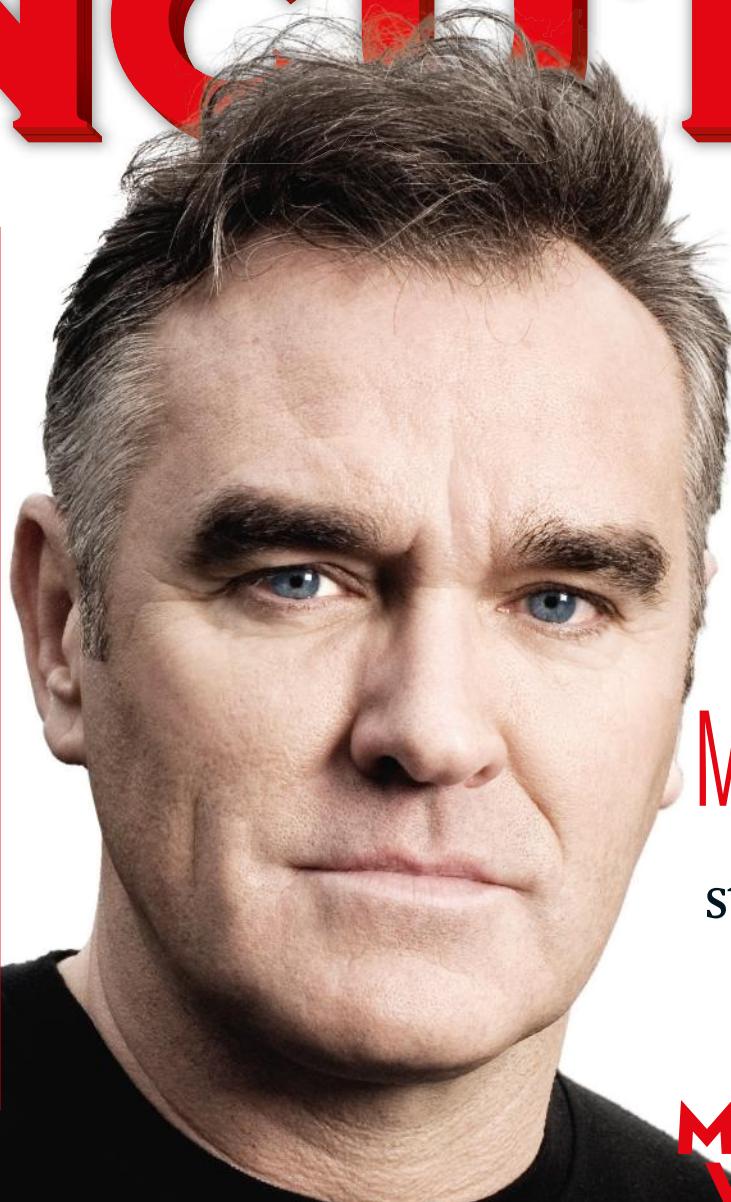


UNCUT

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52-PAGE
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2013
ULTIMATE
REVIEW
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**THE CURE
NICK CAVE
TOM WAITS
NEIL YOUNG**
38 PAGES OF
REVIEWS

1942-2013

LOU REED

"I lie. I hate. I'm going to take it all down with me when I go."

"It was confusing, scary..."

MORRISSEY

The real inside story on his very weird year

EXCLUSIVE!

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

"I've written my Springsteen song!"

THE BEATLES

Uncovered!
The lost Chrimble records

PLUS

NICK LOWE
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4 Instant Karma!

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Matthew E White

Are we rolling?



IF YOU WERE a fan, you probably watched with horror, incredulity and fretful concern at the things Lou Reed put himself through in the '70s, especially after the critical and commercial rejection of *Berlin* hardened an already cynical disposition into an unsparing bitterness and what seemed like a headlong pursuit of self-obliteration. Even more than Keith Richards at the time, Lou seemed the rock star most likely to become a casualty of his addictions.

For many, the abiding image of Lou in those years is probably as the cadaverous Rock 'N' Roll Animal of the live album of that name, recorded in 1973, that he later disowned, its bombastic live versions of several much-loved Velvet Underground classics never popular with his original audience. These were the days when he would startle crowds by tying-off and pretending to shoot up during performances of "Heroin", an Iron Cross shaved on the side of his head, his skin turning green, hypodermics handed out to fans afterwards, a new

kind of rock'n'roll souvenir, which made a change from drumsticks and plectrums but was generally considered to be in pretty poor taste.

That Lou survived the ravages he inflicted upon himself and returned as the '80s closed with some of his strongest work – *New York*, *Magic And Loss*, *Songs For Drella* – seemed close to the miraculous and made you think he must be indestructible, would be around now forever, a ridiculous thought, but you live in hope, or something like it.

He had looked frail at his last London show, at the Royal Festival Hall, in August 2012, but polite enquiries about his health were answered with the reassurance that age not illness was the cause. We know now, though, that he was already desperately sick and had recorded his last album, the controversial Metallica collaboration, *Lulu*, with considerable effort and in no little pain. His death on October 27 blew a big hole in my world for reasons explained in our tribute to him which starts on page 18.

In the world Lou's now left, *Uncut* celebrates its 200th issue this month, with an end-of-year bonanza. In traditional fashion, we present our annual review of the past 12 months, which as ever includes our Albums Of The Year as well as the best reissues, films, DVDs and books, as voted for by nigh on 50 *Uncut* contributors. This year's lists are contained in a special, free 52-page book, home also to your guide to our Best Of 2013 free CD, featuring tracks, if you're not already listening to it, by My Bloody Valentine, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, John Grant, Roy Harper, Richard Thompson and more.

For the issue itself, David Cavanagh penetrated Morrissey's inner circle for a fascinating account of Moz's turbulent 2013, a year blighted by illness and cancelled dates, but eventually illuminated by the publication of *Autobiography*, which quickly became a best-seller. Despite the set-backs of the last 12 months, it would appear we can expect to hear a lot more from a rejuvenated Morrissey in the New Year, starting with the imminent release as I write of a live version of Lou's "Satellite Of Love". Elsewhere, MBV's Kevin Shield answers your questions in An Audience With... special, John Grant talks us through his gilded back catalogue.

John Robinson, meanwhile, brings his usual expert touch to a look at how The Beatles in their Beatlemania heyday spent their Christmases – in pantomime, would you believe? Neil Spencer spends some time with Nick Lowe, and Can recall the making of "Spoon", their 1971 hit (in Germany, anyway), while Michael Bonner meets the Coen Brothers to discuss their new film, *Inside Llewyn Davis*, and one of its stars, John Goodman.

As ever, let me know at the usual address what you make of our Top 75 and attendant lists and what your own favourite albums and films of 2013 were. When it's finally upon us, we hope you all have a great seasonal holiday. We'll be back in the New Year with our first issue of 2014, on sale from Thursday, January 3.

Allan Jones



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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT

Featuring THE WHO | MICHAEL HEAD | PARQUET COURTS | BILLY CHILDISH





Uncut is 200: long may we run!

ROUND A CERTAIN age, one becomes a little bashful and embarrassed by birthdays. Still, *Uncut* turns 200 this month and, while we figured you'd be more interested in our survey of 2013 than great swathes of retrospective self-aggrandising, it would be churlish to completely ignore such an auspicious anniversary.

Here, then, is a gallery of *Uncut*'s first 200 covers: from Elvis Costello in June 1997, to Steven Patrick Morrissey this month. Our special thanks go to all of you who've stuck around, and who've confirmed our hunch that this mission – to join the dots between great old music and the best work being done today – is a worthwhile one. Perhaps rock is best understood as an evolving tradition, not one that constantly needs to try and

reinvent itself with the shock of the new.

Anyway, though we make no apologies for being obsessed with such rich and multi-faceted artists whose ongoing careers are still so compelling, hopefully this display will prove that we haven't featured Neil Young and Bob Dylan on the cover *quite* as often as many would assume... A few surprises you may have forgotten here, besides; Shelby Lynne's month of glory in February 2000 being the most notable one.

At this point, it's also worth remembering you can get *Uncut* back issues at www.uncut.co.uk/digital-edition – and while you're on our website, why not take a look at www.uncut.co.uk/features, where we're archiving some of the best long pieces from our storied past. Some pretty good writing here, too, though of course we would say that...



A QUICK ONE

► A reminder that our latest *Uncut Ultimate Music Guide* is out now; 148 pages on the genius of Neil Young, with plenty of great lost interviews from the NME and Melody Maker archives and big new reviews of every Neil, Springfield and CSNY album. Price £6.99.

► Promises of a solo album and a Blur reunion set remain unfulfilled, but Damon Albarn has a new release with his Africa Express project due (digitally, at least) on Dec 9. Recorded in Mali, *Maison Des Jeunes* is a collaboration between local musicians and Albarn's western all-stars, this time including Brian Eno. A physical release will follow next year.

► After playing *The Wall* on 219 dates, Roger Waters is finally embarking on a new album; his first since the 2005 opera *Ca'ira*, and his first rock set since *Amused To Death* in 1992. "It's couched as a radio play," Waters told *Rolling Stone*...

► Jack White's adoration of vintage musicians is evidently reciprocated, judging by an imminent comp, *Rockin' Legends Pay Tribute To Jack White*. Among the vets covering various White songs: Gary US Bonds, Big Jay McNeely, Bobby Vee and an old friend, Wanda Jackson.

► Oh, and please visit uncut.co.uk. Daily news updates, reviews, playlists, archive features; you know the drill...

The Who's Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey at the premiere of *Sensation: The Story Of The Who's Tommy*, London, October 22, 2013



WHO BY NUMBERS

'I won't have much fun. But I think we need to celebrate it...'

PETE TOWNSHEND and ROGER DALTRY prepare themselves for their imminent 50th anniversary. WHO's last?

NEXT FEBRUARY, IT will be 50 years since a west London R'n'B group called The Detours decided to rename themselves The Who. For a man who has spent an improbable amount of time contemplating his own past, Pete Townshend does not appear instantly elated at the prospect of the anniversary.

"We will probably just tour and it'll probably be the last big tour that we do. I wasn't going to do a tour for the anniversary," Townshend says, at a special screening of *Sensation – The Story Of The Who's Tommy* at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith. "I won't say I enjoyed *Quadrophenia*, but it was a successful tour. It was good for me because Roger did all the creative work. No, seriously, I just showed up and wangled away on the guitar. I enjoyed it. I wasn't particularly crazy about being

up on the stage and on the road.

"But with respect to the whole thing about, for me, having been through some real shit in the last 15 years personally, one of the things that really means something to me is to have the affection of the public. This is not a rock star thing to say. Most people think rock stars are

cunts and they're right. A quick interview with Noel Gallagher and you'll realise he's a lovable rogue, isn't he? But I think we do love it.

"So for me, the important thing is that every time I would meet somebody in the street they would say, 'So, are you going to tour again?', and I'd kind of go, 'No, not really.' As I said that, I'd realise they'd go, 'Oh, OK, then.' Whereas if I was to say 'Yes', I'd get all this wave of 'Oh, well, I'll come and see you!' I'd think, 'Why would you come and see us?'

"So, anyway, for our 50th anniversary I won't have much fun. But I think we need to go out, we need to celebrate it."

Roger Daltrey is less equivocal. "We're trying to ignore this," he says. "It's just another year for us. You're talking to a band that never thought it'd make it to the end of the week. So who knows? We've got no plans at all for next year. I really mean that. I wish we did, because I could

"Pete and I are playing better than ever... The music hasn't dated, so why not?"
Roger Daltrey

do with The Who at the Albert Hall in March [*the Teenage Cancer Trust shows Daltrey organises*]."

"To me, so what? It's 50 years. It's lucky Pete and I are still here. As long as we can still do it, it doesn't matter if it's 51 years or 53 years. I'd hate to think it's all over. But if it is, it's been a great run. I think Pete and I are playing better than ever, we're joined at the hip. There's no reason to stop, and the music hasn't dated, so why not? But equally, you can't be on the road all the time."

Daltrey's ongoing projects currently include a Keith Moon biopic, that he has been working on with Nigel Sinclair of Exclusive Media, that appears to be moving forward a little faster now that Exclusive have signed a deal with Da Vinci Media Ventures to develop the movie. He also has an album in the works with Wilko Johnson.

"I'm going to do some songs with him," Daltrey confirms. "We were desperately trying to find new material, but we just want to get something done in the studio as quick as we can. See if there's any chemistry, see if we can make something a bit different. I don't know whether it'll be any good, I don't know, it's going to be a joy to play with him. I love him as a man, he's an absolute treasure, an extraordinary character. I've always noted his guitar playing, but always thought there was a lot more there to get out of him. So we'll see."

Townshend, meanwhile, is wry about the Deluxe and Super Deluxe issues of *Tommy* that he is ostensibly promoting: "This is about Universal trying to make some money at Christmas, isn't it?" he says. "It's a project that's significant in the '60s maelstrom of stuff like *The Dark Side Of The Moon* [actually 1973], *Sgt Pepper*, *Pet Sounds*, those albums from the '60s which made a particular mark. So it keeps coming back. I don't know if it is the most important thing to me today."

"I don't think there's much else to screw out of it," he continues when asked if there's much unreleased material left in the Who archive. "Although it'll be interesting, when I'm dead and gone, and people start to go through all the paperwork that I gather. When I was writing my book I found I had a huge amount of really interesting paper. Not just press clips, but letters, documents, bills, lots and lots of handwritten notes, letters from Kit Lambert, letters from Keith, letters from Eric Clapton, all kinds of interesting things from right the way through my life."

"All of that stuff, when it's curated, will be extremely interesting. But I just haven't got the time. Well, I have got the time, I could easily do it. I gathered it for my book, and when it actually came to it, what I actually did in the book is I just went through it. But every time I come back to do something like this, I feel better informed, in a sense; becoming more of a curator of the project."

MICHAEL BONNER



The Who as The High Numbers, 1964

12-strings to his bow...
The returning
Michael Head



HEAD MASTER

Shack and awe!

The magical world of MICHAEL HEAD, revisited. Arthur Lee talks to him in his dreams!

FOR MICHAEL HEAD, the songwriter who has for over 30 years written mystical, beautiful songs for his groups The Pale Fountains, Shack and The Strands, it is incorrect to talk in terms of a songwriting process. It's all a lot more mystical than that.

"Whether it was with the Paleys or Shack, I never once thought, 'I'm gonna write a song now...'" he says. "They either appeared in my dreams or when I was daydreaming walking down the street."

After seven years away (Shack's last album release was 2006's *The Corner Of Miles And Gil*, for Noel Gallagher's Sour Mash label), Mick has happily now dreamed up more songs. Michael's new flexible lineup is The Red Elastic Band, and with their assistance, he has made a wonderful new EP called "Artorius Revisited", which revisits the sound of classic records by Love, Nick Drake and Mick Head. How did he decide the time was right?

"I hadn't smoked for years," Mick confides. "And I got some lovely Thai bush from a friend. I went to bed that night and in the morning I had five songs with lyrics that I wouldn't have written myself."

The most urgent part of Mick's work is to try and capture the elusive essence of the song before it disappears for ever. It's a stressful business.

"It's like there's a Polaroid image," he explains, "and when I wake up in the morning it's disintegrating in front of my eyes. I wake up and try and grasp as much as I can. Then when I go to Lidl or Asda, I'll daydream."

The EP peaks with the lovely, conversational, "Lucinda Byre". It's a classic Mick Head song in

the vein of "Streets Of Kenny" or "Neighbours", in that it confers a sense of innocent wonder on a parochial setting. Here, that's Liverpool's bohemian Bold Street, renowned for its cafés and its urban legends of time-slip phenomena. It features the winning line: "Excuse me sir, are you scanning my mind?"

"The song starts in a café having some acid," Mick explains, "and it's about getting to the end of Bold Street – if you can. Even if you're not tripping, there's no way you can get to the end of it without bumping in to people you've not seen for 10 years or whatever..."

The EP contains happy evidence of a talent undimmed by experiences in the music business. After signing to a major label with a reconstituted Shack in the late 1990s, the band's anticipated commercial breakthrough never materialised. Mick is phlegmatic about the experience. "I was never in it for dough," he says. "What me and our J do is make songs."

"Our J" is Shack's spectacular guitarist John Head. John is "doing his own thing" at present, but his influence is clearly still a strong one on Mick. When he composed the songs for his new record, Mick became preoccupied by the idea that Arthur Lee had been talking to him in his dreams. He thought about confiding this to his brother, but ultimately decided to keep it to himself.

"I thought if I say that to him," laughs Mick, "he's going to fucking chin me."

JOHN ROBINSON

"Artorius Revisited" is out now on Violette. For more info see www.michaelhead.net

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS

Wig Out At Jagbags DOMINO

"We lived on Tennyson and venison and the Grateful Dead..." Endlessly quotable, ineffably joyous, economically jamming: one of Malkmus' best solo LPs.

MARK LANEGAN

Has God Seen My Shadow?

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

A valuable and frequently unnerving anthology of the voice of doom's solo work, plus unreleased songs.

MOGWAI (left)

Rave Tapes ROCK ACTION
Slightly misleading title time, as the post-rock vets calmly stretch out for perhaps their best LP since '01's *Rock Action*.



RYLEY WALKER

The West Wind

TOMPKINSSQUARE

If we ran *Tips For 2014*, this Chicagoan would be in there, judging by this ravishing hybrid of Tim Buckley and LA Turnaround-era Bert Jansch.

MORGAN DELT

Morgan Delt

TROUBLE IN MIND

An extravagantly messy lysergic flashback from *Trouble In Mind*'s latest psychedelic boy wonder, Cali native Delt.

THE HADEN TRIPLETS

The Haden Triplets

THIRD MAN

Released by Jack White, produced by Ry Cooder, sired by Charlie Haden. LA indie lifers the Hadens team up for a lovely set of vintage country songs, in the vein of the Roches or McGarrigles.

DOUG PAISLEY

Strong Feelings

NO QUARTER

A third fine set of artisanal country from Toronto's Paisley, this time subtly playing up the Johnny Cash comparisons.

MATT KIVEL

Double Exposure

OLDE ENGLISH SPELLING BEE

From Cleveland, Kivel is another real find: a folksy singer-songwriter whose ethereal bent recalls the first Bon Iver LP.

SNOWBIRD

Moon

BELLA UNION

Simon Raymonde revisits his Cocteaus sound with Stephanie Dosen and a band recruited from his Bella Union roster.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E-STREET BAND

New York City Serenade (Rome 11/7/13)

YOUTUBE

Between tours, the Boss slips out this beautifully shot, lavishly orchestrated live version of a rarely performed 1973 classic.

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



Crowned Courts:
(l-r) Sean Yeaton,
Max Savage,
Andrew Savage,
Austin Brown

WE'RE NEW HERE

Parquet Courts

Recommended this month: the new kings of slacker snark begin their crooked reign, crooked reign...

ONE HOT NIGHT in August, The Old Blue Last in Shoreditch played host to a party to celebrate the release of an EP, "Tally All The Things That You Broke", by Brooklyn's Parquet Courts. Hundreds had to be turned away from the word-of-mouth gig. Several hours after the lucky few had been shut in the airless room with only the bar to entertain them, Parquet Courts banished any British reserve with a set of such intensity that, at points, so many people were trying to propel themselves off the side of the stage to crowd surf that the band could barely be seen.

After the show Andrew Savage, de facto frontman, emerged from the friends and fans swigging beers and smoking out the windows over Great Eastern Street. He looked like he'd been through a mangle: hair stuck to his face, eyes bloodshot, shirt wet through from the heat. "That's the reaction we're aiming for!" he said.

The band have goaded the UK for the best part of 2013 with album *Light Up Gold*. Its raw, melodic guitars and loose drums came wrapped in slacker poetry that captured with chaotic precision the ennui that comes from trying to create. Stand-out "Stoned And Starving" took the listener on a five-minute, two-chord march round New York in search of something – Swedish fish, roasted peanuts or licorice – to sate a stoned man. It sounded like a simple weed-smoking anthem, but at its root was a restlessness born of the need to find something just out of reach – something Savage and bandmate Austin Brown describe as the lit gold of the LP's title.

By the time "Tally..." was released, Parquet Courts had stopped wandering around looking for salvation in sweets and fish and started calling people to

arms. They rallied listeners to stop being spooned by the media: "Express yourself without the tools that they give you/Want something they didn't tell you to want," Savage screamed on "The More It Works".

"I'd hate to think we get put through any cookie-cutter, music-press filter," Brown tells *Uncut* in

October. They maintain a barely concealed disdain for the press and reject Facebook and Twitter.

"Whenever we get the chance to communicate with people who might be interested in us, it's more fun to do that in ways we think is interesting ourselves," he said.

One way is by releasing cassette mixtapes as a guide to their peers and influences. You won't find Pavement or The Velvet Underground on those tapes, even though that lineage is easily traced through their sound. Instead Olympia punk rockers Milk Music, fellow Brooklynites PC Worship and Detroit noise-punks Protomartyr feature. "We are fans of Pavement, but it's not like we're in that scene or exist in the same context," Brown said. "The mixtape shows where we think our music could sit." The only problem is after the year they've had, Parquet Courts are in danger of eclipsing the scene they claim to be a part of. They are the highest-placed new band on *Uncut*'s end of year album chart.

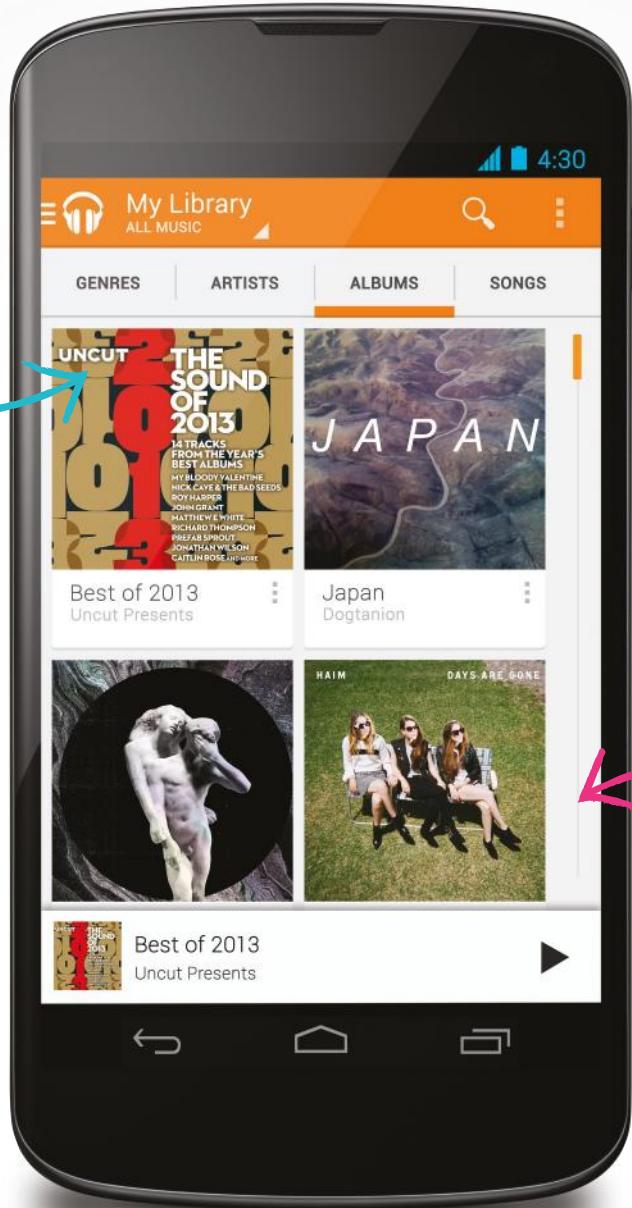
A new LP and more UK dates are set for early 2014. "Keep your ear to the ground," Brown says. "Things will be happening." HAZEL SHEFFIELD

Light Up Gold and the "Tally All The Things That You Broke" EP are out now on What's Your Rupture? They play Brighton Concorde 2 (Feb 14), Manchester Academy 2 (15) and London Electric Ballroom (16)



For more details of the tracks on this month's CD, please see our Best Of 2013 supplement

All
the tracks that
were on that free
Uncut CD



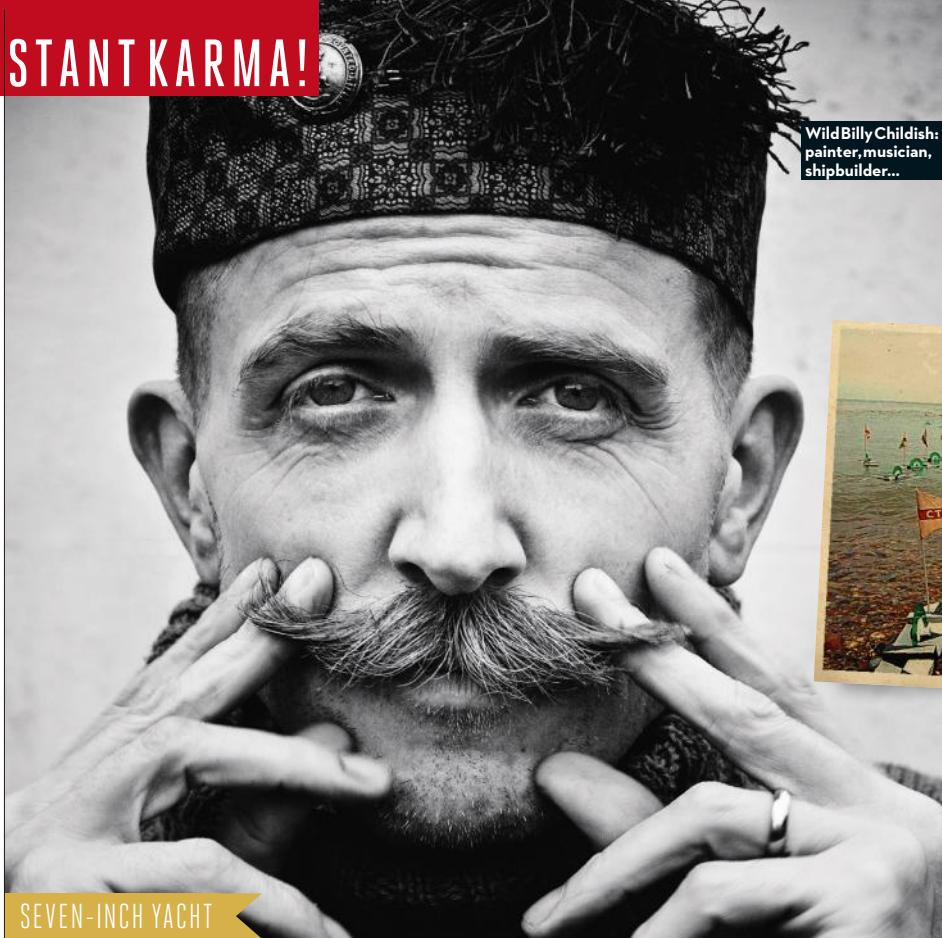
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SEVEN-INCH YACHT



Thee Navy Lark

BILLY CHILDISH launches his new project with a fleet of ships carrying seven-inch singles. Also involved: The KLF!

I'VE NEVER REALLY been anything other than between all things," says Billy Childish. "I used to be known as a musician who painted, and now I'm more of a painter who makes music. The English, they can't have you being both. Nobody really wants you in their camp. I think it's because I'm very critical of music, art and writing, and they don't want you shitting in their backyard."

Childish may have quietly retired from live performance in recent times, but as he enters his 53rd year, his furious workrate is showing no sign of abating. The last 12 months have seen exhibitions in London and Los Angeles, a new poetry collection, a novel – titled *All The Poisons*

In The Mud – nearing completion, plus a half-dozen LPs recorded in the primitive garage-rock style that's been a Childish trademark right back to his '80s groups, Thee Milkshakes and Thee Mighty Caesars. He works quickly, without deliberation. "It's not quite as ramshackle as 'bang it down, and that'll be all right,'" he says. "But it has to sound like it is."

This November saw the release of *Die Hinterstoisser Traverse*, the second LP of 2013 from Childish's new project, CTMF. New, but the name actually dates back to 1976, when Childish was an apprentice stonemason at Chatham dockyard, and a member of a local archaeological group, The Medway Military Research Group. When punk

broke, Childish elected to form a band with some school friends – although this group never got further than the name (which stands for Chatham Forts, but might equally, says Childish, stand for Copyright Termination Front, or Cunts, Tossers And Mother-Fuckers). Childish revived the name at the start of 2013, though membership is fluid;

curiously, both Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond are floating members, having recorded bass and xylophone parts, respectively. A KLF reunion, of sorts. "But they're a bit cagey about it," harrumphs Childish. "They're undercover."

A song titled "Land Sea And Sky" got Childish pondering interesting ways to disseminate the music.

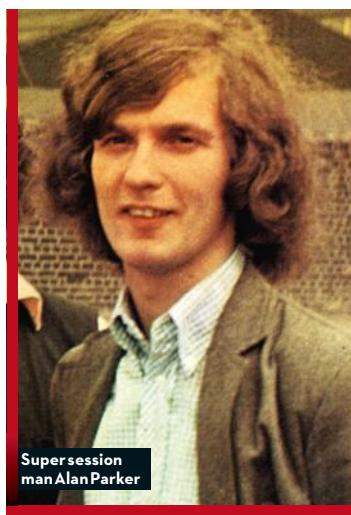
"I got thinking about the idea of an invasion," he says. "We thought we'd attach vinyl to

balloons, but that's expensive. I thought about Chinese Lanterns, but they're a bit boring. Then I thought, it'd be nice to make a little boat." His design saw the keel replaced with a vinyl 45 of "Land Sea And Sky", and the hull decorated with WWI-style dazzle camouflage, also employed by artists from the Cubists to the Vorticists. "Picasso claimed he invented it," says Childish. "But, you know, zebras were already doing it."

After weeks in his workshop, October 20, 2013 saw Childish and his four-year-old daughter Scout make a film of themselves launching 31 dazzle ships into the Thames Estuary. He's been eagerly charting their progress. "We've had a spate land along the Sussex and Essex coast. Some people have wanted to keep them. Others we've got back by swapping posters and what have you." Not all have fared so well against the elements. "One of them looked like it'd been at sea for six months – there was just a fragment of the record left."

Three weeks into the mission, an eerie calm has descended, with over three-quarters of the craft unaccounted for. "I presume they're all along that coastline," says Childish. "But there's a possibility some have been washed into the North Sea and beyond." He seems enthused about this. "That would be our best hope. As far and as smashed as possible, that's my motto." LOUIS PATTISON

CTMF's All Our Forts Are With You and Die Hinterstoisser Traverse are available now on Damaged Goods



AND ON GUITAR... ALAN PARKER

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

► Taught at the Royal Academy Of Music by classical guitarist Julian Bream, Alan Parker started his career as a session guitarist in the late 1960s. He has worked with artists such as Bowie, Donovan, Serge Gainsbourg, The Walker Brothers, Elton John, Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney amongst many others. He played with Blue Mink in the early 1970s and has contributed to film scores for Henry Mancini and Lalo Schifrin and TV theme tunes for such programmes as *Top Of The Pops*, *Minder* and *Sir Prancelot*. More

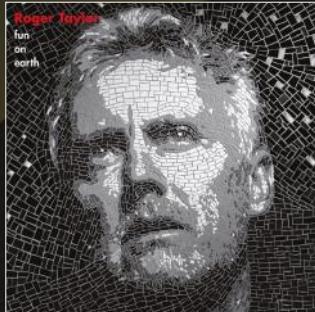


Sir Prancelot 'plays' Alan Parker's theme tune

recently he worked with Howard Shore on the *Lord Of The Rings* soundtracks.

KEY SESSIONS: Donovan's "Hurdy Gurdy Man", The Walker Brothers' "No Regrets", David Bowie's "Rebel Rebel" & "1984", Blue Mink's "Melting Pot", CCS' *Top Of The Pops* theme version of "Whole Lotta Love", Serge Gainsbourg's *Histoire De Melody Nelson*, Kate Bush's *The Kick Inside*, Elton John's *To Be Continued* and Barry Gray's *Thunderbirds 2*. PHIL KING

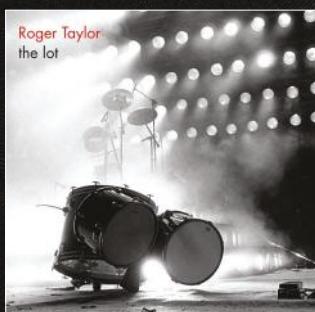
Roger Taylor



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Kevin Shields

Interview: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Linda Nylind

Return of the king! My Bloody Valentine's visionary leader on his 'desert island' guitar pedals, Daft Punk's marketing budget and his new "Springsteenish" song...

K

EVIN SHIELDS IS looking forward to My Bloody Valentine's next great musical

adventure. "I'm in the mood to really mess around with things and try to change things a bit," he tells *Uncut*. "Whatever happens, will happen. It's a new phase."

It might seem strange that Shields should already be thinking ahead to his future plans. After all, judging by the 22 years it took from inception to completion of his band's latest album, *m b v*, you could be forgiven for assuming that Shields follows his own capricious muse, unbothered to timetables and deadlines. Inevitably, even completing this interview came with its own set of delays, as proposed dates were shifted and rearranged. Naturally, the business of soliciting questions from readers – along with some of Shields' famous friends and collaborators – proved straightforward enough. Almost overnight, *Uncut*'s electronic mailbag was deluged by a record number of your submissions. Meanwhile, Shields – on tour in America – appeared to be living up to his reputation for procrastination, as he first approved the sound balance of "Only Tomorrow" on our free CD, and then, finally, guaranteeing a date and time for our interview.

On the subject of delays – as Shields explains, the timeline of *m b v* is more straightforward than its 22-year gestation might otherwise suggest. "We started working on the record in 1996," he

divulges. "One track was even started before that, although very little of it exists now, but the tune was from something like 1993. There was a huge gap of time – because I joined Primal Scream and had maybe too much fun – and then got my act together again. When I started working on this properly, it was just two years. It always seems to take me about two years to make an album, in reality."

The end, when it came, was surprisingly quick. Shields confirms that he finished mastering the album in mid-December last year. The analogue mastering took place a month later ("I couldn't help but tinker") and the record was released on February 2. A few teething problems with the band's website aside, *m b v*'s release kicked 2013 off in fine style for the band; how did the rest of the year shape up for Shields and his co-conspirators?

"If you add up all the gigs we've done, it doesn't seem that many,"



it's one of the songs we most enjoy playing. I've heard live recordings of it, and it sounds good."

Now the dust has settled on *m b v*, how does Shields think it compares to *Isn't Anything* and *Loveless*?

"The three albums have a strong relationship to each other," Shields acknowledges. "All of that stuff was, for want of a better word,

that was slightly Americanised.

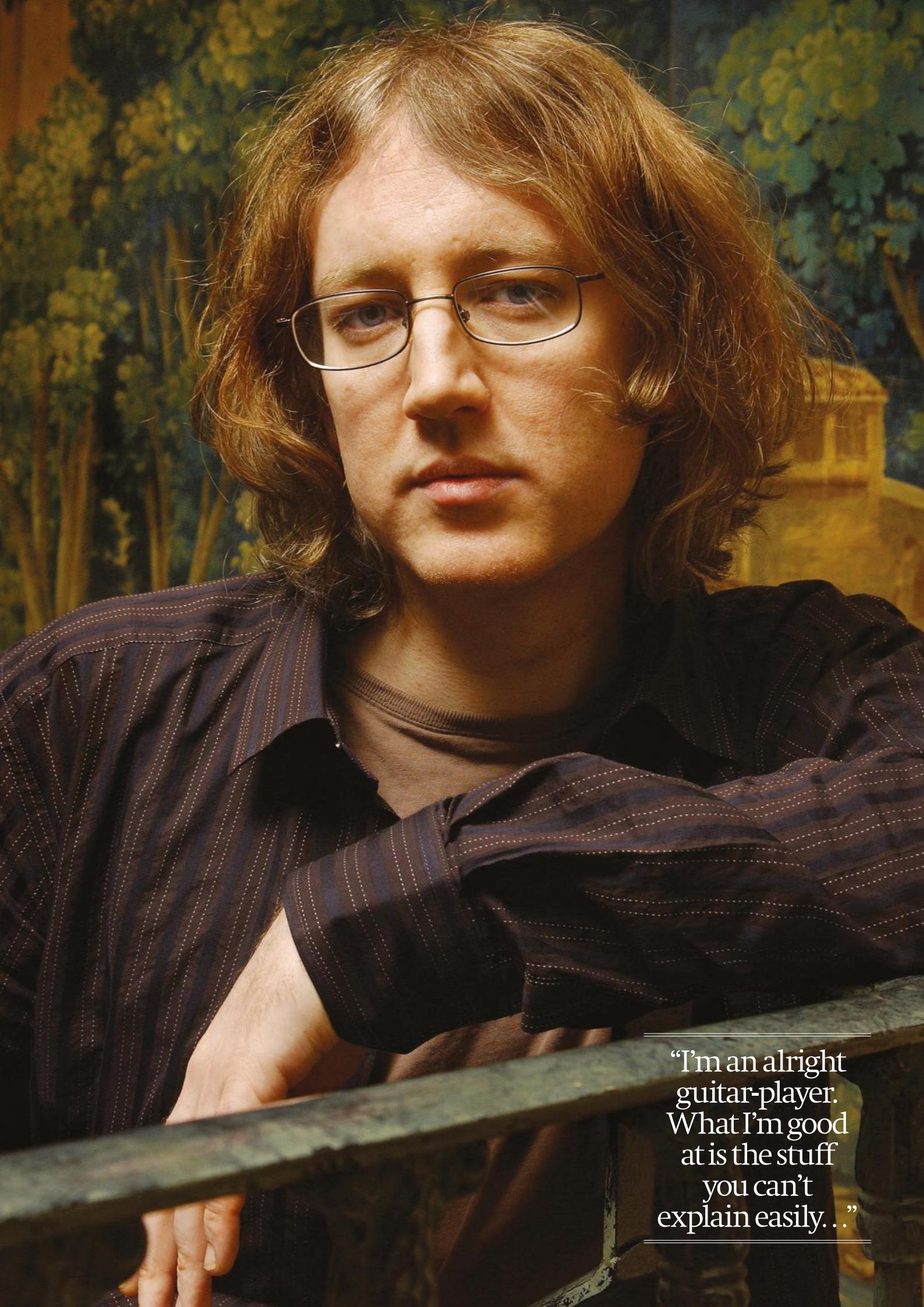
"I feel those records, even with the big gap, are still one thing; this last one is the end of that. This time, everything I do will be 100 per cent separated from that era. I've got a really strong feeling to push things, we're all trying to get out of our comfort zones. With that last record, I tried to get out of the comfort zone by not writing songs in the traditional sense, with a view to editing them into songs. It was a crazy way to work in the end and I don't recommend it to anyone. It was abstract. But it worked!"

With that, Shields settles back to answer your questions. Over the course of 90 minutes, he chats amiably and at length about subjects ranging from his memories of the Dublin punk scene in the late '70s to the earliest songs he learned to play on the guitar, the status of some legendary "lost" My Bloody Valentine recordings, and even answers a question that has stumped many of our finest minds down the years: Which comes first, the tunes or the noise? •

"Is there a lot of stuff backed up? I've got hundreds of tunes, songs, melodies..."

he considers. "Although for six or seven weeks we were busy all the time. I guess one Japanese gig could take up five days. We've been constantly moving. What's been really good is playing all the new songs live, especially 'Only Tomorrow'. That was so weird when we first played it in rehearsal: how the hell is this going to work? Now

being under the spell of the thing, just having to do it the way it was done. Maybe *Isn't Anything* could have been different. There was a certain attitude with *Isn't Anything*, to capture everything as raw as possible. Sonic Youth were a big influence and Dinosaur Jr, production-wise. *Isn't Anything* had that very stark, dry production



“I’m an alright
guitar-player.
What I’m good
at is the stuff
you can’t
explain easily...”

STAR QUESTION



Is the dog happy?

Patti Smith

Yes, it's a pretty happy dog.

'Happy dog', it's something me

and Patti had going between us. 'Happy dog' is like looking into the face of God. We were going to call our record label Happy Dog, but we found that a band already had it. It's hard to explain... a dog will bite you, a dog is a dog. It's for all these people who are trying to get enlightened out there, it already is, do you know what I mean? But it's more than that. It's a very positive term.

What's been your favourite release of 2013?

Mark MacLellan, via email

The record I liked the most was Tame Impala, the second album, but I think that came out last year. It had a great sense of freedom, really good melodies in what I'd call a 'freeish' kind of way. It's very positive, without trying to be. A great mix of playfulness and class. Do I seek out new music at home? For the past few years, it's been more like reading about a band and checking them out on the internet. Before that? I stopped listening to the radio a long time ago. I used to like TV. I would watch any music programme – including the Mercury Music Prize – to check out anything new. But now it's more hearing about things from people around me. Then when you want to hear what it sounds like, I go on YouTube like most people.

Where do you stand on the Spotify debate?

Neil, Preston

I never use Spotify. The

idea of ads makes me sick. I've seen Spotify royalty statements and they're quite comical – 0.3 pence, things like that, for a song. In the end, it's run by the major record companies, and it largely benefits them, too. The idea of having a legal streaming service is cool, but it's the wrong energy. I think new models will probably emerge as we descend into further chaos, and out of that will come much more creative, friendly models. All the big corporate companies have zero empathy; that's the nature of corporate companies. It's not very complicated to look at major file sharing sites and deal with them, but there isn't the will to do it. The pressure should be on the service providers, like the phone companies and internet companies, to charge everybody for using the service. There's nothing wrong with people getting music for free. It's very important that anybody who can't afford something should hear it for free. I grew up recording all the John Peel shows off the radio. A lot of songs that I love – I never bought them. It's a good thing that people listen to music whichever way they want. As I said, I've no problem with people listening to music for free. It's going to end up on YouTube, so you might as well deal with that reality.

What was your first guitar?

James R, County Limerick, Ireland
My very first guitar, an acoustic, my mother bought me when I was a kid. I left it lying around, being drawn on and abused in general, even though I had ideas about being in a band. Then one day, there was two strings left on it, and I learned how to play a Buzzcocks song – "Harmony In My



MBV in 1986: (l-r) Debbie Googe, Colm Ó Cíosóig, Shields, David Conway



STAR QUESTION



What would you title your memoir if published by Penguin Classics?
Thurston Moore

Oh, my God... that's a good question!

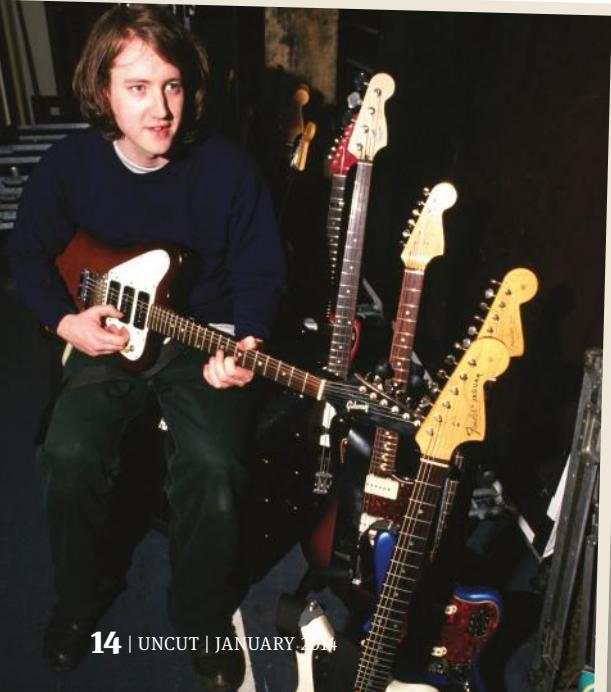
I guess I really don't have a clue. Is this about the Morrissey book? Oh, yeah, controversially I didn't think about that. What did he call it anyway? *Autobiography*? Oh, I heard people were saying they wish there was more stuff about The Smiths.

had a month off recently, but we decided we'd just wait until we've finished the current dates, then get back together and work on these EPs, or maybe a mini-album. Is there a lot of stuff backed up? I've got hundreds of tunes, songs, melodies. I never feel it's about worrying about getting a tune. It's more about something that really clicks, that feels very exciting. There are a few tunes I made in the past year, and one of them should definitely be on this EP. It's very weird. It's a bit Springsteenish. I know, I've written my Bruce Springsteen song! It's hard to believe, isn't it? Why is it Springsteen-ish? I don't know. Maybe I'll have to change it so it doesn't sound like that anymore.

Do you know what the album sales were for *m b*?

Daniel Butler, Buffalo, NY

I don't know in the whole world, but I know in the UK it was 8,040 for the vinyl. That's all right. Daft Punk sold 10,000. They had the biggest marketing campaign, so it's OK: zero against a million for promotion. We sold most of them through the



How do you rate yourself as a guitarist?

Vinny, Newcastle

I'm all right. What I'm really good at is the stuff you can't explain easily. Technically, I'm remarkably terrible sometimes. When I first started, I wanted to be really simple but have a strong impact – simplicity can allow for less cultural baggage and a more primal or more real, lasting thing. All the bands I've loved had simplicity. It transcends everything. The Ramones, The Velvet Underground. There was a certain roughness in The Beatles that people never really appreciated. People like Thurston Moore and J Mascis were also big influences. J's sense of freedom, Sonic Youth established you could really do anything with guitars. There's also people like Bob Mould, and the post-punk guitarists, John McGeoch, Keith Levine, Geordie, Roland S Howard.



website, then a bunch through shops. Anyone who wanted them, we gave them directly to the shops.

When promos for the remastered EPs comp were released, they included a track called "Kevin Song", but it was dropped for the official release. Any details on why it was dropped?

Brett, North Carolina

It got leaked by somebody. It didn't go on the comp because it annoyed me. The main reason is that the original multi-track recordings were lost so there was no way I could mix it. I like the melody, but the mix annoyed me too much. We tried to make an EP in 1989, just after we did *Isn't Anything*. We did four songs and that was one of them. "Bilinda's Song" wound up as "Angel" on the EPs comp, "Moon Song" was on the "Tremolo" EP. There was another song that's not out there at all. It's the strangest I've ever made in my life as I realised it was a rip-off of at least five major songs. I don't normally worry about that, but this time I was like, "OK, it's this song, it's also that song, and shit, it's that song as well." So that one's buried completely.

How fundamental a role have drugs played in the creative process of the band over the years? Daniel Dylan Wray

Basically, I made "Sunny Sundae Smile" and then I smoked pot for six months and made the "You Made Me Realise" EP. It's not quite as simple as that, but you know... I think for a lot of people, pot is very inspiring. Then it becomes really uninspiring. I like smoking pot but I don't think I need to smoke to write music. On the other hand, all things that inspire you or put you in a different state of mind or perspective are good things. But it's also really boring. Repetition is boring, no matter what it is.



"It's important that anybody who can't afford music should hear it for free"

Which comes first: the tunes or the noise? Rose, Charlton

The tunes. Without tunes, it's just freeform stuff for the sake of it, which is enjoyable but it's less interesting for people to listen to. You can get drawn into a whole universe with melody for language. I like the fact that for some strange reason I don't know the name of the guitar strings even though I've tried to learn them about a hundred times. I only have a basic idea of what chords are called. It's not necessary, is it? For me, mostly songs come from tuning a guitar in some way, or finding some chords that work. I'm like an editor, I go, 'That's pretty good, that works, or it doesn't.' I don't have to think very much.

List your 'desert island' guitar pedals. Mark Rodda, Melbourne

Maybe an SPX-90 and a Roger Mayer Octavia. I'm a bad person to ask. I can talk about pedals for ever. I have a relationship with pedals like I do with guitars. It's instantaneous. Within 10 seconds I know whether I like it, usually as it's impolite and uncompromising and leaves room for you to become a part of it. One of the main effects we used was called

reverse reverb. I used it all over *Ecstasy* and "Strawberry Wine" to no great consequence, as I was using it the way it was meant to be used. Then in '88, I found you could make huge waves of sound by hitting it softer or harder. This led to a style of playing I developed where it looked like whatever I was doing had nothing to do with the song I was playing. It put you into two different time spaces at the same time. It looks insane because of the relationship between the guitar in my hand and what's coming out.

Why were you so bothered about not making the Mercury shortlist? Paul O'Reilly

This is it, in a nutshell: Keith Cullin, who helped us put our record out, was eager for it. I said, "We can't do the Mercury as we don't do live TV." He said, "But you can get nominated and then pull out." I was said, "OK, we can do it if you want, but I don't care." Then he was ranting for two days, 'cos we're not on Amazon or iTunes so we're not even allowed to submit the record. Thing is, we wouldn't have done it anyway, we wouldn't

have jumped through the hoops. I'd never take part in a competition for albums. If you want to give us a prize or accolade, I'll graciously accept. But I'm not going to do live TV full-stop because I can't control it. I love watching old footage of bands on TV, so I really need to get over that.

STAR QUESTION

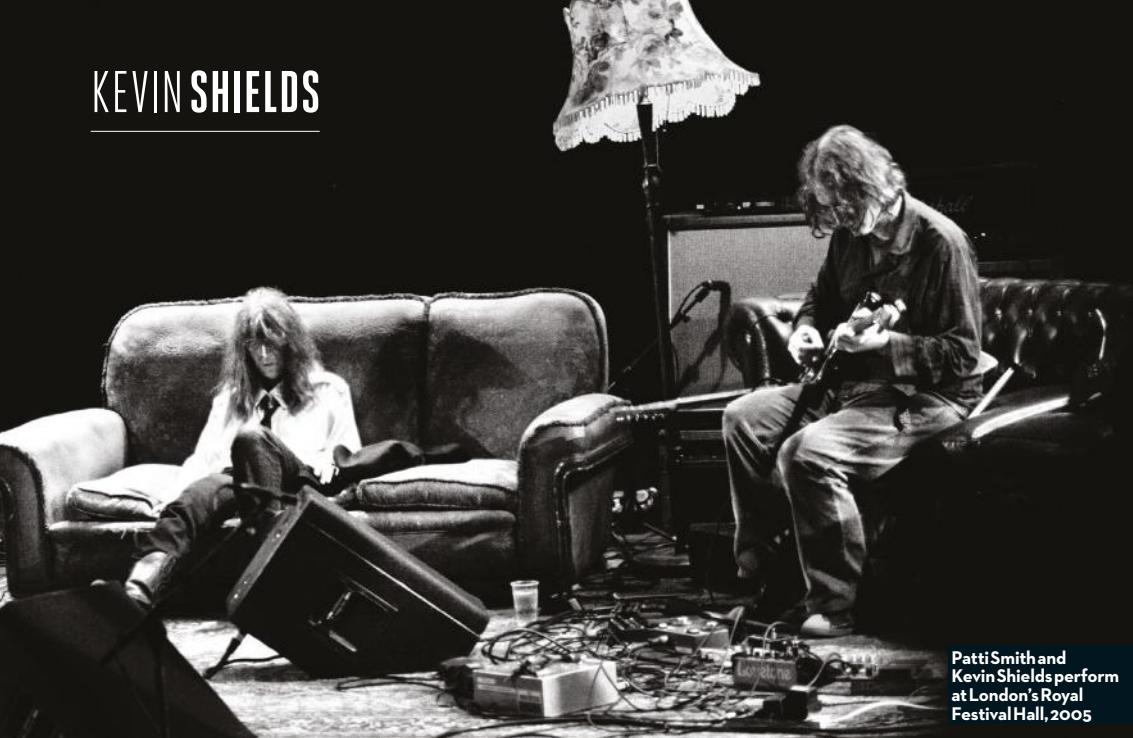


Many bands, after doing a record influenced by MBV, tried to distance themselves from that sound, and started mining the '60s for inspiration. Do you have any insight on that progression? Shoegazers jumping ship for the '60s? J Mascis

If you're going to pick a decade to try to topple what we did, you may as well pick the '60s. The weird thing is, a lot of those shoegazing bands came out of a slightly garage/psych background, so that was always in the mix. With the Britpop thing being so '66-ish, it just made sense. But, yeah, if you're going to try to go forward, go back to the best decade. What did I think of shoegazing bands? When they were doing all that, I was at home, I wasn't making records but writing tons of Beatles-y songs. So maybe it was something in the air.

The 'classic' early '90s MBV line-up, with Bilinda Butcher, bottom right, replacing Conway





Patti Smith and Kevin Shields perform at London's Royal Festival Hall, 2005

How did *The Coral Sea* collaboration with Patti Smith come about?

Leona Rodgers, East Lothian

She was doing the Meltdown festival. It was also Robert Mapplethorpe's anniversary, and she had written *The Coral Sea* about him. She asked if I'd like to do something. You know, Cat Power was also involved. It was me, Patti and her together. They came to my

studio and we got chatting and Patti was just really inspiring – "We've already won, we're doing this." We really connected. One of the coolest things was I had stopped using a tremolo arm and Patti really inspired me to start playing guitar again like I used to. Anyway, I prepared a bunch of guitars, got everything ready to go and then we just did it onstage, in 2005. It was totally improvised. Then a year later, we did more. The second was way more chaotic. I drowned Patti out, went way overboard, I was too noisy and that gave me a kick in the ass. But it was intense, focused into a moment.

How do you write songs?

Mark Steward, Sutton

I start with a guitar – acoustic or electric, unplugged electric. Then I start messing around. What usually happens is I go into a trance, playing for five hours or so and usually three or four tunes come out. Out of those, you realise you've got a third of the lyrics: you find them unconsciously. Then the recording is when you have to make it real. I write with the vocal line, a lot of the phrasing and attitude is there, but the words will be in some strange language. But it all means something, that's the weird part of it. You're just trying to make sure you don't fuck it up.

Which album of yours is meant to have "nearly bankrupted Creation"? *Loveless*, or a follow-up that never materialised?

Ivy, South London

"Bankrupted Creation"? It's bollocks. To nearly bankrupt somebody they'd be in a situation where we'd spent so much money they had none left. Somehow they made Primal Scream's next album after *Loveless*, so where the money for that came from I don't know. Then they started giving us royalty cheques. I don't know how someone who's bankrupt can be paying royalties, which on a 50-50 profit-share deal means they were getting profit, too. That was in 1995 or '96, and they didn't sell up until 2000.

It doesn't make sense. It's a bit like a game, to see the way media works. I've played it over the years, where a statement becomes fact – like 'Britpop is a conspiracy'. I didn't say that. I said I'd love to see the MI5 files, but I wasn't imagining the files said, "We must invent Sleeper." It was more I'd imagine them going, "Leave Liam Gallagher alone."

