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AND

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Are we rolling?

"WOULD MY 18-year-old self look at what I'm doing and think of it as rock'n'roll? No," admits Jeff Tweedy, among a lot of emotionally candid things he tells us this month. "But the part of it that's still real to me is virtually the same. It all revolves around the core principle that you are somehow empowering yourself, and OK with who you are. Do I think, in the traditional sense of what a lot of people think rock'n'roll is, what I'm doing now would be perceived as rock'n'roll? Hell, no."

Tweedy's new album, an intimate collection of songs predicated on the crises and consolations of family, is an object lesson in how middle-aged artists can talk about their lives in a rock context without resorting to rock cliché. When commentators who don't listen to much music take a cursory look at the charts and announce that rock is in some way dying, what they generally miss is that rock is actually diversifying, maturing, becoming a more nuanced and complex beast.

This month's *Uncut* – and, hopefully, every month's *Uncut* – works as a showcase for that idea; for seeing a bigger picture stretching far beyond a reductive idea of what rock'n'roll should be. That bigger picture can still make room for sex, drugs and attendant peccadilloes, of course: the latest scree of good quotes from Ryan Adams, now on the cusp of 40 himself, beginning on page 44 should be testament enough to that.

But I think the tale of Jeff Tweedy forming a band with his teenage son is just as compelling, and I'm kind of proud of the fact that we have Steve Albini talking about his recipes for fluffy coffee and dill mayonnaise as well as Neil Young and Page & Plant. I'm also thrilled that one of my favourite



Jeff Tweedy: "Rock'n'roll? Hell, no..."

songs of 2014, "Mahogany Dread" by Hiss Golden Messenger, has made it onto this month's *Uncut* CD. "Mahogany Dread" is, I think, about the complex emotional forces that come into play when you start a family and leave an old life behind; about love and doubt, responsibility and denial, and how all these things intertwine in constantly surprising, occasionally troubling ways. It strikes me as one of the more profound and original songs I've heard about fatherhood. "It's getting hard to be easy now," MC Taylor sings near its death, "A couple of kids, Mahogany dread/But happy days are still ahead..."

As I write, my colleagues are playing with an online version of Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies* cards (www.stoney.sb.org/eno/oblique.html), and "Lowest Common Denominator" just turned up. That's what we're trying to

avoid here: please let us know at uncut_feedback@ipcmedia.com how we're doing.

Thanks,

John Mulvey, Editor

John Mulvey

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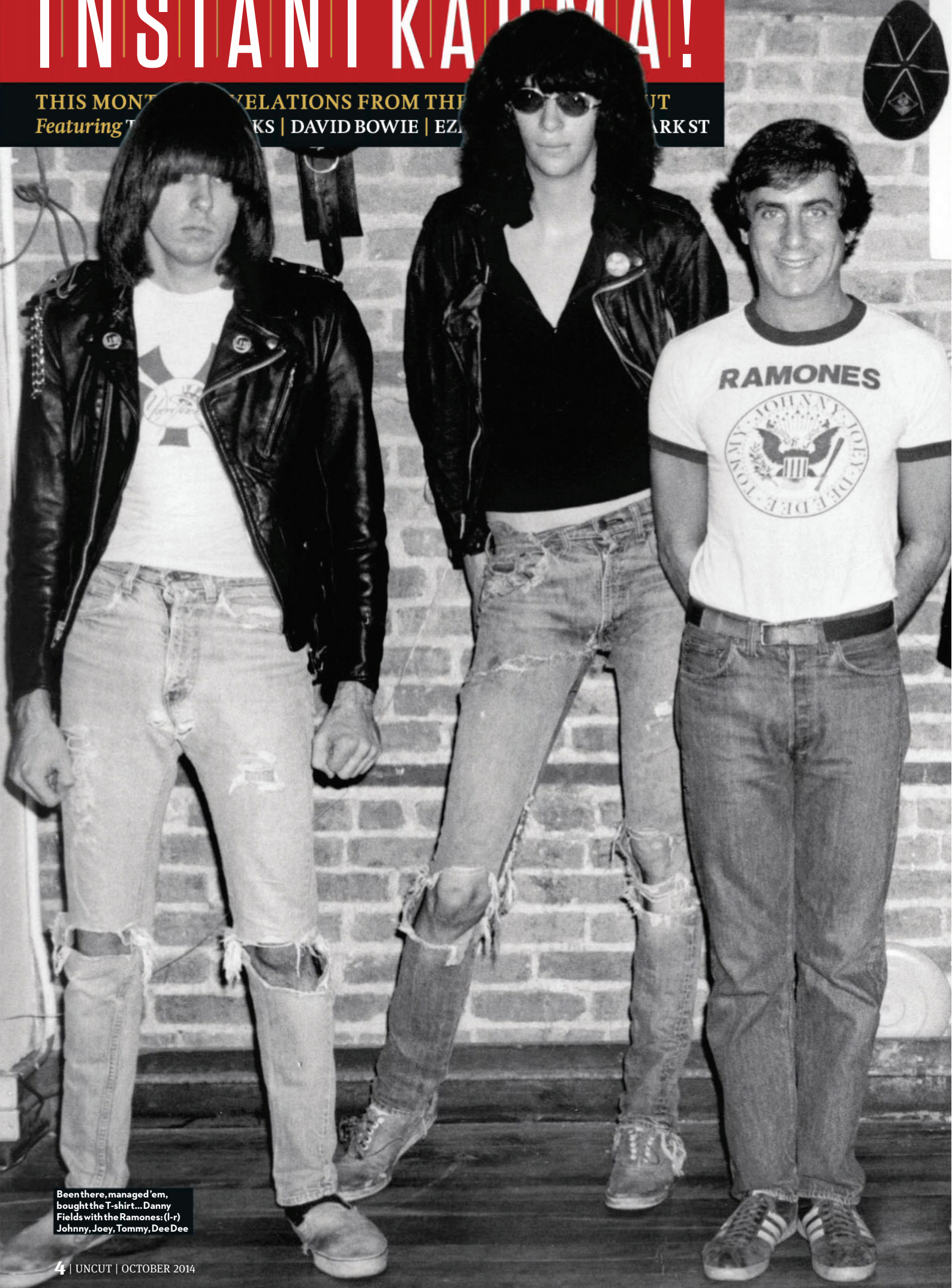
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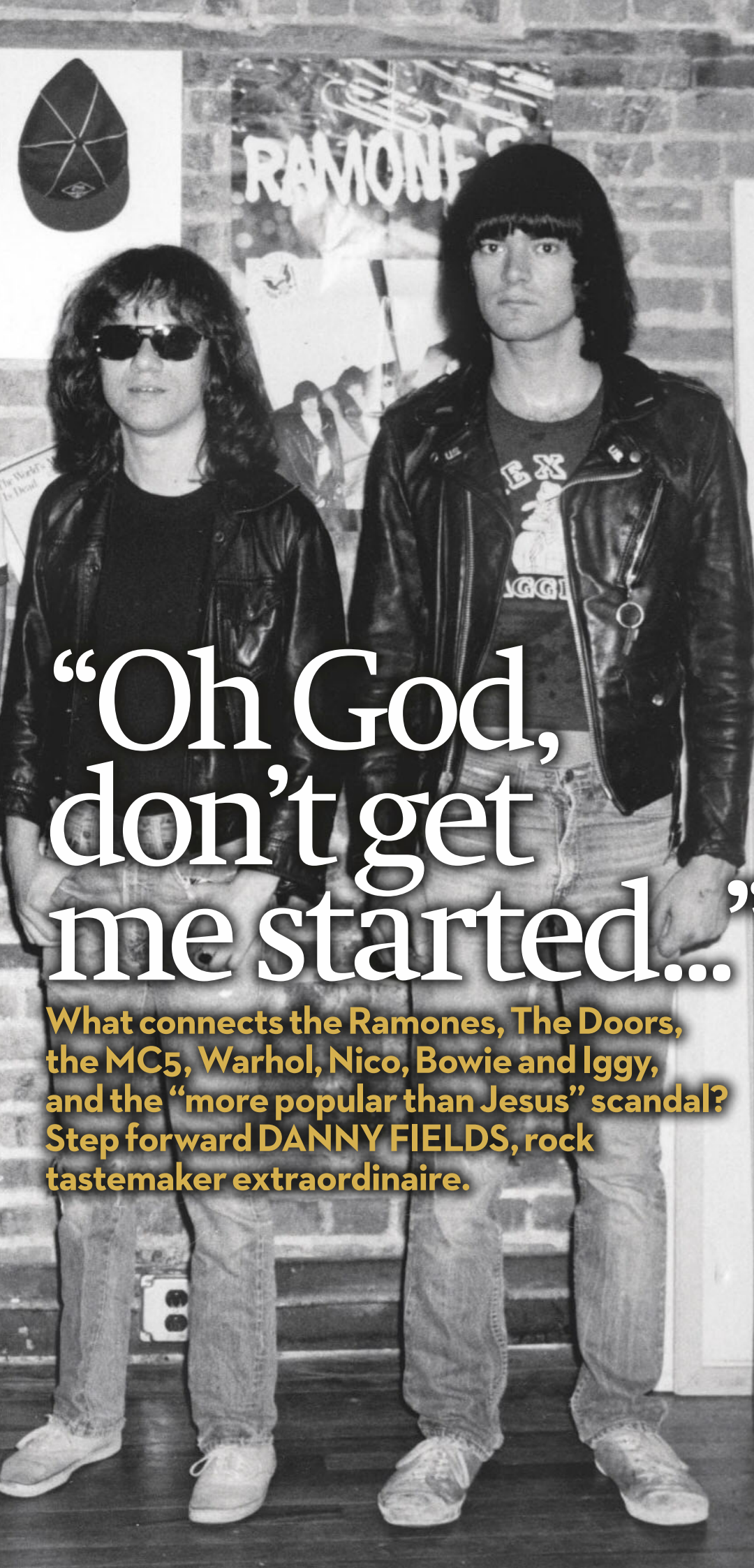


INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE CUT
Featuring TOMMY LEE | DAVID BOWIE | EZRA KIDZ | MARK ST



Been there, managed 'em, bought the T-shirt... Danny Fields with the Ramones: (l-r) Johnny, Joey, Tommy, Dee Dee



“Oh God, don’t get me started...”

What connects the Ramones, The Doors, the MC5, Warhol, Nico, Bowie and Iggy, and the “more popular than Jesus” scandal? Step forward DANNY FIELDS, rock tastemaker extraordinaire.

“**W**HEN I THINK about the Ramones now,” says their former manager, Danny

Fields, “I think of that old film, *The Fighting Sullivans*, about five brothers who died on a ship during the last war. The final scene is of their ghosts climbing through the sky, arm in arm, with the clouds behind them and something stirring like ‘The Battle Hymn Of The Republic’ playing on the soundtrack. Oh God, don’t get me started...”

At his apartment in the West Village, Danny Fields is reflecting on almost five decades of rock’n’roll history. As a journalist, publicist, A&R man and manager, Fields has been one of the most important backstage figures in American rock history. His remarkable story is now the subject of *Danny Says*, a new documentary by filmmaker Brendan Toller. “When I was about 15 or so, rifling through rock’n’roll books I kept coming up against this mysterious guy – Danny Fields,” explains Toller. “He’s The Doors’ publicist who introduced Jim Morrison to Nico in *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, the punk Svengali, Ramones manager and narrative glue of *Please Kill Me*, the Ivy League dilettante who meets the Warhol crowd in *Edie: American Girl*. I thought – these all can’t be the same Danny Fields? But they are. Danny helped create the template for American alternative. There’s not a modern band that doesn’t owe a debt to the taste and vision of Danny Fields.”

Fields, however, has a more modest take on his talents. Born in 1941, Fields grew up in Richmond Hill, Queens. He dropped out of Harvard after a year and “fooled my way into becoming an editor at *Datebook*. This was 1966. We had the rights to publish some wonderful interviews with John Lennon and Paul McCartney. John said, ‘I don’t know what will go first, rock’n’roll or Christianity. We’re more popular than Jesus now.’ I thought, ‘Oh, there’s the headline.’ Then the magazine came out and the cataclysm came, starting in the Bible Belt. They started burning Beatle records. I caused the band a great deal of trouble. It was their last tour of America.”

At the time, Fields was living near “Max’s Kansas City, which was a block and a half from Andy Warhol’s new Factory on Union Square. It was an attractive place for those who worked odd hours to have as a neighbourhood hangout. The backroom of Max’s was like the green room for the Factory. Lou [Reed] and I were friends from the early days of the Factory. ‘64, ‘65ish.”

By early 1967, Fields had fallen into a job at Elektra Records. “When I lost *Datebook*, I got a call from a friend in LA asking if I could get some press for a band she managed called The Doors. It was very casual then. So I called Elektra and said, ‘I’m the publicity person for your band, The Doors. And by the way? That song they did, “Light My Fire”, that’s definitely a hit.’ And they said, ‘It doesn’t matter, we’re releasing “Break On Through”.’ Which failed to do so as an entity. Then they

● had the genius to shorten the studio version of 'Light My Fire' and it went to No 1. So Elektra called me to say, 'You're smart, this worked. We're starting a publicity department.' I worked with Jim Morrison. He had power over two extremely powerful women in my life – Gloria Stavers and Nico. He was OK, but difficult to work with. A beautiful reptile, with emphasis on the beautiful. He was gifted and magical and mythical and memorable and unmanageable. These are extra-planetary beings we're talking about. Jim was beyond classification, that's how you tell a star."

The MC5 and The Stooges were among his signings to Elektra. "At that point, the MC5 were a big local band in Detroit. I saw them and said, 'Hey, you guys are wonderful!' They invited me to their commune, their fortress, where Wayne Kramer said to me, 'You ought to come and see our little brother band, The Stooges.' So I walked



Fields (left) with Iggy Pop, Lisa Robinson and David Bowie, Penn Plaza Club, NYC, March 26, 1976

across to the Michigan student union. I heard the sound of The Stooges before I saw them, and that's what pulled me into the room. A lot, a lot, a lot of sound. You could live a life looking for that much of a lot, so I guess that was it. Then I went in, and saw this incredible being onstage: Iggy. So I called Elektra and said, 'There are two hot bands.'"

Back in New York, Fields facilitated an introduction between Iggy Pop and David Bowie in September 1971. "I was at home with my house guest, Iggy. We were watching a western in black and white when my friend Lisa Robinson called and says, 'I'm at Max's with David Bowie.' He'd said in *Melody Maker* that he loved Iggy, so I said, 'Let's go round the corner.' I introduced them."

Arguably Fields' longest association, however, was with the Ramones, who he co-managed with Linda Stein for five years. His other charges included the Modern Lovers, while as a journalist he edited 16 magazines and wrote an influential column for the *Soho Weekly News*; in 2000 he authored a biography of friend Linda McCartney.

Many of these stories are recounted in *Danny Says*, named after a Ramones song about Fields. Brendan Toller, who began working on the film in November 2009, describes his subject as "incredibly generous with his intellect; constantly cultivating and encouraging one's artistic and intellectual potential. Danny can go toe to toe on virtually any subject from ballet to zen."

Fields, however, remains typically modest about the film itself. "It's not my movie, it's just about me. I know that sounds snotty, but it's true. I don't want to know who's in it. Just now, I don't even know that I want to see it..." ●

MICHAEL BONNER

To find out more about *Danny Says*, visit www.dannysaysfilm.com

CENTENARY SOUNDS

ANTHEMS FOR DOOMED YOUTH

THE UNTHANKS and SAM LEE remember World War I in song

"IT'S ALMOST AN impossible task," admits Sam Lee, speaking a century to the day after Britain declared war on Germany. "To take one of the greatest international tragedies and make a musical show out of it..."

Yet that's exactly what Lee and The Unthanks have attempted to do with their upcoming live event, *A Time And Place: Musical Meditations On The First World War*, set to be performed in Birmingham, London and Leeds in September.

Though they've known each other for years, these concerts will be the first time that the folk singer and the north-east collective have collaborated. They'll be joined by strings and brass, and accompanied by visuals from video designer Matthew J Watkins.

"I know a number of projects about the First World War have fallen through because the protagonists involved have been overwhelmed by the subject,"

explains The Unthanks' Adrian McNally. "So we decided to deal with more personal stories.

"A lot of it is told from the female perspective, for Rachel and Becky [Unthank] to sing – loved ones left behind or the plight of what mothers had to go through. We're telling other people's stories from that time and giving them a voice."

"You don't just want one heartbreaking story after another," says Rachel Unthank, "although there are quite a few of them in the show. It was also a time when women began to play a different role in society; I've written music to a poem by [pro-war poet] Jessie Pope, about girls taking on all the roles of men while they were away."

While The Unthanks have set a variety of war poems to music, including "A War Film" by Teresa Hooley – "They are all less about war and more about love," reckons Adrian – Lee gathered tales straight from elderly people in the south-west of England. One woman in a nursing home inspired a song after telling of a soldier who wasn't able to walk over the bridge in their town; he had last crossed it with his comrades on their way to war, and he was the only one to return.

"The war was a massive extinction of a vast amount of our young musicians, poets, singers, a vast amount of our creative nation," says Lee. "Jimi Hendrix being blasted out from helicopters, that's become the modern-day soundtrack to

war. But there would have been folk songs from home sung in the trenches. A lot of songs from the Crimean or Napoleonic wars were reshaped and turned into First World War songs, and I find that fascinating."

Though *A Time And Place* celebrates the resilience of those involved as well as mourning the destruction, The Unthanks and Sam Lee, both finishing new albums of their own, agree that working on the project has

been a unique challenge.

"It's hard work singing it and spending time with it, because it's so tragic," says Lee. "It's not a show I could do every night."

"You can't help thinking about your own sons," adds Rachel, mother of two boys with McNally. "'A War Film' is about a mother thinking about her baby on her knee, and realising that all those men who died have mothers. They were all just somebody's son." TOM PINNOCK

A Time And Place is performed at Birmingham Town Hall (September 17), London Barbican (18) and Leeds Howard Assembly Room (19)



"We're telling other people's stories from that time, giving them a voice"

ADRIAN MCNALLY



Looking at the personal impacts of WWI: (l-r) Sam Lee with Rachel and Becky Unthank

The princes of Denmark Street

The battle to save Tin Pan Alley, crucible of British rock

IT LOOKS MUCH like any scruffy London alley, but Denmark Street has a claim to being the most important street in British rock history. A home to publishers, songwriters, studios and managers since the 1910s, it had “everything you need on one street”, says Mick Avory, The Kinks’ drummer, who bought equipment, recorded demos and met the band’s manager in this one small street. Now campaigners want Denmark Street to be made a conservation area to protect its distinctive character from development.

“I worry about the erosion of our heritage through a process of gradualness,” says campaigner Henry Scott-Irvine. “Denmark Street is a beacon. This is where British pop music started. It began as a home for sheet music, then publishers moved in because it was cheap. It became like London’s Brill Building and exploded in the ‘60s. It is such a significant part of our heritage.”

Just about every star of the ‘60s and ‘70s visited what was called Britain’s Tin Pan Alley. “It was a centre for working musicians,” says Rod Argent of The Zombies, who opened a keyboard shop on the street in the late ‘70s. “We’d make demos at Central Sound, and then go next door to La Gioconda, this little café that was full of musicians. You’d always meet somebody who was playing in Soho, making a demo or meeting publishers.”

Paul McCartney says the guitar shops were “like going to Santa’s grotto”, while Elton John worked as an office boy at publishers Mills Music at No 20, writing “Your Song” on the roof. Jimi Hendrix is said to have bought a fuzzbox at Macari’s, while The Rolling Stones recorded their debut LP at Regent Sound. A pre-fame David Bowie practically lived in La Gioconda. Soul singer Linda Lewis recalls recording her “first demo on the street in 1964 with John McLaughlin and then recording ‘You Turned My Bitter Into Sweet’ with a pair of session musicians called Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones”. Songwriting team Cook and Greenaway (“I’d Like To Teach The World To Sing”, “Blame It On The Pony Express”) had an

office on Denmark Street, as did Coulter and Martin (“Congratulations”, “Puppet On A String”) and Carter and Lewis, who wrote for Herman’s Hermits and The Ivy League. It’s even where *NME* and *Melody Maker* were founded. Later, the Sex Pistols rehearsed at No 6, leaving graffiti that still remains.

The street’s instrument shops have been frequented by every musician that ever

“This is where British pop music began... it is such a significant part of our heritage”
HENRY SCOTT-IRVINE

passed through London, but campaigners fear these could be forced out by a development affecting neighbouring Denmark Place. Properties on Denmark Street will be refurbished, including the 12 Bar where Jeff Buckley played, and one – No 21, where Lionel Bart worked – will be demolished to create pedestrian access. Laurence Kirschel, owner of developer Consolidated Developments, admits that

“most of the time, redevelopment means sterility”, but insists music will remain the focus of Denmark Street and “90 per cent” of existing traders will remain when the development is completed in 2017. “We want to bring back all the different bits of the music industry,” he says. They will be building a new venue, short-stay apartments aimed at travelling bands and erecting a hall-of-fame on Denmark Place. While Kirschel rejects the need for conservation status – “Any restriction is the dilution of creativity and what we call music-related today isn’t the same as in the 1960s” – he already has a similar, albeit weaker, agreement with Camden Council.

Campaigners are unconvinced – and signatories to Scott-Irvine’s petition at www.change.org include the likes of Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records. “It’s a creeping process,” argues Scott-Irvine. “Once it’s refurbished and rents go up, what happens after?” Kirschel, who has owned the land since the 1980s, counters that “we want this to become the centre of the British music industry again so will make sure it’s done in a delicate way. We don’t want to Disney-fy it. We will do something very acceptable for the industry and it’s up to them whether they want to support it. They can’t talk about saving Denmark Street and then do nothing about it.” **PETER WATTS**

A QUICK ONE

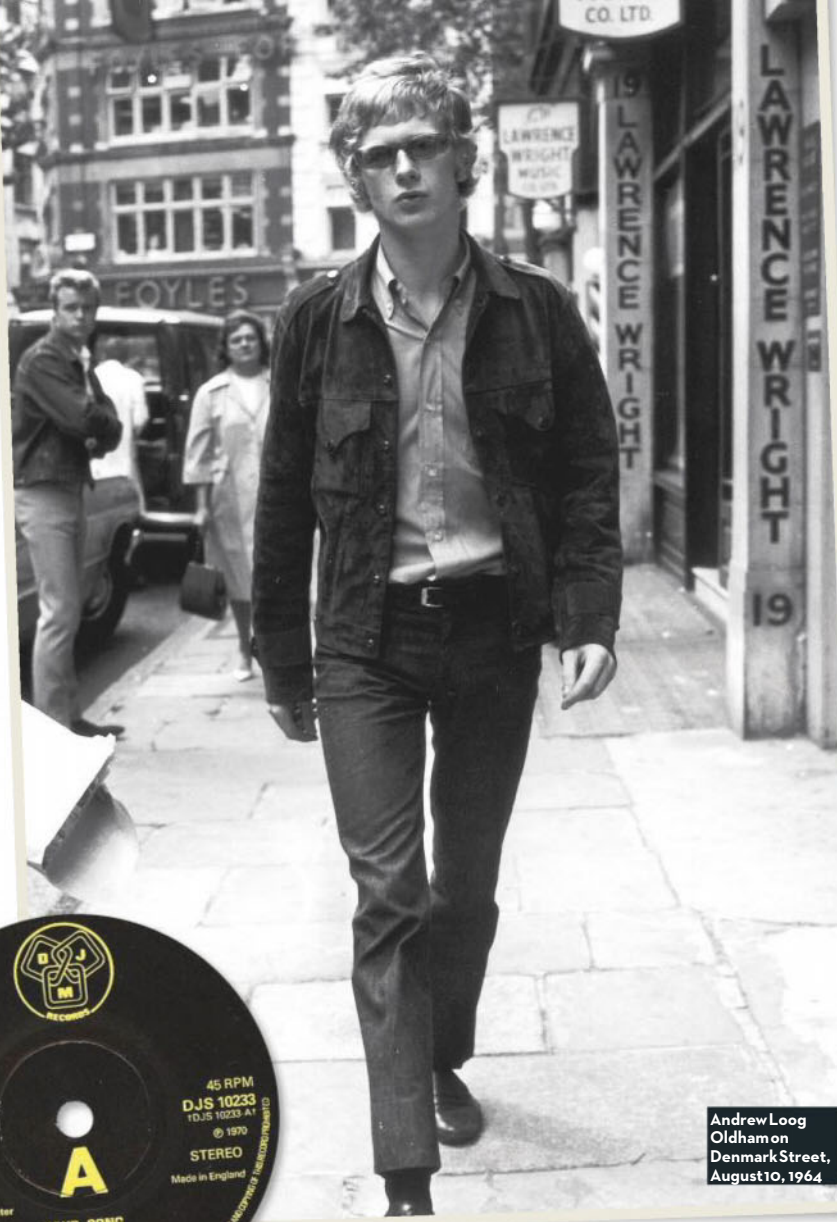
► A big month for **Leonard Cohen**, who hits 80 on September 21 and seems likely to be releasing a new album the day after. The album, his lucky 13th, is reportedly titled *Popular Problems*. In less good Len news, his infamous Buddhist teacher, Roshi, died in July, aged 107.



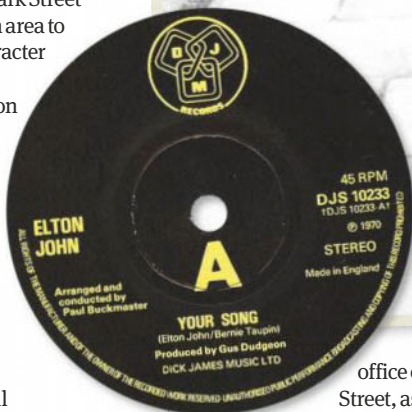
► Over a decade since they went on “indefinite hiatus”, DC hardcore legends **Fugazi** have an album due this autumn. 26 years after they were recorded, Dischord will grant an official release to the band’s first demos, previously distributed on cassettes at early Fugazi shows.

► The eco-bent of **Neil Young’s** current Crazy Horse tour becomes more pronounced with each gig. “Rockin’ In The Free World” has picked up new, anti-oil company lyrics, while Greendale’s “Be The Rain” and a politically engaged “Standing In The Light Of Love” (from 2000’s unreleased *Toast*) have been dragged out of mothballs. Young has also called on his website for a boycott of non-organic cotton, “I vow,” Young says, “to speak up to do what I can to PROTECT EARTH.”

► Busy days at www.uncut.co.uk, as ever. News, reviews, longreads from the vaults... you know the drill.



Andrew Loog Oldham on Denmark Street, August 10, 1964





Feathers, 1969: David Bowie, Hermione Farthingale and John Hutchinson

It's time to leave the capsule if you dare...

JOHN 'HUTCH' HUTCHINSON, the man who fell out of Bowie's orbit. "He saw us as England's Simon & Garfunkel..."

IT'S THE SUMMER of 1969 and John Hutchinson is at his desk in Scarborough, where he works as a draughtsman. Suddenly there's a familiar sound from outside. The handyman is humming a song that he's just heard on the radio. Hutchinson recognises it instantly as "Space Oddity", a soon-to-be hit for his friend, David Bowie.

It was a bittersweet moment. A few months earlier, Hutchinson had given up his musician's life with the unknown Bowie and, driven by the need to support his young family, returned from

London to his home county of Yorkshire. Earlier that year he and Bowie had recorded a demo of "Space Oddity" at a flat in South Kensington. "No-one else heard it before I did," he tells *Uncut*, "as he'd put it together the night before. David turned up with this complete song. I remember thinking it sounded a bit like the Bee Gees."

The pair worked it up with dual vocals, Hutchinson taking the "Ground Control to Major Tom..." lines. There followed a handful of gigs, with Bowie "seeming to see us as England's

answer to Simon & Garfunkel". But it didn't work out: "The timing was all wrong. I think David was probably very disappointed in me having to leave. He asked me if I'd come back after I'd got the family settled, but I just couldn't do it."

Hutchinson has a unique vantage point when it comes to Bowie, as detailed in his new memoir, *Bowie & Hutch*. He played in no less than three of his musical incarnations, beginning in 1966 as guitarist for Bowie's mod-era band, the Buzz. He'd already quit for home by the time he fetched up in the capital again, two years later, to join Bowie and girlfriend Hermione Farthingale in Feathers, a trio that combined music, dance and mime.

But whatever the artistic merits, these were lean times. Hutchinson watched Bowie struggle to make a successful career: "What struck me was he didn't focus on anything else. Being a performer and having a band meant everything to him. He had this incredible determination and belief."

The last chapter in Hutchinson's tenure with Bowie was unexpected. In early 1973 his marriage was over and he was living in a damp flat beneath a Scarborough clothes shop, earning a crust by playing local dances with The Roger Dean Five. Then Bowie offered him a job as 12-string guitarist on his *Aladdin Sane* tour of America and Japan.

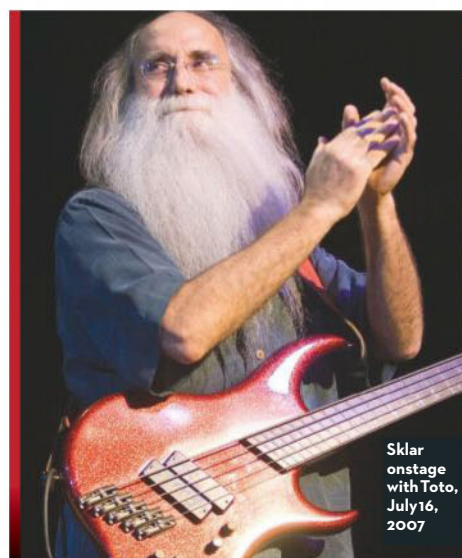
"When we met again, David was a successful rock'n'roll phenomenon," says Hutchinson. "The set-up with the ex-Warhol guys as tour management was about as surreal as you could get. To be at Max's Kansas City was to experience New York at its most raw. Guys were selling drugs and people like David Johansen were wandering about with their shirts off."

Hutchinson was also present, strumming the opening of "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide", when Bowie announced Ziggy's 'retirement' at the Hammersmith Odeon in July. His final contact was a brief exchange at the aftershow party, while Bowie was dancing with Bianca Jagger.

There have been emails over the years, but Bowie and Hutchinson haven't met up since.

Not that Hutchinson, who these days plays in acoustic band The Sultans Of Thwing, is bitter about any of it. Instead, he says, those late-'60s days with Bowie were precious: "It felt as though anything was possible. But it's funny because nobody, including David, ever thought in terms of becoming rich and famous. It was more that we could do it." **ROB HUGHES**

Bowie & Hutch is published by Lodge Books. For more details visit www.johnhutchhutchinson.co.uk



Sklar onstage with Toto, July 16, 2007

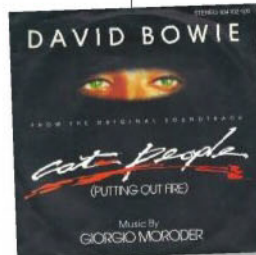
AND ON BASS... LELAND SKLAR

UNCUT'S GUIDE TO ROCK'S GREATEST SESSION PLAYERS

➤ James Taylor's bassist in the early 1970s, Leland Sklar has played on over 2,000 albums. Frequently booked alongside fellow session maestros Danny Kortchmar (guitar), Russ Kunkel (drums) and Craig Doerge (keys), the quartet were christened The Section and recorded three of their own LPs in the mid-'70s. He has also recorded soundtracks to numerous films such as *Legally Blonde*, *Metropolis*, *Phantom Of The Paradise* and *The Postman*. In 2010 he took part in the Troubadour Reunion Tour, backing James Taylor and Carole King.

KEY SESSIONS: Giorgio Moroder's *Cat People*, Graham Nash's *Innocent Eyes*, Randy Newman's *Land Of Dreams*, Joanna Newsom's *Ys*, Jackson Browne's *The Pretender*, Leonard Cohen's *The Future*, Van Dyke Parks' *Moonlighting...*, Phil Collins' *No Jacket Required*, Donovan's *Cosmic Wheels*, The Doors' *Full Circle*, Rod Stewart's *Atlantic Crossing*, Stephen Stills' *Stills*, James Taylor's *Mud Slide Slim...*, Hall & Oates' *Bigger Than Both*

Of Us and Warren Zevon's *Excitable Boy*. **PHIL KING**





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"I realised the best I had to offer was my mania..."
Ezra Furman



WE'RE NEW HERE

Ezra Furman

Recommended this month: an edgy and heroic new take on classic rock'n'roll. "At its best, music helps people survive!"

EZRA FURMAN ADMITS that he has no idea why – eight years after getting together with a bunch of college mates (The Harpoons) and self-releasing a dorm-recorded debut, then delivering three more albums of sharp and literate, if slightly rickety punkish pop – his fifth should be the one to swivel the spotlight in his direction. "It's a very exciting time," he concedes, sounding slightly nonplussed by current UK enthusiasm, from his family home in Evanston, Illinois. "It's like everything's taking root."

Released last October, *Day Of The Dog* in fact announced the arrival of a rather different Ezra Furman. Backed by a bunch of musicians called The Boy-Friends, it saw the singer-songwriter and guitarist defying all those who'd tagged him a Jonathan Richman for the Tumblr generation by cranking out a furious, raw set along classic rock'n'roll lines. Boasting lyrical smarts and an unguarded heart, it took its cues from Chuck Berry, Dylan, Hüsker Dü, Pixies and The Shirelles.

"*Day Of The Dog* was the first time where I decided what I wanted my record to be and made it," declares Furman. "It's like, 'I wish there was this kind of music in the world,' and then I made that. I think a lot of punk was about trying to get back to the energy of early rock'n'roll – if you listen to the Ramones, it's like The Beach Boys with faster tempos and more driving guitars – so I was looking for the wildness that they share."

Little Richard's eruptive energy and transgressive attitude were also key: "His screaming with his band was paving the

way for seriously manic people to make that kind of music. He's gay and gay people tend to inspire me, certainly – being not quite straight myself. It's nice to see queer people assert themselves."

The singer's own disposition also plays its part; he's been told he is bipolar and suffers from what he describes as "crushing lows and panic

attacks", as well as ADD. "I wanted it to be kind of fast and furious," he explains of his newer sound, "and I realised the best I had to offer was my mania. I listen to a lot of good songwriters and there's a temptation to be the erudite and studied, really great lyricist. We cheat ourselves out of delivering really exciting music because we want everyone to hear our lyrics, so we slow it down and get all Leonard Cohen, so that everyone pays attention."

Ask Furman about his prime motivation in becoming a musician and why he didn't pursue a fiction-writing path, as was his original intention, and he comprehensively fails to trot out any clichés about the approval of others being a bonus. "I just want to be useful to people who might be in trouble. I wanted to make music as I depended on it so much. At my lowest, it's always been a comfort and at its best, it helps people survive. There's a moral drive to making music – although there are a lot more moral things I could be doing," he laughs.

SHARON O'CONNELL

Ezra Furman plays Exeter Cavern Club (Sept 3), Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (4), Bestival, Isle Of Wight (4-7), Manchester Band On The Wall (22) and London Scala (23)

I'M YOUR FAN

"I love *Day Of The Dog*. It's like a mad mix of mid-'70s John Lennon crossed with Little Richard, with a delicate whiff of Lou Reed's *Transformer*, delivered in a couldn't-give-a-fuck American drawl."

Marc Riley, BBC Radio 6 Music



THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

CHRIS FORSYTH & THE SOLAR MOTEL BAND *Intensity Ghost* NO QUARTER
Fittingly, in a month where we review Television live (p102), Philly's new Verlaine delivers his own *Marquee Moon*. Jams!

NATALIE PRASS *Bird Of Prey* SPACEBOMB
Matthew E White's Spacebomb stable unveil another star; a Nashville singer whose lavish folk-soul stands comparison with Feist.

THURSTON MOORE
The Best Day

MATADOR
Stoke Newington's finest and his new combo (featuring MBV's Deb Googe on bass) come up with, perhaps, the best post-Sonic Youth release yet.



