-2013

ALAN O'DAY ENJOYED the rare distinction of scoring US No 1 hits both in his own name and for others. 1974's "Angie Baby", a bizarre fable about a strange girl who shrinks a would-be assailant into her radio, was a Billboard chart-topper for Helen Reddy. Three years later, O'Day enjoyed similar success with self-styled "nocturnal novelette", "Undercover Angel". He also wrote hits for Cher ("Train Of Thought"), The Righteous Brothers ("Rock And Roll Heaven") and Bobby Sherman ("The Drum").

## MANDAWUY YUNUPINGU

*Aboriginal-Australian singer-songwriter*

1956-2013

BIOGRAPHER ROBERT HILLMAN cited Aboriginal singer-songwriter Mandawuy Yunupingu as a modern visionary, convinced that "music could become a political agent in making the broad mainstream Australia more aware of the rich Indigenous culture of his people." As frontman of Yothu Yindi, the band he founded in 1986,

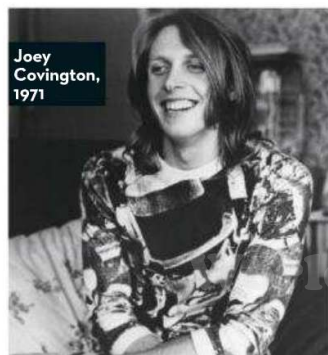
Yunupingu helped bring the sounds of his local Yolngu people to the national stage. In 1992 he was named Australian Of The Year for his work as a musician and educator.

## JOEY COVINGTON

*Jefferson Airplane drummer*

1945-2013

DRUMMER JOEY COVINGTON, who has died in a car accident in California, worked in various New York pick-up bands, backing the likes of The Supremes and The Shangri-Las, before heading out to LA in the late '60s. Falling in with Jefferson Airplane, 1969 saw him replace Spencer Dryden during sessions for *Volunteers* and also join Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady in side-project Hot Tuna. He then featured on the Airplane's *Bark* (singing on their final hit, his own "Pretty As You Feel") and *Long John Silver*, before leaving to form Fat Fandango in 1972. Four years



Joey Covington, 1971

later, Covington re-emerged for Jefferson Starship's *Spitfire*, for which he co-wrote Billboard Top 20 success, "With Your Love". In recent years he toured with the San Francisco AllStars.

## JOHNNY SMITH

*Jazz guitarist*

1922-2013

ALABAMA-BORN JOHNNY SMITH was one of the most versatile guitarists of the post-war era. He began in hillbilly band Uncle Lem And The Mountain Boys, but it was his discovery of jazz that set him on the road to a professional career. In 1952 he issued *Moonlight In Vermont*, with Stan Getz on sax, landing a US hit with the title track. Though perhaps his best-known composition is 1954's "Walk Don't Run", a chart success for both Chet Atkins and The Ventures.

## GRAHAM WALKER

*Co-founder of musical comedy band The Grumbleweeds*

1944-2013

THE GRUMBLEWEEDS WERE a regular act on British radio during the late '70s and throughout the '80s, during which time they also hosted a Granada TV programme that lasted five years. Co-founded

by Graham Walker in Leeds in 1962, they turned professional after a successful appearance on talent show *Opportunity Knocks*. Walker, who also enjoyed occasional acting roles in *Emmerdale*, *Coronation Street* and *Heartbeat*, had recently been touring as a duo with fellow Grumbleweeds original Robin Colvill.