Have you thought about re-releasing your *Lazy* recordings? Dudley, Colefield

Some day, I'd like to have everything

playful. One of our crew bought a book collecting articles from *Ablaze!* fanzine. There was an interview with me just after *Loveless*. The person interviewing us criticised *Loveless* for not being as interesting as they were hoping. I went into a big rant about how the idea of what is weird or out-there is a superficial, culturally bound idea. If you went to a people who'd never heard music, would they find "Tomorrow Never Knows" any weirder than "Help!"? Our perceptions are different. What I was saying in this interview was

"With Primal Scream it'd kick off Tuesday 'til Sunday. Everyone would recover on Monday"

out. I always meant to present a sort of aural history of the band. If you hear the stuff we did in '83, it makes "You Made Me Realise" sound really poppy. It was very improvisational. Our favourite band at the time was Einstürzende Neubauten. The whole thing was more conceptual and subversive. Then when we did *Isn't Anything* and *Loveless*, that was me doing music for the sake of music, enjoying being under the spell of something. With *Loveless* I wasn't trying to be weird. It was more

that *Loveless*, it doesn't matter if the vocals are quiet or the guitars are loud, it's the whole thing. I've known since I made *Loveless* that what's good about it will endure and what people like or don't like about it is not very important. You can have an emotional connection with something and it's timeless.

What are your favourite memories or bands from Dublin's post-punk scene? Martie Donohoe, Dublin

STAR QUESTION



Do you really think CJ was a CIA operative? Bobby Gillespie

Yes! OK, CJ was a crystal-meth-smoking crew guy in Japan, who disappeared and we decided he was CIA, so that became his nickname. Seriously? I don't know. I like the idea of it. It was great fun playing in Primal Scream. Between *XTRMNTR* and *Evil Heat*, it was a nine-piece group and everyone was really good at what they did. I started hanging out with them in '98, and then for two years I was in the group. It was all the things I used to dream about when I was 17, to be in a band, play guitar, have fun and not worry. Though there was a huge element of chaos, they managed it by working from 12-6 then all hell would break loose. Tuesday it'd kick off, then die down on Sunday. Everyone would be recovering on Monday. The cool thing I learned from those guys is you can have a lot of chaos around you but if you have a certain work ethic you can make things happen.

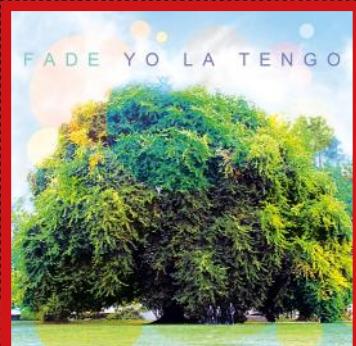
I started going to gigs all the time in 1979. There was a place called the Dandelion Market and every Saturday and Sunday from around two o'clock to six o'clock there was a gig on. It was in this underground car park that you accessed through, literally, a hole in the wall. 50 pence in. That was the punk scene for me. U2 were part of that, funny enough. They used to do Ramones songs. "Glad To See You Go". I remember they had an argument with a band who were supporting them called The End, who also used to play it. U2 said, "We're headlining, we want to do it," and The End said, "But it's our signature song!" For me, the Virgin Prunes were super inspiring; really, really out there. In 1979, they would make tapes that would just... God knows what... the strange sounds, oddness. Then they would play gigs that were super trashy and have disco music afterwards. They were like The Velvet Underground. They were doing all sorts of crazy stuff in all sorts of directions. It was the one thing that stopped me feeling completely depressed about being in Dublin when so much interesting stuff seemed to be happening in the UK. ☺



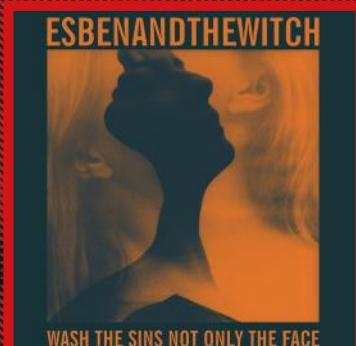
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Log on to see who's in the hot-seat next month and to post your questions!

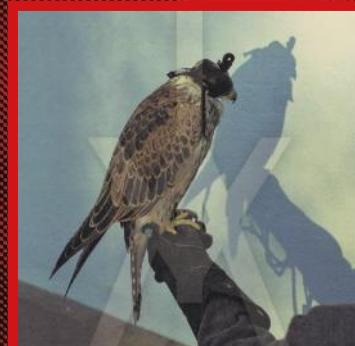
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Chelsea Light Moving



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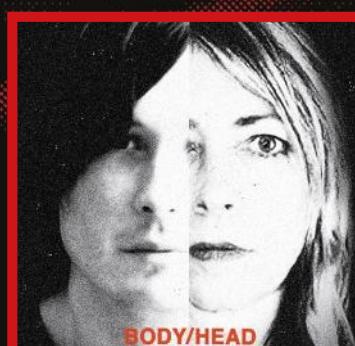
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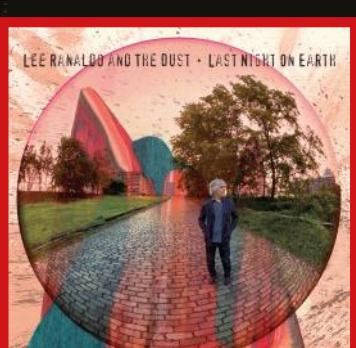
MAJICAL CLOUDZ
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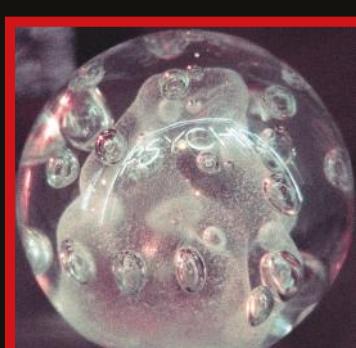
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
...Like Clockwork



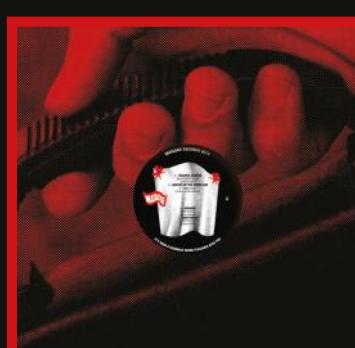
BODY/HEAD
Coming Apart



LEE RANALDO AND THE DUST
Last Night on Earth



DARKSIDE
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"IF THEY PUT ME IN PURGATORY, I'D BE THE FUCKING LANDLORD"

LOU REED | 1942-2013

Magic, and loss. An extraordinary artist remembered by one of his old drinking partners, ALLAN JONES

Photograph: Mick Rock

THE BLACK CLOUD in the corner of the room with something scowling inside it turns out to be Lou Reed, clearly not having one of his better days. He stares at me for what seems an uncomfortably long time through aviator shades tinted gun-metal grey, lights a Marlboro, speaks.

"What locker room did *Melody Maker* find you in, faggot?" he asks, his voice a low rumble ominously pitched somewhere near the bottom end of the conversational frequency that sounds like thunder in a bucket.

"How old are you? You look about eight," he says, possibly aggrieved that *Melody Maker*'s whimsically sent a mere waif to interview him, some child who might be more usefully employed as a raw-kneed chimney sweep or nimble bookie's runner. "And your head's too big for your body," he adds. His nastiness seems well-practised. I give him a smile, putting a lot into it, more of his bile to come.

"It's been a long time since I spoke to any journalists," he says, but not before knocking back a large glass of whiskey, two bottles of Johnnie Walker Red on the table in front of him, one of them already half empty. "This afternoon, I've been interviewed twice. Now I remember why I gave up speaking to journalists. They are a species of foul vermin. I wouldn't hire people like you to guard my sewer. Journalists are morons. They're idiots. They're ignorant and stupid."

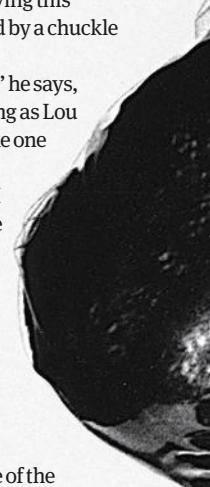
It seems fair to say that the Lou Reed I meet in April, 1977 on a brief visit to London to promote his new album, *Rock And Roll Heart*, is so far the Lou Reed I always imagined Lou Reed would be if I ever actually met him. So I'm reasonably braced for such rants as the one he now delivers, a toxic tirade, mostly directed at the journalists he so loathes, that when I play back the tape of the interview runs uninterrupted for 27 minutes. It's an astonishing performance and when it's over I'm laughing out loud and feel like giving him a round of applause. Instead, I ask if he feels obliged to put on such a show because he's Lou Reed and it's expected of him. He surprises me by giving this some thought, his reply when it comes prefaced by a chuckle that sounds like bark being torn from a tree.

"Sometimes I need to be reminded who I am," he says, somewhat disarmingly. "Sometimes performing as Lou Reed and *being* Lou Reed are so close as to make one think they are one and the same person. I've hidden behind the *myth* of Lou Reed for years. I can blame anything outrageous on *him*. I make believe sometimes that I'm Lou Reed. I'm so easily seduced by the public image of Lou Reed that I'm in love with Lou Reed myself. I think he's wonderful. No, it's not something I do to disguise my vulnerability or insecurity. Sometimes I just like being Lou Reed better than I like being anyone else."

There's a pause, just a heartbeat.

"Have a drink," he says then, offering a bottle of the whiskey that will soon be the hysterical ruin of our afternoon. And unless I'm mistaken, he's stopped being one Lou Reed and become another, this one much less like all the evil in the world coming to the boil at once. "What's your next question?"

What indeed? Lou Reed, who died on October 27 from complications following a liver transplant in May, shaped the rock landscape as influentially as Bob Dylan or The Beatles. In dark alliance with John Cale in The Velvet Underground, he overthrew existing notions of what rock music could be, nearly everything worth listening to since influenced by the noise they made. Richard Williams put it best. "They are not the reason rock'n'roll exists," he wrote of the Velvets. "But you could call them the reason it sounds the way it does and not get laughed at." I have a lot of questions.





Lou Reed, as shot by
Mick Rock in his Great
Newport Street studio,
London, autumn 1975.
2,000 copies of the signed,
limited-edition book,
Transformer, by Lou Reed
& Mick Rock, are available
from www.genesis-publications.com; Tel: +44
(0)1483 540 970; price £295

EWIS ALLAN REED was born in Brooklyn, on March 2, 1942, son of a successful accountant and a mother who was a former beauty queen, and from the age of 11 grew up unhappily in Freeport, New Jersey, besotted from an early age with rock'n'roll, with an especial fondness for doo-wop and a developing taste for avant-garde jazz, elements of both infiltrating his music over the years. As teenager, he was sent to a psychiatric hospital for electroconvulsive therapy intended to remedy his general hostility and homosexual inclinations, a traumatic experience that did much to determine his future character, fuelling lifelong resentments.

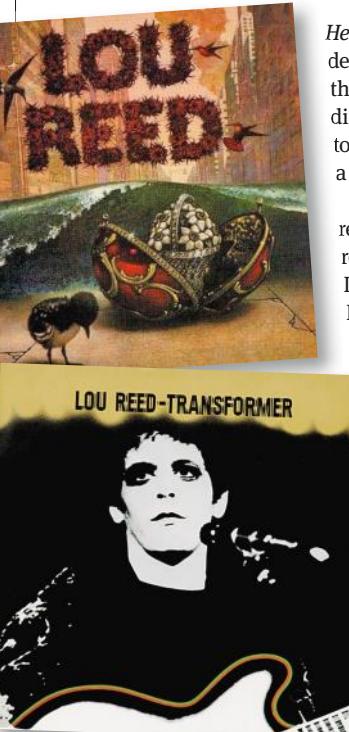
By 1960, he was studying creative writing and journalism at Syracuse University, where he became enthralled by the poet Delmore Schwarz and further immersed himself in music, which he'd decided would provide him with a career. In 1964, he started work as a songwriter for Pickwick, who specialised in novelty knock-offs, for whom he'd cut a spoof dance craze song called "The Ostrich". A band was assembled for a TV show to promote it that included ambitious young Welshman, John Cale, in America on a classical scholarship and, at only 22, a veteran of New York's avant-garde music scene.

Reed and Cale shared in the latter's words a taste for "drugs and risk-taking" and soon formed The Velvet Underground. Their first two albums, especially, recorded by the classic 1965-68 Velvets lineup of Lou, Cale, guitarist Sterling Morrison and drummer Moe Tucker, changed rock forever, took popular music into previously uncharted territories of symphonic feedback, deranged noise, relentless drones and sustained harmonics. The records' mix of savagery and sophistication was unprecedented and carried an influence that far out-stripped their modest commercial appeal (not even their fabled association with Andy Warhol, ostensible 'producer' of their 1967 debut helped shift copies). Successive generations would be in thrall to their sonic grandeur and a collective black-clad look that matched their sound – sinister, aloof and menacing – that was as influential as their music. Among disciples of the VU can be counted David Bowie, The Stooges, Can, Roxy Music, the Sex Pistols, Joy Division, REM and The Jesus And Mary Chain.

And then there were Lou's songs. Even more than Dylan, some would say, Lou brought a startling new literacy to rock songwriting that mixed journalistic candour and a novelist's flair for place and character on taboo-breaking songs like "I'm Waiting For The Man", "Venus In Furs", "Heroin" and the 17-minute "Sister Ray", cacophonous centrepiece of the second VULP, *White Light/White*

PENNIE SMITH

Transformer:
Reed live at
the Kings
Cross Cinema,
July 14, 1972



The classic VU lineup,
1966: (l-r) Lou Reed, Nico,
Sterling Morrison, Moe
Tucker and John Cale



Heat. His subjects were hard drugs, the thrill of obliteration, deviant sex and psychotic abandon. "There seemed to be this huge untouched American landscape, with all this different subject matter that nobody was writing about," he told me in 1989, and he became its acknowledged laureate, a documentarian of dark places.

Lou fell out apocalyptically with Cale before the Velvets recorded their more subdued third LP, and before they released *Loaded*, their fourth and most commercial album, Lou had also quit. He retreated to the family home on Long Island, worked for a year as a clerk in his father's firm,

before returning in 1971 with *Lou Reed*, a timid start to a solo career rejuvenated by an association with David Bowie that yielded his most popular album, *Transformer*, and its hit single, "Walk On The Wild Side". Lou was unhappily cast as a chubby glam-rocker, however, and quickly shed a large portion of his audience when he followed *Transformer* with the uncompromisingly grim *Berlin* and *Metal Machine Music*, a double LP of not much more than tape hiss.

For the next decade, he'd continue to frustrate and amaze on inconsistent, occasionally brilliant albums like *Street Hassle* (1978), the redemptive *The Blue Mask* (1982), which marked the beginning of a profitable collaboration with guitarist Robert Quine, and *Legendary Hearts* (1983). He was back on top form, though, for 1989's angry and politicised *New York*, the elegant *Magic And Loss* in 1992 and 1990 requiem for Andy Warhol, *Songs For Drella*, that reunited him with Cale. The two shared a stage again in 1993, when the VU reformed for a European tour that ended in predictable acrimony.

The records Reed released in the new millennium were often no less divisive than the albums he made 40 years earlier. *The Raven* (2003), inspired by Edgar Allan Poe, and *Lulu* (2011), based on the plays of German writer Frank Wedekind, recorded with Metallica, left even hardened fans puzzled and aghast. *Lulu*, especially, was critically roasted, attracting some of the worst reviews of Reed's career, although the version of the album's 20-minute epic, "Junior Dad", he played at his last London concert in August, 2012, was a highlight of a show at which he looked enormously frail but capable still of the kind of performance that underlined his enduring pre-eminence as one of rock music's most pioneering creative spirits.

To the last, he seemed to remain provocatively true to what he once told me was the best advice he was ever given when it came to how to treat an audience and its usually limiting expectations. "Andy told me this, and I thought it was great," he said: "Always leave them wanting less."

BACK IN London that April in 1977, I've been taken aside and discouraged from asking Lou about any number of things, starting with The Velvet Underground and including David Bowie, the much-lambasted *Berlin* and just about anything else of predictable interest. This is so absurd I decide to ignore such advice and see what happens if I ask him what he thought were the highlights of the Velvets' brief but spectacular career. To my relief, truculence gives way to palpably fond reminiscence.

"They're too numerous to mention," he says, voice audibly softening. "I love what we did and I'm proud of it. We stood for everything kids liked and adults hated. We were loud, you couldn't understand the lyrics. We were vulgar. We sang about dope, sex, violence – you name it. If I wasn't me, I would have idolised myself in The Velvet Underground."

We talk about the resentment of some that he didn't die when his reputation was intact, indisputable, untarnished.

"I know half the people turn up at concerts to see if I'm going to drop dead onstage," he says. "And they're so disappointed that I'm still around and writing and capable of performing without falling down. But I haven't OD'd. And I know that a whole mess of those people would have been just *ecstatic* if, say, five years ago I had. The legend for them would have been complete."

"But I didn't want to do that. And they were appalled. 'Lou,' they said, 'You write all these songs and say all these things and then you don't go out and finally *do it*!' You've let us down. Come on. Have a heart. They never even offered me the dope to do it with. They expected me to do it with *my own dope*. My dear, they must have been *joking*. And even when I was approached, it was invariably with the wrong dope. Someone comes staggering up to you and you wonder just what the fuck they're on. Like, they're turning *green* and vomiting and they say, 'Here's some stuff, Lou.' And you throw your hands in the air and say, 'My dear, no!'

"I couldn't possibly turn green and go out like that. I'm too fastidious. Anyway, I'm not into dope. That's true. Why are you laughing? I don't smoke grass and I don't like things that everyone sniffs off a table. That's tawdry. It's so *common*. I like to play with my own system, alone. I'm into drug masturbation. Hey, that's really good," he laughs. "I've just given you the headline for your article. 'LOU REED – DRUG MASTURBATION EXCLUSIVE!' It doesn't mean anything, but it's like Jim Morrison, who was a fool, but he was interviewed once and came up with that line about being an 'erotic politician'. It didn't mean a thing, but sounded fantastic and he got so much press out of it. Drug masturbation must be good for at least two columns."

"And you know if he was around today," he says of Morrison, "they'd be saying the same things about him as they're saying about me. You know: 'Why doesn't he stop before he desecrates his best works totally and completely? He's taking away the admiration of us, his closest friends. Why doesn't he stop before it's too late? Why doesn't he leave part of it untouched?' Well, having met the ingrate, you know that I'm not to be taken seriously. I lie. I cheat. I hate. I'm going to take it all down with me when I go."

The Bowie-produced *Transformer* is delicately approached.

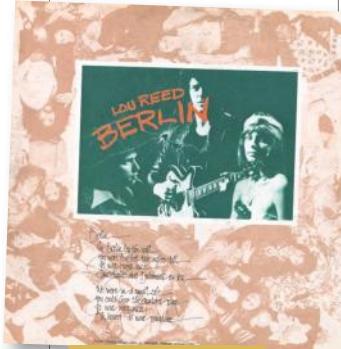
"That album had nothing to do with anything," he says sharply. "It did get me a hit single, cause for much subsequent dismay in many circles, including mine. I really don't have any memories of making that album. I was in pathetic shape. I had a nervous eye twitch and David thought I was drunk all the time, which I wasn't."

Much reviled at the time, *Berlin* is now acknowledged as a classic. In 1973, the critical panning it received on release is clearly still painful, his tone when talking about it sombre, full of raw hurt. "The way that album was overlooked was probably the biggest disappointment I ever faced," he says, almost whispering. "From that point on there was nothing that anybody could do that would affect me. I pulled the



"YOUR HEAD'S TOO BIG FOR YOUR BODY, FAGGOT..."

Lou Reed



EYEWITNESS

"HE WAS KIND, GENEROUS AND FUNNY..."

Working on Berlin, by guitarist Steve Hunter

"WHEN BOB EZRIN called me about doing a Lou Reed record, I was pretty excited. We did the basic tracks for *Berlin* in London at Morgan Studios. He and Bob had already discussed how they were going to do the album and Lou really didn't need to be in the studio. He would just drop by to see how things were going, so I only met him briefly. Even when we toured we never saw much of each other. I'm a guy who stays on my own a lot when I'm on the road and I think Lou was, too. It wasn't until later when we did *Berlin* live [in 2007] that we got to sit and chat. We got to be very close."

"I thought *Berlin* was genius. I was very hurt and angry when it wasn't received better than it was. Then when we decided to do a live show, I didn't know what to expect until rehearsal. We got a list of songs that Lou wanted to do. I thought, 'OK, it's a Lou Reed show incorporating some of the new songs – it's not going to be just a *Berlin* show.' Then that, of course, took on a

blinds *shut* at that point. And they've remained closed. There's really no talking to me now. You think I'm kidding, don't you? I don't care what people write about me anymore. I have no respect whatsoever for their opinions. I may never hit that peak again. Like *Metal Machine Music*, it's the kind of album you only do once."

We talk late into the afternoon, not much left in either bottle of Johnnie Walker Red when we're done. As I'm leaving, he asks me what I'll be doing the following week, which of course depends on my fickle paymasters at *Melody Maker*.

"Fuck *them*," he says. "You're coming to Sweden with me," he seems suddenly to decide.

To my great astonishment, he seems to have *taken a shine to me* and is even now commanding a passing flunkie to take care of the relevant travel arrangements.

"I'll see you next week," he says, and he does.

WHEN I ROLL up to the Stockholm hotel where he's staying, he's actually waiting for me in the lobby. We're soon being driven through oddly deserted streets to an address Lou has scrawled on a piece of paper that turns out to be the pad of a high-end dealer that looks like the lair of a minor Bond villain. By the time we leave, we're fearlessly high on something or other and not long after this we're in Lou's hotel room. Rachel, the glamorous transvestite who's Lou's lover at the time and the inspiration for "Coney Island Baby", is standing at the window, following the flight of a helicopter buzzing over rooftops. "Sister Morphine" is playing on Lou's Uher tape recorder, which he takes everywhere, slung over his shoulder like a rocket launcher. His arrival anywhere is invariably predicted by the strains of Abba's "Dancing Queen", a current favourite, and the only other track he seems to be currently listening to.

LYNN GOLDSMITH/REX FEATURES



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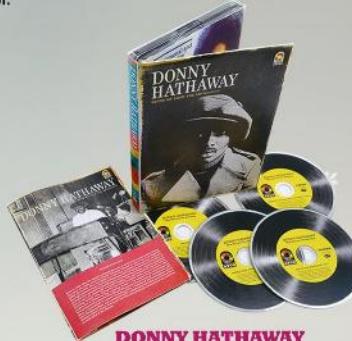
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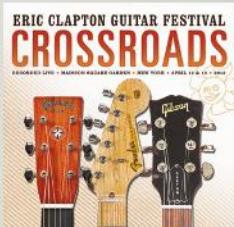
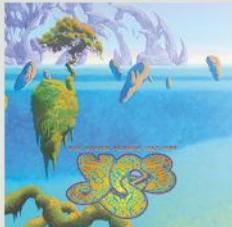


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EXTREME NOISE TERROR

• Lou's sitting across the room from me, tuning a guitar, talking non-stop about anything that occurs to him. I've never met anyone so relentlessly funny and Rachel and I are still laughing at dinner after a phenomenal show at Stockholm's handsome Concert House when Lou entertains us with an account of trying to get ice for his drink that morning. "We're in Sweden, right, and they can't get me some *ice*. Good Christ! Sweden's almost in the goddamn *Arctic Circle* and they can't get me some miserable fucking *ice*. There must be *ice everywhere*. I told this guy to get his wife or whoever to fill her mouth with water. Then I told him to send her out into the street with her mouth open, wait for the water to freeze and then come up to my room and spit in my fucking drink."

Lou's next show is in Gothenburg, after which the local promoter invites everyone out for a drink. Lou's band perk-up at this, but Lou orders them back to the hotel for an early night. He says he's up for a drink, though, and takes me with him. We fetch up many cocktails and whatnot later at a swanky fish restaurant where we're seated at tables around a large circular pool. The waitress gives us small remote control devices, which makes us wonder what the fuck's going on. It turns out our food will be served on large dinner plates placed on model boats. Using our remote control devices we'll guide the boats with our food on them to docking berths adjacent to our tables. Unbelievable fucking fun! Lou is laughing like a madman, sailing his boat around the pool in a manner that can only be described as reckless, said boat careening around the pool, capsizing the boats of other diners.

"I wish they had some fucking *submarines*," Lou cackles, the pool now awash with sinking boats, food bobbing on its surface like flotsam. A large schooner drifts by. "Sink that fucker, Jones," Lou

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF METAL MACHINE MUSIC

"**M**OST OF YOU won't like this and I don't blame you at all," wrote Lou Reed in his sleeve notes for *Metal Machine Music*. But not even he could've been prepared for the vituperative reception for his most polarising work. Four 16-minute tracks constructed via a series of amps, repeat and tremolo units, a three-speed reel-to-reel and, of course, guitars, 1975's *MMM* was an unrelenting maelstrom of noise. Stores were so deluged with returns that RCA deleted the album in weeks. Reed would ardently defend his "electronic instrumental composition" as a serious work of art, repeating the claim that passages of Beethoven and Vivaldi were discernible



amid the squalls. On other occasions, he'd dismiss it as a joke that nobody was smart enough to get.

Nevertheless, it attracted supporters even in its early days. In an at least halfway-sincere defence for *Creem*, Lester Bangs called it "the greatest record ever made in the history of the human eardrum". A teenage Thurston Moore thought it was pretty dope, too.

Over time, "noise"

shifted from a term of disparagement to a bustling musical category, and *Metal Machine Music* edged towards respectability, especially after European ensemble *Zeitkratzer* approached Reed with the idea of performing the LP live. "It can't be done," was his initial response, yet the group devised an eerily precise recreation of Reed's chaos, albeit now with parts for accordion and tuba.

Vindicated at last, Reed would later join members of *Zeitkratzer* to tour as *Metal Machine Trio*. In 2011, he supervised a remaster and sanctioned 180g vinyl and Audio DVD releases. Reed's nerve-shredder had finally become "the perfect holiday gift for your loved one!"

JASON ANDERSON

HOW TO BUY...

10 OVERLOOKED LOU ALBUMS

SALLY CAN'T DANCE



1974, RCA
Though his highest-charting album in America, it's hard to see how anything this belligerent ever qualified as a hit. The malevolence underpinning the brassy, R'n'B-tinged rock of the title track rises to the surface in "Kill Your Sons", a metallic KO with references to the electro-shock therapy of Reed's troubled youth.

CONEY ISLAND BABY



1975, RCA
Tender and caustic, the title track was Lou's most affecting study of the ways that teenage hurts yield grown-up complications. It's also one of many songs here steeped in the doo-wop music that was bred so deep in his bones.

ROCK AND ROLL HEART



1976, ARISTA
Though his first for Arista sags under a surplus of standard-issue barroom vamps, "Ladies Pay" and the savage "Temporary Thing" cut through the murk.

LIVE: TAKE NO PRISONERS



1978, ARISTA
It may be patchy as a live LP but as a demo of Lou's stand-up comedy skills, it's second to none as his hilarious rants hijack scrappy renditions of "Sweet Jane" and other faves.

THE BLUE MASK



1982, RCA
Having languished in the early years of punk, Reed stripped it all back to basics

with this ferocious restatement of purpose, aided in no small part by VU fanboy turned ace guitarist Robert Quine.

LEGENDARY HEARTS



1983, RCA
Some of *The Blue Mask*'s rage is traded for a looser feel and a bit of humour, albeit of a kind where the punchlines involve actual punches.

NEW SENSATIONS



1984, RCA
Few rock idols had an easy time in the '80s but Lou somehow scored a hit without causing anyone to cringe. Even better than breezy rockers like "I Love You, Suzanne" is the *Loaded*-worthy "Fly Into The Sun".

ECSTASY



2000, SIRE
Though straight-up rock recordings were a rarity in his final two decades, this late

outing has no lack of drive, especially on "Like A Possum", a choice 18-minute chunk of *Sturm und Drang*.

THE RAVEN



2003, SIRE
Inspired by the works of Edgar Allan Poe, this magnum opus is often sunk by an excess of ambition but still has touches of the sublime, like the reinvention of "Perfect Day" by a then-little-known Antony Hegarty.

HUDSON RIVER WIND MEDITATIONS



2007, SOUNDS TRUE
Composed as an accompaniment for his own "meditation, Tai Chi and body work", his second instrumental LP was dismissed as a new-age curio. But its drones boast a muscularity that's unmistakably Lou. JASON ANDERSON

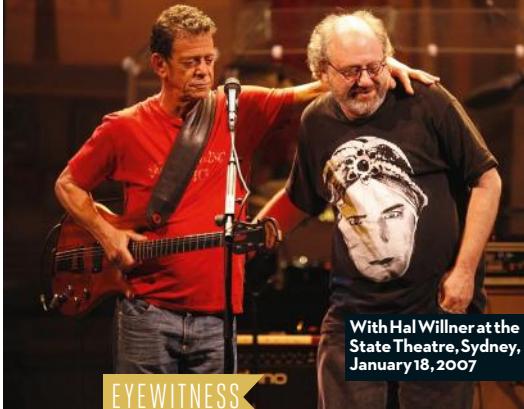
YEAR LATER, I walk into Lou's dressing room, backstage at Philadelphia's Tower Theatre to a typically hearty welcome. "Jesus God! It's the faggot dwarf! We thought you were dead. You look well. What happened? Did you get religion? Last time we saw you, man, you looked worse than anybody I've ever seen, except myself. Are you still working for *Melody Maker* trying to influence the diseased minds of cretins?"

He's just played a blinding show, his new LP, *Street Hassle*, is getting great reviews and he's on a high, prowling the dressing room like something feral under a howling moon, clearly fuelled by something you might use to launch a rocket. He's wearing one of his own tour T-shirts and bright yellow braces over that, hitching up tan leather trousers that flare unexpectedly at the ankles and are laced up with thongs at the crotch. If he wasn't Lou Reed, he'd look absurd. "Say hi to the band," he says, introducing me to people I already know. "Weren't we great tonight? Weren't we the best rock'n'roll band you ever saw? God above, we're a fucking orchestra. Did you ever hear anyone play guitar like I did tonight? Wasn't I just great?"

I'm relieved he's lost none of his overwhelming modesty since we last met. "Oh, I still know I'm the best," he says, laughing, handing me a beer. "Who else is there? Kansas? Mel Tormé? Come on. I'm Dante with a beat. I'm like Bach, Bartók and Little Richard. I'm so hot at the moment I burn myself whenever I touch a guitar. What did you think of 'Street Hassle' tonight? Great, uh? That gets spooky. That's me on the line out there, man. Like Dante. If they put me in purgatory, I'd be the fucking landlord."

A few days later, the morning after another tremendous show in Passaic, New Jersey, we're in the bar of the Essex House, a swanky hotel overlooking Central Park, where Lou gets into a row with a regrettably wisecracking barman that puts him into a foul mood that continues when we go up to the urban wasteland he's turned his room into. At some point during the long dislocated conversation we go on to have, we end up talking about "Kill Your Sons", a song from *Sally Can't Dance* about the electric shock therapy his parents surrendered him to as a teenager, which he now seems to be saying is the root of his fiercely oppositional character, his parents in his pathological demonology synonymous with society's authoritarian determination to stifle the libertarian impulse to be at all costs oneself, unbound by timid convention. At least that's what I think he's talking about. "It's like war, right from the top," he says. "The moment you wake up in *their* world and you tune into the fact that you've got to get out, it's war. And they'll do anything to stop you. They're poisoning us from the start and we don't stand a chance. I believe there's a war and we're on one side and they're on the other. I think rock'n'roll is terribly, terribly political and subversive and they're absolutely right to be afraid of it. Across the board, there are lots of albums with words like mine. But I'm more of a threat because of what I represent. I'm an enticement to their children. I'm still banned on the radio, not because of what I look like, but because I represent certain ideas. I mean, I don't have long hair, I don't wear earrings or glitter. Maybe they don't like Jewish faggots. How seriously can you take it? So they don't play me on the radio? What's the radio? Who's the radio run by? Who is it played for? They should take me very seriously. They do. They want to keep me locked away. I'm dangerous. They're afraid of that. And they should be, because a lot of us aren't kidding and we just keep going. And they can't stop us, man."

SEE LOU Reed once more before the end of his dark decade. In April, '79, he plays a famously confrontational show at London's Hammersmith Odeon. Afterwards, I'm invited to dinner with him and Bowie at the Chelsea



With Hal Willner at the State Theatre, Sydney, January 18, 2007

EYEWITNESS

"HE DID NOT WANT TO GO..."

Hal Willner recalls his 30-year friendship with Lou

IT'S BEEN DEVASTATING. I've been Lou's Tonto, his faithful companion. I've known Lou for around 30 years, since we did "September Song" in 1985 [for Kurt Weill tribute album *Lost In The Stars*]. Then since *Ecstasy*, I've been around for almost everything, from helping remount *Berlin* to *The Raven* to the radio show [Lou Reed's *New York Shuffle With Hal Willner on Sirius XM*].

There was no other artist quite like him and I don't think there ever will be again. He was the Miles Davis of rock.

"I had some magic moments with him, like when we went on the road with *Berlin*.

"[Recently] he'd been battling [health problems] for a few years. During the *Metallica* record, things were starting to eat at him as it progressed from Hep C to cancer. It was a rage-filled period and that's what you heard. In the last while, we kept doing the radio show. We'd play records for each other and talk about it. Music is the great medicine. There was nothing like listening to music with him - he would outwardly cry when listening to something beautiful. He liked to hold his arm out to show you the goosebumps.

There were times when he wasn't feeling well but music would revive him every time. And he did not want to go - he was never resigned to it. He did everything he possibly could have done to get over this, a lot of painful processes that many people wouldn't go through. But he wanted to stay until the very last breath."

JASON ANDERSON

Rendezvous restaurant. Everything seems to be going swimmingly when Bowie says something to Lou to which he replies by slapping Bowie several times across the face, following up with a flurry of punches to Bowie's startled head. The room freezes, time suspended, as Lou first apologises then starts beating up on Bowie again when Bowie intemperately repeats whatever he said to provoke the first assault. Burly minders restrain Lou, frog-match him off the premises, Bowie left sobbing at his table. Lou's eyes as he's walked by me are remote dead things.

There are worse times to come for Lou, but when we meet next, in February '89, at a West London hotel, he's much reformed, his hard-won sobriety harrowingly documented on songs like "Underneath The Bottle" and "The Last Shot" from *The Blue Mask* and *Legendary Hearts*, two of the many overlooked albums Lou records in the 1980s that were barely mentioned in his recent obituaries, as if he did nothing worthwhile in the '80s, until *New York*, the album we're here today to talk about. When he eventually appears in the hotel suite booked for our interview and asks where the mini bar is, it's only to dig out a jar of some kind of coated nut that's taken his fancy.

These days, it should be noted, Lou is also politically and ecologically concerned, an active member of Amnesty International, in support of whom he toured America in 1986, alongside U2 and Sting, a regular at benefits in New York for a variety of charitable concerns. He's lined up with the good guys, ready to fight the good fight, firm in his opposition to Republican America, the blight of Bush, who at the time had just succeeded the addled Reagan in the White House, successive administrations about which he is scathing. "The Reagan legacy is a three trillion dollar debt and a war he waged against people who couldn't fight back," he says. "Women. Children. The poor. People who are sick. People who are dying of AIDS. The attitude of someone like Bush on AIDS is along the lines of, 'Well, they deserve it.' He thinks it's confined to so-called degenerates in New York. I don't know what he's going to say when it creeps around his little house in LA and comes in with the fucking postman."

These are all very admirable sentiments, powerfully articulated, like the songs on *New York*. There are flashes of the old irascibility, though, especially when he follows a rant about evangelism in the United States and then starts a hymn of praise to U2, a group it seems to me who are consumed by their own kind of evangelism. The words are barely out of my mouth before Lou is stuffing them down my throat.

"U2 aren't evangelists," he says and I can feel the back of my neck start to redden. "Jimmy Swaggart is an evangelist. U2 are just a bunch of good guys. Evangelism smacks of self-righteous piousness, fist-waving *Elmer Gantry* stuff."

This sounded suspiciously like U2 to me.

"Why criticise someone for trying to do something unique and really sweet, Allan?" Lou asks, giving me another look. "I mean, you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. I mean," he says impatiently. "What are you doing?"

I'm just trying to get by, Lou.

"Well," he says, "don't make so much noise about it."

THE INTERVIEW OVER, Lou puts on his shades for a five minute photo-session with MM lensman Tom Sheehan. "Step forward, Lou," Sheehan says.

Lou steps forward.

"Hang on," Sheehan says. "You've gone too far."

Lou laughs. "That's the story of my life, Tom," he says, with a smile it's hard to forget. "That's the story of my life." **❶**

PUSH THE SKY AWAY

A black and white photograph of a man in a dark suit standing on the left, and a woman in a bathtub on the right, partially obscured by a white shower curtain. The man is looking towards the woman.

THE INDEPENDENT *****
THE GUARDIAN ****
MOJO ****
UNCUT ****
THE TIMES ****
SUNDAY MAIL *****
THE EXPRESS ****
THE MIRROR ****
METRO ****
NME 9 OUT OF 10
CLASH 9 OUT OF 10

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“The reports of my death have been greatly understated...”

Even by his standards, 2013 has been a bizarre year for noted author and sometime recording artist STEVEN PATRICK MORRISSEY.

After 11 months of chaos, misinformation and anxiety, *Uncut* uncovers the real inside story of Moz's *annus horribilis*. The meat-free arenas! The ruined tours! The health scares! The publishing battles... At last, Morrissey's friends and bandmates reveal all — including tantalising hints of what 2014 may hold...

Story: David Cavanagh

Photograph: Perou





POOR FLINT. The debt-ridden Michigan city, dogged by some of America's worst crime statistics, laid claim to another dubious honour this year: it was the unluckiest place on Earth to be a Morrissey fan. The singer had already cancelled a gig there in October 2012 (having flown back to England because his mother was unwell), so his fans in Flint were doubly psyched for the rescheduled show on January 24. However, with only hours to go, it was announced that this, too, had been called off.

Jesse Tobias, Moz's American guitarist, explains that the problems had started a week earlier in North Bethesda, Maryland. "Systematically, throughout the day, members of the tour began to feel ill," he tells *Uncut*. "Stomach pains, nausea and... well, you get the picture. We finally gathered that it must have been food poisoning from catering. Someone strained the veggie pasta through a shoe, perhaps. Luckily, Moz was spared and we made it through the show."

Onstage the following night – Reading, Pennsylvania – Tobias' co-guitarist Boz Boorer wore a facemask. He wasn't the only one breathing germs. Kristeen Young, the tour's

support act, recalls the desperate situation backstage: "Before my set, about 12 of us lay flat out on the floor in the production room. It looked like the hospital courtyard scene in *Gone With The Wind*." The tour continued for three more nights (Port Chester, Pittsburgh, Columbus) before Flint got the phone-call. That was just the tip of the iceberg. Within 24 hours, Morrissey was receiving treatment for three separate medical conditions in a Michigan hospital.

In all, he cancelled 60 shows (including another rescheduled Flint gig in April) as the year lurched from one crisis to another. The cancellations stretched from January to August,

from Minneapolis to Buenos Aires.

"Unfortunately we had a string of problems," says Tobias. "It was horrible. This was a bit of a cursed year." Morrissey's online apologies were mini-masterpieces of tragicomic exasperation ("The reports of my death have been greatly understated...") By March he was unable to get tour insurance, unable to work, effectively checkmated. "The obvious conclusion stares back at me from the mirror," he wrote in July. It sounded ominous.

MORRISSEY'S MUCH-ANTICIPATED AUTOBIOGRAPHY (Penguin Classics) has become one of the fastest-selling memoirs since official sales records began... Morrissey debuts at No 1 in the Official UK Top 50, relegating Helen Fielding's new Bridget Jones novel, *Mad About The Boy (Cape)*, into second place" – *The Bookseller*, October 23.

Few artists could have salvaged such a spectacular autumn from the wreckage of the spring and summer – especially once headlines had been written about their career being formally wound down ("Doctors Advise Morrissey To Retire From Touring", "Emotional Morrissey Hints At Withdrawal From Music Business"). He'd alluded to the book's existence on March 19 in an interview with a Mexican radio station, five days after cancelling an appearance at a festival in Mexico City. "Yes, it's there," he said



of *Autobiography*, "and it's sitting and at the right time I'll press the button. But it's not the right time yet, it's not the right time."

Pressing the button – publishing terminology for putting a book into production – was not a priority in March, since Morrissey still intended to tour for much of the rest of the year. But when it became clear that the landscape beyond July would be barren ("Morrissey Hit By Yet Another Illness; Cancels Entire South American Tour"), the narrative of his year began to change completely. After manoeuvres of such stealth and secrecy that the media and other publishing houses were left wondering how Morrissey and Penguin had pulled it off, *Autobiography* hit the streets on October 17. Queues formed. News websites raced to print the first revelations. From

MORE MOZ

THERE IS A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT...

Morrissey's releases and/or new music since 2011

June 2011. Janice Long session, Radio 2. Three new songs – "Action Is My Middle Name", "The Kid's A Looker", "People Are The Same Everywhere" – are all Morrissey/Boorer compositions.

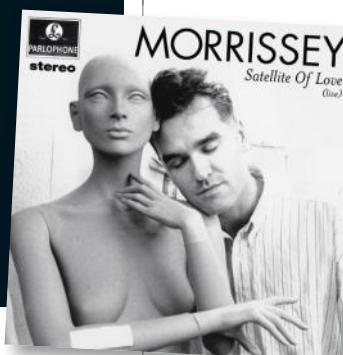
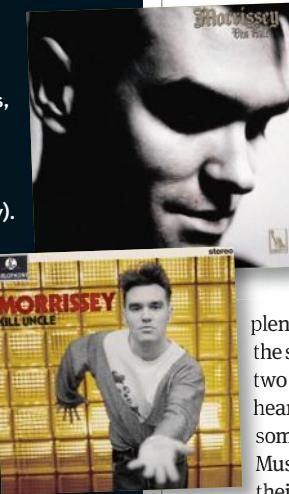
July 2011. Tony Visconti-produced session in Dublin for Canadian cable TV series *Studio In Session*. The aforementioned three songs, plus another new one, "Scandinavia". The session later appears as an extra on *Morrissey 25: Live* (see below).

April 2012. Remastered edition of *Viva Hate*. One track ("The Ordinary Boys") is replaced by a demo ("Treat Me Like A Human Being") and "Late Night, Maudlin Street" is severely edited.

April 2013. Remastered, extended *Kill Uncle* (1991). Morrissey insists on whole new LP cover.

Oct 2013. *Morrissey 25: Live*, filmed at Hollywood High School, March 2. The gig marks 25 years as a solo artist, but also includes five Smiths songs. Shown in cinemas in August prior to DVD release.

December 2013. A new single, a live 2011 cover of Lou Reed's "Satellite Of Love".



MORRISSEY
IN 2013

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

January 9. Morrissey's US tour begins in Greenvale, New York, due to end in Portland on March 8.

January 24. Morrissey hospitalised with suspected bladder infection. As diagnosis

changes to bleeding ulcer and Barrett's oesophagus, 19 shows are cancelled.

February 27. Tour resumes in San Diego but only six shows are possible before illness (double pneumonia) and

cancellations strike again.

July 19. Hit by further illness and financial problems, Morrissey abandons his South American tour without playing a single concert. Calls it "the last of many final straws".

September 12. Morrissey issues a statement saying

his deal with Penguin has collapsed and he is now seeking a new publisher for *Autobiography*. Within 24 hours, the statement is retracted.

October 17. To huge media interest, *Autobiography* is published as a Penguin Classic, entering the book charts at No 1 and beating

the first-week sales of Keith Richards' *Life*. Morrissey, looking fit and healthy, signs copies in a Gothenburg bookshop.

November 2. Morrissey is discharged from Cedars-Sinai hospital in LA after suffering whiplash, concussion and an arm injury in an apparent car crash.

about his health and possible retirement. How much of it did he plan? Somewhere in the silence (the book's PR campaign was a campaign consisting of no PR), one sensed Morrissey's watchful eye. The focus shifts now to America, where *Autobiography* is published by GP Putnam's Sons on December 3. If sales are prolific, Moz will surely be in his most powerful position since 2004, when he ended a seven-year chart absence with the highly successful *You Are The Quarry*. He's currently without a manager or a record deal, yet it's hard to think of a singer who's had a higher profile in the last two months.

"He knows when things should happen," says

Jennifer Ivory, a former head of marketing at Sanctuary (...*Quarry*, *Ringleader*...) who speaks to Morrissey on a regular basis. "He knew when the book should come out, when the next release should be. He has an idea of the years. He sort of maps it out in his brain."

Morrissey has complained that labels snub him in favour of younger, more malleable talent, but whoever signs him will have plenty to release. "We're long overdue for the studio," says Jesse Tobias. "There are two albums' worth of songs ready. I've heard almost everything and feel it's some of the strongest material to date. Musically diverse. Anthemic. Even in their infant stages the songs excite me."

One wonders if Morrissey's Lazarene recovery from the sickbed may be the launchpad for a comeback that would dwarf even *You Are The Quarry*. But then a statement arrives in

November as *Uncut* goes to press:

"Morrissey has now been discharged from Cedars-Sinai Hospital in LA following treatment for concussion, whiplash and an arm injury." After a year like 2013, maybe it's a good idea not to make any rash predictions about 2014.

London to Manchester, there was the whispering sound of pages urgently being thumbed. It was like Morrissey fever of old.

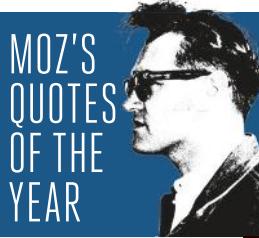
The turnaround was staggering. Preoccupation with the contents of *Autobiography* ("Inside Morrissey's Memoir: Romance, Sexuality, Hate" – *Pitchfork*) drowned out months of speculation

Morrissey makes headline news in Britain while he himself is thousands of miles away on the other side of the Atlantic. On January 8, quotes start to leak from an interview with *Loaded* (conducted at Morrissey's London hotel a



IT BEGINS WITH a ventriloquistic flourish. Not for the first time,

Morrissey makes headline news in Britain while he himself is thousands of miles away on the other side of the Atlantic. On January 8, quotes start to leak from an interview with *Loaded* (conducted at Morrissey's London hotel a



MOZ'S QUOTES OF THE YEAR

"We're all naked under our clothes. You can lounge about all day at the Henley Regatta smoking dope, but sooner or later you'll need to do something with your life" - *Loaded*, January

"If more men were homosexual, there would be no wars, because homosexual men would never kill other men, whereas heterosexual men love killing other men. They even get medals for it" - *Rookie*, February

"I turn up [at my gigs] in order to watch the crowd, whereas it's generally assumed that they turn up to watch me. The only difference is that I don't have to queue, and I don't get groped by venue security" - *Hollywood Reporter*, February

"The rhino is now more or less extinct, and it's not because of global warming or shrinking habitats. It's because of Beyoncé's handbags" - onstage at the Staples Center, LA, March

"The most common misconception is that I'm an extrovert. I'm not at all. Not at all. And [that] I'm angry and a monster. It's not true. I'm not a monster..." - *Reactor 105.7*, Mexico, March

"As a matter of recorded fact, Thatcher was a terror without an atom of humanity" - open letter, *Daily Beast*, April

month ago) in which he makes scathing comments about the Beckhams during a sustained attack on celebrity culture. Attracting even more attention, though, is his surprise approval of Ukip, the right-wing Eurosceptic party once described by David Cameron as "a bunch of fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists". Morrissey's opinion of them is different: "I nearly voted for Ukip. I like Nigel Farage a great deal. His views are quite logical, especially where Europe is concerned."

As with all Morrissey controversies, the shock of the moment soon gives way to reheated analysis. The quote is condemned (*Daily Telegraph*) blog: "Morrissey has been an angry embarrassment to his fans for years. Who cares what he thinks about Ukip?", but there's also condemnation for Morrissey quotes in the past ("You can't help but feel that the Chinese are a subspecies", "Reggae is vile"), which remain on file in perpetuity, smouldering like bonfires never properly extinguished. Ukip, far from being pleased with the *Loaded* interview, warily distance themselves from it. "It's a double-edged sword," their press officer Gwain Towler will tell *Uncut*. "He said a lot of unpleasant things about the royal family which obviously we wouldn't agree with. He's a fascinating individual, but we didn't think, 'We must pick up the phone and ask him to open for Nigel at the conference.'"

Across the ocean in New York, January 8 is the eve of Morrissey's latest US tour. Backed by guitarist/musical director Boz Boorer and his American-Colombian "four-piece band of handsome young men" (*Hollywood Reporter*), Moz sings "Action Is My Middle Name" on *The Late Show With David Letterman*. The song was first aired in 2011 in a Janice Long Radio 2 session. "Pleasure to see you again," beams Letterman, shaking Morrissey's hand. "Enjoy your tour."

For seven days, he does. The first destination is Greenvale, a hamlet 30 miles east of New York. "Quite often we play off the beaten path, unique venues with special significance," Jesse Tobias explains. "It's not uncommon for us to pull up to a venue in the middle of nowhere and find out Oscar Wilde or The Stooges had been there." The first song is "Shoplifters Of The World Unite", Moz's regular set-opener since October. The gig ends with "How Soon Is Now?", which sees a number of fans invade the stage. Most settle for a bear hug before they're scooped away by security. A few are more aggressive. One gets Morrissey in a headlock.

Tobias: "Then we had an amazing show at the Brooklyn Academy Of Music. That was a highlight. People surging over one another trying to reach the stage. Beautiful chaos. There's a whole East Coast contingent of Mozzophiles that come to all the gigs." At Morrissey shows, the fans are central to the ceremony. Their attempts to touch him add to the impression of a messiah walking among his followers. "Everyone in the audience tends to be incisively stylish and enthusiastically emotional," notes Kristeen Young (right), who's toured with him since 2006. Tobias makes a key point: "The thing about playing off the beaten path is that you get



Moz guitarist Jesse Tobias, January 9, 2013, Greenvale, NY...



...and masked axe man Boz Boorer, January 18, 2013, Reading, PA

a cross-pollination of people from surrounding states, smaller towns, bigger cities. People are ready to pop with excitement when they make the trip out to the shows. It's an event. They travel with friends, they tailgate... a proper gang experience."

The tour heads to NJ, then Maryland, playing sold-out venues as it goes. Kristeen Young likes to watch Morrissey from the wings. "He was in excellent voice. Not one night was the same. Unlike many singers, his patter isn't a scripted delivery, so nothing ever gets old. If I miss a single night I feel I've missed out on something important."

Morrissey and his band have every reason to feel optimistic as

they sit down to their vegetarian pasta in North Bethesda.

ON THE NIGHT of January 23, Jesse Tobias went out drinking with other bandmates in Detroit. They'd dined with Morrissey and he seemed fine. They staggered back to their hotel in the small hours, making a commotion and being scolded by staff. They awoke to an email from the tour manager informing them that Morrissey was in hospital. "I felt like such a schmuck," Tobias says.

It was the day of the Flint cancellation. Initial media reports suggested a bandmember had fallen ill. That Morrissey himself had been hospitalised was not revealed until two days later; he was said to be undergoing tests for a suspected bladder infection. Follow-up stories added bewildering new details: Morrissey had concussion; he had a bleeding ulcer; he had Barrett's oesophagus, a serious condition frequently associated with cancer. As media astonishment grew,

almost every day in late January and early February brought news of a medical emergency. Sometimes it was unclear whether a story was a clarification of a previous diagnosis, or a new diagnosis altogether. "I am certainly on the road to recovery," Morrissey wrote (prematurely, as it turned out) on February 16, "but caution and prevention demand further IV blood work, lest I keel over and die before your very eyes." His statement apologised for postponing three more gigs.

The ulcer was in abeyance, but anaemia had become a worry. His band couldn't believe what was happening. "It was confusing, scary and it makes you feel helpless," says Tobias. "He had a lot of hospital trips, IV drips, bed rest..."

During some of these bouts with illness, the band and Moz were in separate cities. We had to be ready to resume at the next venue when he was in the nearest suitable hospital, sometimes hours away."

After 19 postponements, the tour restarted in San Diego on February 27. Several times, Morrissey made a point of changing lyrics to keep a public argument going with his current bête noire, Jimmy Kimmel. Kimmel, an ABC talk show presenter, had become Morrissey's latest cancellation: he'd learned that his fellow guests on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* would include the Robertson family from Louisiana, stars of a reality TV series (*Duck Dynasty*) about a company that manufactures duck- and deer-hunting merchandise. Morrissey, whose views on animal rights must have been known to the production team, accused the Robertsons of being tantamount to "animal serial killers". Kimmel mocked his "dumb statements" and



challenged him to repeat them on air.

"Morrissey's arrival in LA has been headline-heavy and he's yet to sing a single note," commented *The Hollywood Reporter* as the insults flew back and forth.

A sold-out concert at the Staples Center on March 1 made for another big story. Back in January, it had emerged that Morrissey wanted the LA venue's owners to guarantee that no meat products would be sold or consumed on the night – not an easy request to make of a 20,000-capacity arena that contains at least one McDonald's franchise. In the end, Morrissey appeared to win his battle (McDonald's remained closed for the evening while other fast-food outlets turned veggie), but an even bigger achievement, some reckon, was the extraordinary atmosphere that descended when he took the stage. "That night, Staples Center felt like a living room," says Kristeen Young. "It was nothing anyone expected, being that it was such a large venue. But there was a universal sensitivity that night. Almost a sweetness, a calm, a bond in the air at some points. Which is significant for a huge crowd who can be physically assertive in their pursuit to reach the stage... and him." The tour was back in business. The following night's gig was at Hollywood High School. It sold out, legend has it, in 12 seconds. With only 1,800 allowed in, fans started queuing the day before; the line stretched down Hollywood Boulevard. Celebrity guests included Quentin Tarantino, Joaquin Phoenix and Patrick Dempsey. The musicians were advised there would be cameras onstage. They assumed this meant one or two, like at Glastonbury, but were instead met by a full-scale film crew shooting the show for a DVD, *Morrissey 25: Live*. As the crew set up and people dashed around, Morrissey and band had to wait in portable dressing-rooms on the school's track and field grounds. They were introduced by Russell

The great man at a book signing, Gothenburg, Sweden, October 17, 2013



Brand. "I think all of us here, when we're watching him contort and thrash upon this stage, recognise a person who offered us salvation when we were truly, truly alone,"

Brand said. "A person who can elevate the mundane and the vulnerable and make them seem truly heroic."