MARK LANEGAN BAND
Phantom Radio HEAVENLY

Grunge's deathless Voice Of Doom expands on the "sad disco" direction of 2012's *Blues Funeral*, now with extra New Order circa *Low-Life* vibes.

UNDERWORLD
Dubnobasswithmyheadman: Deluxe Edition UNIVERSAL

A 20th-anniversary reissue that reveals, amazingly, their techno breakthrough has only improved with age. A genuinely useful second CD of rarities, too.

CARIBOU *Our Love* CITY SLANG
Dan Snaith's seventh album finds his light-footed psych-electronica moving gently into the clubbier environment he occupies with his Daphni alter-ego.

MARTIN DUFFY
Assorted Promenades O GENESIS
26 years after his star turn on Felt's *Train Above The City*, Primal Scream's keys man completes an atmospheric solo album.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Native North America (Vol 1): Aboriginal Folk, Rock And Country 1966-1985

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC
The latest inspired crate-digging project from Seattle's Light In The Attic mavens. The Townes-like Willie Dunn is an especially nice discovery.

EX HEX *Rips* MERGE
Punchy and addictive punk-pop from former Helium frontwoman Mary Timony, pitched halfway between vintage CBGB ramalam and Sleater-Kinney.

FOXYGEN *...And Star Power* JAG JAGUWAR
An epically frazzled 2CD odyssey from the Cali duo. Pop gems, Flaming Lips trips, plenty deep space weirdness... It's all here.

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

**"BOSEMAN IS SENSATIONAL
AS JAMES
BROWN"**

DAVID GRITTEN, SAGA

CHADWICK BOSEMAN
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF 'THE HELP'

GET ON UP

THE
JAMES
BROWN
STORY

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**"INVENTIVE
AND BOLD"**

DAN JOLIN, EMPIRE

COMING SOON

TIME HAS TOLD ME

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 SPIDER BAGS

Back With You Again In The World

Hey ho, let's go! Kicking off this month, we have a delirious ramalam from Chapel Hill's Spider Bags; a band on their fourth album, it seems, but excitingly new to us. "Back With You Again In The World" is an unstable mix of roots rock and DIY punk, placing the rackets bunch as kindred spirits of The Men, The Strange Boys and, perhaps, The Replacements. Wait for the sax solo...



2 TY SEGALL

The Faker

The inexhaustible garage rocker tries many things on his latest solo album, *Manipulator*, but it's a searing kind of glam that feels most prominent. Hence "The Faker", a strutting belt-buckle boogie that eventually finds Segall soloing away as the catchy tune fades around him.

3 BOB CARPENTER

Silent Passage

An auspicious find from the archives, this one: a lost masterpiece of Cosmic American Music from 1974. "Silent Passage" is the title track of Carpenter's sole, remarkable album, which draws elevated comparisons to *No Other* from Allan Jones on page 90. Among a pretty stellar supporting cast, you can pick out Emmylou Harris on backing vocals, too.

4 ALLAH-LAS

Had It All

Later in this issue, the Allah-Las' Miles Michaud claims that his band's second album was influenced by prog-rock – not something which is immediately obvious when you hear "Had It All". Instead, the LA four-piece are still jangling on a stretch of Sunset Strip

that remains perpetually, blissfully 1965. One to file proudly alongside the *Nuggets* boxset.

5 EZRA FURMAN

Been So Strange

Over the past few months, Ezra Furman's skinny and spirited take on classic rock'n'roll has quietly become something of a phenomenon – thanks in part to the enthusiastic patronage of BBC Radio 6 Music. As he embarks on his biggest UK tour to date, here's a catch-up from last year's *Day Of The Dog*; a sparky update of old VU and Jonathan Richman formulae. Sax again, too, this time conjuring up the ghost of Clarence Clemons.

6 ALICE GERRARD

Wedding Dress

As the title of a 1995 comp of her recordings with Hazel Dickens would have it, Alice Gerrard is a Pioneering Woman Of Bluegrass. At 80, she remains uncannily potent, as evinced by this traditional gem from *Follow The Music*. Hiss Golden Messenger and Megafaun provide staunch support. "I have no idea where I learned this," Gerrard admits in her sleeve notes. "I've known it forever."

7 TWEEDY

Summer Noon

An intimately rendered pop standout, like a stripped-back treat off Wilco's *Summerteeth*, from Jeff and Spencer's *Sukierae*. For the full affecting story, check out our interview that starts on page 64.

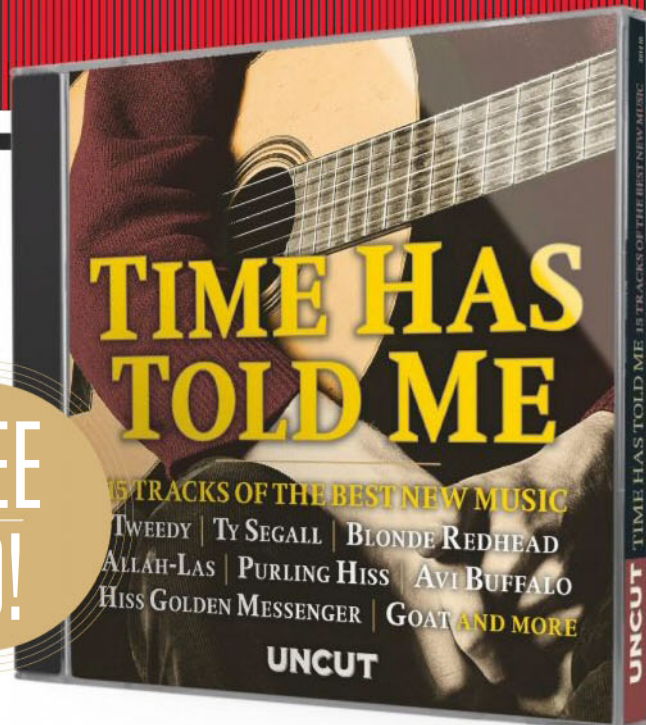
8 GOAT

Hide From The Sun

The enigmatic Swedish cult band's mission to incorporate as much global psych into their ritual jams continues apace on their second



FREE
CD!



album, *Commune*. Take "Hide From The Sun", which would sit neatly alongside vintage cuts by either Turkish maestro Erkin Koray or by their eminent Swedish forebears, Träd, Gräs Och Stenar.

9 HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

Mahogany Dread

A rich, swaggering meditation on the challenges of fatherhood, "Mahogany Dread" is one of the highlights to be found on the latest album by longtime *Uncut* favourites MC Taylor and Hiss Golden Messenger. Late-'70s Dylan might be a touchstone, and possibly even The Waterboys' rousing "And A Bang On The Ear".



10 TRICKY FEATURING TIRZAH

Sun Down

Back on form after many capricious years, Adrian "Tricky" Thaws revisits the menacing terrain of *Maxinquaye* on "Sun Down". Up-and-coming London singer Tirzah excels in the smoked, distaff Martina Topley-Bird role.

11 AVI BUFFALO

Memories Of You

The long-awaited second album from Long Beach's Avi Zahner-Isenberg and friends makes good on the sunny Californian promise of their 2010 self-titled debut. Zahner-Isenberg still sings like Doug Martsch and solos like Nels Cline; here, though, there's a luminous new Beatlesly dimension to "Memories Of You". No sax, but plenty of French horn.

12 BLONDE REDHEAD

Dripping

If once the New York trio were intimidating Sonic Youth acolytes, nowadays quite a lot of their music wouldn't sound out of place on a dancefloor, albeit one populated by alienated aesthetes. "Dripping", then, rides a sleek electronic groove that realigns them to the likes of The xx and The Knife.

13 HALF JAPANESE

In Its Pull

Jad and David Fair haven't made an album together as Half Japanese for some 13 years and, while rock historians normally bracket them as lo-fi primitivists, "In Its Pull" shows they can rock too, awkwardly but fiercely. A further revelation: how much these notionally twee veterans resemble early Hold Steady in 2014.

14 JENNIFER CASTLE

Sparta

Over the course of three below-the-radar albums in Canada, Castle collaborated with *Uncut* favourite Doug Paisley. "Sparta" is a sprightly companion to Paisley's exemplary country-rock, but presents only one side of the range shown on her new set, *Pink City*, which as often reveals Castle to be a chamber-folk artisan in the vein of Joanna Newsom.

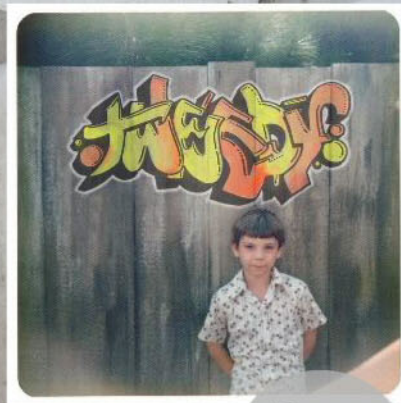
15 PURLING HISS

Learning Slowly

And finally this month, a cut from the awesome new Purling Hiss LP, *Weirdon*, that shows how the Philly noiseniks are gradually revealing themselves to be their generation's very own Dinosaur Jr. Don't let them fuck up, will you?

The new album available Sept 22nd, 2014 on 2xCD/2xLP/Digital.

"The best studio album Jeff Tweedy has been involved with since 'A Ghost Is Born' – **Uncut**



TWEEDY
"SUKIERAE"

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"Everything shines out brighter and louder than ever before (...)

Their most crowdpleasing record" – UNCUT



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ANTI-

ANTI- real artists creating great recordings on their own terms

Steve Albini

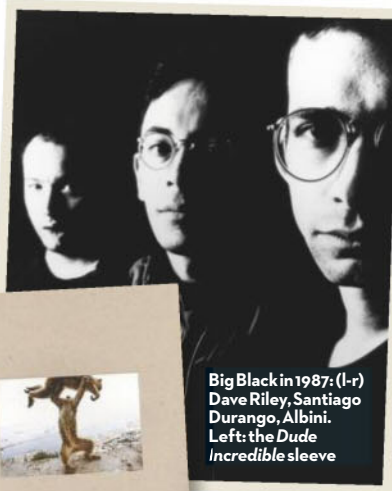
Interview: Michael Bonner
Photograph: Paul Natkin

How the Big Black/Rapeman/Shellac man produced Page & Plant, The Stooges and Nirvana, only to develop a Hobnob habit: “The perfect food for intergalactic travel”

IT'S 10AM ON a Tuesday morning and Steve Albini has just arrived at the offices of Electrical Audio, the two-studio recording facility in Chicago, Illinois that he founded in 1997. Over the past few decades, Albini has overseen the creation of hundreds of records – among them, legendary albums by the Pixies, Nirvana, Page & Plant, PJ Harvey and The Stooges. Today, however, he politely rebuffs enquiries about his current clients. “I am very discreet, because there are people who will form opinions on bands based on their association with me.”

Of course, Albini is a man of many skills, and not all of them lie behind the desk. As singer and guitarist, he has been a mainstay of the independent scene from his earliest days in Big Black through Rapeman and now Shellac. In fact, this month, Shellac release *Dude Incredible*, their first LP since 2007. Why the wait? “We mastered it either end of June or beginning of July 2013 and since then we’ve been working on the cover,” he explains. “Trying to get monkeys printed on paper turns out to be very difficult. I could understand it if we were trying to print wood nymphs on aluminium or something, but we’re not. We’re trying to print monkeys on paper. But apparently it’s a new procedure so it’s literally taken that long to get a fucking cover printed. It seems preposterous that it was so hard. But in the end we’re happy it’s monkeys on paper. We’re fine with it.”

And with that, it’s into the *Uncut* mailbag...



Big Black in 1987: (l-r) Dave Riley, Santiago Durango, Albini. Left: the *Dude Incredible* sleeve

STAR QUESTION



Could you remind me of the recipe for the famous Electrical Audio ‘Fluffy Coffee’? We’ve been trying to recreate it and never get it right. *David Gedge*

It’s pretty simple. You have an espresso machine. You grind espresso grade coffee very fine and mix one portafilter of espresso coffee with a quarter teaspoon of finely ground cinnamon. Don’t just sprinkle the cinnamon on the coffee; you have to mix it in or it congeals it into a matte and prevents the water from percolating through the portafilter. Tap that mix down and that’s now prepared to make a shot of cinnamon-infused espresso. Before you make the shot, put a tablespoon of maple syrup in a pint glass and half fill it with whole milk. Then, using the steaming wand on your espresso machine, steam that milk and froth it so that it fills the pint glass to the

top with foam. You now have a pint glass full of maple syrup-infused milk with foam on top. The foam is also infused with maple syrup, which stabilises the foam and makes it tasty like marshmallow. Now you pull the shot of espresso from the espresso machine that you’ve charged with your coffee and cinnamon and dump it in one motion into the pint glass filled with foamy, hot milk. That is a traditional hot fluffy coffee. I’m convinced that if I had come up with the fluffy coffee before we bothered building the studio, I wouldn’t have needed to build it. I’d just have a little van or some place that makes these and I’d fucking print money.

PJ Harvey says you make a great dill sauce. What’s your secret? *Ivy, Brighton*

She’s probably talking about a dill mayonnaise I was making for a while. There’s no secret, it’s a classic. You emulsify an egg yolk with oil and either vinegar or lemon juice. Add a bit of salt and pepper and then a load of fresh chopped dill. Use just the fronds and chop it as fine as possible. It’s a great universal sauce.

The original sleeve for Big Black’s “Headache” EP is one of the nastiest record covers ever. What was your reasoning?

Glenn Burke, Appleby
A number of things. Partly as a visual pun. Partly because there aren’t that many images you can look at where you can identify with the image. You instantly imagine how that could happen to you. A major component of Big Black’s aesthetic was this idea that we are all susceptible and vulnerable to

STAR QUESTION



What’s your walk-up song? *Kim Deal*
“Master Of Sparks” by ZZ Top because the riff in that is unstoppable. The

thing that makes baseball better than other games is because it’s structurally unique. Other games can be reduced to a simple formula: you’ve got one team in possession of a ball and you’re trying to put that ball in a goal and the other team’s trying to prevent the movement of that ball or trying to steal the ball to put it in the goal. That’s basically all other team sports and they’re all fucking stupid. They all run on a clock for a start. Is some kind of bell going to go off and you lose?

Who would you like to work with before you die?

Sean Parker, Chester
I’ve been a lifelong fan of Crazy Horse, and I admire Neil Young in many ways. Primarily, I admire his skills as a guitar player and the way he takes my most uncomfortable thoughts and makes them concrete using pure sound. I could do a good job with one of his records. But he’s a very particular guy and I can’t blame him for it as the results have been spectacular. He’s got an unbelievable batting average. All of my favourite music has been made by people who do it their way, with a disregard for the audience. Neil Young, top of the list, then Willie Nelson, unbelievable musician – always puts himself in awkward situations. And Dolly Parton – it would be great to work on her.

“Fighting as
entertainment is
fucking barbaric...
I don't care if it's
chickens or dogs
or people!”



Albini in the 'A'
control room of his
studio, Electrical
Audio, Chicago,
Illinois, June 24, 2005

● dark thoughts or aberrant behaviour. We are all vulnerable to situations beyond our control... you're not special, you're not safe, you're not better than other people. You look at a picture of another person totally traumatised like that and you can't help but picture yourself or someone you know in that situation and instantly feel weakened by it. I'm deducing all this after the fact, as we certainly didn't have this conversation when we did it. We just saw the picture and went, "Wow! We should use that!" Everyone in the band was like, "Yeah, that would be perfect."

STAR QUESTION



Have you ever been in a fist fight? *Kelley Deal*

When I was an adolescent, I was in a couple of actual fights. I really detest

violence and its practice. I don't respect or admire fighting, boxing, wrestling... I can appreciate the effort and the conditioning and the tactical elements of it, but it still boils down to physically trying to incapacitate another person. Children and animals fight. Watching fighting as entertainment is fucking barbaric, I don't care if it's chickens or dogs or people.

You've curated various All Tomorrow's Parties events. Were there any bands you wanted to get on the bill but couldn't?

Cheri Dickens, Edinburgh

My biggest disappointment was Bill Withers. We have a backdoor contact for him and made some enquiries, but he wasn't interested in performing. There was a documentary on his current life, *Still Bill*, that was made four or five years ago. It's really enlightening. If I'd seen that documentary earlier, I don't know if I'd have approached him. Because it's clear from this that he's content making music on a very personal scale and he's not interested in being in the public eye anymore. I feel like, in a way, being ignorant of that was my fault.

STAR QUESTION



Ask Steve what prostaglandins are. *David Yow, The Jesus Lizard*

He probably doesn't mean the actual definition, which

he could find on the internet. He wants me to make something up, so I'm going to say that's the resultant stock made by boiling socks and/or underwear to kill lice and nits.

ANTON CORBIN



Nirvana at the time of *In Utero*: "...it's all Steve Albini's fault"

How did Plant and Page approach you to record *Walking Into Clarksdale*?

Robert Dawes, Chorlton

I literally got a phone call from Robert Plant. It was incredible. You're talking about people who are responsible for a half-dozen of the best records ever made and who have shaped the idiom of my lifetime and those people called me on the phone to talk about working on their record. I mean there isn't an English word for how I felt, it was enormously flattering. Going into it, I knew it was kind of an impossible challenge to satisfy their core audience and make a record that they wanted to make. I would do another record with Page and Plant

"Third World War Two is without question the greatest LP title of all time"

in a heartbeat. They were totally professional with me. It was clear they were in charge of everything, but it was also clear that they appreciated the effort that everybody was making on their behalf. I was impressed with how collaborative Page and Plant were, bearing in mind that there was a previously existing power structure where it was Jimmy Page's band and Robert was hired to be the singer and in the interim, Robert had gone on to become a very successful solo artist and now should be able to call the shots in a lot of situations. Jimmy was deferential to him in that regard. A very similar experience for me was

when I got to work on a record by The Stooges. I feel very lucky in that I have literally had my wildest dreams come true a couple of times.

Are you still a fan of proto-punkers Third World War?

Philip Delahunte, London

What an incredibly underrated band. They were radical and Communist and openly advocating overthrowing the Crown, which is technically treasonous. Really rough, confrontational singing, skeletal, stripped-down music, biting guitar sounds. If their music had got more attention, I'd be surprised if they didn't get police attention due to their subject matter. The best thing about Third World War is probably that after they made the first LP *Third World War*, they decided they were going to make another album and they may have decided to make another album for no other reason than to name it *Third World War Two*, and that would've been a perfectly valid decision. That is without question, the greatest album title of all time.

How did it feel to revisit *In Utero* for the 20th anniversary?

Sean McCarthy

At the time, there was a political problem between the band and the label. In the end, the record as it was released was accompanied by a rather unpleasant attempt by the record label to blame me for its failure, which is a bizarre perspective from a label, saying, "This is a new record from a hit band. We hope you love it, if you don't it's Steve Albini's fault." It was an unpleasant six months and I almost went broke. So there was a bit of bad taste in my mouth regarding that record when it was released. I tried not to personalise that towards the band, and it was great to reconnect with Krist down

the road and realise we were still friendly and can still work together. It was gratifying that the people responsible for that reissue were willing to let them go the distance for quality and by that I mean we had the original masters for the original sessions and I suggested that we do the vinyl reissue as double-12" and that we cut it direct into metal at Abbey Road, and they signed off on all of that. I said I was happy to oversee the mastering and they signed off on that, as well. So I got to see the production aspect of the reissue version of the original mix through to the end. That was very satisfying and in the end I don't know how to make a record better than that.

STAR QUESTION



How many Hobnobs do you eat a day?

Stuart Braithwaite, Mogwai

There was a period where I was making a lot of records in the UK and I was in the company of English people and Scottish people in particular and I would go through a packet of Hobnobs a day. Hobnobs with hot tea, it might very well be the perfect food. Instead of looking for a thing to sustain mankind on the intergalactic journey to another planet, they just want one food that they can feed generations while the spaceship is travelling to a new home planet. Hobnobs and hot tea, no questions you could totally survive on that! 🍪

Dude Incredible is out Sept 16



UNCUT.CO.UK

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

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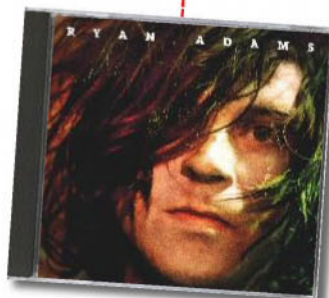
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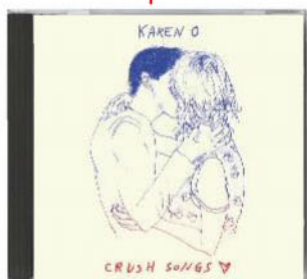
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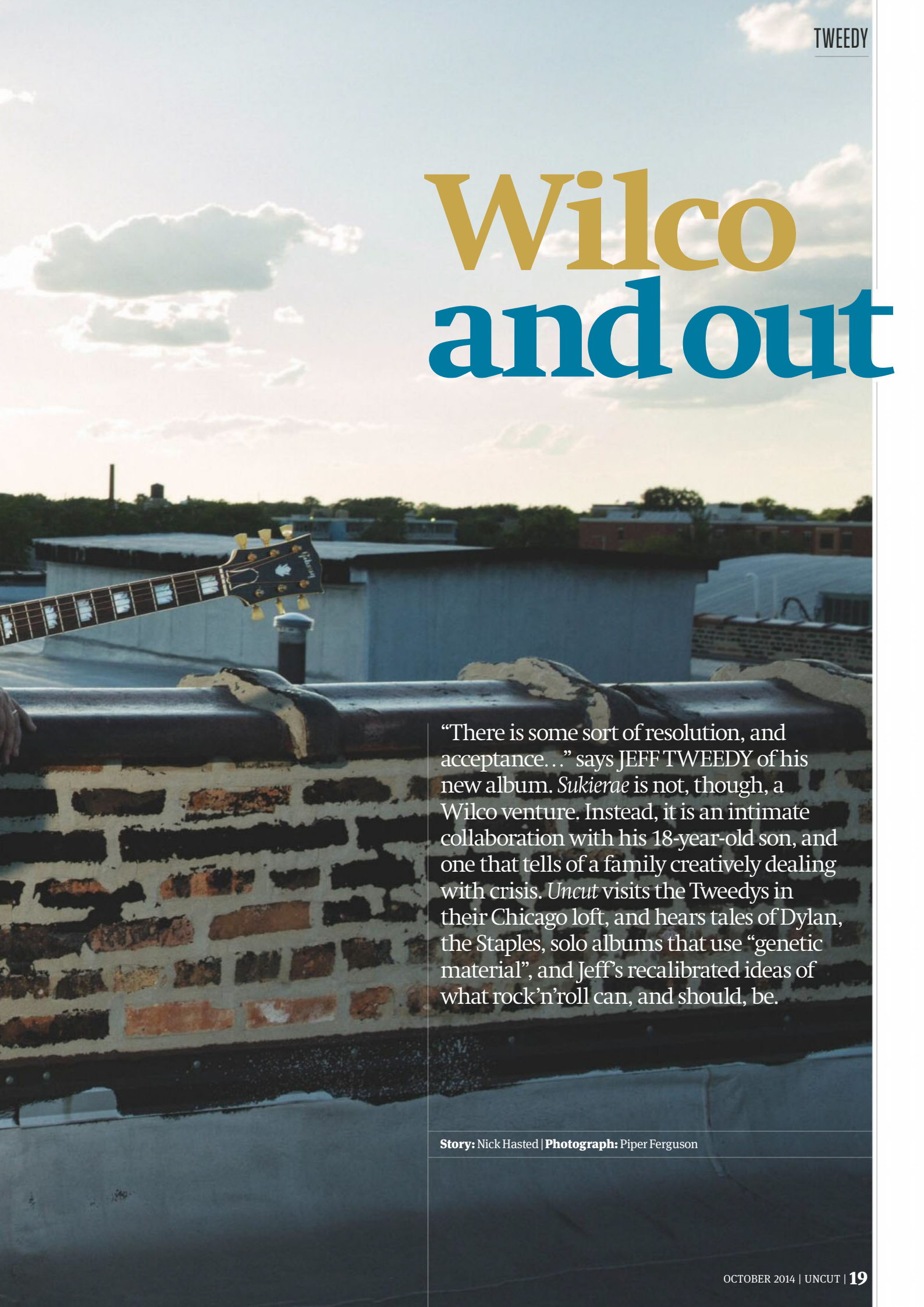
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Tweedy, 2014: a
father-and-son
business



Wilco and out



“There is some sort of resolution, and acceptance...” says JEFF TWEEDY of his new album. *Sukierae* is not, though, a Wilco venture. Instead, it is an intimate collaboration with his 18-year-old son, and one that tells of a family creatively dealing with crisis. *Uncut* visits the Tweedys in their Chicago loft, and hears tales of Dylan, the Staples, solo albums that use “genetic material”, and Jeff’s recalibrated ideas of what rock’n’roll can, and should, be.

Story: Nick Hasted | **Photograph:** Piper Ferguson



Jeff and Spencer working on the Tweedy album at The Loft, Chicago, 2014

TWEEDY LIKENS The Loft, the Chicago studio he has owned and made Wilco records in for the past 12 years, to a clubhouse. Wandering through it after our interview, it certainly has a homely feel. The red patterned carpet could be from a 1970s English pub. Four rows of Tweedy's guitars are racked on metal industrial shelves at one end of the long, open-plan room. A vintage yellow '40s amp with a National shield on its front is a piece of Americana in itself. So is the smudged harmonica with a paper "D" stuck to it, reverently kept in a glass case, which Bob Dylan gave Tweedy last year. A Stetson sits on a speaker. Tweedy's 18-year-old son Spencer, with whom he has just made a gorgeous double-album, *Sukierae*, is acting as our tour guide. "This is the drum my dad bought for my mom," he says, pointing at a bass-drum which still has blue wrapping paper around its sides. "I think it was really for himself. Like when Homer Simpson bought the bowling ball for Marge. I think it even said 'Homer' on it..."

Every available space in the studio is filled with artefacts collected down the years by Tweedy Senior. Books on Duchamp, the Fluxus art movement and Popeye sit next to Robert Burton's *The Anatomy Of Melancholy*. On another shelf, *The Wilco Book* and Bob Dylan's *Lyrics* are side by side, as are the complete works of Lewis Carroll and Dante. Scattered around the stereo, there's Randy Newman's *Little*

Criminals CD, albums including *Turn Me Loose – Outriders Of "Old-Time" Music* and Alice Cooper's *Love It To Death*. An old cream cassette of *The Basement Tapes* has been left by the tape-deck. Wilco gig posters decorate the walls. Behind an exercise bike, a curtain screens off a battered-looking bed at the back of The Loft, where visiting musicians can sleep

over. In the kitchen area, there's a pinball machine. Meanwhile, behind an array of further amps is studio area itself. Signed photos of Don Rickles and Bob Newhart sit on the right-hand side of the central mixing desk, with a smaller photo of Ike and Tina Turner placed between them. A vintage mic, keyboards, a piano, and multiple drums are all set up ready to record.

A boxed toy truck from the Wilco gasoline company and a collection of Tweedy's baseball caps are shelved on one side of a thin wall that separates off the studio. Boxed hard drives of recent LPs recorded

here by White Denim, Low and Mavis Staples are stored on the wall's other side. So is Wilco's *The*

Whole Love, the most recent of eight studio LPs by the band Tweedy formed 20 years ago from the ashes of Americana pioneers Uncle Tupelo. Glancing down, I notice there's a sofa beneath these shelves. And lying on it, wrapped in a green sleeping bag, baseball cap pulled low to block the mid-afternoon sun, is Jeff Tweedy, sleeping soundly. He has, it transpires, more reason than usual to be tired.



The front cover of the Tweedy album, featuring a young Jeff

FOUR HOURS EARLIER, I meet Tweedy in the street outside The Loft. Wearing a Connecticut Tigers baseball cap, denim shirt, battered blue jeans and glasses, he looks affably rumpled. In the kitchen at the back of the studio, he considers how he came to make *Sukierae*, the closest Tweedy has come so far to making a solo album. It's credited to Tweedy, acknowledging Spencer's presence on drums.

"Wilco have had a pretty long run of being on the road and making records, with not a lot of down-time between," he explains. "And everybody else in the band had their other things going on, and I'd started working on the Mavis Staples record [2013's *One True Vine*], and Spencer ended up playing drums on that. The songs I wrote for that they sounded kind of like a solo record. I always thought that if I was ever going to make a solo record, I should try and play everything myself, like *McCartney*. And I thought there was a little bit of a loophole to use my genetic material to play the drums!" he laughs. "But aside from that, I just wanted to keep doing it after the Mavis record because Spencer's so good, and I have an incredible, intuitive connection musically with him, like nothing I've ever experienced."

It transpires, the making of *Sukierae* was a family affair in one more, wholly unwanted way. "There's little miraculous coincidences that occur in your life that you have to pay attention to," Tweedy says, clearing his throat. "And I don't know what I would have done if I'd been in a normal work schedule, revolving around a Wilco record and touring. Because from January on, my wife [Sue Miller Tweedy] is having a very serious illness that we've been dealing with. She was diagnosed with cancer, then she started chemo – it's a miracle we didn't have to navigate all of that along with, 'How am I going to get home from Switzerland to be there for this scan?', and being able to focus entirely on that, and have this music be what it's been for my whole life. Not necessarily an escape, but a consolation, or an outlet for a certain amount of emotion and a healthy way to disappear."

Spencer Tweedy arrives as we're talking. He's a young-looking 18-year-old, skinny and quietly intelligent. He plays a daft game left over from childhood with his father, sitting on each other on a studio chair. "He's

going to interview us separately, like the cops, to see if we've got our stories straight," jokes Tweedy.

As we sit sharing take-out tamales in the kitchen at the back of The Loft, Spencer reports on the massage he's just given his mother, and explains 50 lbs of bread pudding is waiting for them at home. Fans leave a home-cooked meal at their house every night. "It's really kind," Tweedy says, "because by the time we get back from the hospital, we're often too tired to cook much. But it's all comfort food, so it's hard to keep the weight down." There's a feeling of easy family warmth around the table.

"I have an incredible, intuitive connection musically with my son, Spencer"

JEFF TWEEDY

Spencer turned up a lot in old Wilco articles. Aged only eight, he was already playing in a school band, The Blisters, bashing away at his drums in the family basement. "I remember that, back at our old house," Spencer recalls. "They put me behind the drum kit for the first time when I was two. I got my own miniature drum kit when I was five, and when I was six, my dad bought me a direct-to-CD recorder, and we recorded a bunch of *Raccoonist* demos in my bedroom – *Raccoonist* is our alter ego moniker for the two of us, and also my [14-year-old] brother Sam sometimes. That's the underground name for Tweedy."

From age six, Spencer jammed with his father, often on future Wilco songs. Drumming on Mavis Staples' *One True Vine*, however, marked his graduation to the studio big time. "I was afraid that at any moment, I wouldn't perform well enough, and the whole thing would be taken away from me," he reveals. "I've dreamed of making records my whole life."

"He always credits being sat down at a drum kit in my wife's office at the rock club she used to run here in town, even before he could sit up by himself," his father recalls. "Every drummer that came through the Lounge Ax would let him bang away on their drums. It was a challenge to record with him on one level, because a father and a producer have two very different agendas. But he's really good, I have to say."

I think I'm under-utilising him, to be honest! The only conflict would ever be when he would say, 'Dad, I really need to get home and finish my homework.'"

Tweedy's need for new music is still insatiable enough to have a box of fresh albums delivered monthly to his home. "It's hard to differ from someone with such an open mind," Spencer says, as he considers his own music tastes. "I hadn't identified with new popular music until the recent garage-rock revival, with Ty Segall, and these kids from Chicago, Twin Peaks and The Orwells, and Kurt Vile. These people

EYEWITNESS

WHEN JEFF MET BOB

"I'd only met Dylan once before, when a photographer who knew me and him snapped a picture of us together," Tweedy says, reflecting on last year's *Americanarama* tour, which saw Wilco join forces with Dylan, My Morning Jacket and others. "He said hi to me on the first or second night of the tour on the way to the stage, and he knew my fucking name. To be honest, I didn't expect that. My head was on a 360-degree swivel to see, 'Did everybody see that?' There was no way



to play it cool, as if, 'Oh yeah. Hey, what's up, Bob?' I was really thrilled. And then I did get to talk with him a bit when we got up and played with him a few times. I told him that Mavis [Staples] said hi. And he said, 'Tell her she should have married me,'" Tweedy laughs. "So the next night I said, 'She says she's still available.' And he said, 'Yeah, right. I wish!' My impression of him was like he's the prettiest girl at the party, where everybody's afraid to talk to him, and when you had a moment to, the only thing shocking was that they were human. We played with Richard Thompson a lot, too, which was as exciting to me musically as playing with Bob Dylan was, because we weren't just being told what key 'The Weight' was 10 seconds before we went onstage. It was in a different key every night, by the way..."



With Mavis Staples, 2013



The Blisters, with Spencer, far right

● resurrecting great '60s rock are the first time I've identified with my own generation. My dad loves it, too."

Tweedy famously wrote in an early Wilco song that he was "saved" by rock'n'roll. Does he think Spencer needs music in the same way he did, growing up in the backwater of Belleville, Illinois? "From my perspective, he doesn't need to make it in the same way as I do," Tweedy believes, "because he has a lot more than I ever did. In terms of interests, and ability, and talent in other ways. He's pretty capable at everything he tries to do. I found the opposite to be true! Even music wasn't something that came as naturally to me as it did to him. It was all I thought and cared about, and I still feel that I'm a much better listener than a player, and anything I'm able to do is only because of that. But he has a savant ability to play.

"There's a lot of things that are incredibly different about the world Spencer lives in and the world I lived in," he considers. "When I was growing up, there was a deep sense of isolation and alienation, once types of music started resonating with me that were virtually unheard of, and if heard of, despised, like punk, and I started caring about it so deeply. You looked around in the town where I

"I always doubt myself... but then I play music, and I have no doubt"

SPENCER TWEEDY

grew up, and there was only [*Uncle Tupelo* co-leader] Jay Farrar to talk to. There were much deeper lines in the sand being drawn, and there was no way to find your tribe, like the internet provides today. Contrast that with Spencer's life growing up fairly privileged, in a big city, and going to Montessori schools. At the same time, a certain amount of alienation seems to be hard-wired into my DNA," he laughs happily. "So I don't worry too much."

"I do need to make music," Spencer believes. "Last year, it was so hard to sit in school for seven hours thinking, a mile up the road at the studio I could be making a record right now. I always doubt myself, I'm always questioning, 'Am I only doing this 'cause I was born into it and it was around me?' Shooting holes in my own dreams. But then I play music, and I have no doubt."

I recall seeing an early Wilco gig in '97, when Tweedy climbed into the crowd at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire and – outraged at their lack of response – physically shook every audience member he could reach. Rock'n'roll seemed an article of faith to him then. At 46, does the music still mean as much to him?

"Rock'n'roll as a fashion and sellable lifestyle is

INTRODUCING... THE BLISTERS

"THE BLISTERS RECORDED *Finally Bored*, our only album after 10 years of being a band, here at The Loft," Spencer Tweedy says. Jeff Tweedy calls it "the best album title of all time". He is, of course, proud of the band his son formed when he was eight, and who have proved to be unexpectedly durable. "The Blisters sounds like indie rock, like Built To Spill or Pavement or something," Spencer says. "I'm not the

FINALLY BORED

songwriter in that band, which is kind of a strange thing, because due to my dad a lot of our limited press has centred on me. Henry Mosher is the singer and songwriter in The Blisters, even though I started the band. Henry writes really great music for us. The Blisters are still operational. It's the same lineup as when I started, except for one person. I've also been writing and singing my own stuff, and it's just so hard, but I just have to remind myself that I'm only 18, and not get discouraged. I had this weird experience of the very first song I ever recorded being on Pitchfork."

definitely faltering," Tweedy believes. "The part of it that's still real to me is virtually the same. It all revolves around the same core principle, that you are somehow empowering yourself, and OK with who you are. Do I think in the traditional sense of what a lot of people think rock'n'roll is, would what I'm doing now be perceived as rock'n'roll? Hell, no. Would my 18-year-old self look at what I'm doing and think of it as rock'n'roll? No. But my 46-year-old self feels the same as I did when I was 18 and playing to a bunch of people that didn't give a fuck about me as now, when I get up onstage and play 14 songs from a record that no-one's ever heard. That doesn't feel any less rock'n'roll to me as what I feel I felt like when I was 18. In some ways it's a little bit more honest. It's a little bit more direct."