## STEVE HYAMS

*One-time Mott The Hoople singer/guitarist*

1950-2013

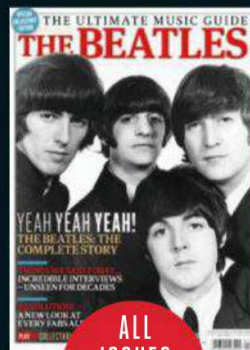
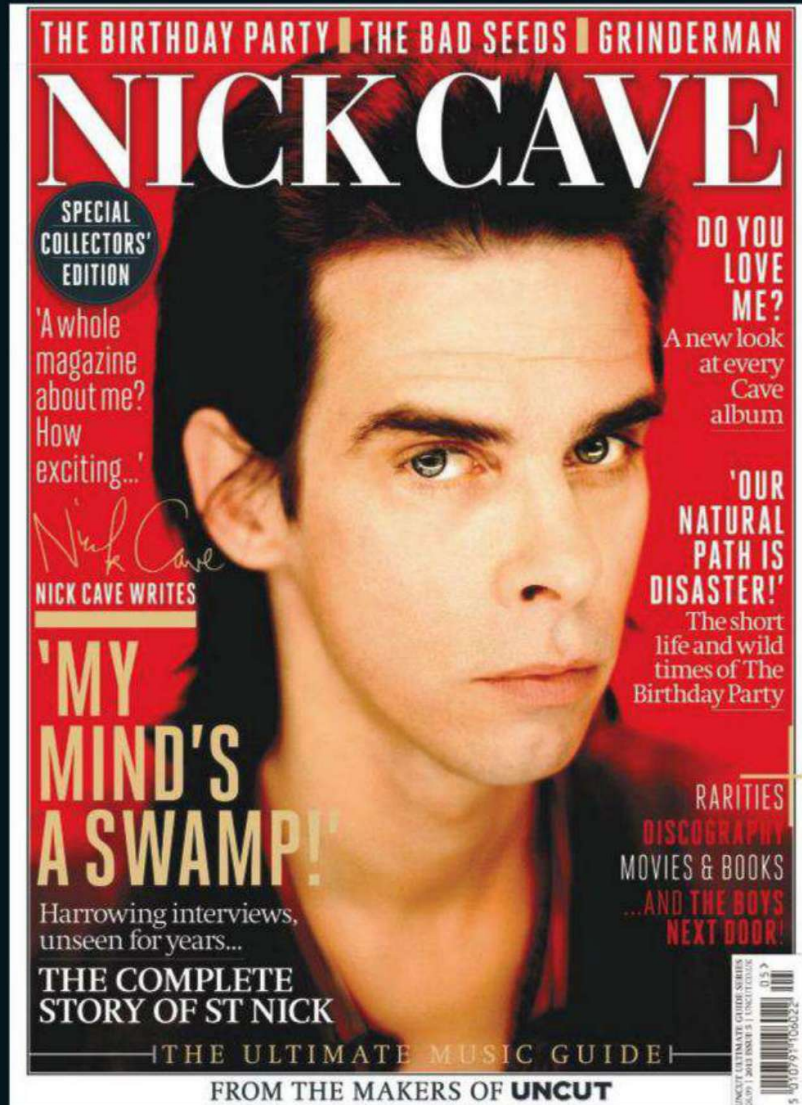
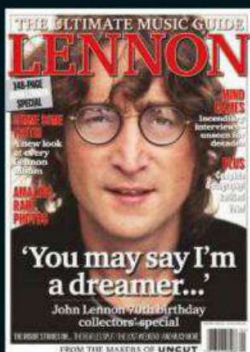
IT WAS A measure of the esteem in which Steve Hyams was held that Ian Hunter recently said: "I would've been really happy if Steve had taken my place after Mott The Hoople finished in 1974. He was unique. Steve's one that got away." Alas, it wasn't to be. Hyams, a singer-songwriter and guitarist who knew Mott from their early days, recorded just one album with them, 1977's *World Cruise*. Due to legal problems over the band's name, it was only issued in 1993. He also fronted The Dig Band and the Steve Hyams Band and cut two solo LPs. 1977's *Mistaken Identities* featured "I Fall Over, I Fall Down", later covered by Marianne Faithfull for the *Broken English* sessions, but not released. **ROB HUGHES**



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## NICK DRAKE VS SUGAR MAN

I was thinking about Nick Drake while recently watching the utterly superb *Searching For Sugar Man* documentary. Both Nick and Rodriguez were making music at exactly the same time – right around 1969-71. Both created superb music (Nick three albums, Rodriguez only two). Both were critically acclaimed (Nick Drake by fellow musicians, producers and intelligent critics; Rodriguez by much of white South Africa). Yet both sold poorly, made little money, ran out of creative steam, lost enthusiasm, lapsed into obscurity. But here the similarities end. Nick was thin-skinned, a well-loved but pampered English schoolboy, quite upper-class, the product of Empire (he was born in Burma to colonial parents). Rodriguez was on the social scrapheap from the beginning. Half-Mexican, quarter-Anglo and a quarter Native American, blue collar, Detroit born and bred, Detroit being one of the most impoverished and violent cities in the US. It's where Michael Moore started out filming the underbelly of American capitalism and all the misery this entails and creates.