A week later, Morrissey was back in hospital with double pneumonia.

HIS DOCTORS WERE now warning him to stop touring. He divulged as much (but intimated that he wasn't planning to heed them) on Reactor 105.7, a Mexican radio station, during a wide-ranging interview in mid-March. He talked of losing a lot of blood and described his "immune defences" as being "very low". The language was disquieting. But again he stressed his optimism – and again the optimism was misplaced. There would be no more Moz gigs in 2013. Just 36 more cancellations and tens of thousands of disappointed ticket-holders in North and South America.

Slowly, month by month, the saga of Morrissey's ongoing medical dilemmas began to operate

in parallel with a second story: the possible publication of his long-promised book. First mentioned back in 2006, the book had loomed in the background of the wider health agenda since January 2013 ("Morrissey Signals To Fans His Autobiography Is Coming, But Who's Publishing It?" – *Capital New York*), but information-wise it was clear little had changed since April 2011, when Moz told Radio 4's *Front Row* that a 660-page manuscript had been completed and that he wished it to be published as a Penguin Classic. When approached in January, nobody at Penguin US claimed to have heard of the book and Penguin UK denied it was on their schedule. Morrissey confirmed in March it had a title, but added that he'd "rather not say anything until it's launched". When your autobiography is called *Autobiography*, you don't want loose tongues spoiling the surprise.

Being fast-tracked to Penguin Classic status (an accolade traditionally reserved for works that have attained distinction over many decades and centuries) would prove controversial. But while critics argued Morrissey was guilty of arrogance, or of some kind of kitsch gimmick, his desire to be published by Penguin Classics was consistent with aesthetic decisions he'd taken in the past. An artist with a deep appreciation for logos and imprints, he'd asked EMI in 1988 to reactivate the dormant HMV (a leading pop label of the '60s) to make his records look exclusive and special.

Later, *Southpaw Grammar* bore the orange RCA

AFP PHOTO / TT NEWS AGENCY/ADAMHS/SEL

MEET THE BAND

WHO'S WHO

Morrissey's trusted lieutenants

BOZ BOORER

Guitarist, musical director. British rockabilly veteran (Polecats) and mainstay of Moz's band since 1991. Also his principal co-writer since departure of Alain Whyte in 2004.

JESSE TOBIAS

Guitarist. Texan-born, LA-based. Previously in Red Hot Chili Peppers (briefly in 1993) and Alanis Morissette's live band on Jagged Little Pill tour. Now in his 10th year with Morrissey.

SOLOMON WALKER

Bassist. From Illinois. Real name Solomon Snyder. Brother of Matt Walker (né Snyder, ex-Smashing Pumpkins), Morrissey's drummer from 2006-12. Solomon joined in 2007, replacing the long-serving Gary Day.

ANTHONY BURULCICH

Drums. Former percussion student at Berklee College Of Music. Subsequently a member of new wave-influenced, critically acclaimed The Bravery, who now seem to have disbanded.

GUSTAVO MANZUR

Keyboards. From a Colombian family, via Washington DC and Austin, Texas. Joined Morrissey in Sep 2009, replacing Kristopher Pooley. Besides keyboards, Manzur plays a number of Colombian instruments.





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© Victor logo which had graced the David Bowie and Lou Reed records that changed Morrissey's life. In the *Maladjusted* era, Island revived the 'palm tree' label that once decorated Roxy Music singles. Morrissey was not disrespecting the proud history of Penguin Classics by coveting its logo; on the contrary, he was respecting it for all he was worth. "I see [my book] as the sentimental climax to the last 30 years," he'd told *Billboard* in July 2011. But his proposed December 2012 publication date slipped by without a word.

Before any sign of an autobiography, Morrissey had some writing to do in the summer. Most of it was steeped in despair ("The future is suddenly absent, and my apologies are now so frequent as to be somewhat ridiculous"), for his South American tour – hit by a recurrence of food poisoning in Peru – had collapsed like a house of cards. He blamed a combination of logistics ("It's quite easy to sell tickets, yet impossible to transport band and crew from F to G") and sinister forces ("This really is the last of many final straws..."). After all the hospitalisations, the matter of insurance may have tipped the balance. Who wanted to take a risk on a singer who'd cancelled three times as many gigs as he'd played? "Considering the year we'd had, it was just, 'Oh, of course the tour isn't happening,'" relates Tobias. "The health issues, food poisoning and scheduling problems [became] an avalanche. In some ways it seemed right to let some time pass and clear the black cloud that had swallowed us." Asked where he went after South America, Tobias replies: "To the bar, for about four weeks."

A deceptive calm prevailed. For two months, Morrissey vanished from the news. Then, on September 12, a bizarre statement appeared online, apparently written with his blessing, stating that his publishing deal with Penguin had fallen through due to a last-minute hitch. The next day brought a retraction: he was not seeking another publisher, and he and Penguin were fully determined to publish within the next few weeks. Finally, a Penguin press release on October 3 put an end to the charade by announcing a publication date for *Autobiography* of Oct 17 (the day after Oscar Wilde's birthday), but provided neither any facts nor any clues about the book's contents. The media leapt into action. The death of the Penguin Classics brand was predicted by outraged literary editors. Johnny Rogan, author of *Morrissey & Marr: The Severed Alliance*, had never seen anything like it. He called *Autobiography* "a publishing phenomenon" and foresaw Harry Potter-type scenes at bookstores. Penguin's publicity department was sent a list of 20 questions by *Uncut*. An email arrived five hours later answering 'No comment' to all 20 of them.

Even other publishers were wary of discussing *Autobiography* on the record. "The idea of embargos on books is certainly not new," one told us. "What is unusual is that the secrecy was so rigorously adhered to. The genius part was the way they dropped the bomb the book had been pulled. Who knows what went on there? It seems like a great way to announce it. From then, it was pretty much No 1 on Amazon pre-orders."

The suspicion is that Morrissey stage-managed the whole scenario, with Penguin carrying out his instructions to the letter. Both sides will have enjoyed seeing the media dance, yet both lost out financially when *Autobiography* went straight to paperback. Moz was putting his money where his



Morrissey, with Jake Walters, at the album launch for *Vauxhall And I*, the HMV store, London, March 1994

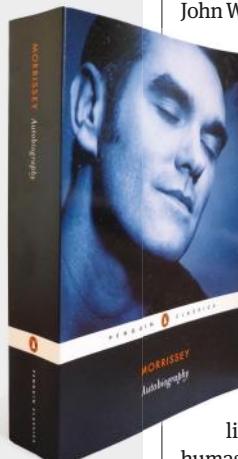
MOZ MATTERS

IT'S TIME THE TALE WERE TOLD... AGAIN?

Autobiography left a lot out, says Johnny Rogan

"I ENJOYED THE CAMEO stories about his aunts and uncles, but there was so much about his immediate family that remained unstated. There's a 'shadow' autobiography that exists in dozens of unseen letters. Morrissey refers to these as his 'tactless revelations'. It's there that we get an undiluted account of the teenage Morrissey – a less arch, more open and vulnerable narrator than the self-confident adult who writes *Autobiography*. In a very literal sense, the book is an exploration of Morrissey's inner world. The characters are namechecked in a paragraph or vignette, then abruptly disappear. Predictably, the Jake story secured the tabloid interest, but in the end, he too disappears without an encore.

"As ever with Morrissey, you're left wanting more. He could easily write another book about his songwriting themes and inspirations. But that's a book he may never write."



mouth is. He and Penguin could have published in hardback at twice the price, reaping a Christmas harvest with a paperback 12 months later. But Penguin rarely prints its Classics in hardback.

A SIDE FROM ONE North London bookshop that opened at midnight, October 17 was a normal day in British retail – but it was soon evident that *Autobiography* was selling well. The first reviews focused on the more arresting disclosures, such as Moz's mid-'90s relationship

with Jake Walters and the kidnapping attempt in Mexico. The unbroken 10-page opening para was the subject of stunned incredulity. The lack of an index infuriated those who prefer to speed-read. The writing was succulent, shot through with vivid recollection and intense emotion. He was good on cities: Manchester, LA, Rome. One got a sense of what it's like to see the world through his eyes. But his vicious words for Mike Joyce, Judge John Weeks and Geoff Travis, and the mammoth

Smiths court case that was the book's seemingly interminable centrepiece, ensured that most appraisals of *Autobiography* were profoundly mixed. (Joyce, Travis and Johnny Marr were all unavailable for comment.) Moz, who'd gone to Sweden for a book signing, watched from afar as the players in the comedy read aloud from his script. He interjected only once – on Oct 19 – when it dawned on him that the press were making inferences about the Jake Walters business. "Unfortunately, I am not homosexual," Moz clarified, making

liberal use of italics. "In technical fact, I am humasexual. I am attracted to *humans*. But, of course... *not many*." *Uncut* sent some questions to him at the end of October. They went unanswered.

So where now? According to his friend Jennifer Ivory, Morrissey is once again open to the idea of hiring new management and finding a suitable label. He hasn't released an album since *Years Of Refusal* in 2009. Perhaps it's time he reminded everyone that he used to be a pretty good singer before he embarked on his literary career. Ivory confirms that Morrissey receives periodic approaches from record companies, quite contrary to his familiar melancholy laments about being the eternal spinster of the music industry, bereft of suitors. "I don't get approached by *anybody* to record," he reiterated glumly in March, "so nothing ever happens really. So I wait, and I wait, and then I wait in order to wait, so here I am, sitting here waiting." It's more a question, thinks Ivory, of the approach being made in the right way. Having run the marketing campaigns for his two *Sanctuary* albums, she doubts he would be an unreasonable artist to work with. ☀



"Give up education as a bad mistake" - Morrissey performs at Hollywood High School, LA, March 2, 2013

He does, however, insist on trust and he likes to be wooed; he's old-fashioned like that. He could easily afford to pay for the recording of a new album himself and license it to various companies around the world, but that's not Morrissey's style. That would be undignified.

"The offers have to be right," says Ivory. "The people within the company have to be right. He wants to feel protected by a company, protected by people working on [his album] and putting their arms around it." And when that LP is ready, it had better crash into the charts at No 1 (which ...Quarry and ...Refusal didn't) or Moz will make it a grim day for everyone at the label.

"He wants success," Ivory says. "He wants people to hear his music, like every other artist I've ever met. But he wants it on his terms." What are his terms? "He won't compromise himself. If he doesn't want to do something, he's not doing it. Most artists don't get away with that. But he does." Can he be talked into doing something? "Yes, but only if he was willing to do it in the first place. He didn't want to do *Jonathan Ross* [in 2004]. But he did, and I'm glad, as it was great TV, and he's become friendly with Jonathan as a result. He didn't want to do the *Russell Brand* show [in 2006], but he's become friends with Russell too."

Radio 1 was already closing Moz down in the *Sanctuary* years, believing he no longer

made sense to their demographic. Since then, the landscape has been transformed by iTunes and Spotify. Morrissey brandishes his spear like Canute and commands the tides to halt, but few artists have such a heightened perspective on their own music. "Buying a Morrissey disc remains a political

gesture," he writes in *Autobiography*, and it's possibly the most astounding sentence in the book. But even though physical product is holding on gamely (CDs still account for 50% of album sales, calculates Ivory, now at Warners), Morrissey's interest in the other 50% - some would say the crucial 50% - is non-existent. He doesn't care about downloading, crowdsourcing, social media or the blogosphere. "He grew up obsessed with pop music, chart positions and *TOTP*," says Ivory. "All those things no longer really exist. But he's a purist. He buys CDs all the time. If I say, 'What have you done today?', he'll say, 'I went to HMV. He still wants to buy it and hold it.'

"There are lots of artists from his era who lament the passing of physical product," notes David Munns, an industry veteran who signed The Smiths to EMI. "But at the end of the day, he's got to wise up a bit, 'cos you can't buy a physical disc in Manhattan. If you're lucky, you might find a CD in Best Buy. Bless him for hanging in

there, but he'll have to give in. There'll be such a small footprint for physical goods and the people who want his music will find it online, whether they pay for it or not." (Interestingly, Moz's new 45, a live version of Lou Reed's "Satellite Of Love", is available *only* as a download for the first month of release.) But before anyone decides whether Moz's next LP will be bought over a counter or with a

quick click, the issues of songwriting and production are already proving divisive among fans. Morrissey doesn't have an official website. When he has something to say, he sends an email to *True To You*, a devoted Moz webzine (*true-to-you.net*), which prints it without comment.

Within minutes it's being scrutinised on the other

principal Moz site, *Morrissey-solo.com*. The site's UK administrator is a Yorkshire-based formulation chemist named Peter Finan. "There are fans who'll praise everything he does," Finan allows. "But others have been looking at his recent albums and saying the quality doesn't match *Vauxhall* or *Southpaw*. For them, another LP of 'the same again' wouldn't be very popular. His sales have been going down. You may say that's a reflection of the Spotify age, but there's another view: that it's time for something different."

Morrissey might not concur. In a radio interview in October, his keyboard player Gustavo Manzur revealed that Morrissey privately refers to his present lineup as "the band of my dreams". Coming from an ex-Smith, that's a hell of a thing to say. And while the pages of *Morrissey-solo.com* continue to be filled by Mozzophiles hoping to see the return of guitarist Alain Whyte (who left in 2004 after co-writing many of Morrissey's finest songs of the '90s), the reality is that Boz Boorer and Jesse Tobias are the established writers now.

Finan, a fan since 1984, was saddened by the way Morrissey's 2013 imploded on him. ("But he's absolutely going to come back and it won't be long.") Eoin Devereux, a sociology lecturer and co-editor of *Morrissey: Fandom, Representations And Identities*, is more concerned that Morrissey, as we look towards his potential re-emergence next year, is no closer to being understood by the media. "The broader picture of his lasting legacy is usually missed," Devereux argues. "The focus in the coverage of *Autobiography* has been on his sexual orientation, allegations of racism and who he's settled scores with... Morrissey was and is a very complex, multi-layered text. He appeals to gay and straight people, to male and female fans, and to Chicano, Latino and English fans with the same levels of intensity. It's as if he presents us with a very wide palette from which to choose from. One thing is certain, you can never take anything for granted or at face value with him."

It's a breath-takingly diverse appeal however you look at it. "How do they find their way to me?" Morrissey wonders rhetorically a couple of times in the book. But might his fanbase actually increase? "The book makes things interesting," says Ivory. "People who I wouldn't have thought would buy it, are buying it." Flat on his back in February, Morrissey is now up on his feet, walking confidently, holding all the cards. 

"He wants people to hear his music, but on his terms. He won't compromise"

THE TUMBLR

THIS CHARMING CHARLIE

Morrissey gets animated...

Amid 2013's cancellations and illnesses, a rare heartwarming story was The Tumblr's "This Charming Charlie", which put Moz's old Smiths lyrics into the mouths of *Peanuts* characters. Here, for example, was Snoopy in a philosophical quandary ("Does the body rule the mind or does the mind rule the body? I don't know...").

The Tumblr was created in August by Lauren LoPrete, a Bay Area designer. Within a week, the media discovered her and "This Charming Charlie" became a favourite daily read. However, the fun appeared to be over when she had takedown notices from Universal Music Publishing, owner of some of the rights to the lyrics. But a happy ending followed when Moz stepped in, claiming to be "delighted and flattered" by her comic strips. "I always wondered if he'd seen them," LoPrete tells us. "Now I know he does, it makes it a bit more challenging."



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HAPPY CHRISTMAS
Beatle People!

All I want for Christmas is a Beatle!

A Rare Cheese, Podgy The Bear and The Ballad Of Jock And Yono? Join us on a seasonal journey through the lost BEATLES Christmas singles – a tale that involves surreal pantos, long-suffering fan club secretaries, unhinged experiments and Kenny Everett. And which tells, in a strange new way, how John, Paul, George and Ringo charmed the world with their in-jokes and irreverence, and how they slowly fell apart, while keeping up a festive front.

Story: John Robinson

Rockers around
the Christmas
tree: The Beatles
in a photo session
for FAB 208, 1964



FOR THE BEATLES, Christmas didn't just come once a year – in December 1963, it arrived on no fewer than 30 separate occasions. A few weeks earlier, the group had lined up behind a barricade and shaken hands with fans at a convention in Wimbledon. Now, at shows supported by Cilla Black, The Fourmost and Billy J

Kramer, they proved to be the gift that kept on giving.

Rather than a pure rock'n'roll event, the two-shows-a-night, 16-night stand that their manager Brian Epstein arranged for them at London's Finsbury Park Astoria in December was all about displaying Beatle-related versatility at the festive season. NEMS Enterprises, newly moved to the capital, was not, after all, solely The Beatles' management office, but an outfit that nurtured the careers of a wide roster of talent. Nor, in turn, were these simply pop stars – they were personalities, rounded entertainers, such as you might see on television.

"We didn't just play the songs," remembers Billy Hatton from The Fourmost. "The Beatles did some routines, we did some of our impersonations – to prove the versatility of the Liverpool fellers."

As conceived by their director, Peter Yolland, the shows were "to change the concept of the pantomime". In practice, they were a difficult fusion of theatre and rock'n'roll. The sets were wobbly, and the glittering performers' rostrums so unstable they occasionally cut the power cables. Into this chaos then periodically emerged The Beatles, performing sketches in advance of their closing 30-minute set. The one sketch everyone remembers was one in which John Lennon (as the villainous "Sir Jasper") tied a helpless damsel (George Harrison) to the railroad tracks.

"It was obvious it was the first time The Beatles had done anything like that, but they did it well," remembers Peter Langford from The Barron Knights, who were on the bill backing Cilla and compère Rolf Harris. "The crowd could see the movements. But because of the screams it was impossible to hear what was going on."

Screams, however, were inevitable. The Christmas shows rounded off a year that had seen Beatlemania spark with the August release of "She Loves You", and catch light with the band's October appearance on *Sunday Night At The London Palladium*. By the time John Lennon had told rich guests at the Royal Variety Performance to rattle their jewellery in early November, the phenomenon was out of control.

For Brian Epstein, whose theatrical ambitions led him to produce Alan Plater's play *Smashing Day*, and even to buy a London theatre, the Saville, the Christmas shows were a vindication of his belief not just in The Beatles, but in a certain type of Beatles, positioned at the very heart of the mainstream.

He had seen the characterful, showbiz-appropriate charmers under the scowling leather-clad rockers, and now delighted in revealing them to the world.

The Beatles rehearsing with director Peter Yolland, Finsbury Park Astoria, December 1963



The assembled cast, including Cilla Black and Rolf Harris

"They were ahead of their time in terms of the comedy they could produce"

Tony Barrow

Wobbling scenery, screams, Rolf Harris and all, the Christmas shows (another followed in 1964) allowed Beatles fans to have as full an experience of the band's characters as possible. They also showed the wisdom in Epstein's central conviction: if he added professionalism to their abundant charm, nobody would be able to resist them.

"When they first started out their humour was very insular," says Billy Hatton. "They used to have jokes, but they were in-jokes. They broadened it out – they were trying to improve themselves."

It would not always be practical for them to play Christmas shows, but reaching out to their fans at this time of year would always be a responsibility The Beatles took seriously. Even when there was barely a Beatles to do so.

IN 1963, REMEMBERS Tony Barrow, PR to The Beatles between 1962 and 1968, the popularity of the band could be measured by the sackful. On each of the stairs that connected the ground floor of 13 Monmouth Street, London WC2 ("a dirty bookshop") to the one-and-a-half rooms above (Epstein's London HQ

until March 1964), there were bags of unopened mail.

Without the attention of someone like Freda Kelly – who ran The Beatles Fan Club from Liverpool and who had remained there when the office moved south, an enjoyable situation – the band's growing popularity was creating an administrative nightmare. Barrow envisioned a mob of angry parents. Where were the fan club memberships for their children? What was the likely fate of their postal orders?



Backstage at the Finsbury Park Astoria, December 1963



Panto time, 1963, with John as 'Sir Jasper', right

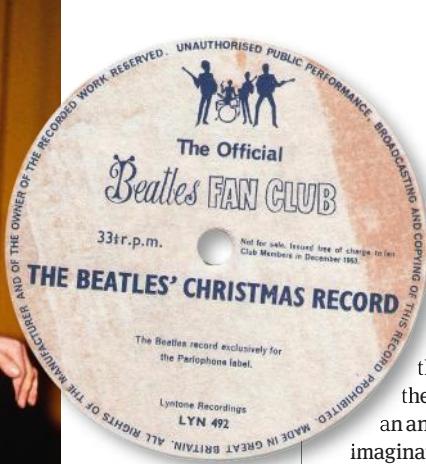
His solution was inspired. Reasoning that fans had made their first connection with The Beatles via records, he now proposed to give them one for nothing, to thank them for their patience. Taking his cue from *Reader's Digest*, who advertised their own boxed sets of records using "paper" discs – what we now call "flexidiscs" – he placed a call to Lyntone, the London company that manufactured them. In doing so, he didn't only take steps to solving his immediate problem, but also helped create a fascinating alternative canon. Through it, you can observe a humorous and satirical Beatles, a Beatles becoming more confident and autonomous in the studio, even a Beatles drifting apart. These, now with a lively online fanbase, were The Beatles' Christmas records.

"That first record was a damage-limitation exercise – designed to get a lot of fans and their parents off our backs," remembers Tony. "We didn't want people to be disappointed or disillusioned with The Beatles. So if they were presented with a record that was exclusive to them, that the general public could not buy, this would go a long way to appeasing everybody."

the Christmas record fitted perfectly. In Liverpool, Freda Kelly – arguably one of those most in the know – illustrated the need for such a record. It wasn't until Cilla Black dropped into her Liverpool office one day that she discovered that The Beatles had not only made a fan club record – they had made one mentioning Freda. Not having heard the record, and knowing the band to have a caustic sense of humour, she thought this a potentially dubious honour.

"I said to John, 'I bet you've ripped me apart,'" remembers Freda today. "And he said, 'Course we have!'"

In fact, the mention of Freda (a brief but respectful thanks, from George Harrison) was very much in keeping with what Tony Barrow envisaged for the project: for the band to convey gratitude to the faithful for their support, in their own vaguely surreal manner. Ultimately, though, the record helped burnish the utterly original proposition made by The Beatles: that they were characters as much as beat musicians, their appeal not confined to their songs, but also the personalities beyond them.



Paid-up members were gobsmacked to receive a record of The Beatles talking to them. It was important to keep the fan club on side."

Rather unlike every fan club since, The Beatles club was designed not as a shop, but as an information service – a mission into which

"What I was keenest to project of the band was their humour," says Tony.

"We could only really expose that through interviews: whether that was TV, radio or written media."

As he had for their early press appearances, for the Christmas record Barrow had written a script for the band to work to, but as it proved, they quickly departed from it. The idea of an annual broadcast evidently caught their imagination: though Barrow considered it a one-off, the band approached him in 1964 about another possible recording date.

"They were more than happy to do it," Tony remembers. "Again I provided a script for them. They sent it up and as a result they made it a far funnier record: they thanked the fans, then went into comedy routines. They were ahead of their time in terms of the comedy they could produce at the drop of a hat."

As tempting as it might be to imagine that The Beatles combined not only an unbeatable ear for melody, but also a gift for family-friendly humour, it's worth listening to outtakes of the 1965 record as a corrective. Painfully, the group attempt to improvise "bits" to the sound effects being fired at them. The arguable highpoint is John and George alighting on an idea for tinned, sliced babies ("the limbs and head go into Pal kennel meat...") and John saying that for spots he uses a product called "Gumtree's Arseholes". In the background Barrow can be heard attempting to lift the band's spirits by saying that with judicious editing, they may be able to use a few seconds of this largely dire material. "Those Christmas records show a lot of things that influenced them," says Ken Scott, second engineer on the 1965 record. "They all adored the Goons. Peter Sellers became a close friend of George's. Those recordings take a lot from the silliness of the Goons – it's the kind of thing that led to George getting involved with Monty Python later on."

Taking a proposition and testing its boundaries – if it was what The Beatles did with their music, then it was what they did with their seasonal obligations, too. From 1963 to 1965 the group had progressively stretched Tony Barrow's original concept of a "thank you" record, but kept the idea essentially intact. The following year, they broke free of it completely.

LFR: C. MAGNOLIA/EVERETT/REX

FAN OF THE PEOPLE

Good Ol' Freda

Beatles fan club secretary Freda Kelly finally takes her bow in a new documentary. Apple grant the use of five songs – the filmmakers suggest four and the (officially unreleased) 1963 Christmas single.

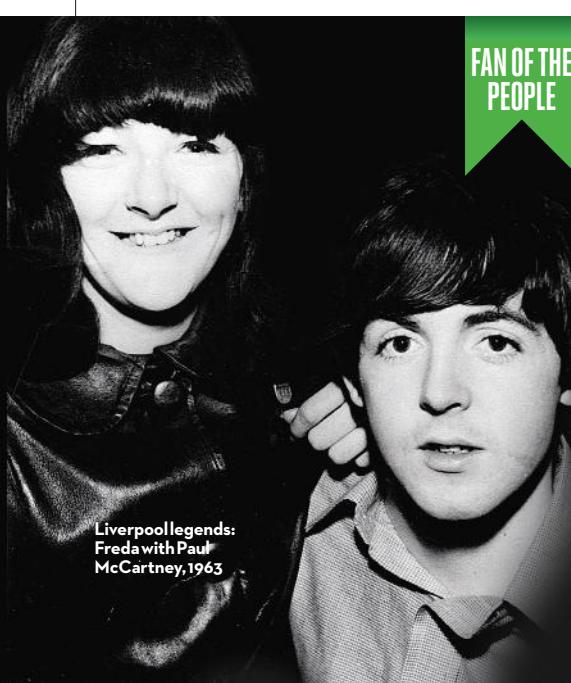
"I'D BEEN ASKED over the years to do things, and I'd shrugged it off. If Gerry Marsden came on the telly, I might say something to my son, something like 'I went to his 21st party...' My son would say, 'But you never talk about this...'

"The film came about because I was asked to a Beatles festival in America and I was talked into it. I was amazed by the reception

I got there – when I came back my grandson was born and my daughter said, 'Can you not do something for him?' I thought, I wouldn't mind sitting in the chair talking... and that's how it came about. Truthfully I can't understand what all the fuss is about. I wouldn't talk about the bad bits. I'm in my work clothes – that's how quickly they did it.

"I thought it was really nice of them, The Beatles and the wives, to give me carte blanche – to give me the five records and we could pick. So I think people have thought, who's this woman The Beatles are giving songs to? Where's she been hiding?"

www.goodolfreda.com



Liverpool legends: Freda with Paul McCartney, 1963



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shaking the habitual



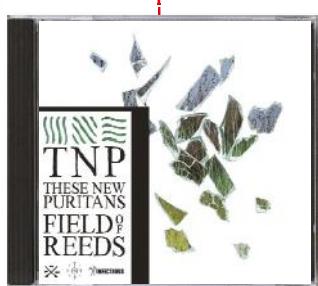
johnny marr
the messenger



unknown mortal orchestra
II



these new puritans
field of reeds



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BY CHRISTMAS 1966, The Beatles were no longer a phenomenon that might be screamed at in public. With the band having retired from public performance that August, they were now solely to be experienced through their records, their retreat into the studio both about driving their music forwards, but also a tactical withdrawal. The public that made them stars was also the public that screamed through their concerts. The studio was a sanctuary: a place where they might hear themselves think.

The public seemingly isn't much on The Beatles' minds for their 1966 record, "Pantomime". Much of the same good humour is there: the record is bookended by a McCartney piano knees-up called "Everywhere It's Christmas", and elsewhere features a sequence of disconnected, humorous bits. As it has across the arts, here narrative has been replaced by collage. The tone ranges from Milligan-esque absurdity – one segment's called "A Rare Cheese (Two Elderly Scotsmen)" – to satire of documentary TV.

If there is a halfway house between *The Goon Show* and Monty Python, it's probably to be found here. It's not awfully funny, but it is a self-confident, hermetic product of the studio – just like the Beatles records you could buy. If, as Hatton thought, Beatle humour had become a way of drawing people in, here it had reverted to insularity. They certainly weren't thanking anyone for buying their records.

For The Beatles, the studio was a paradoxical kind of retreat: a haven from the more arduous duties of public life, but also a place from which they could reach, and define their audience. In July 1967, the *One World* broadcast invited 400 million worldwide TV viewers to watch them perform "All You Need Is Love". Even if it couldn't manage it on the same scale, the Christmas single of that year conveyed a similar sense of empathy and fraternity at the festive season.

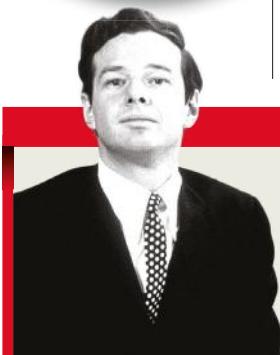
At the end of the record, George Martin announced, "They'd like to thank you for a wonderful year..." In the six-and-a-half minutes before, the band delivered a gift to their fans as priceless as Tony Barrow had originally conceived: something that sounded of a piece with their work of that year. This, thought lost, then discovered at the time of *Anthology* in 1994, was "Christmas Time Is Here Again".

"You can count on one hand the sessions that were fun, but this was one of them," remembers Richard Lush, second engineer on this and many Beatles recordings between 1966-1968. "Some things like 'Mr Kite' went on for three or four days just to get the backing track done. I wouldn't say they were serious... but they were seriously concerned that something had to be right."

"Christmas Time Is Here Again" is a joyous composition in which the title is repeated ad nauseam, interspersed with some enigmatic additional words (notably: "O-U-T spells 'out'..."). It has the feel of a Lennon song, though Richard Lush feels it "typical of Paul". First engineer Geoff Emerick thinks it could have been done entirely on the hoof. A point on which all are agreed are its joyful nature, a group of one mind, at the peak of its powers, having fun. "When they got round the vocal mic they became schoolkids again," remembers Emerick. "Someone would say something mundane, another one would pick up on it – and that's how it



Starr, Lennon, George Martin and McCartney in their "sanctuary", recording *Sgt Pepper*... at Abbey Road, London, 1967



would happen; they would run down the stairs to the studio." Spontaneity seems to have characterised the whole session. The fact the record was recorded in EMI's smaller Studio 3 suggests it was a last-minute decision, another artist using their customary Studio 2. Likewise the time slot: between 10pm and 2.45am.

"If you worked with The Hollies you knew you were going to work from 2pm to 10pm because they would want to go to the pub," remembers Richard Lush. "With The Beatles, they might say they were going to start at 2pm but not turn up til 7pm – then they would go 'til four in the morning. They were the only people who would go that late."

"Christmas Time Is Here Again", as Lush remembers it, joins a select band of Beatles tracks ("Hey Bulldog"),

Management the Epstein way

...by his clients and staff

SMART CLOTHES



BILLY J KRAMER:

When I first signed with Brian I used to wear outrageous clothes: gold lamé, red suits, yellow suits. The first thing he said when I signed with him was, "We're going to throw away the Christmas tree."

GET A GOOD TEAM



BILLY HATTON:

I think Brian was a bit out of his depth. People thought he was a bit green, but then he got professional men

like Tony Barrow around him. He had to learn, but he was very honest.

THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE



BILLY J KRAMER:

Brian would come to shows unannounced and critique what he thought was wrong with it: if he didn't like the choice of material, or how I introduced the songs.

NO SANDWICHES



TONY BARROW:

His main contribution to

The Beatles was to smarten them up: to change the way that they dressed; to stop them eating sandwiches and smoking cigarettes onstage.

CONVINCE THE PARENTS



BILLY HATTON:

We were well-educated fellers: trainee accountants, trainee engineers, trainee architects. We couldn't tell mum and dad that we were going to give all that up for shagging in the van.

“Everybody’s Got Something To Hide...”) particularly blessed by the mood in the room. “They’re examples of sessions where everything came together quickly and they had a really good vibe. They were in a great mood and played great. The ‘Pepper’ reprise is another one. There was never any pressure on that session – they were just having a laugh.

“It was a favourite of Geoff’s and mine during that period,” says Lush. “Probably because it was happy.”

MAURICE COLE, THE young Liverpudlian who rose to broadcasting infamy as Kenny Everett, was once a shy and retiring creature. When he accompanied The Beatles on their ’66 US tour (with a view to his presenting nightly Beatle radio programmes by phone), his bosses at Radio London feared young Kenny would get drowned out among the loud voices, sport coats and pork pie hats of the US DJs also on the tour plane, and come back with nothing. Tony Barrow received a phone call: “Do look after the lad.”

As it turned out, Radio London’s fears were justified, and



The Beatles’ 1966 US tour hits New York – with Kenny Everett (inset below) no doubt close by

on the tour plane, Kenny got nothing. But The Beatles’ empathy for a fellow Liverpudlian meant that they went out of their way to accommodate him on their own time. “He got an in that the others didn’t,” remembers Tony Barrow. “When The Beatles were relaxing, I’d be taking Kenny along to their hotel suites, where he would have them to himself for an hour or until he had what he needed – that in turn fostered a closer relationship between him and The Beatles. And they all shared a, how can I put it, an appetite for substances.”

Everett’s intimacy with The Beatles and his talent for tape collage made him the only candidate to put together the band’s last two Christmas singles. With Epstein dead, NEMS a fading administrative adjunct to Apple, and bandmembers piloting divergent courses, The Beatles were increasingly separate entities that needed help to be stuck together. In this instance, literally. “Kenny did a very fine editing job on them, at a time when it was hard to get four Beatles in a room for a commercial recording, never mind a fan club Christmas record,” says Tony Barrow. “What he did was a marvellous jigsaw job with what he’d collected from them individually.”

What’s most remarkable about the last two Christmas singles isn’t their changed tone, which can veer from stiff upper lip (Paul), deadpan approaching bitter (George) to manic and jokey (John), but that they exist at all. Their new company Apple was an escape hatch through which The Beatles might abscond from being The Beatles. Yet still the records emerged through the fan club – tacitly honouring the fans, the policy of a previous administration, and their former selves. “They weren’t goody-goodies but they did care for their fans and that proved it,” says Freda Kelly. “That’s why when I closed the fan club, the leaving present [to the fans] was the LP with all the Christmas singles on it.”

“They gave more than the average pop star of the 1960s,” says Tony Barrow. “The whole team of us, with a few

XMAS REVOLVERS

The Fabs’ Noel

Seven ways to “a happy chrimble and a very new year”



1963: SINCERE GOOD WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

Brief: The boys tell you what they’ve been up to in a variety of voices – occasionally their own.

Key line: “I’d like to reply to everyone personally, but I don’t have enough pens.” (John)



1964: ANOTHER BEATLES CHRISTMAS RECORD

Brief: More of the same, with a little more irreverence.

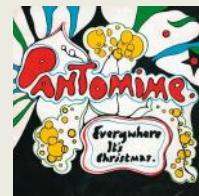
Key line: “I hope you’ve enjoyed hearing the records as much as we’ve enjoyed melting them. No, that’s wrong.” (Paul)



1965: THE BEATLES THIRD CHRISTMAS RECORD

Brief: A festive knees-up; their fans are thanked in between the Fabs’ enjoyment of their own high spirits.

Key line: “It’s an all-white policy in this group.” (John)



1966: PANTOMIME

Brief: A self-contained studio piece. Paul does the cover.

Key line: The exchange between Podgy The Bear and Jasper. (John and Paul)



1967: CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE AGAIN

Brief: Cool six-minute composition, interspersed with quality Pepper-era current-affairs absurdism.

Key line: “In the recent heavy fighting near Blackpool, Mrs G Evans was gradually injured.” (George)



1968: CHRISTMAS 1968

Brief: Divided Fabs stuck together from various locations. John adopts comic Yorkshire accent to tell the tale of “Jock and Yono”.

Key Line: “Thanks to all our fab fans for making our life worth living.” (George)



1969: THE BEATLES SEVENTH CHRISTMAS RECORD

Brief: Contributions soldered into a collective disc by the iron wrist of Maurice Cole”.

Key line: “Just a plug for the film, Ken, try and keep it on...” (Ringo)



exceptions, was exiled Liverpudlians and we all stood together. We all got a kick out of it.

“Caring about their fans was the way they’d been brought up, I think,” Barrow continues. “There was quite a logistical difference between what they did at the Cavern and what they did at Shea Stadium – but whether it was half an hour at Shea or three hours at the Cavern, they were still trying to communicate more closely with their fans. In the Cavern that meant taking a ciggie from a girl in the front row. At Shea that meant projecting themselves across this great divide. It was still communication.”

The Christmas singles compilation that Freda Kelly sent out to the fans in 1970 was called *The Beatles’ Christmas Album*, but the LP also bore a punning subtitle: *From Then To You*. It was a memorial for an era, and a reminder of how much had changed, of course. But it also served to remind how much about The Beatles had stayed the same. ☺

John, Paul, George, Ringo and Me by Tony Barrow, published by Andre Deutsch, is out now, available from www.carltonbooks.co.uk, RRP £16.99, and as a Kindle Edition. Thanks to thebeatles-collection.com

Spoon

CAN

After setting up their studio in a sleepy village cinema, Krautrock's grooviest band somehow scored a hit with the theme tune to a German detective show... "The whole village was proud of us!"

HOW MANY HIT singles in 1971 started off with the sound of a drum machine? Only one: "Spoon", by the utopian Krautrock ensemble Can, which went to No 1 in their native Germany. Since 1968, Can had occupied a rehearsal/performance space at Schloss Nörvenich, a castle outside their hometown of Cologne. In the autumn of 1971, they relocated to an abandoned cinema building in the small village of Weilerswist, 20 kilometres south-west of Cologne, where they set up Inner Space, a live-in sonic laboratory where they developed their unique sound and recorded all their subsequent work. A string of previous film soundtracks (including Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End*) led them to be commissioned for the theme tune for one of German TV's most popular detective series, known as "Durbridge", based on the Tim Frazer novels of English crime writer Francis Durbridge. They submitted one of their first recordings in the new space: "Spoon".

Unlike many of Can's subsequent music, most of "Spoon" is the sound of Can playing live and as one. A wayward Latin beat on the rhythm box was the catalyst, but Jaki Liebezeit's scurrying, mechanical groove, Irmin Schmidt's stabbing synths, Michael Karoli's searing guitar lines and Holger Czukay's bass depth charges add up to a vintage Can dish. Damo Suzuki, the Japanese busker they'd picked up on the streets of Cologne, improvised a lyric about cutlery that managed to sound comical and menacing by turns.

ROB YOUNG

IRMIN SCHMIDT: We had done this music for a German television programme, *Millionenspiel*, and that was very successful. So we were asked to

do the music to [a *Durbridge* episode called] *Das Messer* [*The Knife*]. We accepted, of course, and started working, and it was about the first thing we did in the new studio. We did our best, and then when I came with the music to the editing room, the director [Rolf von Sydow] flipped out – he didn't like the music at all. He said, "I wanted commercial music and not some avant-garde music." He was totally against it. Big trouble – but the guys who actually commissioned the music loved it, and said, "No matter what the director says, this music should remain – it's fabulous." That was a few days of sleepless nights, because I thought we had done it all in vain. The film itself got very bad critics, and a hundred different papers all over Germany, even the little provincial papers, all wrote, "It's a very mediocre Durbridge this time, but the music is extraordinary." And we went into the charts with it.

HOLGER CZUKAY: It was no *French Connection*, not at all. But they played it every night, with our song at the start and end. It was good for the band from that point of view.

SCHMIDT: The film is a detective story, criminal, and that's typical Can – Can music was rarely only friendly and light-hearted... Even with "Spoon", which is a relatively light-hearted song, there is something edgy about it. When we came into this village, Weilerswist, of course we looked pretty wild, that was a very normal middle-class and working-class village. To them



KEY PLAYERS



Irmin Schmidt
Keyboards



Holger Czukay
Bass



Jaki Liebezeit
Drums



we looked so wild, people got very suspicious about us. And we started together with the work of "Spoon", we also were working on installing and insulating the studio.

JAKI LIEBEZEIT: The first years were nice. It was a

completely empty room in the beginning, the old village cinema. The cinema had given up, because everybody had got a car, to go into town, or a television. It was 10 years empty, this room, so we got it and started with nearly nothing.

SCHMIDT: Actually, the recording of the title song wasn't much different from the recording we had done before. The special thing about this title was, we used this rhythm machine at this time, this very simple machine which actually, you know, bar pianists use. That was a little rhythm box. It started with this rhythm machine and Michael [Karoli] playing a rhythm guitar and me joining in with these riffs, and Holger's bassline. That was all done live in the studio in one go. But there are of course things edited, like the melody, which might have been refined in over dubbing.

CZUKAY: The drum machine was used on [1971's] *Tago Mago* for the first time, and especially Jaki was using it, an artificial instrument, not so much like a drum machine,



Men and machines... Can at Inner Space, Weilerswist: (l-r) Irmin Schmidt, Holger Czukay, Damo Suzuki, Jaki Liebezeit, Michael Karoli

but on "Spoon" it was used for the first time like a drum machine.

LIEBEZEIT: I don't mind drum machines. To make a synthetic attempt to have a real drum there, that idea I don't like so much. "Spoon" was the biggest hit we had in Germany, and that sound was one of the first rhythm boxes, a Farfisa rhythm box. It could play bossa nova, tango, jazz, waltz, all kinds of dance rhythms, and you could also press down all the buttons at the same time and get that mixture of everything. It was fun – we didn't take it too seriously.

SCHMIDT: It was the first one, certainly in Germany, nobody had heard this kind of sound, that was one of the things that this funny director was so... for him that was so unusual, uncommercial, and yeah, I don't remember any piece at that time, 1971, using a drum machine, especially using it rhythmically in this weird fashion.

CZUKAY: I remember the drum machine very well. Jaki always reacts to something which is machine-like. Because he felt the drum machine was invented to bring a little bit of human feeling into everything. So he is more than the drum machine, he can absolutely repeat something forever. It was even from the very beginning, because Jaki was playing free jazz before, and he said to me, "If I want to play free jazz, then I could take a sack of peas and hang it up over the drums,

and open it and then the peas could fall down."

SCHMIDT: It was actually more Michael and my idea, and we three had to convince Jaki to use it, to play to it. At first he was a bit reluctant. And then it was more or less Michael who started with a guitar riff, which was using the box actually not in the sense it was programmed, so let's say it was foxtrot, beguine, whatever these old-fashioned boxes had. And he did not use it as it

"The groove was the most important thing. Everything was building on it"

IRMIN SCHMIDT

was programmed, but used it against its rhythm. So not starting on the 'one' that's indicated, but on the two or whatever. And that became so interesting that that was Michael that had this idea, and his guitar riff together became such an interesting thing that Jaki really joined in and there it was, there was the groove, and that was

always the most important thing. That was always the basis of everything we did: the groove had to be right, and all of a sudden the groove was right. Everything was building on it...

CZUKAY: Working with the machine and getting the machine not to overstretch the machine, it was typical of Jaki not to do that. This was one of the most necessary steps for us to become more professional.

SCHMIDT: When you listen to the live version of "Spoon", for instance the long version on *The Lost Tapes*, then you hear how much different live versions could be. It's really worked out, and carefully worked out, but even if there were edits, any business in Can was always that Michael, Holger and me worked out the structuring of anything and Holger was the one who had the craft to edit. He did the editing, but the decisions were always made together. Jaki didn't like to take part in this kind of business, and that's why you don't hear edits. Because by the end Jaki would have gone crazy if he had heard the edit and it would have destroyed the groove. The groove wouldn't have been right in an edit. And then it had to sound perfectly natural. Which was basically a structural decision first, and then of course the craft to do it right.

CZUKAY: This time Jaki didn't need to play heavy, he could play softly, and then the [new Neumann] condenser microphone was

THE MAKING OF...



Fat mattresses...
Can at Inner
Space

recording everything perfectly, that was a big change here. We could mic him up with the overheads, quite far away from the drums, and the room would allow us to do that. Previously, we had dynamic microphones and the distance from the instrument to the mic was quite narrow. It was a difference suddenly: we were trying to become more sensitive.

I think with "Spoon", we had consumed all the professional tapes which I had, so then I had to take some home tapes of my own, one from 1955, I found it in the garbage. Because I was working in a radio shop, and they were throwing it away. And we used this tape, and it was still working very fine.

SCHMIDT: Damo never made what you could call proper lyrics, because it always was a kind of Dada mixture of totally meaningless syllables and some words and phrases which came to his mind. And actually the whole thing in Can was more using the voice as an instrument, as one of the five instruments – it never had this kind of lead singer. And above all the lyrics never had this sense of transporting any kind of message, it was just music.

CZUKAY: This is not like Ian Curtis, whose lyrics are really important – no, I think our lyrics are not important, not at all. It was a companion to *Das Messer*, less aggressive.

SCHMIDT: It was at the time our most successful piece, and it changed things, of course, economically... We were working extremely hard, constructing our new studio,

because that was hard work, and making the film music at the same time. Bought these fifteen hundred mattresses from the army which we nailed on the walls, and had a local carpenter to make a framework on the wall which we could hang the mattresses on, and that went on at the same time as we were producing this music.

It turned out to be commercial because we sold 350,000 singles, and that wasn't bad. Neither for this piece or in the future did we think about being more commercial. We went

on like we did before. We had more money, for which we bought a van, and we bought a PA, and mixing desk. Before that we had extremely little equipment, and even if we got it at a good price, nevertheless we could buy equipment and the van.

CZUKAY: Oh yes, we didn't carry the equipment from Germany to England – we had to buy a bus! A little lorry, a van, but that was good

enough for us.

SCHMIDT: That's what we spent the money on. And of course we got more exposure in Germany...

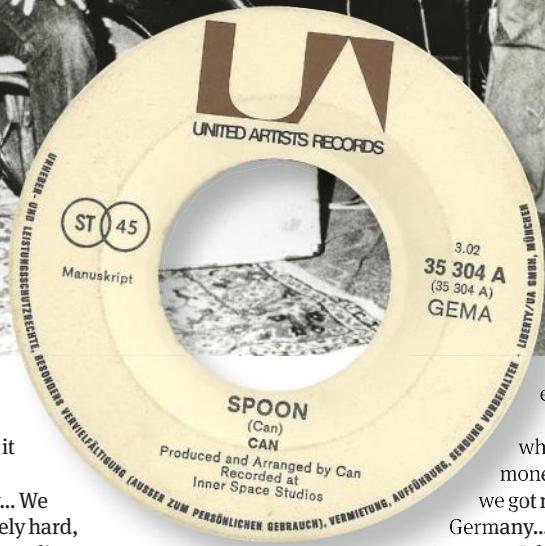
CZUKAY: I think Michael really lost something, a cassette [*stolen from his car*]. To tell you the truth, this is one of the promotional gags which was used [*laughs*], because one friend of mine, who later became a promoter, said, "You obviously have talked about who is the murderer in the film [*on the cassette*]. And we said, "You have talked about the murderer in this film, didn't you?" That's why every newspaper was writing about it. This is really a science [*laughs*]!

SCHMIDT: The people in the village saw us working 16 hours a day, and paying the carpenter the money he asked for immediately, and then all of a sudden being in the papers and television, getting a prize. So the whole village was all of a sudden proud of having us there. There was this moment when a journalist came and wanted to make a documentary story about Can, and was expecting that everybody in the village would say, "Oh, these are hippies..." and that they would forbid their girls to talk to us, and all that. But the opposite was the case: they all said, "Oh yeah, they are wonderful, they are really working hard and they have this wonderful song," and so he was really disappointed. ☺

Can Vinyl Box is out December 2 on Mute

FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Can
- **Performers:** Irmin Schmidt (keyboards), Holger Czukay (bass), Michael Karoli (guitar), Jaki Liebezeit (drums), Damo Suzuki (vocals)
- **Recorded at:** Inner Space Studio, Weilerswist, Germany
- **Released:** 1971
- **German chart:** 1
- **UK chart:** n/a



TIMELINE

December 1969:
Vocalist Malcolm
Mooney leaves.

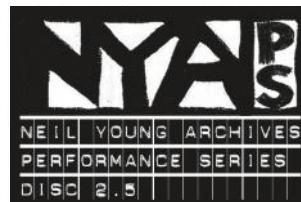
May 1970: Kenji
"Damo" Suzuki

recruited as vocalist.
December 1971: Can
depart Schloss
Nörvenich, begin
setting up Inner Space,

and record "Spoon".
November 1972: Ege
Bamyasi released.
1980: Spoon chosen
as name of Can's

independent
record label.
1997: "Spoon" remixed
by Sonic Youth and
System 7 on *Sacrilege*

remix album.
2002: Appears on
soundtrack to Lynne
Ramsay's movie,
Morvern Callar.



A black and white photograph of a brick wall with a dark awning. The awning has the words 'Cellar Door' written on it in a stylized font. The 'Cellar' part is on the right and 'Door' is on the left.

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UNCUT



THE FREEEWHEEL LLEWYN DAW



Interviews with

Director Joel Coen

Director Ethan Coen

Actor John Goodman

Producer T-Bone Burnett

Dave Van Ronk's co-author Elijah Wald



Songs performed by:

Oscar Isaac

Dave Van Ronk

Bob Dylan

Justin Timberlake

Adam Driver

In their latest movie, *Inside Llewyn Davis*, JOEL & ETHAN COEN turn the tale of a struggling folk singer into a phantasmagorical odyssey, involving lost cats, an uncanny jazzman (John Goodman!) and Justin Timberlake singing “The Auld Triangle”. *Uncut* revisits Greenwich Village circa 1961 in the company of the film’s stars, soundtrack supremo T-BONE BURNETT and the Coens themselves... “And then we thought, ‘Why would anyone beat up a folk singer...?’”

Story: Michael Bonner

JOEL COEN REMEMBERS the first time he visited Greenwich Village. It was during his student days, he explains, shortly after he had moved from suburban Minneapolis and enrolled in the undergraduate film program at New York University. “This was the very beginning of the 1970s – ’71, ’72,” he says. “The last vestiges of the original folk scene were still there. Gerde’s was still on Third Street. There was still a Gaslight, but it had moved up the street on MacDougal Street. The music was different, but you could sort of see the traces of it. The area was still very heavily Italian American. There was a little bit of it still there, on Bleecker Street and MacDougal.”

For their latest film, *Inside Llewyn Davis*, Joel and his younger brother Ethan have recreated the cafés and coffeehouses of

Greenwich Village; albeit from an earlier era to the one Joel experienced. The events of their film take place across one week in late 1961 – a pivotal time in the Village, it transpires. “1961 is very different to, say, 1967,” clarifies Ethan. “It belongs more to the late ’50s than it does to the commonly held notion of the ’60s.”

“We were always interested in the music of the so-called folk revival of the late 1950s,” says Joel. “The scene that took place in the Village before Bob

Dylan showed up – music that was being produced and played during the beatnik scene. That period only lasted through to the very early ’60s.”

It is also a critical period in the life of Davis, a young folk singer struggling to make a living on the circuit while undergoing a series of typically Coen-esque indignities. As Ethan explains, “One day, Joel just said, ‘What about this? Here’s the beginning of a movie... a folk singer gets beat up in the alleyway behind Gerde’s Folk City.’ We thought about the scene. And then we thought, ‘Why would anyone beat up a folk singer...?’”



Folk hero or zero:
Oscar Isaac as
Llewyn Davis



Carey Mulligan and
Justin Timberlake as
folk duo Jean and Jim

ANOTHER SIDE

INSIDE OSCAR ISAAC

The Coens' lead actor on playing Llewyn Davis...

“W

hen I got the part of Llewyn, I read *Mayor Of MacDougal Street* a couple of times. I read *Chronicles*. I also met Erik Franzen who lives on MacDougal Street above the Gaslight. I met him before my audition and I took some guitar lessons from him. He's an amazing Travis picker, which is the style of playing I used in the film. I also played in clubs in the Village.

“I focused on Dave Van Ronk's repertoire so that when it came time to meet T-Bone and make adjustments, I was open and ready. I came up with arrangements and brought those to T-Bone and we would present them to the Coens and they'd say 'yay' or 'nay'.

“How does Llewyn compare to other Coens leads? They make theatre of the common man. Barton Fink says that. They don't make films about the genius, they make them about the guy right before the genius. The guy that wanders into the situation.”

THE COENS BROTHERS began work on *Inside Llewyn Davis* three years ago. The writing process, they explain over early morning coffee in London, has remained unchanged now for almost 30 years. “I don't know if we have a method,” ponders Ethan, as he peers into his cup. “We show up at the office. Is that a method? That's about the extent to which it's been formalised. We show up at the office, and talk a scene through. We do it together. We don't outline, so we don't have prospective tasks to divide up. It's just we start at the beginning and talk the first scene through, write it up, proceed to the next.”

“We have a computer and Ethan does most of the typing,” reveals Joel, who's folded his rangy frame into a capacious leather armchair, his feet resting on the table in front of him. “It works like that. It hasn't changed much since *Blood Simple*. What was interesting about Llewyn as we were writing him? Tell a story about a musician, specifically we were interested in doing that. And somebody who's quite good at what he does but isn't going to be successful in a sort of abstract, amorphous way. Why is that? What are the other reasons?”

As we discover, Llewyn [played by Oscar Isaac; see panel] is the remaining half of a semi-successful folk duo who is trying to make it on his own during a harsh winter in Greenwich Village. What goodwill he has among his friends in the folk community seems to be drying up;

he has a habit of causing trouble, often women are involved, and he is liable to repeat his past mistakes, a point the Coens highlight in the film's elegantly elliptical structure. Llewyn drifts between sofas, management offices and basement venues. A tabby cat proves a constant source of frustration. There is a purgatorial road trip to Chicago. “We thought of the film as an odyssey that doesn't go anywhere,” says Ethan.

Among Llewyn's fellow musicians in the Village, we meet Jim (Justin Timberlake) and Jean (Carey Mulligan), who might just pass for a Peter, Paul And Mary-style trio when they sing with Troy Nelson at the Gaslight. Other characters bear similarities to Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Folkways Records' boss Moe Asch, Albert Grossman, the Clancy brothers and Jean Ritchie. In one of the film's most memorable sequences, Llewyn meets a heroin-addicted jazz musician, Roland Turner, played by John Goodman, who has especially trenchant views on folk. Meanwhile, to help best present the

“The
Freewheelin' Bob
Dylan cover
was the colour
template for
the movie”
Joel Coen

contemporaneous songs that appear in the film, the Coens have reunited with T-Bone Burnett, their ‘music archivist’ on *The Big Lebowski* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*.

But as the Coens tell it, they have been fans of folk music since their childhood. “Obviously we're old, but not quite old enough to have first hand memories of that scene,” admits Ethan. “We were little kids in the provinces in the period of our movie. But as kids, we started listening to rock'n'roll, commercial folk and notably Bob Dylan.”