SUKIERAE WILL BE released as a double-album, like Wilco's country-rock landmark *Being There* back in 1996. The 20 songs here are subtly diverse, from the bad-trip psychedelia of "Diamond Light Part 1" to the enigmatic folk-rock of "Desert Bell". All the same, its second half feels more acoustic and reflective.

"It's definitely sequenced to become bolder and quieter as it proceeds," Tweedy explains. "There is some sort of resolution, and acceptance, which is a dirty word in the context of rock'n'roll. But I don't think there's anything antithetical to rock'n'roll about enduring. I wish more people that I loved and cared about artistically had endured. And so, the last song, 'I'll Never Know', is about my mom, and it's the saddest song on the record, and... I dunno, I'm not going to spell it out, but I appreciate that the arc of the record is perceived that way by you."



Wilco in 2011

That last song is a mystery. Its only clear lyrical image is of a TV flickering in a corner of a room.

"I never had a bedtime, when I was a little kid," Tweedy explains, relenting, "and my mom was a night-owl, she never slept more than an hour or two at a time, and so I would get up and I would watch movies with her while she was sleeping, and her cigarette was still burning. It's a very vivid memory of mine, as far back as I can remember. And it's sort of sad and lonely, but it's also how I remember my mom. And then I was thinking about having kids, and how I'm not always conscious around them – I mean, literally! – and how, when I used to see my mom sleeping, I'd worry about her dying. And now she's dead [*JoAnn Tweedy died in 2006*]. And I don't know, it's so incredibly sad, but it feels so good to sing about. And the lyrics are, 'We watched thousands cheer Lily Mars strike up the band in *Babes In Arms*'. That's a very old black-and-white Judy Garland movie, because they were my mom's favourites. It's good to talk about, you know."

Although *Sukierae* was started before his wife's diagnosis, many of its songs describe scenes from a long love affair with affecting sadness. "Oh, I've always been certain/Nearly all my life," Tweedy sings on "New Moon",



Tweedy, live at Lincoln Hall, Chicago, 2014

"One day I'd be a burden/And you would be my wife."

"Well, she's definitely on my mind a lot, always," Tweedy says, "and especially while writing lyrics for this record. It was hard not to sing to her, and honour this thing that we've maintained, that's so hard to do. Sukie Rae is her name. She called herself Sukie her whole life because Peter Noone's little sister was Sukie Noone, and she was in love with Peter Noone when she was nine. I should add that the prognosis is very good, and there's a real positivity with all the doctors. But it's not a walk in the park. I mean, I have panic disorder, so there's been years where it doesn't take anything and I feel I'm being chased by a bear. But to have something existentially threatening like this has been... really fucking challenging! My wife has always taken care of me, you know. So the way I was feeling writing all of this record is, I'm relieved that I can come close to paying that back. I've felt very weak through a lot of it. But I've been able to make her feel less alone and at the same time, not scare our children, in spite of feeling like my heart was going to explode, and like I couldn't eat."

TWO NIGHTS LATER, Tweedy the band, bulked out to a five-piece for their US tour, take the stage at Chicago's 300-capacity Lincoln Hall. Jeff and Spencer start with a Q&A session with veteran Chicago rock writers Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot. Coincidentally, the venue is three doors down from where Sue Miller Tweedy, sitting in the balcony's shadows, once ran the Lounge Ax. The banter is breezy, as when Kot broaches the question of groupies.

"I am only 18," Spencer reminds him. "I think the fans are a little bit older..."

"Not only am I offended," Tweedy deadpans, "now everyone here is offended. The creepiest thing in the world would be for someone to get involved with Spencer because they love his dad."

The mood briefly changes when Kot asks if *Sukierae*'s music is something the whole Tweedy family needed. Jeff looks searchingly at Spencer before answering. "It's been the worst six months of our family's life," he says. "I don't remember working that hard, but I recorded a double-album in this period. I was able to disappear into it."

No-one seems to miss Wilco's old songs during the following gig, in which new songs like "Nobody Dies Any More" and "Low Key" already sound like old favourites. "How you doing?" someone shouts from the dark, a standard Chicago greeting. "Doing pretty good, considering," Tweedy replies.

"Suzie comes up every once in a while," Tweedy muses, back in The Loft. "She just can't believe how many guitars there are. She thinks we could be living in the Taj Mahal if I hadn't bought them..."

"Rock'n'roll as a fashion and sellable lifestyle is definitely faltering"

JEFF TWEEDY

Taken song by song, the album he and Spencer have just made could have been a Wilco record. Arguably, though, only a father and son could have located the right emotional space that runs through it.

"I've never really realised," Tweedy considers, "but since Wilco started playing to bigger audiences, I've put a lot of songs in higher registers where I can really belt. But my voice is much more expressive of how I really feel, and much more fitting with the kinds of lyrics I write, if I'm strumming an acoustic guitar. Maybe all of these songs would have been on a Wilco record, but it would have been in a different key. This record's in my key. I like records that you feel like you want to lean in a little bit, and that something's being shared, that you don't want to miss."

"I like being able to perform quietly, with that nuance," Spencer agrees. "It's the best

place to play emotionally for me. It is a very emotional album. It feels like it's honest. With recent Wilco albums, people accused him of being sterile and impersonal. Hopefully, what he's doing will be more obvious to people with this stripped-down production. It's pure introspection, and art."

Just before I leave, Tweedy, back awake after his doze in the studio, eagerly plays me his latest collaboration with Spencer, an unfinished Pops Staples album that they've just completed, at Mavis Staples' request. "If this Staples record comes out and gets the attention it deserves," Tweedy says, turning it up, "that'll be my proudest and most lasting achievement in music."

But what about Uncle Tupelo and Wilco?

"Those," he says simply, "were just consoling moments for me." **T**

Sukierae is reviewed on page 64

TOP OF THE POPS

POPS STAPLES' LAST STAND

Jeff Tweedy's new production

FIVE YEARS BEFORE his death in 2000, Pops Staples left a final album unfinished. There had been an attempt to complete it with what Jeff Tweedy calls "cruise ship" arrangements, but unhappy with the result, Mavis Staples decided against releasing it. But after recording two albums with Tweedy and latterly Spencer, she asked them to finish the job, adding Mavis' voice and their own bass and drums. "It felt like playing in the room with Pops," Tweedy says, as he treats me to selections from the record, switching between his production and the tinny '90s effort. The new version sounds like classic Southern soul, full of gospel sentiment, with Pops' stinging guitar much in evidence. "Pops would have had the Staples sisters singing over this bit," Tweedy says. "Their absence [*Cleotha*

died in 2013] says something to me."

"Talk to me, old pal of mine, if you feel you can't go on," Pops sings on the last song Tweedy plays me, apparently called "Friendship", which sounds like the Staple Singers' version of "The Weight" with its sentiment inverted. "Mavis said she couldn't tell the difference between your guitar and Pops'," Spencer reminds his dad. "Made me cry a little bit," Tweedy admits. The album is due out in December.

Pops Staples, centre, with daughters, from left, Cleo, Mavis and Yvonne, 1996



HIT WAVE!

The Four Tops! The Supremes! Marvin Gaye! Martha And The Vandellas! From the Motown hit factory and beyond, HOLLAND-DOZIER-HOLLAND revisit 10 of their most extraordinary records. “We were a bunch of dogs guarding the meat house!”

Story: Tom Pinnock

OF ALL THE cogs in Motown’s impressive production line, arguably the most important were the songwriters. Hitsville USA’s most successful team were three young men from Detroit, barely in their twenties when they began working for Berry Gordy.

“They were masters in harmonies and masters in rhythms,” says Martha Reeves today. “They were creative geniuses who I think God blessed with a wonderful talent.”

Over the next decade with Motown and their own innovative labels, Eddie Holland, his brother Brian, and Lamont Dozier used that talent to create an unprecedented body of work, with songs like The Supremes’ “Where Did Our Love Go” and “Baby Love” (two of 10 H-D-H No 1s for the group), The Four Tops’ “Reach Out I’ll Be There” and “I Can’t Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch)”, and Martha And The Vandellas’ “Heat Wave” among their many illustrious highlights.

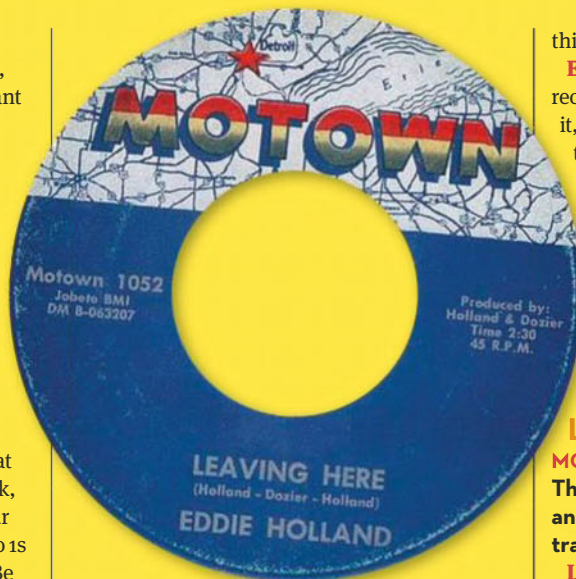
As a new boxset is released, Holland-Dozier-Holland and some of the artists they wrote for, including Mary Wilson and Dionne Warwick, look back over the making of 10 of their greatest songs – written-to-order products that somehow encapsulated their time and still sparkle today.

“Competition was thick and heavy at Motown,” laughs Eddie Holland. “We were a bunch of dogs guarding the meat house!”

EDDIE HOLLAND LEAVING HERE

MOTOWN, 1963. US 76; UK -

One of the first songs to be written and produced by the trio, this was also Eddie’s swansong as a performing artist.



Lamont Dozier: Brian and Eddie were already working with Berry Gordy. Eddie was working with Jackie Wilson, recording his demos. Jackie was stealing all his riffs and shit! [Laughs] I came to Motown later, in '61, '62, after I left Gwen Gordy at Anna Records.

Brian Holland: I did a little bit as an artist as well – one or two records.

Lamont: Our first thing together, Brian and I, was “Forever”, The Marvelettes did it first [1963]. Then it got busy. Eddie suggested we three get together ‘cause he was tired of chirping and wanted to join the writing end of it – he figured we could get more done. The fact we’d all been artists made a difference, absolutely. We knew exactly what to do, as far as writing for other artists. Eddie wanted this to be his swansong as an artist. It was a great track, it was like a gospel

thing, and it just fit Eddie’s voice perfectly.

Eddie Holland: What do I remember about recording “Leaving Here”? That after I recorded it, I left there. No, on the serious side, during that time, I was not really that interested in singing anyway, I was more interested in writing. With “Leaving Here”, “Just Ain’t Enough Love” and “Jamie”, I actually forgot I even recorded those things until someone reminded me. Maybe I wanted to forget!

Lamont: It wasn’t where his heart was. And it wasn’t helping his pocket either!

THE MARVELETTES LOCKING UP MY HEART

MOTOWN, 1963. US 44; UK -

The first H-D-H song to chart in the Top 70, and the track that introduced their trademark “feelgood feeling”.

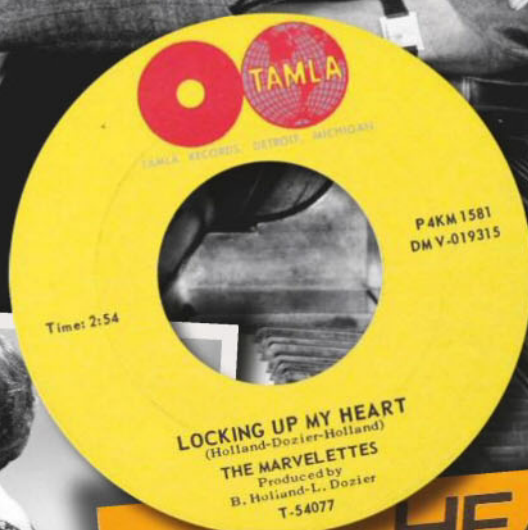
Lamont: We had a little room [at Hitsville USA], with a piano and a Webcor, a little recorder, and a desk. A lot of stomping was going on, man. That’s where we cooked up the stuff.

Brian: We all came up with the sparks of songs. Lamont came up with the idea for this.

Lamont: It was just a feelgood thing – like most of the things we did, it started from a feeling or an idea, and we went into the studio and just cut it. This had a gospel feel, it had a real catchy refrain. Usually, we cut those things within three or four days after coming up with the idea, and The Marvelettes needed something at the time. This is what got the ball rolling for Holland-Dozier-Holland. We all came from the church. We had that kind of camaraderie, so we could get a lot done, because we were all on the same page.

Eddie: I never wrote lyrics first – it was all inspiration from the music. A divine intervention! I usually spent an average of two

Lamont Dozier,
Eddie Holland and
Brian Holland: "A
lot of stomping was
going on, man"



The Marvelettes, NYC,
1964: (l-r) Gladys Horton,
Georgeanna Tillman,
Wanda Young and
Katherine Anderson





learned a lot, we developed there.

Lamont: It was a songwriting college!

MARTHA AND THE VANDELLAS HEAT WAVE

GORDY, 1963. US 4; UK 21

Reeves and the Vandellas' second hit, oozing the quintessential 'Motown Sound'. Later covered by The Who, Linda Ronstadt and The Jam.

Lamont: This was a feeling I used to warm up on, that old Charleston thing, and we just decided to knock it out, just do it on Martha Reeves. It became a very iconic song.

Martha Reeves: They said, "Martha, come over to the studio, we have a song for you." There was Lamont sitting at the keyboard, Eddie singing, and then they brought the Vandellas over after they taught me the lead. Brian and Lamont sang the two parts for them, and we went in the studio and cut it. I prided myself on being a one-take artist – once Eddie had sung it to me, I had it. I could do a session in an hour.

Brian: We were always doing different tricks in the studio, even when I was mastering songs. On "Heat Wave" we went out into the alley and brought back some snow chains, for tyres, to get that percussion.

Lamont: We were always looking for new sounds. We didn't have any synthesizers

in those days, so we had to be inventive. Martha was wonderful! Did she need encouragement? Eddie took care of that. He was cracking the whip with a lot of the artists. He was a taskmaster of the highest degree.

Eddie: I worked with the lead vocals. I would give them a demo tape – "Don't come in the studio 'til you know the song!" Then once they came in the studio, I would take one hour and make sure they'd done their homework. I wouldn't let them out of the studio 'til they got it right. Sometimes it took two, three, four hours. Five hours, sometimes, if they didn't get it right.

Lamont: That was the Motown university stuff. When you're in school you've got to do your homework. 'Cause if you don't, you will be punished!

Martha: After a song was recorded, it would be submitted to the quality control department. They would call in bus drivers, secretaries, waitresses, people from the church, from the factory, athletes, every profession, and let them hear the records by all the producers. They would make the decision as to whose record won. I think the competition

➔ weeks on a song. But we never had days where no inspiration came. For the simple reason that, in Motown, everybody was trying to run for that same piece of meat, you were getting hunger cramps in your belly – no, no, you come up with some ideas! [Laughs] Really, it was a lot of fun at Motown, there was nothing like it in the world ever. We



"One-take artists", Martha & The Vandellas, 1966

MO' FACTS

STATS! IN THE NAME OF LOVE...

Holland-Dozier-Holland's work in numbers

200+ songs written and released

45 songs with the word 'love' in the title

13 Billboard No 1 singles

4 Billboard No 1s in 1965 alone

10 Billboard No 1s for The Supremes

35 Billboard Top 10 hit singles

4 songs inducted into the Grammy Hall Of Fame – "Reach Out I'll Be There" (1998),



"Where Did Our Love Go" (1998), "You Keep Me Hanging On" (1999), "Stop! In The Name Of Love" (2001)

100,000,000 radio and television airplays

96 Invictus singles

44 Hot Wax singles

17 Music Merchant singles

was important – all those writers, all trying to make the Motown sound, make hits. You could say they all became successful because of that energy, that desire to win.

THE SUPREMES WHERE DID OUR LOVE GO

MOTOWN, 1964. US 1; UK 3

The Supremes' first No 1, and the beginning of an incredible run of chart-topping hits for the band and H-D-H – all despite the "disappointing attitude" of lead Supreme Diana Ross.

Lamont: This was the record that made The Supremes and made Motown. In fact, this was the first of 10 No 1s we had with The Supremes.

Mary Wilson: We recorded several songs with Holland-



Dozier-Holland before this. Then we heard "Where Did Our Love Go", which we weren't that crazy about at all. It just wasn't as soulful as we wanted. But anything they brought us, we wanted to like, because working with them was like working with royalty. I've learned to like it!

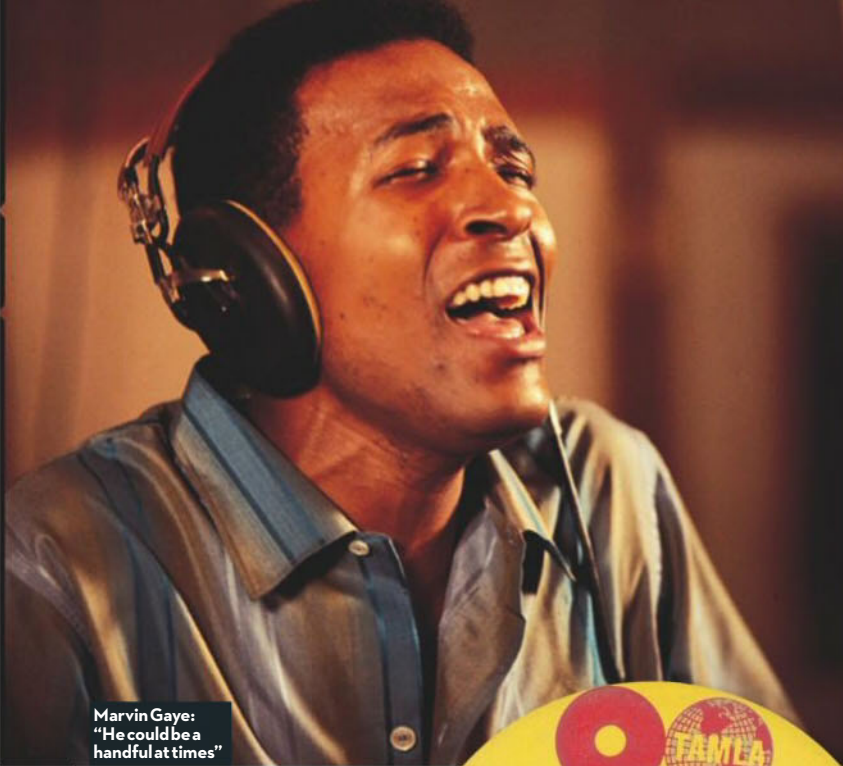
Eddie: I was teaching Diana Ross the song, and in my haste I was using a lot of vocal gymnastics, and she said she wanted to sing the song like I was. And I told her, no, I didn't want the song sung like that. Our intent was to make the song sexy and sensuous, so she had a very disappointing attitude, to say the least. She went in the studio with the same attitude, but I let her continue 'til she finished, and then she said in a very sassy voice, "Was that what you wanted?" I said, "That's exactly what I wanted. Thank you, see you later!" So that's what you hear on the record.

Lamont: We wanted her to be more sultry. But it came out the way it was supposed to be. We got the product. Though Diana didn't like it much. We tried to keep [follow-up] "Baby Love" in that same vein. We knew how to write for The Supremes, after that many hits you get to know the beast... hah, I mean, the artists!

Wilson: I don't think anyone wanted to sing the song the way Eddie wanted it. That's what people mean by taskmaster. But they weren't horrible or mean or tough – they just wanted what they wanted. But their way ended up



Sassy attitude: H-D-H with The Supremes in '64



Marvin Gaye:
"He could be a handful at times"

being the right way, that's what made it a hit. We were 16 when we came to Motown, and for us they were like great people – we had heard Eddie on the radio, and were in awe of him because he was a wonderful singer.

Lamont: This had some stomping on plywood on the recording, too. We had our own footstomper, a little guy named Michael Valvano, who did a lot of stomping for us on these two-by-fours, and that created an ambience of sorts for the records.

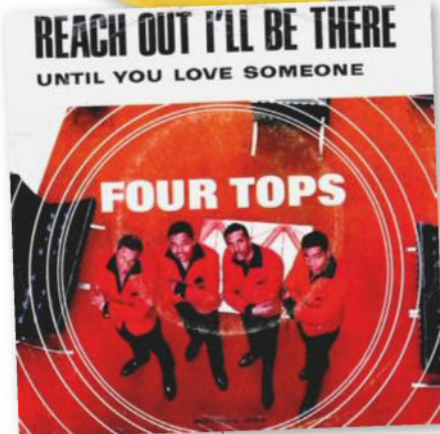
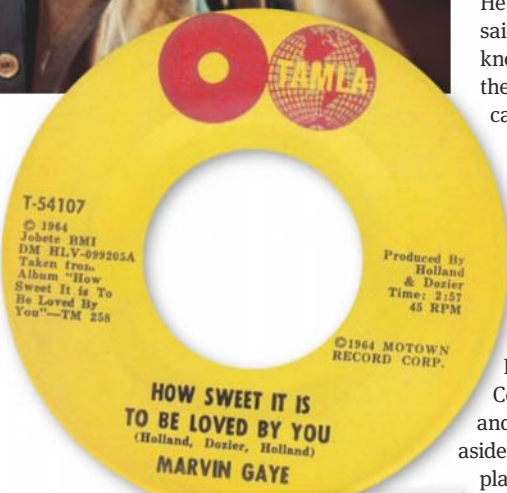
MARVIN GAYE HOW SWEET IT IS (TO BE LOVED BY YOU)

MOTOWN, 1964. US 6; UK 49

H-D-H's biggest hit for former Motown session drummer Gaye. As with The Supremes, there was tension in the studio...

Lamont: This is probably one of the fastest things Marvin did. He was fantastic, but he wasn't one for doing homework. I think he did this in one take, though. I remember him talking about wanting to leave 'cause he had to go and play golf – so he just sang it in one take and left through the back door. We all looked at each other, amazed! He was a technician, in a way. He was pissed off, because the key was too high, but Eddie did that sometimes to challenge the artist to reach, and add to the performance. Marvin would do stuff when it was out of his range, he was very inventive in delivering a song. So he did it in one take and we were shocked at the performance, 'cause he could be a handful at times. But we all loved Marvin, in spite of the way he was sometimes.

Eddie: He was a great piano player, and good on the drums, too. I remember, when I first found out about Marvin's skill, I was teaching him "Can I Get A Witness". I sang it once and was getting ready to sing it again, and he goes, "I got it." He looked so calm, I was surprised, so I said OK. He went into the studio and he nailed it. And he added some more stuff to it. He was amazing, really, he had one hell of an ear.



we left that office pretty upset. We did not believe in that song at all. But about three weeks later, when I heard it on the radio, I could not believe how great it sounded.

Eddie: It was very rare that we left the studio without cutting at least two songs, one of them being a hit. With The Supremes, I think the first three hits were from one session. But for every one song we cut, we threw away 10 to 15.

Lamont: If it didn't live up to what we thought was No 1 material, we'd throw it in the can. Sometimes they came out later, like The Elgins' "Heaven Must Have Sent You", which went Top 10. To us, that was a throwaway B-side!



FREDA PAYNE BAND OF GOLD

INVICTUS, 1970. US 3; UK 1

After leaving Motown, and battling legal action that would last for years, the three formed their own Invictus label, scoring a UK No 1 with "Band Of Gold", which featured members

THE FOUR TOPS REACH OUT I'LL BE THERE

MOTOWN, 1966. US 1; UK 1

An experiment that became a huge hit, this was a step forward in terms of melody, mood, vocal delivery and more.

Lamont: We idolised the Tops when we were teenagers. They were five or six years older than us.

Eddie: Every singer in Detroit wanted to be like them. As great a singer as Levi Stubbs was, though, I had to send him home when we recorded "Baby I Need Your Loving". He didn't do his homework, and I said, "You know what? You don't know the song, so go home, listen to the tape and come on back." He came back, and he nailed it.

Abdul 'Duke' Fakir: I call them the greatest tailors of music for my era. You'd come in, they'd say "What do you need?" When you'd walk out, you'd have a song tailored to your fit, your sound, your way of delivery.

Lamont: On "Reach Out...", Brian started out with that little Cossack feel. He was playing it over and over, and finally I pushed him aside on the piano, and started playing, "And if you feel that you can't go on...". I don't think nobody was coming up with stuff like that.

'Duke': We thought "Reach Out..." was an experiment that would go on an album! Berry Gordy called us into his office to tell us he was about to release a song that would be bigger than "I Can't Help Myself". We asked when we were going to record this song, and he laughed, and said, "You have already recorded it." Berry played it, and we said, "Damn, Berry – that's not a hit, are you kidding?" He said, "Just be prepared to pay taxes... this is gonna be a big one." Well,



The Funk Brothers

"IT WAS LIKE A PARTY!"

In the studio with Motown's legendary Funk Brothers

"BACK IN THOSE days we recorded with the musicians," explains The Supremes' Mary Wilson. "That was in the days when the musicians were in the studio. It was like a party!"

And what musicians... Holland-Dozier-Holland never cut a track until they could get the musicians from Motown's house band, The Funk Brothers, that they wanted – usually, James Jamerson on bass, Benny Benjamin on drums, Robert White, Eddie Willis or Joe Messina on guitar, and Joe Hunter or Earl Van Dyke on keys.

"The Funk Brothers had some second-stringers," explains Lamont Dozier, "but if we couldn't get Benjamin or Jamerson we'd just wait until they were available."

"Sometimes you'd be there when they gave the chord sheet to James Jamerson," remembers Martha Reeves, "and he'd fiddle around a little bit with the bassline, and then be joined by Earl Van Dyke or Robert White. That would be a treat. That was the secret of The Funk Brothers. They played everybody's music to suit them. I mean, our music doesn't sound like what The Supremes or The Four Tops sang to."



Freda Payne, performing "Band Of Gold" on *Top Of The Pops*, 1970

of Motown's Funk Brothers. Co-written by Ron Dunbar, with H-D-H using the pseudonym Edythe Wayne.

Abdul 'Duke' Fakir: When they left Motown, we were brokenhearted. They were so important to Motown, to the world, to the artists. It was a struggle, but we managed to still have hits. But there's still nothing like Holland-Dozier-Holland. And there never will be in our life.

Eddie: The story of why we left Motown is a very involved one. It could have been avoided, but because of my attitude, it wasn't. So one thing led to another. Muhammad wouldn't go to the mountain, the mountain wouldn't come to Muhammad...

Lamont: We were [always] a record company within another, so to speak, because we were self-contained.

Brian: We were a wheel inside of a wheel.

Eddie: We wanted to put feelgood feelings other than where we worked, basically. Was it freeing forming *Invictus*? Not really – I felt free when I was at Motown. [Laughs] That's what *Invictus* was, a lot of work! It was one of the most unique label and distribution deals ever. Many people in Capitol Records didn't understand the deal themselves. Freda was very easy to work with – all the artists were, because otherwise I wouldn't deal with them. If you have an artist that's difficult to deal with, then why bother?



CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARD GIVE ME JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME

INVICTUS, 1970. US 3; UK 3

A huge hit on both sides of the Atlantic – though getting General Johnson's signature vocals were a challenge... "This is not the same guy!"

Eddie: It doesn't take Holland-Dozier-Holland to create music that excites me. As a matter of fact, some of the most interesting songs we put out, in my opinion, are the ones General Johnson and Greg Perry did.

Lamont: Chairmen Of The Board featured a great lead singer, General Johnson – a very unique voice.

Eddie: I had heard him in The Showmen, and I thought he had one of the most unique voices I had ever heard. So we brought him over to Lamont's house and asked him to sing "Give Me..." He didn't sound like himself and I said, "This is not the same guy..." So I told

him, "Sing it like this" – and I sang it in the style he sang like with The Showmen. And he said, "Ah, that's what you want!" "Yeah! It's the guy!" I talked to his wife years later, and she said she hated "Give Me..." because she didn't like him sounding like that!

HOLLAND-DOZIER WHY CAN'T WE BE LOVERS

INVICTUS, 1972. US 57; UK 29

The team returned to releasing their own tracks on *Invictus*, including this underrated ballad sung by Lamont.

Eddie: The spirit hit Lamont again, and he wanted to sing. Was it more stressful writing for ourselves? Not at all. You know, creative people don't really function like that. You do what you love, and you enjoy what you're doing at the time, so there's nothing stressful about it. If I were to go back and look at the Hot Wax and *Invictus* situation from now, it would be very stressful, because it was a very complicated deal. But when you're aggressively moving, especially when you're young, you don't really look at it like that, because you're in an adventurous frame of mind. All you believe is what you can do – and you can do it because you say you can. But it's true to say we had less time to write, when we were dealing with the business side of things more.



DIONNE WARWICK YOU'RE GONNA NEED ME

WARNER BROS, 1973. US N/A; UK N/A

A psychedelic soul masterpiece that opened Warwick's *Just Being Myself* LP, and one of the last H-D-H cuts before they dissolved their professional partnership.

Eddie: We co-wrote this, yeah. We enjoyed working with other people. We had met a lot of talented people, and we had no problems in infiltrating them into the company. It was fun watching different people get together and exchange ideas creatively, argue, debate. It's always interesting, 'cause you learn from them also.

Dionne Warwick: Working with H-D-H was wonderful. I recorded it with the musicians there in the room, and it didn't take long – it never takes me very long to record. Did Eddie coach me? No, I didn't need coaching, I am always prepared! There was no tension in the studio – as a matter of fact, it was a fun-filled day.

Eddie: Why did H-D-H stop working together? It's like a man and a woman who marry – often they drift apart emotionally and psychologically. If a marriage can stay together three, four, five years and they enjoyed those years, it was a success as far as I'm concerned. This thing about forever is a bunch of nonsense – people don't stay the same forever! We grow, we develop. There's no difference in creative people. While you were together, if it was successful, then it was good. And we still get on really well together, absolutely! ☺

Holland-Dozier-Holland – The Complete 45s Collection is available now on Harmless

EYEWITNESS!

"I ANSWERED THE PHONE AT HITSVILLE USA"

Martha Reeves on her early days at Motown

"FIRST WENT to Hitsville USA after being given a card the previous night, and being told that I had talent, by William Stevenson, the boss of the writers in the A&R department.

"William greeted me at the door and said, 'What are you doing here? You were supposed to make an appointment.' So I sat in his office answering the phone until he returned four hours later, and in that time, I met all the writers, including Holland-Dozier-Holland.

"I was asked to come back, and was there [as a secretary] for three months before I got a salary. Then a Union man came and made a rule that there had to be an artist on the microphones when a recording was being made. So one day they called me out of the office, and I went in the studio and did this demonstration record for Mary Wells. H-D-H then heard the Vandellas behind Marvin Gaye on 'Stubborn Kind Of Fellow', so they submitted 'Come And Get These Memories' for us.

"We had an occasion to be at Hitsville USA every day – if we weren't recording, we'd be in a class. We had an artist development department – Maurice King and Johnny Allan taught us music theory, Cholly Atkins taught us to dance, and Maxine Powell taught us etiquette.

"We were always busy. That was a good thing about being a part of a large thing like the Motown family. We were always either learning or recording, or having parties – we stayed together like a real family, it was a true family."



Martha Reeves

fresh

produce



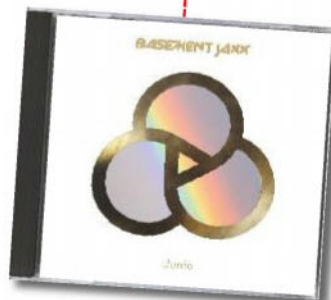
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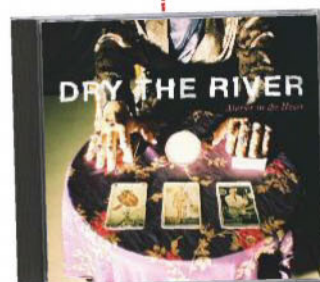
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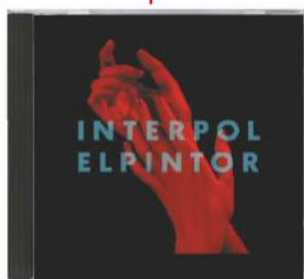
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NICK DRAKE

The Changing Man

His soft voice, withdrawn nature and short life have given rise to a myth of NICK DRAKE as a tragic figure. In fact, this was a man with a robust musical identity, and a far-reaching plan for his songs. Forty years after his death, his producers JOE BOYD and JOHN WOOD, and contemporaries including RICHARD THOMPSON, ASHLEY HUTCHINGS, DAVE MATTACKS and BEVERLEY MARTYN remember a musician of uncompromising vision. "It was hard to figure out," says Thompson. "He seemed to go to places people hadn't gone to before."

Story: John Robinson

Photographs: Copyright © Estate of Keith Morris

Nick Drake in the garden of his ground-floor flat at 112 Haverstock Hill, Belsize Park, London, June 1970



W

ALK DOWN OLD Church Street, past the Manolo Blahnik outlet and the gardeners tending their employers' hedges, and you'll eventually arrive at a Georgian building set a little back from the pavement. Today, it's been converted into desirable residences, tucked away near Chelsea's King's Road.

Between 1964 and 1976, however, this was the site of Sound Techniques studio, effectively the cradle of British folk rock.

Here, Joe Boyd and engineer John Wood recorded mesmerising albums for Boyd's Witchseason Productions: by Fairport Convention, The Incredible String Band, Sandy Denny, John Martyn and Nick Drake. The building began life as a dairy. A cow still looks down benignly from the exterior brickwork.

"It was a good space," remembers Ashley Hutchings, then in Fairport Convention. "We recorded so many albums there, it became home. You popped in and out, and someone would be playing there. It was a nice place to be, Chelsea. The sun always seemed to be shining. We had all the time in the world."

Forty years ago, in July 1974, Nick Drake visited Sound Techniques for the last time. The sun was certainly shining, but the material he now approached originated in worse weather. Drake's work always seemed to have a

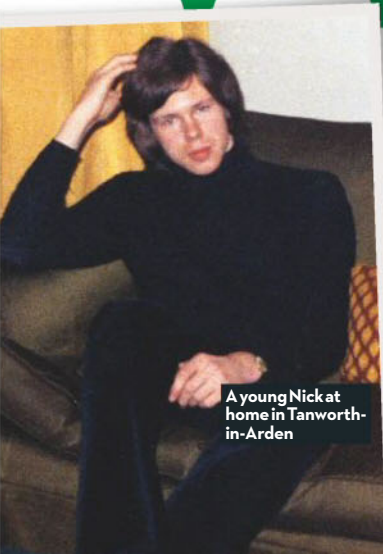
seasonal logic. His 1969 debut, *Five Leaves Left*, was crisp, autumnal, and ordered as a school's Michaelmas term. The looser *Bryter Layter* (1970) suggested an urban pastoral idyll, grass browning in a summer park. On 1972's *Pink Moon*, the branches of Drake's music were still starkly beautiful, but bare. Believing he had enough material to begin a new album, he now entered Sound Techniques again.

"Nick came to see me in the winter," remembers Joe Boyd. "It was a dark, cold time. He was very distressed, and I was very distressed at how distressed he was. I said, 'Well, let's start recording again.' Then I had to go back to California, and there was a gap. When I returned, we went back into the studio, in the summer."