Nick didn't handle so-called failure well. He retreated into himself, became reclusive, anti-social, isolated, depressed, perhaps even suicidal. His death was probably an accident, but it was caused by a mental state that needed the anti-depressants that killed him. Guitar purists still hail him as a genius. Famously, no-one can play his songs as he did with their bizarre and intricate guitar tunings. Nick was crushed by the lack of recognition. Rodriguez, on the other hand, had had a lifetime to get used to it. He was tough, resigned, resilient, and didn't even mind doing manual labour, knowing he was greater than it and thus never lost his artistic self-esteem and authenticity because of it. I love the pride he gave his daughters while raising them (apparently without a mother), introducing them to art, music, books, ideas, instilling a sense of culture and confidence in them, and refusing himself to be bitter, being almost Zen-like in his



Rodriguez: survived with dignity intact

acceptance of life and fate. Over the long term this attitude became his ally; when success finally arrived he was already humble in the face of it, taking it in the same stride he had taken failure. He is not just a survivor. He has survived with dignity, which is what his listeners in South Africa had heard in him all along. Amid all the lies, repression and corruption of apartheid, Rodriguez was the sound of truth to them, an article of faith.

In this sense the film is deeply emotional, almost religious. Rodriguez as holy pilgrim, Christ-like. Banished and forsaken, lost in the wilderness for years, then resurrected and triumphant in return. Christ riding the donkey into Jerusalem, Rodriguez riding the jet plane into Cape Town. Palm leaves, concert halls, the crying multitudes, the saviour come home. There onstage the humble pilgrim as Messiah. Yes, miracles always happen in South Africa, the land of Mandela, World Cup rugby triumph and Rodriguez. Someday they will even put Rodriguez on a South African banknote.

Poor Nick. I wish he had had even half the strength and character of Rodriguez. All that precious future music lost!

*Jeff Sievert, Nara, Japan*

## NOT SO SWEET

Thanks for the Rodriguez article in your July issue. Having seen *Searching For Sugar Man*, I was delighted to see him on the Coachella bill and couldn't think of a better setting to witness the undead anti-hero perform live. Wymond Miles' comments about his lack of interest in rehearsals unfortunately explain a lot, however. His set was a disorganised shambles. Songs started and stopped. He instructed the band to cease playing, leaving them redundant onstage. Vocals were mumbled. Such a disappointment. What's next for Sugar Man? I hope he's got it together for the UK gigs.

*Dede' Arneaux, Ayrshire*

## BANG ON, BUCKLEY

So I come into work at Bang On!, the little club that Terry Dunne opened next to Tramps when he expanded the latter back in 1992 and Jeff Buckley is just finishing his soundcheck. Since doors don't open for an hour, we shoot a couple of games of pool on the table that Terry had moved over from Tramps. Minor chit-chat, nothing major. I think he beat me two out of three, much to my chagrin as at the time I fancied myself quite the pool player. He hands me a list with a

few names printed on the back of one of the Bang On! promotional cards. His guestlist.

When Jeff comes on, there are about 10 people in the club, including Baker the soundman, Paul Kiernan, the little prick of a bartender, house manager Terry O'Neill, me and a few punters.

He sings a few songs in that achingly beautiful voice, accompanied only by his own electric guitar, and then comes the extra special payoff: "Hallelujah". I had never heard the song before, but will never forget it. Just magnificent, one of the most dazzling performances I have ever witnessed. Terry O and I just looked at each other in total amazement. Never seen anything like it before or since.