Coincidentally, both the Coens and Dylan hail from Minnesota; though as Joel is quick to point out, the suburbs of Minneapolis where they were raised were very different from Dylan's hometown. “Hibbing, where Dylan's from, could be Mars if you were living in Minneapolis,” he says. “The North Iron Range. We were in the sticks in Minneapolis, but that's really the sticks. But growing up, we were aware that he was a Jew from Minnesota, and so are we.”

As Ethan admits, Dylan is “the elephant in the room” as far as their film is concerned. Although *Inside Llewyn Davis* is set specifically just as Dylan arrives in Greenwich Village, his presence percolates through the film – whether through the use of an unreleased studio recording, “Farewell”, or in more subtle ways. “*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* cover was the

colour template for the movie,” reveals Joel.

“It provided the general feeling template for the movie in terms of grey, New York, slushy, no sunshine, cold.”

“It's funny, when you picture the scene, it's winter,” says Ethan. “There's also another really good picture, although it's later, of



Phil Ochs on Bleecker Street. It's the same thing. It's winter, and his shoulders are compressed.”

“There's no way it would have seemed right shot in sunshine with leafy green trees in Greenwich Village,” Joel continues. “And also, the mood of the movie was meant to feel somewhat oppressive that way. It fits the story better.”

Dylan isn't the only Greenwich Village veteran whose influence is evident in the film; a key reference point for the Coens was Dave Van Ronk's memoir, *The Mayor Of MacDougal Street* [see panel]. “It was a very small scene at the time,” says Ethan. “A little community that was in a very specific geographical place at a very specific time that was interested in this specific music. His depiction of the scene was so vivid, it was the most interesting of the things we read about that period. So we pilfered small, specific things.”

“We made a significant part of Llewyn's repertoire Van Ronk's songs or arrangements of songs he sang,” continues

Joel. "We knew his music. You know, this music is all descended from the music in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* So it was familiar to us. But particularly Dave Van Ronk's music moved over into Llewyn in a comfortable way for us."

"It's something interesting about then – well, still now – about people who defined themselves so specifically by the music they played or were enthusiastic about," adds Ethan. "Van Ronk started out as a Dixieland jazz guy and switched over to folk because, small as the money was in folk, it was better than being a player of Dixieland. That's interesting: people deriving their identities from their music."

"There's always ironies there," observes Joel, "weird things any time you get into issues of authenticity in this music. You have guys like Elliot Adnopoz, the son of a neurosurgeon from Queens, calling himself Ramblin' Jack Elliott..."

"Dave was alive to the idea that there was something ridiculous about being worshipful at the shrine of authenticity," notes Ethan. "Also, the scene before Dylan was primarily people who considered themselves preservationists, not writers. It's the source, rather than what you make of it."

"It was also interesting to us that Llewyn have a degree of ambivalence about that and the music itself," says Joel. "In one scene, we see him heckle a woman performer in the Gaslight. The irony is she's representative of the true authenticity, the person from Appalachia with the autoharp, singing the songs she's been singing since she was a baby and go back further..."

AS YOU'D EXPECT from a Coen brothers film, *Inside Llewyn Davis* is populated with wonderful, often grotesque, supporting characters. Chief among these is John Goodman's venomous, washed-up jazz musician, Roland Turner. "John is larger than life," explains Ethan. "He's like John Cleese. He's angry but it's always funny."

"He brings a lot of independent vigour," adds Joel. "We'll be in the middle of writing something and then somebody you know who's an actor takes over the voice of the character. As we were writing this, it became evident that this would be

something really interesting to see John play, and then that feeds into how the character develops."

"John – is he a normal person or a dangerous madman?" reflects Ethan. "When he arrives, there will be colour. And things will get bad."

In fact, *Inside Llewyn Davis* is Goodman's first film for the Coens since *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*. "It's been 13 years," Goodman confirms. "What did I do to piss them off?"

With his return to the fold, Goodman can now claim to be the longest-standing member of the Coens' stock company.

"I remember the first time I met them," he explains. "I went in for *Raising Arizona*, and they told me that they had

directed *Blood Simple*. I watched that and was immediately impressed with their film. How literary it was. How they made things work on an independent budget. Very creative. A lot of hard-boiled Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett-type stuff, with great imagery. They'd given me scenes. I don't believe I'd seen the whole script yet, but the scenes were hysterical. I wanted it badly. But as soon as I walked in, we were laughing so hard about all kinds of stuff that it seemed like I'd known them or grown up with them. This is very presumptuous to say, but it was a good, comfortable feeling."

How would Goodman sum up working with the Coens?

"Fortunate," he considers. "Right place, right time. Similar Midwest wise-guy sensibilities. When we did *O Brother...*, I was always interested in that music and this stuff I like as well. There's got to be a common thread somewhere. Maybe, we're both from

the same area of this country at the same time."

How has their working relationship changed?

"I don't know that it has," Goodman says. "Here, it was like coming home. There was a role they had written for me after *Oh Brother...*, but the names of the characters were almost identical. The characters were getting to be too much of the same guy. So they went for somebody else. I understood that. But, yeah... I'm still there on opening day whenever they release a film. I just love what they do."

What about Roland Turner? Thinking about Ethan's



THE REAL LLEWYN

MEET THE MAYOR

How Dave Van Ronk's memoir became the inspiration for the Coens' movie...



"It was always assumed that T-Bone would be working on the music"

Ethan Coen

"I became aware that somebody was optioning *The Major Of MacDougal Street* about six years ago," says Van Ronk's co-author, Elijah Wald. "I only became aware that it was the Coen brothers when the news broke publicly [in 2011]. The Coens say they drew from the book the general feel for the period. But they've taken a couple of specific scenes, too. There's a scene where he goes to collect money from his record company and the guy at the record company offers him his winter coat, and when he hitchhikes to Chicago to audition at the Gate Of Horn. So there are details from the book. And God bless them, Oscar Isaac does play some of Dave's guitar arrangements, and plays them well. I saw the film with Dave's widow, Andrea Vuocolo Van Ronk. Both of us enjoyed the film, enjoyed the acting. The only thing we both walked out saying was, 'Dave always talked about it like it was more fun!' The film is certainly darker than the book."

BOBBY BANK/WIREIMAGE



"To me, Roland seems like a normal guy..." John Goodman as the venomous Roland Turner

The Mayor Of MacDougal Street is published by Da Capo Press

• quote – “things will get bad” – they certainly take a turn for the worst when Turner arrives. “Yeah,” he laughs. “I was thinking maybe Roland really likes Llewyn and he’s just that way with everyone, you gotta get used to him. He’s just toxic. Yeah, he might have even taken an interest in him.”

Although Goodman cites Charlie Meadows from Barton Fink and *The Big Lebowski*'s Walter Sobchak as his favourites among the characters he's played for the Coens, he appears to be developing a fondness for Turner. “Roland may appear weird and far out to some people, and to Llewyn. But to me, Roland seems like a normal guy,” says Goodman. “Coens characters are like all human beings you meet, just stretched a little. I thought a lot about the guy before we began and I assumed he was a pianist. But when I went to the read-through, Joel said, ‘No, he’s a trumpet player.’ Ethan goes, ‘I see him playing the saxophone.’ So he’s a little bit of all three.”

But Turner represents a certain type of jazz musician, as his look – maroon suit, Caesar haircut, fedora and cane – attests.

“The hair was my idea,” says Goodman. “I wanted it to look like Gerry Mulligan. It didn’t work out, I looked more like Moe Howard. But I thought, he’s a white jazz guy, he’s trying to dress like an African-American, very loud suits and a nice lid. I don’t know if the heroin has started out a hip accessory, but usually with addiction there is another story there. A lot of self-hatred. The look was modeled after Doc Pomus. I used to see Doc when I’d go see Mac [Dr John] at the Lone Star in New York. Doc’s, or Mac’s a little more flamboyant than that. But it was the suits, the goatee. The heroin. And the voodoo.”

IT FEELS SIGNIFICANT that *Inside Llewyn Davis* is John Goodman's first film with the Coens since *O Brother....*

Both films feature specific strands of American roots music; and both include a significant off-camera role for T-Bone Burnett. In this instance, T-Bone oversaw the film's performances and worked on the soundtrack album [see panel]. “T-Bone became involved as soon as we were done with the script,” says Ethan. “It was never even discussed, it was assumed that T-Bone would be working on the music.”

As with John Goodman, T-Bone's relationship with the Coens stretches back to the earliest days of their career. “I saw *Blood Simple*, that was shot in Texas, where I’m from,” begins T-Bone. “There were people I’d grown up with who were on the crew. Then I saw *Raising Arizona*. Even more than *Blood Simple*, it was so familiar that after watching it about 10 times I called Joel up and said, ‘Hey, I’m coming to New York. You want to have dinner?’ It’s the only time I’ve called somebody out of the blue like that. I have a very strong reaction to their work. Why? The details are so smart, so specific. And funny. It was as if we’d grown up together. We became friends, then six or seven years later I ran into Joel in New York, and he asked me to work on *The Big Lebowski*.”

“When people ask how we see this film in connection to

John Goodman as
Walter Sobchak in
The Big Lebowski



Isaac Marion, Justin Timberlake and Adam Driver portray their characters in 'Columbia Studios'

PEOPLE'S MUSIC

“THIS MUSIC GREW OUT OF THE GROUND”

T-Bone Burnett on the sound of *Inside Llewyn Davis*...

“In those days, there were only three venues to play. The Hungry Eye in San Francisco, the Gate Of Horn in Chicago and the Gaslight in New York. When a folk singer went on tour, that's where he went. Albert Grossman invented the college circuit at all those universities in the north-east. They would have cloggers from the Appalachians, and Grossman started booking Peter, Paul And Mary, and he'd add Muddy Waters.

The music in *O Brother... and Llewyn Davis* is important because historically music is the way we taught everything. It's the music of the poor people in the United States. And as we reinvented this ancient music, that becomes a vehicle for people, too. The history of this country has young people walking out of their homes with nothing but a song and conquering the whole world again and again.”

Inside Llewyn Davis' soundtrack is available now on Nonesuch

our previous films, we put it in context in terms of process,” explains Joel. “It felt familiar for us to be working with T-Bone. The movies with him have a continuum for us that’s interesting. But it’s all connected to process.”

“We had a different idea to *O Brother...*,” says T-Bone. “The idea was to find actors that can sing the part and shoot it all live. We pre-recorded everything, but only as a map to make sure we had everything done before we got near a stage. The performances were filmed live, without any click tracks. We started six months in front on this film, with this music, and by the time we got to the shoot, I was there with a stopwatch timing measures to make sure they didn’t speed up or slow down so we could cut between takes. Isn’t that wild?”

ANY ATTEMPT TO get the Coens to scrutinise their films is met with resistance. They wriggle out of trying to locate *Inside Llewyn Davis* in their body of work, Ethan protesting: “Each thing is a thing in its own right.” Goodman seems to have no such qualms. “Is there a thread to their movies? *O Brother..., No Country For Old Men* and *True Grit* were quest films. I think there is a journey here. But I don’t see a lot of money, a big pay-off, for Llewyn unless he learns to unbend a little. But why should he? He’s a tremendously serious artist. Maybe he’s afraid of success. Last time I saw the film, it struck me harder than the first time, and that

was the question of success. What does he have to give up to put a roof over his head, or provide food and shelter?”

Joel and Ethan offer some closing thoughts, at least, on the conflict that’s taking place inside *Llewyn Davis*; between craving success and the fear of selling out.

“How do you deal with that?” asks Ethan. “Do you juggle that or reconcile that? Or are you a little hypocritical, like Llewyn is, espousing the one thing while trying to do the other. It’s all complicated.”

“How does that make you feel about yourself?” adds Joel.

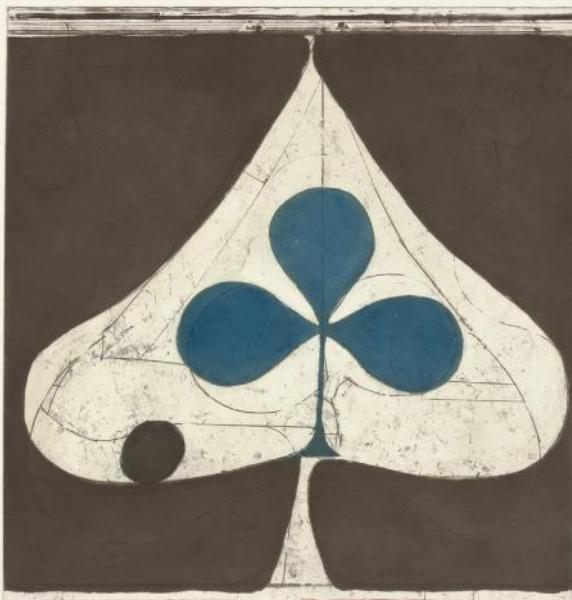
“It’s success in one respect, failure on another,” concludes Ethan. “How much success do you want? How much failure can you take? It’s hard to navigate. Certainly for him. It’s easier for us...”

“...because,” finishes Joel, “we sold out long ago.”

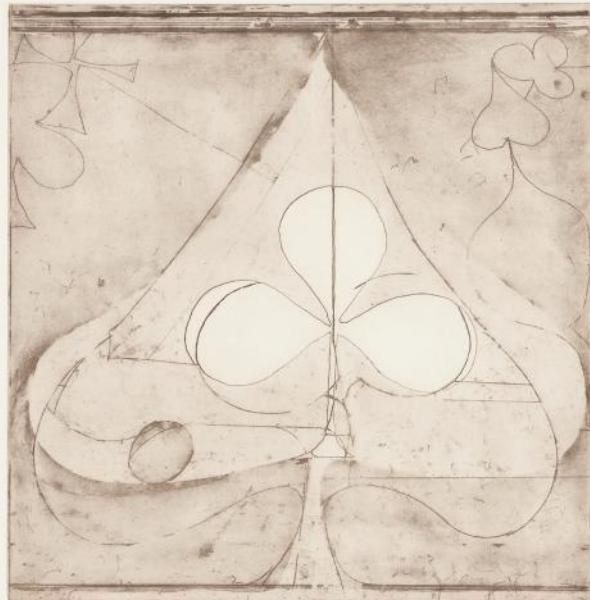
Inside Llewyn Davis opens in the UK on January 24



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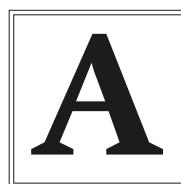
'SHIELDS MARKS A GREAT ADVANCE FOR GRIZZLY BEAR'
8/10, UNCUT

ITUNES US ALBUM OF THE YEAR, 2012



John Grant

The former Czar and confessional singer-songwriter talks us through his back catalogue. "I found my voice..."



ANYONE WHO'S watched Grant's magnificent solo career develop across two albums – 2010's *Queen Of Denmark* and this year's *Pale Green Ghosts* – will tell you, Grant specialises in bracingly honest songwriting. These LPs have brought commercial and critical success to the notoriously self-critical Grant. But before this solo acclaim, there were The Czars – the band Grant formed in his hometown of Denver, Colorado with Chris Pearson (bass), Jeff Linsenmaier (drums) and guitarists Roger Green and Andy Monley. Here, Grant talks us through his career – both band and solo. "One day, I'll learn to separate the feelings from the music," he says.



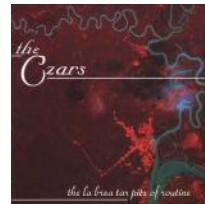
The Czars with Grant (second left, standing): "We were moving away from indie-rock..."



THE CZARS MOODSWING

VELVETEEN, 1996
Welcome to The Czars: purveyors of fine arthouse indie tunes. Self-released, this was recorded in the

basement belonging to the producer's mother.
I haven't listened to *Moodswing* since the day it came out. I don't really listen to my old music. I was in this hostel in Reykjavik recently and "The Hymn" from the *Goodbye* album came on while I was sitting there having my dinner. It was like having a conversation about diarrhoea while eating a plate of chilli. The producer on *Moodswing* was Bob Ferbrache, along with the band. Bob is a bit of a Denver institution; he's done a lot of stuff with David Eugene Edwards of 16 Horsepower. He was very eccentric... a bit tricky. But he really loved me and I liked him and we had great conversations about movies because we both loved Fassbinder and Herzog. He lived in his mother's basement and had a studio there where we recorded the first two albums. We didn't know shit about anything. I was scared shitless to sing in front of anyone. You had to just drag everything out of me 'cos I didn't feel I had the right to do anything. My singing is very mumbly because I didn't want people to know what I was talking about. Some of the old stuff I'm really proud of. The reason it's painful to listen to is because of who I was and how much I didn't like who I was. The rejection I received when I was young for being a homosexual... that's nothing compared to the number you do on yourself when you've been taught that you are not a human like other people.



THE CZARS THE LA BREA TAR PITS OF ROUTINE

VELVETEEN, 1997
Named after an LA landmark, *La Brea* was the first planned Czars

album, the songs based – as would become their template – around Grant's masculine croon. That's a good album title. It's quite funny. But I don't know if I accessed myself at all on this record. "Cold" is definitely a step up in my songwriting, and that's because I wrote it about Jeff [Linsenmaier]. I was mad at him. So it was the first time I connected with raw emotion and wrote down how I felt. That's what works the best: undiluted, unadulterated feeling and passion. "Cold" was probably the first glimpse. And the synth on "Half The Time" proves I always wanted to make electronic music. From the moment I first heard "Eagle" by Abba. But I didn't learn how to do it until I was on my own and made *Pale Green Ghosts*. The guy singing on "Russian Folk Song" is the same Russian guy that reads out the passage from *The Master And Margarita* at the beginning of the album. I was quite sweet on him at the time. But he was killed in a car wreck in Moscow a couple of years after. The band? I always had the best relationships with my guitarists. I didn't feel my drummer was particularly good. I felt he was holding back because he was angry with me for not letting him have the amount of control that he wanted. I should have just been on my own from the beginning! Everybody thought I had a great voice but I didn't know what to do with it. But I'm slowly, slowly opening up with each album.



THE CZARS BEFORE... BUT LONGER

BELLA UNION, 2000
Grant had been sending demos to Simon Raymonde for a couple of years before The

Czars signed to his Bella Union imprint.
I was going to meet up with a Cocteau Twin. And you can't imagine what kind of a role the Cocteau Twins had played in my life. A guy at high school who I was in love with played the *Treasure* cassette for me in 1985 in his grandmother's basement in Denver and they've been a permanent part of the soundtrack of my life ever since. We recorded this at September Sound, in St Margarets near Twickenham. In the studio I ended up feeling that Simon didn't take me very seriously as a musician. I was writing lyrics as we did the songs, and I didn't know what I wanted to say yet. Simon asked me who I'd like to sing with, and I mentioned Paula Frazer of Tarnation... and he got her to come over. She was like a modern-day Patsy Cline to me. I was being taken seriously a little bit. The album title came from a deaf mute I knew from Ukraine who I used to write notes with in Russian. We were trying to explain to someone how long we'd known each other, and what he wrote down was "Before... but longer." There's a good line in "Gangrene": "The nail that sticks out/Must be hammered down." Someone told me that that was the idea behind how Japanese society functions. I was starting to express that I felt alienated, and I'd been forced to conform. We were moving away from indie-rock, but there's still too much of it on "Gangrene" and "Zippermouth".



Grant: "Really fucking angry!"



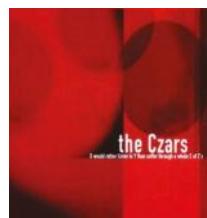
THE CZARS THE UGLY PEOPLE VS THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

BELLA UNION, 2001

Issues with the sleeve

notwithstanding, Grant loved the title and at least some of the songs. Sadly, it bombed. We recorded this in Denver, with Simon Raymonde and Giles Hall producing, and Colin Brooker engineering. This is my least favourite Czars album because I hate the cover art. And I picked it out, 'cos I thought it was edgy or something. That cover [a shot of a naked girl's legs] sums up how I was getting it wrong at that point. The title's good, though, as are some of the songs: "Killjoy", "Lullaby 2000", which was written by Roger Green. I was getting closer but the songs are never fully realised. I felt the people around me in the studio were like, "Yeah, you're sort of getting it, but you're not really busting it out like you should with the talent you have. We know you're holding back." But they still believed I was going to someday. Why weren't we successful? I felt that was because I wasn't good-looking enough and I was a disappointment as a performer. And we just couldn't get a break. At one point Chris Blackwell's label Palm Pictures were going to pick us up and then, after taking a year and a half to get to this point, Chris Blackwell came in on the day we were supposed to finally sign, and said: "No. I don't like it. Bye." It was always like that. I always blamed myself and that's what made me so difficult to get along with. And I wasn't a good performer because I was afraid of being called a

faggot. I developed horrible depression and crippling anxiety disorder, which developed into alcoholism and cocaine abuse just as a way to cope.



BELLA UNION, 2002

Oddly titled stop gap release, and something of a collectable among Czars fans – it was given away on tour. An interesting footnote in the band's history.

This is often referred to as a live EP, but it isn't. We just recorded it live in the studio in Denver. We produced it ourselves. The eclecticism of the four songs is exactly what was wrong with The Czars. It's like a patchwork quilt. I love patchwork quilts. But not in music. I love a lot of different styles, but my heart belongs in electronic music. And on this record I didn't know what the fuck we were doing. The title comes from a dictionary of Russian idioms, and refers to the formulas they used for idioms. My friend Lawrence Epstein, who became Schwa, the guy I wrote "Sensitive New Age Guy" on *Pale Green Ghosts* about who committed suicide two years ago... he came up with this title. It's strange, because this was my favourite thing by The Czars for a long time. But it still didn't fit into who I was. I really wanted to be making music that sounded like Front Line Assembly, Skinny Puppy and Alien Sex Fiend.



THE CZARS GOODBYE

BELLA UNION, 2004

As Bella Union lose faith, Grant sinks deeper into alcoholism; but the band overcome obstacles both internal and external to make their best album.

Again made at NFA Studios in Denver and self-produced, 2004 was when I got sober, I guess. But we had started *Goodbye* the year before and then I went off to Paris in 2003 and started to bottom out. We were kind of giving up, but then I came back to Denver and we decided to finish the album. The future of the band was uncertain, but I've blocked out so much of what happened around that time because I don't want to remember it and don't want to think about it. I know I wrote a couple of the songs in Paris. I wrote "Paint The Moon" while I was watching an episode of *The Twilight Zone* on French TV called "The Midnight Sun". I was very, very proud of that song and always will be and still perform it sometimes. I was starting to understand how to open up and how to be vigilant, and take advantage of ideas. This is supposed to be fun. And you can hear I was starting to get that. "My Love" was me putting one of my favourite pieces of Russian animation in a song. We sampled it, and even got permission from the wife of the guy who did it [Vadim Kurchevsky]. It was called *My Green Crocodile*. It's about a crocodile who falls in love with a beautiful cow. "Los" is called "Los" because I was ashamed of the sentiment of the song and worried I was gonna be called a whiny bitch for writing about my feelings. "Los" stands for "Lake Of Syrup".



THE CZARS SORRY I MADE YOU CRY

BELLA UNION, 2005

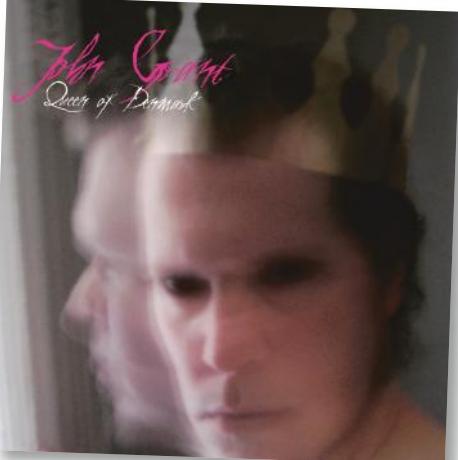
With The Czars
finally breaking up,
Raymonde compiles
an album of cover versions from B-sides
and unreleased recordings. Grant's refusal
to alter the gender perspective in songs
that were originally performed by the
likes of Patsy Cline and Brenda Lee sees
him 'coming out', just as he quits music
for five years.

This came out after the band had split and sold more than any other Czars album. So I finally show everyone what kind of singer I am and then promptly disappear? That about sums it up. I didn't want to do the record at all but Simon wanted it. He even had this picture he'd taken of a friend that he wanted to use for the cover and I was just like, "Whatever. I'm quitting. 'Cos I just don't have what it takes." I was horribly embarrassed about who I was. But then Midlake gave me this push that I needed. And I always knew that I had it in me. I was the person that I wanted to be. I just couldn't access him. But I am really proud of the cover of "Angel Eyes" by Abba. I need to start doing it live 'cos I love it so much.



"In mourning..."
John Grant in 2013

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



JOHN GRANT QUEEN OF DENMARK

BELLA UNION, 2010

For those who had never heard The Czars, Grant's Midlake-assisted solo debut was an out-of-nowhere masterwork. Who was this fortysomething who sang like Robert Palmer, played piano like Lennon, emoted about his sexuality like Antony Hegarty and raged as hilariously as Eminem?

I met Midlake at South By Southwest during the death rattle of The Czars. They were people that I really respected. That was important. And they were doing really well. And they were saying, "We think you're amazing" and I believed them because I thought they were amazing. And they wanted me. Eric Pulido kept calling me saying, "When are we doing this album? We'll put you up. We'll be your band. We really feel that you have something you need to do." I kept them waiting

because I was asking myself if I really wanted to do this. I was 40 years old... wouldn't I just be making a fool of myself? But once I got there they created this atmosphere which was the closest experience I'd had to a family... like brothers. I needed to feel that love from other American men. And they were straight, which for some reason, felt very important to me. And they came from strict religious backgrounds too, and they didn't give a shit that I was gay. They loved me and got my sense of humour and they followed through with all the promises they made. It can't be overstated how important those guys are. Musically, they did whatever I wanted them to do. And they were up to the task. I don't think I'd always worked with musicians who were capable of playing the things that they needed to. The Czars' guitarists were great, but Paul Alexander of Midlake introduced me to the fact that a great bass player can transform a song. He constantly surpassed my expectations of myself. Midlake brought expertise. And they never laughed at any of my ideas. So I wasn't afraid to be myself. I like the fact that many fans of John Grant have no knowledge of The Czars. The Czars era reminds me of how scared I was and how evil I have been to myself. So that feeling is what I connect to when I listen to it. *Queen Of Denmark* is where I found my voice, as far as I'm concerned. In every sense. I finally felt I was allowed to say, "You know what? I'm really fucking angry I was taught I don't matter as much as other people because I'm a sick pervert." A lot of the rage came from the fact I was never able to stand up for myself when I was attacked verbally or physically because I was taught they were reacting the only way one should to such a creature. On *Queen Of Denmark* the man finally stood up and said... "Fuck that!"



JOHN GRANT PALE GREEN GHOSTS

BELLA UNION, 2013

After the success of *Queen Of Denmark*, Grant decamped to Iceland with Biggi Veira of Gus Gus, indulged his love of electronica, and wrote one of the great break-up albums.

The *Queen Of Denmark* tour was really exhausting. I was in such mourning for the relationship I sang about on *Queen Of Denmark* and *Pale Green Ghosts*, and the attention I was now getting saved me from going off the deep end. But I felt totally at the bottom again, and I was barely able to take any of the success in. There'd been so many false starts, and part of me was wondering, "Do I really have a career in music now? Or is it a fluke?" But as soon as I saw Biggi Veira's studio in Iceland, and heard the Icelandic language – because I'm a language freak – I just felt that I had to work with this guy. And of course I was scared shitless, but my motto is be scared... and do it anyway. And that's served me well. Working with Sinéad O'Connor? I just adore her. She's one of those idols that you meet who surpasses your expectations. Who would have thought, when I heard "Mandinka" for the first time and shat my nappy on the dancefloor in Boulder, Colorado that I'd one day be hanging out at her place in Ireland, just chilling, and talking about music, with her playing me a duet by John Lee Hooker and Van Morrison and saying, "You and I should do this." Are you kidding me? Did writing so honestly about my break-up have a cathartic effect? It's started to. I can talk about it now without feeling despair. I can imagine a future now. And that's something. ☺



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Doughty hero of the pub rock wars... Unlikely chart star... Confidant of Johnny Cash, Elvis Costello and Ry Cooder... Urbane pop craftsman for the discerning grown-up...

(What's so funny 'bout) Nick Lowe?

Story: Neil Spencer

Photograph: Chalkie Davis

MAKING TEA IN the kitchen of his downtown Brentford pad, Nick Lowe ponders the theory that The Beatles ruined pop music. “Because after them, everyone thought they should write their own material – which of course most couldn’t,” he says. “And it also ended the era of great session musicians, people who were fantastic instrumentalists playing very simply.”

Nick draws no conclusions, but part of him, one senses, belongs in pop’s Tin Pan Alley era; the versatile studio professional, the agile tunesmith, the crafty lyricist. Only part of him, however, for over the course of a career that started in his teens, Lowe has worn many guises; the post-hippy idealist of “(What’s So Funny ‘Bout) Peace, Love And Understanding”; hard-drinking pub rocker with Brinsley Schwartz; retro-stylist with Rockpile, madcap in-house producer for Stiff Records; unlikely pop star; aspiring country crooner and, finally, the sophisticated middle-aged romantic he unveiled on 1994’s *The Impossible Bird*, a role he has continued to inhabit on disc, though these days he’s a happily married father marveling at his eight-year-old son’s drumming skills.

As pop careers go it’s a one-off, not least for the way it blurred the line between artist and

producer in the late 1970s, when Lowe was a pivotal figure in the punk and new wave insurrection. Among his first productions was Graham Parker & The Rumour’s 1976 landmark debut, *Howlin’ Wind*. He later produced the first punk single, The Damned’s “New Rose” for Stiff, and even more tellingly produced Elvis Costello’s first five albums. His touch remained sure for other acts on Stiff and beyond (The Pretenders “Stop Your Sobbin’”, for example) while his own output married acrylic-bright melodies with deadpan wit.

Lowe’s focus drifted in the ’80s. He abandoned production – “I hated the sound the machinery made” – while his own music became erratic and, at times, insipid. Since re-inventing his approach with *The Impossible Bird*, the albums have flowed steadily, accruing into an understated but brilliant canon of songs that flit easily across styles while remaining rooted in Lowe’s genial, sensitive character: Brill Building pop for grown-ups. In his homeland he’s something of a connoisseur’s choice, a music lover’s national treasure, but in the US he has a wider public that crosses generations.

We are at Lowe’s muso retreat, a short stride from the family home, to talk about his new record, *Quality Street*, his Christmas album, though *Uncut* uses the occasion for a flick through Lowe’s back pages. The décor is arty

and modernist, though a vintage Johnny Cash LP is on prominent display, a nod to his friend and hero. As ever, Nick is dapperly dressed in grey flannels, white shirt and basket-weave loafers beneath a well-coiffed shock of birch-silver hair and a chunky pair of horn rims. He’s in good shape. His conversation is fluent and articulate, accompanied by a semaphore of hand signals, his enormous, bass player’s palms sometimes splayed skyward to make a point, but more often strumming acoustic air guitar, no doubt one of estimable vintage, rather like its owner.

UNCUT: Was it weird making a Christmas album in the spring?

NICK LOWE: I thought we might have to festoon the studio with holly as I have always swallowed the idea that people made Christmas albums at Christmas, which is obviously impossible. But once you start, it’s a mere job of work.

There are some originals, some obscurities.

I didn’t know Roger Miller’s “Toy Trains” but apparently it’s much loved in America. I co-wrote “A Dollar Short Of Happy” with Ry Cooder and asked Ron Sexsmith for something and he sent “Hooves On The Roof”.

Then there’s a de-glammed Wizzard’s “I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday”. If

NICK
LOWE
SPRINGTIME
FOR BASHER





BRINSLEY SCHWARZ

not the Mount Everest that's certainly the K2 of Christmas pop singles but I never heard a cover of it. We took out every other chord and found we had a result. These days there isn't really any such thing as a hit Christmas pop single as there was in the 1970s, it's just what Simon Cowell says it's going to be. I think the last ones to enter the canon are Cliff's "Mistletoe And Wine", The Pogues' "Fairytale Of New York" and Chris Rea's "Driving Home For Christmas", and they are all back in the 1980s.

There are also spirituals, which hint at a Christian streak. You wrote "Far Celestial Shore" for Mavis Staples' recent album. How did that come about?
I met Mavis when I was on tour with Wilco, Jeff Tweedy, who produced both her recent albums, asked me to write something. I was raised an Anglican, I love gospel music and the language of The Bible, so it's not a great leap, but I can't participate. I heard Craig Ferguson say 'I am the sort of person who can be moved to tears in an empty church, but become an atheist in a full one', which I totally identify with.

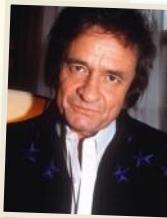
I'd like to loop back and talk about the days after what you call the 'pub rock wars', when you, Jake Riviera and Dave Robinson started Stiff... The band Jake managed, Chilli Willi, had broken up and the writing was on the wall for my band, Brinsley Schwarz. It wasn't a bad-natured break-up. We had been sharing a house in Beaconsfield which was fantastic, like going to college, we had our own rehearsal room there. But we'd had our breaks, like opening for Wings, and nothing had happened. I woke up and thought I'm 26 now, too old for this. I was spending a lot of time with Jake, and we knew something was coming, sensed it. We had friends in New York and the scene there had caught fire, though it was much more arty and serious than what arrived here. A voice seemed to say "It's your turn! Step forward, you're next!" We looked at the mainstream and thought, "We're not joining, if it's our time we are gonna do something different." I'd had enough of drippy singer-songwriters and hopeless blues boogie bands trying to copy Dr Feelgood. Jake looked round for a record deal but what was on offer didn't make my pulses race. What they wanted for me I didn't want for myself.

Although you cut the first Stiff single, "So It Goes" / "Heart Of The City", your initial input was principally as producer, wasn't it? Yes, I was co-opted as part of management. I became house producer simply by having been in more studios than Jake or Dave. They had tons of ideas how records should sound but I got the gig, they were busy managing and conceptualising.

CASH FLOW

"JOHNNY AND JUNE CAME TO STAY"

Nick Lowe on a visit from the in-laws...



In the late 1970s, Carlene and I were living in Shepherd's Bush, which at that time was still a poor area, mainly Irish, and Johnny and June came to stay. They arrived in three taxis, one for them and two for their luggage. They stayed two or three weeks. I'd come down in the morning to find Johnny in his bathrobe strumming his guitar while June cooked breakfast in our tiny kitchen. Johnny always dressed in the full Man In Black regalia. They would go down to North End Road market, Johnny in his frock coat, like a gunslinger, and June in her mink coat and cossack hat with a diamond pin. Because country music is so big in Ireland everyone would call out - "Johnny, great to see ya, good luck."

They were completely unfazed by a London street market. You have to remember they came from humble backgrounds. He was the most charismatic person I have ever met, he would suck all the air out of a room, but in a good way."



Elvis Costello, The Damned, Wreckless Eric and more – where were those records cut? In Pathway, a tiny studio in Stoke Newington. It was like a garage. It had been Oswald Mosley's lock-up, where the Blackshirts kept their pamphlets and placards! It had a great engineer, Barry Farmer, who had pretty much built the place. It was completely analogue, all glowing valves, and was boiling hot in the summer and freezing cold in the winter, but it had a fantastic sound.

What did your job as a producer entail back then?

It was still old-school, in the sense that if you said you were a producer forcefully enough people believed you. You didn't have to know how to actually work the equipment. I didn't do much knob twiddling but I was good at telling the engineer what I wanted to hear, and at energising people, figuring out what they wanted to do, and at discovering where the creativity in a band lay – that it wasn't necessarily with the loud-mouthed lead singer but with the shy bass player. I wasn't always right, I made bad decisions, but I was full of myself and the more people wrote how good I was, the more I believed it. It was an exciting time because for a while the monkeys took over the zoo. Suddenly big heads started to roll in the major labels. People who we thought were ruining the music scene were clearing their desks. Goodbye! Then they got in hip-looking guys, though they weren't really hip, and the majors wrested back control.

This was when you acquired the 'Basher' Lowe nickname? Popularly because I was quoted as saying production was "Bash it down and tart it up later." But the actual reason was Dr Feelgood. Because my father was in the RAF, they'd say [adopting *Dam Busters* voice] "Basher, bandits at 12 o'clock," taking the piss.

Were you still playing in Rockpile at the time? Yes. But it was a side gig, because Dave Edmunds came from a different generation and the other guys didn't really get what we were up to at Stiff. They were great but it was an old-fashioned rock'n'roll band and I had fancy pants ideas.

And you did – fleetingly – become a bona fide pop star. Yes, which I liked for all sorts of reasons. The music, obviously. But also getting a table in a restaurant, getting attention from girls who wouldn't normally look twice. It was a crazy time.

In the middle of all this, you married Carlene Carter. We were totally in love with the idea of each other, and we had such a great time. But as a marriage it was doomed to failure. There was no way we could have sunk into domesticity. Apart from the fact that she was and is fantastic, I got to meet her mum and step-dad, June and Johnny Cash (*see panel*), and those two were a major influence on me.



Rockpile, 1977: (l-r) Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds, Terry Williams, Billy Bremner



Still Jesus Of Cool: Nick Lowe, 2013

In what way? They were a great example of how to behave. They were big stars but so gracious. John was having trouble at that point. His career was starting to falter, he was running himself ragged trying to pay for this enormous operation he had, with scads of musicians and roadies, and offices and ex-sons-in-law with their hands out. He was working his arse off. He was a wonderful bloke, I love him and June to this day.

Why did your career turn sour in the mid-1980s?

“We used to record where Mosley’s Blackshirts kept their pamphlets and placards!”

because I had been a producer and I knew it was coming. I had yukked it up with management on the 14th floor and made disparaging remarks with them about artists. I knew how it worked. I had an impressive résumé for a guy in his early thirties. Done time in the fleshpots of Germany: tick. Served in the pub rock wars: tick. Stiff Records, there at the beginning: tick. Written hits for others and produced them: tick. Yet I didn’t feel I had done anything really good.

How did you resolve it? I wanted to be in music for the long haul, and at that time there weren’t too many examples. Frank Sinatra. Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee. But though everyone dug them no-one cared about their records any more. It was OK to grow old in jazz or country, but not in pop. I thought there must be a way to do it, to write and record for myself.

So what happened? In 1986, Elvis Costello gave me a job in his band The Confederates touring Australia and Japan, just

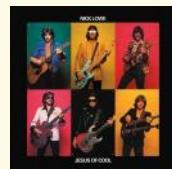
HOW TO BUY...

NICK LOWE ON RECORD



**BRINSLEY SCHWARZ
NEW FAVOURITES OF...**
(UNITED ARTISTS, 1974)

The Brinsleys' sixth – and final – album. Produced by Dave Edmunds. Contains the original version of “(What’s So Funny ‘Bout) Peace, Love And Understanding”. Elsewhere, “Ever Since You’re Gone” is a Southern slowie, “Like You Don’t Love You” has Motown vibes and there are harmonies galore.



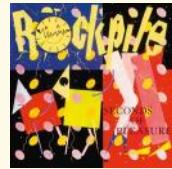
**NICK LOWE
JESUS OF COOL**
(RADAR RECORDS, 1978)

Classic solo debut, packed with hits – “I Love The Sound Of Breaking Glass” and “So It Goes” – augmented by “Heart Of The City” and outstanding tracks like the dark, crepuscular “Endless Sleep” and the lush “Little Hitler”. Re-released in an expanded edition in 2008 on Proper.



**NICK LOWE
LABOUR OF LUST**
(RADAR RECORDS, 1979)

8/10 Blasts off with his biggest hit, “Cruel To Be Kind” and also memorable for the stand-out “Cracking Up”. Terrific Barney Bubbles artwork. Re-released in 2011 on Proper.



**ROCKPILE
SECONDS OF PLEASURE**
(COLUMBIA, 1980)

7/10 Collaborations between Lowe and Dave Edmunds are, for contractual reasons, a confusing catalogue, but here they intersect sweetly. Lowe’s songwriting skills are sublime on “Fool Too Long,” the pitch black “Now And Always” and the sly “When I Write The Book”.



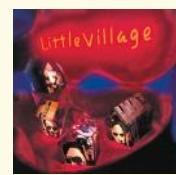
**NICK LOWE
NICK THE KNIFE**
(COLUMBIA, 1982)

6/10 With Rockpile split, this leans popwards, dipping into reggae for “Heart”, Creedence country for “Stick It Where The Sun Don’t Shine” and going plain daft on the throwaway “Zulu Kiss”.



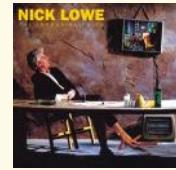
NICK LOWE

Labourer of lust, 1978



**LITTLE VILLAGE
LITTLE VILLAGE**
(REPRISE, 1992)

Eponymous offering from the short-lived supergroup of Ry Cooder, John Hiatt, Jim Keltner and Lowe. So-so songs but bags of in-group smarts; witness “Don’t Think About Her When You’re Trying To Drive”. Good advice.



**NICK LOWE
THE IMPOSSIBLE BIRD**
(DEMON RECORDS, 1994)

Written in the aftermath of his split from broadcaster Tracey MacLeod, this redefined Lowe as a mature, understated songsmith. Highlights include “Lover Don’t Go” and “Withered On The Vine”.



**NICK LOWE
DIG MY MOOD**
(DEMON RECORDS, 1998)

7/10 This builds on *The Impossible Bird* to complete Lowe’s transition into a rock-crooner. Tales of heartbreak and lost love include “Faithless Love”, “Lonesome Reverie” and “I Must Be Getting Over You”.



**NICK LOWE
AT MY AGE**
(PROPER, 2007)

8/10 Adds a country groove to the ‘Brentford trilogy’, with Charlie Feathers’ “A Man In Love” and Faron Young’s “Feel Again”, and Lowe’s own, nasty “I Trained Her To Love Me”.



**NICK LOWE
QUIET PLEASE... THE
NEW BEST OF NICK
LOWE**
(PROPER, 2009)

10/10 Runs from the original “What’s So Funny...” to the melancholic cool of his later compositions. It also cherry picks gems from the ‘wilderness years’, including the caustic “All Men Are Liars”. There’s a DVD of videos and a 2007 Belgian concert.

playing rhythm and doing backing vocals. A very nice job. One night he said, "Why don't you open with a 20-minute solo set?" and pressured me into it. I went out thinking it would be awful. But it was Japan, so they were very sweet and enthusiastic. They arranged a solo show in Tokyo and I became fascinated by the solo thing. It brought focus about the songwriting. I'd be playing thinking, 'Why did I write this awkward part?'

Afterwards the songs

became more considered. Nowadays it can take me weeks to get something down to three minutes, the length that would fit on an old 45 single, which is hotwired into me as the really cool length of time. When I do shows, I keep the songs coming and they help each other, so that you don't leave room for people's attention to wander.

You took – what? – 12 years to finish "The Beast In Me". How come? Johnny Cash came to London to play Wembley in '81. I had this idea for a song, had the first verse, and I stayed up all night thinking, 'Oh, I can play this for him.' I drank I don't know how much, but a lot. I became convinced I was Johnny. It sounded good after a few bottles of wine. The next thing I knew I was waking up to Carlene talking on the phone, saying, "Yeah, we're looking forward to seeing you, Nick's written this great song. He stayed up all night and he really wants to play it you."

I opened my eyes to a hideous hangover. I definitely didn't feel like Johnny Cash! I tried to get Carlene to ring them back and to say I'd been taken ill but there was no putting them off, they were on their way to the soundcheck. I went into the garden to do some digging and get some air and suddenly this shadow came over me. It was John: "Carlene says you got this song." So I went into the house, the sitting room was full of people, his band and nannies, June, backing singers. They'd all come in from the tourbus which was parked outside. I scrawled around for this terrible scrawl I'd written, and instead of the sonorous voice of the night before, out and came this weedy little voice [laughs].

So what happened next? Eventually I finished and there was this silence in the room, and John, who was sitting there surrounded by his court, said, "Play it again." It was even worse the second time. When it finished I never wanted to hear this thing ever again, but before he went, John said, "Don't worry about it, you're onto something."

Every time I saw afterwards he'd ask, "How's 'The Beast'?" I thought he was taking the piss but he meant it. Then the last time he played London, at the Albert Hall, he got me up to play with him. I didn't want to. I'm a JC fan and if I was in the audience and saw me get onstage I'd want me off. John thought it was hilarious. Afterwards I went home and picked up the guitar and the other verses just clicked. I sent it off to him, didn't hear anything, then my step-daughter rang me up saying, "Grandpaw cain't stop playing that song you wrote." The next thing, it came out on *American Recordings*.



Elvis Costello, left, and Nick Lowe, right, with their manager Jake Riviera, London, 1986

PRETTY LOWE

"HOW ABOUT SOME ABBA PIANO?"

Nick Lowe
remembers
recording with
Elvis Costello...

"It's amazing to me that Elvis was going to dump 'Oliver's Army' when we first started recording it. We went through it all afternoon, and it just wasn't happening at all. Elvis didn't like it and he was getting more and more shirty. I couldn't really see why. I thought it was a really good track, but it did sound very obviously poppy. Maybe that was a problem for him. Anyway, something about it was getting up his nose, and I'd started making overtures about this: 'Well, all is not lost, Elvis. I can take this off your hands any time.' But he wasn't really biting.

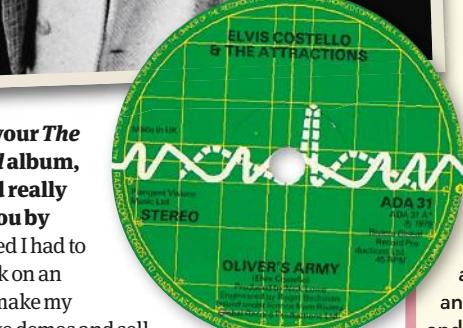
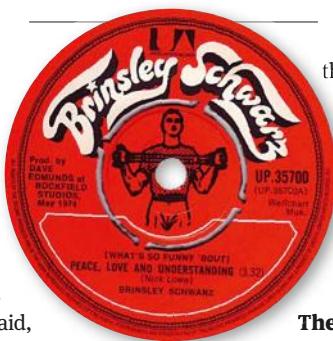
Out of the blue, Steve Nieve said, 'What about if I do a sort of Abba piano part on it?' Complete silence. We knew their records were good, but no-one wanted to own up to it. But Nieve really liked them, as did Elvis, so the consensus was, 'Let's try it.' I didn't think this was going to disturb my plan to get the track for myself. Nieve did the piano part and suddenly the thing went from black and white to fireworks. I don't think it's quite the first take that you hear on the finished record but the effect was

instantaneous. It gave the record an unbelievable sound and spirit. I thought it was pretty good before, but when that piano went on it I saw my nefarious scheme going out of the window. I didn't mind too much, because it was such a great cut. And so Elvis had the massive hit – and I didn't!"

GRAEME THOMSON

It came out on your *The Impossible Bird* album, too. Things had really picked up for you by then... I'd realised I had to make things work on an acoustic guitar, make my records sound like demos and sell the songs. I was looking to start that earlier on, with *Party Of One*, and, though it's not for the faint-hearted, with *Pinker And Prouder Than Previous* – though I couldn't get people to understand and I lacked confidence. Working with John Hiatt and Ry on [Hiatt's] *Bring The Family* was a turning point, which led onto us forming Little Village. I'd also had an end to an unhappy love affair, which helped me write heartfelt songs that gave the record some bottom and maturity.

"I became convinced I was Johnny Cash. The song sounded good after a few bottles of wine"



You also had a bit of a windfall, didn't you? It coincided with me unexpectedly getting an enormous amount of money when Curtis Stigers covered "What's So Funny..." on *The Bodyguard* soundtrack. It was a perfect storm, me coming up with good songs and an original sound, plus the injection of cash – 'cos I was pretty much on my uppers – to enable me to tour the record in the US, where I knew my audience was. I knew I'd lose some of my fanbase but I got a new audience with *Impossible Bird*, more women. Some of the rockers dropped away, it was too wet for them, and the women don't like the old stuff, it's too chatty. I have a more recent crowd in their thirties, which has a lot to do with me touring with Wilco. At home, people think of me as a cross between Shakin' Stevens and a one-hit wonder like Nik Kershaw. It's my own fault. I can play a fancy place in London. But in the sticks? Forget it.

These days you're back with a full band...

Yes, but it's the same aesthetic, we play quiet – glorified acoustic – but having the band means it swings and has a little more jump in it... that old thing about it's not just the rock, it's the roll. I have always liked groove.

Looking back, how would you sum up what you've achieved? I have never been one for dividing things into genres; shit music is shit music and a good song is a good song. I like to think of my stuff as 'fly', or 'saucy'. They'll do fine. ☺

Nick Lowe's Quality Street is available now on Proper Records

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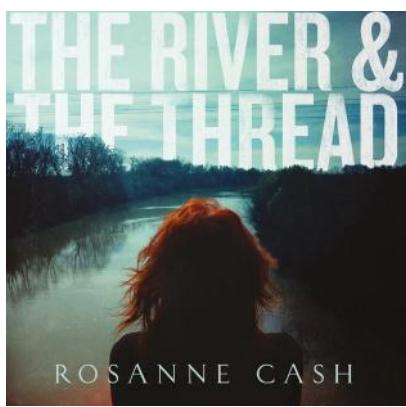
10 Masterpiece 9 Essential 8 Excellent
 7 Very good 6 Good but uneven
 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

New albums

THIS MONTH: NICK CAVE | CIAN NUGENT | COURTNEY BARNETT & MORE



CLAY PATRICK McBRIDE



TRACKLIST

- 1 A Feather's Not A Bird
- 2 The Sunken Lands
- 3 Etta's Tune
- 4 Modern Blue
- 5 Tell Heaven
- 6 The Long Way Home
- 7 World Of Strange Design
- 8 Night School
- 9 50,000 Watts
- 10 When The Master Calls The Roll
- 11 Money Road

ROSANNE CASH
The River & The Thread

BLUE NOTE

Mesmerising trek through the land of Dixie; R Cash paints her masterpiece. *By Luke Torn*

10/10

EVEN THE LIGHTEST-hearted of Rosanne Cash's superb 35-year repertoire often carries with it the weight of history, the struggle for self-discovery and a sense of place. It's hardly surprising given her station, born into the first family of American music royalty. On *The River & The Thread*, Cash's first album of original material in seven years, and first since brain surgery in 2007, those vibes run deeper than ever, plunging into complicated emotions, impossible situations, piquant insights, fate and history, and the meaning of it all in the land of Dixie.

Playing like a travelogue through time, space and place, *The River & The Thread* opens – with a yawning, bluesy guitar chord – in the northwestern Alabama burg of Florence. This is "A Feather's Not A Bird", and it finds Cash flitting between emotional and geographical landscapes to a sinewy, swampy mix of hot-wired guitars, silky harmonies and a

revelatory, ominously impassioned vocal. The setting could be right now, or 100 years either direction. "There's never any highway when you're looking for the past," she declares, part of a kind of cumulative taking stock.

Cash and guitarist/producer/husband John Leventhal assembled an exemplary lineup of musicians for *The River & The Thread*: singers Allison Moorer, Amy Helm and John Paul White (The Civil Wars), Allmans guitarist supreme Derek Trucks and, as she puts it, the Voice Of God Choir – Rodney Crowell, John Prine, Tony Joe White, Kris Kristofferson – who pitch in on one cut. That said, it's Cash, at the top of her game as a singer, who carries the day. Her voice is a persistent wonder, a flexibly crystalline instrument, which with a tiny shift in intonation, a subtle turn of phrase, alters the texture or perspective, imbuing the songs with trenchant, kaleidoscopic shades of meaning. →

New Albums

→ One might think of *The River & The Thread* as the glorious summation in her post-dad-death trilogy, following 2006's grief-stricken *Black Cadillac* and 2008's tradition-grounded, Johnny Cash-inspired album of covers, *The List*. It feels as if this is now the point where the internal turmoil subsides, the clouds part, new connections await. Then again, it just might just as easily signal a rather momentous rebirth.

Not that there's not always more grief around the corner. Sung in a kind of stunned mix of determination, vulnerability, and fatalism, "Etta's Tune" is at the heart of *The River & The Thread*, indeed the spark, the first piece written for the album. A tribute in part to fallen Tennessee Two bassist and close friend Marshall Grant (a prime architect of her dad's boom-chicka-boom sound), who passed away in 2011 at 83, and Etta, his wife of 65 faithful years, this song is celebration and mourning. It's deeply personal yet connected to everything, a glimpse into the fabric of centralising, salt-of-the-earth, real-life characters. Every stanza is teardrop territory.

The altogether snappier "Modern Blue" kicks in next, changing up the mood, the album's shiniest, coolest-rocking coin. Hinging on Leventhal's catchy guitar curlicues echoing down through the verses, it's, ostensibly, a world travelers' tale. The protagonist traipses through a litany of locales, all of them not Memphis, before the epiphany comes: "I went to Barcelona and my mind got changed," Cash leans into the song's pivotal verse, "So I'm heading back to Memphis on the midnight train."

The ghostly blues stomp of "World Of Strange Design", meanwhile, Trucks percolating the rhythms on slide guitar, is Cash pushing her poetic edge, heading off into deepest mystery, exploring the identity of place, the forces of fate ("If Jesus came from Mississippi..." she ponders), on perhaps the album's most powerfully affecting track.

Along the way, Cash touches upon the quest for spiritualism in a world of loneliness ("Tell Heaven") and the wits-end desperation of a Dust Bowl-era Arkansas farmer ("The Sunken Lands"). "Night School" feels more contemporary lyrically, but with its sparkling, orchestral 1860s parlor-ballad arrangement, it joins most of its peers in defying the conventional parameters of time; musically, it's *The River & The Thread*'s most daring, surprising piece.

Following the country thread: Rosanne Cash

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced and arranged by:** John Leventhal
Co-Produced by: Rick DePofi
Recorded and mixed by: John Leventhal and Rick DePofi at NY Noise, New York, NY
Personnel include: John Leventhal (guitar, bass, mandolin, organ, celeste, electric sitar), Derek Trucks (slide guitar), Tim Luntzel (bass), Shawn Pelton, Dan Rieser (drums), John Cowherd (Wurlitzer piano), Rodney Crowell, Amy Helm, Kris Kristofferson, John Prine, Tony Joe White (backing vocals)

Within the general structure of a classic Celtic ballad, gorgeous mandolin and fiddle accents, and the her so-called Voice Of God Choir, Cash plunges into myth and reality, magnificence and tragedy, her voice delivering each chapter in the story with an aching beauty.