Over what Boyd remembers as two consecutive nights, he and John Wood worked with Drake on four songs, among them "Hanging On A Star" and "Black Eyed Dog", a piece recounting a haunting by an unshakeable foe, delivered in an eerie falsetto reminiscent of Skip James' "Devil Got My Woman".

"With *Pink Moon*, some songs on that were very dark," says Richard Thompson, the Fairport guitarist who guested on *Five Leaves Left* and *Bryter Layter*. "But this was a degree further off the edge."

"John [Martyn] brought it back from Island, and said, 'This is the latest from Nick...'" remembers Beverley Martyn, one of Drake's closest friends. "Nobody had heard anything as real as that. It was him stripped bare."



A young Nick at home in Tanworth-in-Arden



Derelict house, Wimbledon, April 16, 1969 – an outtake from the *Five Leaves Left* cover session

“The impetus to go in the studio had been because he was so unhappy and so disturbed,” says Joe Boyd. “I was viewing it first and foremost as therapy, because he always loved being in the studio. I didn’t hear the lyrics until he overdubbed them on the guitar parts.”

And when he did?

“It was terrifying. It was really alarming,” says Boyd. “But it was tremendous. It was quite extraordinary.”

It was a painful revelation. But, even in the grip of a fatal depression, Nick Drake was as in control of the direction of his music as he had been for the previous eight years. As distressing as it was for his friends to hear, he still knew precisely what it was that he had to do.

“I’VE DONE SOME research,” says Ashley Hutchings, rustling some sheets of paper excitedly.

“It was a five-day event at the Roundhouse. Called ‘Circus Alpha Centauri’. December 20-24, 1967, and it was in aid of an arts centre. I was playing with Fairport...”

“Jimi Hendrix, as Father Christmas was compere... Obligatory lights and films...”

“[Rustling] Tickets one pound!”

Hutchings is recounting the circumstances whereby, during a hairy psychedelic event in north London, he found himself with time on his hands.

“I was killing time, really,” says Hutchings. “Enjoying the music, and then I heard this sound... a single very tall, young person singing and playing the guitar. At that time, all the singer-songwriters, like John

Martyn, sang with American accents. So to hear this very English-sounding music really stood out.”

Ashley Hutchings had just discovered Nick Drake.

“We swapped phone numbers,” says Hutchings, “and as quick as possible I called Joe Boyd and said, ‘You’ve got to go and see this guy, he’s terrific. He’s very different.’”

Boyd heard a tape of demos that Drake had recorded while at Cambridge University, and immediately proposed making a record. “My first impression was that he was a genius,” he says. “It was that simple.”

To fully serve the material that Drake had, however, required sensitive treatment. For Boyd, the touchstones were George Martin’s string ensemble arrangements for The Beatles, John Simon’s involving production for Leonard Cohen’s *Songs Of Leonard Cohen*, and an assignment of his own – *In My Life*, the Judy Collins covers album he had lately produced for Elektra. It was all some distance from Boyd’s vérité production of the debut Incredible String Band album, a development which seems to have pleased Drake. “I said, ‘I hear strings,’” Boyd

remembers. “He said, ‘Oh good.’ He was too shy to admit it, but he had already performed in that way at a May Ball in Cambridge.”

On the recommendation of Peter Asher, Boyd booked arranger du jour Richard Hewson to work on Drake’s material, and in a three-hour session

at Sound Techniques, the musicians recorded Hewson’s treatments of “I Was Made To Love Magic” (oddly reminiscent of Moondog), “The Thoughts Of Mary Jane” (rather schmaltzy) and “Day Is Done” (heavily signposting the song’s crestfallen nature).

“We shook hands,” says Boyd, “and Nick and John Wood stood there and said,

‘That was a waste of money.’ I think Nick was relieved – he was hesitant to push his opinions forward too much, but he was stubborn.”

“They just didn’t seem to gel,” says John Wood, “with or without Nick’s parts. You could see

Nick was getting more and more unhappy.”

To some eye-rolling from Boyd and Wood, Drake then suggested a friend from Cambridge “whose arrangements aren’t too bad”.

“We looked at each other in a fairly jaded fashion,” remembers John Wood. “Then Robert Kirby turns up with a double string quartet and knocks off two tunes in an afternoon.”

“We made *Five Leaves Left* in bits and pieces,” says Joe Boyd. “I was busy with a lot of other things, so it was, ‘OK, I have a

few days here, let’s do some Nick Drake sessions.’ And then two months later we’d do more. Each track was thought about and we decided what the best lineup would be for that.”

Additional players were slowly drawn into the record’s inner circle. Cellist Clare Lowther played on “Cello Song”. Bassist Danny Thompson, in company with ubiquitous 1960s percussionist Rocky Dzidzornu, made explicit the driving urgency in “Three Hours”. American pianist Paul Harris, who had been musical director on John and Beverley Martyn’s *Stormbringer!*, played on “Man In A Shed” and “Time Has Told Me”. The latter also featured Richard Thompson.

“Nick was a very original player,” says

Thompson. “He spent a lot of time on his songs, on the accompaniments to them, figuring out what he was going to do. He does some fairly unusual things. He does things a bit back to front sometimes – I think you only do that by thinking very hard about what you’re doing, embedding things so they become second nature.

“‘Time Has Told Me’ changes shape harmonically. It took me a while to figure it out – he had more of a jazz ear than a folk ear. It seemed to go to places people hadn’t gone before.”

“I’m always amused when I go into a big record store and see Nick Drake filed under ‘folk,’” says Joe Boyd. “If there’s ever anyone who wasn’t folk, it’s Nick Drake.”



Joe Boyd

“If there is ever anyone who shouldn’t be filed under ‘folk’, it’s Nick Drake”

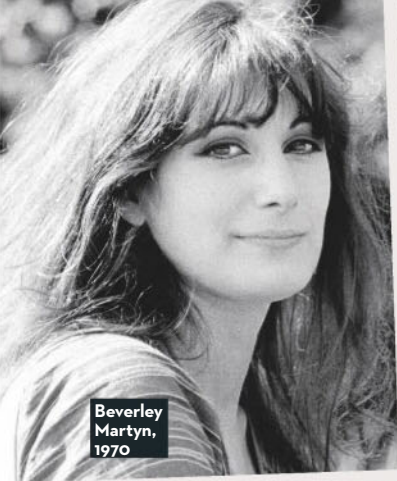
JOE BOYD

EYEWITNESS!

NICK DRAKE AT THE ROUNDHOUSE



ASHLEY HUTCHINGS: “There are a couple of contradictions from the early Nick, to Nick later. One was that he was standing and playing. I thought he was terrific, the guitar-playing, the songs. The other was the persona. People would later say he had no stage presence but what partly drew me was that aura. When he’d finished, to just a smattering of applause – which you’d expect, because no-one knew who he was – I immediately found him very engaging and very open. This was a young, early Nick – clearly very different from later on.”



Beverley Martyn, 1970

ANOTHER SIDE

“MAYBE IT WAS HURTFUL TO NICK...”

The unadorned music on BEVERLEY MARTYN'S tape

WHEN BEVERLEY MARTYN

first heard a Nick Drake recording, she wasn't that impressed – thinking that the songs would have been better served by a *vérité* recording.

“They were all a bit too much,” she says. “They were taking too much of the poet and the essence of the guitar. I thought it was a bit overdone – maybe it was hurtful to Nick, because it was like saying, for it to work, you've got to have all this stuff behind you.”

The material on the tape that Drake gave to Beverley offers a different side of the performer. “It almost perfectly sounds like a studio recording. When you hear the tape I've got, you can hear why very little should have been done to it – it's all there. It's not demos from Cambridge. It's a four-track, produced by Joe Boyd. This was the tape that got him the deal with Island Records.”

(At the time of this interview, Beverley Martyn's tape was due to be auctioned – but has since been removed from the sale).



Regent's Park, London, summer 1970

IN THE SUMMER of 1967, having deferred his entry to Cambridge University, Nick Drake was notionally enrolled at a college in Aix-en-Provence. His real course of study, however, was taking place on the guitar. Having mastered the fleet licks he heard on the first Bert Jansch album (Jansch's “Strolling Down The Highway” was a staple of his busking sets there), Drake was developing his technique and embarking on his own first compositions.

“He didn't have any problem busking,” says Robin Frederick, a songwriter who knew Drake in Aix. “He could dazzle on guitar. He knew he was good – he spent a long time getting good. It was positive feedback for him – and a way to get a few francs to go over to Les Deux Garçons and have something to eat. That for him was a fun part of life.”

Although reserved, the possibility of a musical connection could bring Drake out of his shell. Later that summer, in Morocco, it's said Drake played for several Rolling Stones after chancing on them in a café. As Robert Kirby told it, there was never any intermediary to introduce the pair of them that autumn in Cambridge – Drake simply turned up on Kirby's college staircase one day and proposed they work together. In Aix, after one of her sets at a café/nightspot called De La Tartaine, Drake now suggested something similar to Robin Frederick.

“He didn't talk, but it didn't seem odd to me,” says Frederick. “He could communicate so fluently with music. It was easier for him.”

In Drake's earliest songs, written in Aix, Frederick can hear the seed of what, by *Five Leaves Left*, had become his unique musical signature. Rather in contrast to the Aix vibe – young people carrying guitars; rapt “circles of lads” listening at Drake's feet; what Frederick calls the city's “troubadour-infused ancientness” – Drake arrived at something absolutely antithetical to stoned and hopeful guitar composition.

“It's a very conscious experimentation with how song melodies and chords work together,” she explains. “He was picking up Bert Jansch and John Renbourn in quite an analytical way. He had steeped himself in bossa nova: the *Getz/Gilberto* album was huge, we all had it. From bossa nova he picked up a new kind of melody singing.

“If you listen to ‘They're Leaving Me Behind’, one of his earliest songs, he's keeping a steady beat on the guitar and then he sings this long melody line over the top of it,”

Frederick says. “It was not like anyone else would sing. He had a background as a sax player, and it's a sax line. If you listen to a song like “All Blues” from *Kind Of Blue* by Miles Davis – it's like that.

“By the time of ‘Cello Song’ he's now developing it as a singer,” says Frederick. “He got the idea of disconnecting the melody from the underlying beat. He'll start on an unexpected beat in the middle of the bar: you as the listener are being rocked back and forth. It sounds like it's floating but it isn't. It's completely connected.”

In talking about Nick Drake's sound, Robin Frederick uses words like “complex” and “ambivalent”. His music was built using cluster chords, in which additional dissonant notes are introduced: they add sweet and sour nuance, as dissenting voices might add interest to a story.

“You really hear that on *Five Leaves Left*,” says Frederick.

“On ‘They're Leaving Me Behind’ he's struggling for his signature sound. But within 18 months he's writing ‘River Man’, with these chords, full of light and darkness. Over that he lays the melody which sheds new light on the chords – and he's doing that in 5/4 time. It sounds like it's pulling you forward. It's like overlapping waves.”

“He mentioned Ravel and Debussy. Nick understood harmony”
JOHN WOOD

SO KEY A composition did “River Man” seem, Robert Kirby declined to arrange it – feeling out of his depth in the ebbing tides of 5/4. Having worked with him on a Children's Film Foundation project, John Wood suggested Harry Robinson might be suitable for the job. Ten years previously, Robinson had been Lord Rockingham, captain of Lord Rockingham's XI, the session

A-team employed to comp rock'n'roll on the late-'50s ITV show *Oh Boy!*. These days, he turned his hand to arrangements of a more sophisticated stripe.

“Ravel was one of the names Nick mentioned as a template,” remembers John Wood, “and Debussy. Nick could play piano, and he understood and had read about harmony. That was unusual for the time, for that sort of musician – it's part of the family tradition of music he came from.”

“We went to see Harry Robinson,” remembers Joe Boyd, “having sent him a tape. Nick took along his guitar, and as the tape was playing, Nick strummed chords against the tape to show what sort of chords he liked, and to suggest what the strings might do. Harry was very impressed.

"Then Harry showed up with 14 strings, with Harry conducting next to Nick. People say, 'How do you get that great sound?' By having a bunch of microphones open in a great room. There was no separation, no booths. Nick was out there with the strings."

On September 24, 1969, *Five Leaves Left* had been in the shops for three weeks. Drake now began his promotional schedule, with a performance at London's Royal Festival Hall. The first half of the show comprised his own set, followed by John and Beverley Martyn. After the interval, Fairport Convention – reconvened after the motorway crash in early May that had killed their drummer Martin Lamble – would debut their new lineup, and the material from *Liege & Lief*, the album that heralded their new direction.

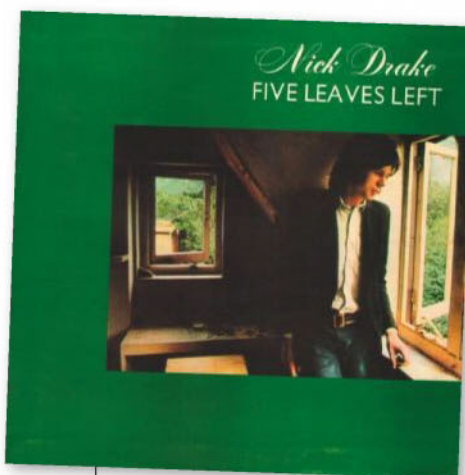
"It was the most successful gig Nick ever did," says Joe Boyd. "In retrospect, it made us overconfident. The situation was so unusual: the audience had assigned seats and it was the Festival Hall, so you didn't talk or drink beer. And it was very reverential because of the death of Martin Lamble – everyone was very respectful."

"We said, 'You're going to be great,'" says Beverley Martyn, "and he was. But that was somewhere where you could hear a pin drop, not a normal gig where you had to go and flog your album to students. So if you didn't have a band, or do wah-wah guitar or whatever, you couldn't be heard."

"Nick tuned his guitar for three minutes and didn't say anything," says Joe Boyd. "then he played, and they clapped. Loudly. You just felt, wow, this can work: Nick is so great and his music is so mesmerising, he doesn't have to tell jokes, he can go out to work."

Witchseason booked a tour of clubs and colleges.

"And it didn't work," Boyd continues. "I looked at the



"We were both shy. We nodded meaningfully to one another"

RICHARD THOMPSON

schedule and said, well, 'I'll go to... Leamington Spa or Cambridge.' He got through three or four dates. But then I got a phone call from Nick saying, 'I can't do this any more.'"

WITCHSEASON PRODUCTIONS OPERATED out of offices in Charlotte Street, near Soho, and offered a full portfolio of in-house musical services: production (by Boyd), management (by Boyd and Tod Lloyd; or Anthea Joseph for Sandy Denny), even sleeve design (by Daniel Halperin). The company's family tree grew from the unlikely meeting of Boyd's interest in the world's roots music, and the psychedelic sounds of underground London, emanating from his influential club, UFO. Though a business, it also served, unofficially, as a hang, a loose affiliation of like minds – which now welcomed Nick Drake.

"I don't want to give it a more idealistic atmosphere," says Joe Boyd. "I was very impressed by Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, and we aspired to be a commercial outfit. But we couldn't help ourselves."

"It was an office without many chairs, so there were a lot of people sat on the floor in the outer office waiting to get paid," remembers Richard Thompson. "I'd seen Nick there a few times. Even in a time when people didn't say much, he was exceptionally withdrawn, and I was also very shy. We might have nodded meaningfully to one another, but that was probably about it."

"We all felt like we were in the same camp," says Gerry Conway, then drummer of Fotheringay. "We all became friends together. The Fairport band was pretty outgoing, but everyone recognised that Nick was a bit more introverted."

"Joe would take Nick and I out together, to the cinema and to art galleries," says Beverley Martyn, "and to people's

HOW TO BUY

Five great Boyd/Wood productions



CHRIS MCGREGOR'S BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH

RCA/NEON, 1970

Too hip for segregated South Africa, McGregor brought his mixed-race group the Blue Notes to London, added members and created this spectacular big band. A riot of noise and joyful unison playing, this is jazz at its most raw and inspiring – not cool, but red hot and smoking.

8/10



FAIRPORT CONVENTION UNHALFBRICKING

ISLAND, 1969

The band before tragedy struck. Boyd and Wood capture the band's delightful appropriations of Dylan ("Si Tu Dois Partir"), and their next-level blending of English folk and dynamic psychedelic jamming, "A Sailor's Life". The Witchseason agenda in a nutshell.

9/10

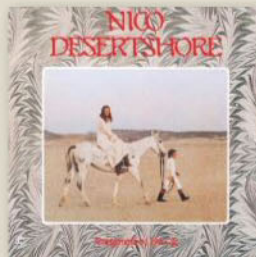


THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND THE 5,000 SPIRITS OR THE LAYERS OF THE ONION

ELEKTRA, 1967

Without founder Clive Palmer, ISB got on less well, but produced much more. *5,000 Spirits* was the first fruits of this, as the band (accompanied by Danny Thompson and Boyd's UFO partner Hoppy) flee trad and expand their minds. "The studio was a toybox," exclaims Heron today.

8/10



NICO DESERTSHORE

REPRISE, 1970

"An artefact, not a commodity" was how John Cale – arranger and co-producer here – described Nico's work. In the right hands, that's not as alarming as it first appears. Nico's roiling harmonium and symbolic declamations are throughout placed in mysteriously seductive spaces. The spectacular "Mutterlein" was played at her funeral.

8/10



JOHN AND BEVERLEY MARTYN STORMBRINGER!

ISLAND, 1970

Proving that Sound Techniques wasn't just a studio, more a state of mind, Boyd and Wood decamped to Woodstock. The Band's Levon Helm guests, and Paul Harris (later a Nick Drake sideman) is musical director of proceedings.

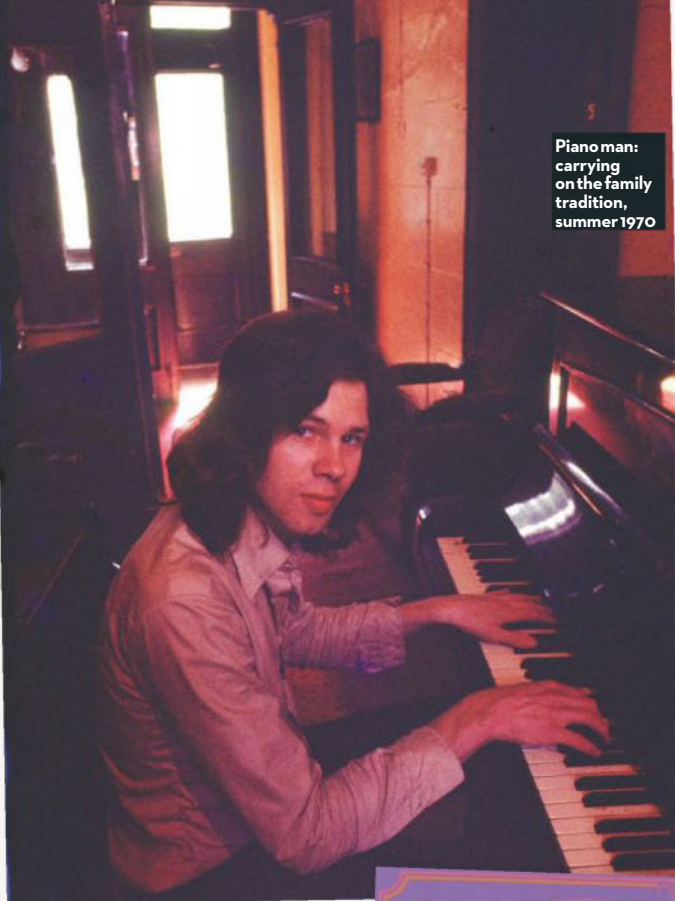
8/10

MORE MAGIC

WAY TO BOOT

How Nick Drake's dad started the Nick Drake bootleg industry

“NICK'S FATHER WAS a bit of a gadget freak,” says John Wood. “He made tapes of Nick at home. He recorded all sorts of things. He recorded Nick when he was about nine or ten, did fake interviews with Nick and his friends. The family was very musical, so he would record them together: Molly at the piano, Nick playing the clarinet. There was an aunt from one side of the family who played the cello. “Later, Rodney did do some compiling of Nick's



Pianoman: carrying on the family tradition, summer 1970

houses. It was Joe's way of getting Nick to have some friends. Nick looked up to people I knew like Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, Davy Graham. He would be quite chatty over those kind of things. You would think someone with those looks would be full of themselves, but he wasn't.”

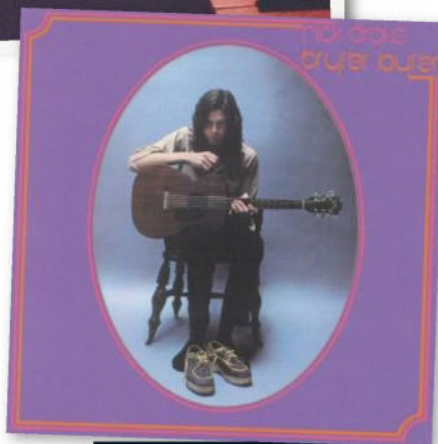
Beverley Martyn owns a tape that Drake made with Boyd, which conveys Witchseason's intimacy with their artists. “Joe used to do this a lot,” says Beverley. “Come down to where you were and put down your latest thing. It was a way of getting you where you felt most comfortable.”

When John and Beverley Martyn returned from making *Stormbringer!* in Woodstock, Drake “very proudly” brought round *Five Leaves Left* and played it to them. While they thought it was great, the general public seemed reluctant to commit.

“I was very surprised,” says John Wood. “I can't remember anybody who wasn't bowled over by it. But it didn't go anywhere. Partly because he didn't have any reputation performing, and partly because I'm not sure Island were as enthusiastic as they might have been. In retrospect, the relationship Witchseason had with Island may have been a disadvantage, as they were producing so much of their material in-house.”

Today, Joe Boyd feels hindsight initially gave him a different impression of how the album was received. “One of the images I had in my mind was that he had got great reviews but hadn't sold,” he says. “But when I saw a reprint of some reviews in a fanzine, I saw *Melody Maker* called it ‘an uncomfortable mix of folk and cocktail jazz.’”

BEFORE THE ARRIVAL of Bob Marley, says Beverley Martyn, there were two records you could guarantee Island Records founder Chris Blackwell would have near his turntable. One was *Stormbringer!*. The other was *Five*



“Nick and John Cale had a meeting. God knows what happened”
JOHN WOOD

Leaves Left. “Chris got Nick immediately,” says Joe Boyd. “There was a certain public-school-boy affinity there.” When Boyd said that he planned to make another Nick Drake album straight away, “he said, ‘Fine, great.’”

“I just felt we had to make another great album and people would eventually get it,” says Boyd. “People would see we were serious.”

“There was an underlying feeling that *Bryter Layter* needed to be a bit more accessible in some ways,” says John Wood. “*Five Leaves Left* is fairly formal in its structures. A rhythm section would give the album a wider appeal.”

Boyd had recently heard Mike Heron's latest batch of songs and suggested they would be better suited to a solo project than to The Incredible String Band. Heron's *Smiling Men With Bad Reputations* (released six months after *Bryter Layter*) features an impressive supporting cast: Beach Boys drummer Mike Kowalski, John Cale, Dudu Pakwana from Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath, and the rhythm section of Dave Mattacks and Dave Pegg. “It was a Joe special,” says Heron. “Joe knew all the people, suggested all the people and contacted all the people.”

“He's a big picture producer,” says Dave Mattacks. “He read the paper and made aesthetic decisions: ‘This isn't working, that's not a good idea, you're not convincing me with that performance.’ John made audio sense of that.”

The same combination of deep listening and man-management Boyd now brought to *Bryter Layter*, in which Drake was accompanied by two rhythm sections: Americans Mike Kowalski and bassist Ed Carter, and from Fairport Convention, Dave Mattacks and Dave Pegg. Before the sessions,

Drake drove up to Fairport's communal home in Hertfordshire to run through the songs.

“He came to the Angel at Hadham, which was our group hovel,” says Dave Pegg. “13 people with one toilet. There weren't any great musical preparations – we just played along. It was like instant arrangements.”

“He came up in the middle of the day, ran the songs and drove back that evening,” says Dave Mattacks. “Like with Richard Thompson, the songs were basically done, so they leave you to it. When someone's time is that good, you don't have to provide the rhythmic glue – you're left to do something more interpretative.”

The album's loose feel continued to grow in response to its environment. For “Poor Boy,” pianist Chris McGregor happened to be in the control room at Sound Techniques – he dropped downstairs to record the song's piano solo. John Cale was at the studio working on mixes of Nico's *Desertshore*, and asked to hear some recent Boyd/Wood work. He admired the Mike Heron tracks, later playing on the album. He then heard some Nick Drake.

“He went bananas,” remembers Boyd. “He said, ‘I have to meet this guy, where is he?’”

“He and Nick had some sort of meeting,” Wood continues. “God knows what happened at that. But he called up the next day and said he wanted a celeste, a harpsichord, a bass amp...”

home recordings. People would make the pilgrimage to Tanworth-in-Arden, and he'd give the tapes away to people who would subsequently bootleg them out.”

In 1999–2000, Wood made an inventory of the family archive, cleaning up and remastering the selection of material that has since come out as the *Molly Drake* album and *Family Tree*, a compilation spanning Nick's Aix and Cambridge demos, and home recordings.

“In some ways I can understand why people want to hear it,” says Wood. “But not really why it has such great interest for people. But if it's in the public domain, you end up thinking you may as well do the best you can for it.”

Wimbledon
Common,
April 16, 1969



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“I said, ‘OK, What are we doing?’” says Boyd. “He said, ‘Recording two of Nick’s songs. I’ve been with him all night.’ They showed up at noon together and we did ‘Northern Sky’ and ‘Fly.’”

The last third of *Bryter Layter* contains some of the richest and most surprising music in Drake’s catalogue. The backing vocals and piano solo on “Poor Boy”, and the magical sound of celeste on “Northern Sky” place the singer in a warm and inviting setting. If the music sounds easeful, it was a labour-intensive ease.

“We pulled out all the stops,” says Joe Boyd. “Like, ‘Let’s put a microphone in the hallway to add a touch of chamber echo to the strings...’ Not that anyone’s going to hear that. But it gave it an atmosphere.”

“It was perfect for the time and for that location,” says Beverley Martyn. “Nick lived in Belsize Park and would come round nearly every night to us in Hampstead to eat and to be part of the family. I was caught under the spell of those two albums.”

WHEREAS THE SOUND of *Five Leaves Left* had largely been originated by Drake himself, *Bryter Layter* drew much of its feel from the retinue of players aggregated around Sound Techniques, and from Boyd’s ideas. While this was fine as the record began, as sessions went on, artist and producer clashed.

Two issues were divisive. When Drake played at the Royal Festival Hall in autumn 1969, he had been sent back on for an encore, and played a composition that Boyd hadn’t previously



heard. It was to his ears one of the greatest Drake had yet written. With sessions for *Bryter Layter* in progress, producer enthused to artist about the track.

“I said, ‘Nick! That song!’, and he said, ‘It’s not really finished.’ I said, ‘We’ve got to have it, we’ve got to record it.’ I heard that album with that song at the heart of it, the ‘Time Has Told Me’ or the ‘River Man’ of that album. He said, ‘If it’s finished we can record it, if it’s not, we can’t.’”

The second issue was financial. Drake and Robert Kirby approached Boyd with a unifying concept for the album: each side would begin and end with an instrumental piece.

“I heard the instrumentals and I thought they were kind of bland, MOR,” says Joe Boyd. “I hated them, I really argued with him. On one session, we ran out of time and we had only got three of them done. It would have cost a fortune to record the fourth. So I refused, which is why the record has that slightly off-kilter concept – an instrumental at the beginning of each side and the end of the second side.

“Whether he felt he and Robert had overdone it with strings and brass or resented me imposing Chris and John Cale on him I don’t know, but he stamped his foot at that point. He said that the next album was going to be just him and guitar.”

Boyd’s conflict with Drake was a metaphor for his larger problems. In spite of having broken new acts, made great albums, and defined its own aesthetic, Witchseason was under serious financial pressure. Come the winter of 1970, it had begun to seem that its period of charmed creativity was coming to an end. Certainly, Drake himself was disappointed with his lack

of progress. “Nick believed that he was good,” says Boyd. “I told him. John Peel told him, John Martyn told him. John Wood told him. A lot of people told him he was really, really good – and the records didn’t sell. He had a belief and an expectation he could reach people. It was the question of having acceptance, having an audience that listens to you. It wasn’t, ‘Why didn’t I make more money?’ It was more, ‘Why didn’t people respond to the music?’”

“There was a certain amount of guilt and frustration on my part that I hadn’t come up with the answer,” says Boyd. “What happened in 1970 was that I realised that it wasn’t easy. The Incredible String Band becoming Scientologists... Sandy Denny wanting Trevor Lucas in her band. Then Nick said to me he wanted to make his next record with no arrangements and no overdubs. I felt that it was career suicide.”

When in 1971 the opportunity came to run the film music department at Warner Brothers in Los Angeles, Boyd seceded

Witchseason’s artists to Island, and booked a plane ticket.

NEARLY A YEAR later, John Wood answered the telephone to Nick Drake. Drake would occasionally drop in to visit John and Beverley Martyn at their new home in Hastings, on the Sussex coast, and visit Wood and his family at their home in Suffolk, but otherwise, his movements were sketchy. Wood hadn’t heard from him, he remembers, for “a long time”, but when the pair spoke, it appeared that Drake’s appetite for recording was undiminished.

“He said, ‘I’m ready to go back in the studio.

EYEWITNESS!

I WAS NICK DRAKE’S A&R MAN

Richard Williams’ view from inside Island Records



“MY CONTACT WITH Nick was odd and fleeting, and restricted to one incident in which I didn’t actually meet him. Those four late tracks were brought to me in a strange way – by Nick with John Wood, at St Peter’s Square. But Nick didn’t get out of the car, which was a pretty fair summary of the state of his relationship with the outside world; certainly with the record company.

“I don’t think any serious consideration was given to doing anything with them. We wouldn’t have thought, ‘Shall we put these out as an EP?’ In those days it was an album or nothing for Island. He wasn’t someone that you could ring up and prompt or bully. There just wasn’t that kind of connection with him, which was a great shame.

“His proclivity for reclusiveness was well known in the company. He wasn’t pushing himself and no-one was pushing him. Joe Boyd had gone, so he didn’t really have a patron – didn’t have anyone who knew him.”



Hampstead Heath, late 1971 – shot for the *Pink Moon* album cover

When can I come in and record?” says Wood.

Sound Techniques remained a busy studio, but something about Drake’s increasingly mercurial nature motivated Wood to suggest he came in as soon as possible.

“He was off the radar a bit,” says Wood, “so I thought maybe I shouldn’t hang about. The only time we could get was in the middle of the night. I just felt he wanted to get on with it quickly. There wasn’t any messing about – he knew exactly what he wanted to do.”

What was recorded over those two evenings became 1972’s 28-minute *Pink Moon*.

“The first or second thing we put down was ‘Parasite,’” says Wood. “But at that point I’m not sure if I knew what was going on. I remember saying, ‘Do you want Danny to come in?’ and he just said, ‘No, I don’t want anyone else on it.’”

Among the material Drake recorded was a song whose complex minor-chording creates a sense of stillness, while describing a world of unrelenting motion. It sounded of a piece with material from *Five Leaves Left*. This, finally, was “Things Behind The Sun” – “that song”, the song that Drake had played as an encore at the Royal Festival Hall two years earlier.

“One of the interesting things about Nick,” says John Wood, “is that he pretty much always knew what he was going to do with everything.”

In the title track, Robin Frederick hears a musical statement of Nick Drake’s personal condition.

“When he goes down to that low note, it’s too low for him to sing,” she says. “He could easily have put it up a step and sung it that way, but he wanted it like that. I trust the

choices he made. That low note is basically saying, ‘I can’t get any lower – this is too low for me.’”

Pink Moon was Drake’s final album. He died on November 25, 1974.

IT WAS AROUND 1978, thinks Joe Boyd, when they started turning up at his house. “Kids from Ohio, with backpacks. ‘You knew Nick Drake? Please tell me about him.’ How they knew where I lived, I don’t know, but I got people knocking at my door.”

Once the manager/producer of a struggling songwriter, since Nick Drake’s death Boyd has been cast by some as custodian of Drake’s fortunes in life – implicitly saying that if different decisions had been made about his music, the outcome of his life would have somehow been different.

“There is a school of thought which says Nick Drake is at his best at his purest, ie *Pink Moon*, and all the rest is just Joe Boyd imposing something on Nick,” says Boyd. “But I would say to them: that was what he wanted. The only time he performed in Cambridge was with a string quartet. Before I even met Nick, he was working with Robert.

“I hear from people who ask, ‘When are you going to put out the version of *Five Leaves Left* or *Bryter Layter* with just Nick’s voice and guitar?’ And I write them a polite note saying, basically, fuck off.

Explaining that it’s recorded live in the studio... The only way you get ‘River Man’ to sound like that is to put Nick in the middle of the strings – you can’t get an album of just Nick and guitar because the strings are all over the voice track.”

In their son’s final months, Boyd also retained the confidence of Nick Drake’s parents, who asked him to call and reassure Nick that he wouldn’t think less of him if he took antidepressants.

Beyond that, Boyd has looked after Drake by making sure his records have remained available in perpetuity.

“I knew Chris Blackwell would always support Nick,” Boyd remembers, “but I said ‘Who knows, you might get run over by a bus tomorrow. I want it in the contract that his records don’t go out of print.’” I had the feeling that one day people would get it, but not if the records had been allowed to disappear.”

When they arrived at Boyd’s door, these kids from Ohio generally told Joe the same story.

“Both boys and girls would tell it,” says Boyd. “I started going out with this person, it was early in the relationship and it was starting to get serious. They said, ‘Do you know Nick Drake?’ I said, ‘No. Who’s Nick Drake?’ and they said: ‘Sit down...’

“And they put this record on, and something became clear to me that if I didn’t take this seriously, then the relationship didn’t have a chance.”



Want more? Then you need *I Saw Nick Drake: Photographs* by Keith Morris, an ultra-large-format limited edition book of Keith Morris’ photographs. It includes the best of his three album cover sessions with Nick Drake and is published by Ormond Yard Press. It is available now from www.snapgalleries.com



Maria Metcalfe in the Far Leys music room (note Nick’s guitar case, right)

A FAN’S STORY

“THEY GAVE ME ALL HIS STUFF...”

In 1987, fan Maria Metcalfe became friends with Rodney and Molly Drake

“I WENT TO see his grave, and as we approached Bates Lane, I plucked up the courage to go and ask if I could see the house. Rodney answered the door – actually he shouted down from an upstairs window. “I said, ‘Oh, hi, is this where Nick Drake lived?’ and he said, ‘Yes, I’ll come down.’ He was so welcoming he put me at ease straight away, and said would I care to wait for Molly? And that was how the friendship started.

“After we’d had tea, they asked me if I’d like to see the music room where Nick did his recording. “He sat there...” “That’s the reel-to-reel!”... As I was leaving they said would you like to come again? For some reason they chose to take me under their wing. When Rodney died [1988], Molly sold Far Leys and moved to another house in the village. They gave me all of Nick’s stuff. I got very close to them and Gabrielle.