A couple of years after Jeff died tragically, I was cleaning out my drawers and came across Jeff's handwritten guestlist. Apparently, after getting home that night I tossed it in a drawer and never thought about it again. It's one of my prized possessions, and a reminder that I was actually there, that it wasn't a dream, and that on that October night, I witnessed true greatness!!

*Dan Rohan, The Bronx, New York*



## HARVEST FESTIVAL

I am a regular attendee of The Great Escape festival and subscriber of your excellent magazine. The standard of the *Uncut* stage this year was awesome. Thursday night it was the turn of Matthew Houck of Phosphorescent to dazzle us with a virtuoso performance full of emotion and superb musicianship. He was ably supported by the excellent Lord Huron. On Friday I saw the Deap Vally sisters rocking and then Billy Bragg performing from his new album as well as rolling back the years to his first album.

Saturday night it was *Uncut* all the way. The Strypes tore it up, Mary Epworth calmed it down and then it was the psych glory of White Fence. Great musicianship and sound. I was in awe and still in time for a set from Woods that really delivered. I enjoyed seeing about 30 bands over the weekend. I recommend Night Engine and Splashh to name but two. Keep up the great work. The magazine goes from strength to strength.

Kevin Lonsdale, Dorset

## ROCKING ALL OVER THE REVIEW

I just wanted to commend Andrew Mueller for the review of the new Quo album. It is the single funniest review I can recall reading. From the flawless opening line and the elegantly deployed "etc" to the final hammer blow. Brilliant.

Tim Boardman, via email

## A DATE WITH ELVIS

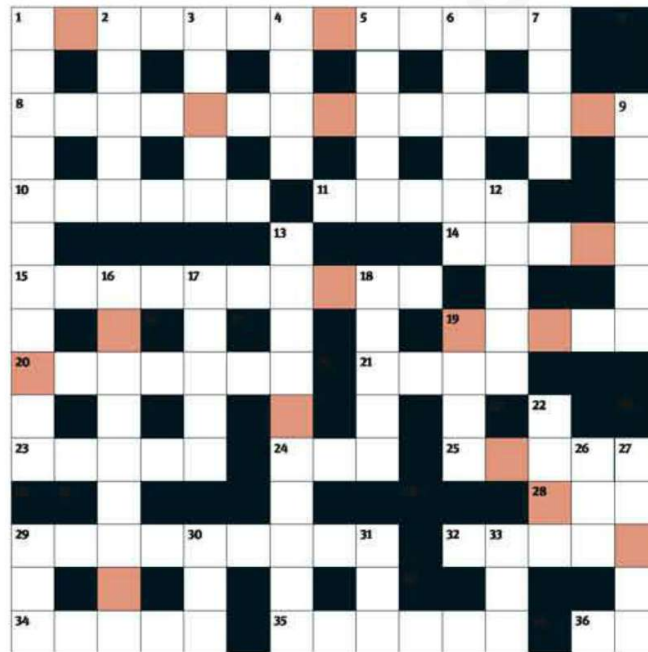
Regarding your July 2013 issue of *Uncut*, page 28, Elvis Costello's "Stranger In The House" was probably written in 1976 (given away as bonus 7" single with *This Year's Model* in 1978), and not during his "Billy Sherrill-produced *Almost Blue* period", which was 1981. What were you thinking?

Martin Curley, via email

## SAME AS THE OLD BOSS

What a sensational article by Richard Williams in the July issue, a terrific look back at Springsteen in the UK. Too bad Williams had to let his politics slide its way into the text when he wrote "...the hideousness of George Bush's two presidential terms...". He is entitled to his opinion, but it's such liberal nonsense, which, considering the subject of the article, fits quite nicely. I can only imagine what Williams thinks of Mr Obama's one-and-a-half-terms thus far as president. "Hideous" is a probably a good place to start.

Jeff Hyatt, via email



## HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by The Band. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* August 2013 Xword Comp, 9th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: July 30, 2013. This competition is only open to European residents.

## CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Queens Of The Stone Age and The Boomtown Rats are of a similar time? That's a wind-up, surely (4-9)
- 8 "Hitch a ride to the end of the highway, where the neons turn to wood", 1970 (2-6-3-4)
- 10+22D Paul McCartney sent his good wishes with this choice compilation album (3-3-4)
- 11 "As a matter of opinion I think he's tops, my opinion is he's the cream of the crop", 1964 (2-3)
- 14 This led to 'corruption and lies' for New Order (5)
- 15 To stop REM getting away with it, you'll need to put your foot down (10)
- 19 Times have changed for this Alice Cooper single (3-2)
- 20 It's wrong to merit just one of The Strokes (7)
- 21 David Lee \_\_\_\_\_, lead singer of Van Halen (4)
- 23 Josh \_\_\_\_\_, Americana singer who's now performing 'The Happiness Waltz' (5)
- 24 "Morning, it's another pure grey morning/Don't know what the \_\_\_\_\_ is holding", from Jake Bugg's "Lightning Bolt" (3)
- 25 The product of the recording was an album for Pearl Jam (5)
- 28 (See 17 down)
- 29 (See 4 down)
- 32 Was there room here for a Moby album? (5)
- 34 Kenny \_\_\_\_\_, charted with 'Up On The Roof' and appeared on the cover of Wings' album *Band On The Run* (5)
- 35 Without any expectation at all of a number from The Vaccines (2-4)
- 36 George Michael and Mary J Blige performance from Glastonbury (2)

## CLUES DOWN

- 1 Bastille's song named after character from TV series *Twin Peaks* (5-6)
- 2 Diana \_\_\_\_\_, jazz pianist and singer and wife of Elvis Costello (5)
- 3 (See 16 down)
- 4+29A Goffin/King song which was a hit for Manfred Mann and Rod Stewart (2-2-3-2-4)
- 5 "\_\_\_\_\_, I'm lost", I said, though I knew she was sleeping", from Simon And Garfunkel's "America" (5)
- 6 Speak freely of numbers by both Mungo Jerry and Leftfield/Lydon (4-2)
- 7 Drummer \_\_\_\_\_ Hartley, whose eponymous band played at Woodstock (4)
- 9 Simon \_\_\_\_\_, his backing band The Big Sound went on to become Gentle Giant (6)
- 12 Bassist with Killing Joke and, along with Paul McCartney, The Fireman (5)
- 13 The clever people were on the way out when the Ramones released this album (5-5)
- 16+3D Club chart not to be fixed for an album by The Lemonheads (3-6-5)
- 17+28A You've got a Morcheeba single? Can I have a look? (3-2-3)
- 18 "We had a quarrel, I was untrue on the night he died", 1964 (5)
- 19 Macy Gray's personal attempt at a song (1-3)
- 22 (See 10 across)
- 26 A bit of Sleeper for a bit of Love (3)
- 27 US R'n'B group whose only UK chart success was in 1969 with "I Can Sing A Rainbow" (5)
- 29 (See 33 down)
- 30+31D "No need to ask me if everything is OK/I got my answer, the only thing I can say, I say \_\_\_\_\_", 1964 (3-3)
- 33+29D A musical score written for album by Neil Finn (3-3)

## ANSWERS: TAKE 193

## ACROSS

- 1 Old Sock, 5+17A Between The Buttons, 9 Memphis, 10 One Slip, 12 Kim Wilde, 14+24A Gil Evans, 15 Daddy's Gone, 16 Fuzz,

- 21+11A Radio Ga Ga, 23+3D Phil Ochs, 26 NYC, 27 Loose Fit, 31 Speak And Spell.

## DOWN

- 1 Oh My God, 2 Damaged, 4+19D Kissing The Pink, 5+28A Blodwyn Pig, 6 The Fly, 7 Ellie Goulding,

- 8 No Parlez, 13 My Guy, 17 Tupelo, 18 Editors, 20 Noah, 21 RSVP, 22 On Call, 25 Gene, 29 Imp, 30 On.