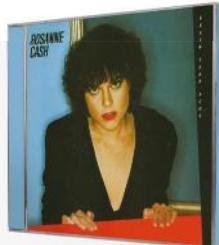
"50,000 Watts", though, a shuffling blues, grasps new hope, alas a new identity, and optimism in the post-war South – in short, a new start: "We'll be who we are, not who we were," she sings in scrumptious, anticipatory harmony with Wandering Sons singer Cory Chisel. The song doesn't name names, but it might as well be referencing Johnny Cash's clarion calls "Hey Porter" or "Big River" blasting out of Memphis' WSM in 1958.

The spidery "The Long Way Home" is the album's sleeper, at first slipping by unsuspectingly. But

Foreboding heartbreak permeates the characters' stark realities in the aching Civil War-era portrait "When The Master Calls The Roll" – the principals scrolling by as in a novel.

here, amid a Leventhal string arrangement seemingly awash in kudzu, David Mansfield's nimble violin and viola touches, and Cash channeling her purest gothic voice, emerges one of the album's central truths – the resolute inescapability of place: "You thought you'd left it all behind," she avers.

By the time *The River & The Thread* completes its mesmerising trek, tracing the history and its myriad characters, the feel and the psyche of the deepest South in its closer, "Money Road", the troupe has arrived in tiny Money, Mississippi, upon a rural roadway adjacent to Robert Johnson's mythical crossroads. Spooky as a pitch-black midnight walk across Bobbie Gentry's (also adjacent) Tallahatchie Bridge, Cash's voice cutting like a scythe through keyboards that rise and fall like ghosts, all the themes, a million micro-bits of the story, converge, before Leventhal suddenly, shockingly, takes the listener out with a prickly electric sitar, time heading in both directions.



Seven Year Ache

COLUMBIA, 1981

If folks weren't quite getting it, Cash's third LP pounded down the walls. She could play the chanteuse just fine, but the rockabilly of "My Baby Thinks He's A Train", the Tom Petty twang of "Hometown Blues" – this was a new slant to country. And – on the title track – her first masterpiece as a writer.

8/10



King's Record Shop

1987, COLUMBIA

Cash's peak as a star, *King's...* produced four No 1 singles. The songs, such as "Runaway Train" and the brave "Rosie Strike Back", were dazzling, but the ballad "The Real Me" portended an altogether different artistic path. In hindsight, KRS, somehow, is both pinnacle and dénouement.

8/10

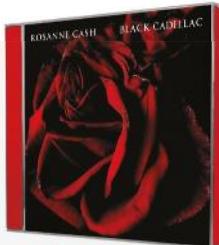


Interiors

COLUMBIA, 1990

By the late '80s, it was clear the country mainstream could never hold her. *Interiors*, a dramatic about-face for a major artist, proved it in spades. No dark emotion went unexamined on intense meditations on love, heartbreak, infidelity, the crumbling of a life. In critical shorthand – a 1990s *Blood On The Tracks*.

9/10



Black Cadillac

CAPITOL/EMI, 2006

Cash had been through it all by 2006 – divorce/ remarriage, loss/return of her voice, death of dad Johnny/stepmom June. On *Black Cadillac*, she brought *Interiors*-style songwriting, and new stories and textures, to bear on the daunting spectre of her father. An essential, unforgettable set.

9/10

Q&A

Rosanne Cash on
The River & The Thread,
time and timelessness,
and going home...

I HAVE A RECENT quote from you:

"If I never make another album, I'll be content because I made this one."

Yeah, you know what? That comment is going to come back to haunt me! Well, but I felt it and I feel it. I feel I have been working towards this album for a long time, and I finally wrote some songs I had been trying to reach in myself and outside myself for a long time. I think I was feeling my own mortality when I said that, but it's pretty true. I do feel that way.

Why weren't you able to reach them before?

Well, the last time I wrote an album was seven years ago, my last album was a covers album. A lot happened in that seven years. I think I'm just at the point in my life where these are the songs available to me. This one has a bluesy, swampy feel to it... That was a conscious decision. You know, we decided to make this record about the South and obviously we had to follow some musical direction that made sense for that, and we wanted to cover a lot of territory, everything from that kind of Southern pop, you know Dusty [Springfield] or Bobbie Gentry with the cascading strings thing. Everything from that to really bluesy stuff like "World Of Strange Design". Then on into "Night School", which is really more of an orchestral piece – another tradition!

...and a sense of being on the road. I mean there's a lot of geography in the songs, real geography, but I think the thread that goes through it is both real travel and time travel. And the heart opening.

When did you first start to write the album, what was the spark? It started to form in 2011. Arkansas State University had purchased my dad's boyhood home, and they asked me to participate in the restoration and in the fundraising for the restoration. It was really the first Johnny Cash project I had wanted to get involved in. I thought, you know, my dad would really love this, this would be important to him. And it was important to me too, and I thought it would be important to my kids. The house was about to fall down, but they were able to get it. I started organising this fundraiser and while I was down there, Marshall Grant died.

That is "Etta's Song"? Yeah.

What was your relationship with Marshall?

Oh my God, it was really close. He had become like a surrogate dad to me after my dad's death. He was the third person to hold me after I was born! We talked every few months. He would go over and over all the stories from the road. He was anguished that he couldn't prevent my dad's drug addiction. He remembered all the tours, he'd saved everything, and he was trying to settle his memories. And then he died when I was down there [at Arkansas State], so my heart kinda got cracked open. At the same time I was making a lot of trips down South, and the idea just started to form. And Etta, she was Marshall's wife for 65 years, she is like family.



"The South" is a broad subject. How did you edit? The first way we pared it down was we weren't going to proselytise, we weren't going to try to bust any stereotypical myths people have about the South. The songs would be enough, just to point the arrow to the Delta – this is the heartbeat of the country – music, the revolution, the Civil Rights era, the blues, slave songs, gospel, and so much came from there. You think about Bobbie Gentry and Emmett Till, where Till was murdered. The proximity, it was all just right there – where Robert Johnson was buried – it's all in a few square miles.

What came from this experience? That particular trip where we went down Money Road, we took for John's [Leventhal] birthday, then we went to Oxford, Mississippi, and went to Faulkner's house, and then deep into the heart of where all the great blues musicians came from – Greenwood, Dockery Farms. We went to Dockery Farms, where Charley Patton had sat on the porch of a juke joint. That in itself was chilling. We met this 90-something-year-old man who knew Bill Faulkner and Eudora Welty, he said [affecting a proper Southern gentleman's voice], "Eudora was a lovely woman." And then you add the layer of my own ancestry in Arkansas, and going to the place where my dad grew up, it was just so deep. It was a life-changing experience.

What is your favorite track? Well, it depends. "A Feather's Not A Bird" is real important to me

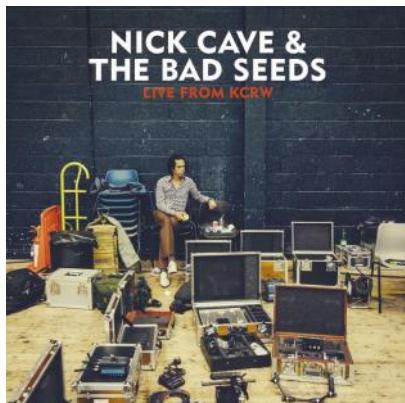
because it lays out the landscape of the whole record. But, some days it's "50,000 Watts". It feels like such a heart-opener, looking into the future with so much hope, and knowing everything will be all right. And then some days it's "When The Master Calls The Roll", because it feels so timeless to me. I've always loved so much those Celtic and Appalachian ballads, story songs, you know, that end in a real heartbreaking way.

"World Of Strange Design", that's just a great turn of phrase... I was allowing my madness to run riot, free-associative stuff. I thought if I was really in that dense, weird, wonderful South and looking out for a minute – how might my world be, how might it look? Well... Jesus would come from Mississippi. I was able to tap into some madness.

*"The last time
I wrote an album
was seven years ago
– a lot happened in
that seven years..."*

Since you spent so much of your upbringing in California, it seems like you are both an insider and an outsider in the South? Exactly. Maybe if

I had lived in Money, Mississippi I wouldn't have been able to do this. You know, I was born in Memphis, I still have a lot of relatives there. There are many layers to this. I can love it freely now, but the first few years I moved away I'd go back and my stomach would start hurting. It would just feel claustrophobic. Now I go back, I'm excited. You know that line from TS Eliot, what is it... "We arrived where we started and know it for the first time"? **INTERVIEW: LUKE TORN**



TRACKLIST

- 1 Higgs Boson Blues
- 2 Far From Me
- 3 Stranger Than Kindness
- 4 The Mercy Seat
- 5 Wide Lovely Eyes (1/2 song)
- 6 And No More Shall We Part
- 7 Wide Lovely Eyes
- 8 Breathless (few bars only)
- 9 Mermaids
- 10 People Ain't No Good
- 11 Into My Arms
- 12 God Is In The House
- 13 Push The Sky Away
- 14 Jack The Ripper

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Live From KCRW

BAD SEED LTD

Radio on – the dons of magisterial cool get up-close and personal. *By Sharon O'Connell*

8/10

WITH A BLUNT honesty and disregard for the conventions of PR that's perhaps typically Australian, Warren Ellis has admitted that what appealed to the Bad Seeds when the idea of playing a live set for LA radio station KCRW was first mooted was precisely nothing. "Actually," he told *Uncut*, "we were all determined to not do it because the tour up to that point had been intense. But then we decided to do a couple of Grinderman shows at Coachella and figured anything was fair game." Hence this set, recorded last April by Bob Clearmountain at Apogee Studio in Santa Monica. The live album customarily struggles with an

identity crisis. It's often painfully obvious that it has no real purpose save to remind fans of an act's existence in the gap between studio albums. It's also hard to see the point of recording a show that has no emotional resonance for those who weren't there, while those who were can presumably recall it at will. And although live sound quality hasn't been an issue for decades, replicating the immediacy of the live experience always will be. Which is where the alluring warmth and peculiar, in-ear intimacy of the made-for-radio recording comes into its own.

Live From KCRW sees the Bad Seeds' current lineup stripped down to its cornerstones of Nick



Cave, Warren Ellis, Martyn Casey and Jim Sclavunos – plus former member Barry Adamson, who joined for the *Push The Sky Away* tour – and in rare close-up. The 10-song session (the limited vinyl release adds “Into My Arms” and “God Is In The House”) digs as far back into their catalogue as *Your Funeral... My Trial*, which is represented by the hypnotic and woozily mysterious “Stranger Than Kindness” and it features only four songs from their recent studio album. All have been either adapted to the environment or chosen because they suit it, although audience requests apparently played a small part. “Eventually,” deadpans Cave, as titles are shouted out by the small crowd of fans, “you’ll say one of the songs on this very short list here.”

They open with “Higgs Boson Blues”, a skewed and witty but affecting narrative with an existential core, its compelling slow burn rendered even more chimeric than usual, allowing surreal visions of Hannah Montana crying with dolphins and Cave in yellow patent leather shoes to swim in and out of focus. Piano, underplayed violin, gently lapping keys and the softest brushwork constitute the rueful “Far From Me”, from *The Boatman’s Call* and underline its debt to Jimmy Webb, while that album’s quietly philosophical, seldom-visited “People Ain’t No Good” also gets a showing.

What’s most apparent is the band’s mastery of mood and pacing. Of course, that’s central to the mix of shock and awe and exposed vulnerability that has always been the Bad Seeds live experience,

Q&A

Warren Ellis



What were the particularities of playing a live set for radio?

We wanted to strip the group down, make the versions leaner and quieter; the size of the room and format dictated this. Also, it made a break from the *Push The Sky Away* tour and the enormity of the show with strings and choirs. It was nice to get to the heart of the songs.

How did you fix on a setlist?

Some were obvious, as we were playing them in the live set and wanted a fair representation of the new album. Others we had played in a smaller format prior to this; it was very loose on the night. Some we dialled up on the spot as people requested them.

How did Bob Clearmountain end up on board?

It’s his studio, so I guess he does all the sessions for KCRW. We wanted it mastered in the States, so we asked Howie Weinberg to see it through – he’s the Joe Pesci of rock’n’roll.

“The Mercy Seat” is a strikingly less thunderous and urgent version. Did the room call for that?

It’s about the song, not the thunder. The environment called for all the songs to be treated that way – shorn of cacophony and theatrics.

KCRW’s website notes that you declined a request for the videoing of the performance. Why was that?

Cameras make you aware of where you are. Live recordings are historically problematic and it’s difficult to get the good stuff un-self-consciously. Video felt like a deal breaker and it’s nice to think that visually, this exists as a memory only.

but this intimate shared space makes any changes in a song’s treatment more dramatic and amplifies their emotional impact. Thus “The Mercy Seat” is minus its familiar declamatory fury, manic energy and accelerating sturm und drang – made over as a stately, piano-led funeral ballad, it’s somehow more in line with Johnny Cash’s minimalist cover. “Push The Sky Away” – in which Cave’s splendidly grazed baritone is offset by winnowing organ, electronics and the most sombre of beats – addresses both creative motivation and the dying of the light and is devastatingly poignant in its simplicity. When Ellis said of the session “it’s the most beautiful [I’ve] heard Nick sing outside of the recording environment”, he might well have had this song in mind. The quiet is finally upset by an almost comically raucous set-closer. “Hammer it, Jim”, Cave instructs Sclavunos and he does, counting into the cacophony and lurching near-chaos of “Jack The Ripper”.

If most live albums are dispensable, ending up as the lesser played records in a completist’s collection, then *Live From KCRW* is rare. More than standing as a document of a particular time and place, it makes not having been there feel like a real loss.

A to Z

COMING UP
THIS MONTH...

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CHANTAL ACDA

**Let Your Hands Be
My Guide**

GIZEH

Cosy debut from
former Sleepingdog
frontwoman

She chooses her
collaborators well, Dutch-

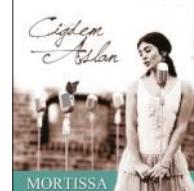
born, Belgium-based Chantal Acda. After three dreamy, drowsy albums with Adam Wiltzie (Stars Of The Lid, *A Winged Victory For The Sullen*) under the Sleepingdog moniker, her solo debut album boasts Nils Frahm as producer and musician, while Peter Broderick adds his hushed voice to the sparse melancholy of “Arms Up High” and “We Will, We Must”, perfectly complementing Acda’s own tranquil delivery. At times – though the musical settings here are less lush, sometimes so fragile as to be brittle – she even evokes Stina Nordenstam, especially within the starry-eyed beauty of “My Night”.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE

CIGDEM
ASLAN

Mortissa

ASPHALT TANGO



Debut album by
a new voice from
the global village

7/10

Evoking a lost world in
which inscrutable men

in fez hats smoked hookah pipes in the coffee houses and hash dens of old Istanbul, Aslan breathes new life into the stylish sounds of rebetika, once the musical currency of the Ottoman Empire. Clattering darbukas and bouzoukis, swooning violins and seductive clarinets underpin elegant Turkish blues and thrilling Greek dance tunes, topped by a sensual voice of Oriental grace and mystery, courtesy of a young Turkish Kurd woman from Hackney – proving that in these multi-cultural days, you no longer have to go very far to find world music of the most enticing kind.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

COURTNEY BARNETT

The Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas

MARATHON ARTISTS/HOUSE ANXIETY

An introduction to an impressive songwriting talent. By Laura Snaps



8/10

self-limiting attitude that gives much independent music its "indie" mentality. "I guess if you're afraid of aiming too high, then you're not really gonna have too far to fall," she sings on opener "Out Of The Woodwork", chiding a patronising older friend busy trying to look cool.

There's a certain amount of such self-defence at work on *A Sea Of Split Peas*, which collects the two EPs the 25-year-old Melbourne musician released on her own label, Milk! Records. 2012's "I've Got A Friend Called Emily Ferris" was written "by accident" in her bedroom and recorded in her lounge, whereas this year's "How To Carve A Carrot Into A Rose" took a year to write and was captured in a studio. Both boast shaggy guitar jams that evoke a less spaced Kurt Vile, and observational lyrics that squirrel poignant moments into apparently prosaic details, like Eleanor Friedberger. Barnett is comforting, refreshing and genuinely funny, talents recognised by the Australasian Performing Rights Association who nominated her alongside Tame Impala for 2013's Song Of The Year. This early success prompted Barnett to pair the EPs for wider release, but has said she doesn't want people to "misinterpret" it as an album.

Even the prosaic tracklisting resists 'album' status: *Split Peas* starts with the newer, more sophisticated material and winds up with the simple "Ode To Odetta", a sweet coda where Barnett feels her way around a loop pedal and strong vocal harmonies. "I sing plain, you sing pretty," Barnett rues, envying her friend's easy expression. At the newer end, on "Carrot"'s "History Eraser", she forges a picaresque guitar ramble, admitting, "In my dreams I wrote the best song that I've ever written/ Can't remember how it goes," before unspooling her commanding, pin-sharp recollections of a dream so wild you couldn't script it.

Barnett is even self-deprecating about her narrative voice, but you can hear her growing more confident in it as her work progresses. Crucially, she trusts herself to tell a story sparely, letting the finer details percolate and employing nifty linguistic tricks as well as words; the clever internal rhymes of terrific single "Avant Gardener" ("Life's getting hard in here so I do some gardening") contribute to a growing sense of unease: she goes out weeding to allay laziness-induced guilt but then suffers an anaphylactic shock.

The music is equally subtle and expressive. Barnett and band play bluesy figures that sometimes just repeat for seven minutes, yet

THE ARTWORK FOR Courtney Barnett's *A Sea Of Split Peas* is a wobbly pencil outline of Hokusai's *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, one of the most recognisable works of art in the world. Here, it's unfinished and defiantly half-arsed, a cutesy mirror of the self-limiting attitude that gives much independent music its 'indie' mentality.

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SLEEVE NOTES

► Recorded at: Harry Street; HeadGap Studios, Melbourne

Produced by: Courtney Barnett

Personnel includes: Courtney Barnett, Dave Mudie, Brent DeBoer, Bones Sloane, Alex Hamilton, Dan Luscombe, Pete Convery, Daniel Firth, Peter Lubulwa, Rob Harrow

somehow remain captivating. They jam without getting indulgent, throwing in "Jean Genie" quotes, sparks of feedback, a little barroom piano, and streaked pedal steel, letting Barnett's often-layered vocal melodies set the pace. Her voices are unsettling on the opening verse of "Lance Jr", where she confesses to masturbating to someone else's songs with the caveat, "Doesn't mean I like you, man/It just helps me get to sleep/ And it's cheaper than Temazepam." At first she seems completely unguarded, but then, another caveat. "Overrated films marked 'XXX/Come on, play it with some tenderness," she sings, inadvertently reflecting her ability to be straight-up without being crude.

Barnett's ability to find physical comfort in someone else's music is the sweetest detail you learn about her from *A Sea Of Split Peas*. She's a romantic in denial who'd rather wander around town looking for someone who doesn't live there any more than pick up the phone and risk speaking to them. On her travels, she picks up and loses parts of her personality according to the people she meets. "I replicate the people I admire," she admits on "Don't Apply Compression Gently". She's open about being a work in progress – but one confident enough to let people watch as she hones her original voice. First things first: cut the caveats. *A Sea Of Split Peas* is already better than most band's debut albums.

Q&A

Courtney Barnett

Who informs the way you tell stories in your songs? Darren Hanlon, Dan Kelly, Jonathan Richman, Lou Reed... I like a conversational story. "Don't just sing about a bird; sing about the colour of the bird, the song it's singing, the branch it's sitting on, how many worms it had for breakfast." I'm paraphrasing, but I think that was Leonard Cohen.

"Out Of The Woodwork" concerns limiting ambition to stave off failure. Have your own

ambitions changed with recent attention?

I think that's a natural defence mechanism, but then you also don't get anywhere (I'm projecting). So I started challenging myself to do something. My ambition stems from my will to achieve something to keep me from going insane.

It doesn't sound like you're in a hurry to make your debut album. Do you feel relaxed about it? I'm always in a hurry to do the next thing! I don't like to lay listless for long. Now we have a break from touring, I will be writing more and making the debut. Most pressure comes from myself. I'm a perfectionist and a procrastinator so everything takes 20 times longer than it should. There's no rush. I'll be writing songs for a long time.



THE BAND OF HEATHENS

Sunday Morning Record

BLUE ROSE

Regrouped and with added grit

8/10

Major personnel upheavals last year saw three founding members of Austin's Band Of Heathens leave the fold, forcing singer-guitarists Ed Juri and Gordy Quist to recruit fresh faces. The transition has been a smooth one, culminating in arguably the most satisfying of the group's five studio albums so far. As before, The Band remain a prominent touchstone (the barrelhouse chug of "Miss My Life", the wistful shuffle of "One More Trip"), but richer hues have been added to the overall picture. "Caroline Williams" sounds like the result of Robbie Robertson and Jimmy Webb arm-wrestling on bar stools, just one example of some beautifully atmospheric Americana.

TERRY STAUNTON



BEEDEEGEE

SUM/ONE

4AD

Gang Gang Dance man's solo whimsy *SUM/ONE* began life as the new Gang Gang Dance record, before Brian DeGraw (BDG, see?)

7/10

decided that these songs were gravitating towards a more personal space. The familiar new-age motifs and vivid pitch-bent synths remain, although Gang Gang Dance's more euphoric urges have been suppressed, the stirring drums replaced by compressed, twitchy beats. The result sounds not unlike DeGraw's labelmate Grimes. Hot Chip's Alexis Taylor, Douglas Armour and Lovefoxx from CSS have been employed to give voice to DeGraw's anxieties, although their performances tend towards the fey. It all adds up to an album that is pleasantly quirky rather than revealing.

SAM RICHARDS



BRENDAN BENSON

You Were Right

LOJINX

Another modest triumph by the underrated songwriter and Raconteur

8/10

Splendid though Brendan Benson's contributions to Jack White's Raconteurs have been, it would be regrettable if they occluded the records that he releases under his own name. The songs on *You Were Right* are orthodox but unusually clever, evocative of fellow wry strummers such as Nick Lowe and Old 97's' Rhett Miller. Benson's backing band, comprised of former members of The Posies, Ryan Adams' Cardinals and Ashley Monroe, are as capable on the breezy Cheap Trick-ish power pop of "As Of Tonight" as they are on the punky likes of the distinctly White Stripes-ish "Red, White & Blues".

ANDREW MUELLER



BLITZEN TRAPPER

VII

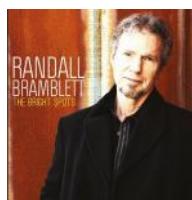
LOJINX

Well-crafted but monochromatic outing by veteran Portland indie band

6/10

Fronted by singer/multi-instrumentalist Eric Earley since the dawn of the century, Blitzen Trapper has hewed closely to its earthy brand of neoclassic roots rock, with The Band as its most obvious reference point. Seven albums in, the group's sound has become codified, Earley's staccato drawl and Canned Heat-style harmonica vamps bouncing atop the taut, springy grooves like an old Ford pickup on a rutted dirt road. Some delectable details pop up early on, like the swirling organ that shape-shifts "Thirsty Man", but the nearly unrelieved combination of Earley's twang and the Cripple Creek cadences grows wearisome by the LP's second half.

BUD SCOPPA



RANDALL BRAMBLETT

The Bright Spots

NEW WEST

A modern-day master of Southern roots music at his soulful best

9/10

Less celebrated than other Athens mainstays,

Bramblett brings a distinctive character and style to the indigenous blues and R'n'B that mark his musical turf. His ninth LP, juxtaposing experimental, loop-based Nashville recordings and live-off-the-floor performances with his own band, showcases Bramblett's eloquent lyrics, deeply soulful singing and mood-inducing instrumental work on both keys and sax. The sardonic highway blues "John The Baptist" recalls *Royal Scam*-era Steely Dan, the poetically soulful "Whatever That Is" moves with the grits-and-gravy strut of The Staple Singers while "Detox Bracelet" is strikingly original in conception and execution.

BUD SCOPPA

HOW TO BUY...

BRENDAN BENSON

Much more than a Raconteur



BRENDAN BENSON

Lapalco Star Time International, 2002

Benson's second album appeared six years after his debut, 1996's acclaimed *One Mississippi*. *Lapalco* was worth the wait: in that interim, Benson's songcraft had improved immensely, and his worldview grown yet more careworn. But he resumed his semi-partnership with former Jellyfish strummer Jason Falkner, conjuring such deadpan pop gems as "Tiny Spark" and "Folk Singer".

8/10



BRENDAN BENSON

The Alternative To Love V2, 2005

A splendid album that cemented Benson's growing reputation as

a law unto himself cult songwriter, at large somewhere in a realm cornered by Matthew Sweet, Todd Rundgren, Alex Chilton and Warren Zevon. The downbeat powerpop of the songs shrouded wry, waspish lyrics which triumphantly failed to answer the question posed in "Get It Together": "You love me and I love you/So what's the problem?"

9/10



THE RACONTEURS

Consolers Of The Lonely XL, 2008

Second album to date from a supergroup of sorts with Benson, Jack Lawrence and Patrick

Keeler of The Greenhornes, and Jack White. Benson co-wrote *Consolers Of The Lonely* with White, and the two brought out some of the best of each other, especially the rowdy rock'n'roll of "Salute Your Solution" and brass-blasted pop of "Many Shades Of Black".

9/10

ANDREW MUELLER



JC BROOKS & THE UPTOWN SOUND

Howl

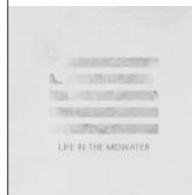
BLOODSHOT

Cinematic Chicago soul with rock overtones

8/10

Brooks' widescreen melodramatic soul roars with ambition, weaving old-school R&B and funk into a powerful tapestry of sound that recalls *Purple Rain*-era Prince, the insightful social commentary of Curtis Mayfield and the swaggering self-belief of Terence Trent D'Arby. This third album is again set against a tough urban soundscape, but with more discipline and focus than previously. Brooks rails against the powers that be on "Ordinary" ("I believe we can crush the old guard..."), laments the disposable nature of modern relationships on "Married For A Week" and evokes vintage gospel on "River". Articulate, emotional and primed for the dancefloor.

TERRY STAUNTON



AISHA BURNS

Life In The Midwater

WESTERN VINYL

String-sodden debut by impressive Austin singer-songwriter

7/10

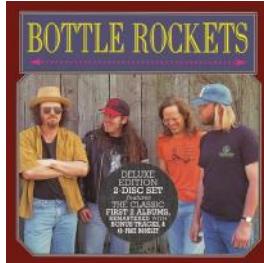
There's a wonderful, wallowing, navel-gazing mood running through this fine debut album from singer-songwriter Aisha Burns, who usually plays violin for a pair of Austin bands. There's plenty of strings on *Life In The Midwater* – Burns plays violin and viola as well as guitar – but the dominant instrument is her voice, which has a tremulous timbre that you can picture accompanying motion pictures about thwarted love on yearning folk like "Sold" or the drawling "Discerpo". Burns also turns out tunes with a pretty country feel such as "Gatekeeper", while the ominous drone of "Requiem" sees her at her most intriguing.

PETER WATTS

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



9/10

BOTTLE ROCKETS

Bottle Rockets/The Brooklyn Side [Deluxe Editions]

BLOODSHOT

Blue-collar blast: Roots-rock masterpieces, back in print...
The Jayhawks hewed closest to Gram Parsons' cosmic vision. Uncle Tupelo were visionaries themselves. But Festus, Missouri quartet Bottle Rockets not only held the moral, working-class compass of the '90s alt.country wave, they – with their ferocious Skynyrd-meets-Crazy Horse thunder – rocked harder than the whole lot. Later, the Drive-By Truckers took their blueprint and ran with it.

Nothing fancy: their amped-up country/rock is as meat-and-potatoes as you can get. But leader Brian Henneman's hypocrisy detector and fierce identification with the downtrodden – tracing a line from Guthrie to Haggard to Springsteen – is regularly set to stun. The debut is rawer, combining bluegrass, hard country/rock and bar-band fare with the scoot-scattting country sound that drove Waylon Jennings' more upbeat work.

It's not all memorable, but the pissed-off "Wave That Flag" and the abject horror of "Kerosene" in particular, make for withering commentary on society's failures. By the time of 1995's *Brooklyn Side*, the group was slicked-up a tick, courtesy of producer Eric Ambel, enough to unveil more range. Tears-in-your-beer balladry ("Queen Of The World"). Top-shelf rockabilly ("Idiot's Revenge," with that classic line: "She likes Dinosaur Jr but she can't tell you why"). Even ZZ Top boogie ("Radar Gun"). Henneman's songs are yet sharper, mixing humour and pathos. There's a rarely topped song about being poor ("1,000 Dollar Car") and stories of wasted lives ("Welfare Music"). Although populist rage and savage humour is never far beneath the surface, the group also reveals a surprising, almost power-poppy feel for ringing, sing-song hooks ("Gravity Fails", "I'll Be Comin' Around"). In short – a monumental album.

EXTRAS: 19 bonus tracks – acoustic demos, live cuts, pre-Rockets material – plus generous notes, 7/10 photos and testimonials, provide perspective amid an embarrassment of riches. *LUKE TORN*



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► It may be a traditionally quiet time for new releases, but the New Year promises to throw up a few intriguing things. *Divided & United* is an ambitious set produced by Randall

Poster (whose CV includes soundtracks for Martin Scorsese and Wes Anderson) that marks the 150th anniversary of the US Civil War by asking big names to cover 32 authentic songs from the era. Those involved include **Loretta Lynn, Ralph Stanley, Dolly Parton, Shovels & Rope, Pokey LaFarge, Carolina Chocolate Drops** and **Old Crow Medicine Show**. Ahead of a follow-up to 2011's terrific *Indestructible Machine*, rowdy Ohio

country-punk **Lydia Loveless** (left) issues five-song EP **"Boy Crazy"**. Her Bloodshot label describes it as "sun-washed, rebel-powered pop songs" with plenty of twang and a Tom Petty feel. Also upon us is **Songs From The Movie**, the orchestral debut of **Mary Chapin Carpenter**. Recorded at London's Air and arranged by Grammy-winning conductor Vince Mendoza, Carpenter offers up fresh versions of old faves like "Between Here And Gone" and "Come On Come On". There's also a show at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on Jan 24. Still on the live front, elusive US songwriter **Richard Buckner** nips over for a brief tour of UK and Ireland to support new album **Surrounded**. He plays London's St Pancras Old Church and the Brudenell Social Club in Leeds in mid-December. *ROB HUGHES*



CAVE
Threace
DRAG CITY

Now That's What I Call The Psychedelic '70s
Chicago's Cave might turn off the impatient with their instrumental, jam band-style workouts.

7/10

Still, their fourth album since they formed in 2006 is as tight as their jeans would once have been flared, its five sprawling tracks nonetheless deceptively focused. Though their ongoing debt to the Krautrock canon remains evident, their stoner brew is now heavily spiced with influences drawn from Afrobeat, funk and space-rock: after six minutes, "Silver Headband" swaps gentle Neu!-like repetition for some sweaty, chugging riffs, while "Arrow's Myth"'s wah-wah guitars, flute and Hammond organ suggest that they've been digging out the Donny Hathaway live recordings.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



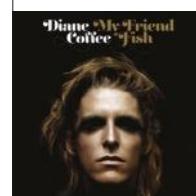
GARDLAND
Syndrome Syndrome
RVNG INTL

Aussie duo's mangled electronics
In a country ravaged by EDM, the avant-garde techno of Sydney duo

7/10

Gardland offers a beacon of hope to anyone toiling away in the shadows Down Under. Their debut *Syndrome Syndrome* is an old-fashioned affair reminiscent of Autechre's earliest fumblings, its various elements stitched together from hardware jams by industrious newcomers Alex Murray and Mark Smith, who are scrabbling around for a coherent style. At times their desire to wrongfoot the listener can seem deliberately perverse, but when they properly collapse down a wormhole, as they do on second-half highlights "Magicville" and "Success In Circuit", the results are terrifically psychedelic.

PIERS MARTIN



DIANE COFFEE
My Friend Fish
WESTERN VINYL

(Male) child actor reinvented as a one-man vintage hit machine

7/10

Diane Coffee is a curious character; a past life doing voices for cartoons like *The Lion King*; a day job as drummer of Foxygen; luminous cheekbones... and a girl's name. The contrivance seems, well, contrived until you hear the music, apparently recorded in two weeks in Coffee's New York apartment. The opening "Hymn" is a startling piece of nouveau-chamber pop production, all symphonic twists and choirs at strange angles. Cue brattish reinventions of Creedence ("Never Lonely"), Floyd ("Tale Of A Dead Dog") and Costello ("New Years"). It's a bit Lenny Kravitz at times, but the excellence and ear-popping sound see Coffee through.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



COLD CROWS DEAD I Fear A New World

RAYGUN

Introspective psych from South Coast wunderkind and Scottish rocker

Cold Crows Dead is the collaborative meeting of prolific Brighton songwriter Paul Steel and Murray Macleod, frontman of Aberdeen noise-poppers The Xcerts. While their name brings to mind pimple-smothered emo – song titles such as “Scarred And Thoughtless” and “Screaming At Shadows” don’t exactly help – their sound is closer to the expansive psychedelia of The Flaming Lips and Mercury Rev, albeit with occasional bursts of Beach Boys, Beatles and Biffy Clyro-esque rock. You can’t help but admire their ambition, though their determination to cover all musical bases makes for a somewhat muddled first effort.

FIONA STURGES

6/10

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FIONA STURGES

DALE COOPER QUARTET & THE DICTAPHONES

Quatorze Pièces De Menace

DENOVALI

French post-rock refugees explore their jazzy dark side

8/10

Just as their name is perfect for their unsettling Lynchian sound, so the DC4tet’s third album’s title sums up its contents accurately: 14 tracks of solemn, film noir jazz. Admittedly, were they not frequently so threatening, lengthy excursions like the funereal “La Ventree Rat De Cave” – evocative of a monochrome, barren landscape – or the torch song theatrics of “Céladon Bafre” might seem like pastiches. But, like a stake through its heart, there’s credible sincerity throughout, especially on the twenty-minute opener, “Brosme En Dos-vert”, which sounds like a battle between Caspar Brötzmann and his father, Peter.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



SAMANTHA CRAIN Kid Face

FULL TIME HOBBY

Gorgeous third album from the country-folk Okie

First Aid Kit fans may already know Samantha

Crain as the charmingly off-centre support act on the Swedish duo’s recent dates. *Kid Face*, her first full European release, should win Crain, born and raised in Shawnee, Oklahoma, a whole new slew of admirers. The minimal arrangements – mostly acoustic guitar, fiddle and piano – serve to place the bewitching allure of her voice front and centre. With its upward tilts and tremulous vowels, it’s not unlike a more rustic Regina Spektor. Though it’s the spectre of the late Jason Molina, whom Crain cites as her biggest inspiration, that infuses the dusky beauty of “For The Miner”.

ROB HUGHES

8/10



CULTS Static

COLUMBIA

The heartbreak is real on NYC duo’s second

Cults surfaced with 2010’s “Go Outside”, a hybrid of ‘60s girl group moves and modish electro-pop that propelled this Manhattan couple to blog fame. In the lead-up to *Static*, the pair – multi-instrumentalist Brian Oblivion and singer/lyricist Madeline Follin – separated, promising an extra pinch of bitter in their bittersweet elegies. *Static*’s production, courtesy of Vampire Weekend collaborator Shane Stoneback and Gnarls Barkley engineer Ben Allen, is bright and punchy, which has the unintended effect of sabotaging softer moments. The swooning “Always Forever” stands out, though, and there’s raw sorrow in even the breeziest cuts: “We both know what it’s like to be lonely,” coos Follin on “I Can Hardly Make You Mine”.

LOUIS PATTISON

6/10

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LOUIS PATTISON



DIRECTORSOUND Other Rivers

DIRECTORSOUND

Sweetly sighed songs, by the waterside

Dorset-born Nick Palmer has been flying quietly, under the radar, as Directorsound for a good

decade or so now. Discovered by The Pastels, whose Geographic imprint released his first album, *Redemptive Strikes*, back in 2003, Palmer’s music is playful and romantic, full of spindly, Django-esque guitars, arrangements from the Pascal Comelade school of toy instrumentation, and charming sweeps of melody that are pure Morricone. Huffing accordion shadows the likes of “The Lark Night Train”, sketching out melancholy phrases while padding drums underscore nylon-string guitar, sending chordal inversions into the air like beaming satellites. Can’t wait for the forthcoming, ‘darker’ sequel.

JONDALE

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DALE EARNHARDT JR JR The Speed Of Things

WARNERS

Second album by Detroit’s weirdo pop duo

Dale Earnhardt Jr Jr are like the protagonist in the joke about the definition of a gentleman: he can play the accordion, but doesn’t. They have everything necessary to become irritating purveyors of bumptious novelty pop, but won’t. Instead, the melodies on *The Speed Of Things* soak in languid melancholy, as reminiscent of Okkervil River as Hot Chip. The single, “If You Didn’t See Me (Then You Weren’t On The Dancefloor)” feels deliberately hobbled at just a few beats-per-minute short of disco anthem status. Instead, it is sumptuous, sad and beautiful, as is the rest of this album.

ANDREW MUELLER

7/10



DEAD FLOWERS Midnight At The Wheel Club

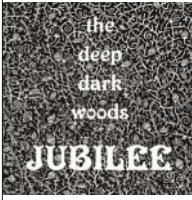
HEE HAW

Classic American song; from London via Montreal

7/10

Ian Williams sings in the gruff, whisky-soaked tradition of Cash, Waits, Hazlewood and Kristofferson. His band’s debut album unveils a real songwriting talent, effortlessly excavating a specifically male kind of morbid confessional over country-folk melodies so classic they could be covers. Based loosely around a vision of America and Canada as one big dying seaside town, the cosmic melancholia of “Pan”, “Make It Bright” and “Supernova” explore mid-life pain, loss and regret with redemptive humour and defiance. Imagine Mark Lanegan singing the works of John Grant and you’re just about ready to be heartbroken.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



THE DEEP DARK WOODS Jubilee

SUGAR HILL

Canadian folkies’ fifth album, produced by Jonathan Wilson

6/10

Ryan Boldt’s Canadian five-piece have re-emerged from the north with their fifth album and the band now supplemented by additional guitar player Clayton Linthicum. It’s Linthicum who gives the album some of its most memorable moments, adding bracing thrusts of electric guitar to the lilting folk of “18th Of December” and further enlivening the jaunty “Red Red Rose”. The other key component is the album’s producer Jonathan Wilson, who helps bring a ‘70s vibe to fine tunes such as the elegant sweep of “Gonna Have A Jubilee” and the whimsical “East St Louis”, while the rollicking melancholy of “Bourbon Street” certainly does its title justice.

PETER WATTS



ELSIMORE Push/Pull

PARASOL

Sumptuous but airless art-rock from the Midwest

Ryan Groff, the frontman of this virtuosic quartet from the musical oasis of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, boasts a powerful voice and enunciates his intricately detailed lyrics as precisely as the lead in a Broadway musical. Producer/engineer Beau Sorenson has polished the tracks to a patent-leather sheen. Both do their jobs skillfully and with obsessive attention to detail, achieving precisely what they set out to do: fashioning an album’s worth of lavish set pieces. And yet the effect of this expertly executed formal exercise is suffocating, as if the sounds and emotions contained therein were vacuum-sealed. Rarely is a misstep this impressive to behold – I’ll give them that much.

BUD SCOPPA

6/10



New Albums



FORGOTTEN BIRDS

Sahara

KARAOKE KALK

Charming, nostalgic set of indie-folk from Germany

7/10

Rocko Schamoni's Baltic Sea cabin over a week, Hamburg duo Forgotten Birds' debut is an endearing, sepia-tinted collection, its summery innocence mindful of autumn to come. Its highlight is the sweet "Brooklyn Bridge", boasting the same wilful naïvety as The Pastels covering Mazzy Star, while "Fools Rush In" adds woozy guitars for a little acoustic dreampop. The Whitest Boy Alive's Marcin Öz is also on hand to fill out tunes like the lovely "Rose Of Trallei" with simple basslines, but it's Jan Gazarra and Judy Willms' honest, deceptively childlike harmonies that win the day.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

THE GENTLE GOOD

Y Bardd Anfarwol

BUBBLEWRAP

Mellifluous marriage of Welsh and Chinese folk styles

Cardiff-based Gareth Bonello has previously

released two airy, pastoral folk albums under his Gentle Good alias, with bilingual lyrics that underscore the natural musicality of the Welsh language. But this more ambitious project was born during Bonello's six-week musical residency in Chengdu in southwest China in late 2011. Partly recorded with local musicians, several tracks combine Welsh-language lyrics and finger-picking guitars with zither-like stringed instruments and exotic woodwind. "Yr Wylan Fry" sounds like Ennio Morricone jamming with Belle And Sebastian, while "Edau Gwin" may just be the first ever Chinese bluegrass tune. Lovely stuff, if a little sedate.

STEPHEN DALTON

6/10



GESAFFELSTEIN

Aleph

PARLOPHONE MUSIC

First from new don of dark techno

Mike Lévy was catapulted into the spotlight earlier this year via two tracks on Kanye West's *Yeezus*, "Black Skinhead" included. That single's glowering insistence is typical of his work as Gesaffelstein, but the French producer's debut LP proves that it doesn't define the limits of his interests or talent. So, alongside the thrillingly brutal, mechanico-disco strut of "Hate Or Glory" and the furiously jacking techno anthem for the saucer-eyed 6am masses that is "Duel", sit "Aleph" and "Piece Of Future" – both neon-lit, retro-futurist panoramas with an air of deep melancholy more akin to Lévy's compatriot, College. And if Gesaffelstein is simply showing off his broadmindedness with cabaret-styled closer "Perfection", it's hard to begrudge him.

7/10



SHARON O'CONNELL

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GIGGS

When Will It Stop

XL

Lighter – by modicum – third from South London rap kingpin

The Peckham inhabited by the 32-year-old Nathaniel Thompson is not one that Del Boy would recognise. As Giggs, Thompson is as close to the UK gets to a gangsta rap star, a former convict whose slow, menacing rhymes exploring an urban hell of hard-faced hoodlums and merciless gangland warfare. His second long-player for XL isn't upbeat exactly – unlike Dizzee Rascal, you couldn't see him lining up a Robbie Williams cameo. But the excellent, "(Is It Gangsta) Yes Yes Yes", produced by Mark Ronson, sets his insistent monotone against a bright blare of horns and swirling soul keys, while "Play It Loud" finds him pondering redemption, however unlikely that seems.

LOUIS PATTISON

7/10



GOAT

Live Ballroom Ritual

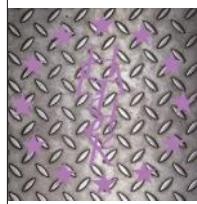
ROCKET

Swedish psych collective caught live in London

As releases by the likes of Tame Impala, Temples and Hookworms have conspired to suggest, psychedelia is very much back in vogue. The more interesting new groups, though, have found ways to advance the genre beyond mere '60s flashback. Groups such as Goat, whose melding of incense-scented exotica, Afrobeat and *Wicker Man* folk – not to mention their stagewear, all ceremonial masks and kaftans – suggests an intrepid reading of the form. This crisply recorded live set from Camden's Electric Ballroom spins out 2012's *World Music* in straightforward fashion, although this year's single "Stonegoat" – Lep Zep mysticism delivered with Ramones pacing – suggests much good to come.

LOUIS PATTISON

7/10



HEATSICK

Re-Engineering

PAN

Berlin-based Brit producer's hyperreal hoedown

One of the prime movers in the lo-fi house boom, Heatsick's Steven Warwick was in danger of being typecast as "that funny bloke with the Casio keyboard". Acutely self-aware, he's conceived his second album *Re-Engineering* as a "cybernetic poem", which at least explains why he's saturated his dubbed-out rhythms with ambiguous internet chatter in the vein of James Ferraro or Oneohtrix Point Never. This he does with humour, though, smearing jazz saxophone over the glossy, queer funk of "Mimosas" and "Speculative"'s cappuccino groove. For a record that often shifts all over the place – someone busks "Wonderwall" on "U1" – it's an absorbing listen.

PIERS MARTIN

8/10



CLARA HILL

Walk The Distance

TAPETE

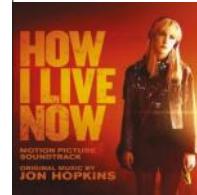
Former Jazzanova protégée finally finds her own voice

Once known as a member of Berlin's independent Sonar Kollektiv, for

whom she turned in three albums of smooth downtempo grooves, Hill returns after six years away in an almost unrecognisable guise as experimental indietronica folkster. Letting her love of Linda Perhacs and Joni Mitchell blend with some more esoteric tastes – Schneider TM is among the guests here – she coasts confidently between the psychedelia of "Dawn Of A New Day", the giddy, lo-fi indie of "Lost Winter" and "Heading Out"'s more baroque pop. "Glacial Moraine", meanwhile, wouldn't sound out of place on Goldfrapp's latest. A convincing, impressive reinvention.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

8/10



JON HOPKINS

How I Live Now OST

JUST MUSIC

Apocalypse Soon?

Bat For Lashes guests

One of 2013's most striking electronic releases was Jon Hopkins' Mercury Music

Prize-nominated *Immunity*, a record whose sense of WTF? wonderment was equalled only by its savage beauty. Now comes his score for Kevin McDonald's survivalist tale of an American teenage girl on holiday in the English countryside when WWIII breaks out. Hopkins' job is to serve the story, but any soundtrack LP must stand on its own merits and his – a mix of pastoral piano pieces and electronic interludes that throb and drone with unspeakable menace – certainly does that. Amanda Palmer's opener "Do It With A Rockstar" strikes an unwelcome cod-grunge note, but presumably, it makes sense in narrative context.

SHARON O'CONNELL

6/10



JIMMER

The Would-Be Plans

CHIEF INJUSTICE

One-time Rave-Ups frontman belatedly begins his second act

Twenty-three years after walking away from

showbiz, Jimmer Podrasky, leader of seminal Americana band The Rave-Ups – immortalised in John Hughes' *Sixteen Candles* and *Pretty In Pink* – makes a surefooted return. *The Would-Be Plans* feels as familiar as an old pair of Levi 501s, as Podrasky wraps his lived-in, blue-collar voice around plain-spoken songs like the empty-bed lament "The Far Left Side Of You" and the rueful "Satellite", on which he claims "there isn't a bongload big enough" to ease his pain. The musicians amplify the unforced urgency of his songs with the nonchalant authority of Dylan's mid-'60s pickup bands, enriching the texture of this engaging record.

8/10



KOSHEEN

Solitude

KOSHEEN

Impressive display of stylistic range from the Bristol electro-soul veterans

7/10

Now releasing music on their own label after several years of legal wrangles and long silences, platinum-selling Bristol dance-pop trio Kosheen's fifth album is a confident and eclectic showcase of styles, from the lean electro-soul belter "Save Your Tears" to the upmarket rave-pop whoosh of "Harder They Fall". Framed by polished nods to dubstep and drum'n'bass, only the trip-hop title track jars a little, a mournful Portishead pastiche with singer Sian Evans approximating Beth Gibbons' vocal mannerisms to an almost uncanny degree. This may be an in-joke between fellow Bristolians, but still a little too on the nose.

STEPHEN DALTON

KWES

Ilp

WARP

James Blake-meets-Burial from latest London electro kid Lewisham's Kwesi Sey has worked with Damon Albarn, Bobby Womack

6/10

and The xx before releasing his debut. And it's a thoroughly modern product, stretching his undemonstrative Cockney vocals over liquid Mogadon beats and freewheeling melodies that defy easy categorisation. But despite the production excellence it's an oddly distancing listen, an essay on tasteful urban angst. The whiny "Broke" ("I'm tired and I'm broke"), for example, is a salient reminder that resigned apathy leaves one feeling apathetic and resigned. Still, there are amazing drum sounds, "Bashful" has a spring in its step, and, on the instrumental "Hives", evidence that Kwes could go on to be a splendid soundtrack composer.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



THE LAST

Danger

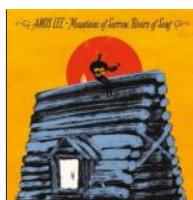
END SOUNDS

LA stalwarts merge powerpop and hardcore on first LP in 17 years

8/10

On the minute-and-a-half opener "I Know", danger bursts out of the gate with a bass rumble and an adrenalin blast of coruscating noise worthy of the Sunset Strip in its punk heyday, before careening into a trademark cool, dark, harmony-pop bridge. So it goes with this perennially underrated outfit, brothers Joe and Mike Nolte joining with the Descendents' vibrant rhythm section, Karl Alvarez and Bill Stevenson. Flitting from pure aggression to dark, deft, melodically rich pop hooks, usually within the same song (especially on the thumping "Look Again"), Joe Nolte's anthemry is as filled with alienation and misfit romanticism as ever.

LUKE TORN



AMOS LEE

Mountains Of Sorrow, Rivers Of Song

BLUE NOTE

US country-soulster lacks edge

6/10

Big news in the States, the Philadelphia singer-songwriter deals in understated, impeccably played country-soul which teeters on the edge of anodyne. Recorded in Nashville with a cast including Alison Krauss, Patty Griffin and Jerry Douglas, his fifth album finds Lee channelling everyone from prime-time Levon Helm ("The Man Who Wants You") to "Hercules"-era Aaron Neville ("Loretta"). Ballads like "Chill In The Air" and "Burden" have a stately gait, but Lee is more engaging when he turns playful huckster ("Scamps") or explores experimental textures on "Indonesia" and the dark, distorted blues stomp of "High Water".

GRAEME THOMSON



MAGIK MARKERS

Surrender To The Fantasy

DRAG CITY

Staggering return from US underground free-rock dream-team

8/10

It's been a number of years

since the last Magik Markers album, and in that time, not much has changed, which is no bad thing. They've sharpened the focus a little, but thankfully not enough to limit the freedoms of their abstruse song forms. *Surrender To The Fantasy* pivots around "Mirrorless", a beautiful, sky-bound Velvets non-ballad, with Elisa Ambroglio's voice at its most tender, but there's also plenty of wildness here, like Ambroglio's furious free guitar on "WT". They're the true inheritors of the psychic disconnect and crude abstraction that marks out those early Royal Trux albums: less Stones, more stoned.

JON DALE

REVELATIONS

From the Mercurys to the movies: Jon Hopkins' brilliant year



► A prolific man, as well as a modest one, Jon Hopkins hasn't only written the soundtrack for *How I Live Now* this year. In the summer, he turned in the crunchy *Immunity*, a record of electronica classicism and stirring melody. It was nominated for the Mercury Music Prize, but to hear his description of it, you'd think it had all been a happy accident.

"I approached it without really having any idea what kind of record I was going to write," says Jon. "It turned out much more melancholy than I was expecting - in my head I was making a party record, then it kind of turned out all apocalyptic."

"This record has connected with people in a way that I haven't experienced with any of my previous ones so it certainly feels like some kind of landmark."

A feature of Jon's year has been collaborative recordings with vocalists like Natasha Khan and Purity Ring. Is this something he could see himself pursuing more in the future?

"I would love to have vocals from Thom Yorke or Jónsi to work with," Jon says wryly. "I can't imagine they've got much on..."

JOHN ROBINSON



MIA

Matangi

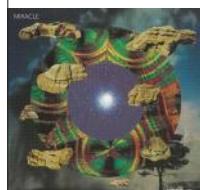
NEET/VIRGIN EMI

Culture-clash controversy queen raises middle finger to the world

9/10

A blazing Molotov cocktail of globalised beats, angry sexy raps and military-industrial conspiracy theories, *Matangi* "Maya" Arulpragasm's long-delayed fourth LP comes with a dramatic backstory that includes her Superbowl lawsuit, a bitter custody battle with her billionaire ex and a search for the Hindu goddess whose name she shares. *Matangi* is also her most exhilarating and multi-faceted album, from the Drake-dissing reincarnation anthem "YALA" to the bank-bashing battle cry "Bring The Noise" to the vocal-looping wordplay experiment "aTENTION". A post-millennial cousin of anarcho-feminist icon Emma Goldman, MIA wants a revolution she can dance to.

STEPHEN DALTON



MIRACLE

Mercury

PLANET MU

Doom metal meets John Carpenter meets... Erasure?

There are more than enough moody synthpop duos to go round, but *Miracle*'s impressive background in heavy music - Mancunian Daniel O'Sullivan with doom-rockers Guapo and Ulver, Steve Moore with Pennsylvanian slasher-disco duo Zombi - ensures that they glower more convincingly than, say, Hurts. *Mercury* is imposing, portentous and atmospheric, but the duo never hide behind noise or abstraction. These are out-and-out pop songs with big, bombastic choruses here, although a faint undercurrent of menace ensures that when O'Sullivan sings about love it sounds like obsession, heartbreak like revenge.

SAM RICHARDS



THE MONKS KITCHEN

Music From The Monks Kitchen

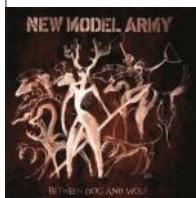
WONDERFULSOUND

Excellent, astute, rapturous folk-rock from London hermits

8/10

Recorded in a loft in North London over five years – and with title paying homage to The Band – this fine, strange album offers a mix of styles filtered through sepia, muted, filter. It opens with the spooky shanty “On A Dark Black Ocean” and while everything that follows has a folky vibe, there are great changes of pace, from the billowing John Faheyisms of “Whirlwind” to the Byrds flourishes of “I Wanna Go” and the Phosphorescent-channelling choral soundscape “O’Melancholy”. Interspersed are numerous instrumentals, but the stand out song is “Don’t Lie Awake”, which really does sound like a lost Bob Dylan song from 1964.

PETER WATTS



NEW MODEL ARMY

Between Dog And Wolf

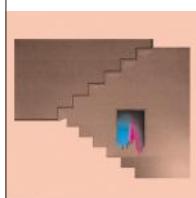
ATTACK ATTACK

Yorkshire agit-punks rise above past limitations

7/10

Closing in on their 30th anniversary, the veteran Bradford crusty-punks led by Justin “Slade The Leveller” Sullivan are enjoying a surprise commercial and critical hit with this 12th album, reinventing their sound following personal tragedies and band reshuffles. Sonically adventurous tracks like “I Need More Time” replace pub-rock bombast with orchestral brass, jazzy arrangements and broody electronica, while midlife rumination “Lean Back” brings Springsteen-ish reflection to the Yorkshire Dales. Old weaknesses remain, with Sullivan’s declamatory lyrics often mistaking grandiosity for gravitas, but *Between Dog And Wolf* is mostly an impressive beast.