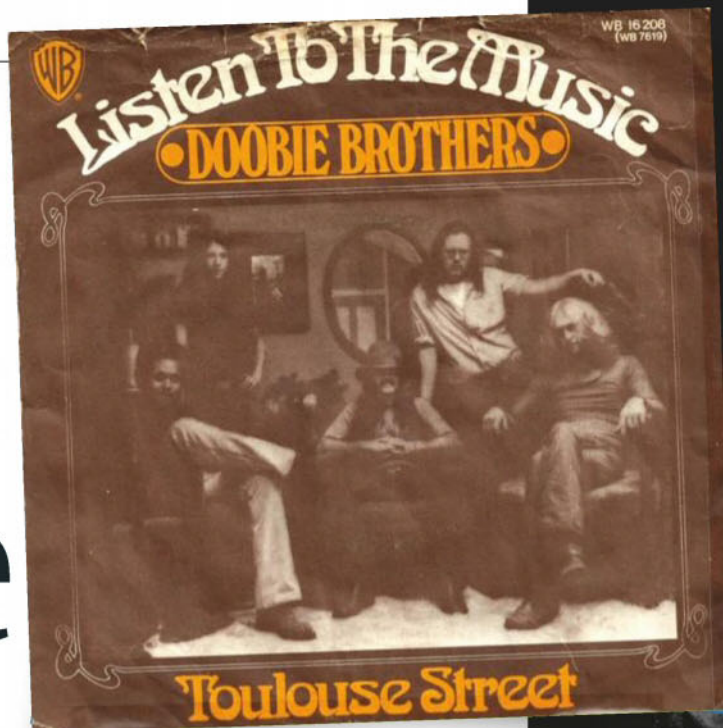
“In the beginning I asked loads of questions. There were no hidden secrets. After Molly died, Gabrielle took Nick’s stuff back so they could get all the music from the recordings, and now it’s in Much Wenlock [where Gabrielle lives]. My husband and I went for dinner there at Christmas.

“I was walking through my house and I saw a silver spoon Rodney left to me and Nick’s reeds from when he played the saxophone. I still have things – some of his shirts. It’s amazing – I just went over there to have a peek and... you just couldn’t believe it.”

Listen To The Music

BY THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

Naïvely hoping to save the world during the Vietnam War, a last-chance second album and its anthemic hit saved the Doobies' career instead: "We were being played on the radio!"



"It's still important things are not all doom and gloom": The Doobie Brothers in 1972 - (l-r) Pat Simmons, Tiran Porter, Michael Hossack, Tom Johnston and John Hartman

COULD MUSIC SAVE the world in 1972? No, but it certainly rescued the career of The Doobie Brothers. Named after California slang for marijuana, and formed when Moby Grape's Skip Spence introduced former drummer John Hartman to Tom Johnston, the band were just about to be dropped by their label because of lackluster sales of their debut album. Given one chance to redeem themselves – with the help of producer Ted Templeman – they set to write their way out of their own personal purgatory with a second album.

Against the backdrop of a changing lineup, with the last dregs of the Vietnam War and the first Watergate break-in to inspire them, guitarist Tom Johnston penned this anthemic but rather naïve solution for the end of world discord. The song opened the floodgates to the Doobies' domination of the AM radio airwaves for more than a decade, during which time they scored 15 Top 40 hits, seven certified-platinum albums, four gold albums and three Grammy Awards.

Accordingly, it was the last song the band played at their farewell show in 1982. But the song lives on and so do The Doobie Brothers: in 2010, they released their first album in a decade, *World Gone Crazy*.

JAAN UHELSZKI

PATRICK SIMMONS: We were at an odd moment in our career. We had recorded the first album, and it didn't really do that well commercially. We knew Warners were getting ready to dump us. Our manager Bruce Cohn went to Warners and said, "Look, can you guys see your way to give these guys one more chance?" To everybody's surprise they said, "OK." So we went back and started writing some more songs – one of which was "Listen To The Music", and that's how we got back into their good graces.

TOM JOHNSTON: "Listen To The Music" just showed up one night while I was playing my acoustic guitar in my bedroom at the house I was living in in San Jose, California. Why I remember that it was late at night is because I called Ted [Templeman] and woke him up to play the song for him. When he picked up the phone I told him, "This is a single!" It was the only one of our songs that I've ever been right about. I played it for him on the guitar and I forced him to listen. After I was finished he said: "Yeah, yeah, maybe. I don't know. With a couple of changes it might be. Call me back in the morning."

KEY PLAYERS



Tom Johnston
Lead vocals,
guitar



Pat Simmons
Vocals, guitar,
banjo



Tiran Porter
Bass and
background
vocals

TED TEMPLEMAN

(producer): No, he didn't call me in the middle of the night about "Listen To The Music". He did for "China Grove". I've still got his message on tape. Comes from being a junkie. You can quote me, I don't care. It's that ability to manipulate facts. Even after they're clean. When I first heard "Listen To The Music", it was a whole song. He was actually singing a little melody. He just doesn't remember. He had it down.

And I said, "Well, send me a tape." I didn't expect to get it and he sent it. It was them rehearsing, and he sang the melody all the way through. "Whoa, whoa, listen to the, music." He had every lyric, every melody perfect.

TIRAN PORTER: Tom didn't wake us up after he wrote the song. The first time we heard it was at rehearsal, in the basement of the house where most of us lived. Everybody there: Tom, Pat, John, Mike [Hossack, second drummer], and me. And at that point it wasn't a whole song, just the chords. No vocal melody, no lyrics, nothing. Afterwards I remember everybody was smiling, going "Yeah, yeah, that's really cool! Yo, man, this is going to be great! Let's smoke a doobie."



SIMMONS: I didn't hear it that night when Tom was working on it. The first time was when he played it for me in a dressing room at a gig. Tom told me, "I got this new song I've been working on, and it feels commercial to me." He started playing the riff, and asked: "What do you think?" I told him, "It reminds me of another song that you wrote, only this is a little more mainstream." I thought it sounded like a song called "Feeling Down Farther" which was on our first album.

PORTER: After I heard it I said to Tom, "How about this for the chorus part? 'Whoa, whoa, listen to the music.'" And he went, "Yeah, yeah." So he went, wrote the lyrics and the melody line around that chorus, then called Ted Templeman and played it for him, and Ted went nuts. As I remember it, he didn't call Ted until the next day.

TEMPLEMAN: Tiran may have said he came up with the chorus, but no, he didn't. That's all Tommy.

PORTER: Well, I gave the chorus its melody line and lyric, and it's only a single lyric, but hey, what the hell?

TEMPLEMAN: That song dropped out of heaven for Tommy. He sent me a little tape of it, a reel-to-reel which I still have. They didn't know what they had. Tommy had no idea. He was out of his mind half the time, and just keeping him on the stage was Pat's big thing, you know? Tom doesn't like to remember that part. Nobody does.

SIMMONS: "Listen To The Music" was among the first songs we recorded when we went down

to the Warners studios. I don't know if it was the very first, but it certainly was among the first.

JOHNSTON: This was one of the later songs, because we went in and recorded at Wally Heider's with [Bruce's brother] Marty Cohn, our engineer for the first record.

TEMPLEMAN: Tommy sent me a finished tape. The song was complete. He had it all

"I thought music
could change
the world...
nice thought,
but it's not enough"

TOM JOHNSTON

mapped out. What I did was arrange it. There's no denying that Tommy's genius is there. And Michael Hossack made a big difference, here. They had an excellent bass player with Tiran. All I had to do was get the sound right and then do all the background vocals and get Tommy on there.

JOHNSTON: Ted said it needed some changes, but I don't remember that we changed anything.

TEMPLEMAN: It was like another record I did with Nicolette Larson. Neil Young gave me this tune, "Lotta Love", and sounded like a folk ditty but I put an intro on it and it turned into something. The same thing happened with "Listen To The Music". They didn't have an intro. I gave them one.

JOHNSTON: I probably came up with that first guitar intro first. That rhythm style was something I developed from playing acoustic guitar along with years of playing blues and R'n'B. It was my way to play drums and guitar at the same time. Kind of a rhythm style that I developed. The "chunka chunka" as it's called.

TEMPLEMAN: I don't think it would have turned into what it was without [engineer] Donn Landee and me. A different type of intro can make or break a record.

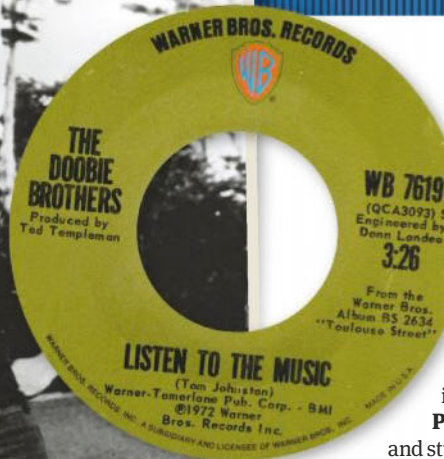
SIMMONS: Ted mentored us all the way through the song. The magic of a good producer is to be invisible within the context of a song.

TEMPLEMAN: Pat really had a lot to do with the record, sonically. He was the guy that carried the water the whole time. It's Pat and Tommy together, but Tommy wasn't too together at that time. Pat had the idea that he wanted to make the song be like "Layla".

JOHNSTON: Pat wanted to put a banjo on it. He wasn't a banjo player but he figured out how to play that part on a banjo that he came up with. There's a lot of stuff on it. There's even a marimba being played in that song.



The Doobies in '72: "We were all young and stupid..."



FACT FILE

• **Written by** Tom Johnston
Performers: Tom Johnston (lead vocals, guitar), Pat Simmons (lead vocals on bridge, backing vocals, guitar, banjo), Tiran Porter (bass and backing vocals), Michael Hossack (drums, steel drums)
Produced by Ted Templeman
Recorded at Amigo Studios, Burbank, California
Released as a single, June 19, 1972
Highest US chart position 11
Highest UK chart position 29

◆ **TEMPLEMAN:** It was Pat's idea to put the banjo on the song. It was also his idea to put the steel drums on. He helped to make that record. He was like a producer. It was like there were three producers on "Listen To The Music". I did the tracking but he had these incredible ideas for it, all those layers of stuff.

SIMMONS: I knew it needed a bridge. And we didn't have one in the tune. That's the little thing that we stuck in there, after the second chorus. "The one that starts with *"Like a lazy flowing river..."*" We threw that in there and then we didn't really know where that was going. Ted put that phasing on it and we all looked at each other and went, "Wow. That really makes it."

TEMPLEMAN: On the first album there was competition between Tommy and Pat. It exists in all groups. It was Tommy's song, but I wanted Pat's voice to be on the record, and so we put that middle section in, in the second verse. It wasn't in the song as Tommy wrote it, so technically Pat wrote that whole situation. And to make it sound like that – kind of dream-like thing – Donn Landee and I had two 16-track machines and I would start one, he'd start the other and we'd cause that "whew" sound, I stole the idea from this old song from the '50s called "The Big Hurt" by Toni Fisher. I don't think there's anything original in there except for the band.

JOHNSTON: Nobody had been doing that on records at that point. I don't know how or why

Ted and Donn Landee came up with doing that in the breakdown, that part you're referring to where Pat's singing and *"lazy flowing river..."*, but it worked out well. I have to give them credit, because that wasn't my doing.

TEMPLEMAN: I didn't really have to sell them on the idea. They didn't even know I'd put the phasing on it. They were on the road when I did that. Their manager Bruce Cohn came in when I was doing that phasing thing and says to me, "What the hell is that?"

JOHNSTON: I wrote those words in 1972 right in the middle of the Vietnam War and I thought that if leaders of countries could get together on some grassy hill and have music playing, they'd get past all the petty crap and dealing with all the egotistical BS that's affecting millions of people, and the skirmishes that happened as a result of all that. Let the music be the international language and just enjoy life. It was somewhat of a leftover from the days of Haight-Ashbury when I was still imbibing certain substances.

SIMMONS: The reason people connected with this was because we were just coming out of the '60s, and it was still the message we all felt was important. I think we still feel it's important, that things are not all doom and gloom.

JOHNSTON: Do I think that way now? Well,

I've since become somewhat jaded and I'm not altogether sure if that would work anymore. And I was still of the impression at that point that music could actually change the world. I don't believe that anymore. Nice thought, but I'm sorry, it's not enough.

PORTER: We were all young and stupid. Or we were just idealistic enough to believe that it was going to happen and the government was realistic enough to go, "We'll never let this happen."

TEMPLEMAN: I didn't pay much attention to the words. I'm not that tuned in. Lyrics are something that usually girls like, you know? I listen to the melody.

JOHNSTON: I'm not sure it's the words that made that song or whether anyone understood them or not. Apparently it's just the chord structure and the feel of a tune, rhythmically, that moves people. And the chorus. That song is somewhat of an anthem to begin with. Even though I didn't write it thinking that at the time, I'm not going to say I'm that way ahead of the game because I'm not. But that's how I look at that.

PORTER: I was driving in my little Volkswagen Beetle. It came on the radio and I had to pull over. I'd never been on the radio before. I'm on the radio! It sounded great.

JOHNSTON: Hearing the song on the radio for the first time was a big deal. I was in my

Volkswagen and I pulled over and stopped and just listened. I hadn't done a lot of recording, and hearing my own voice on a radio was a weird thing because you don't think you sound like that when you're talking. Then you hear it and you go, "That's not what I thought I sound like at all." Just the fact that the song sounded good, that it was being played on a radio on a regular basis, was huge.

SIMMONS: I was in San Francisco at our manager's place. I got up in the morning and I hear Bruce downstairs going, "Wow, listen to that! Listen, listen, Pat, Pat! You gotta hear this!" I went downstairs and "Listen To The Music" was playing on the radio, and he was jumping up and down.

JOHNSTON: The song didn't change anything personally and professionally. The only thing that changed everything was that the album was successful – that's what really changed everything! I wouldn't say that "Listen To The Music" was our calling card. It was just the first thing I ever heard of ours on the radio and that was getting played a lot. ☺

TIMELINE

1969: Tom Johnson and original drummer John Hartman are introduced by Skip Spence

1970: Original lineup – Johnson, Hartman, Simmons and bassist Dave Shogren – form

April 1971: Band release self-titled debut
Late 1971: Tiran Porter replaces Shogren;

Michael Hossack joins as second drummer
July 1972: Band release "Listen To The Music"

and *Toulouse Street* LP
Nov 1972: "Listen To The Music" reaches No 11 on Billboard Hot 100

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14th Cardiff, Globe / 15th Leeds, Cockpit / 16th London, Forum

www.drytheriver.net

Transgressive
MUSIC

“DO YOU EXPECT ME TO BE SAFE? ’COS THAT’S NOT MY STORY.”

On the cusp of 40, the irrepressible adventures of RYAN ADAMS continue apace. In his new LA studio, *Uncut* finds Adams planning experiments with hash and full, as ever, of wild tales. About Whiskeytown and the Cardinals (“Those dickheads!”), Johnny Depp and Judd Apatow, Glyn Johns and Jack White. About the therapeutic qualities of pot and, yes, yet more aborted albums...

Story: Bud Scoppa | Photograph: Alice Baxley

“**C**HARLIE, SOMETHING WEIRD is happening. I click iTunes to open it, but then it says it’s open and I don’t see it. I don’t understand what the fuck’s going on.” Ryan Adams is fiddling with the Mac in his otherwise strictly analog, vinyl-filled office at Pax-Am

Studio, a snug two-storey building he finished constructing three years ago on the campus of Sunset Sound Recording in Hollywood. He’s determined to demonstrate what he means by “automatic writing”, the technique he employed to come up with all but one of the songs on his fine new self-titled album. Charlie Stavish, Adams’

engineer, appears and the two of them brainstorm the problem for several minutes before it’s resolved. “OK, check this out,” says Adams. Moments later, the stately, measured riff that powers “Gimme Something Good” begins. By the time the chorus erupts, Adams is playing air guitar. “The songs arrive in a really intense, fucked-up way,” he says with his ringlet-framed face, poking through a thick tangle of dark brown hair, aglow in a boyish grin. “There’ll be nights when we hit several of them at once.” He picks up his red, white and blue acoustic from a nearby rack, fires up the voice app on his Samsung Galaxy and places it on the desk in front of him before starting to strum. “*I don’t want bacon, I don’t want bacon at all,*” he sings in a Neil Young falsetto warble. “I gotta send this to myself,” he explains. “Because this is good.”



Catching some rays:
Adams outside his Pax-Am
studio in Hollywood, 2014,
during the recording of
his self-titled new album

“Pulling music out of the air, it’s voodoo,” says the Heartbreakers’ keyboardist Benmont Tench, a regular Adams collaborator. “And it’s really good in the case of voodoo to have somebody who’s the focal point for drawing the energy – somebody’s gotta conduct the ceremony, and Ryan is damn good at it, and so is Tom [Petty]. So that might be why I have an affinity for working with both of them.”

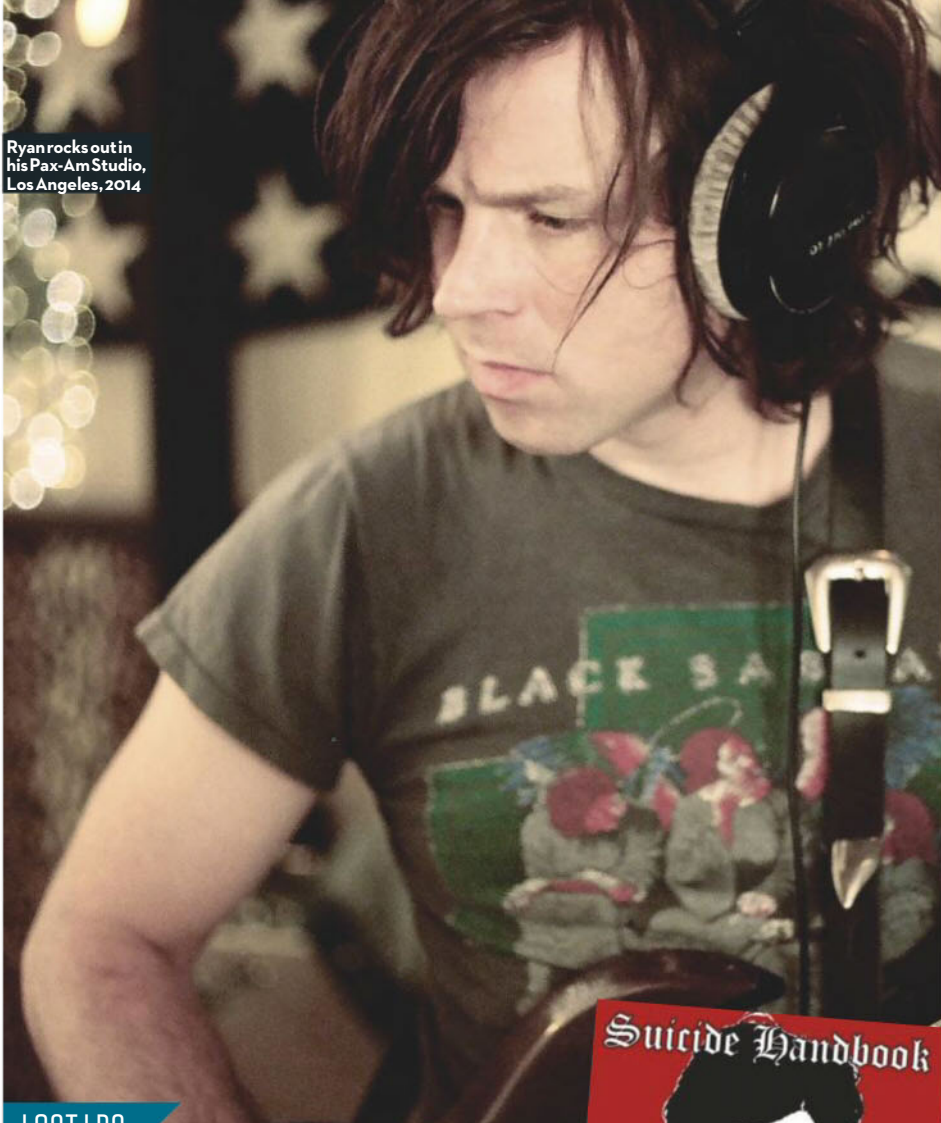
This new album, it transpires, is very different from the one that was originally intended to follow-up to 2011’s *Ashes & Fire*. According to Tench, who played on it, Adams recorded an album that “was more acoustic-sounding, more of a piece with *Ashes & Fire*, though they were distinct records”. But, Adams reveals, at the last minute he decided to pull the record. “Some people close to me really loved it,” he explains now. “And we had some good times. But, man, it was wrong. I’d listen to it and think, this is old shit to me. I ain’t this guy.”

Instead, Adams chose another path. He threw himself into multiple projects at Pax-Am, recording not only his own Ryan Adams record but also co-producing new albums by Ethan Johns (*The Reckoning*) and Jenny Lewis (*The Voyager*). Scrolling through his iTunes library, Adams then locates the original demo of Lewis’ “She’s Not Me”; even in this early form, it sounds like a ’70s summertime classic. Is Pax-Am turning into a hit factory, then? “Yeah, minus the hits!” Adams corrects. “It’s like a swing factory. We’re swingin’, but we’re not hitting anything yet.”

EVIDENTLY, THESE ARE busy times for Adams. Besides his prodigious songwriting output and flourishing production empire, he is happy and domesticated. But arguably none of this would have been possible had Adams not been able to change his life, five and a half years ago. “I had Ménéière’s disease my whole life, but I never understood what was happening to my body or to me onstage,” Adams says of this chronic condition of the inner ear. “I never understood why I would all of a sudden have a spell where I felt dizzy and uncomfortable, like a deer in the headlights. A flashing light can trigger an attack. It sucks, and it feels like a panic attack – you’re dizzy, sweating and confused. It’s really weird, and I didn’t know. I just fuckin’ didn’t know.”

Adams says hypnotherapy, acupuncture and exercise (he runs regularly) have helped to control his illness. But he was turned on (literally) to the most effective form of treatment while at his lowest point, in late 2008, at the end of what he now sees as an eight-year imprisonment on Lost Highway Records and immediately following the deeply unsatisfying last days of the Cardinals (whose final lineup he now refers to as “those dickheads”). “I was sick in bed for like six months after I told everybody, ‘I’m stepping away from music. I’m sick – I can’t do this shit anymore,’” he recalls. “Somebody very close to me came by and said, ‘It’s sad to watch you suffer, so I brought these cookies. I thought you might wanna try them and see if you feel better.’ I would’ve tried anything then, because I didn’t wanna be on painkillers and steroids; that’s another form of suffering, and I didn’t wanna be that person. So I tried a

Ryan rocks out in his Pax-Am Studio, Los Angeles, 2014



LOST LPS

UNRELEASED AND INTRIGUING...

A guide to some of Ryan’s lost albums...

COMMERCIAL SUICIDE HANDBOOK²⁰⁰¹

“Can you imagine if, after *Gold*, they had released *Commercial Suicide Handbook*?” Adams says of his dysfunctional relationship with Lost Highway. “This widely bootlegged record – people just call it *Suicide Handbook*, which is pretty dark. The irony is that it was just gonna be just me on acoustic guitar and [drummer] Bucky Baxter. Like an acoustic record; that would’ve been so fucking cool. But they wouldn’t put it out. I remember them telling me, ‘We don’t need Ryan Adams anymore because we have Ryan Bingham.’ And I was like, ‘Good luck with that.’”

BLACKHOLE²⁰⁰⁶

Adams describes this long-gestating album, on which he played all the instruments other than drums, as *Love Is Hell*’s “rock sibling.” “It was the last sessions I did before I knocked all that crap out – drinkin’, partyin’ and all that stuff. It was the tail end of that crazy winter, so it has that energy, which is really beautiful. I haven’t

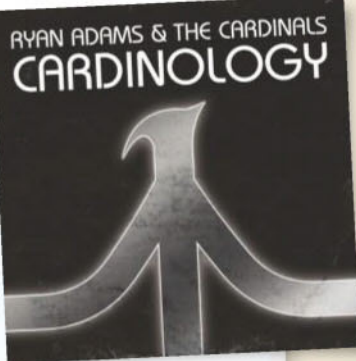
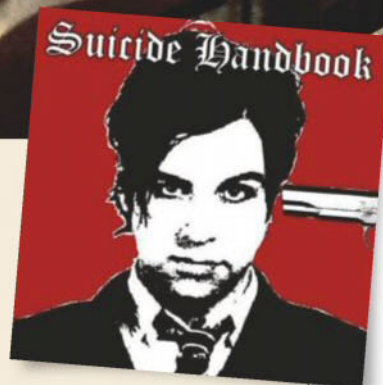
decided when or how I’m gonna put it out, but there are songs on it that people in my life really love – my wife digs it, my best friend thinks it’s one of the best things I’ve ever done – and my other best friend is the only other person on the record: Johnny T on drums. It’s one of the coolest things ever, man.”

ALIEN USA²⁰¹²

“Mike [Viola, co-producer] and I made a whole record, 28 songs long, for when I had to break the spell of *Ashes & Fire*,” Adams reveals. “He was basically going, ‘Do everything you ever wanted to do, and do it completely and totally in excess and wrong.’ It was a really weird, pop-rock ’80s explosion record that was also automatic writing. But Mike’s thing was then let’s see how we finish – to tape. Mike says it was like beta-testing this place [Pax-Am], because we wanted to know how to do it for real in here. I thought that was a record; it wasn’t, but the first real motherfuckers came through.”

TITLE UNKNOWN²⁰¹³

Benmont digs it.



MEGAN MCSAAC



Ryan Adams (right) and The Cardinals

Adams in his studio, producing Jenny Lewis' *The Voyager*

quarter of this cookie, and it didn't make me high at all, because I was so fucking dizzy and nauseous. My bones ached and felt like they weighed a hundred pounds, my head throbbed – I was having horrible headaches – my left ear was screaming like a siren day and night, my jaw hurt. And this was like the first little bit of relief; it was like a sigh. I immediately felt a little better. I had an appetite again, and I slept really deeply that night. Two days later I got out of bed, and I hadn't wanted to do anything for maybe six weeks before that. I couldn't get in a car. Mandy [Moore, his wife] couldn't drive me anywhere because my brain was swimming from the motion.

Two days after that I was ready to go for a hike. More and more, it liberated me. I made a point of smoking pot – at first it was vaporising – every day, and not getting baked at all, just taking a hit or two to bring everything down, and an hour later go into my world. Dude, it fuckin' saved my ass. It reignited how fun it was to play guitar, and then those songs started to descend on me, slowly but surely. It was a real fight, too, because I had been writing for this fake band [the post-

Catherine Popper Cardinals], which was an easier way for me to channel my talents without having to address me."

The first fruits of Adams' recovery were *Ashes & Fire*, produced by Glyn Johns – whose son, Ethan, had been Adams' producer, engineer and collaborator on Whiskeytown's 1999 swan song *Pneumonia* and his celebrated solo albums *Heartbreaker*, *Gold* and *29*. Released in 2011, the introspective *Ashes & Fire* introduced the 36-year-old version of Ryan Adams, exposing his humanity in all its vulnerability against the pastoral acoustic backdrop of Johns' production. On its heels, Adams decided to face his Ménéière-triggered stage fright and test his newfound comfort level by way of an extended solo tour. That tour took Adams to a different place, so that when he kept his vow to have Glyn Johns produce the follow-up to *Ashes & Fire*, he grew increasingly uneasy with the context. It wasn't just that he didn't want to make the same record twice, more that he was in a different headspace altogether, the metaphorical equivalent of moving from the leafy comforts of Laurel Canyon to the bustle of Hollywood.

RYAN'S MIXTAPE

HÜSKER DÜ! DANZIG! THE LEAVING TRAINS!

Adams' listening list for Glyn Johns

Before the recording of the aborted follow-up to *Ashes & Fire*, Adams bought a stack of CDs for Glyn Johns, urging the producer to "check this out. This is what happened in the late '80s and the '90s that you didn't hear," because he said he quit listening to records in the late '80s, which is when I started making music. I said to him, "This is where I came from, this is what it feels like. So if I do a solo and it ends in feedback but it's beautiful, I want you to know why." But I don't know if he listened to any of that stuff." Among the CDs in the stack were:

GREG SAGE
STRAIGHT AHEAD 1985

HÜSKER DÜ
FLIP YOUR WIG 1985

WIPERS LAND
OF THE LOST 1986

THE LEAVING TRAINS
FUCK 1987

GUNS N' ROSES APPETITE
FOR DESTRUCTION 1987

DINOSAUR JR BUG 1988

DANZIG DANZIG 1988

SONIC YOUTH
DAYDREAM NATION 1988

45 GRAVE ONLY THE GOOD
DIE YOUNG: LIVE 1989

ANTIETAM BURGEO 1990

MY BLOODY VALENTINE
LOVELESS 1991

NIRVANA
NEVERMIND 1991

"I got home from *Ashes & Fire* and this place was built," he says of Pax-Am. "All these guitars were on the wall. My typewriter was here; this drawer was full of stationery; there are this many fucking songs" – he opens a drawer, pulls out a foot-thick pile of papers and slams it on his desktop – "and there's a notebook I carry around, and there are like five of these. And there are jars of weed and a record player and all my amps that I've ever loved."

He recorded the follow-up to *Ashes & Fire* with Glyn Johns – who declined to work at Pax-Am, preferring to return to Sunset Sound's Studio B right next door – and it was given a release date before Adams decided to shelve it. "I was returning to the stuff I love," he explains. "Making my label a real thing, hangin' out in California with Keith and Dimitri from OFF!, jamming with Paul Cutler, who used to be in 45 Grave, meeting Falling James from The Leaving Trains, talking to Bob Mould, one of my heroes, getting all of the old shit away from me and going towards the real shit. And it broke me open. I caught this train that I stupidly got off of for a minute. So, before we started the record, I explained to Glyn, 'I need to do my thing. I want to play electric guitar on my record.' But I knew this was the guy who recorded Clapton; he isn't necessarily going to understand Sonic Youth. When we were making the record, there were some fucked-up moments where the whole band is piping up like, 'No, man, we were just doing that on the floor with electric guitar, and it sounded so cool.' And he'd go, 'I don't fucking care.' So I sat there with an acoustic guitar thinking, this ain't fucking real."

Adams' issues with the album had nothing to do with the quality of Johns' production or the performances of the musicians, including Jeremy Stacey on drums and Don Was on bass. Indeed, Tench enjoyed the sessions for the shelved album as much as he'd enjoyed playing on *Ashes & Fire*. "I like playing good songs with good people," he says. "On the second Glyn record it was all my good friends, and we're hangin' out and playing all these really good songs. And on this record with Ryan, it was the same thing."

"Ryan's studio is a lot of fun to just be in; it's a very warm and inviting place. There are some barriers to working there, and I like barriers and limitations. Tape has limitations in that what you play is what you get. The organ I usually play is a Hammond C3, and they're massive. It won't fit in Ryan's studio – you can't get it through the door – so I used a portable Vox Continental organ. Then there's the combination of characters that he cast to play. It was a rock'n'roll band in a very small space – too small to even fit my usual gear in. So two of the amp speakers are in the bathroom. Ryan's standing in the corner and I'm walking an obstacle course, with a series of unfamiliar foot pedals arrayed across the top of the organ, and I'm just bashing them with my hand whenever I want to turn them on or off – occasionally in the process cancelling out the sound that I'm getting on the organ. And all of this you hear on the track, but it affects the songs in a good way. Because something like that happens, and at the same time Ryan has an idea and throws in a different chord or melody, and then you have to react to that, and he reacts back. That's how you get

this kind of thing, having all these people crammed into that tiny room listening to each other while Ryan pulls some magic out of the air."

"I made a point of smoking pot every day..."

ADAMS IS ONE of several artists of his generation – a rarefied group including Beck and Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy – for whom it’s second nature to defy expectations, in the manner of Dylan and Neil Young. “You have to be willing to move on, and that’s what makes Ryan interesting,” Ethan Johns offers. “He’s always checking out new ideas, and he’s not afraid to fail. Which is really rare in an artist today, because everybody’s so paranoid about staying on top or whatever it is they’re paranoid about, that they forget you’ve got to be willing to fail to do good stuff.”

Arguably, the most radical example of Adams’ willingness to take an idea to its extreme was during Whiskeytown. Looking back on his psyche during those turbulent days, he says, “I knew that if Whiskeytown failed – and it was built to fail,

because it was not real – I remember thinking, if this is doomed to fail, I’m gonna fuck it all the way up. I’m gonna take it so fucking far, within the guidelines of not hurting anyone physically, not going to jail and not dying. I’ll live this story, ‘cos I already know this story. If you see a rock’n’roll show and the band is just getting by, that’s every band I ever saw. There were a lot of

times when we weren’t very good, I wasn’t a very good guitar player, I liked to get wasted, I was really shy – I think I might’ve had a touch of Asperger’s then, ‘cos I could barely look at people in the face, I was very shy talking to women and reserved with my friends, until I drank a little. I was uncomfortable in my own skin. But my feeling was, if you’re not that good, dude, you should just self-destruct; you should destroy it, because that’s something. I always thought that’s what rock’n’roll was. Like, that’s a story, that’s real. Paint that picture.

“There’s not really been a country-rock band to destroy it in the way Flipper destroyed it. The Replacements were already really good, so them destroying it was something far more beautiful. We were not technically good, so there was an element of allowing it to bleed through. I would look over at Caitlin [Cary, *Whiskeytown’s* fiddle player] during concerts and see her crying onstage, and I would be *suuuuper* fucked-up, and I remember thinking, dude, if she only felt as good as I feel, ‘cos I feel super-good. But I knew that in those fucked-up moments, real transcendental beauty happened. I knew that when those songs hit, when I was not in character but allowing this darkness to happen, it was fucking amazing, and shitty became majestic. That alchemy of intense dark energy created intense light energy. There’s less grey, and Whiskeytown had to have no grey. And by the time Whiskeytown made the albums after

STAR OF STRIPES

RYAN ON JACK

Why White is “a blues champion!”

“Rock’n’roll got its deserved hero,” Adams offers, “when Jack White stepped up and was like, ‘Watch me devastate your entire fucking industry and all of your expectations of rock with a plastic guitar,’ and his pal on the drums, and literally release records without bass, with beautifully out-of-tune but seriously correct parts. And on analogue equipment with a guy that basically kinda went, ‘Hey, guess what? CDs are over.’ Just at the helm of that, CDs are fucked and everyone is stealing the records on computers. It was like watching everybody in the music industry get what they deserve at the hands of this guy out of Detroit who’s seriously, seriously consumed the power of the mythological shit from Led Zeppelin and the blues elements. I mean, think about that: rock’n’roll starts with the blues, and the real industrial part of music dies with the blues – with a fucking blues champion. Like all of a sudden here’s this hero, and you can’t manufacture what that is... like really you can’t. That’s the sickest story ever.”

Faithless Street, it really was an aberration. So the ship crashed and broke up, but I survived. So what do you expect me to do now? Be safe? ‘Cos that’s not my story.”

Jim Scott, who produced 1997’s *Strangers Almanac*, recalls how wilfully unpredictable the 23-year-old version of Adams could be. “We arrive in Nashville and I find out Ryan has just fired a couple members of his band – he’s got a rhythm section he’s never actually played with before. He’s forgotten his guitars – he’d left them in the parking lot of his apartment building. And he decides that all the alt. country songs he’d gotten signed on he didn’t want to do that anymore. He wanted to play punk songs, and he had all-new songs he wanted to do. So, we were going to do three or four days of pre-production, rehearse, try to find grooves. But for three days, they just played like Black Flag songs. I sat there and thought, well, this is what it is.

“Finally, we ended up recording the songs that are on the record, but 15 more that were not supposed to be recorded with this group of guys that had never played together, that didn’t know the songs. It was just lucky the record is as good as it is. The secret to that is patience and waiting. If Ryan only showed up to do one hour of good work a day, make sure you record it. He’s really good, and the Ryan that’s really good, and not a punk, showed up just enough to make the record great. It’s not a judgment; it’s just people. I can try to make a good record, but it doesn’t mean I’m going to. We recorded some special moments, but we also recorded a lot of stuff that’s not good, and I hope nobody hears it. But he’s a good guy, and I hope he makes records for a long time.”

IN 1997, ADAMS was a sometimes brilliant, sometimes cringe-inducing adventurer. In 2011, he was a sensitive singer-songwriter in the most literal sense. In 2014, he views himself as the leader of a rock’n’roll band, while his new friends in high places treat him like a full-on rock star – a role he seems more comfortable with than ever before. When he’s in town, Johnny Depp comes around to hang out and jam (he plays the solo on “Kim” and guitar and vocals on “Feels Like Fire”). Fellow nocturnal creature Judd Apatow exchanges post-midnight emails with Adams, who sends the filmmaker takes of new songs (“He always gives me a vibe”), while Apatow sends Adams pages of newly written dialogue for his opinion. But hanging out with the Hollywood in-crowd is not Adams’ primary preoccupation. As he nears his 40th birthday, he’s focused on making the best music of his life – still flying by the seat of his pants, but doing so with newfound discipline, confidence and self-awareness.