HIDDEN ANSWER  
"Morning Theft"

Compiled: Trevor Hungerford

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## Devendra Banhart

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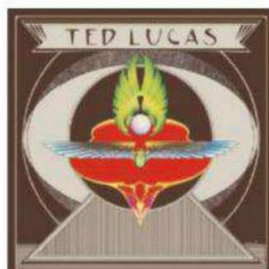
A record that wowed the teenage me

### Live In Chicago, 1999

**Joan Of Arc** 1999

I was 18 when this came out and at the San Francisco Art Institute, and it was really influential, on constant rotation. I can't quite explain why, but the cover was playful and

cerebral, the titles were clever and funny, and the lyrics were just mercurial enough that I couldn't quite penetrate them, so that was seductive. At the beginning of my career I liked to cloak, and to use symbolism and metaphor.



A reliably comforting record

### Ted Lucas

**Ted Lucas** 1975

He was a guitarist and a session musician for Motown, who played with The Supremes and Stevie Wonder. He was a hip, far-out guy who opened up for Ravi Shankar and Frank

Zappa, and I've heard he inspired "Mr Tambourine Man". This is just one of those albums I constantly turn to; it's beautiful, gentle, soulful music. His voice is so pure and rich – it has a debilitating beauty – but it's also comforting.



My introduction to Sun Ra

### We Travel The Space Ways

**Sun Ra** 1967

I discovered Sun Ra through Andy Cabic [of *Vetiver*], who is something of an older brother to me and has an oceanic record collection.

I remember sitting in Andy's apartment

when he put this on and being completely blown away by the album art and by the songs, each one of which felt like a lesson. The music is cerebral and metaphysical at the same time, and led me to discover Ra as a philosopher.



A brain-bending pop fave

### Acnalbasac Noom

**Slapp Happy** 1982

They were a German-British avant-pop group and I guess part of the kosmische/Krautrock movement. They made some futuristic music, but this is close to a perfect pop/art-

rock album. It's fun and playful, proto-everything music – I've never heard anything like it. There's a haiku, a philosophical, humorous element to their lyrics. My favourite of theirs, "Blue Eyed William", is on there [CD reissue only].



A perfect album

### Dreams Less Sweet

**Psychic TV** 1983

This is a perfect album; I think it's a total masterpiece and turn to it very often. When you're faced with an album like this, all you have are blanket statements, but "The Orchids" is one of the most beautiful pop songs I've ever heard, although it's not

representative. The title is perfect, too – it actually sounds like the title. It has a... I don't know if I'd call it darkness, more an esotericism.



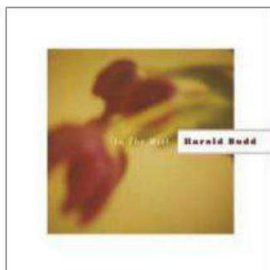
An essay in jazz understatement

### The Easy Way

**The Jimmy Giuffre 3** 1959

Giuffre was an American clarinetist and saxophone player who died in his eighties, having made a huge number of records. This is the type of jazz I like – it's slow and minimal,

almost incidental – like blue jazz – and in a weird way, really ahead of its time. I really like music that feels like it's ever decaying, where the percussive element has either been erased or exists in a room 20 blocks down.



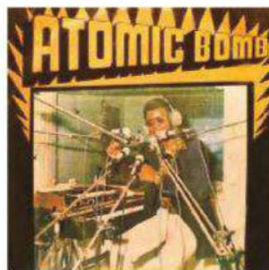
The album that influenced Mala

### In The Mist

**Harold Budd** 2011

I listen to a Harold Budd mix every day and I love all of his albums so much, but this is a good place to start. It influenced what I did on my last record. I have a song called "Für

Hildegard Von Bingen" and he's done a similar thing with real people, only much more elegantly. There's a song called "The Art Of Mirrors (After Derek Jarman)" and I got into Jarman through Budd.



My own irresistible earworm

### Atomic Bomb

**William Onyeabor** 1978

The world might just be better off not hearing this song, which will burrow and propagate its seed exponentially by the second, into the hearts and souls of all humanity. It's the

catchiest song I've ever heard; when it gets in my brain, I can't sleep. He's a mythical character from Nigeria and there's so little information about him, but Luaka Bop is putting out the first reissue of his music.

*Devendra Banhart plays Manchester Ritz on July 17 and London Barbican on July 18. Mala is out now on Nonesuch.*

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