STEPHEN DALTON



NO JOY

Wait To Pleasure

MEXICAN SUMMER

Much joy, actually, from Canadian shoegaze girls Formed in Montreal in 2009 by Jasamine White-Gluz and Laura Lloyd, this power trio makes

7/10

no attempt whatsoever to hide their stylistic sonic cathedral. Album opener “E” has everything a Lush fan could want: rumbling rhythms, walls of fuzz-reverb guitars, a pretty and entirely incoherent girl’s voice drowning in the electric ether, a final descent into chaotic implosion. The gnarly bass perhaps marks them out as secret Birthday Party fans, even as wonderfully titled tracks like “Slug Night” and “Ignored Pets” run through alternative guitar styles of the ‘80s and ‘90s, from Robert Smith, Robin Guthrie and William Reid through to Sonic Boom and Kevin Shields.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



ONE UNIQUE SIGNAL

Aether

GENEPOOL

Sludgy post-rock abetted by Sonic Boom

The second from London post-rockers One Unique Signal is the dense and

torrid *Aether*, which is pock-marked by crater-like moments of relative calm amid a sea of noise. The raging repetitions of “Luna Attractions” and “One Three Five” are fine examples of the band’s thick, heavy sound, which takes on pagan undertones when unsettling, insistent chants are added to the mix on “A Beginning” and “Aether”. “Amplitude” is lighter, with spoken vocals evoking some of The Mekons’ odder offerings, while the spacerock wooziness of “Celebration And Absence” might well reflect the influence of Sonic Boom, who mastered the album.

PETER WATTS

6/10



SANO

Sano

CÓMEME

Colombian upstart’s deranged disco

Sano’s Sebastian Hoyos earned his spurs running the illegal Perro Negro raves in his hometown

6/10

of Medellin, Colombia, one of the more notorious cities on the planet, so it stands to reason that his cavalier debut is often sleazier than a politician’s handshake. Like his Cómeme labelmates, Hoyos deals in a kind of gonzo Latino disco that pillages from new wave, electronic body music and techno to forge an idiosyncratic mutant salsa which either works brilliantly (as on the delirious “Cotoneate” and “Matasanos”) or tends to fall flat (“Boquerón” and “Necrophilic Love” are tedious). More often than not, though, his wildly haphazard approach pays off.

PIERS MARTIN



PUSHA T

My Name Is My Name

GOOD MUSIC/DEF JAM

Hard-boiled muse of hip-hop’s biggest producers

8/10

Clipse’s Pusha T is yet to gain promotion to rap’s A-League, but there’s a reason why Kanye and Pharrell save their toughest beats for him. His cold, flinty delivery instantly punctures hip-hop’s glamorous facade; he never seems to be enjoying his Maybachs and Mercedes, just grimly totting them up. This album’s best moments shrewdly recall the stark, booming sound of Clipse’s 2006 coke-rap masterpiece *Hell Hath No Fury*, with lyrics addressing the dilemma of what a man in his mid-thirties should rap about when he’s not yet a superstar but no longer a hustler. The terse, compelling hip-hop noir of “SNITCH” and “Nosetalgia” provide the answer.

SAM RICHARDS



MATHEW SAWYER

Sleep Dreamt A Brother

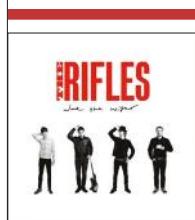
FIRE

Visual artist paints subtle sonic collages of pastoral alt.folk

7/10

A successful painter in his other life, Sawyer brings an unobtrusively arty sensibility to these fragile experimental folk songs, which inhabit a haunted parallel England where spooky sound effects meet the doleful beauty of Syd Barrett, Kevin Ayers and Robert Wyatt. Inspired by the deaths of several friends just as he became a father, Sawyer’s first LP under his own name is a sombre, rich affair, couching chamber-pop and drowsy piano loops in a light bedding of birdsong, animal noises and clunking footsteps. Though “Death Is Like A Dream We’ll Have” feels incongruously jaunty, the quietly devastating spoken-word elegy “Another World” stays with you longer.

STEPHEN DALTON



THE RIFLES

None The Wiser

COOKING VINYL

Essex boys return with their original lineup for more pop jollies

7/10

Four albums down the line, Chingford’s spiky guitar poppers continue to crackle with youthful vigour, if only intermittently breaking fresh ground along the way. The mod/powerpop template they’ve long adhered to serves them well, but there’s now an even leaner growl to the opening “Minute Mile” with its bow to the jerky art-punk of *Go* 2-era XTC, while the kneckerchief bounce of “All I Need” finds them hitching a ride on Ronnie Lane’s folk-rock caravan. It’s all delivered with gusto and buckets of charm, enough for listeners to maybe forgive punning titles such as “Shoot From The Lip” and “Catch Her In The Rye”.

TERRY STAUNTON



ANOUSHKA SHANKAR

Traces Of You

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON

Ravi Shankar’s girl pays tribute by breaking free...

8/10

Recorded as her father was dying and dedicated to his memory, paradoxically *Traces...* finds the sitar maestro’s favoured pupil breaking free of her classical upbringing on her most adventurous album to date. Nowhere is this more evident than on three lyrical tracks featuring half-sister Norah Jones, whose sultry vocals create a gorgeous counterpoint to the haunting sitar melodies. A thrilling sitar-guitar duet with producer Nitin Sawhney on “River Pulse” is another highlight, but Shankar is equally impressive on the solo sitar piece “In Jyoti’s Name”, inspired by the infamous 2012 Delhi gang-rape which led her to speak out about her own childhood sexual abuse by a family friend.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



CIAN NUGENT & THE COSMOS

Born With The Caul

NO QUARTER

Introducing, from Dublin, a new star of psychedelic folk-rock...
By John Mulvey



8/10

he wrote of "Marquee Moon" itself, "is practically unlike anything I've ever heard before... The band build on some weird Eastern modal scales not unlike those used in the extended improvised break of Fairport Convention's 'A Sailor's Life' on *Unhalfbricking*. The guitar solo – either Lloyd or Verlaine – even bears exactly the same tone as Richard Thompson's."

It was a trick crucial to the billowing romance of *Marquee Moon*, but one forgotten as the more pervasive idea of Television as an urban band – grimy, streetwise, intellectually and culturally transgressive – became punk orthodoxy.

This year, however, the possibilities of linking folk traditions with Verlaine and Lloyd's flamethrowing have felt very much alive. A bunch of predominantly American guitarists like William Tyler and Steve Gunn, part of the underground scene that once had Jack Rose as its fulcrum, have started moving away from devout Takoma School studies towards a fuller

electric band format. Most notably, Chris Forsyth's recent *Solar Motel* proudly betrayed the fact that the Philadelphia guitarist had once taken lessons with Richard Lloyd himself. To this micro-genre we can happily add Cian Nugent, a 24-year-old from Dublin. Nugent surfaced in 2011 with *Doubles*, a mostly solo acoustic album on VHF, which displayed uncommon virtuosity but not, perhaps, quite enough individuality to raise him above the serried ranks of John Fahey acolytes. This year, though, Nugent has significantly stepped up: first in an elevated jamming band, Desert Heat, also featuring Steve Gunn (their debut album on MIE Music, *Cat Mask At Huggie Temple*, is worth a listen, as is their live rip through the VU's "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'" live at www.nyctaper.com). Now, following a seven-inch on Matador earlier in 2013, Nugent has made an LP with a group of fellow Irish musicians, christened The Cosmos, that reconfigures his music into expansive psychedelic folk-rock.

Not initially, mind. *Born With The Caul* begins with Nugent still alone, playing a languid acoustic blues called "Grass Above My Head" and waiting for his bandmates to discreetly slip, one by one, into the mix behind him. After about four minutes the pace picks up into a nimble rag, with Ailbhe Nic Oireachtaigh's fiddle and Bill Blackmore's woozy, good-time trumpet leading the brief carousing.

Good stuff, but it's the album's two other songs that really showcase Nugent taking flight. "Double Horse" starts, again, with a pensive solo, but soon

switches up into candlelit psych-raga, with the guitarist affecting an elaborate, incantatory style reminiscent of Six Organs Of Admittance. As he adds faintly Celtic flourishes over the organ and viola drones, "Double Horse" increasingly resembles a cross between "Venus In Furs" and The Waterboys until, 10 minutes in, Nugent and Nic Oireachtaigh's surging epiphanies move the whole production into the zone of "A Sailor's Life".

"Double Horse" stretches for nearly 17 minutes, but is trumped by the rolling electric "The Houses Of Parliament", clocking in six-and-a-half minutes longer and moving with such invention and fluency that it seems much shorter. Nic Oireachtaigh's work here has something of the elegiac tone of Warren Ellis, while David Lacey's busy jazz drumming marks the piece out as closest to what Nugent achieved alongside Gunn and John Truscinski in Desert Heat. There are strong allusions to Television, too, and to another Television antecedent that rather undermined their punk credibility, the Grateful Dead. And amid all the instrumental revelations, there is a pointer as to where Cian Nugent's bright quest might take him next: 10 minutes in, he hollows out a space in the jam to sing, quietly but affectingly, for what turns out to be less than a minute. Among his multifarious projects for 2014, it transpires, is a band called Cryboys; "My first song band where I'm writing songs and singing," he says. "Which is a buzz."

Q&A

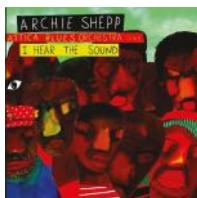
Cian Nugent



Can you tell us a bit about The Cosmos? David and Ailbhe played on my previous record, but on this new one Ailbhe is sharing leads with me, which is great, as she's a wicked player. Conor learned the whole set the day of his first gig with us, which was opening for the Magic Band. Just before we went on, Rockette Morton sat down next to us and said, "My name's Rockette, how you doing?" An intimidating start.

Could you explain the title? My friend Grace's Auntie Ellen runs this Mythology Summer School on Clare Island, and Grace told me the story of the mythological character of Cian, who was born with the caul. I didn't know what it meant, so had a look on Google Images and was disgusted, but really liked the folklore around it. Some babies are born with a membrane around their head, it's quite rare, and traditionally it was considered a sign of good luck, that the baby was destined to greatness. People would keep the membrane and give it to sailors as a talisman to keep them safe at sea. One day I asked my mother, had she heard of this tradition and she calmly said, "Oh yeah, you were born with the caul. I kept it for a while but it's been lost somewhere along the way."

New Albums



ARCHIE SHEPP ATTICA BLUES ORCHESTRA

I Hear The Sound

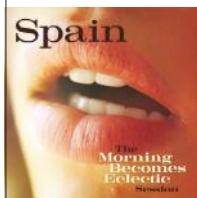
ARCHIEBALL

Live tribute to his 1972 freak-funk LP

7/10

Saxophonist Shepp might be one of the saxophone's most militant voices, but he's in a surprisingly wistful mood on this Kickstarter-funded release. It records a concert celebrating the 40th anniversary of the release of *Attica Blues*, his incendiary tribute to the infamous New York State prison uprising in 1971. Where that LP fizzed and crackled with righteous anger, this live document is a more mellow, reflective and – dare one say it – more gentrified affair. Such musically deliberation ill suits the funk-fried grooves, but the woozy, bluesy melancholy is a perfect fit for the many ballads, where Shepp's Franco-American band have room to show off.

JOHN LEWIS



SPAIN

The Morning Becomes Eclectic Session

GLITTERHOUSE

Radio session from cultish Cali crew

7/10

For those adrift on the solipsistic seas of mid-'90s slowcore, *The Blue Moods Of Spain* was a siren call. It was the debut from Spain who, along with Low and fellow Californians Red House Painters and Idaho, offered a refuge from post-grunge ubiquity, although Spain's drawing on jazz, country, gospel and soul set them apart. A 2003 compilation signalled the end, but in 2007 founder Josh Haden recruited all-new members and last year they released an LP of fresh material. This seven-song set – recorded live for an LA radio station – has all the nuanced intimacy and hushed warmth you'd expect of classic Spain cuts, with the darkly twanging "Untitled #1" a standout.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MATTHEW SWEET & SUSANNA HOFFS

Under The Covers Volume 3

FLOATING WORLD

6/10

The two-person human jukebox reach the '80s

Sweet and Hoffs' previous covers albums mined the '60s and '70s. Their third reaches the era in which they made their own names – Sweet as a cultishly regarded singer-songwriter, and Hoffs with The Bangles. Their selections here are a predictable roster of left-field rock doused with Anglophilic. Some selections work well – Hoffs' syrupy trill perfectly suits their versions of Elvis Costello's "Girls Talk" and Roxy Music's "More Than This" surprisingly well, but the arrangements lack the muscle to stand up to the likes of Tom Petty's "Free Falling" and REM's "Sitting Still".

ANDREW MUELLER



SUSANNA AND ENSEMBLE NEON

The Forester

SUSANNA SONATA

Short (34 mins), but exquisitely sweet

8/10

She's probably best known for two albums of (often startling rock) covers – one as The Magical Orchestra and one solo – but singer, pianist and composer Susanna Wallumrød has also recorded with a baroque harpist and is an Oslo Jazz Festival regular. Now, just 18 months after *Wild Dog*, she returns with some of Norway's Ensemble Neon for an elegant but emotionally resonant blend of frost-bitten folk, Scandi-jazz and contemporary chamber music. Recorded live in a single day, these five tracks explore pastoral/eco themes and reference Sandy Denny, Talk Talk, Grieg and Kate Bush's *Aerial*, with Wallumrød's voice – at its most devastating on "Lonely Heart" – their pure, pellucid focus.

SHARON O'CONNELL



TIGRAN

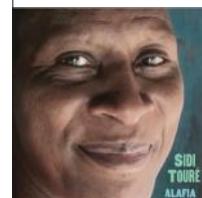
Shadow Theater

VERVE

Ambitious Armenian-American pianist 2011's breakthrough LP, *A Fable*, saw this Los Angeles-based Armenian put an oriental twist to

the solo piano meditations of Keith Jarrett and Erik Satie. This big-budget follow-up album gives Tigran Hamasyan the opportunity to try out a variety of settings, and his piano and wordless vocals are often surrounded by grinding jazz-rock laced with some subtle nods to thrash metal. But the best moments move in weirder directions. An Armenian folksong ("Drip") is transformed into a piece of dubstep, another ("Pagan Lullaby") recalls Sigur Rós, while "Holy" is a delicious version of an Eastern Orthodox hymn. A calling card for a major talent.

JOHN LEWIS



SIDI TOURÉ

Alafia

THRILL JOCKEY

More acoustic magic from Mali's rich source After a solitary album released on a tiny specialist label in 1996, we didn't hear from

Sidi Touré again until 2011, when a belated follow-up appeared on Thrill Jockey. His third album for the Chicago-based label in as many years was recorded in exile as his hometown was in the grip of Islamist extremists – and, like many recent Malian releases, the songs are coloured by the turbulence. Sidi broadly draws on the same desert blues traditions as Ali Farka Touré, but there are subtle differences here, too, with the lighter folk rhythms of tracks such as "L'eau" and "Annour El Sahel" casting him more as an African Lead Belly to Ali's Robert Johnson.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



TOY

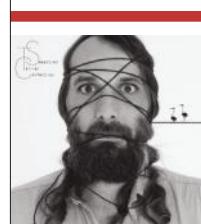
Join The Dots

HEAVENLY

Psych-pop quintet tread water

With their debut, London's Toy rode a wave of roaring, FX-treated psychotropic pop underpinned by heavy motorik beats, suggestive of some long-lost '70s krautrock band. If at times it sounded like a homage, it was at least a compellingly groovy one. Now, just 15 months later, opening track "Conductor" points promisingly to a leaner, meaner aesthetic – a sandblasted Boris playing *Neul!*, maybe – but soon their familiar pattern of accelerating gear shifts and swirling atmospherics emerges. There's no denying the wind-rush thrill of the title track, nor the malevolent pull of "Fall Out Of Love", but you'd expect such a capable band to disguise their affection for MBV, Ride and Kitchens Of Distinction rather better on their second album.

SHARON O'CONNELL



SÉBASTIEN TELLIER

Confection

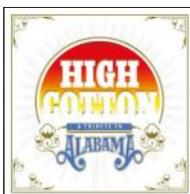
RECORD MAKERS

Hirsute flâneur returns to the source

7/10

Released 10 years ago, the Serge-like swirl of "La Ritournelle" remains the high-water mark of Sébastien Tellier's eccentric career, something he tacitly acknowledges on fifth album *Confection* by reuniting with the team behind that track – including drummer Tony Allen and mixer Philippe Zdar – for a set of creamy instrumentals that evoke its shabby beauty. After the lurid pop of last year's *My God Is Blue*, this is Tellier retreating to his comfort zone, where he tosses off the swooning likes of "L'Amour Naissant" and "Adieu" after a late breakfast. A restorative step, perhaps, and we await his next move with interest.

PIERS MARTIN



VARIOUS ARTISTS
High Cotton: A Tribute To Alabama

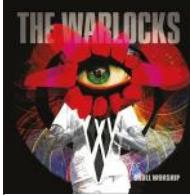
LIGHTNING ROD

40th-anniversary tribute to long-running US country types

6/10

working band whose multi-million sales betray the public's appetite for a steady diet of formulaic country-pop, Alabama aren't the most obvious candidates for a tribute album. Old Crow Medicine Show make a spirited fist of "Dixieland Delight" and Todd Snider-Elizabeth Cook duet "Feels So Right" is a weepy treat, but a fair portion of these covers (from the likes of Jason Isbell, Shonna Tucker, Lucero and others) struggle to break free of their MOR roots. Jessica Lea Mayfield gets it right on "I'm In A Hurry" though, imbuing the original with a sticky air of genuine disquiet.

ROB HUGHES



THE WARLOCKS
Skull Worship

ZAP BANANA

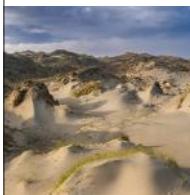
Los Angeles droners return with first LP for five years

After a lengthy break, The Warlocks return with an album that

intensifies their drift into darker and experimental territory while also tipping a nod to some of their US inspirations. So while songs like "Endless Drops" and the reverse loops of "Eyes Jam" recall trippier aspects of Krautrock, there is also a strong resemblance to Sonic Youth on the stumbling drive of "Dead Generation" and "It's A Hard Fall". The band even dabble with acoustic psychedelia on "Silver & Plastic" but come over best on the slurry, stoner "You've Changed", with its thud-thud beat and heavy swipes of textured guitar.

PETER WATTS

7/10



WHITE MANNA
Dune Worship
HOLY MOUNTAIN

Californian psych-rock in excelsis

White Manna aren't the only modern band to summon the spirit of '69 in their grooves. But

while many of their peers look to open-ended psychedelia as a way in, David Johnson's West Coast quintet are attuned to the noisier, more primordial urges of MC5 or The Stooges. These six compositions build on the repetitious approach of last year's self-titled debut album, creating lean, space-blown epics such as "Solar Returns" and "Illusion Of Illusion". Distorted guitars and phased effects add to the overall stoner mood, with the group coming over like Dead Meadow on "Transformation" and whipping The Deviants' "I'm Comin' Home" into a sustained frenzy.

ROB HUGHES

8/10



KIM WILDE
Wilde Winter Songbook
WILDEFLOWER

Surprisingly upmarket Christmas collection from '80s songstress

6/10

singing an impromptu (and rather drunken) rendition of "Kids In America" on a crowded late-night train carriage, accompanied by a guitarist. This Christmas album has some of that daft seasonal informality – a reprise of "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree" sees Nik Kershaw, of all people, replacing the late Mel Smith – but most of it is surprisingly classy. She and Rick Astley play off each other well on "Winter Wonderland", there are six bittersweet original Christmas anthems, and best of all is a version of Fleet Foxes' "White Winter Hymnal", with fine harmonies from brother Ricky and dad Marty.

JOHN LEWIS



THE WILD FEATHERS
The Wild Feathers

WARNER BROS

Texas natives (plus one Oklahoman) invade Nashville with six guns blazing

8/10

The Wild Feathers deliver their take on throwback SoCal country rock at a gallop rather than the customary canter, to exhilarating effect. In the foreground, co-leaders Ricky Young and Joel King come off like vocal composites of Frey, Henley and Meisner, but the quintet's overall attack recalls Poco in its early shit-kicking days, as they spice up the inherent sweetness of their voices. The centerpiece is "The Ceiling", a six-minute-plus fireworks display of cascading harmonies and clanging guitars that builds to a mind-blowing intensity. A refreshingly badass entry to a genre whose purveyors tend to be overly mild-mannered.

BUD SCOPPA

REVELATIONS

Country music for the masses: paying tribute to Alabama



▶ Alabama's exploits speak for themselves: 75 million LP sales, 21 consecutive No 1 singles on the country chart, stacks of American Music Awards. But you know you've really made it when the tribute albums start landing. To mark the 40th anniversary of the Fort Payne band who slicked up country-rock for the US masses, *Alabama & Friends* features Kenny Chesney, Toby Keith, Trisha Yearwood and other predictable crossover names. Far more appealing is *High Cotton: A Tribute To Alabama*, which finds huge '80s hits like "Feels So Right", "Dixieland Delight" and "Love In The First Degree" covered by admirers that include Old Crow Medicine Show, Jessica Lea Mayfield, Lucero, Todd Snider and ex-Drive-By Truckers Shonna Tucker and Jason Isbell. The latter has hailed Alabama's songs as "great reflections on what it's like to live and love in the South". Snider, meanwhile, explains of the second compendium: "It started when somebody heard that all the normal country stars of the day were going to make a tribute to Alabama. So we thought it would be cool if there was also a good one. 'Cause we're from East Nashville, it doesn't mean we have to be purely alt.country. This record proves that mainstream country doesn't always suck."

ROB HUGHES



YOUNG KNIVES
Sick Octave

GADZOOK

Ashby-de-la-Zouch geek-rockers shake up their post-Britpop sound

Slowly slipping off the radar since their Mercury-nominated peak in 2007,

Young Knives come back fighting with their fourth album, a self-produced and self-released affair reportedly inspired by singer Henry Dartnall's recently diagnosed tinnitus. No longer sounding like a Blur full of Graham Coxons, the Oxford-based trio here borrow from vintage Public Image on the scouring metallic sneers of "Marble Maze" and even Sigue Sigue Sputnik on the propulsive electro-grinder "Owls Of Athens". But mostly they sound liberated to experiment across a broad musical spectrum, from the warm romantic surges of "We Could Be Blood" to the wonky prog-punk blast of "Green Island Red Raw".

STEPHEN DALTON



RICHARD YOUNGS
Calmont Breakdown/Regions Of The Old School

FOURTH DIMENSION/MIE MUSIC

Weird scenes from the surrealist Scot

Richard Youngs is not one for predictability, recently releasing a left-field country set and a lop-sided rock record, among others. On *Calmont...* he sends drum machines and cross-eyed Midi action to pachinko parlour heaven. *Regions...* is a mammoth double, with a focus on chimes and electronics; "Celeste" comes across like digital gamelan, before shakuhachi skims the lunar terrain of "The Thoughtlife".

JON DALE

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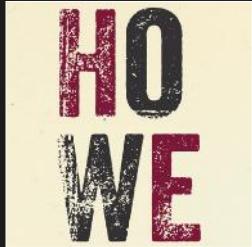


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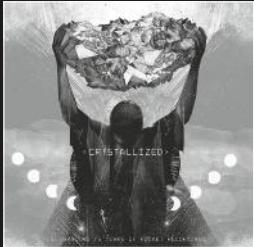
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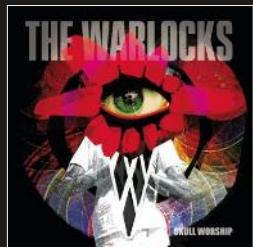
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SCORING: THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

10 Masterpiece

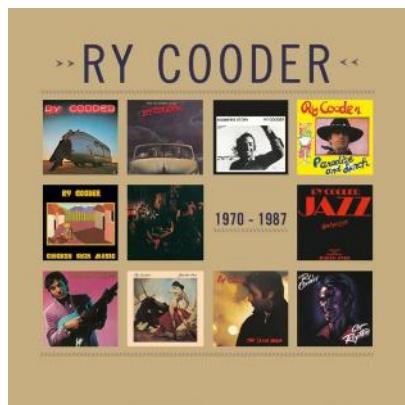
1 Poor!

SCORING: EXTRA MATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrapings

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



SUSAN TITELMAN

RY COODER

1970-1987

RHINO

Box fresh: 11 albums from guitar king's first golden age.
By Neil Spencer

9/10

HOWEVER YOU define this thing called Americana, Ry Cooder is surely its godfather. He'd doubtless guffaw at the suggestion, proffering that the music of the Americas belongs to those who created it, whom he has done his modest best to champion, yet to whatever tributary of tradition you turn, there you'll find a Cooder recording honouring and interpreting it. Blues, R'n'B, soul, early jazz, Tex-Mex, calypso, gospel, Hawaiian, country – Cooder and his virtuosic fretboard skills have embraced them all.

The extent of his achievement is brought home on 1970-1987, its mundane title a tacit acceptance that Cooder evades categorisation. 'Ethno-musicologist' used to be bandied around, but one look at cover shots of him in 1930s drag on *Into The Purple Valley*, or with a Fender Strat pressed against a mohair jacket on *Bop Till You Drop*, and that tag withers. Cooder is way too funky to be a dusty academic, however arcane his tunings, time signatures and source material.

History and politics have always mattered

CONTENTS

Ry Cooder (1970) **6/10**

Into The Purple Valley (1972) **9/10**

Boomer's Story (1972) **7/10**

Paradise And Lunch (1974) **8/10**

Chicken Skin Music (1976) **8/10**

Show Time (1977) **7/10**

Jazz (1978) **6/10**

Bop Till You Drop (1979) **7/10**

Borderline (1980) **8/10**

The Slide Area (1982) **7/10**

Get Rhythm (1987) **6/10**

→ to Cooder. The son of a left-leaning lawyer and folk singer, he grew up with Woody Guthrie anthems in his ears, their stories of displaced Okies resonant in his native California. Cooder's Sunshine State is no Laurel Canyon idyll but the home of blue-collar grafters, immigrants, trailer-dwelling petrolheads and Latin dandies, and his favoured songs tell an Everyman's tale of empty pockets, cop hassles, delirious good times and broken hearts.

On his eponymous debut, Guthrie's "Do Re Mi" rubs shoulders with "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live?" by Californian songsmit Alfred Reed, while Willie Johnson's "Dark Is The Night" gets the stark slide guitar previewed on the *Performance* soundtrack, later to become a trademark and win wider public attention on the *Paris, Texas* soundtrack.

Into The Purple Valley raised his game, mixing Guthrie and Lead Belly with obscurities like the 1940s calypso "FDR In Trinidad" and 1920s gospel number "Denomination Blues". In contrast came the fierce guitar of "Money Honey" and bouncing mandolin of "Billy The Kid". Also on display was Cooder's ability to transform a song; "Teardrops Will Fall", a piece of 1958 pop trash, was recast as a tender ballad, Johnny Cash's chugalong "Hey Porter" was slowed to languor.

After such a tour-de-force, the blues-laden *Boomer's Story* marked a loss of momentum, despite diversions like the dreamy 1930s Mexican hit "Maria Elena" and Sleepy John Estes voicing his own "President Kennedy". Cooder renewed his onslaught on *Paradise And Lunch* and *Chicken Skin Music*, albums that defined his approach for years afterwards. Addressing his lack of vocal prowess, he added gospel backing singers, while *Chicken Skin* introduced Tex-Mex accordion wizz Flaco Jiménez. Both brought heft and variety to an eclectic assemblage of song. Bobby Womack's "It's All Over Now" emerged as a reggae jog, Jim Reeves' country tearjerker "He'll Have To Go" as a despairing love call from an El Paso cantina. There was Hawaiian steel guitar from Gabby Pahinui and 70-year-old pianist Earl Hines vamping on Blind Blake's "Ditty Wah Ditty".

It all worked marvellously onstage, as testified by *Show Time*, with the show stolen by the spare bottleneck'n'vocals of "Jesus On The Mainline" and "Dark End Of The Street", an adulterer's tale from Southern soulster James Carr that became a Cooder staple.

Jazz was a step sideways, a bookish delve into the 1920s era of vaudeville songs like "Shine" (rendered complete with non-PC preliminary

A prickly character: Cooder in the early '70s



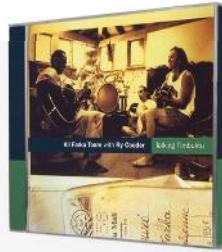
verse) and of jazz pioneers like Jelly Roll Morton and Bix Beiderbecke, whose ambitions to create modern classicism were never fulfilled. Cooder's arrangement of "In A Mist" offers a glimpse into an unrealised future.

Bop Till You Drop re-engaged with mainstream tastes, and yielded Cooder's only hit, a cover of Presley's "Little Sister". It's a tight, punchy album, whose soul flavours came via minor hits

by Ike & Tina, Howard Tate, Arthur Alexander and Fontella Bass. There's a great Cooder original, "Down In Hollywood", about the dangers of cruising downtown ("Don't run out of gas!"), on which Chaka Khan whoops things up, but the record's sound – it was the first album to be recorded digitally – doesn't help its cause.

Borderline and *The Slide Area* extend the urban, electric mood of *Bop*, the former memorably

HOW TO BUY...
POST-1987 RY
The best of Cooder's recent resurgence

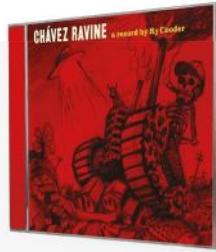


Talking Timbuktu

WORLD CIRCUIT, 1994

The encounter of Cooder and Malian guitarist Ali Farka Touré was a personal triumph that redefined what 'world' music meant. The duo's shared passion for blues and Cooder's adaptability delivered a session shimmering with desert heat, cut with blistering solo and trance vocals.

9/10

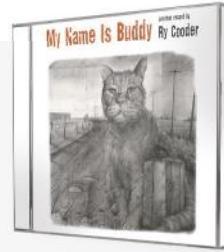


Chávez Ravine

NONESUCH, 2005

The first of Ry's Californian trilogy is a lament for the East LA Latin neighbourhood bulldozed in the mid-'50s. As a narrative it stutters, as an evocation of time and place it's peerless, mixing R'n'B hits like "Three Cool Cats" with Tex-Mex dance and guests including 'Chicano hepcat' Lalo Guerrero.

8/10

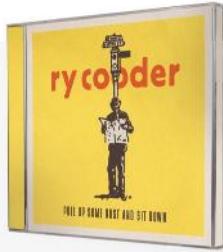


My Name Is Buddy

NONESUCH, 2007

The sequel to *Chavez Ravine* is a more eccentric exploration of the past, with a left-wing tabby cat hitting the Depression-era hobo trail. His allegorical journey allows Ry to paint the times on numbers that involve usual sidekicks like Flaco Jiménez and guests like Van Dyke Parks and Pete Seeger.

7/10



Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down

NONESUCH, 2011

Cooder's commentary on 'Republikan' America was his most outspoken disc. Drawing on an array of roots styles, it ranges from the anti-war "Christmas Time This Year" to the wry "John Lee Hooker For President" with its canny impersonation of the late bluesman.

8/10



making over Billy Joe Royal's country hit, "Down In The Boondocks", from tinny country pop into epic neo-gospel splendour – one of Cooder's best transformations. South-west flavours arrive on "The Girls From Texas" and the instrumental title track. *The Slide Area* is less winning, with tired versions of "Blue Suede Shoes" and The Impressions' "Gypsy Woman", which is quite beyond Cooder's vocal powers. "UFO Has Landed In The Ghetto" is a hard funk workout that's an oddity in Cooder's canon, though his fascination for extra terrestrials would reappear on *I, Flathead*.

Cooder was immersed in soundtrack work by the time of *Get Rhythm*, which seeps a sense of impatience with the whole project of solo albums. Johnny Cash's title track, Presley's "All Shook Up" and Chuck Berry's "13 Question Method" are routine, and the muscular production seems to shout, 'Oh they want rock music, here it is.' Delights include two originals, the knockabout "Going Back To Okinawa" and the sorrowful "Across The Borderline".

Cooder's weariness was understandable; he had laboured long for critical praise but received disappointing sales, and the US seemed largely uninterested in the people's music that he had put before the country. Better, perhaps, to work with Walter Hill on a succession of fine movies, and later, to engage with his love of Cuban music on the hugely successful Buena Vista Social Club. It would be a long wait before Ry Cooder sang again, though when he returned in the new century it would be with unexpected vigour.



Q&A

Ry Cooder on the perilous music business, Americana and why he should have listened to Randy Newman...

I assume that like most musicians you **don't listen to your old records**? This was the record company's idea. They called and said they wanted to do it and I gave my consent. I don't know how to even contemplate that stuff, it was all done so long ago. I still love the songs, and play some of them onstage, but I don't listen to the records.

Do you have any favourites among the 11 albums? No.

You covered a huge number of songs but wrote few yourself, unlike today, when you have become prodigious. I didn't know anything then. When I made the first album I was 24, and at that age you have nothing to say. I just played the music I loved and tried to do it justice. The thought was to record traditional music with modern methods, to reconstitute it using electric bass and so forth, to experiment. We can hear it played back, speed it up, slow it down, overdub – all things the original musicians couldn't do. Making those albums was a good laboratory. I would have liked some information about the histories of the songwriters, many of them pretty obscure, people like Washington Phillips and Arthur Reed. Reed was a vintage Appalachian fiddle player. He was popular but that he was recorded at all was a fluke. The history of how all those people made it onto disc is fascinating.

You didn't just use folk and blues – I discovered that "Teardrops Will Fall" was by Dickey Doo And The Don'ts!

Wilson Pickett recorded it after he left The Falcons, that's how I knew it. The label would have been looking round for material, that's how it was then; songwriters wrote and singers performed. There were plenty of other people who liked that stuff as much as me, but I was the one signed to Warner Brothers. I don't know why they signed me, because to sell records you had to look and sound a certain way, which I didn't. The moment I realised how it worked was when an A&R man asked, "When are you going to get a pair of leather pants?" Usually they aren't so explicit, but they think it all right, and there was I fooling round with Lead Belly songs.

And many other styles of music... When I started with Tex-Mex, Randy Newman told me, "You're going to commit commercial suicide." And I was saying, "Oh but it swings, it's beautiful and I'm having such fun." He was right.

But a lot of people liked it. Oh, over in Europe!

And you always had great reviews. Critics don't sell records, unfortunately. No-one reads what they write anyway. Radio was one of the pillars of the business, the people you had to curry favour with were the radio promo guys, who'd take the records to the stations and genuflect to get them played, because as we know, the public airwaves aren't really public. I really wasn't a good team player. Eventually, for me, the string ran out.

You don't like what the business has become? It's a tragedy, because what made music great was the four-minute pop song and the care that people took to create something that had never existed before. The loss of that idea is terrible. Nowadays musicians have to be an exhibit for a lifestyle rather than telling people what they feel or think. It's corporate entertainment.

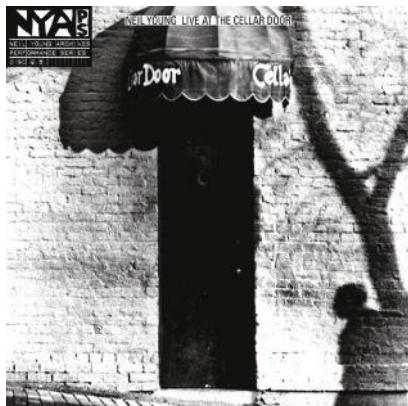
Are you heartened by the rise of Americana, that so many young musicians are now tapping into the wellspring of tradition that inspired you? It's there for people who want to

find a place, an alternative to being computer scientists or bakers or whatever is on offer. It's good to see more young people playing instruments. You can tap into tradition, then it's up to the musicians to do it justice.

"Now musicians have to be an exhibit for a lifestyle... it's corporate entertainment"

find a place, an alternative to being computer scientists or bakers or whatever is on offer. It's good to see more young people playing instruments. You can tap into tradition, then it's up to the musicians to do it justice.

Do you have a current project or two? I'll be touring the US with The Chieftains next year, which is always fun. And I am making a record for the survivors of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, to talk about the dangers of its aftermath, the high levels of radioactivity, which have gone largely unreported. I'm going to talk to the farmers and inhabitants, and write new songs that talk about what has happened, to try to make a record for the people. I'll get the songs translated – it's hard, Japanese language is so different, and they don't have protest music in Japan. **INTERVIEW: NEIL SPENCER**



TRACKLIST

- 1 Tell Me Why
- 2 Only Love Can Break Your Heart
- 3 After The Gold Rush
- 4 Expecting To Fly
- 5 Bad Fog Of Loneliness
- 6 Old Man Birds
- 7 Don't Let It Bring You Down
- 8 See The Sky About To Rain
- 9 Cinnamon Girl
- 10 I Am A Child
- 11 Down By The River
- 12 Flying On The Ground Is Wrong

NEIL YOUNG Live At The Cellar Door

REPRISE

Gentle, revealing performances from the eye of Neil Young's 1970 storm. *By Jason Anderson*

8/10

A CERTAIN AIR of serenity pervades the latest of Neil Young's archival live releases, culled from performances at Washington, DC's Cellar Door in late November and early December of 1970. That calm may be misleading: just after his stand at the Cellar Door, he stormed out of a concert at Carnegie Hall, annoyed by raucous fans who'd sneaked in via the fire exits. As Young later explained, "It was an intermission – I just took it a little early."

No-one can blame the singer for feeling tired and emotional. After all, he'd just turned 25 and the brief tour that included the Cellar Door stint capped off a year that was eventful even by his standards. With the release of CSNY's *Déjà Vu* and the immediate impact of the hastily written "Ohio", Young experienced his first taste of

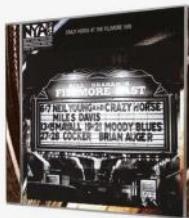
mega-stardom as well as the sour side of life in the supergroup, which marked the end of its tour in July with one of its customary acrimonious collapses.

The boost in profile helped Young attain his first real commercial success as a solo artist with the late-summer arrival of *After The Gold Rush*. Having decamped from LA's studios for his inaugural home set-up, he'd also been building up a massive trove of recordings with Crazy Horse, then firing on all cylinders with guitarist Danny Whitten and keyboardist Jack Nitzsche both still on board.

On the personal front, matters were stormier due to the collapse of Young's marriage to Susan Acevedo. And not long after the tour wrapped in December, he'd suffer a slipped disc while working in the garden, an injury that would



HOW TO BUY... NEIL YOUNG LIVE Tales from the twisted road



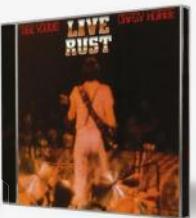
Live At The Fillmore East

REPRISE, 2006
Recorded on the last tour to feature Danny Whitten before his death, this set is a stunning document of Crazy Horse at full gallop. While the majestic rendition of "Down By The River" was no surprise to fans who long clamoured for the disc's release, an early incarnation of "Wonderin'" certainly was.



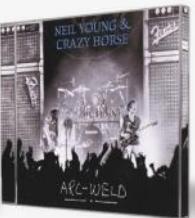
Live At Massey Hall 1971

REPRISE, 2007
The jewel of the Archives Performance Series, this Toronto solo set showcases an artist who knows exactly where he's going even if nobody else did. Most revelatory are the versions of *Harvest* songs that may be richer than the dressier recorded counterparts that arrived a year later.



Live Rust

REPRISE, 1979
Arriving within months of *Rust Never Sleeps* (with which it shares four songs) and the accompanying concert film, *Live Rust* had a distinct air of redundancy when it first landed. But time's been kinder to his attempt to draw together a decade's worth of work and paint it all with Crazy Horse's smoky brushstrokes.



Arc-Weld

REPRISE, 1991
A great live set, with avant-garde extra disc. Spliced together from fragments of feedback and guitar noise recorded while on tour, the accompanying 35-minute *Arc* drew a line in the sand that many Neil fans opted not to cross, but it remains one of his ballsiest provocations.

JASON ANDERSON

leave him in a back brace for many months to come.

Yet all of this tumult was either on the horizon or somehow out of the frame in the performances collected for *Live At The Cellar Door*. The 13 songs were originally recorded for a live album that was also slated to include material from Crazy Horse's blazing sets at the Fillmore East in March. One of the three new songs to make their live debuts during the solo tour was "Old Man". With Young delivering its opening lines in an almost tentative murmur, the future *Harvest* standout evinces a vulnerability that would be replaced by a more confident tone by the time of the performance on *Live At Massey Hall 1971*. A rarity that would not get any official release until the *Massey Hall* disc, "Bad Fog Of Loneliness" is an affecting expression of his post-divorce inner turmoil. "So long, woman, I am gone/ So much pain to go through," he croons. Yet his bravado immediately evaporates in the plea that follows: "Come back, maybe I was wrong."

Other *Cellar Door* selections reinforce the notion that Young's always been at his most plaintive when at the piano. "I had it put in my contract that I'd only play on a nine-foot Steinway grand piano... just for a little eccentricity," he quips during the banter that opens a wistful "Flying On The Ground Is Wrong". Elsewhere, his liberal use of the sustain pedal deepens the ache in "After The Gold Rush". More startling is the transformation of "Cinnamon Girl", heard without the big dumb thunder of its iconic guitar riff. With Young hammering away at the ivories instead, it might've passed for a jaunty Tin Pan Alley-style vamp if not for the edge of sorrow in his voice.

There's a quality of softness, too, something that's palpable throughout the performances. Its presence is surprising for an artist who was always a little too steely to ever be mistaken for a sensitive folkie. There are many sterling moments to escape from Young's vault – but none seem quite as unguarded as the best ones here.



ANY TROUBLE

The Complete Stiff Recordings 1980-1981

CHERRY RED

8/10

Mancunian power poppers collected

There was a time when Any Trouble were tipped to be Stiff's next big breakthrough signing, following the success of Elvis Costello and Ian Dury, but arguably suffered in the long-term from frequent comparisons drawn between the band and the former of the label's two stalwarts. It's especially evident on *Where Are All The Nice Girls?*, the first of the group's two studio albums, packaged here with a hitherto promo-only live disc, lead singer and songwriter Clive Gregson liberally borrowing Costello motifs on "Second Choice" and "Foolish Pride".

There are fewer skinny-tie power pop shapes on 1981's *Wheels In Motion*, although the glossy production has a tendency to blur the charm of "Trouble With Love" and "Open Fire", but there's more clarity and warmth to the cover of Gregson's future employer Richard Thompson's "Dimming Of The Day". The *Live At The Venue* set presents most of the first album's songs at adrenaline-fuelled speed, only taking the foot off the pedal for a brace of intriguing cover versions, Springsteen's "Growing Up" and Abba's "Name Of The Game". Classy, hook-filled pop aplenty, then, still sounding fresh and fiery three decades on.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON

BOARDS OF CANADA

In A Beautiful Place Out In The Country



WARP

8/10

Highlight of a complete vinyl reissue package

Warp are reissuing BOC's back catalogue on vinyl, and it's a worthy format for the Scottish duo – their retro utopianism sounds all the more appropriate emerging from the vaguely magical wax technology of a previous generation. Time hasn't been all that kind to all their work though – their breakbeats are often a little polite. It's the "In A Beautiful Place Out In The Country" EP from 2000 that remains their best work, those beat patterns irradiated to leave them sickly and half-stepping, rather than jaunty. "Kid For Today" is like the rosetinted, morphine-slurred memories of a UK garage producer in his dotage, slow jazzy melodies rolling towards a drop of exquisite beauty; the title track and "Zoetrope" are good versions of their core sound, the former using its vocal sample simply and well where elsewhere they've overegged the pudding. Best of all is "Amo Bishop Roden", named after a member of the Branch Davidians, a snowblind six-note melody struggling through spartan bass kicks and a devotional second line – surely an inspiration for Burial. It's a wonderfully minimal moment from a duo for whom less is always more.

EXTRAS: None.

BEN BEAUMONT-TOMAS



THE LEN BRIGHT COMBO

Wreckless Eric Presents The Len Bright Combo/Combo Time! (reissue, both 1986) FIRE

7/10



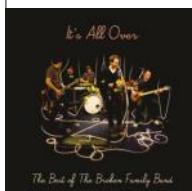
7/10

Stiff Records oddball's post-booze rave-up

The badge Wreckless Eric is wearing on the sleeve of his 1978 debut album reads 'I'M A MESS', and by the time he released this pair of albums with Billy Childish cohorts Bruce Brand and Russ Wilkins, he most certainly was. Promised the whole wide world in his Stiff Records heyday, the former Eric Goulden was treading a joyless path between a drink problem and a nervous breakdown by the mid-'80s, as detailed in a typically dour sleeve note to The Len Bright Combo's revived ouvre. Stylish paisley undergroundsmen eager to pass themselves off as a dimbo garage band, the Combo pieced together their debut for £86 but Goulden's lyrical barbs poke through the fuzz on "You're Gonna Screw My Head Off", "The Golden Hour Of Harry Secombe" and the Nick Lowe-low of "Shirt Without A Heart". The hastily assembled follow-up *Combo Time!* is less of a chore than Goulden suggests, but the band's involvement in a fatal road accident prompted their dissolution soon after. "Suddenly it wasn't funny anymore," writes Goulden. Was it ever?

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH



THE BROKEN FAMILY BAND

It's All Over - The Best Of The Broken Family Band

THE STATE51 CONSPIRACY

7/10

Cambridge's caustic country-rock quartet

revisit multifarious past glories

Four years after they hung up their banjos for the last time, the Cambridge folk-pop four-piece The Broken Family Band have assembled prime cuts from their five LPs, stretching across seven years, in this greatest hits package. Fronted by singer Steve Adams, The Broken Family Band maintained a modest yet besotted following through an idiosyncratic sound that fused the old-style Americana of The Handsome Family with Pixies-style alt.rock. As their career progressed they all but dispensed with the country element but the breadth of their sound is apparent here, from the sweetly lo-fi "John Belushi" to "Hey Captain!", with its squalling fuzz-filled pay-off. Most engaging is the songwriting, in which sex, booze and the devil are recurring themes. Adams' words are brimful of satirical barbs, as evidenced in the faux-jolly "Happy Days Are Here Again", in which he suggests that we can all "play in the scum on the banks of the river/We could fuck each other over just for fun", and the lilting "The Booze And The Drugs", in which he declares his devotion to his junkie girlfriend despite the fact that her clothes are torn, her feet are filthy and she really needs to brush her teeth.

EXTRAS: None.

FIONA STURGES



PETER BRODERICK

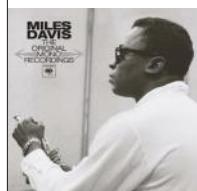
Float (reissue, 2008) ERASED TAPES

7/10

One-time Efterklang collaborator's bold debut reissued

Given the confidence with which he exercises stylistic changes across this succinct collection of (nearly) instrumentals, there's little to suggest it was Broderick's first album. Now remastered by Nils Frahm, *Float* heralded the arrival of a remarkably mature talent. It's true plenty was comparable to sometime labelmate Ólafur Arnalds: the elegant sentiment of "A Glacier" and "A Simple Reminder" occupies a similar cinematic space to the Icelandic neo-classical composer's, and "An Ending" is full of the swelling strings and pendulously melancholic chords familiar to those who heard Arnalds' recent work on *Broadchurch*. But Broderick's not afraid of tweaking the formula, adding banjo and guitar drones to "Stopping On The Broadway Bridge" and employing field recordings, piano and strings on "Floating/Sinking" to conjure up a curiously baroque ambience. The beautifully arranged "Something Has Changed" also shifts cunningly from its chamber music introduction to a chiptune finale, helping to interrupt what might otherwise have seemed at times a little over-earnest. Though Broderick has perhaps challenged himself more over his 10-10! – subsequent solo records, this was a confident, often stirring introduction.

EXTRAS: Two bonus download tracks.
5/10 WYNNDHAM WALLACE



MILES DAVIS

The Original Mono Recordings

COLUMBIA

8/10

The classics as they were first released

There's a scene in the first series of *Mad Men* where Don Draper joins his folkie lover Midge and her hip Greenwich Village pals to listen to Miles Davis' new album. Something of that kind of scripted period detail attends this latest boxing of classic Davis recordings. Mono, of course, is how the run of albums from 1957's *Round About Midnight* to 1961's *Someday My Prince Will Come* were originally heard, stereo versions not even considered until 1959's *Kind Of Blue*. The selling point here is audiophile and boutique. It is often the case that a mono master will be in better nick than a stereo one, having been revisited fewer times for reissues. There is also the questionable incentive of hearing this music "as it was heard at the time". Considered alone, these points probably won't be enough to engage anyone but the completist. It's certainly difficult to make for Miles the same case made for mono sets of The Kinks or The Beatles, that mono delivered a specific punch for pop listeners – Davis' music was about defining contemplative modern spaces, not for transistor radios. Undoubtedly, a home without any of these albums is missing something (1958's *Jazz Track*, mainly recorded in France, is particularly engrossing). Whether this is precisely the motive you need to remedy that is a different matter.

EXTRAS: None.
JOHN ROBINSON



DR FEELGOOD

Get Rhythm - The Best Of Dr Feelgood 1984-1987

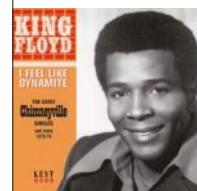
SALVO

6/10

Canvey Island rockers battle against 1980s production values

Snobbery surrounds the output of Dr Feelgood after the departure of Wilko Johnson, though their most successful period actually came with Gypie Mayo on guitar. Mayo left in 1981. By 1984, singer Lee Brilleaux was the only remaining original member. Kevin Morris had replaced The Big Figure on drums, Phil Mitchell was on bass. Guitar duties were handled by Gordon Russell, formerly of Geno Washington's touring band. True, this ain't vintage Feelgood. At times – notably on the 1986 album *Brilleaux* and 1987's *Classic* (both included in their entirety) it's apparent how they suffered from attempts to marry their lairy R'n'B sound to the grotesque production values of the time. There are good ideas on *Brilleaux*: a cover of The Undertones' "You've Got My Number" almost works, but Brilleaux sounds disengaged. Similarly, the Dave Edmunds-produced "See You Later Alligator" drowns in its own sense of novelty. Selections from 1984's *Doctor's Orders* are far better, notably the Larry Wallis co-write "Close But No Cigar" and a snappy rendition of Willie Cobbs' "You Don't Love Me". The highlights of the second CD are culled from the French EP "Mad Man Blues", notably the spit-and-sawdust title cut.

EXTRAS: None.
ALASTAIR MCKAY



KING FLOYD

I Feel Like Dynamite

STAX

7/10

New Orleans soul man's purple period

Malaco Studios in Jackson, Mississippi, earned a solid reputation in the late

'60s and early '70s for producing a wealth of radio-friendly singles awash with taut soul rhythms, although the bulk of acts that passed through its doors were actually from New Orleans. Jean Knight led the pack, scoring a massive hit with "Mr Big Stuff", and King Floyd wasn't far behind with the sublime "Groove Me", and the full range of his vocal skills is on display in this collection, sides originally released on the Chimneyville label. Like Knight, Floyd was taken under the wing of single-minded producer/arranger Wardell Quezergue, who brought bombast and drama to Floyd's self-penned ballad material ("Please Don't Leave Me Lonely") but was more restrained and economical on the uptempo cuts. "Woman Don't Go Astray" and "Let Me See You Do That Thing" take a leaf out of the Otis Redding playbook, the band's clipped grooves allowing plenty of room for Floyd's eloquent testifying, while the man himself nods respectfully to his major influence on covers of "Think About It" and "Hard To Handle". The relationship between Floyd and Quezergue soured in the mid-'70s, the singer only intermittently recording again until his death in 2006.

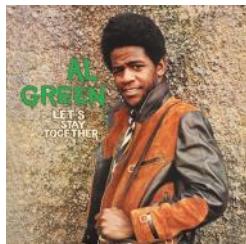
EXTRAS: None.
TERRY STAUNTON

AL GREEN

Let's Stay Together/ I'm Still In Love With You

FAT POSSUM

1972 – when Al Green ruled the world. By Richard Williams



8/10



8/10

Stay Together and *I'm Still In Love With You*, his third and fourth albums for the Hi label, which made their appearances in January and October of '72, respectively.

"1972 is Al Green's year and he seemed to snatch it up almost effortlessly," Vince Aletti wrote in *Rolling Stone* that November. At the time it seemed as though Green represented the eagerly awaited successor to Otis Redding: a new figurehead for the kind of soul music that retained an explicit connection with its blues and gospel roots, disdaining the experiments with the language of rock that could be heard in the music of his contemporaries. Although hardly unsophisticated, Green's music still sounded as though it was aimed at an audience of people whose diet included cornbread and grits.

The direct link between Redding and Green was Memphis and the durable formula of Southern soul, whether recorded at the old Stax studio on East McLemore or Royal Recording on South Lauderdale. Barely a mile apart, the two locations were linked by a highly evolved understanding of one of the last genres of American pop music whose exponents only had to open their mouths or pluck a string to betray their geographical location.

Green was 23 years old when he met the trumpeter, songwriter, arranger and record producer Willie Mitchell in 1969. Mitchell owned the Royal studio and was a vice-president and A&R chief of the locally based Hi Records, whose only real claim to fame at that point was a pair of instrumental hits by musicians better known for playing on other people's records: Bill Black's "Smokie Pt 2" and Ace Cannon's "Tuff". Together,

TO DOMINATE THE world of soul music in the year 1972 took some doing. The air was filled with Marvin Gaye's *Trouble Man*, Curtis Mayfield's *Super Fly*, Bobby Womack's *Understanding*, War's *The World Is A Ghetto*, Bill Withers' *Still Bill*, Sly And The Family Stone's *Fresh*, the Isley Brothers' *Brother, Brother, Brother* and Stevie Wonder's double-punch of *Music Of My Mind* and *Talking Book*. That's formidable competition, but Al Green faced it down with *Let's*

Mitchell and Green would make the little regional label synonymous with the second coming of Memphis soul, and no finer evidence exists than the music on these two albums.

With Green's first two Hi albums, Mitchell had edged gradually closer to what became the trademark approach of an almost obsessive minimalism in arrangement and production, moving towards the setting most suited to the singer's unique characteristic: the quieter he sang, the more powerfully intense his performance became.

The best place to hear that phenomenon in action has always been "Simply Beautiful", a track on the second of these albums. It's built on an acoustic guitar accompaniment, with a bass guitar and kick-drum and hi-hat, a floating B3 and the occasional intervention of gentle strings. Green himself seems to merge with the song, the sound of his falsetto getting thinner as he gives the impression of being overwhelmed by sheer ardour, until it almost disappears in a series of ecstatic hums and gasps, leaving just the memory of languid rapture hanging in the air.