Describing those magical moments that happen next door in the tiny, tiled tracking room, Adams says, “There’s times during the dicking around when I don’t have to tell Charlie – he senses it’s happening, those riffs – and he stops us and plugs in the tape machine. When that happens, you play for the money, ‘cos that goddamn reel holds seven songs and it’s \$300. So your asshole tightens up a little bit more, and when your sphincter closes like that, your lungs open up and you let it go, man. You’re ready to cut that fuckin’ take... It’s true.”

With that, Adams rises from his chair and sets off to meet Bob Mould at the prep for a video shoot. “They keep sending me emails about this shoot tomorrow and I can’t look at them now,” he says to his manager. Adams has more pressing things to think about. He tentatively picks up a vial from the array of prescription indica and sativa on his desk. “I don’t know how to smoke hash. I’m gonna leave this here. Should we learn how to smoke hash tonight? It’s gotta be on YouTube, right?”

Moments later, the 2014 version of Ryan Adams slides into the driver’s seat of his shiny black Porsche, turns onto Sunset and drives off into the Hollywood night. ☺

Ryan Adams is released on Columbia Records on September 8



THE WYTCES 'ANNABEL DREAM READER' 25/08/14



MARK LANEGAN BAND 'PHANTOM RADIO' 20/10/14

Heavenly
recordings 

... BELIEVE IN MAGIC

ALBUM BY ALBUM

Sinéad O'Connor

"It's so bloody nice to talk music, not how your life's shit and what's in your handbag"

SINÉAD O'CONNOR IS in fine spirits when she calls *Uncut* from her home in Dublin. "It's so nice to bloody talk about music," she explains. "Usually, people just want to talk to you about bloody hip fat and stuff like that. How your life is shit, what's in your handbag. Anything but the music." Certainly, during a career spanning nearly three decades, O'Connor's capacity for generating controversy has often meant her music has been overshadowed. But, then, she has always followed a singular path. Jazz tunes, Irish folk songs and reggae covers have dotted her catalogue, while her own material has fearlessly addressed big issues from religion to child abuse. What's next? "I want to go forward as a songwriter," she says. "I'm always gonna sing. But I'd love to get into writing songs for other people now. I believe I have the potential." But today, she is happy just to look back on nine of her 10 studio albums... "Hang on a minute while I light a cigarette," she says. "I guess it's been an adventure."



"I don't have the personality of a pop star..." Sinéad in autumn 1988, and right, at home in 1997

THE LION AND THE COBRA

ENSIGN/CHRYSALIS, 1987

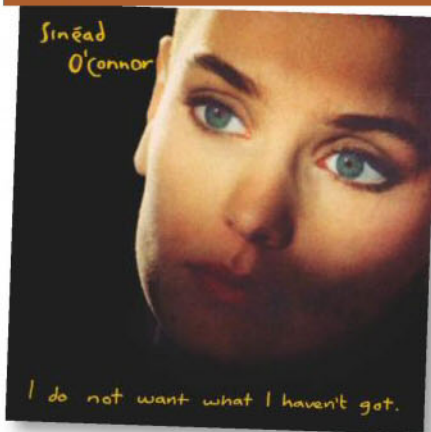


"Troy", "Mandinka" and "I Want Your (Hands On Me)" showcase O'Connor's mercurial talents. Run-ins with the producer demonstrate her single-mindedness.

You know, we actually made two versions of this. The first one was produced by Mick Glossop, which I didn't like. It was all a bit too pretty and ethereal. He was trying to turn me into Enya or a female version of Van Morrison. So we binned it. I took over production and we re-recorded it. I was also cooking my first baby at the time, but I guess when you're that young it doesn't seem like too much. In those days, you didn't really need to know how to work all the equipment to produce a record. You just needed a really good engineer, so you can describe what you want to do, and some great musicians. Nowadays, you gotta use ProTools, which probably no musician can understand. Or at least I can't anyway. I say that's why I'm a singer, 'cause I'm fucking stupid.

A lot of those songs I'd written at school. I must have been 16 going on 17. "Drink Before The War" was about my headmaster and "Never Get Old" that was about a boy I had a crush on at school. He was this gorgeous guy that all the girls wanted to go out with. I went out with him for like a day and then he sensibly dumped me. Mainly I look back at it and I think 'Jesus, I was a kid.' I'm very proud of it. But I was really young. Young and skinny. God, too skinny.

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



I DO NOT WANT WHAT I HAVEN'T GOT

ENSIGN/CHRYSALIS, 1990

Massive hits: "Nothing Compares 2 U" reaches No 1 in 15 countries, I Do Not Want... sells seven million copies. Attendant success, however, does not sit well with O'Connor.

Prince had written "Nothing Compares 2 U" for The Family. Their version was lovely. It was very different. It was extraordinarily slow. My manager at the time heard it and suggested I record it. At the time, Soul II Soul had just all kicked off. I really liked their records, so I asked Nellie Hooper if he would produce the thing.

I remember working down in Ham with Chris Birkett, the engineer. There were a lot of sessions with him, writing songs at the last minute. I remember thinking certain songs were shit, and then they turned out to be the songs everybody loves. Like "The Last Day Of Our Acquaintance",

audiences go fucking mental for it. So I enjoyed hanging out with him. He was a normal guy, which I hope he takes as a compliment... not some record industry asshole.

"Nothing Compares...", "The Last Day Of Our Acquaintance" and "Emperor's New Clothes" are still huge songs live. Some of the other songs, I kind of cringe at them now. I don't necessarily think they're bad songs, they're so personal that, at this stage in my life, I wouldn't really deal with them. Like "Feel So Different" and "You Cause As Much Sorrow". I'm quite proud of "You Cause As Much Sorrow". It's quite a brave song. But at the same time, I wouldn't identify with it right now. I was a very young person. I was a square peg in a round hole. I didn't, and I don't, have the personality of a pop star. I found myself in a lot of trouble because I was suddenly expected to play a certain game, but no-one had told me the rules. It all was a bit Kafka. I didn't know the rules to the game – but if I had, I probably would've left. It all affected my self-esteem. Because I was young, it was very difficult for me to carry all that. I actually did go around the world unnecessarily for quite some time believing I was some kind of terrible person. I wasn't, I was just in completely the wrong zone. People would be out to get you. I was quite dangerous because of the types of things I was writing about and singing about, like child abuse. You're not talking about obvious politics in your songs but you're equally dangerous, and especially when you're a woman who isn't toeing the line. I was rejecting fame, I was rejecting pop stardom, I was rejecting the money, the things that everybody thought we should want in life.



AM I NOT YOUR GIRL?

ENSIGN/CHRYSALIS, 1992



How do you follow-up a multi-million selling album? With a collection of jazz standards, obviously...

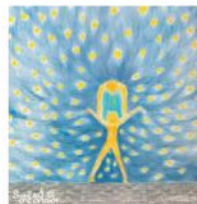
They were songs I associated with my mother. She had died

when I was almost 18, but I was still very much working it out. Certainly, a lot of the songs around the second record are in reference to that event. For instance, the whole reason I was crying in the video for "Nothing Compares 2 U" is because of the line, "All the flowers that you planted mama, in the backyard/All died when you went away". I was working out these big emotional issues. The other reason was, I can be quite calculating artistically. I wanted to create a red herring. I felt a lot of pressure. I didn't want to be in the pop star world and I had to get out of that by any means necessary. But equally, I didn't want to be under the pressure of the follow-up album: "How are you going to follow *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*?" Blah blah blah. I wanted to take that expectation away. I've planted a few red herrings over the years, like *Sean-Nós Nua* or the Rasta LP [*Throw Down Your Arms*, 2005]. They're records I stand by 1000 per cent, but they had purposes other than the artistic. [Producer] Phil Ramone was probably the richest person I've ever met. I had never come across a person who had lived such a rock star life and had so much fucking money. But what I was most impressed with was his ability to put a fucking incredible band together. I wasn't suddenly the big strong person I had

been on the previous two albums. I had taken quite a kicking. I was far from home, blah blah blah. But he was understanding.

UNIVERSAL MOTHER

ENSIGN/CHRYSALIS, 1994



Art as therapy. O'Connor meditates on her late mother and her own maternity
Universal Mother is the actual follow-up to *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*. The title of

the record came from a dream I had about my mother. '70s Ireland was a very difficult place to be if you were a kid. On top of that, I grew up in a house that was full of extraordinary violence. I came from an age where there was no such thing as therapy. I chose music as a pathway to recovery, as a way to work all that shit out. *Universal Mother* is the most important record, in terms of my beginning to really look at that stuff properly. In those days, myself, Roseanne Barr and Kurt Cobain were the first people to talk about being victims of child abuse without being in shadow. Up until that point, every time you saw a child abuse survivor, they were in shadows – as if they had something to be ashamed of. It was a really uncomfortable subject. It's a very important record from that point of view. Interestingly, it's the only record I've ever made in Ireland. But I think that's not for nothing. For an Irish artist to make such a record was terribly important. It still took another 10 years before the issue of child abuse became something that was OK for Irish people to talk about.

FAITH AND COURAGE

ATLANTIC, 2000



An impressive array of producer/collaborators assemble: Wyclef, Adrian Sherwood, David A Stewart and Brian Eno

Why the six-year

gap? I believe it was because my manager of 12 years, Steve Fargnoli, had just died. He was a father figure in many ways, an absolute rock. I also moved back to Ireland. There was some stuff that had to be sorted out, life shit [in 1999, O'Connor was ordained into the breakaway Latin Tridentine church].

Yeah, there were a lot of people involved in that record. I like to wander around from album to album and work with different people. I met Dave Stewart and he said he'd love to write some songs together. And at the same time, I was crazy about Adrian Sherwood's work and Wyclef. I didn't want to wait and make one Adrian Sherwood record then one Dave Stewart record and then one Wyclef record. I kind of got excited! Yeah, Brian Eno is on that album as well. At the time, we absolutely hated each other, which was kind of hilarious. We had a dreadful row one day in France at Dave Stewart's house. I threw Eno's keyboard in the pool and stole his diary. I'd read it and he'd written something really shitty about me. There was all this mayhem. I flew back to England with it. Dave and Brian were chasing me, trying to find the diary which I dumped in the bin at the airport. But now we get on great. He's brilliant, Brian.



Sinéad, The Boss: "Nowadays, I see songwriting as my number one job"

THROW DOWN YOUR ARMS

CHOCOLATE AND VANILLA, 2005



More career curveballs. Following an album of traditional Irish songs (2002's *Sean-Nós Nua*), O'Connor unveils her reggae record.

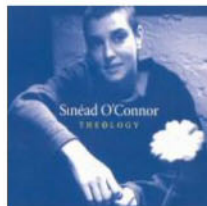
I was lucky enough to get out of Ireland when I was

almost 18 to live in London. A guy called Lepke, who was a friend of my manager, ran a radio station, the Dread Broadcasting Company. He had a record stall in Portobello Road and he held an open mic there on Saturdays. I used to go and hang out there with my manager 'cos I didn't know anyone else in London. Along would come all these Rastas – I'd never seen Rasta people before – and they'd be shouting into the mic, "Burn the Pope!", "Set fire to the Vatican!" I'd never heard anyone criticise the Church. Equally, apart from *Slow Train Coming*, the only religious music I'd heard was real boring music that would make God want to shoot himself. The priests were all miserable, whereas the Rastas were leaping around full of fire. I said to myself, "I really want to make a record of Rasta tunes," but the record company always want your pop record. I managed to get myself out of EMI, probably before *Faith And Courage*. So I was in a lucky position, creatively speaking, where I wasn't signed and I had enough money to make a few records that I wouldn't have been allowed to make for a major. Recording at Tuff Gong was fan-fucking-tastic, possibly the most memorable recording experience I've had. Jamaicans are my favourite people on Earth. Jesus Christ, it's the

kind of place where you'd bump into Johnny Clarke sitting on a bench outside the airport. You'd just bump into these guys left, right and centre you didn't even think even existed.

THEOLOGY

KOCH RECORDS, 2007



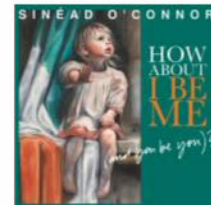
An LP tackling nothing less than the big themes: God, in particular.

The only album I'm taking into the coffin with me. It was a record I wanted to make since I was about seven or

eight years old. I was very interested in music at a very young age, and also in theology and God. Since I grew up in the '70s, I was interested in investigating this book, The Bible, that was being used to oppress people. When I began to read the Old Testament, I began to see that there was a potential to tell the truth, that is, expose the difference between the real God character in The Bible and the one the Church was selling. And there was a potential to share the truth musically. Then it grew out of my association with the Rasta movement, which became quite huge over the years. I'd also gone to theology college, where I had a brilliant teacher, an old priest. One day, I was reading 'The Song Of Solomon', which I love, and the priest came in, banged his finger up and down and said, "You should put that to music." At that time I was sick of music. I just didn't wanna know. But he kept on at me about it, so eventually I said, "OK." There was obviously a reason why I was at college. There was something I was trying to get out. It was *Theology*.

HOW ABOUT I BE ME (AND YOU BE YOU)?

ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2012



O'Connor begins new songwriting practices. Will Smith scripts and the Holy Spirit are involved

I wanted to close the previous chapter of my life, where my platform

would be recovery. Van Morrison is a big inspiration to me. Certainly at the beginning of the '80s, his records are very personal and about recovery. He was showing that you could take a musical journey of healing. There is a certain happiness on *How About I Be Me*. It's the start of a more joyful expression. It's not about recovery and healing, it's about what you could do once you've done that. So a song like "4th And Vine" is a really happy, girly dance-y tune. It became that I wasn't writing songs about my own life or my own suffering. I began to really change as a songwriter. I began to hone a certain craft. "Back Where You Belong" was inspired by a script that I was given for a movie, *The Water Horse*. It was the first time I started to write character songs. I'd been given two scripts. The other was a song called "Very Far From Home", originally written for a Will Smith film. I didn't give it to them as I thought the song was better than the movie. I hated the script. I hated everything about it. The character in "Take Off Your Shoes" is supposed to be the Holy Spirit talking to the Vatican.

I'M NOT BOSSY, I'M THE BOSS

NETTWERK, 2014



O'Connor's songwriting tip continues; Chicago blues becomes an unexpected influence.

When you're a woman, often people neglect the fact you've written songs. They talk about you as

a singer. It's a very male world, songwriting. I suppose I've been much more focused as a singer, but nowadays I see songwriting as my number one job. In the last few years, I've been listening to a lot of Chicago blues – the happy, funky blues. It became a major influence on this LP in terms of songwriting as much as sound. I watched interviews with a lot of these old guys, like Buddy Guy, talking about songwriting. They kept talking about the facts of life, identify with the simple things in people's lives. If it's not money, it's romance. You don't need six minutes if you can say it in three. This record is about a series of female characters, and the particular journey of one of the characters who matures from romanticising girl to sensible woman. I wanted to make a romantic record. It's a very womanly record, from that point of view. What are the key songs? My favourite is "Voice Of My Doctor". The song was inspired by a painting I came across which had this giant stone head of a man and this tiny little Buddhist priestess leaning against him snuggling, and he had a big old tear running down his face. And I love "Your Green Jacket", where the character manages to find a few moments alone with his jacket. ①

*Sinéad's new album **I'm Not Bossy, I'm The Boss** is available now via Nettwerk*

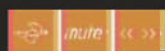
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Mercury rising!

1974. An upwardly-mobile QUEEN are creating decadent rock pageantry out of the back of a Winnebago. As a new live album captures the start of Queen's imperial phase, BRIAN MAY remembers an "incredible adventure" on £25 a week. Then we raid the *Melody Maker* vaults for an eyewitness report on that '74 tour. "Oh my dear," says FREDDIE MERCURY, "we're at each other's THROATS!"

Interview: Michael Bonner | **1974 feature:** Chris Welch

LOOKING BACK ON 1974, a pivotal year for his band Queen, Brian May remembers, "We were fairly small fry in those days. Although it was definitely starting to happen, we were by no means in the upper echelons of rock society.

For the first time, we felt that we had a momentum going. We weren't the only ones pushing it anymore. We kept asking ourselves, 'Where is this going? How far can we go? *What is this?*'"

Queen had finished 1973 on a high note. They'd played with Mott The Hoople – "we'd got across remarkably well," says May – and now prepared to enter the new year on their first headline tour, supporting new album *Queen II*. The tour ran through March and climaxed with a triumphant homecoming show on the last day of the month at London's Rainbow Theatre. It was the first of two hugely successful tours for Queen that year: they were back out on the road in October, this time to promote their second album of the year: *Sheer Heart Attack*. Reflecting on their incredibly busy schedule during this period, May considers, "We had to be immersed in it, or we wouldn't have survived it. It was an incredibly exciting time." To confirm the band's extraordinary trajectory during 1974, they sold out a further two nights at the Rainbow, November 19 and 20.

All three of the band's landmark London shows from that year are now

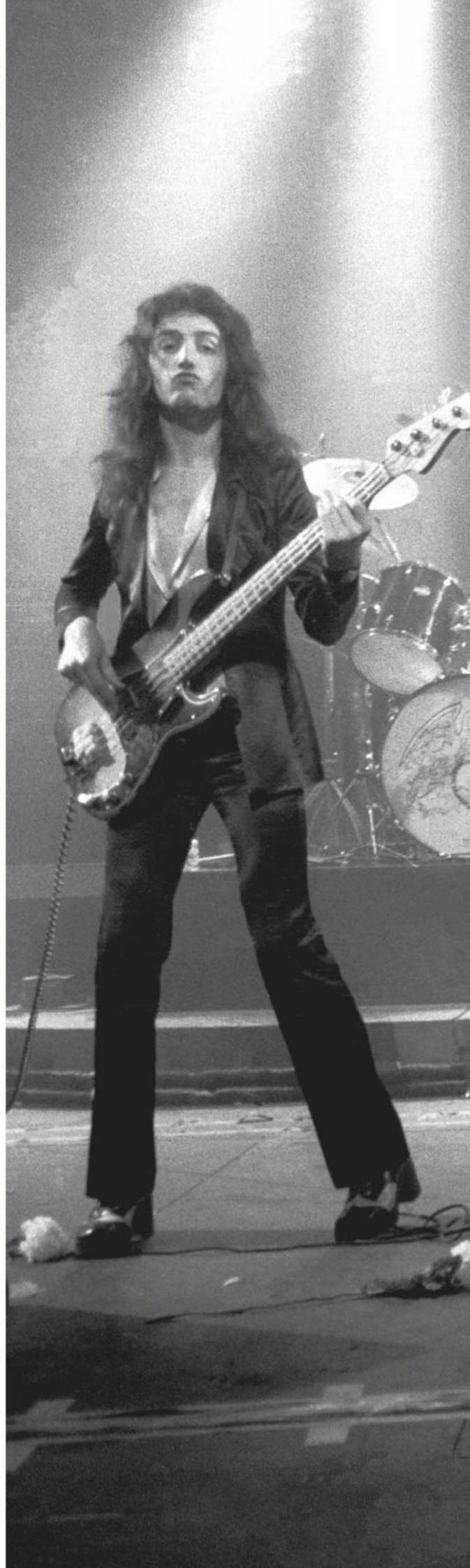
collected on a new *Queen Live At The Rainbow '74* album (reviewed p91), which catches the band as they begin to enter their imperial phase. Directly below, in a new interview, Brian May recounts life on the road in 1974, from the Cleethorpes Winter Gardens to the stage at the Rainbow. Meanwhile, on page 57, we return to November 1, 1974 with a piece from the *Melody Maker* archives, where Chris Welch meets Freddie Mercury in a deserted hotel bar in Liverpool...

UNCUT: The March 1974 tour finds you playing venues like the Cleethorpes Winter Gardens and the Century Ballroom, Taunton. What was life like on the provincial touring circuit in the early '70s?

BRIAN MAY: It was all new to us. We were becoming a headline act, which we did fairly quickly. It all sold out, and it was very exciting. All this, as a bonus to the fact we thought we were making good music and we were enjoying the artistic side of it. We were boys, and it was an incredible adventure.

So how are you travelling from gig to gig at this point?

I think we were still in a Winnebago. We used to sleep in that, as well, but we pretty soon got fed up with that and checked into hotels. But there wasn't very much money to be made. I don't think we ever made money on tour until 1986. Because in addition to working our way up the levels, we always spent too much on the show. We were always into our toys and



Queen live in London,
1974: "It was an incredibly
exciting time for us..."



● lights and sound and production. We were always living beyond our means, which was fun to do. But we didn't care. We didn't really have our eye on how much money we were making, we were just enjoying the trip, really. It was only when there was a bit of a break and we thought, 'Hang on, our managers are driving Rolls-Royces and building swimming-pools and we're still on £25 a week.' It was pretty strange, but that was more a feeling of being taken advantage of.

How were Queen developing as a band during this period?

On all fronts, really. When things are starting up, you think, 'I'll do this for a while, it'll be fun, then I'll get a proper job. It'll never be sustainable.' Then you suddenly turn around and think, 'Oh, hang on, this is becoming what I do.' The more

"The press were telling us we were rubbish but the public response was great"
BRIAN MAY

you do something, no matter what it is, the better you get at it. Especially if you're completely immersed in it every day of your life. You become a touring animal or a recording animal and your skills develop very fast. So you go through quite a transformation, and part of it is letting go – you have to let go of your home life, because it disappears. You can't do that any more, you have to be committed to what you're doing.

In what ways would that manifest itself?

The group becomes your family. We were completely committed. In a sense, you have to let even your friends go at home. Your real friends understand that. I still have a couple of great friends from that period, but they're the ones that

understood that was happening to me. The bubble that you had to live in.

What are your audiences like at this point?

It was a very genuine time for all of us. Those kind of tours make you learn your art and your craft. They knock the band into shape incredibly quickly. You're playing every night, in every situation. You're learning how an audience behaves. And you're actually developing an audience of your own. It's not just 'an' audience; it's 'your' audience. From that point on, it's a two-way communication. It really culminated in Wembley, 1986, when the audience became as important a part of the show as we are. If you could transport yourself back to those gigs, you'd find that most of the audience at a big rock gig would just sit there and not do anything but listen. They might bang their heads, but they wouldn't be standing and clapping, they wouldn't be singing all the words. It was something very special that happened with us. I was proud of the bond we formed with our audiences.

When was the idea first mooted to play the March 1974 Rainbow show?

It came from Mel Bush, who took us on as promoter. He took a chance. We weren't that big at the time. He booked a whole national tour of small theatres, really, but then he said, "By the time you do it, you will be able to fill the

Rainbow." We were quite surprised, because the Rainbow to us seemed like a distant destination, a bit of a dream because we'd seen some of our heroes play there. I remember, we all went to see David Bowie at the Rainbow and thought, 'My God, wouldn't that be incredible if one day we could do this.' So Mel Bush saying, "Yeah, you

can do that, boys," was exciting. It was the climax of the tour, our first real solid headlining gig in our home town, so monumental to us.

Do you have any specific memories of the show?

It was very warm. The place was filled with kids dressed up in the kind of costumes which were of a theme, like the *Queen II* black-and-white theme. Quite glamorous. It was an amazing thing to behold. For the first time, a London audience knew every word and were screaming and shouting. It's funny when you're so close to home, there's always a lot of pressure. But there's also a lot of real excitement. To be a hero in your hometown is odd, actually, but rather nice.

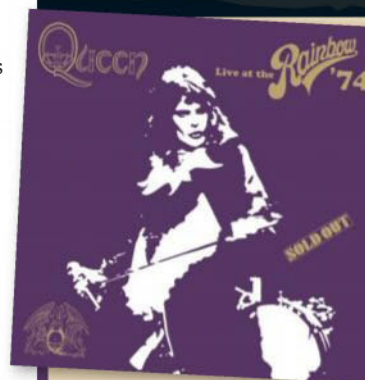
The *Live At The Rainbow* album was intended to be your third album...

...I've got to be honest, I don't remember that. It's obviously true, because all the documented evidence is there. But I don't remember the third album being a live album. It wasn't something that was in my memory as something important. To my mind, we just got on with making the next studio album. I don't know where that thought came from.

You contracted hepatitis on tour in the States.

Yes, I had to be flown back to the UK. I was extremely yellow. It was a bit of a shock. I had no idea what was happening, but obviously it was very bad. I woke up in hospital. Boston had been the place where we'd really broken through. So it was a real disappointment not being able to go on, because the tour was going really well. So I flew back to England. It turned out the diet they put me on for hepatitis aggravated the stomach condition I'd had for years. So I ended up back in hospital having surgery for stomach ulcers. In between all that, I thought I was recovered. We were in Rockfield recording *Sheer Heart Attack*, so after I'd been hospitalised and had the operation we resumed that and went back out on tour. It was a good job I had a quick recovery.

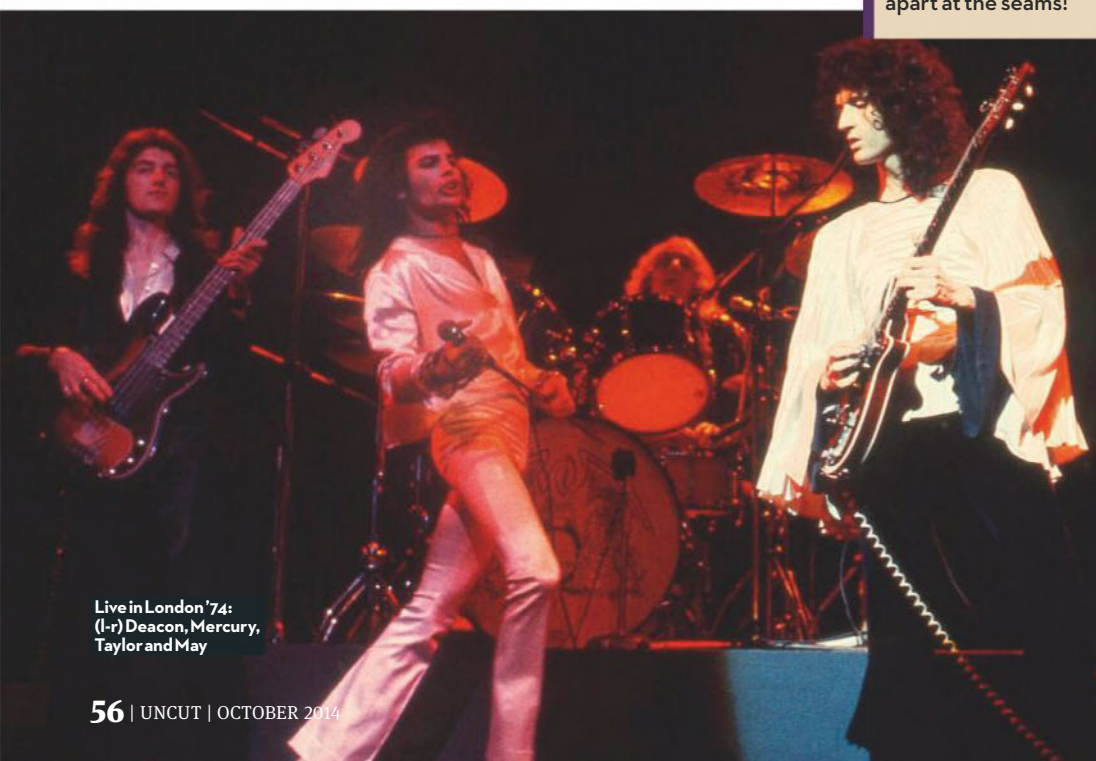
THE ROYAL ARCHIVE



NOW THAT *Live At The Rainbow '74* is coming out, is there more material in the archive?

"There's quite a lot of live stuff in the archive in various states of repair," explains Brian May. "I think we all imagined that it was irretrievable. Bits of it were missing, it was not quite right technically. It's a great tribute to our team that they managed to reassemble it all and make it sound good – and look good, because I don't think we had all the film from the cameras. Roger and I were amazed at how good it sounds and looks. There were various bad transfers at the time, so they ditched all that and went back to all the source material and rescued what they could. It was bits of tape, all falling apart at the seams!"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Live in London '74:
(l-r) Deacon, Mercury,
Taylor and May

You're back on the road in October, 1974 for the Sheer Heart Attack tour. In what ways was that different from the Queen II tour?

There's a big influx of new material, so it's quite different in structure. We still don't have "Bohemian Rhapsody" or "We Are The Champions" or "We Will Rock You", but it's a very big, anthemic end to the show with "In The Lap Of The Gods... Revisited". Freddie's in his Zandra Rhodes frocks, of course, which he debuted on the Queen II tour. Zandra was great, she was part of assembling the image. We organically grew into it, very much fuelled by Freddie's love of style. He was a great influence.

So what could we expect if we'd attended the show at, say, Victoria Hall, Hanley on October 31?

I remember it very well, actually! You'd see a band of young boys making pretty heavy music, very energetic music, but with a lot of melodic content and a lot of harmonies. We were very keen on our harmonies at the time. The show was already quite theatrical. We had this belief, which was unusual in those days, that actually presentation was important and it was part of the show. So, yes, you could go onstage and keep your back to the audience and wear jeans and play your music and hope that everybody got it. But actually that two hours onstage was an opportunity to present a completely rounded show in every way: big sound, big lights, a big presence, costumes, the whole bit, even make-up in those days. It wasn't a particularly normal thing to do at the time. Although there was the glam rock thing, that was a little different from what we were. We weren't very close to the Sweet or Slade or whatever. It wasn't quite the same thing. We were more theatrical and dressy-uppy, if you see what I mean.

You returned to the Rainbow for two shows in November. How did you up the ante on the March show?

These things are a barometer for us. We're looking for signs that we're doing things right. The fact that you sell a venue out twice rather than once is a nice confirmation that things are growing. It feels like you're building and who knows where you can end up. That was a great feeling, to go back to the Roundhouse and sell it out twice. A feeling of going in the right direction, I guess. It helps to build your inner strength, especially at a time when, as usual, the press were very much against us.

In what way?

They seemed to be trying to tell us we were rubbish. But the fact that the response from the public was so great and growing so fast was a help to us. Our view of the press has never been very good since then.

So there you are with Zandra Rhodes costumes, playing these regional dates: what are the facilities like at the venues?

Pretty basic. Behind the exterior they were not glamorous at all! We'd turn up to tiny dressing rooms and make the best of it. It was part of the fun. We were personally penniless. We didn't have an extravagant lifestyle. But it was fun!

MICHAEL BONNER

Persian popinjay
Freddie Mercury in
his Zandra Rhodes
outfit, London 1974



**TAKEN FROM MELODY MAKER,
NOVEMBER 9, 1974**

"PEOPLE THINK I'M an ogre at times. Some girls hissed at me in the street... 'You devil.' They think we're really nasty. But that's only onstage. Offstage, well I'm certainly not an ogre." Freddie Mercury is a star, nevertheless.

The first real rock supremo since Robert Plant or Rod Stewart.

Exuding élan, arrogance and stagecraft, he has emerged at the head of Queen to claim his crown. And step aside all ye who scoff or mock, for Queen are trundling ahead with inexorable momentum.

Freddie was shouting at me in the deserted bar of a Liverpool hotel at 11am on Saturday. No – he wasn't expressing anger at recent *MM* criticisms of the band. He was just trying to make himself heard above the noise of a woman sucking at a carpet full of cigarette ash, with her Holiday Inn vacuum-cleaner.

"Oh my dear, she's coming this way."

Freddie sighed as the din grew louder. Fastidious, elegant, he maintained an even temper, despite the ravages of last night's celebrations. Many bottles of champagne had been consumed in the aftermath of a riotous reception for the boys at Liverpool's stately, if somewhat battered Empire.

Inevitably, thoughts had turned to another group of long ago, who caused similar scenes as they trod those hallowed boards. Oddly enough, Brian May, Queen's fleet-fingered lead guitarist, uses AC-30-watt amplifiers, just like The Beatles.

But Queen's music is from the '70s – not the '60s. Cleverly arranged, carefully timed, delivered with maximum effort to create the greatest impact, it works on a young and receptive audience like a bombshell. Forget eight-year-olds screaming at the Osmonds. Their big brothers and sisters are learning how to yell again.

"Yes, I like an audience to respond like that," Freddie was saying. "Maybe we'd like them to sit down and listen to some of the songs, but I get a lot more from them when they're going wild; it brings more out of me."

"I get more from the crowd when they're going wild... it brings more out of me!"

FREDDIE MERCURY

QUEEN ARE A strange, refreshing bunch. They are in that happy position in a band's history, when the first wave of excitement and success is breaking over them. Events are moving rapidly. Singles and album hits in Britain. America is within their grasp and beckoning seductively. Yet their image may have served to confuse and sow seeds of suspicion.



Queen take tea at Freddie Mercury's flat, Holland Road, West Kensington, London, in early 1974

● Like any band achieving success too quickly for the media's liking, they are under-fire, although they seem more disappointed with the critics than hostile. The whole situation is an exact replica of Led Zeppelin back in 1969, when they were first deluged with self-righteous cries of abuse.

Perhaps Queen have gone about the business of forming a successful group with too much skill and intelligence. And yet they cannot be blamed for wanting to avoid the mistakes of their forebears. They have the example of the last 10 years of triumph and failure in the world of rock music to study, and they have profited from the examination.

Like many of Britain's most significant rock talents, Queen are collegians who have abandoned their degree courses for the lure of showbiz.

Freddie Mercury, in fact, has a degree in graphic art. Roger Meddows-Taylor, their drummer, studied dentistry and has a degree in biology. Brian May, incredibly, is an infra-red astronomer, and could become a doctor if he completed his studies. When Concorde raced the sun to study an eclipse, he was in line to join the team of scientists on board.

John Deacon, their bass guitarist, has a degree in electronics. If ever the band's stage equipment presents a problem, then the roadies are tempted to call on him for expert advice.

Their amiable, efficient American manager, Jack Nelson, is somewhat in awe of them. "Freddie designed the group's logia, y'know, and he never even told me. If you look, you'll see it encompasses the four astrological signs of the group. Freddie's a Virgo."

Jack has managed the band since they first emerged from London's Trident Studios. "They go to Japan after they've been to the States in

April. It's funny, they are the number one group in Japan, above Jethro Tull, Yes and ELP, and even Deep Purple, and they used to OWN Japan. But they've never seen Queen yet – it's all through the *Queen II* album."

"IT WAS VERY POPPY AND UNREAL..."

FEBRUARY, 1974. Just over a week before the *Queen II* tour begins, the band are invited to perform their new single, "Seven Seas Of Rhye" on *Top Of The Pops*, filling in at the last minute for

David Bowie. They record an alternate backing track at Eel Pie Studios and on February 24, record their first appearance for the TV show. The single peaks at No 10. "It's hard to even remember now what *TOTP* was like," says May. "It was a very formulaic show and most people mimed.

It was very poppy and unreal and most of us who followed a serious road towards making music didn't like it. Nevertheless, it was your vehicle for being seen by more people. Suddenly, there's an explosion of awareness. So to get on there was a big break for us, it really was. We were shoved on at the last minute and it was done in the studio with no audience, as there was a strike going on. It was thrown together very quickly, but it made a big difference. Suddenly, the record's charting and this whole kick comes in from outside."



Meanwhile the vacuum-cleaner roared in ever decreasing circles. "I'm feeling less than sparkling this morning," said Freddie, who admitted that the concert had been exhausting, even before the champagne took its toll.

Sheer Heart Attack, their third album, just released, had already received a dose of press abuse. How did Mercury react?

"The album is very varied, we took it to extremes, I suppose, but we are very interested in studio techniques and wanted to use what was available. We learnt a lot about technique while we were making the first two albums. Of course, there has been some criticism, and the constructive criticism has been very good for us.