The first album opens with its title track, reminding us that "Let's Stay Together" – an R&B chart-topper in the US for nine straight weeks – is where the sound came together. It unveils the notion of using a soggy tom-tom to carry the slinky

rhythm and the general air of laconic understatement conjured by the Hodges brothers – Charles on keyboards, Teenie on guitar and Leroy on bass – with the great Al Jackson Jr on drums (sometimes replaced by Howard Grimes) and the dry-toned Memphis Horns, led by the saxophonist Andrew Love and the trumpeter Wayne Jackson.

Older ways reassert themselves on subsequent tracks, but it's still hard to believe that great songs like "So You're Leaving" and "It Ain't No Fun to Me" – both written by Green – could have been overlooked in the process of choosing subsequent single releases.

By the time they made the second album, the formula was at its peak. Like "Simply Beautiful", "I'm Still In Love With You" is nothing short of perfection, and the version of Kris Kristofferson's "For The Good Times" extracts pure gold from the country-soul mine, while Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman" is so utterly transformed that Green himself seems to become its author.

Once again the singer and his producer could afford to overlook a potential hit single, in this case "Love And Happiness". Such was the luxury of choice they enjoyed back in their glory days. There would be classics to come – "Take Me To The River", *The Belle Album* – but this was when Al Green ruled the world.



Rediscovered! ▶

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



COUM TRANSMISSIONS

Home Aged & The 18 Month Hope

DAIS

7/10

The early works of the subversive performance art troupe that spawned the equally transgressive Throbbing Gristle

"BRION GYSIN ONCE said to me, 'Gen, they won't be interested in your work until you're gone 60,'" cackles Genesis P-Orridge. Associate of William Burroughs and inventor of the cut-up technique, Gysin, not for the first

time, was onto something. In 1976, Throbbing Gristle were a national disgrace, dubbed "wreckers of civilisation" by Tory MP Nicholas Fairbairn for their ICA show *Prostitution*, which featured pornographic images and art made from used tampons. But the world turned awhile, and in 2009 – the year P-Orridge turned 59 – Tate Britain acquired his full archive for artistic posterity.

P-Orridge's work stretches back to the late '60s, when he founded COUM Transmissions, a Fluxus-inspired performance-art troupe based in Hull. To catalogue four decades of work, he enlisted Ryan Martin of New York's Dais Records. "One day, Ryan went, what's this box of reel-to-reels?" recalls P-Orridge. "We went, oh, some old shit from the '60s, you don't want to listen to that. He said, you don't get it – the fans would love to know how things started. You should put it out. We said, well, why don't you fucking do it? He did, and it sold out in a week."

The fourth in Dais' series, *Home Aged & The 18 Month Hope* unearths work from between 1971 and 1975, nicely encapsulating COUM's amateurism, absurdity and sense of mischief. There's an interview conducted by a politely bemused Radio Humberside disc jockey. Performance poet Fizzy Peat reads his "Cement Men – My Granny Goes Grave Digging". And there's a number of solo violin pieces, weird, folksy squalls reflecting COUM's mission statement that "the future of music is non-musicians".

It's a shame "Edna And The Great Surfers" – recorded when COUM blagged their way onto a Hawkwind bill in 1971 – wasn't captured in better quality. Still, the way Genesis tells it, you really had to be there. "The lineup was Cosey Fanni Tutti dressed in a minute English schoolgirl's outfit, firing starting pistols in the air. We had a very blue northern comedian stood on a surfboard balanced on a bucket of seawater. And this was the stage where the bands were all trying to get the biggest drum kit. So throughout the gig, we brought out more and more drums. Oh, and a dwarf on lead guitar." LOUIS PATTISON



HOWE GELB
Little Sand Box

FIRE

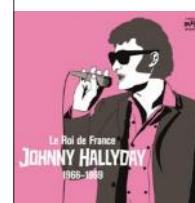
More surreal solo gems from America's most prolific elder statesman

8/10

Hot on the heels of assorted Giant Sand reissues comes this compendium of frontman Howe Gelb's solo albums, among them 1991's *Dreaded Brown Recluse* (his first solo effort comprising Giant Sand overspill); 1998's engagingly lo-fi *Hisser*; 2011's unlikely excursion into flamenco, *Alegrias*; and a piano album sporadically distributed at gigs entitled *Some Piano*. These LPs act as a record of Gelb's musical preoccupations away from the interference of his many collaborators, along with his geographical movements (2002's *The Listener* reflects time spent both in Canada and Denmark, while *Alegrias* is the fruit of a lengthy stay in Córdoba in Spain). Gelb has described these releases as "an afterthought", though these are considerably more than sketched doodlings and outtakes. *Little Sand Box* has its mad moments but it also has its thrilling ones. In these instances Gelb's contrariness and charisma always shine through.

EXTRAS: As you might imagine from a man who seems to record 24 hours a day, Gelb has packed *Little Sand Box* with bonus songs and alternative takes. There are also typically witty liner notes from Gelb, and a lyrical introduction from the music writer Sylvie Simmons.

FIONA STURGES



JOHNNY HALLYDAY

Le Roi De France
1966-1969

RPM

Who's who of '60s beat back France's king of ersatz pop

8/10

French pop superstar Hallyday has always been cast as Cliff to Serge Gainsbourg's Elvis. Which perhaps explains why it's taken so long for a compilation of his best late-'60s music to appear, from the period after the troubled troubadour had completed his national service and later attempted suicide. If the backstory and Hallyday's ingenious pastiches of contemporary British and American rock and pop weren't fascinating enough, the majority of the 22 tracks collected here were recorded at the legendary Olympic in London and feature the likes of Jimmy Page, the Small Faces, Spooner Oldham, Brian Auger, Peter Frampton, King Curtis and Foreigner's Mick Jones, who was a member of Hallyday's live band and sings the one English language song here, "Don't Need Somebody". Page kicks off proceedings with the Yardbirds riffage of "Psychedelic", which sets the tone for Hallyday's unusual gift: entirely self-conscious rip-offs of cutting-edge rock with just the right amount of Eurocheese. Highlights include a stomping Northern Soul version of "Black Is Black" (retitled "Noir C'est Noir") and the bravura splicing of "Hey Joe" and "Hey Jude" that is "Je N'ai Pas Voulu Croire". Fans of cult mavericks from Joe Meek to Kim Fowley will do le freak.

EXTRAS: None.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE
Miami Pop Festival
SONY LEGACY

Completists! 1968 fest set, buffed

6/10

at a Miami racetrack promoted by headshop owner Michael Lang in May 1968, but that was as close as he got to the sky. Plagued by fractious relations within the Experience (Noel Redding can be heard thanking the crowd on several occasions here, as if he were on an equal footing), and the demands of a new record on which Chas Chandler had lately quit working, the man is clearly torn. A character who didn't enjoy replaying the same thing indefinitely (10 minutes into "Red House", you may doubt that analysis), Hendrix was tiring of psychedelic rock (he doesn't play anything from *Axis: Bold As Love*, out just a few weeks before) and is pining for the blues. No-one would argue he excelled at both, and the audio restoration and remix by Eddie Kramer of his original tapes is commendable, but save for some killer business on "Hey Joe" and "Fire", nothing quite catches light. In a career as short as Hendrix's there's a tendency to imagine that every performance was pivotal. This however is a historical recording of a prosaic situation: an unspectacular set from a man in mid-career, apparently freshly dosed with STP.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN ROBINSON



THE JAM
The Studio Recordings

POLYDOR/COMMERCIAL MARKETING

The ideal gift for any vinyl-loving mod

8/10

boxset featuring heavyweight vinyl pressings of all six Jam studio albums and another two LPs of non-album singles and B-sides, complete with a 44-page hardback book and period photos. As with Beethoven symphonies, people rave about the odd-numbered Jam albums, and it's true that #3 (the hymn to male self-pity that is *All Mod Cons*) and #5 (the brittle post-punk of *Sound Affects*) are undisputed masterpieces that stand up to the immersive effect of a vinyl playback, while even #1 (*In The City*) is carried by a wave of primal garage rock energy. As with Beethoven's *Pastoral*, The Jam's sixth (the clubby, Style Council-ish swansong *The Gift*) is as good as any of the faves, but numbers two and four are rather more problematic LPs that work better on an iPod, where you skip the junk and go straight to the gems ("Tonight At Noon" and "Life From A Window" from *This Is The Modern World*; "Saturday's Kids", "Little Boy Soldiers" and the orchestral version of "Smithers Jones" from *Setting Sons*). No new material but let's face it – this'll probably be stroked and revered rather than actually played by the middle-aged mods who'll get bought it for Christmas.

EXTRAS: Book, photos, rigid box, voucher
6/10 for digital download.

JOHN LEWIS



KEITH JARRETT
No End
ECM

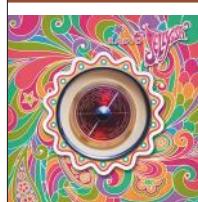
Unlikely guitar-led '80s home-recordings from the jazz titan

He might be the biggest jazz pianist on earth but Keith Jarrett has also cultivated some secretive musical alter-egos. He's performed classical recitals, busked around Haight Ashbury on the soprano sax and even, in 1968, recorded an LP of Dylanesque pop songs. This two-disc set assembles 20 lo-fi home recordings from 1986 – numbered simply "I" to "XX" – in which Jarrett multi-tracks himself on lead and bass guitar, drums, tabla, recorder and voice. Jarrett's sleeve notes humbly brag that Stan Getz once saw him playing guitar, incognito, in a Pennsylvania club and asked him to join his band as a guitarist, and Jarrett is a stylish, if garrulous, axeman. On tracks like "XI" and "XV" he imitates Robby Krieger's sitar-like explorations; elsewhere he combines the slow-burning modalism of John McLaughlin with the flamenco minimalism of Vini Reilly. Much of this LP revisits the febrile jazz-rock that Jarrett recorded with Miles Davis in the early '70s (work that Jarrett has often dismissed), but there are also nods towards hypnotic African high-life ("V"), Alice Coltrane-ish Hare Krishna anthems ("X" and "XI") and a few weirdly punky instrumentals ("XII" and "XIII"). A fascinating portal into one of the great musical minds.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS

7/10



JELLYFISH
Radio Jellyfish
OMNIVORE

Crisp unplugged set from '90s powerpop savants

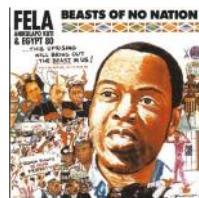
Since Badfinger got the ball rolling 40-plus years ago, the perpetually downtrodden powerpop

genre – aptly described by novelist Michael Chabon as the music of hit records that miss – has been distinguished by a handful of high-charting anomalies from the Raspberries to Cheap Trick amid countless stiffs fashioned by beloved (by a few) commercial misfits. In its third rarities compilation documenting one of the best of these also-rans, the third-generation power-pop practitioners Jellyfish, Omnivore has gathered 10 tracks performed acoustically for radio stations in Holland and Australia in 1993 as the quartet toured behind its second, final studio album, *Spilt Milk*. The absence of ringing electric guitars (lead guitarist Jason Falkner had left after the '90 debut album *Bellybutton* to form the Greys with Jon Brion) isolates the band's core strengths: angel-voiced singing drummer Andy Sturmer, dazzling keyboardist Roger Manning and their elegantly contoured Beatlesque songs. Along with shoulda-been hits like "That Is Why", Jellyfish honours its progenitors with the obligatory "No Matter What" and a reimagining of The Move's "I Can Hear The Grass Grow" that cleverly connects Roy Wood with XTC auteur Andy Partridge. Lovely stuff – though a better starting point would be the label's first comp, the astonishing *Live At Bogart's*.

EXTRAS: None.

BUD SCOPPA

8/10



FELA KUTI & EGYPT 80
Beasts Of No Nation/ODOO

KALAKUTA SUNRISE/KNITTING FACTORY

Late-period pick from the Afrobeat godfather

The final tranche of releases from Knitting Factory's extensive Kuti reissue campaign concentrates on the Nigerian bandleader's late period, from 1981's defiant *Original Sufferhead to US (Underground System)*, released just a year before his 1993 arrest and imprisonment on a trumped-up murder charge (Fela was later exonerated, but he would never release another LP). For an idea of a threat that Fela posed to the Nigerian authorities, look to '89's *Beasts Of No Nation*. The sleeve, by long-time collaborator Lemi Ghariokwu, depicts various world leaders – Thatcher, Reagan, PW Botha – sprouting devil horns, or morphing into rats. The contents are equally incendiary: a single recording that spanned both sides of an LP, an incensed Fela itemising the crimes of world governments to music from the 20-piece Egypt 80 and a six-piece choir. There is little consideration of concision here, and evidence of a more improvised structure than on recordings with Afrika 70. But *Beasts...* is both more melodically rich and stirring in its heavy emotions, Fela excoriating of the global political establishment, those "animals in human skin" to grand gales of sax. Also included as a twofer is the same year's *ODOO*, another sprawling jam tackling institutional corruption.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON



THE LEGENDARY STARDUST COWBOY
For Sarah, Raquel And David: An Anthology

CHERRY RED

7/10

The Texan genius/madman who half-

named Ziggy Stardust

45 years after his first recording, the man they call "The Ledge" gets his first "greatest hits". But this 42-track double-CD covering 1968–2005 does nothing to resolve the possibility that this whooping, ranting, space-obsessed rockabilly outsider is actually one big put-on. On the one hand, Norman Carl Odam is a trained actor and has wackily dedicated this anthology to Sarah (Ferguson, Duchess Of York), Raquel (Welch) and Mr Bowie. On the other, the anthology kicks off with his first recording, 1968's "Paralyzed", produced by the young T-Bone Burnett, which still sounds like one of the most bizarre, terrifying and visionary rock'n'roll records ever, with its padded-cell vocals and collapsing one-chord rhythm. "I Took A Trip On A Gemini Spaceship", as covered by Bowie on *Heathen*, is strangely beautiful, and when "Kiss And Run" adds an orchestra and a proper tune the results are either hilarious or disturbing, depending on one's worldview. As Odam's 'career' progresses he becomes more punkabilly sensible and descends into novelty, but there's no denying his early music's influence on The Fall, The Cramps, Suicide, The Gun Club and everyone else that has ever sought to make music in the key of Z.

EXTRAS: None.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

White Light/White Heat Super Deluxe Edition

POLYDOR

Reed & Cale's most experimental work. Still mind-blowing, says Andy Gill



10/10

Light/White Heat's cultural significance is spot on, but it's not right to say that no-one listened to it. My friend Alan and I spent a heady weekend back in 1971 tripping to this colossal record on some ridiculously strong hallucinogen. It was pure liquid acid, dripped onto centimetre cubes of plaster of paris, which you had to keep in the freezer to prevent the drug evaporating. Having chewed and swallowed a cube apiece, we listened to "Sister Ray" at huge volume, pinioned in our chairs. It was my first and only true synaesthetic experience: I could actually see this music, a turbulent, roiling maelstrom in which, though merely mono, the various constituent elements were clearly visible as a three-dimensional sculpture of visual sound. Quite extraordinary.

And yet there lies in Reed's remark a grain of truth. For while its predecessor, *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, has subsequently become garlanded with legendary status as the Great Influential Album, *White Light/White Heat* remains comparatively unknown, a secret infatuation esteemed mostly by initiates and obsessives. It's the purer, less compromised of the two records, and the better for it. It's also the Velvets album on which John Cale's input is most significant, both musically and vocally.

"NO-ONE LISTENED to it," claims Lou Reed in the press release for this reissue of The Velvet Underground's second album. "But there it is, forever – the quintessence of articulated punk."

He's only partly correct: Reed's assessment of *White*

Where the debut had blended candy pop, modal drones and chugging rock riffs, here the pop element was reduced to just the token two minutes of "Here She Comes Now", a soothing mantra that served as a brief moment of balm amongst the blistering noise, a guttering light in the churning darkness.

The rest of the album constitutes one of rock's great warts'n'all masterpieces – a barrage of heavily distorted, churning riff noise in which the usual rock influences are given a jolt of speed and a crash-course, courtesy of Cale's seething organ and viola, in the minimalist experiments of LaMonte Young and Terry Riley. The speed-freak anthem title track opens proceedings at a shambolic sprint, Reed's hammered piano and the harmony hooks applying a sleek varnish to its oddly sluggish momentum. Then Cale's lugubrious Valley Boy intonation narrates "The Gift", the ghoulish tragic-comic tale of poor Waldo Jeffers' doomed attempt to visit his old girlfriend via the US Mail, a debacle animated over eight minutes by the band's curmudgeonly, rolling groove, which seems to celebrate Waldo's absurd fate with an existential relish. Thanks to the various additions here, it's possible to hear "The Gift" in mono, the original stereo (story to the left, music to the right), as an instrumental, or just as the story.

The new remastering is most effective on "Lady Godiva's Operation", another grim tale sung by

Cale as a haunting, distracted lullaby, with startling interjections from Reed. It's now recognisable as the album's most complex sound-montage, containing sound effects – breathing, heartbeat, whispering, moaning – only partly discernible in the muffled original version. The second side opens with "I Heard Her Call My Name", perhaps the single most intensely amphetamine track ever recorded, a surge of erotic ardour that bursts in, mid-flow, on a spear of piercing guitar, galloping along on the edge of feedback as Reed exults in how a girl's attention makes his "mind split open". It's one of the taproot riffs not just of punk but also Krautrock, a charging motorik that sets up the climactic 17-minute demimonde tableau of "Sister Ray", another rolling, sluggish riff in which Cale's stabbing organ jousts with Reed's tortured guitar whine, as Moe Tucker and Sterling Morrison's anchoring groove speeds up and subsides beneath an uncoiling, semi-improvised scrawl that owes nothing to the usual blues roots.

The subsequent departure of Cale removed the sense of pitched battle from their sound, throwing the spotlight on Reed's tales of emotional erosion among losers and lovers on the fringes of society. As a result, the Velvets effectively contracted into a dinky rock'n'roll group, with the aggressive blitzkrieg snarl of *White Light/White Heat* supplanted by the more intimate style of their eponymous third album, with its recovery-ward air of acquiescence. The cusp of this change is captured in the additional outtakes of "Temptation Inside Your Heart", "Beginning To See The Light", "Stephanie Says", "Guess I'm Falling In Love" and two versions of "Hey Mr Rain"; but the real bonus here is the complete April 30, 1967 show from The Gymnasium, NYC, a tremendously involving performance that captures the Velvets at something

like their optimum, from the chugging proto-punk of "Guess I'm Falling In Love" to a 19-minute "Sister Ray" that adds a switchblade panache to the album version.

As for my debauched acid weekend, that didn't end well. The next night, I chomped another plaster cube and we went to see *Carnal Knowledge*, which had just come out. And then my mind split open.





LE GRANDE KALLE

His Life, His Music

STERNS

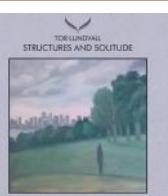
Classic sounds from the godfather of Congolese music

9/10

In all the crate-digging by specialist labels in recent years which has unearthed lost historical gems from all over West Africa, the ground-breaking sounds of Congolese rumba have tended to get overlooked. Le Grand Kalle – real name Joseph Kabasele – formed the first full-time Congolese band in 1950. He named it African Jazz, a somewhat misleading description since they played gently swaying guitar-led dance music that fused imported Cuban rhythms with African idioms. By the time of Congo's independence in 1960, 'Kalle' was leading the most influential band in Africa, featuring the outstanding guitarist Dr Nico and the young saxophonist/keyboardist Manu Dibango. They celebrated by recording the enchanting "Independence Cha Cha", one of the key tracks in this splendid, two-disc 38-track set that chronicles Kalle's career from his first recordings in 1951 until his death in 1970. Over the years, his style developed from the simple but beguiling 'tropical' sound of the 1950s to a fuller, rootsier flavour that re-Africanised the Latin rhythms and pointed the way to the high-octane style of later soukous stars such as Kanda Bongo Man.

EXTRAS: A superb 104-page historical booklet 8/10 with insightful text complemented by a wealth of evocative photos.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



TOR LUNDVALL

Structures And Solitude

DAIS

Serene, sometimes sinister atmospherics from NJ artist-composer

7/10

Tor Lundvall's paintings depict the scenery of nature, the wilderness the surrounds his studio in the deep woodland of East Hampton, right down towards the eastern tip of Long Island. There is no sense of bucolic warmth to his canvases. Instead, these autumnal forests and rolling fields are dotted by fleeting shadows or cower beneath troubled skies, imbued with a melancholy that at times verges on menace. Turning his hand to music in the late '90s, Lundvall's recordings strike a similar tone, cloudy suites of dark folk, neo-classical instrumentation and sombre Eno atmosphere that he has dubbed "ghost ambient". *Structures And Solitude* collects four sold-out albums, starting with 2004's *Last Light* and ending with last year's *The Shipyard*, plus one final disc of new instrumental. His soundscapes are meticulous, misty gusts of sound lent movement by subtle rhythms, cymbal washes and spectral strings. *The Shipyard* is as close as the collection gets to industrial, a fog-wreathed portrait of a port at dawn. The best work is that which brings Lundvall's voice to the fore, though, "Storm" and "Cold" imbued with a dark dreaminess that recalls David Sylvian's '80s ambient work.

EXTRAS: *Night Studies*, 18-track instrumental 8/10 album. Discs packaged with additional bonus and instrumental tracks.

LOUIS PATTISON



MANU CHAO

Siberie M'était Contée

BECAUSE

First international release for 2004 French-language album

7/10

Only released previously as a limited-edition in France, *Siberie M'était Contée* presents the Spanish-French maverick globalista in both familiar and unfamiliar guise. Chao's trademark has always been world beat with a Latino vibe and a studied avoidance of any influence from the French music he grew up hearing in the Paris suburbs and which he once famously dismissed as "bullshit". On *Siberie...* he revised his opinion and created his own leftfield homage to the world of chanson, variete and musette. At times his French vocals – a language he'd rarely sung in before – sound like pastiche and you wonder if it's all intended as a send-up. But when it works the results can be spectacular, as on "Helno Est Mort", in which the nursery rhyme "Au Clair de la Lune" mutates brilliantly into a New Orleans funeral march. More familiar is the execution, as Chao's unique take on musique française is filtered through his customary cut-and-paste laptop technique to create a hypnotic, freewheeling collage that glide beguilingly in and out of focus.

EXTRAS: A book of lyrics with illustrations 6/10 by Jacek Wozniak. His 1998 career highlight *Clandestino* gets a simultaneous reissue after several years out of print due to copyright issues.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE POGUES

30 Years

RHINO

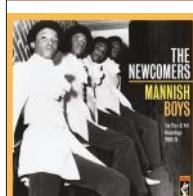
Career-wrapping doorstopper including Strummer-era live album

9/10

Now that The Pogues are as prominent a fixture of a British Christmas as Wizzard, Slade and Cliff Richard, it's difficult to recall what a peculiar proposition they seemed, upon their emergence in the early 1980s: a troupe of punk rockers equipped with folk instruments, fronted by a public schoolboy who thought he was Brendan Behan. This boxset offers the chance to revisit the unlikely, glorious saga, wrapping up remastered/remixed versions of all seven studio albums with a previously unreleased live album, recorded in 1991 during Joe Strummer's tenure as singer. The trajectory charted is one of vertiginous ascent, followed by steady – though largely dignified – decline. The Pogues' first three albums are as spectacular an opening salvo as anyone has recorded: what follows is essentially the sound of a band trying to keep afloat a jerry-rigged craft crowded with volatile personalities. The new temptation here, the Strummer-fronted live show, reminds what a colossal live group The Pogues were – and, on the good nights of their sporadic reunions, are. The highlights are the acknowledgements of what Strummer's punk and The Pogues' folk always had in common: utterly joyous versions of "London Calling" and "I Fought The Law".

EXTRAS: None.

ANDREW MUELLER



THE NEWCOMERS

Mannish Boys

STAX

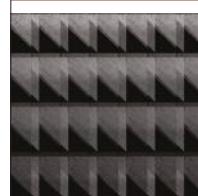
The complete works of an overlooked Memphis boy band

7/10

Although Stax signed a handful of sweet soul harmony groups, none were given the nurturing care and attention afforded the label's higher profile marquee names. Like The Mad Lads and The Astors before them, The Newcomers frustratingly saw a lot of their recordings shelved; reissue specialists Ace Records have previously unveiled a few tracks on multi-artist compilations, but *Mannish Boys* trains the spotlight on two dozen rare gems, some recorded for the Volt and Truth labels. The sound primarily leans towards the bouncy bubblegum of the early Jackson Five, especially on the playground romantic romp of "Pin The Tail On The Donkey" and the coming-of-age saga "Still A Boy In My Heart". There's a more mature and sophisticated sheen to the lush balladry of "Betcha Can't Guess Who" and "Mannish Boy", while "Keep An Eye On Your Close Friends" takes its lead from the percussive funk fellow Stax signing Isaac Hayes explored on the soundtrack to *Shaft*. The Newcomers had two accomplished lead singers, Terry Bartlett and Randy Brown, their call-and-response on the earlier cuts bringing to mind the interplay of Michael and Jermaine Jackson, most notably on the 10 previously unreleased demos that offer an insight into the group's inner workings.

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON



ELIANE RADIGUE

Adnos I-III (reissue, 2002)

IMPORTANT

Monolithic, magnificent, minimal drone drifting

9/10

For five decades, American minimalist Eliane Radigue has been relentless in her pursuit of a particular version of the ever-changing same. She's not released too many records, which means both that her few releases are all incredibly articulate and beautifully formed, and also that she never exhausts the parameters she works within: each album is a welcome entry in the narrative arc of her career. If she has a defining moment, though, it is surely *Adnos*, a series of pieces realised in the late 1970s but unreleased until the early 21st Century. *Adnos* sums up Radigue's aesthetic in three long, thick, understated drone-outs: each disc consists of one track, running to about 70 minutes, of Radigue figuring out a framework for her composition and then letting it unfurl incredibly slowly. It's the kind of work whose phenomenological impact rests on deceptive movement: the manner in which *Adnos* unfolds renders the minute changes Radigue makes almost imperceptible, yet you end somewhere rather different to where you started. About 25 minutes into "Adnos I", for example, Radigue unassumingly introduces gently struck percussion tones, cloaked in analog synthesis: the impact of this introduction is immense. The cumulative effect is incredibly powerful.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

The Specialist >

The Radiophonic Workshop



► IT IS A coincidence, of course, but in the same month the BBC splashes out on an all-star celebration of the 50th anniversary of one of its most cherished and lucrative franchises, *Doctor Who*, the defunct sound effects unit that created the Timelord's whooshing theme tune in 1963 receives a rather more modest accolade, though one that seems entirely in line with its retro-futurist appeal. Two early landmark albums by The Radiophonic Workshop are to be repressed on – yes – vinyl.

Both 1968's *BBC Radiophonic Workshop* and 1975's *The Radiophonic Workshop* were reissued on CD as recently as 2008 by Mute's The Grey Area imprint, but such is the romantic allure of this archaic organisation and its pioneering circuit-benders that its story, like the progressive sounds it smuggled on to the airwaves, never gets old. In the likes of Delia Derbyshire, John Baker and David Cain, the Beeb's Maida Vale Workshop attracted a cadre of bookish composers in the '60s who applied the avant-garde techniques of Stockhausen and Boulez and elements of *musique concrète* to their open-ended brief to produce effects and

new music for radio and TV. In the process they'd become the unsung heroes of British electronics, tinting the output of everyone from Pink Floyd to Aphex Twin, The Human League to Broadcast.

Remastered by Radiophonic archivist Mark Ayres, *BBC Radiophonic Workshop MUSIC ON VINYL* (8/10) collects the first fruits of the unit's beavering, a period of intense experimentation involving customised equipment, tape loops and unorthodox recording methods used to create, on the one hand, queasy incidental ditties such as Baker's "Sea Sports" or his Raymond Scott-ish nursery rhyme "Boys And Girls", and, on the other, Derbyshire's eerie, otherworldly abstracts. There's a sense of eccentric wonder about the record, as if the team were genuinely excited by their task to devise new ways of coding the bright future that surely lay ahead.

Alas, by 1975's *BBC Radiophonic Workshop MUSIC ON VINYL* (7/10), the space race was over, the hippy dream had withered and Wings were in full flight. But all was not lost: the Workshop had loosened its tie and acquired the early EMS VCS3 synthesisers from which

new recruits such as Malcolm Clarke, Paddy Kingsland and Roger Limb extracted the kind of Martin Denny-esque exotica common to many music libraries at that time. With the bubbling "Bath Time" and a mad medieval romp called "Romanescan Rout", Clarke seems particularly perverse. Even back then, the nerds were having the last laugh. *PIERS MARTIN*



RAMONES
*The Sire Years
1976-81*
WARNER MUSIC/RHINO

1-2-3-4-(5-6) –
definitive
introduction to
punk's big bruvvas

8/10

"I don't know why I'm so sour," sighed bassist and songwriter Dee Dee Ramone at the conclusion of the grim 2003 Ramones documentary, *End Of The Century*. "I guess it was just an ugly life somehow." A miserable three-chord soap opera in their declining years, the New Yorkers' great tragedy may have been that they got it so right first time. This cheapo boxed set brings together their first six studio albums, their self-titled 1976 debut setting the tone with its combination of mother-me defiance (Dee Dee's rent boy anthem "53rd & 3rd"), sawn-off Beach Boys ("Blitzkrieg Bop") and soppy Shangri-Las ("Today Your Love, Tomorrow The World"). That formula thrills on *Leave Home* and *Rocket To Russia*, before it turns into an unrewarding day job on *Road To Ruin* and the Phil Spector-produced *End Of The Century*. That being said, 1981's flyweight *Pleasant Dreams* is an unexpected joy, Joey Ramone hinting at friction with guitarist Johnny Ramone on "The KKK Took My Baby Away", and breaking into a giddy foxtrot for the sweet "It's Not My Place". Had the story ended here, perhaps everyone would have been happier in the long run.

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH

ROYAL TRUX
*Veterans Of
Disorder* (reissue,
1999)
DOMINO

Post-grunge power
couple after their
goldrush

7/10

Having extracted a \$1m contract from Virgin Records at what guitarist Neil Hagerty called "a peak in the post-Nirvana-death market", reeling stoners Royal Trux enjoyed their ultimate triumph when they returned to indie-land for 1998's cock-rock stink bomb *Accelerator*, the concluding instalment of what Pussy Galore-alumnus Hagerty and his then-partner Jennifer Herrema conceived as a trilogy based respectively on the '60s, '70s and '80s. Now back in print, its likeable follow-up was just slightly more of the same; asked at the time what marked *Veterans Of Disorder* out from its predecessors, former kite-shop sales assistant and Calvin Klein model Herrema conceded somewhat sheepishly: "It's not all that different, really." Smarter than their trailer trash Sid and Nancy schtick suggested, Herrema and Hagerty had reportedly quit hard drugs by this stage, their wonky idea of clean living evinced by the Lynyrd Skynyrd log flume ride "Waterpark" and Highway 61 pile-up "Coming Out Party". Elsewhere, Ted Nugent-meets-Tom Verlaine on fuzz-feast "Blue Is The Frequency", and if *Veterans* is the sound of the Trux slowly running out of gas, it still just about holds its place in the fast lane.

EXTRAS: None.

JIM WIRTH



LEE HAZLEWOOD INDUSTRIES

There's A Dream I've Been Saving 1966-1971

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Cosmic Cowboy's indie label exhumed. By Alastair McKay



9/10

What he didn't quite accept, though the evidence is plentiful, is that in career terms he had a habit of shooting himself in the high-heeled boot.

The label, LHI, was formed in 1966 when Hazlewood's reputation was rising. Prior to his unlikely star-turn with Sinatra, the former DJ from Oklahoma had been round the block a couple of times; scoring a hit with Sanford Clark in 1956, and adding the echo to Duane Eddy's twang. He had also laid the foundations of an idiosyncratic solo career with *Trouble Is A Lonesome Town* (1963) and *The NSVIPS* (1964).

LHI took his ambition to another level, though it remains unclear just what Hazlewood wanted from the imprint. It can be viewed as one

SIX YEARS AFTER his death, 47 years since his biggest hit (Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made For Walking"), Lee Hazlewood remains an enigma. Partly, he designed it that way. Throughout his career, he cast himself as an outsider, a drifter, a cowboy.

of the first great indie labels, though it was run from an office at 9000 Sunset Blvd with scant regard for commerce. Indeed, Suzi Jane Hokom, whose roles included production and art direction (as well as being romantically involved with Hazlewood) suggests the boss wasn't bothered about hits. He ran a label because others were prepared to fund it.

Still, he gave his co-conspirators free rein, and strange things happened, even if few people noticed. Hokom was allowed to develop as a producer, and used her influence to get the International Submarine Band signed, though Hazlewood was ambivalent about Gram Parsons. (Hokom suggests his disinterest was, at root, based on jealousy.)

A relaxed, chaotic endeavour, LHI had an open-door approach, and a studio band comprised of key members of The Wrecking Crew (guitarist Al Casey was an associate from Hazlewood's time as a DJ in Phoenix), with back-up from the likes of future Byrds



Q&A

Suzi Jane Hokom



How did you meet Lee?

We all hung out those days at Martoni's, an Italian restaurant in the heart of Hollywood where everybody hung out – promotion men, A&R guys, artists. I was 19, I'd already made some records, and I met him through mutual friends. I found him so refreshingly fascinating.

How was LHI run? All of us were in it for our lives. We were there 'cause this was going to be our shot at doing something fabulous. But then you have The Master dictating what he thinks, and Lee wasn't the hippest when it came to rock'n'roll. With the little finite nuances of these artists – sometimes he didn't get it.

How would you sum Lee up? Basically, Lee really was a writer. I would have loved to have seen him write books. He just had such an interesting take. There was a bitterness, and yet a great sensitivity and romanticism. That's what I fell in love with – his writing. I think writing was a way that he could express what he couldn't express himself in life. He was a small guy. Short, tiny. There was this gruff exterior... he called himself Grey Headed Old Son Of A Bitch – every love letter was signed GHSOB. That was who he decided he was gonna be. His sensitivity and his great humour came out in his writing.

Clarence White and Ry Cooder. The output was varied. Between the grooves, you can hear the beginnings of a tear in the generation gap. Hazlewood is relaxed with the straight-up country of Sanford Clark ("The Black Widow Spider" could almost be a future hit for Richard Hawley). The baroque pop of "Sunshine Soldier" by Arthur is extraordinary. But Hazlewood's instincts pushed the Detroit girl group Honey Ltd away from political engagement. Indeed, LHI's trademark is the tension between Hazlewood's instincts and those of his acts (see the tethered psychedelia of "Maharishi", by The Aggregation). Other acts were invented to fill quotas (Rabbit, with Hokom's rabbit Friday on the LP cover).

Of course, the whole thing is overshadowed by Hazlewood's own recordings. True, Ann-Margret isn't quite a replacement for Nancy Sinatra, because the Swedish starlet over-enunciates. But the duets with Hokom are among his best work. The Virgil Warner and Suzi Hokom album is equally good – see the sultry "Summer Wine".

LHI ends when Hazlewood moves to Sweden, to collaborate with Torbjorn Axelsson, escape the taxman and help his son avoid the draft. The move coincides with the end of his relationship with Hokom, which he chronicles in 1971's extraordinary *Requiem For An Almost Lady* (included in full). It's a nasty, poetic, beautiful, hurting record, in which the wounded poet tries to understand the hangover of his own hurt. As usual, Lee Hazlewood is the hero of his own song, making fun of the pain, looking for revenge in the comedy of his pathos. "*In the beginning, there was nothing*," he croons, "*but it was kinda fun to watch nothing grow*."

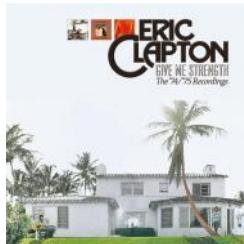
EXTRAS: The simple box has four CDs (all **10/10** Hazlewood's LHI Recordings, plus key tracks from LHI stable), 172-page book, *Cowboy In Sweden* on DVD, flexidisc and other ephemera. Deluxe edition also has three DVD data discs, including 17 albums, and 140 A&B sides in WAV and MP3 format. Plus promo photos.

ERIC CLAPTON

Give Me Strength: The '74/'75 Recordings

POLYDOR

Six-disc set from the 'identity crisis' years – three albums, outtakes, lives and a session with Freddie King. By Nigel Williamson



8/10

owned by Lord Harlech, father of his then girlfriend Alice Ormsby-Gore, rising at dawn and "working like a maniac, baling hay, chopping logs, sawing trees and mucking out the cows". While regaining physical and mental fitness, the simplicities of farm life also gave Clapton untroubled space to collect his thoughts and assemble them into songs and ideas for a new album, his first studio recording since '70's *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs*.

By the time he arrived in Miami to record *461 Ocean Boulevard*, he had a portfolio of well-chosen covers and a handful of original compositions and a new minimalist approach, heavily influenced by JJ Cale. On the album's release in July '74, opinion immediately divided into two opposing camps. To those whose idea of heavy rock heaven was a pummelling, 20-minute version of "Crossroads", his laidback mellow ness was an ambition-free under-selling of his talent. More discerning fans who shared Clapton's admiration for the rootsier sounds of Cale, The Band, Leon Russell *et al* welcomed the humbler aesthetic and the tightly structured songs, and hailed a career highlight.

The follow up, '75's *There's One In Every Crowd* – the original title 'The World's Greatest Guitar Player (There's One In Every Crowd)' was abbreviated by Robert Stigwood who thought the irony too subtle for Clapton's more lumpen fans – was cut from similar cloth and recorded in Jamaica, a choice of location which reflected the success of "I Shot The Sheriff" which had topped the *Billboard* singles chart. To promote the two studio albums, he toured with his US studio band, shows that were recorded for the '75 live album, *E.C. Was Here*.

This six-disc set presents those three original albums, all recorded within a fertile

IN HIS 2007 autobiography, Eric Clapton revealed the unconventional manner in which he prepared for his '74 comeback after three years lost to heroin addiction. As part of his rehabilitation, he went to work on a Shropshire farm

15-month period, as an inter-linked trilogy, augmented by 29 bonus tracks, including studio outtakes, additional lives and a famous session with Freddie King, recorded in summer '74 for the bluesman's *Burglar* album. 5.1 Surround Sound and quadraphonic mixes of both studio releases complete the package.

Marketed as a celebration of a "watershed era" that marked a "spectacular creative resurgence", the truth behind the record company hyperbole is somewhat more complex and interesting. Clapton's own description of his return is distinctly more modest, a sketchy, tentative process to find "a way to restore my playing capabilities in the company of proper musicians". But trying to break from his past and forge a new

musical identity was a confusing and contradictory experience, as he was pushed in different directions by the expectations and demands placed upon him. Nowhere is this more evident than in the live material, when faced with an American stadium rock crowd yelling for his old warhorses, that's exactly what Clapton gave them. Of the 16 concert tracks, only three feature material from *461 Ocean Boulevard/There's One In Every Crowd*. The rest constitutes a

Cream/Blind Faith/Derek & The Dominos greatest hits set, which even when the old material is given a loping Tulsa groove cannot disguise a lack of confidence in his 'new' material. It didn't help that back on the road he was soon on autopilot once more, swapping heroin for brandy to self-medicate himself. At times the '74 tour found him so drunk he played while lying on the floor. A less severe judgement might hold that his new musical direction required smaller, more intimate venues than the same ensembles he'd played and so hated with Blind Faith five years earlier.

That he could still peel off technically brilliant extended guitar solos when called upon is evident from the Freddie King session and, in particular, a previously unreleased 22-minute jam on "Gambling Woman Blues". But almost 40 years on, it's the two studio solo albums that continue to fascinate most, as we hear him resolutely attempting to bury the 'old' EC and trying on different musical personas to see what fits, from the reggae-lite of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" to the JJ Cale pastiche of "Steady Rollin' Man" and "Little Rachel" via the Harrison-cloned "High" and the lovely "Let It Grow", which bore the unintended influence of "Stairway To Heaven" by Led Zeppelin, a band he famously loathed. Paradoxically, out of this identity crisis, he fashioned some of the most coherent music of his career.



INCLUDED:

DISC 1

461 Ocean Boulevard
(Expanded Version)

DISC 2

There's One In Every Crowd
(Expanded Version)

DISC 3&4

E.C. Was Here (Remixed
and Expanded Version)

DISC 5

The Freddie King Criteria
Studios Sessions

DISC 6 BLU-RAY

461 Ocean Boulevard Elliot
Scheiner 5.1 Surround Sound
mix (previously unreleased)

461 Ocean Boulevard

(original quadraphonic mix)

There's One In Every Crowd

(original quadraphonic mix)



TRASE
Tape Recorder
And Synthesiser
Ensemble
FINDERS KEEPERS

Schoolboy electronics, saved from obscurity

7/10

specialising in the baking of old analogue tapes to prepare them for state-of-the-art remastering. In 1981, though, he was 16 years old and using his science and metalwork classes to experiment with the building of synthesisers, electronic mixers and electronic percussion modules. A taste of the project is supplied by the cover artwork – two endearingly gawky adolescent boys captured fiddling with an array of modular synths and reel-to-reel tape machines in a ‘studio’ that is clearly just a suburban garage, right down to the tins of the paint and the learner plate pinned to the back wall. The songs are shaky in that time-honoured outsider pop fashion – see “Unrequited Love”, on which Popplewell wobbles about “*the girl of my so-called dreams*”. Sonically, though, TRASE acquit themselves rather well, from the John Carpenter synthscapes of “Sketch 5” to “Harmonium”, a plaintive proto-shoegaze wash with hints of New Order’s *Movement* to be heard in its raincloud melancholy. Two spirited covers include a take on The Glitter Band’s “Angel Face”, recalling the synth-pop rock’n’roll of Daniel Miller’s Silicon Teens, and a version of Gary Numan’s “We Are So Fragile” that might just outstrip the original for febrile intensity.

EXTRAS: None.

LOUIS PATTISON



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Purple Snow: Forecasting The Minneapolis Sound
NUMERO GROUP

Cataloguing the scene that spawned Prince

7/10

fairly insignificant region in the R&B world until one Prince Rogers Nelson came along in the late '70s and pioneered the Minneapolis Sound, giving funk a digital makeover. That's the standard narrative anyway, but this lavish 2CD package (complete with a detailed 56-page booklet) shines a light on the fertile R&B scene from which Prince emerged. Many of these artists became part of Prince's circle, including producers Terry Lewis and Jimmy Jam (here fronting the prog funk outfit Mind & Matter) and André Cymone (here represented by the Shuggie Otis-like android blues of “Somebody Said”). Others specialised in high-end, EWF-style jazz-funk and Latin-soul which clearly influenced His Purpleness: The Lewis Connection and Music, Love & Funk recall Bootsy Collins, while the remarkable Haze sound like Santana fronted by Crosby, Stills & Nash. But the most prescient tracks slather on the shiny '80s futurism, like the lopsided synthpop of Sue Ann Carwell's “Should I Or Should I Not?” or the squelchy soul of Steven's “Quick”, while Alexander O'Neal (then a Jam & Lewis protégé) provides some wonderful, growling proto-electro. Not all of it works three decades on, but it's a fascinating rummage through a neglected canon.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS



WORLD OF TWIST
Quality Street
(reissue, 1991)
3 LOOP MUSIC

The missing link between baggy and Britpop

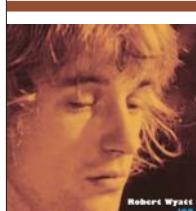
8/10

meld “Barry Gray, Roxy Music and Wigan’s Chosen Few”, World of Twist were legends in their own living room – a kitschy, psychedelic blizzard of pure pop escapism that fizzled out before it really got going. Beset by Spinal Tap-style fiascos – the anthemic “Sons Of The Stage” was denied entry to the Top 40 on a technicality, while they spunked their advance on stage props, including a 12-foot volcano that never made it inside a venue – their sole album, *Quality Street*, failed to capitalise on early promise. The band blamed anaemic production from The Grid, partly rescued by this remaster, yet you can also detect something mischievous in their preference for bingo-hall keys over blokey guitars (a subversive streak that became more explicit when the majority of them regrouped as Earl Brutus). It probably all sounded rather rinky-dink in “the year punk broke”, but in *Quality Street*’s junkshop glamour and playful retro-futurism, you can hear a blueprint for Britpop and beyond.

EXTRAS: A second disc of remixes, B-sides

7/10 and, crucially, the two BBC sessions which the band always felt more accurately represented their sound, plus remarkable live versions of “She’s A Rainbow” and “Kick Out The Jams”.

SAM RICHARDS



ROBERT WYATT
'68

CUNEIFORM

Solo demos from the end of a Soft Machine era

Soft Machine toured the US alongside The Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1968, and during downtime

in New York State and California, Robert Wyatt made a handful of superb solo demos which have remained undiscovered until now. Hendrix himself plays bass on “Slow Walkin’ Talk”, one of the four tracks presented on '68, recorded at a house the Softs shared with the Experience. These tracks were made in a state of limbo, between Kevin Ayers leaving and the re-alignment of Soft Machine as a jazz rock/prog outfit, and as such they reflect Wyatt's unfettered experimentation and eccentrically humorous play. Parts of “Rivmick Melodies” ended up comprising some of Soft Machine's *Volume Two*, but here the absurd ABC recitation involves layered voices like some zany, snipped-up zoo radio. Wyatt then steers the track into some hard-driving modal jazz rock, and finally thanks his promoters and the press in the style of a jingle. “Chelsea” is an extemporisation on a Daevid Allen song which later appeared as Matching Mole's “Signed Curtain”, and a 20-minute “Moon In June” ranges across diaristic ramblings on relationship minutiae, swinging organ workouts, and magnificently lugubrious Anglophonics: “*Living is easy here in New York State/But I wish I was at home again in West Dulwich.*”

EXTRAS: None.

ROB YOUNG

COMING NEXT MONTH...



► If the Christmas period is noted for its handsome packaging, and its quality re-releases then the start of the year is all about new releases. Whether it's great

records by newer artists like Doug Paisley or strong returns from hardy perennials like Stephen Malkmus or Mogwai, there's evidently going to be more to January than a tax bill and a “detox”.

In the “strong returns” category, January finds **Damien Jurado** offering a record called **Brothers And Sisters Of The Eternal Sun**.

A sequel of a kind to his 2012 recording **Maraqopa**, about a man in search of himself, the record's existential narrative has been fleshed out in reality with the help of producer/melodist Richard Swift.

It would be hard for **Wig Out At Jagbags**, **Stephen Malkmus**' new confluence of jams and observational wit to quite match up to its title, but **Mogwai's Rave Tapes**, a seamless mixture of their customary brooding ambience and sharp electronic business does just that. It's great.

A more familiar beast, **Doug Paisley's Strong Feelings** serves up a fabulous cocktail of traditional Americana and raw



emotion, but as it might sound filtered through **The Dark Side Of The Moon**. Strong stuff indeed.

JOHN ROBINSON

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Bruce Dern takes a road trip round the American Midwest, Robert Redford gets all washed up, a Gothic masterpiece is re-released, Ridley Scott misjudges everything and we visit life aboard a fishing trawler

NEBRASKA Looking back on the ways in which Hollywood had changed since he started out as an actor, Bruce Dern told *Uncut* in 2004, "Where are the people?

Where are the stories? That's what the '70s was, and each of us who survived, those are the kind of movies we always wanted to make. And always will try and make. And whenever there's one out there like that – look for us to be involved in it. I'm still trying to be a better actor. I'm still hoping I'm growing. Y'know, there's no retirement. Shit, if you're 80 play 80!" In many respects, Alexander Payne's new film, *Nebraska*, fulfills Dern's requirements. It gives a plum role to Dern – now in his 77th year – as Woody Grant, a grizzled, faintly bewildered retiree who undertakes an 850-mile road trip from his hometown of Billings, Montana to Lincoln, Nebraska on the dubious promise of a million-dollar payout. Superficially, at least, the plot resembles another one of Payne's films, *About Schmidt*, which similarly shifted our perceptions of another New Hollywood star – Jack Nicholson. But in other ways *Nebraska* revives the spirit of Dern's beloved '70s cinema, too, starting with the vintage Paramount logo Payne dusts down for the start of the film. Meanwhile, you might spot the way the story riffs on Paul Mazursky's *Harry And Tonto* – another loose yarn concerning a septuagenarian on a road trip – or perhaps find similarities to Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* in Payne's use of monochrome smalltown photography.

The small town is a critical factor here, I think. Payne is an unusual figure among contemporary film directors in that he still references his non-California origins. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, Payne seems to studiously avoid large metropolitan settings in his films, instead championing recognisably regional environments – in particular his home state. Events in both *Election* and *About Schmidt* take place in the suburbs of Omaha; *Sideways* steers a gentle course round the sleepy vineyards of the Santa Ynez Valley; *The Descendants*, meanwhile, abandons mainland America altogether in favour of the Hawaiian islands.

As Woody – in the company of his long-suffering younger son David (SNL's Will Forte, in a rare straight role) – make their way through Wyoming and South Dakota towards Nebraska, Payne's film becomes a quiet requiem to the disadvantaged American



heartland; half-empty diners, rusting farm machinery and boarded-up stores suggesting that a great tranche of the country is sinking into a dark economic crisis. On a more intimate level, there is also a question mark over Woody's mental acuity: is his befuddlement simply a side effect of having nothing constructive to do with his retirement ("He needs something to live for," says his wife), or is there something more serious going on: is he drifting towards Alzheimer's? Certainly, David's decision to travel with his father is motivated as much by wanting to spend what you suspect he believes is his last significant chunk of 'quality time' with his father as it is to do with wanting to make sure he doesn't come to any harm.

But for all this, *Nebraska* is often a very funny film. The scenes involving a family reunion in the Grants' hometown of Hawthorne, Nebraska are especially funny, as news of Woody's supposed windfall turns him into a local celebrity, giving rise to expectations of payback for past debts, whether real or otherwise.

The chief claimant – and, I suppose, the film's de facto bad guy – is Woody's bull-necked former business partner, Ed Pegram, played brilliantly by Stacy Keach. Props in particular go to June Squibb (84), who plays Kathy, Woody's quarrelsome, foul-mouthed wife. A visit to the Hawthorne cemetery, where she gleefully rattles through the causes of death of various family members and other local residents is hilarious. She gets a terrific, although admittedly unexpected, punchline out of the word "cancer".

And then there's Dern, triumphant as Woody, with his shock of white hair, flannel shirt and jeans, stumbling down the road, doing his best work in 40 years. As long-suppressed details about his early life – his time in Korea, alcoholism, former girlfriends – emerge, we begin to see more clearly what has shaped this largely egotistical and cantankerous old man. These are people going nowhere, in need of something to hang on to.

Reviewed this month...



NEBRASKA
Director Alexander Payne
Starring Bruce Dern, Stacy Keach
Opens Dec 6
Certificate 15
9/10



THE INNOCENTS
Director Jack Clayton
Starring Deborah Kerr, Peter Wyngarde
Opens Dec 13
Certificate 12A
9/10



ALL IS LOST
Director JC Chandor
Starring Robert Redford
Opens Dec 26
Certificate 12A
8/10



LEVIATHAN
Directors Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Vérona Paravel
Opens Nov 29
Certificate 12A
8/10



THE COUNSELLOR
Director Ridley Scott
Starring Michael Fassbender, Javier Bardem
Opens Nov 15
Certificate 18
5/10



Silent determination: Robert Redford in the salty *All Is Lost*

► **The Innocents** One of the best recent reissue strands was the BFI's extensive Gothic season, which ran nationwide from August 2013 to January 2014, including 150 titles and around 1,000 screenings. One of many highlights is this beautiful restoration of Jack Clayton's exemplary slice of Home Counties Gothic, *The Innocents*. A loose adaptation of Henry James' ghost story *The Turn Of The Screw*, *The Innocents* still feels remarkably effective half a century on. Clayton's output only amounted to seven films across a 25-year period – including *Room At The Top*, which kickstarted the '60s kitchen-sink cycle. But *The Innocents* isn't just Clayton's masterpiece, it's one of the greats of British cinema; filmed in 1961, it's one of the last black

and white movies produced here. Adapted by Truman Capote and John Mortimer – some combo – the story finds Deborah Kerr's neurotic governess Miss Giddens increasingly convinced that the large, remote estate where she is employed is haunted by the spirits of her predecessor and her abusive lover, who might well have possessed her two young charges. Freddie Francis' atmospheric cinematography ramps up the tension – there are plenty chilling images: a ghost standing in the reeds by a lake, a beetle crawling from the mouth of a cherub statue, a spectral face emerging through the darkness at a window pane. By dint of when it was released, it's easy to confuse *The*

Innocents with the lesser goings-on in British cinema at the same time. Indeed, anyone who still thinks of Hammer or *The Wicker Man* as the *sine qua non* of British horror would do well to watch *The Innocents*. With the lights out, of course.

► **All Is Lost** Whither Robert Redford? As both actor and director, Redford seems to have become an increasingly marginalised figure in mainstream movies since the '80s: *The Last Castle*, *Spy Game*, *The Clearing*, *An Unfinished Life*, *Lions For Lambs*? Exactly. Off-screen, however, Redford has focused his energies on the Sundance Film Festival: a philanthropic gesture, which filmmakers from Soderbergh to Tarantino are presumably deeply grateful for, but what Redford actually does these days at Sundance is an intriguing question: the current festival director, John Cooper, oversees creative direction of the festival and has final decision on all films and events. However, Redford's re-emergence as an actor of significance might just get a boost from *All Is Lost* – a terrific, radical experiment by writer-director JC Chandor, with Redford's unlucky sailor crossing the Indian Ocean when his 39-foot yacht is damaged in a collision. What follows focuses on the existential business of surviving at sea, with a compelling performance from Redford as he faces crisis after crisis with Job-like determination. He has no name, no backstory and there is no dialogue: Redford's sailor is defined entirely by his actions. In a period high on survival stories – *Captain Phillips*, *Gravity* – *All Is Lost* might be the best.

► **Leviathan** More watery goings-on here – and, as with *All Is Lost*, *Leviathan* is concerned with the endeavours of hardy men operating in harsh, aquatic circumstances with dialogue conspicuously absent. Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véronique Paravel's documentary focuses on life aboard a fishing trawler in the roiling waters off the coast of Massachusetts – the same stretch of ocean where Ishmael's *Pequod* began its pursuit of Moby-Dick. This is a film of relentless and disorientating immersive experience, shot on a dozen high-definition waterproof camcorders, which slip and slide on deck and even tip in the Atlantic. It is not a film concerned with fishing quotas, local economics or the details of maritime policy, rather *Leviathan* is a deeply experimental piece, made from elemental noise and colour.

► **The Counsellor** Ridley Scott's film of Cormac McCarthy's first original screenplay is an extraordinarily odd film. The film concerns Michael Fassbender's Counsellor, who represents shady individuals along the Tex-Mex border. He succumbs to the lure of the once-in-a-lifetime deal, involving 625 kilos of cocaine being transported from Mexico to Chicago in a septic tank. Everything goes tits up in a ditch.

Along the way, we meet a tantalising array of nightclub owners, femme fatales, drug

cartel jefes, shady businessmen and killers. A typical McCarthy pre-occupation – the self-destructive choices a man makes – provides the film's motor. This is ostensibly a world familiar from countless other movies – but unfortunately, it isn't capable of sustaining the dialogue McCarthy has written here, where long portentous speeches sit awkwardly in what is essentially a neo-noir thriller. It lacks David Mamet's punch, or Christopher McQuarrie's polish. It's tonally flat and slightly dull, yet capable of moments of jaw-dropping strangeness: witness Cameron Diaz's bizarre exploits atop a yellow Ferrari.

In a period high on survival stories – Captain Phillips, Gravity – All Is Lost might be the best

Also out...

HOMEFRONT

OPENS DECEMBER 6

Former DEA agent Jason Statham moves his family to the 'burbs, where he tangles with a local druglord, James Franco. Stallone wrote the screenplay. Imagine.

OLDBOY

OPENS DECEMBER 6

Spike Lee remakes the Park Chan-wook shocker, this time with Josh Brolin kidnapped and imprisoned for 15 years and out for vengeance.



Kill Your Darlings

KILL YOUR DARLINGS

OPENS DECEMBER 6

Harry Potter is Allen Ginsberg, as a murder in 1944 draws together three of the Beats.

THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG

OPENS DECEMBER 13

More Hobbitry goings-on. Benedict Cumberbatch is the dragon, Smaug. The usual Brit thespys play dwarves and stuff.

AMERICAN HUSTLE

OPENS DECEMBER 20

'70s-set crime caper from David O Russell, reunited with pal Christian Bale.

WALKING WITH DINOSAURS: THE 3D MOVIES

OPENS DECEMBER 20

The movie version of the BBC TV series, with some properly exciting 3D action the Uncut kids will enjoy over the festive break.

ANCHORMAN 2: THE LEGEND CONTINUES

OPENS DECEMBER 20

Ron Burgundy's crew return in the '80s, where they make their presence felt on New York's first 24-hour news channel.

THE HARRY HILL MOVIE

OPENS DECEMBER 20

The great and good of British TV and films turn out to celebrate the hilarious Hill.

47 RONIN

OPENS DECEMBER 26

Remember that scene in *The Matrix* where Keanu said, "I know kung fu"? This is a bit like that, but he does samurai gear instead.

THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY

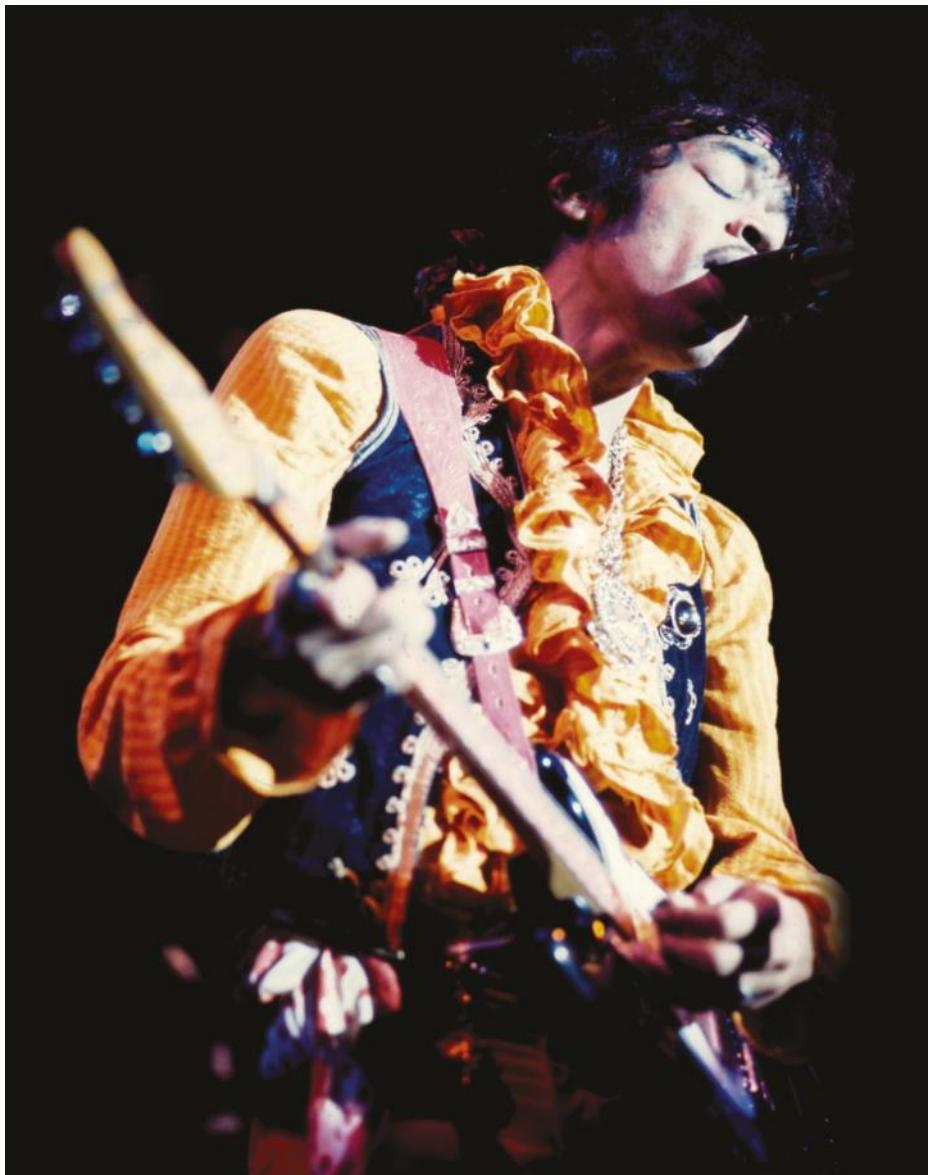
OPENS DECEMBER 26

A pet project of Ben Stiller – he directs and stars – this is the full CGI mad fantasy gear. Kristen Wiig and Sean Penn also feature.

DVD & Blu-ray

THIS MONTH: BLACK SABBATH | THE DOORS | THE ACT OF KILLING

SCORING:
10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor



JIMI HENDRIX *Hear My Train A-Comin'*

SONY LEGACY

A fascinating life story, disappointingly told. By John Robinson



ONE OF THE disappointments about *All Is By My Side*, the forthcoming biopic of Jimi Hendrix, is that the Hendrix estate, Experience Hendrix LLC, has denied permission to use any of his music in the film. The implication being, if anyone is going to tell the late guitar master's story, then it will be them.

6/10

Hear My Train A-Comin' is surely intended as that definitive telling of the story – and since it is supervised by a family member (Hendrix's adopted sister Janie), one hopes it might be told with intimacy, warmth and nuance. As it turns out, the film, while

comprehensive, is actually a strange mixture of dryly objective, and plain misleading. The self-evident truth of the artist, which is to say he was a magnificent player and songwriter who needed a good producer; an over-milked cash cow in life; who died a tragic, grubby death is barely touched upon. Hendrix as presented here is never less than gifted, saintly. This, duly, is less documentary than hagiography.

Just as Jimi and his music endure beyond the grave, so do many of the speakers here. Chas Chandler, Noel Redding, Mitch Mitchell, Jimi himself, and his dad, Al Hendrix. All have since departed this earth and most have their comments imported from other documentaries, but all are presented here without indication of when they might have been talking, or to whom. It's precisely the level of respect for archive

material that we have come to expect from Experience Hendrix.

Still: kudos for finding Hendrix's old Harlem girlfriend Fayne Pridgon, getting good stuff from Paul McCartney, and interviewing the fabulous Linda Keith. But while this clearly wants to be the last word on the subject, the film is in hock to other people's Jimis, leaving little idea of who its own should be. For a man apparently generous to a fault, Hendrix's authorised documentary is not a film that apportions much credit to anyone else.

As you might hope for from the estate, the true strengths here are archival. There are good snatches of black and white footage capturing the Experience on tour in the UK on the "Bexley Black Prince" circuit, and playing watched by The Beatles at Brian Epstein's Saville Theatre. The Woodstock formation of Hendrix's band, never generally given much credit, is at least covered – and deep percussionist Juma Sultan is interviewed. Elsewhere Fayne Pridgon fleetingly alludes to the essentially racist "Wild Man Of Borneo" crap that trumpeted Hendrix's arrival in the UK.

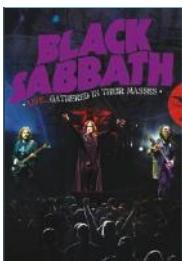
This – namely, the press story – is a narrative that is less familiar, and might have been profitably explored – especially since both Hendrix's UK publicist (Keith Altham) and his US counterpart (Michael Goldstein) are lucid good company. Goldstein uncovers a lesser-discussed problem that Hendrix ran up against in the USA: he wouldn't get played on the radio and *The Ed Sullivan Show* turned him down. Hendrix's success there was, therefore, solely down to live shows and word-of-mouth. Wow! Tell me more! Oh OK, don't, just tell me some more about how the public showman was a mask for the private person.

Unfortunately, though, for all the wealth of reminiscence available here, this is not a film of great artistry or insight. The narrative will be familiar to anyone who watched then or has seen since the great 1989 *South Bank Show* film by Barnaby Thompson and Tom McGuinness (from which the extensive Chandler and Redding interviews derive). Likewise many of the interviewees and most touching archive stuff here (Hendrix caught playing the song "Hear My Train A-Comin'" itself) will be known to anyone who saw Joe Boyd's 1973 film about Hendrix – another talking-head doc, just a rather more poetic one. The whole format feels most redolent of the *Classic Albums* TV franchise – worthy but slightly dull.

In lieu of an original take on Hendrix, this film occasionally offers an arguably fictional one. Hendrix, it says here, was an accomplished parachutist, and a promising military career ended when he broke his foot. Rather than, say, an incompetent supply clerk and poor rifleman, kicked out for masturbating on guard duty. The film states Chandler couldn't get on with Jimi's later working methods, then plays "1983 (A Merman I Should Turn To Be)" as if to imply Chandler had no understanding of how to produce Hendrix's psychedelic music, which is laughable for the man behind *Are You Experienced* and *Axis: Bold As Love*. We hear a lot about how Macca got Jimi booked for Monterey, but not a thing about the role of Brian Jones, who introduced him.

Ultimately, this all comes down to what you might call a trust issue. No-one has dug deep here (possibly for fear of what they might find) and as such the Hendrix represented here is more sanitised, and more one-dimensional than he surely ever was in life. It's enjoyable to watch, but it's filled with unfortunate irony. While the claim is made for Hendrix as a revolutionary artist, this is a film all about toeing the party line. For all its strenuous effort to definitively tell his story, meanwhile, this ultimately leaves Hendrix's truth as elusive as ever.

EXTRAS: None.



BLACK SABBATH

Live...Gathered In Their Masses

VIRGIN EMI

Still powerful (if you forgot the autocue)

Tweaking the formula was not what Black Sabbath was about in 2013. Duly this no-frills performance DVD illustrates how the reformed group (albeit without drummer Bill Ward) still summon some rawness and danger, even when we see its singer painting by numbers before going onstage. The performance is still strong, a set in which "War Pigs" and "Iron Man" show the group's enduring power, even though Ozzy clings to the autocue for the new songs. Tony Iommi, still impeccable, remains as ever

"a lamppost with a guitar".
EXTRAS: None.
JOHN ROBINSON

7/10

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JOHN ROBINSON

THE DOORS

R-Evolution

EAGLE VISION

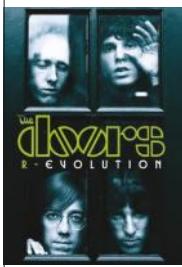
Morrison and pals on the TV pop treadmill

For all their perceived cool and mystique, when it came to touting their wares on television The Doors were no different to any other '60s band. Hence, they found themselves jumping through the typical promotional hoops of primetime pop shows; performing "Light My Fire" on the back of a fire engine on a Malibu beach, or miming to "People Are Strange" in a Manhattan park while a sheepskin-coated Murray The K looks on. Moody, Elektra-sanctioned clips of "Break On Through" and "Roadhouse Blues" are, understandably, closer to their recognisable

hipper-than-thou persona.
EXTRAS: Commentaries, featurette.
6/10 **TERRY STAUNTON**

8/10

hipper-than-thou persona.
EXTRAS: Commentaries, featurette.
6/10 **TERRY STAUNTON**



SCHALCKEN THE PAINTER

BFI (DVD & BLU-RAY)

A hushed, suspenseful film version of the classic Gothic tale

This 1979 BBC production is a Vermeer painting sprung to life. The story is based on a Sheridan Le Fanu tale in which the woman betrothed to a young painter

(Jeremy Clyde) is sold by her uncle to a mysterious, deathly suitor. The horror then unfolds in silence, as the life of a 17th-Century Dutch household is portrayed as a largely wordless series of social interactions. But the brilliantly sustained mood, and the uncanny interior lighting, only amplify the encroaching creepiness and violently erotic dénouement.

EXTRAS: Two horror shorts; documentary, booklet.
8/10 **ROB YOUNG**

9/10

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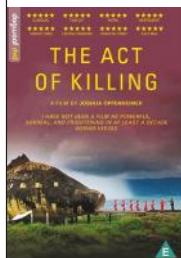


Unspeakable acts: participants in the death-squad recreations get made-up

THE ACT OF KILLING

DOGWOOF

A brave investigation of murder. By *Jonathan Romney*

**8/10**

JOSHUA OPPENHEIMER'S *The Act Of Killing* is – without exaggeration – a documentary like no other. It certainly takes the investigative docu form into some surprising areas – surrealist spectacle, behind-the-scenes 'making of', performance art – and it does it in ways that keep you asking yourself in disbelief exactly what you're looking at. The film's subjects

are murderers – small-time hoods who were hired, following Indonesia's military coup of 1965, to slaughter the enemies of the new regime, whether they were alleged Communists or simply ethnic Chinese.

Subsequently, the killers not only got away with their crimes, but have been able to bask in their glory as glamorous hard men. Discovering how much they loved movies, and how fond they were of boasting about their exploits, Oppenheimer and his co-directors – Christine Lynn and various anonymous Indonesians – gave the guilty parties ample rope to hang themselves in front of the camera. Why not invite them to make their own films, re-enacting their murderous deeds?

The film's subjects – notably a placid, affable-seeming old cove named Anwar Congo and his obese sidekick Herman Koto – happily accept the invitation, but the results are not always quite what you'd expect. Sometimes the pair stage predictable war or hard-boiled crime scenarios, but they also mount bizarre supernatural episodes and even concoct an outrageously kitsch song-and-dance number

involving chorus girls, a huge imitation fish and the theme from *Born Free*. Such scenes also offer the whale-like Herman a chance to air his penchant for grotesque drag.

Along with its moments of hideous farce, the film also offers straighter glimpses of the society that has let these men thrive. We see a rally of the orange-uniformed paramilitary organisation to which Congo and co are heroes, and a TV chat show on which the killers proudly point out that the Indonesian word for gangsters means 'free men'. In the funniest scene, the clueless Koto makes a bid for political office, but can't think of a more compelling campaign slogan than "I... am... Herman!", half-heartedly barked into a megaphone.

Black comedy aside, the cold truth hits home in Congo's two visits to a patio where he used to perform his killings, and where he proudly demonstrates his garroting style. On his second visit, however, the cracks in his calm exterior break open in alarming style: suffice to say, Congo's body, despite himself, starts to express his bad conscience in a way that he has long refused to with words.

With Werner Herzog and Errol Morris involved as executive producers, *The Act Of Killing* leaves many questions unanswered – not only because the exact chronology of its episodes remains unclear, but also because, in luring Congo and co into exposing themselves, Oppenheimer could be said to have made himself complicit with his repellent subjects. The film might also have offered much more historical context for its story, but there's no denying that *The Act Of Killing* is a riveting and fiercely original piece of cinema – the bravest and most disturbing film of 2013.

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TOM WAITS

THE BRIDGE SCHOOL BENEFIT, SHORELINE AMPHITHEATRE,
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA, OCTOBER 27, 2013

In which a failed restaurateur – specialities: eel, donuts, fish scales – repays his debt to Neil Young. Lucky day!

SETLIST

- 1 Raised Right Men
- 2 Singapore
- 3 Talking At The Same Time
- 4 Chicago
- 5 Lucky Day
- 6 Tom Traubert's Blues
- 7 Lucinda/Ain't Goin' Down To The Well
- 8 Last Leaf
- 9 Cemetery Polka
- 10 Come On Up To The House

YOU CAN THANK The Killers' bassist Mark Stoermer for Tom Waits' first live show in five years – save for four minutes last May, when he duetted with Mick Jagger on "Little Red Rooster" at the nearby Oakland Coliseum. When Stoermer's acute back pain caused the Las Vegas band to opt out of Neil Young's annual Bridge School Benefit a month before the event, Young and his wife Pegi had to do some quick manoeuvring to fill the void. They rounded up Arcade Fire and languid folk-rocker Jack Johnson to step in on Saturday

night for the beleaguered Killers. And their Sunday slot was filled by Waits, marking his third appearance at the prestigious event; in the two days after he was announced, ticket sales shot up by 8,000, a great boost to the benefit's usually less-popular second day.

Was Waits an obvious choice because he more or less lived in the neighbourhood? Not so, according to Waits himself, who was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame by Young in 2011, and with whom he shares membership of the not-so-secret society The Sons Of Lee Marvin, founded by their mutual

friend, director Jim Jarmusch – a membership that is made up of celebrities, including Nick Cave and actor Jeff Bridges, who bear some resemblance to the late Hollywood tough guy.

No; five songs into his 10-song set, the wily fabulist insists that he is there to work off a debt he owed Young. "I volunteered to come here; long story," Waits tells the crowd at the Shoreline Amphitheatre. "Back in the 1970s, I borrowed a lot of money from Neil. For me, it was the days of long hair and short money. He loaned it to me so I could start a restaurant. I lost a lot of money on that restaurant. Let me rephrase that: I lost a lot of Neil's money. And you don't wanna see Neil mad. Anyway, it was a small, little restaurant, sort of a specialised place. We were gonna have eel and donuts and fish scales – just fish scales, sautéed and all gluten-free. But it went under, so Neil said, 'Listen, you owe me a lot of money, so I have three ideas for you: jail time, or you can come work in my yard, or you can do the Bridge School.'"

One wonders what Waits might



Tom's wild years: Waits puts on a show at the Bridge School benefit

manages to include something from each decade of his 40-year career, but the preponderance of the songs come from 2011's *Bad As Me*.

In Waits' work, he has veered from affected to cerebral, from the sentimental to the arch. While his peers were patterning themselves after The Beatles, the Stones and Jimi Hendrix during those formative mid-'60s, the young Waits was looking further afield to the returning American GIs, the Rat Pack and the Beats for his cultural cues. His wife and co-writer, Kathleen Brennan, calls this phenomenon a "reality-distortion field", wanting to be an old-timer when he was young. But a man who is atemporal naturally creates songs that are timeless. Not necessarily nostalgic, just not fixed to a particular era or place.

His styles may clash, his aesthetic has changed, and his voice certainly careens from antic to mournful over the years, but all the disparate parts of Waits' musical personality cohere in his performance of "Lucinda/Ain't Goin' Down To The Well", his own murderous ballad grafted onto one of Lead Belly's most incendiary riffs, as it was on *Orphans*.

Looking more lithe than he has in years, with a bemused expression on his malleable face and his hair expertly groomed, Waits rarely looks directly at the audience, only giving them a quick sidelong glance as he executes deep ballet bows and slow pirouettes, moving from guitar to piano and back again.

Waits hotfoots straight into "Right Raised Man", with its sly rhythms, Latin throb, and Jazz Age phraseology. Wagging a crooked finger at the crowd, he reveals the answer to a question that has stymied philosophers, sages and big thinkers since the beginning of time: how to keep

In under 50 minutes, Waits takes us through a well-edited, economical and unplugged tour of his catalogue

have done for Young's lawns – Edward Scissorhands meta-sculptures? Great grinning garden gnomes? – but for the 18,000 faithful he turns up the heat on this uncharacteristically cold autumn night, and turns back the clock with his hepcat phrasing, his pre-war sentiments and vestigial tie-pulling.

Pulling himself up to his full height, clearing his throat and croaking a "good evening" into the chilly dark, Waits begins his set without preamble, giving a nod and a downbeat to an ad hoc band assembled especially for this show: Primus' avant-rock bassist Les Claypool (he's Waits' neighbour, and has figured on three of his albums, though never played a live show with him), Los Lobos' David Hidalgo and drummer Casey Waits, the singer's 28-year-old son.

In a little under 50 minutes, Waits takes fans through a well-edited, strangely economical and mandatorily unplugged (as all Bridge School shows demand) reading of his catalogue, lopping off verses and compressing others as he skitters across the decades, reaching back as far as 1976's *Small Change* for the blurry, slurry autobiography of "Tom Traubert's Blues". Whether it is strategic or just random, he

a woman happy? Apparently it boils down to manners.

Arcane, yet useful knowledge connects all of Waits' songs. There is always some embedded lesson, handy information or a scrap of advice crouching among the flamboyant imagery, the artfulness, or just circus drone of his songs. It's the oft-quoted parable "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king," from the runaway sea shanty "Singapore" that he speed raps through. It's there, too, in the geopolitical musings, delivered in a busted but yearning falsetto, of "Talking At The Same Time". "Everybody knows umbrellas will cost more in the rain," he contends, "Someone makes money when there's blood in the street." The man, whose father left the family at 11, has taken it upon himself to parent the world.

JAAN UHELSZKI

Robert Plant & The Sensational Space Shifters

ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON, OCTOBER 31, 2013

The song never remains the same, as Percy's journey through time and space continues apace

AS ROBERT PLANT tells us during one of his droll between-song chats, he is enjoying "an invigorating time right now". Plant has spent the last 18 months travelling the world, playing festivals in the company of the Sensational Space Shifters – ostensibly, his pre-*Raising Sand* band reconvened. And for tonight's show, part of the Albert Hall's Bluesfest, Plant leads his cohorts through bracingly reworked staples from his back catalogue alongside some unexpected takes on blues standards; from the Mississippi to West Africa via Wolverhampton. Fine evidence, in other words, that Plant's ongoing exploration of music is showing no sign of abating.

Indeed, while the glowing psychedelic backdrop behind the drumkit and the incense sticks smouldering at the front of the stage may throw back to an earlier era, this set is very much about reconfiguring the old in new terms. The show's opener, "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You", is rendered with elaborate flamenco guitar flourishes. "Spoonful", first recorded by Howlin' Wolf, is layered with discordant electronic loops and marks the night's first appearance of Gambian griot Juldeh Camara, coaxing enticing drones from his one-string riti which help transform the song into a deep psych jam. "Black Dog", retooled with swampy African rhythms, is unrecognisable from its original form.

Considering the company Plant keeps these days, the vibe here cleaves closer to *Dreamland* than *Raising Sand*. The guitar interplay between Justin Adams and Liam "Skin" Tyson is powerful and inventive, while John Baggott supplies dark electronic undercurrents throughout. Meanwhile, Plant himself is relaxed, his voice warm and honeyed, and even the odd kick of the mic stand seems relatively restrained. He turned 65 in August and he tells us, "I can get on the bus and go anywhere for nothing." We can only wonder where his marvellous, meandering journey will take him next. MICHAEL BONNER

Still sensational: Robert Plant



Providing the voodoo
Cure: Robert Smith and co
onstage in New Orleans



THE CURE

VOODOO MUSIC+ARTS EXPERIENCE,
NEW ORLEANS, NOVEMBER 3, 2013

Robert Smith takes a nostalgic trip down *Fascination Street*

WITH ITS MYSTICAL airs and gothic tendencies, you'd be hard pressed to find a more fitting town than New Orleans for The Cure to grace. Not that they exactly channel the city's musical heritage, of course: on the final night of the 15th annual Voodoo Music + Arts Experience, The Cure are playing the Ritual Stage at the same time as local legend Dr John takes to the Flambeau Stage on the other side of the City Park site.

Nevertheless, Robert Smith, with his unmistakable halo of thinning but still ratted and matted bouffant hair, sequinned black hoodie and stompy Camden Market boots, has a clutch of site-specific songs for the evening. "Here's a song about New Orleans," he says, the only slice of colour onstage coming from his crimson pout, before launching into a weighty "Fascination Street", written about the debauched stretch of Bourbon Street. "From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea" and an apocalyptic "One Hundred Years" are also charged with a hypnotic gris gris, while the polyrhythms and

death disco strut of "The Walk" suggest The Cure were taking inspiration from Haitian sounds a full 30 years before Arcade Fire.

Despite being written two decades ago, "Burn" (their contribution to *The Crow* soundtrack) receives its live debut, a propulsive, suffocating

An apocalyptic "One Hundred Years" is charged with a hypnotic gris gris

stomp that cuts through the autumn chill. But while the band might be dipping deep into their back catalogue, there's a notable lack of more recent material. In a 29-song set, only "The Hungry Ghost" is from their last LP, *4:13 Dream* (2008), and there are resolutely no new tracks,

a sign that they're sticking to the 2012 assertion that the band's recording career was on hold.

Given The Cure's previous festival form – notoriously breaking Coachella's curfew and continuing to play unplugged even after the PA plug had been pulled – it's interesting to see how they approach this evening's closing set of just two hours and 10 minutes – small fry for a band who regularly string their shows out for three hours or longer. "Apparently it's Sunday," Smith announces when The Cure return for an encore, "and the Lord moves in mysterious ways on Sunday, so when the power disappears, it's nothing to do with us." Rolling into a hit-packed streak of "The Lovecats", "Close To Me", "Let's Go To Bed" and "Why Can't I Be You?", at one minute past curfew Smith announces, "Let's see if the Lord is on our side", before they kick into "Boys Don't Cry". It might not be the Lord, but someone is certainly looking over them; the band finish their searing show unscathed by the wrath of clockwatching stage managers. **LEONIE COOPER**

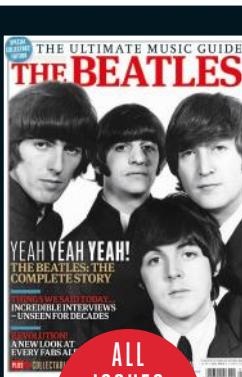
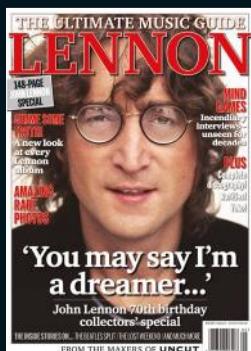
SETLIST

- 1 Shake Dog Shake
- 2 Fascination Street
- 3 From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea
- 4 The End Of The World
- 5 Lovesong
- 6 Just Like Heaven
- 7 Burn
- 8 Pictures Of You
- 9 Lullaby
- 10 High
- 11 Hot Hot Hot!!!
- 12 The Caterpillar
- 13 The Walk
- 14 Stop Dead
- 15 Push
- 16 In Between Days
- 17 Friday I'm In Love
- 18 Doing The Unstuck
- 19 Bananafishbones
- 20 Want
- 21 The Hungry Ghost
- 22 Wrong Number
- 23 One Hundred Years
- 24 Give Me It
- ENCORE**
- 25 The Lovecats
- 26 Close To Me
- 27 Let's Go To Bed
- 28 Why Can't I Be You?
- 29 Boys Don't Cry

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FRIDAY	31	NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL

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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

JOHN 'GYPIE' MAYO

Dr Feelgood and Yardbirds guitarist

1951-2013

IF WILKO JOHNSON's taut fretwork gave the original Dr Feelgood much of their nervy energy, then Gypie Mayo brought an extra shot of stinging blues. The Hammersmith-born guitarist was enlisted as Johnson's full-time replacement in April 1977, after Henry McCullough had briefly filled in. Mayo had served in various bands since 1969, among them White Mule (who issued one single on MCA), the Mike Leander-produced "Looking Through Cats Eyes", psych-funk outfit Alias and traditional Irish band, Concrete Mick. But it was the blues boom that had the most profound effect on his own style, particularly the work of Peter Green, whom he'd first seen with John Mayall in 1967. "My life was never quite the same after that," he said in 1997. "I had never fully realised just how expressive and exciting guitar-playing could be."

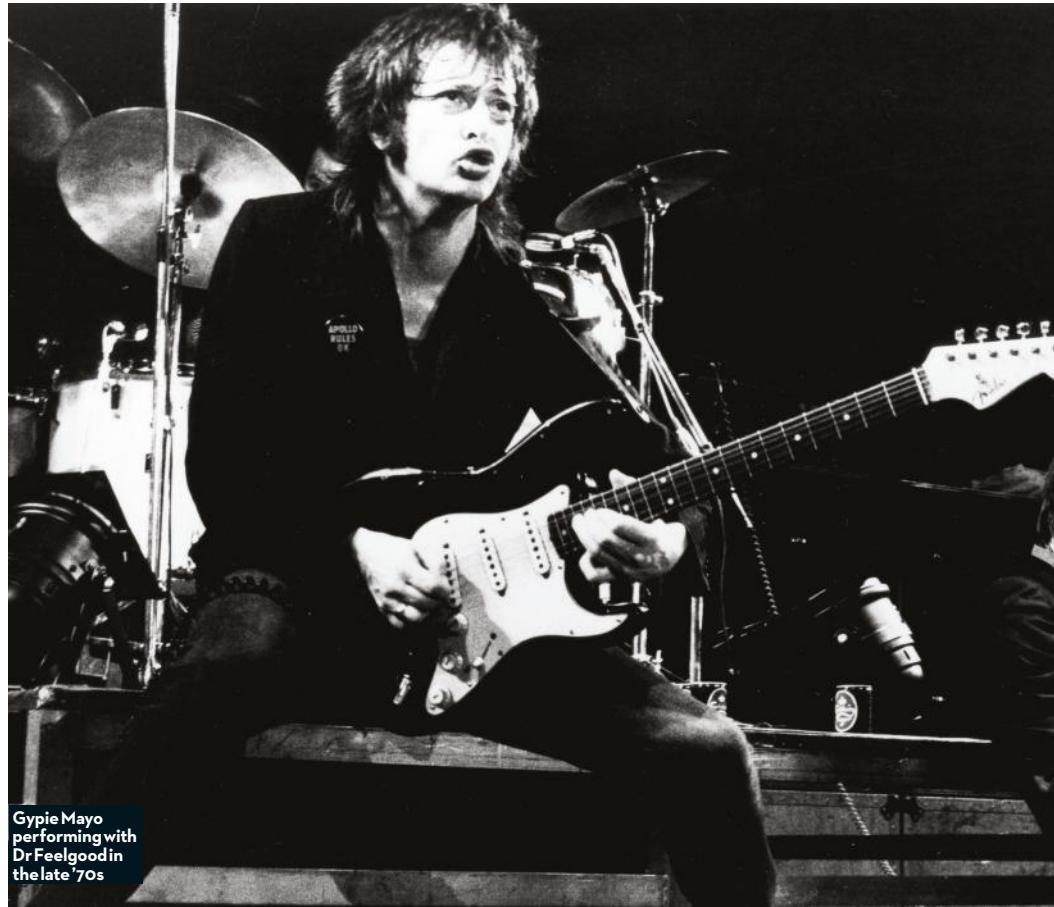
He was an integral part of the Feelgoods up until 1981, featuring on the six albums that spanned *Be Seeing You* to live effort *On The Job*. Alongside Nick Lowe, he also co-wrote their sole Top 10 hit, 1979's "Milk And Alcohol", inspired by Lowe's experience at an early '70s John Lee Hooker gig in New York, but

defined by Mayo's evil guitar motifs.

Between 1996 and 2004 he signed up with the reformed Yardbirds, where he made a significant contribution to *Birdland*, their first studio album in 35 years. Original member Chris Dreja hailed him as "an absolutely stunning lead guitar player. He has that wonderful inspirational

playing style. It's edgy and you never quite know what he's gonna do next."

Once asked by a Dr Feelgood fansite how he'd like to be remembered, the affable Mayo answered: "As an inventive, tasteful and exciting guitar player. And a sweet, shy little chap who didn't get into too much slagging off of others."



Gypie Mayo performing with Dr Feelgood in the late '70s

MARC TROVILLION

Lambchop bassist

1957-2013

BASSIST MARC TROVILLION, who has died from a heart attack at home in Chattanooga, made his name as co-founder of Nashville collective Lambchop, with whom he played on every album up until 2002's *Is A Woman*. It was 1987 when Kurt Wagner and guitarist Jim Watkins first got together for rehearsals in Trovillion's bedroom, the trio christening themselves Posterchild. By the time of Lambchop's self-proclaimed arrival as "Nashville's most fucked-up country band" with 1994's *I Hope You're Sitting Down*, they'd mutated

into a postmodern roots ensemble. Bandmate Jonathan Marx cited Trovillion as a key signifier of their sound, adding that his "steady, solid bass playing and his innate sense of humour served as the glue



Marc Trovillion

that kept Lambchop together". His contributions also extended to songwriting, offering up "The Theme From The Neil Miller Show" for 1998's *What Another Man Spills*. "Indomitable" will never describe anything more acutely than Marc's spirit," said Wagner in tribute.

ROLAND JANES

Sun Records guitarist, producer

1933-2013

HE NEVER ENJOYED the wider fame of labelmates Scotty Moore and Carl Perkins, yet Roland Janes was the other chief architect of Sun Records' rockabilly sound. The Arkansas guitarist became a key fixture of Sam Phillips' house band

between 1956 and '63, where his crisp licks and animated rhythms helped boost sides by Jerry Lee Lewis, Charlie Rich, Billy Lee Riley, Sonny Burgess and others. He was also founder member of Billy Lee Riley's Little Green Men and, in 1959, cut five tunes as the Roland Janes Band. A year later he and Riley formed Rita Records, scoring a hit with Harold Dorman's "Mountain Of Love". By 1962 Janes had opened Sonic Studios, recording artists for local independent labels until his semi-retirement in '74. The early '80s saw him reunite with his old boss at Phillips Recording, while his ongoing session work included guitar duties on Mudhoney's 1998 LP, *Tomorrow Hit Today*.

NOEL HARRISON

Singer, actor and Olympic skier

1934-2013

NOEL HARRISON WAS almost nonchalant about how he arrived at the tune that made his career. Recorded in 1968 for the Steve McQueen film *The Thomas Crown Affair*, "The Windmills Of Your Mind" won an Oscar for Best Original Song and gave him a Top 10 hit the following year. It had been written by French composer Michel Legrand, with English lyrics by husband-and-wife duo Alan and Marilyn Bergman. "It didn't seem like a big deal at the time," Harrison recalled. "I went to the studio one afternoon, sang it and pretty much forgot about it. I didn't realise until later what a timeless, beautiful piece Michel Legrand and the Bergmans had written. It turned out to be my most notable piece of work."

The song was an elusive meditation on the passage of time and the bittersweet end of a love affair, with Harrison singing of turning circles, autumn leaves and apples "whirling silently in space". And while undoubtedly a product of its era – easy listening balladry glazed with *Sgt Pepper*-like psychedelia – it proved to be unusually durable. It has since been covered by everyone from Dusty Springfield and Neil Diamond to Terry Hall and Alison Moyet.

The son of celebrated actor Rex Harrison, Noel's first two singles (covers of Charles Aznavour's "A Young Girl (Of Sixteen)" and Leonard Cohen's "Suzanne") had only been minor hits on the US chart. The success of "The Windmills Of Your Mind" landed him a three-album deal with Reprise, though sales were poor. After starring in various musicals over the next decade or so, sometime Olympic skier Harrison settled in Devon in the late '90s. In 2011 he returned to Glastonbury after 40 years to play the 'Spirit Of '71' stage, while his most recent release was this summer's *Six Songs*, recorded with Exeter musician Phil Rossiter.

RONALD SHANNON JACKSON

Free jazz/fusion drummer

1940-2013

THE CAREER OF Texan jazz drummer Jackson took flight in 1966, after undertaking a scholarship at New York University with trumpeter Kenny Dorham. A fascination with the avant-garde brought him into contact with Charles Mingus, McCoy Tyner and saxophonist Albert Ayler, with whom he played on that year's *At Slugs Saloon, Vol. 1 & 2*. Jackson went on to work with heavyweights Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman as well as Ayler in the '70s and was intensely proud of the fact that "I am the only musician to perform and record with all three." In 1979, after a stint in Coleman's Prime Time, he founded the Decoding Society. Their blend of funk, blues and free jazz put Jackson at the forefront of the fusion movement via albums like *Eye On You* and *Mandance*. He also recorded as Last Exit with Sonny Sharrock, Peter Brötzmann and Bill Laswell.

JOHN TAVENER

Composer

1944-2013

THE GUARDIAN HAILED classical

composer John Tavener as "the musical discovery of the year" when he unveiled his biblical oratorio *The Whale* with the London Sinfonietta in 1968. Two years later the piece was issued on The Beatles' Apple label. Often described as a "holy minimalist", Tavener saw music as a means of spiritual expression. "We seem to have lost our contact with the primordial," he explained in 1999, "divine revelation as opposed to something that's learned by the human intellect." His 1977 conversion to Russian Orthodox Christianity began informing his mystical work, beginning with that year's chamber opera *A Gentle Spirit*. Other critical successes included 1982's choral version

of William Blake's *The Lamb* and 1993's *Song For Athene*, which introduced Tavener to a global audience when it was subsequently played at Princess Diana's funeral. In 2004 he premiered "Prayer Of The Heart", written for and performed by Björk.

MAXINE POWELL

Motown etiquette instructor

1915-2013

BERRY GORDY'S PROGRESSIVE ideas for Motown included the establishment of a finishing school for the label's roster of talent. The Artists Development Department was founded in 1964 by actress Maxine Powell, who began teaching etiquette, posture and stage presence to the likes of Marvin Gaye, The Supremes and The Temptations. Every artist in Detroit attended Powell's classes twice a week. "She was such an important, integral part of what we were doing here at Motown," Smokey Robinson said in tribute.

BOBBY PARKER

Blues guitarist, songwriter

1937-2013

BLUESMAN PARKER SERVED as guitarist for Bo Diddley and

Jackie Wilson during the '50s, but it was his propulsive 1961 single "Watch Your Step" that made his reputation. John Lennon acknowledged its influence on both "I Feel Fine" and "Day Tripper", while Led Zeppelin appropriated it for "Moby Dick". The song was also covered by Dr Feelgood, the Spencer Davis Group and Carlos Santana, who cited Parker as "one of the few remaining guitarists who can pierce your heart and soothe your soul".

PETE HAYCOCK

Climax Blues Band founder, soundtrack composer

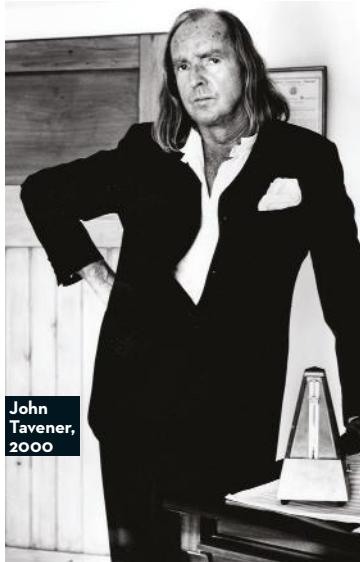
1951-2013

AS SINGER AND lead guitarist with the Climax Blues Band, the six-piece he founded in 1968, Haycock cut over 15 albums, often distinguished by his trademark slide runs. He remained until 1985, after which he recorded as Pete Haycock's Climax Blues Band and briefly played in Bev Bevan's Electric Light Orchestra Part II. Though his main focus was as a soundtrack composer, often in tandem with Hans Zimmer. His film work included *Thelma & Louise*, *One False Move* and 2011's *The Dilemma*.

ROB HUGHES



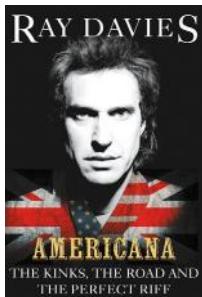
Harrison performing in 1969



John Tavener, 2000

Books

BY ALLAN JONES



Americana:
The Kinks, The Road
And The Perfect Riff

Ray Davies

VIRGIN

8/10

An obsessive dedication to writing the songs that give his life what meaning it has is a serial obstacle to the stable, meaningful and enduring relationship he so much wants to find himself in. But the fulfilment of a family life, watching children grow, pottering around a suburban garden, popping down the pub for a pint, that sort of thing, is something he yearns for but over the years has become increasingly unattainable. The warm heat of domestic bliss has long-since been surrendered to the touring musician's sometimes unhappy life of exhausting travel, endless shows, lonely hotel rooms, sleepless nights and the relentless pressure to write songs that will become hits. Managers, record companies, promoters, his own band, constantly demand album after album from him that he then has to go on the road to promote, to the point where touring and its accumulative disorientations is all he knows, the itinerancy of said lifestyle fuelling his alienation from his family, enhancing tensions within his own band, never far from a turbulent surface going back to their earliest days on the London club circuit that

RAY DAVIES' *Americana* is a book at least in part about fresh starts that tend for the most part to end not as well as might have been hoped when they were originally undertaken. Disappointment and sometimes disaster attends many of its pages as Davies' life lurches unsteadily from personal calamity to professional crisis, Ray often a hapless victim of circumstances largely of his own making.

AY DAVIES' *Americana* is a book at least in part about fresh starts that tend for the most part to end not as well as might have been hoped when they were originally undertaken. Disappointment and sometimes disaster attends many of its pages as Davies' life lurches unsteadily from personal calamity to professional crisis, Ray often a hapless victim of circumstances largely of his own making.

One of the many relationships he evokes has by now finally come to a predictable end, as usual painful and drawn out by Davies' apparent inability to withdraw easily from even the unhappiest circumstance. He is due back in London, rejuvenated in many ways by his most recent New Orleans sojourn, to complete work on a new solo album and other urgent business, Ray as usual having several projects underway at the same time. He's walking a friend home from a Japanese restaurant in the Marigny area, making plans for his return to New Orleans, when they're mugged. Ray is pushed roughly to the ground. His friend's bag is snatched. The mugger makes off, which could have been the end of an unhappy, distressing incident.

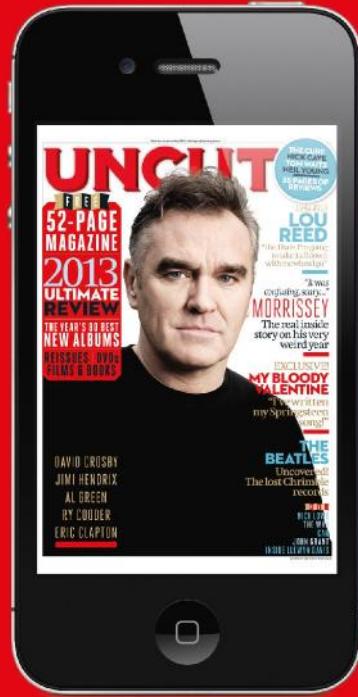
Ray's outrage gets the better of him, however. He gives chase, as if to give the blighter a good talking-to. This proves a futile endeavour. The mugger pulls out a gun and shoots Ray in the leg before making his escape in a getaway car, leaving Ray bleeding in the road. He's soon in the emergency room at Charity Hospital, where heavily medicated on morphine he wonders how all this came to pass, the book's

narrative unfolding from here in complicated flashback, its chronology cut up, spliced, histories within histories, as he reflects on his life and music.

The result is less conventional autobiography than an impressionistic scrapbook covering, among many other things, the parts of The Kinks' career set in America, including the 1965 ban (still not fully explained) that meant they were unable to play there again until 1969, when Allen Klein helped negotiate a new start for them there. They had watched helplessly, meanwhile, as the Stones and The Who and many other bands conquered the States. Ray simmered bitterly as The Kinks missed out on Monterey and Woodstock and essentially had to start again from scratch when their ban was lifted. Their long march back to the top – hit albums, sell-out shows at Madison Square Garden and other mega-venues – takes up large chunks of the book. This means, of course, that there is much discussion of albums that sold well in America but meant little in the UK, among them *Sleepwalker*, *Misfits*, *Low Budget* and *Give The People What They Want*, which may limit the interest of fans of their earlier Golden Age, only fleetingly referred to, when Ray on such great songs as "See My Friends", "Dead End Street", "Autumn Almanac", "Waterloo Sunset" and "Days" might have been preferred. The slog of rebuilding the band's US career is vividly described, however, via diary entries, much observant writing, some of it very funny. There are adroit character sketches, too, of figures like Arista's Clive Davis and Irving Azoff at MCA who abetted their American rehabilitation.

There are key events from these years that are glossed over. Davies' time with Chrissie Hynde, for instance, is afforded not much more than half a dozen sentences. Ray's slowly disintegrating relationship with brother Dave is given a similarly cursory treatment, Dave throughout an oddly distant character, who occupies less space in the book than some of the band's road crew, former managers and agents. **ALLAN JONES**

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JONI, JACKSON & I...

Congrats on a great December issue, which I picked up on a holiday in Ireland. Seeing the 'Joni at 70' cover was a treat. The 50 Greatest Singer-Songwriter Albums was fascinating too. Good to see Janis Ian and Laura Nyro included but no Carly Simon, Tim Buckley or Tom Rush, who must have been the first to cover Joni Mitchell and James Taylor songs? His '68 album, *The Circle Game*, was important to me then, and where was Carole King's *Tapestry*? It was as seminal as Joni's *Blue*.

I am actually one of those who "came up to" Joni in the street, as I met her purely by chance back in 1972 – yikes, over 40 years ago! – when I was 25. She and Jackson Browne were touring then and I saw them at the Festival Hall. A week or so later I was on a bus going down Kings Road in Chelsea to visit a friend who had moved there, when in the stalled traffic I noticed a guy looking in a shop window. He looked familiar and I realised it was Jackson Browne so I wondered if Joni was with him. Then a blonde in a safari type suit emerged from the shop and they walked along together. Without seeing her face, I knew it had to be Joni. Without thinking, I got off the bus and began to walk behind them with no intention of bothering them.

Anyway, Jackson suddenly ran on ahead leaving Joni on her own, so I said, "Joni Mitchell?" She turned and smiled and was very friendly. I didn't feel I was bothering her or acting the fan, so we walked along and discussed the sound problems at the recent concert. She said she couldn't run with Jackson due to her wearing sandals and having had polio as a child. They were trying to find an art gallery before it closed, I knew where it was, so walked along to it with her. It's a very pleasant memory of being 25 and walking along Kings Road with Joni Mitchell.

Maybe rock stars and musicians were more accessible then, without entourages. Elton John back then was equally friendly and chatty. He was often in Noel Edmonds' record shop (Noel being then just a DJ) off the Kings Road on Saturdays. I recall seeing two great concerts of his at Fairfield Halls, Croydon, one with Marc Bolan as guest. I had a spare ticket for that, which I sold to a

Chelsea girl: Joni Mitchell, erstwhile queen of the Kings Road



visiting Canadian guy, who pulled out a joint and despite my "you can't smoke that here," proceeded to light up and share it – we got away with it!

Michael O'Sullivan, Croydon

MITCHELL MATTERS

What a great interview with Joni Mitchell in your last issue. It offered several new strands of conversation (painting, plagiarism, mortality, celebrity culture) that she hadn't covered in much detail before. More disappointing was Andy Gill's cursory (but predictable) rejection of Joni's 1977-1991 recorded output. Actually her vocals are at their best in this period, rich and emotional, shorn of the nasal quality that, for me, tarnished her early work. Yes, there aren't any hits on them, but *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*, *Mingus* and *Dog Eat Dog* deserve much closer inspection, showing an incredible mastery of texture and mood. To my ears, Joni only lost heart and started playing it safe around the time of 1991's *Night Ride Home*.

Matt Phillips, London

TOP 50 FEEDBACK

I bet you got a lot of mail about your Top 50 singer-songwriter albums! No Randy Newman, are you winding us up? No Stevie Wonder, Rickie Lee Jones, Paul Weller, Ron Sexsmith or Conor Oberst? Some of the choices made are just obtuse, Marvin Gaye's *Here, My Dear* better

or more influential than *What's Going On*? I don't think so, and neither did millions of others who passed on *Here, My Dear* for it to be dumped into a bargain bin. Choices like this, Dory Previn and the album chosen for Neil Young are *Uncut* trying too hard to be cool.

Some of the artists listed are bands, the clue's in the name, Elvis Costello & The Attractions, Dexys Midnight Runners, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. If bands who write their own material are included, you really have cocked up. Overall a poor effort and whoever was involved in compiling such a wretched list should now be signing on for jobseekers allowance!

Paul Messam, Macclesfield

MISSING IN ACTION

Congratulations *Uncut*. You have moved me to put finger to keyboard in response to your 50 songwriter albums. I can't believe the glaring omissions. Where are some of the following: John Hiatt's *Bring The Family*, John Mellencamp's *Life, Death, Love, Freedom*, Todd Snider's *Songs For The Daily Planet*? Jeffrey Foucault's *Ghost Repeater*, Tom Russell's *Love & Fear*, Peter Case's *Blue Guitar*, Chris Knight's *The Jealous Kind*, Dave Alvin's *King Of California*. Where on earth is James McMurtry? Try *Childish Things*. And John Prine? How can you omit the Poet Laureate of Americana? Marvin Gaye's *Here, My Dear* better

Paul Quinn, Manchester

DOUBLE CENTURY

As *Uncut* hits its 200th issue and as a subscriber since 1997, I have to say that despite the passing of the years there's always plenty to read and respond to. Take 199 provided an interesting Top 50 Great Singer-Songwriter LP list. Now we all have our favourites, but the omission of Dave Alvin and the inclusion of Bryan Ferry is staggering. Alvin's *Blackjack David* should definitely have been included, and what about the criminally underrated Steve Forbert and Ron Sexsmith?

Andy Riggs, Wallington, Surrey

ACKLES RAISED

Entertaining list of singer-songwriter albums, but how on earth can you leave David Ackles' albums off? One of the greatest songwriters ever.

Stephen Jordan, the Bodleian Music Faculty Library, University Of Oxford

Thanks to everyone who wrote in about the Top 50 Greatest Singer-Songwriter Albums list. I should point out though, that, as stated in my Ed's letter and the intro to the feature, the artists and LPs we highlighted were examples of what we considered the most nakedly confessional singer-songwriter records. Hence, for instance, we selected Marvin Gaye's *Here, My Dear* not because it's a more significant album than *What's Going On*, but as it addressed more



MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Matthew E White

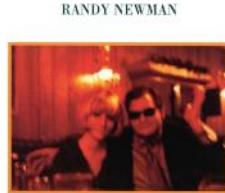
A big inner's guide to the music that informed one of *Uncut's* albums of the year...



The album I grew up with

The Beach Boys Pet Sounds 1967

When I was three or four, my parents had a Beach Boys tape. I loved them then, and then you come back around when you're a little older, and you're like, "Man, this shit is incredible." I've read a lot about how the record was recorded and it was very much a team effort, with a strong vision. I love that stuff... great songwriting and melodies, all coming together in one set of songs, it's amazing.



RANDY NEWMAN

A huge songwriting influence

Randy Newman Good Old Boys 1974

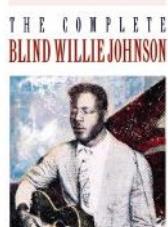
He was the first person that I heard and was like, "Oh, I can write a song like that." Randy Newman was a sort of stepping stone, a connecting point, to a lot of music. I listened to all this soul music, blues and folk, for years and years, and hearing Newman was like, "Shit, this is the guy that's taking it back, taking it out of that context but really, really using that style and making it his own."



The heaviest album ever made

Marvin Gaye What's Going On 1971

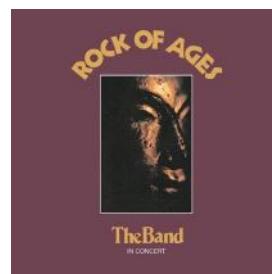
I discovered this at college. It's like this incredible meeting place of great songs, unbelievable singing, production and arrangement work. And there's a boundary-pushing nature to it, an aggressively experimental vibe, especially for a pop record. It might be one of the best records ever made. It's the heaviest music, but you can just put it on at a party and it's absolutely killer. That's special.



My favourite blues musician

Blind Willie Johnson The Complete Blind Willie Johnson 1993

When I was in middle school I went to New Orleans with my dad. We went to this record store and got all these blues CDs - I thought that was the same thing, blues and New Orleans, which it's not at all... But I found Blind Willie Johnson there and he's my favourite blues musician. When I first put his record on, it just struck me as very cool music. Beautiful music.



An album with killer arrangements

The Band Rock Of Ages 1972

A live record, but they got Allen Toussaint to do the horn arrangements, and it's amazing. Steven Bernstein - a trumpet player and the arranger for, like, every cool gig in New York - is a real mentor to me, and the first time I met him, he put this on and said, "This is the one record you can learn most from about arranging and American music history, where it all comes from, and where it's going..."



The freshest thing I've heard in a long time

Kendrick Lamar Good Kid, M.A.A.D City 2012

It's just so fresh-sounding. The production, lyrical content and storytelling are great. It's part of a really strong tradition, but any sort of tradition, as it goes on, needs these new voices pushing along. It's helpful to have people like that around, that are pushing me too, and I feel that from this record. Obviously I'm not going to make hip-hop, but it pushes me to try to make a record that's this good.



A record by the master

Duke Ellington The Blanton/Webster Band 1990

Another example of someone who's making pop music, but real, genius musical shit. Ellington's as good an artist as anyone - killer bands, killer arrangements, great playing. So much recorded music is based on the big band model - strong bass and drums, strong vocals, extra stuff that makes it groove. It's what Kendrick Lamar does. Ellington is a master composer, arranger, musician, more than almost everybody else on this list.



The album that changed the way I hear music

Augustus Pablo & King Tubby King Tubby Meets Rockers Uptown 1976

They changed the world, and record producing... it's had a huge influence on how I listen to things. They weren't in a vibrant place in many ways, but King Tubby was a brave man, and courage is probably the most important thing to have when making music.

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