"But to be frank I'm not that keen on the British music press, and they've been pretty unfair to us. I feel that up-and-coming journalists, by and large, put themselves above the artists.

"They've certainly been under a misconception about us. We've been called a supermarket hype. But if you see us up on a stage, that's what we're all about. We are basically a rock band. All the lights and all the paraphernalia are only there to enhance what we do.

"I think we are good writers – and we want to play good music, no matter how much of a slagging we get. The music is the most important factor.

"This is our first headline tour, and the buzz has got around, without any support from the media. I suppose they like to find their own bands, and we've been too quick for them.

"You see, when we started out, we wanted to try for the best. The best management, the best record deal, we didn't want any compromise, and we didn't want to get ripped-off. So far, it has paid off.

"In America, we've broken the ice already. As you know, we started a tour there last year, supporting Mott The Hoople, but Brian was taken ill and we had to come back. But we had a Top 30 album hit there, we've undertaken a huge

project, but it's all good fun."

How long did Queen spend in planning their project of world domination?

"You make it sound so pre-conceived!" Freddie protested. Mercifully the cleaning device wailed to a halt, and helped dampen a threatened Mercurial outburst.

"Believe it or not – it was spontaneous! It grew and grew, and remember, we'd all been in bands before, so we had plenty of experience of what NOT to do, and not be flabbergasted by the first rosy offer.

"That's how much planning went into it. This isn't overnight success, you know, we've been going for four years! We just got the right people to work for us, and the right company, and it's taken a long time.

"And yet we've been accused of being a hype, compared to bands we've never even heard of, and then finally told that we didn't even write our own songs. That hurt. Right from the start we have been writing our own songs, and that was the whole point – to come up with some ORIGINAL songs.

"In this country, to gain respect in a short while seems very difficult, and the papers like to feel they have you in their grasp. Well – we slipped out of their grasp."

However, Freddie is the first to admit that there can be dissent within the group, as well as without. "We tend to work well under pressure. But do we row? Oh my dear, we're the bitchiest band on earth. You'll have to spend a couple of days with us. We're at each other's THROATS. But if we didn't disagree, we'd just be yes-men, and we do get the cream in the end."

THE GIG: AN atmosphere approaching bedlam is prevalent inside the Empire, long before Queen emit a hint of activity behind the sombre barrier of the safety curtain. Hustler have come and gone, and now the audience are hungry for action.

Bad reviews? Supermarket rock? Thousands of Queen's Liverpool supporters look suspiciously as if they couldn't care neither jot nor tittle.

They whistle and chant and clap with all the precision of the football terraces. The ancient cry of "Wally!" still heard in northern territories, echoes around the faded gilt décor.

Jack Nelson is intrigued by the cry, wonders if Wally are a local group and wants to sign them, until informed that Bob Harris already has a stake in the real thing.

Mersey accents boom over the PA: "We do apologise for the technical hitch, it's to do with the PA system and we are assured the show will start in two, three, four minutes."

More whistles, as tough-looking lads in white trousers and combat jackets with ELP

1974 TOUR STATS!

QUEEN II TOUR

Tour rehearsals venue:
Ealing Film Studios

Opening show: March 1,
Blackpool Winter Gardens

Last show: May 11, Uris
Theatre, New York

No of shows played: 41

Support band: Nutz

Riot took place at: Stirling
University (March 16)
when Queen failed to
return to the stage after
three encores

**Ticket price for Blackpool
Winter Gardens show:** £1
(£1.10 on the door)

SHEER HEART ATTACK TOUR

Opening show: October
30, Palace Theatre,
Manchester

Last show: December 13,
Palacio De Los Deportes,
Spain

No of shows played: 29

Support band: Hustler

**Stalls ticket price for
Rainbow show:** £1.75

and Jethro Tull emblazoned on the back, pass beer bottles and conduct the audience with cheeky gestures.

It's all in fun and the only mild aggro comes when Queen's entourage from London try to claim their seats near the front. "Fuck off!" directs one youth as PR Tony Brainsby pleads for his seat. "All these seats are taken, up to that gentleman there," says Tony, pointing at me.

Ribald laughter from the watching stalls, and repeated cries of "Ooh – Gentleman!" Grousing, the seat pirates eventually relinquish their hold, with dark mutterings of: "All right, but we'll see you outside."

The battle was in vain, for as the party took their seats, the safely curtain went up, and the audience rushed forward. Instantly, the house lights went up again and the curtain jerked uncertainly down.

A nervous man with face ashen of hue appeared at the side of the stage clad in incongruous evening dress, as if he were the master of ceremonies and this was olde tyme music hall.

"There is no way we are going to start..." he began. "All you have to do is enjoy the show..." But there was a way. Somebody turned a blinding spotlight on the managerial figure, and he retired defeated, as the curtain halted in mid descent and began a jerky upward movement.

Within seconds most of the audience were standing up to gaze desperately at the darkened empty stage, and there they were – shadowy figures bounding towards the waiting instruments. The lights blazed, and there was evil Fred, clad all in white, the archetypal demon

rock singer, pouting and snarling: "Queen is back. What do you think of that?"

A tumultuous roar indicated that the mob were well disposed to the idea.

It was difficult to assess the early part of the band's performance because the fans with that wonderful selfishness of clamorous youth, decided to stand on their seats, their bodies screening both sight and sound.

As a non-paying guest, I was not too worried on my account, but felt sorry for the kids at the back who had paid their cash.

Retiring to the back of the theatre, and giving up the hard-won seats, we watched the scenes of tumult, including a boy on crutches, perhaps unable to see, but desperately waving his steel supports in supplication.

The band's strategy and appeal began to take shape as they tore through such dramatic pieces as "Now I'm Here", "Ogre Battle", "Father To Son", and "White Queen" from the second album. Roger's drums are the band's workhorse, punching home the arrangements, and mixing a sophisticated technique with violent attack. Roger says his favourite drummer is John Bonham. Brian is a fervent, emotional guitarist, who is like a Ronno-figure to Freddie, and is obviously a gifted musician. The onstage attention is judiciously divided between them, and when May takes a solo on his homemade guitar, Mercury leaves the stage, only to return in a stunning new costume.

Into a medley now, and apart from their slickness, and Freddie's dynamic presence, the extra power of almost choral vocal harmonies is appreciated, something that few bands with a central lead singer can achieve.

The camper aspects of Queen are displayed in "Leroy Brown", a gay, Dixieland tune that Freddie insists is inspired by the Pointer Sisters.

Then their first hit "Seven Seas Of Rhye", and a lunatic tempo on "Stone Cold Crazy", "Liar", and the finale from "Lap Of The Gods".

Dry ice began to envelop the stage, and as red light glowed through the fog, group and audience took on an eerie aspect, like a scene from some Wagnerian forest, as arms waved like young saplings in a night breeze.

Then an explosion of white light, and two red flares burn over a deserted stage. Queen have gone, signalling a desperate roar of "MORE!"

After some three minutes, the band responded to the insistent demand: "We want Queen," Wally having been long forgotten. Into "Big Spender", with its slow, measured pace and finally "Modern Times Rock'n'Roll", an apt anthem for a group of our times.

The band are still developing, and their mixture of heavy rock and glamorous display might seem curious.

But as Queen makes its royal tour of the land, the effect on their subjects is to inspire unmitigated loyalty. And amid predictions of gloom for the British rock scene, it is a healthy and encouraging spectacle. **Q**

CHRIS WELCH

Queen: Live At The Rainbow '74 is released on September 8 by Virgin/EMI



Freddie Mercury and John Deacon, onstage at the Rainbow, 1974



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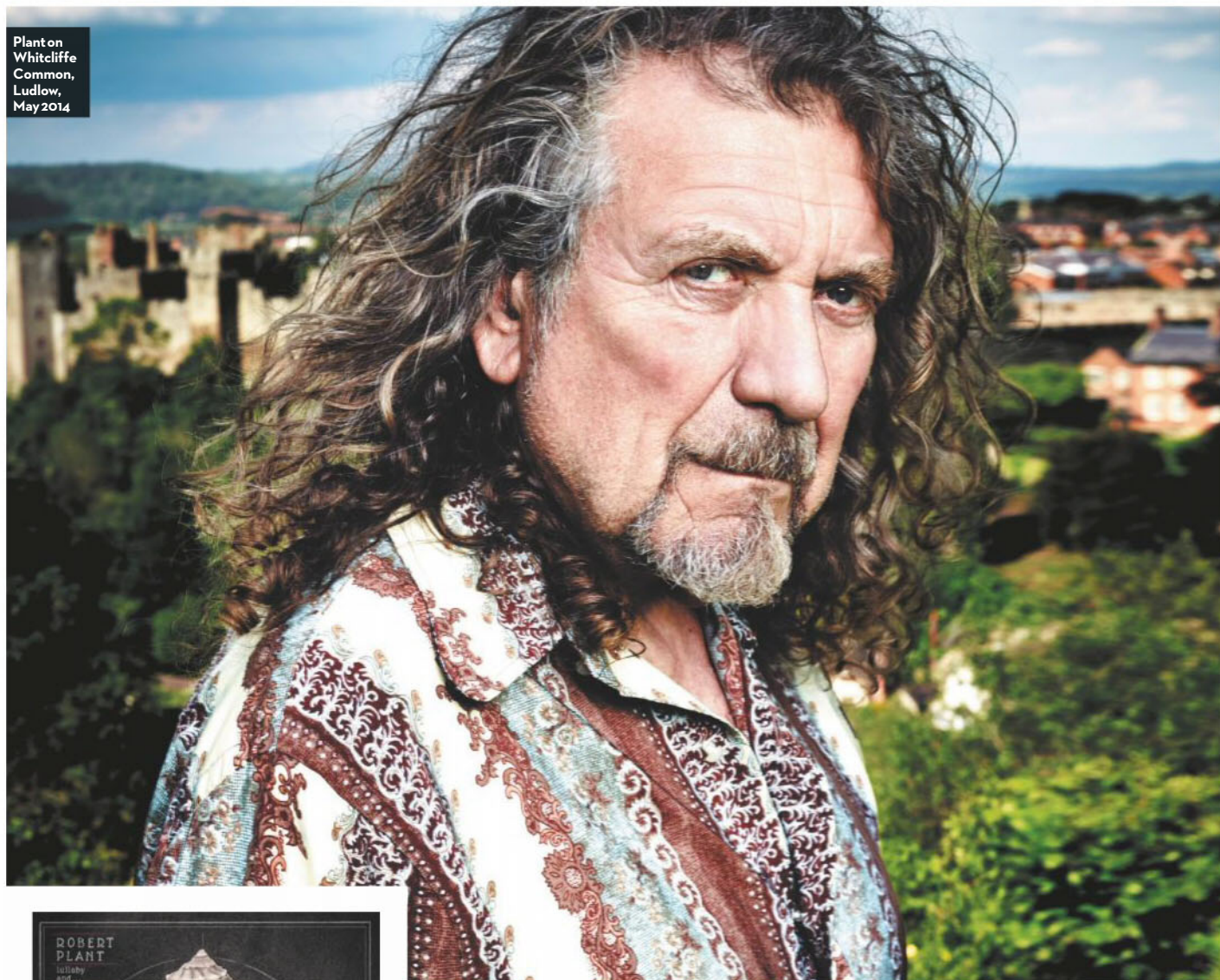
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7 Very good 6 Good but uneven
4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

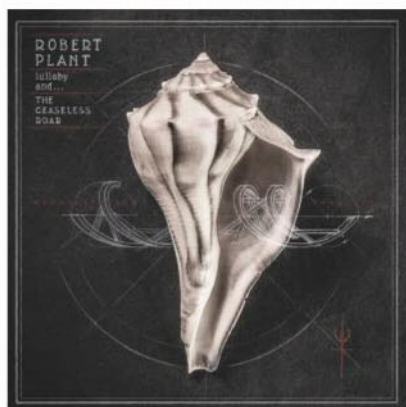
New albums

THIS MONTH: TWEEDY | GOAT | MARIANNE FAITHFULL & MORE

Planton
Whitcliffe
Common,
Ludlow,
May 2014



ED MILES



ROBERT PLANT lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar

NONESUCH

Daring and masterful: late-flowering Plant blooms anew, says *Neil Spencer*

TRACKLIST

- 1 Little Maggie
- 2 Rainbow
- 3 Pocketful Of Golden
- 4 Embrace Another Fall
- 5 Turn It Up
- 6 A Stolen Kiss
- 7 Somebody There
- 8 Poor Howard
- 9 House Of Love
- 10 Up On The Hollow Hill (Understanding Arthur)
- 11 Arbaden (Maggie's Babby)

9/10

ROBERT PLANT MAY well wonder why he couldn't make a solo album of this quality a decade or so back. There was nothing awry with, say, 1993's *Fate Of Nations* or 2002's covers-heavy *Dreamland*, but they are dwarfed by what he and his current band, The Sensational Space Shifters, have created here, a record that deftly aligns the chakras of Plant's storied career while also being a bold act of reinvention.

If the album's component parts are long-standing Plant obsessions – R'n'B, Elvis, West Coast psychedelia, North African blues – he's

never put them together with such panache. As sole producer he has an able lieutenant in guitarist and world-fusion pioneer Justin Adams, with whom he has previously worked, and who sprays *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar* with a dazzling array of fretboards, sometimes big sparkly rock guitars, at others sinuous African blues lines. Adams' long-standing musical partner, Gambian griot Juldeh Camara, adds ritti, a one-string violin and kologo, a four-string lute.

At first *lullaby...* sounds like a world album, steeped in the North African flavours that first seduced Plant back in the '70s and



New Albums

➔ which he explored with Jimmy Page in the '90s, but its 11 tracks morph constantly between styles. Folk ballad "Poor Howard" becomes Bo Diddley taken back to Africa, Plant whooping up old-time R'n'B while lute and ritti dance in response. "House Of Love" is a power ballad seemingly penned under the spell of Roy Orbison, albeit given a touch of swaying Middle Eastern strings, and elsewhere come touches of trance, dub and ripples of Zeppelin bombast. Plant sings with a restraint and precision that was probably beyond him before he teamed up with Alison Krauss for *Raising Sand* in 2007, an experience he's described as a singing lesson, and which has left him with the realisation that sometimes less really is more.

Raising Sand's Americana renewed Plant's career, with 2010's *Band Of Joy* a safe follow-on, but there are few echoes of those albums here. Opener "Little Maggie" may be an antique American folk song but it arrives in gleeful African guise, plucked out on banjo and Adams' three-string tehardent lute, while Plant sings eerily against the beat, fading in and out as the track turns first into acoustic drum and bass before shape-shifting again into electro-trance. Astonishing.

"Rainbow", the first single, likewise has Plant singing across a rhythm wanged out on ritti, swooping between a falsetto coo (carrying echoes of The Four Seasons' "Rag Doll") and dreamy promises to "*be your rainbow after the storm*". "Pocketful Of Golden" and "Embrace Another Fall" maintain the mood with their cavernous production – Plant's lyrics are elusive

throughout – moving from the former's psych-rock flavours into the latter's hypnotic Middle Eastern strings and an entrancing guest spot from a female singer. "Turn It Up" is also full of surprises, from its oblique time signature to the urban angst of its lyrics, at first muttered sullenly before the track bursts into gnarly blues guitar and a trademark Plant moan. He isn't happy. He's

"lost inside America... blinded by the neon, the righteous and the might... stuck inside the radio – turn it on and LET ME OUT!" A great interlude, hand-stitched for radio, which can never resist a song about itself. If there are echoes of mumbling early Elvis on "Turn It Up", then the King's influence is even more evident on "A Stolen Kiss", a sombre piano ballad with a tender, wounded

The lion king: at Ludlow Castle, May 16, 2014



HOW TO BUY...
JUSTIN ADAMS AND JULDEH CAMARA
Plant's trusted lieutenants on CD



JAH WOBBLE'S INVADERS OF THE HEART
Rising Above Bedlam
OVAL, 1991
One of the fruits of Adams' partnership with bassist and band leader Jah Wobble was this radical, co-written foray into Middle Eastern pop with guest spots by Natacha Atlas and Sinéad O'Connor. At times glossy, at others pulsating, ...*Bedlam* evolved the music PiL had pioneered.
7/10



JUSTIN ADAMS
Desert Road
WORLD VILLAGE, 2002
After French band Lo'Jo took Adams to the Festival In The Desert (where Plant also played), life changed. The influence of Tinariwen's desert blues, and of the Sahara itself, is stamped on this solo debut, a series of hypnotic excursions that include a homage to Blind Willie Johnson, an Adams icon.
8/10



TINARIWEN
Aman Iman
WORLD VILLAGE, 2007
Adams repaid the inspiration of Tinariwen by producing their third, and arguably best, album. Recorded in Bamako in Mali in a fortnight, it has a clarity and freshness, while Adams' subtle sonic touches accentuate that this is a fully functioning rock'n'roll/blues band. The producer contributes an atmospheric liner note, too.
8/10



JUSTIN ADAMS AND JULDEH CAMARA
Soul Science
WAYWARD, 2007
Adams' guitar and Camara's ritti have proved a potent partnership. In Camara's hands the one-string fiddle can be a dervish – opener "Yerro Mama" is a case in point – or a meditation ("Blue Man Returns"). *Soul Science* picked up awards, rave reviews and made a global platform for the duo's live act.
8/10

vocal that borrows Presley's operatic tropes (at some points you half expect Robert to croon "Are You Lonesome Tonight"). There's no doubting Plant's sincerity, however. This is a naked, heart-felt meditation on love that "waits for no-one... it's cool and elusive and so hard to find." As days slip away, Plant finds "true love in the ceaseless roar" (available in the shell on the album's cover).

Changing the mood is "Somebody There". The most conventional rock piece here, it opens in a blaze of spangled guitars before Plant, with a Wordsworthian nod to his boyhood sense of wonder, ascends "mountains where dreams turn to gold" to gambol in "the fields of plenty". Its tone of air-punching affirmation finds release in a squall of psych guitars (The Byrds, they live!) before the song marches out, leaving you to wonder who that 'someone' might be.

"House Of Love" is high-grade epic pop. At another stage of Plant's career it might have been noisier and rockier, but here Plant the producer reaches for the tense, noirish mood of Spectroscopic US pop, setting doomy surf guitar

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Robert Plant
Recorded at: Helium Studios, Real World, Conto Rooms
Personnel includes: Robert Plant (vocals, production), Justin Adams (bendir, djembe, guitars, tehardent, bk vocals), John Baggott (keys, loops, Moog bass, piano, tabal, bk vocals), Juldeh Camara (kologo, ritti, Fulani vocals), Billy Fuller (bass, drum programming, omnichord, upright bass), Dave Smith (drums), Liam 'Skin' Tyson (banjo, guitar, bk vocals)

against nervous strings while he emotes regret and resolve in murky echo, punctuating his ruminations on loss and an uncertain future with a killer chorus: "When I think about it now/I watched the house of love burn down". There's no triumph here, just quiet dignity and, in that almost conversational hook-line, puzzlement.

The mysteriously titled "Up On The Hollow Hill (Understanding Arthur)" lifts us into the realm of Plant the seeker and shaman. "All I crave is the love that never dies," he

intimates, his vocals hovering above Tuareg guitars and the clattering sticks of ceremonial Native American dance. Whatever Robert is channelling, it's potent stuff – there's only one Arthur who sleeps beneath a hollow hill after all – and the playing warps beautifully as the hillside visions fade like mist.

Extending the fire-dancing ambience is the drum fest of "Arbaden (Maggie's Baby)", an urgent semaphore of beats and riffs with Camara chanting in Fulani and snatches of "Little Maggie" reverberating in the mix. Robert Plant in dub? Believe it.

While Plant justly gives fulsome praise to his musicians, all of them playing at the top of their game, the spirit that permeates *lullaby*... is his. Beyond the clever production and judicious musical blend is a sensibility and a voice and songs that find Plant still on his quest, still grappling with the intricacies of love, still seduced by distant, misty mountains. His uniqueness has never been more apparent.

Q&A

ROBERT PLANT on folk ballads, Bobby Gillespie and supervising "the flying horse"...

YOU'RE HAVING A lot of fun with the Sensational Space Shifters, aren't you?

There's no boundary to where we can and cannot go; there are cues within the songs and yet the contributors are all the players. It's not like a band where there's a guitarist and a bassist and a drummer and a singer. It's like the give and take and the exchange between Skin [Tyson, guitar] and Justin [Adams, guitar], it's magnificent. And Johnny Baggott [keys]... Then you've got this rhythm section moving around with Billy [Fuller, bass] and Dave [Smith, drums]. I am in a real, real excitement zone with these guys.

Do you still feel the need to prove yourself intellectually and musically?

Oh, not to prove it. You can't bluff it, fake it or talk it up. You've just got to live it out. That's the thing about it all. I'm not asking anybody to get into the groove of what we do, we just do it. Of course, I'm never gonna be everybody's favourite. I don't do things in the way that everybody would like it.

The folk songs, like "Little Maggie" and "Poor Howard", sound very far removed from their traditional roots...

I think what it is, is that we as musicians, at this point in time and hopefully for a good time to come, have a partnership that brings in a lot of creativity from all sides. That allows me to be the sorcerer's apprentice in a way, waving my enthusiasm around, if you'll excuse the pun, and just melding it. It's like running around with a soldering iron, bringing this, that, there... Let's try and nuance that into...

So what's the strategy with this album?

Basically, I'm going round the entire flying horse and making sure that everything works properly.

The flying horse being...?

Just the idea of being able to ride through all these events, properly. It's setting a course through a period of time ahead. Which, because of the artistic capacity, playability and all the humour – we've got a work situation that is spectacular. So then what? By bringing all these influences together and having something substantial to say – obviously, I'm writing the lyrics. Some of it probably isn't particularly stuff I should be saying, but it's enough for me to know I haven't wasted my time. I'm not singing about, you know,

getting old. It's not *Harvest Moon*. It's just like, "Pssht, this is how it is on this song; this is how I feel today." In a year's time I'll be totally different.

I'm intrigued to know what you think you shouldn't be singing about.

First of all, obviously not the clichés. If you listen to amazing lyricists... Dylan's sort of cloak-and-dagger lyric, beautiful. Just when you think it's so simple, you realise that he's got something going down. I wanted to find out how many wives he'd got at one point. I nearly got close to it, as well.

How did you find out?

I asked a lot of people who knew him. I just wanted to know where things come from, you know. Where does it all come from?

Do you have any favourite songs on the LP?

No, not really, I mean it's too early to say. Last night I was at home, approving the test pressing. I played the three sides of vinyl – I hadn't played

it for about a month, 'cos I wanna believe it. I don't wanna flog it to death.

Where do you think this album fits in the broader body of your work?

It's up at the sharp end right now as I'm still absorbing it as a listener. As I said, last night I was listening to the final to approve the actual cut and I went, "Wow." The

textures and the interplays, it's all I ever could have wanted to be around. I mean, to be a part of it, that in itself is a great achievement. To love hearing what your mates are doing.

Is it difficult for you to go back and listen to your own music?

No, no, I enjoy it. In isolation, the changes are interesting, the intentions are always strong and powerful. I don't put anything out I don't have 110 per cent passion for. Otherwise I've got lots of other things I could do with my life. I've always been open to anyone musically, or I wouldn't have sung on all these other records. Bobby Gillespie calls me every 18 months for a harmonica on a Primal Scream track: "OK? Come round." Here I come... [Scottish accent?] "Oh, could you do a bit o' the vocal on there, just do the low vocal there if ye can, don' worry ah'll send you a copy o' the record." Right the way through time it's been like that. I love it. Hey, we'll see how it all pans out in the end. **INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER**



TRACKLIST

- 1 Please Don't Let Me Be So Understood
- 2 High As Hello
- 3 World Away
- 4 Diamond Light Pt.1
- 5 Wait For Love
- 6 Low Key
- 7 Pigeons
- 8 Slow Love
- 9 Nobody Dies Anymore
- 10 I'll Sing It
- 11 Flowering
- 12 Desert Bell
- 13 Summer Noon
- 14 Honey Combed
- 15 New Moon
- 16 Down From Above
- 17 Where My Love
- 18 Fake Fur Coat
- 19 Hazel
- 20 I'll Never Know

PETER FERGUSON

TWEEDY Sukierae

DBPMRECORDS

Tweedy & Son open for business: strong returns follow.
By Michael Bonner

9/10

IN THE THREE years since Wilco released their most recent studio album *The Whole Love*, Jeff Tweedy has been busy with a number of impressive extramural activities. As a producer, he oversaw new albums from Low, Mavis Staples and (in part) White Denim. He also helped put together Wilco's latest Solid Sound Festival, toured alongside Bob Dylan on the Americanarama bill and even found time to cameo in *Portlandia* and *Parks And Recreation*. But despite such rewarding creative experiences, other aspects of Tweedy's life have been far less kind. His elder brother, Greg, died in September 2013 from heart and kidney failure, while Tweedy's wife Sue was diagnosed with a rare form of lymphoma in January this year. It's hard not to imagine *Sukierae* (a compound of Sue Miller Tweedy's nickname, Sukie Rae) as engulfed by these two personal tragedies; much as *Wilco* (*The Album*) was overshadowed by the

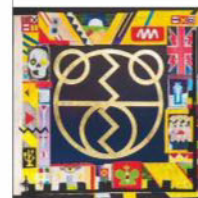
death of his former bandmate Jay Bennett. Some might scrutinise the lyrics for evidence of Tweedy's response to his wife's condition. "*No-one could protect you from the blood in your own veins*," he sings on "Hazel"; "*I've always been certain nearly all my life/One day I'll be your burden and you'll be my wife*" on "New Moon". Evidence, surely, of an appalling pathos governing the record?

But *Sukierae* rarely sinks into a miasma of post-diagnosis melancholy. Indeed, the first line of the album's opening track, the spiky "Please Don't Let Me Be So Understood", is as defiant as it gets: "*I don't wanna give in*". Elsewhere in this issue (p23), Tweedy explains that although work started on this album before his wife's illness was detected, *Sukierae* has since assumed a salutary quality. "I've been able to make her feel less alone," he explains. At any rate, *Sukierae* is very much a family affair. The band consists of Tweedy and his 18-year-old son Spencer on drums – although

AtoZ

COMING UP
THIS MONTH...

- p66** ALLAH-LAS
- p67** AVI BUFFALO
- p68** RYAN ADAMS
- p70** MARIANNE FAITHFULL
- p72** MARK FRY
- p75** SHOVELS & ROPE
- p77** ROYAL BLOOD
- p78** HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER
- p81** GOAT



THE 2 BEARS

The Night Is Young

SOUTHERN FRIED

"Dad-house" duo's well-rounded second album

8/10 Joe Goddard (also of Hot Chip) and Raf Rundell are

the genial elder statesmen of the UK house revival, the Weller to Disclosure's Oasis. "Get Out" and "Angel (Touch Me)" are as crisp as anything produced by the new pop-house generation, with the added bonus of offering some sincere, grizzled wisdom instead of off-the-peg Brit-School warbling. The 2 Bears' faith in the unifying qualities of a good rave-up has a tendency to spill over into hokey sentiment at times – witness cod reggae cringe "Money Man" – but such criticism feels like pure humbug in the face of the album's unexpectedly trippy and heartwarming final third.

SAM RICHARDS



STEVEN JAMES ADAMS

House Music

STATE 51 CONSPIRACY

Solo debut from Broken Family Band/Singing Adams frontman

7/10 Don't worry, Steven James Adams hasn't

gone and made a dance album. The title reflects his plans for a stripped-down, lo-fi home recording – although it didn't quite work out that way. You can hear from the acoustic spine of these smart, literate compositions that they could have stood tall without embellishment. But along the way, Emily Barker and members of The Vaccines and Scottish folkies Lau came on board, helping tracks such as "Drinking From The River" and "Get Over Yourself" to grow supple folk-rock limbs on a corpus of songs somewhere between Sufjan Stevens and Seth Lakeman.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

Q&A

Jeff Tweedy



The album opens with "Please Don't Let Me Be So Understood": a really bratty, rock'n'roll nihilist song...

It's a subterfuge of

some sort. There's not really a concept to the record, but there is some desire to have it be a reflection of growing up. I think it is bullshit to not grow up!

Your songs have sometimes seemed prophetic – as when "Jesus, Etc." took on a new resonance after 9/11...

I definitely notice that. There's a lot of images from this record that have become surreal to me. I'm not agreeing with you in any way about a "prophetic" nature. But there's a lyric – "It won't take long to find a broken backbone", in "Nobody Dies Any More". That was written way before anything happened with my wife's cancer diagnosis. And one of the ways that we discovered the malignancy in my wife's bones is that she had a broken backbone, a collapsed vertebrae. And now when I sing that song, I think, 'Oh my God, that's so strange.'

What's the song about?

Well, a lot of lyrics start with something way more specific, and then I get very uncomfortable with things being too spelled out. But Chicago has a horrible problem with gun violence, and it was an attempt to write about that. It still has images of candlelight vigils on crappy, low-income street-corners, with beer being poured out on the street.

INTERVIEW: NICK HASTED

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**

Tweedy

Recorded at: The Loft, Chicago, IL

Personnel: Jeff

Tweedy (vocal, guitar, bass, iPhone track, keyboard, piano, electric sitar, cassette, Mellotron), Spencer Tweedy (drums, percussion), Scott McCaughey (piano, Mellotron, typewriter, vibraphone), Jess Wolfe and Holly Laessig (bk vocals)

there is also discreet accompaniment from the Young Fresh Fellows and Minus 5 bandleader Scott McCaughey on keyboards, and backing vocals by Jesse Wolfe and Holly Laessig from indie-pop band Lucius.

Of course, this isn't the first time Tweedy has stepped away from his band duties. In 2002, he released the (largely instrumental) score for Ethan Hawke's 2001 directorial debut, *Chelsea Walls*. But *Sukierae* is a full 20-track affair. Driven by warm acoustic notes, "High As Hello" and "World Away", establish a honeyed, slightly stoned mood early on. Conspicuously, "Diamond Light Pt. 1" feels the most Wilco-esque of the first batch of songs – especially the scrabbling guitar lines reminiscent of Nels Cline. It also foregrounds Spencer's skills behind the kit as he manfully sustains the song's eccentric time signature. Songs like "Wait For Love", meanwhile, bring to mind the lovely guitar and piano parts in "Country Disappeared" from *Wilco (The Album)*. "Low Key" is one of the record's few attempts at a straightforward pop song – a less raucous take on "I Might", also from *Wilco (The Album)*, if you like – with some charming George Harrison-style "aah aahs" from Tweedy, Wolfe and Laessig.

Elsewhere, there are quiet, ruminative moments like "Pigeon" and "Nobody Dies Anymore". The former, delivered in an intimate near-whisper by Tweedy, is tremendously affecting, despite its opaque chorus rhyming

"pigeon" with "religion" and "Mt Zion" with "dandelion". "Nobody Dies Any More", which Tweedy says was written before his wife's diagnosis, nevertheless appears weighed down with a weariness. "Desert Bell" possesses a deep, tormented spirit – "Render me down/In a hole in the ground/Mixed with the earth" – while Tweedy's delicate vocals on "Honey Combed" evoke the fragility of Elliott Smith. As the album winds towards its conclusion, Tweedy seems to consider the possibility of being separated from his loved one – "Will you take me?" he asks on "Down From Above" and "I couldn't hold you long enough" on "Where My Love". The frazzled electronic motif on "Slow Love" – reminiscent of the wiry static sound underpinning "Radio Cure" on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* – is a disquieting counterpoint to the song's warm melodies. Fortunately, the introspective fug lifts for the airy "Summer Noon", which might just recount Tweedy's first meeting with Sue Miller at her Chicago club, Lounge Ax: "She spoke to me and provoked my band/And I broke in two in the heat of her hand". The last song, "I'll Never Know", resurrects a memory from childhood concerning his mother; it is simultaneously deeply sad and also comforting.

An album of great depth and richness, *Sukierae* finds Tweedy at his most dignified, addressing life-changing events across all aspects of the full emotional spectrum, from joy to sorrow. It is, then, nothing short of the whole love.



SLEEVE NOTES

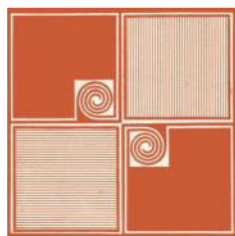
► **Recorded at:** Various locations, LA
Produced by: Dan Horne and Nick Waterhouse
Personnel: Miles Michaud (vocals, guitar), Matt Correia (drums, vocals), Spencer Dunham (bass, vocals), Pedrum Siadation (guitar, vocals, organ), Dan Horne (pedal steel)

ALLAH-LAS

Worship The Sun

INNOVATIVE LEISURE

Sounds of the '60s on blissed-out second. *By Graeme Thomson*



7/10

ONE OF THREE instrumentals which snake their way through the Allah-Las' second album, "Ferus Gallery" takes its name from the Los Angeles centre for contemporary art which, it transpires via a little light

Googling, closed its doors in 1966.

The date of its demise might be coincidence, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Culturally speaking, 1966 represents the line beyond which this LA quartet dare not tread. Their highly regarded 2012 debut drew obsessively from a wellspring of mid-'60s sources. Mostly it was in thrall to fuzzy US garage-rock, but it also added surf-pop, incipient psychedelia, primitive beat music and The Byrds' trebly jangle to the mix. There were overt echoes of The Seeds, The Ventures and The Animals, but also the occasional Hispanic flourish and bossa nova rhythm.

Little of any great significance has changed on the follow-up. Two years may have passed, but the "voices carrying through the Canyon" on opener "De Vida Voz" – a Love-esque mix of halting minor chords and rattlesnake rhythm – are still calling from a very specific musical and geographical location. The closest Allah-Las come to sounding contemporary here is, ironically, on a cover of The Frantics' obscure early '60s instrumental "No Werewolf", which in their hands becomes a pioneering foray into what can only be described as Kraut-surf, the spindly guitar licks welded to a tough, undeviating rhythm.

But really, from its title on down, *Worship The Sun*

is a second slice of impeccable Californian retro-fetishism which subverts ridicule by achieving so spectacularly what it sets out to do. The production, once again overseen by Jonathan Wilson bassist and Beachwood Sparks member Dan Horne and retro soulman Nick Waterhouse, is immaculately imperfect. The performances are raw and just the right side of sloppy, while the drawled vocals – shared between all four of the group – are appropriately offhand and faintly malevolent when required, notably during the call-and-response of "Had It All".

There is some evidence of creative evolution. Piano, pedal steel and vibraphone are sparingly utilised, and while *Allah-Las* sometimes felt like a live set hastily brought into the studio, this time as much emphasis is placed on the songs as on the painstakingly reproduced sound. "Nothing To Hide" is a deliciously sun-warped filigree which takes its compass reading from The Turtles' "You Showed Me" (written by Jim McGuinn and Gene Clark), the vocals as fey and feather-light as Bobby Gillespie in his pre-"Loaded" days. The title track is a masterclass in stoner indolence – "Don't worry about the time" – while the sweetly clacking bossa nova rhythm and fluid guitar lines evoke the listless loveliness of The Byrds' "Dolphin Smile". The tremendous "Better Than Mine" injects a welcome

lick of pace, a country-rock gem that hurtles along on glistening waves of pedal steel.

Nothing on *Worship The Sun* is as obviously pretty as the limp C86 jingle-jangle of "Vis-A-Vis" from their debut, although "Yemeni Jade" is blissfully beautiful, a meandering instrumental featuring pedal steel, tom-toms and a palpable aura of loss.

More typical is the perceptible hardening of Allah-Las' resolve. "Every Girl" is thuggish early Stones with a hint of the New York Dolls, while the chirpy "ba-ba" on "Buffalo Nickel" might evoke the West Coast idyll of The Beach Boys and The Mamas & The Papas, but the riff is pure '66 VU, awkward and snagging. Elsewhere, "501-415" nods to the dawn of British psychedelia, evoking the shadowy sing-song style of early Pink Floyd.

If there's a faint veil of disappointment hanging over all this excellence, it's that Allah-Las haven't built more adventurously on the foundations of their debut. Lyrically, there's few advances on the unreconstructed sexual politics, bravado and blissed-out reveries of the first album, while these short songs (the 14 tracks run to barely 40 minutes) rarely challenge the orthodoxies of their obvious influences. There's not, in truth, much evidence of vaulting ambition here, but then sun-worshippers don't need the sun to evolve. They simply ask that it keeps on shining.

Q&A

Miles Michaud



How would you describe the record? A natural progression. We were listening less to abrasive garage rock and a bit more to late-'60s progressive rock, and that possibly came out naturally in the way the album sounds, but it still has all the same elements and still sounds very much Allah-Las. We're pleased with the way it changed, and the way it stayed the same as well.

It seems more unified than the first one. This

time we arranged and worked out songs in the studio, which was new to us, and enabled us to be experimental. But it's certainly not polished. There are flubs all over the record!

Does the retro tag get on your nerves? It goes both ways. You can be relegated to being knock-offs or revivalists, but all art draws influence from the past. It's a good thing to be able to bring elements of the past into the future. I don't have a problem with people thinking about that when they're listening, but I wouldn't want them to think it's something that's been done or can't be done anymore. It's an aesthetic choice – all rock'n'roll is derived from the '50s. The only guiding light we have is that we make music that we like.

INTERVIEW: GRAEME THOMSON



ALT-J
This Is All Yours
INFECTIOUS

Bafflingly incoherent second album from Mercury-winning trio
Alt-J's 2012 debut *An Awesome Wave* was a total wildcard, cramming

5/10

Radiohead's eight albums' worth of musical exploration into 45 minutes. Stilted but staggeringly popular, it won several serious awards and went platinum. Encouraged by the public acceptance of their weirdness (and now a three-piece after losing bassist Gwil Sainsbury), Alt-J get stranger with *This Is All Yours*, including a recorder interlude ("Garden Of England"), a Miley Cyrus sample ("Hunger Of The Pines"), and an offer to "turn you inside out and lick you like a crisp packet" ("Every Other Freckle"). It lacks the debut's punchiness, and a compelling thread to bind those disparate elements.

LAURA SNAPES



ÓLÖF ARNALDS
Palme
ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Eccentrically mesmerising fourth from delicate Icелander
Inevitably, it's Arnalds' elfish voice that dominates proceedings on her latest,

8/10

somewhat brief, release. But whereas it's normally flitted amid folkish songs of comparable fragility, this time Múm founder Gunnar Örn Tynes adds suitably subtle layers of programming and electronic manipulation – most obviously on the percussive "Half Steady" – that underscore her more otherworldly qualities. Arnalds' instrumental arrangements, too, are increasingly unexpected: "Turtledove" has a medieval air, while "Defining Gender" boasts a haunting Eastern tinge. Innocently nostalgic and powerfully feminine, *Palme* finds Arnalds staking a strong claim to territory as uniquely precious as Dory Previn's.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



ARP
Pulsars E Quasars
MEXICAN SUMMER

Synth voyager returns to base
After coasting serenely on pools of analogue bliss, Arp's New York

7/10

conceptualist Alexis Georgopoulos shook things up, relatively speaking, with the yacht-rock boogie of last year's *More*, a surprisingly orthodox move that proved he also had decent pop chops. He continues in this vein on mini-LP *Pulsars E Quasars*, a set that touches on the laser-guided minimalism of his early work (final cut "New Persuasion") but mainly finds him knocking out shaggy bar-room psych ("UHF1") and strung-out doo-wop ("Pulsars E Quasars"). The best results occur when he blends the styles and "Chromatiques II" and "The Violet Hour" spiral into an endless druggy chug.

PIERS MARTIN



AVI BUFFALO
At Best Cuckold
SUB POP

Return of Long Beach's sweet-voiced indie-rockers

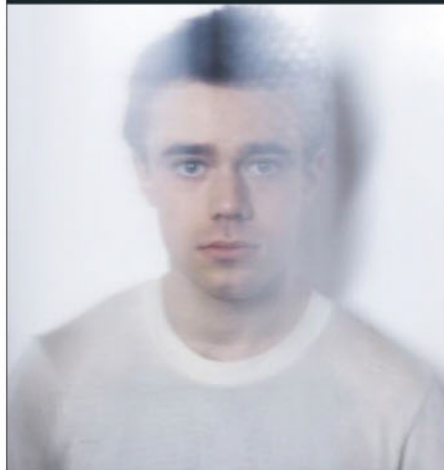
8/10

Four years in the making, the second album from Avi Zahner-Isenberg and friends gently evolves the sound of their much admired debut. The template remains classic American pop-rock served with a glaze of summer-fried weirdness, redolent of The Shins, Flaming Lips and Neil Young, but now there's real heart beneath the often twee façade, most evident on the glorious "Won't Be Around No More" and a clutch of tender piano ballads. Sonically, too, it's more stretched. "Memories Of You" evokes *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* with its irresistible blend of pure falsetto, French horn and dazzling guitar, while "Oxygen Tank" shuttles between torch song and psych-pop wig-out.

GRAEME THOMSON

REVELATIONS

AVI BUFFALO explain their four-year absence



➤ Avi Zahner-Isenberg is singing a love song to the studio. "It's beautiful, all the things it can do," he says. "It opens up your ears, but you have to make a lot of time for it." Avi Buffalo's 23-year-old prime mover has spent the four years between albums one and two orbiting the planet of sound. He talks a lot about space, tones and frequency ranges, but he's also been "getting further and deeper into music, soaking up so much creative energy in Los Angeles". This includes "fun stuff like seeing Philip Glass at UCLA" as well as listening to Glen Campbell, Dionne Warwick, Burt Bacharach, "weird Beach Boys sessions", Alice Coltrane and Yellow Magic Orchestra. They've all influenced the very fine new Avi Buffalo album, *At Best Cuckold* – but what about that cryptic title? "Oh, there's no meaning," he laughs. "It's definitely a phonetic thing. It came to me in a train station and I thought it had a cool ring, so I trusted my gut with it." His band are currently undergoing "hardcore rehearsing" for a tour which brings them to the UK in October. "Our keyboard player is just back from six months playing drums on a cruise ship," he says. "It's going to be a lot of fun."

GRAEME THOMSON



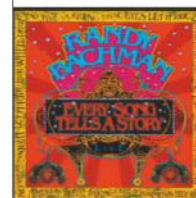
A WINGED VICTORY FOR THE SULLEN
Atomos
ERASED TAPES

Ambient/classical pair turn their hands to dance (ballet, that is)
With the release of their

7/10

first collaborative album in 2011, Adam Wiltzie (Stars Of The Lid) and pianist Dustin O'Halloran became stars of the discreetly flourishing 'post-classical' scene. Along with all the Eno and Arvo Part references, a collateral effect of this success was a commission to score a longform piece by choreographer Wayne McGregor. Hence *Atomos*; more suited to contemplation and drift than dance, perhaps, and with Gavin Bryars-like strings and low-level electronics making the 11 pieces more voluptuous than ever. An occasional swell reminiscent of Sigur Rós suggests, too, that providing soundbeds for nature documentaries may yet prove to be the duo's most lucrative role.

JOHN MULVEY



RANDY BACHMAN
Every Song Tells A Story
ILS

Out of overdrive and into cruise control...
Inspired by Ray Davies' reimagining of The

6/10

Kinks' catalogue in his 'Storyteller' shows, Bachman last year took to the road with his Randy's Vinyl Tap tour, revisiting his best-known songs from The Guess Who's "American Woman" and Bachman-Turner Overdrive's "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" to mature solo hits such as "Prairie Town", reflecting on his early days in Winnipeg with Neil Young. Backed by a small and intimate band of trusted cronies, the live album from the tour presents a warmly nostalgic musical scrapbook of his life and a bonus DVD adds rambling but engaging stories about how the songs were written.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



BANKS
Goddess
HARVEST/UNIVERSAL

Bright American prospect with an already-fanatical following

7/10

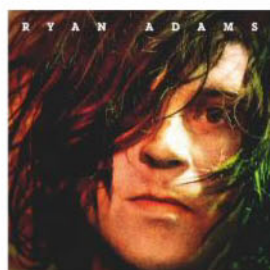
The Weeknd is as frequently brilliant as it is hip – and it gets blended with an arresting Lorde-ian hauteur here by Los Angeles singer Banks. The beats provided by Sohn and others, audibly influenced by Oneohtrix Point Never and the Tri Angle Records camp, aren't quite as original as their peers like Arca, but roiling, noisy bass always kicks in satisfyingly. Banks meanwhile is an earnest singer with an ear for complex anthems – she's at her best when letting big emotions rip, as when she leaves a breathily deep register for a static-wracked higher octave on "Brain".

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



RYAN ADAMS

Ryan Adams
PAX AM/COLUMBIA

Self-titled, self-produced, and pretty well self-realised

The three years that have elapsed between 2011's *Ashes & Fire* and the arrival of this offering are an eternity by Ryan Adams' extraordinary standards. Including his 2000 solo debut *Heartbreaker*, the former Whiskeytown singer released 13 albums in the first decade-and-change of this century – and maintained a quality that almost matched the quantity, give or take the cobbled-together *Demolition* and the spitefully tossed-off *Rock'n'Roll*.

When any artist returns from hiatus with a self-titled LP, they are hustling the listener towards a subtext of "And this, at last, is me." *Ryan Adams* radiates precisely this image of first principles being re-embraced. There is none of the stylistic tourism of, say, his honky-tonk weeper *Jacksonville City Nights*, or his conceptual metal opus *Orion*. *Ryan Adams* is very much Ryan Adams being Ryan Adams. Which, lest we have forgotten, is a good thing. On song, Adams remains probably the most plausible heir to Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty – who, possibly not coincidentally, are the two most obvious influences here. "Gimme Something Good" is pure Petty – a snarling rocker embroidered with sparkling lead guitar and underpinned by Benmont Tench's organ. It's an appropriate tone-setter – the album is largely comprised of similar mid-tempo chuggers. Poised as these are, Adams is always at his best when he permits and/or admits vulnerability. "Let Go" is an acoustic trill that reminds of Adams' gift for finding the deadpan in the prettiest melody. "My Wrecking Ball" is one of the best things he's ever recorded – a frail acoustic ballad built on Springstonian automotive metaphor ("Nothing much left in the tank/Somewhat this thing still drives") and shrouded in a "Tunnel Of Love" keyboard (another recurring motif). Adams is still not (quite) 40, and middle-age is likely to suit a writer with his gifts for wry reflection: another prodigious golden era is not beyond him. **ANDREW MUELLER**

7/10



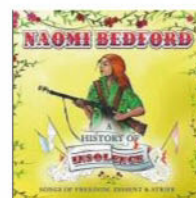
THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

➤ Given that he spent nearly 30 years living in New York, **Woody Guthrie's** output didn't always reflect his time in the city. Late September sees the release of

My Name Is New York, compiled by daughter Nora from Woody's archives. The triple-disc set marries Guthrie songs about his adopted hometown with reminiscences from Pete Seeger and Ramblin' Jack Elliott. Meanwhile, **Lucinda Williams** is readying *Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone*. The first studio double of her career, it features "Compassion", crafted from a poem written by her author/college professor father, Miller Williams. Guests on the album include Tony Joe White, Ian

McLagan, Jakob Dylan and guitarist Bill Frisell. Closer to home, rising Yorkshireman **Serious Sam Barrett** returns with *Anyroad*, a rootsy collection of songs that rattle with the ghosts of Appalachian folk and Southern blues, yet sound emphatically English. It's due in the autumn on YaDig? Records. And though it's not due 'til next year, **Howe Gelb** has been mixing a Giant Sand album in Bristol with John Parish. "We recorded it in Tucson, Brussels and Berlin," Gelb tells *Uncut*. "It marks 30 years since the first album, *Valley Of Rain*." On the live front, be sure to catch ex-Old Crow Medicine Show man **Willie Watson** on his UK jaunt. Kicking off in Bristol on September 3 and ending at London's Borderline, he's touring terrific debut album *Folk Singer Vol.1*.

ROB HUGHES



NAOMI BEDFORD

A History Of Insolence
DUSTY WILLOW

Ancient and modern brew of passionate folk and country

8/10

Subtitled 'Songs Of

Freedom, Dissent & Strife', Bedford's second album is a shrewd mix of traditional songs and airs and thought-provoking storytelling by her partner, The Men They Couldn't Hang's Paul Simmonds. At once plaintive and sensual, vibrant and grave, Bedford's voice is always arresting, befitting such declared influences as Jean Ritchie, Shirley Collins and Hedy West. Highlight is a stirring duet with Justin Currie, "We Are Not The People", reflecting feelings about too much clichéd rock pontificating over the years. It caps an album of unexpected depth and originality.

MICK HOUGHTON



BLONDE REDHEAD

Barragán
ASAWA KURU LLC/KOBALT

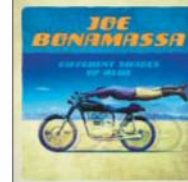
New York aesthetes are rejuvenated by the xx-factor

7/10

Blonde Redhead's journey from art-hardcore to

dreampop seemed to reach a rather bland conclusion with 2010's *Penny Sparkle*. On their ninth album, however, Kazu Makino and the Pace twins have worked out a way to reconcile sophisticated electropop with the minimalist dynamics that made their '90s albums so exciting. Mostly, this appears to involve close study of the xx's first album and Portishead's *Third*; the long, rippling Krautpulse of "Mind To Be Had" is a gorgeous sequel to "The Rip". Still derivative, then ("No More Honey" plays like a parched remix of "I Only Said" by old favourites My Bloody Valentine), but the tense chemistry has been, to some degree, recaptured.

JOHN MULVEY



JOE BONAMASSA

Different Shades Of Blue
PROVOQUE

11th studio album from prolific 21st-Century blues champion

7/10

You can tick off Joe Bonamassa's diverse influences – Hendrix ("Oh Beautiful"), Robert Cray ("Love Ain't A Love Song"), Free ("Never Give All Your Heart") Gary Moore (the title track), Bobby Bland ("So What Would I Do") – and conclude that he's a second-hand stylist rather than an original talent. But that would be harsh. The virtuosic guitar playing is supported by a gritty voice that has steadily grown in authority, his once derivative songwriting has grown more accomplished and the arrangements for horns and keyboards vault the limitations of power-trio blues-rock. Best yet and then some from an artist whose vision continues to expand with every release.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



BUSDRIVER Perfect Hair

BIG DADA

Cali hip-hop maverick's sharp 10th

That Regan Farquhar has released nine albums since the millennium turned is not surprising.

8/10

The alt.rapper's febrile and eccentric style pours out in dense flows that are equal parts poetry, piss-take and socio-political polemic. But if previous titles like *Fear Of A Black Tangent* give a fair idea of his approach, Busdriver is no hip-hop joker. His 10th is another whirlwind of alternative realities and ADHD-styled soundbeds, with alt.rap heavyweights Danny Brown and Aesop Rock among the guests. Rapid-fire delivery often makes catching his drift difficult, but when spaces allow it, as on the hallucinogenic "Upsweep" or pointed "Retirement Ode", Busdriver's wit and wisdom flash through.

SHARON O'CONNELL



MARTIN CARR The Breaks

TAPETE

Classy, confident return from Britpop outsider

That Martin Carr's 'comeback' arrives in

7/10

the slipstream of 20th- anniversary Britpop nostalgia is as accidental as his former band Boo Radleys' hit, "Wake Up": most of *The Breaks*' songs were written – and rejected by labels – some years back. Perhaps they lack the arty flourishes of elder statesman Damon Albarn's solo work, but these bold, brassy tunes serve to remind that it wasn't only about Union Jacks and DMs back then. "The Santa Fe Skyway" delivers a wonderful opening fanfare, "Mountains" recalls The Charlatans at their most winsome, while "Mandy Get Your Mello On" confirms Carr's good humour remains intact.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



JENNIFER CASTLE Pink City

NO QUARTER

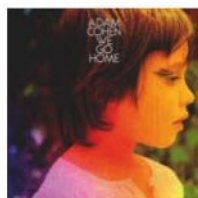
Ravishing solo effort from Doug Paisley associate

At once soulful and faintly medieval, Jennifer Castle

8/10

is a Toronto singer-songwriter who initially seems to fit neatly into a chamber folk tradition. "Working For The Man", with empathetic strings arranged by Owen Pallett, is a tremendous, understated piano drama that stands comparison with the best of Judee Sill and Joanna Newsom. But as her fourth album (the first two were credited to Castlemusic) proves, Castle has considerable range that can also encompass more unadorned folk ("Down River") and warm country-rock rambles ("Sparta"). A finely crafted record, whose artfulness is mediated by informality: check the pivotal clearing of throat on "Sailing Away".

JOHN MULVEY



ADAM COHEN We Go Home

COOKING VINYL

Son of Len takes voyage around his father

7/10

If Adam Cohen began to confront his genetic inheritance on 2011's *Like A Man*, he truly grasps the nettle on the follow-up. Not only was his fifth album recorded at his childhood homes in Hydra and Montreal, it contains references to "Hallelujah" and "taking Manhattan", while the rolling "Fall Apart" begins "They will speak of my father..." The music, too, has a familiar burnished elegance which suits these solid, enjoyably melancholic songs of experience well. Highlights include "What Kind Of Woman", which moves from Tin Pan Alley to Bourbon Street, and the hypnotic, half-rapped prow of "Too Real".

GRAEME THOMSON

HOW TO BUY... BLONDE REDHEAD

NY's evolving international avant-rockers



BLONDE REDHEAD La Mia Vita Violenta

SMELLS LIKE, 1995

Not the first art-rockers to end up in New York wanting

to be the next Sonic Youth, perhaps. But Amedeo and Simone Pace (from Milan, via Montreal and Boston) and Kazu Makino (from Kyoto) fared better than most, as this second album for Steve Shelley's label illustrated. Brittle, sometimes abrasive no-wave, that could also coalesce into great arching anthems like "Violent Life".

7/10



BLONDE REDHEAD Melody Of Certain Damaged Lemons

TOUCH AND GO, 2000

While BR earned hardcore credibility

from Fugazi's Guy Picciotto producing, their fifth set represented a finessing of their avant-rock sound. To pursue the Sonic Youth comparison that dogs them, think of it as their *Experimental Jetset, Trash And No Star*.

8/10



BLONDE REDHEAD Misery Is A Butterfly

4AD, 2004

A four-year hiatus, caused in part by Makino being trampled by a horse, ended with

this filigree sixth album, a further softening of an aesthetic that now chimed elegantly with that of their latest home, 4AD. Where once there was wired austerity, lush chamber arrangements filled out the sound.

7/10

JOHN MULVEY



SHARON CORR The Same Sun

BOBBY JEAN MUSIC

Introspective second solo album from Corr sister

5/10

Teamed with producer Mitchell Froom and Irish

songwriter Don Mescal, Corr has made a definite stylistic departure with her second album. Gone are the trad fiddle lines that helped make The Corrs a multi-million-selling proposition (and which featured on this album's predecessor). Instead, balmy piano-centred introspection ("Thinking About You"), Bacharach chording ("Take A Minute") and a general sense of Corr connecting to her inner Karen Carpenter predominate. It's a suave makeover, but the sameness of the genteel settings and a prosaic worldview, exemplified by the overly sentimental title track, limits the appeal.

GAVIN MARTIN



COUNTING CROWS Somewhere Under Wonderland

CAPITOL

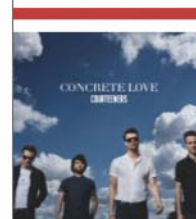
First album of original material in six years

7/10

A live set followed by a covers LP and then another

concert release suggests Adam Duritz and co have been coasting in recent years, but they sound refreshed again here, even if their classy, *Music From Big Pink*-inspired roots-rock has changed little from the default settings established by their brilliant debut *August And Everything After* 20 years ago. Plangent opener "Palisades Park" is built evocatively around piano and trumpet and there are some woozy psych effects on "Scarecrow". But the slide guitars, rolling rhythms and sly, Dylanesque rhymes sung earnestly by Duritz on "Dislocation" and "Elvis Went To Hollywood" return reassuringly to the familiar template.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE COURTEENERS Concrete Love

PIAS

Moz-approved Mancs grow up

What's most striking about The Courteeners' fourth LP

6/10

is that singer-songwriter Liam Fray has dumped the doggedly prosaic vignettes about life as a northern teen in favour of poetic realism with some flair, and that the four are no longer trying to sound like Elbow or Oasis. But it's also blindingly obvious which band they now hold in high esteem. "Small Bones", "International" and (most brazenly) "Beautiful Head" sound like The National, while opener "White Horses" is the sole reminder of a fanbase shared with Kasabian. It's almost a certainty this hooks-stuffed set will follow their other albums into the Top 10, but although The Courteeners are newly mature, they're oddly not yet their own men.

SHARON O'CONNELL



scenario, but there's a full-on rage to "Mother Wolf", co-written with Patrick Leonard, railing against the lies and duplicity of warmongering world leaders ("The words that come out of your mouth disgust me/The thoughts in your heart sicken me").

Were we to ignore the words, the overriding "feel" of the melodies isn't especially far removed from the polite theatricality of Faithfull's last outing, 2011's *Horses And High Heels*, but here Faithfull is at her most lyrically caustic since the pivotal *Broken English* in 1979. Even the love songs have a sinister edge; the lachrymose "Falling Back" (with Anna Calvi) questions past missteps, and "Love More Or Less" (with Tom McRae) picks over the bones of a current but ultimately doomed romance.

But the most striking chapter in this most personal collection of musings is one of two songs contributed by Nick Cave, with whom Faithfull first worked on 2005's *Before The Poison*. "Late Victorian Holocaust" is a spectral ballad about drug addiction that draws on his own and Marianne's (separate)

heroin experiences, but paints a picture of the two of them walking hand-in-hand through a London that alternates between bliss and nightmare.

At a stretch, the song could be read as a companion piece to Lou Reed's "Perfect Day", its delicate travogue finding the protagonists awestruck: "*We were star babies in the dark/Throwing up in Meanwhile Park/Then sleeping in each other's arms/Beyond happy we were, beyond harm.*" There's no doubt Cave could dispatch a handy version of it, but he's clearly tailored the lyric and its London-centric imagery for Faithfull's defiantly dramatic but fatalistic cracked voice.

Much of the album took shape last year following a back injury that kept Faithfull housebound for the best part of six months, during which she was able to focus and prepare a collection she was determined would rely less on covers than previous releases. Nevertheless, her formidable interpretive skills get a workout on three tracks, including a straight-ahead reading of The Everly Brothers' "The Price Of Love" and a smoky drawl through Hoagy Carmichael's "I Get Along Without You Very Well".

Both fit the sombre template of the original songs, while the third cover, Leonard Cohen's "Going Home" is – paradoxically, perhaps, considering its author – the album's frothiest, wittiest component. There's a sly grin to Faithfull's vocal, the sense that she's allowing herself a private joke amid the anger and angst which makes up the rest of the album. Marianne's back on her feet these days, fully recovered, and while reminding us that love is pain, doesn't entirely neglect the funny bone.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Rob Ellis & Dimitri Tikovio, mixed by Flood
Personnel includes: Steve Earle (guitar), Adrian Utley (guitar), Rob Ellis (percussion), Warren Ellis (violin), Ed Harcourt (piano, bass), Jim Scavunos (drums), Tom McRae (guitar), Anna Calvi (backing vocals), Brian Eno (backing vocals)

MARIANNE FAITHFULL

Give My Love To London

DRAMATICO

Recuperating from serious injury, the veteran chanteuse puts her back into one of her most personal records. *By Terry Staunton*



8/10

THE INTRODUCTORY VERSE to the opening title track on Faithfull's first album in three years suggests a misty-eyed romanticism, a valentine to the city the now Paris-based singer called home for so many of her 67 years. Co-writer Steve Earle, who previously

glamorised London on his own GI yarn "Johnny Come Lately", fashions a bouncy, country rhythm, while Marianne sings about dancing along Piccadilly in the moonlight.

It's not long, though, before the narrative takes a cynical turn ("I'll visit all the places/I used to know so well/From Maida Vale to Chelsea/Paradise to Hell"), and the lunar glow gives way to streets lit by the fires of a riot. What starts as loose autobiography becomes a broader, less historical portrait of how Faithfull views the city, setting the tone for a record that checks in on touchstones from the past but more often than not casts a critical eye over the world as a whole.

Earle is just one of several high-profile collaborators, and Faithfull finds another kindred

spirit in Pink Floyd's Roger Waters, whose "Sparrows Will Sing" ponders what a child might think of the damaged planet he'll inherit from the previous generation as he "*tries to decipher the whole of this unholy mess*". It's a gentle, despairing

Q&A

Marianne Faithfull

How did you injure yourself last year?

I was in LA, got up in the middle of night and fell backwards, breaking my sacrum bone in four places. I was laid up for quite a while, and it gave me a lot of time to write – well, to think. I didn't do much writing, but I thought really carefully about what I wanted to do on this record. What do I believe in? What's really important to me? What do I like and what don't I like?

There seems to be a lot of anger on the record. Well, I think anger is good, it's a very creative energy. It drives me to get things done, and is

not nearly as negative as envy or some other emotions. I was determined to do as few covers as possible, and thankfully I had a lot of time to work on my own words because I wasn't able to do much else. It's the most personal album I've ever made.

Did your ongoing relationship with Nick Cave begin by the two of you bonding over your histories of addiction? Not at all! It was a love of, and shared tastes in, music that brought us together. But he could only have written "Late Victorian Holocaust" for me – who else could sing it?! I think it's a masterpiece, it imagines us doing drugs together, which we never did, and it describes a very London junkie scenario. It was never like New York where you're waiting for the man; in London you were running after him.

INTERVIEW: TERRY STAUNTON



COWBELL Skele-ton Soul

DAMAGED GOODS

London duo with soul-pop moves

London two-piece Cowbell – Jack Sandham on guitar and Wednesday

7/10

Lyle on drums and occasional vocals – excel at writing superior party tunes like the '60s girl-band soul outing "Heart On The Line", finger-clicking R&B ditty "Dirt", or freakbeat "Oh Yolande" with organ to the fore. But the pair display a darker side, and while that doesn't always make a natural fit – "The Fear" is about paranoia but feels about as threatening as a banana milkshake – they really hit the right notes with the brilliant "Darkness In Your Heart", a show-stopping ballad crawling with menace that comes over like a cross between Nick Cave and Richard Hawley.

PETER WATTS



CYMBALS EAT GUITARS

Lose

TOUGH LOVE

Emotional third from New York indie rockers Three albums in, Staten Island's Cymbals Eat Guitars have become one

8/10

of indie-rock's best bands: swashbuckling as Modest Mouse, as adept at crushing heartbreak and skyward triumph as Built To Spill. Produced by John Agnello (Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr, Kurt Vile), *Lose* puts the listener in the passenger seat of frontman Joseph D'Agostino's jalopy as he drives furiously in search of the memory of a friend who died too young, strung out on grief and prescription drugs. He's a formidable lyricist, bawling like he's laying into his worst enemy, but hiding bereft Americana ("wind is whipping through the tinsel fixed to the dealership", "Jackson") and gut-punching reminiscences ("XR") within his band's squall.

LAURA SNAPES



DAN'L BOONE

Dan'l Boone

DRAG CITY

Here comes the sound of confusion...

Over the past decade, Neil Michael Hagerty & The Howling Hex have pursued a resolutely

8/10

no-nonsense vision of rock music: tight, hypnotic, disciplined, utilitarian, with just enough everyday surrealism to keep things unpredictable. So it's wild to hear his new group, Dan'l Boone, where Hagerty teams up with, among others, Nate Young of American 'trip metal' noiseniks Wolf Eyes. The short, sharp shock of their debut album contains more sensory confusion than anything since, well, Royal Trux's monolithic 1990 monster-piece *Twin Infinitives*, really: disconnected vox, guitar and electronics, battling against each other, like Hell's own pachinko parlour. It's the ultimate non sequitur.

JON DALE



DELTA SPIRIT Into The Wide

DUALTONE

Californians energised by move to East Coast

Why a band from sun-dappled San Diego would choose to relocate to Brooklyn – arriving shortly

8/10

before Hurricane Sandy in 2012, no less – is beyond me, but the Matt Vasquez-led five-piece appear to have harnessed the storm's earth-shaking power on album No 4. *Into The Wide* opens with "Push It", a ballad, of all things, but it hits like a slo-mo sledgehammer, setting up an album of non-stop roof rattlers and heart-on-sleeve anthems. On the killer cuts "Hold My End Up" and "Patriarch", this underrated band progressively unleash waves of measured ferocity over the turbine drumming of Brandon Young toward payoffs that are staggering in their intensity; young musicians achieving Heartbreakers-like tightness.

BUD SCOPPA

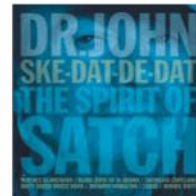
REVELATIONS

Earth's Dylan Carlson on Suffolk faeries and Mark Lanegan...



➤ In spring 2012, *Uncut* joined Earth's Dylan Carlson for a trip to Bentley in rural Suffolk, where the Seattle native was researching folklore of the British Isles – in particular, faeries, several of whom he believed he has sighted on previous visits. Outside Bentley, Carlson explored a meadow once home to Dodnash Priory, today commemorated by a sole "devil stone", which has stood unmoved since the 12th Century. Now, details of our visit have found their way into "Rooks Across The Gates", the climactic track on Earth's new album *Primitive And Deadly*. "That trip was really amazing in terms of the information gathered," recalls Carlson. "It was originally intended as a solo work, a sort of murder ballad folk tune... the details are highly evocative as lyrics." They're sung here by old friend Mark Lanegan, who alongside Rabia Shaheen Qazi of Sub Pop's Rose Windows, supplies the first vocals to be heard on an Earth record since 1996's *Pentastar: In The Style Of Demons*. "I met Mark in 1986 in Olympia," recalls Carlson. "We lived together a couple of different times in Seattle, but never officially worked together – though it was discussed a number of times, things always seemed to get in the way. This time it came together, and I'm pleased as punch about it."

LOUIS PATTISON



DR JOHN Ske-Dat-De-Dat, The Spirit Of Satch

PROPER

"Props for Pops..."

"He's the most famous guy to come out of my neighbourhood," says Dr John of New Orleans legend

6/10

Louis Armstrong, a visitation by whose spirit prompted this tribute. Something clearly got lost in the ether, as the man who unites these 13 tunes (several more associated with other singers) remains in shadow. Satchmo's genial intimacy proves evasive to the Doc's gruffer vocal chops, and of the 1920s jazz revolutionary there is little sign beyond guest horns like Terence Blanchard. Instead, both "Gut Bucket Blues" and standards like "Mack The Knife" get slick big-band arrangements, and visitors Bonnie Raitt and rapper Mike Ladd simply sound irrelevant.

NEIL SPENCER



EARTH Primitive And Deadly

SOUTHERN LORD

Grand full-band return for the Seattle drone-rock pioneer

8/10

The past few years have seen Dylan Carlson extend his brief, bringing his droning guitar stylings to bear on trad folk songs of the British Isles (under the name Drcalsonalbion) and a splendidly craggy score for German-language western *Gold*. *Primitive And Deadly*, though, finds him back at the helm of principal vehicle Earth, purveyors of a gracefully heavy, glacially slow instrumental metal since 1989. The addition of bassist Bill Herzog lends Earth a gnarliness absent in recent folk-inflected outings, while "I See A Serpent Coming" and "Rooks Across The Gates" host old compadre Mark Lanegan, who brings gravelly larynx to bear on some of his most exalted lyrics since Screaming Trees' *Dust*.

LOUIS PATTISON



ELECTRIC YOUTH

Innerworld

SECRETLY CANADIAN

Drive duo's soppy electropop debut LP

Toronto minnows

Electric Youth had a YouTube smash with

6/10

"A Real Hero" in 2011 thanks to its inclusion on the *Drive* soundtrack, but three years later the pair's overdue debut album – a lightweight synthpop set not without charm – could do with a Ryan Gosling to fight its corner. Much like "A Real Hero", most of producer Austin Garrick's *Innerworld* is a familiar parade of smouldering '80s synths and bittersweet melody, shaded in pastels by the wholesome teen-dream fantasies of vocalist Bronwyn Griffin. There's plenty to admire – not least "Without You" and "Innocence" – but you sense their moment may have passed.

PIERS MARTIN



FADED PAPER FIGURES

Relics

SHORTHAND

Part time clever-clogs electropoppers' frosty fourth

7/10

A medical doctor, a Yale professor, and a successful commercial music writer, it's no great wonder that hybrid-indie kids Faded Paper Pictures never chased that dream of being as big as The Postal Service that hard. Masters of their own small niche, nonetheless, the Californian threesome's fourth album perfects their brand of 'why-the-long-face' boy-girl electropop. Essentially, The Shins if they had loved New Order rather than The Cure, R John Williams takes the sullen lead on "What You See", while Heather Alden sparks a one-woman Delgados revival on the anguished "Spare Me". All nice, but no urgent reason to give up the day jobs.

JIM WIRTH



FALTY DL

In The Wild

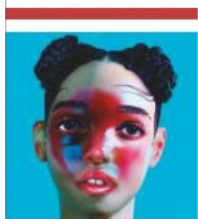
NINJA TUNE

Brooklyn beatsmith's mixed bag

6/10

FaltyDL's Drew Lustman is a restless American producer who's spent the last few years boshing out upfront UK garage and funky house for some of London's hippest dance labels. He tends to struggle to make a coherent statement on his albums, however, and *In The Wild* is no exception, with Lustman wandering tipsily between a variety of sophisticated styles – dinner jazz, drum'n'bass, tropicália – with little concern for flow. There are several enchanting moments here – not least the Latin shimmer of "Dos Gardenias" and "Some Jazz Shit"'s frisky strut – but the overall impression is of a record being padded out with hard-drive off-cuts.

PIERS MARTIN



FKA TWIGS

LP1

YOUNG TURKS

Cybernetic diva's compelling debut

8/10

FKA Twigs – 26-year-old singer and dancer Tahliah Barnett, from Cheltenham but based in London – has already made quite an impression with two EPs of ethereal R&B, and now *LP1*, a set of soulful sci-fi ballads as weird, futuristic and sexy as her own highly stylised image, suggests she's on course to become a very modern pop star. Over hallucinatory electronica and pixelated rhythms, some tracks fleshed out by on-point producers Arca and Clams Casino, Barnett cuts a playful figure. "My thighs are apart for when you're ready to breathe in", she sings on "Two Weeks". Despite the slick presentation, *LP1* is a riveting listen.

PIERS MARTIN



THE FLIES

Pleasure Yourself

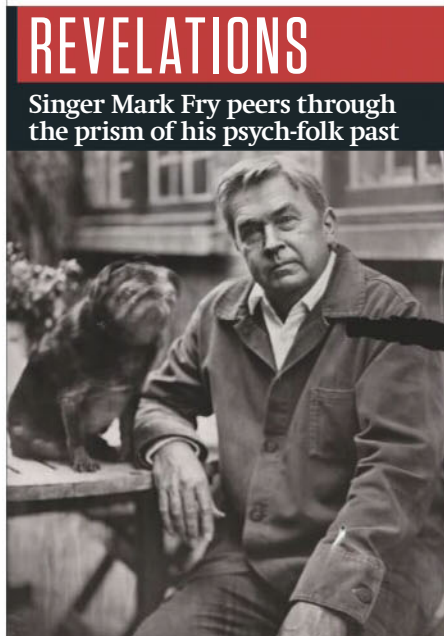
LIBRARY MUSIC RECORDINGS

Second album from atmospheric Bristol veterans

8/10

This trio have roots in Startled Insects, a 30-year-old post-punk collective who've worked closely with Massive Attack and written for many film and TV soundtracks. The Flies is a poppier project which takes Bob Locke and Tim Norfolk's clever three-minute soundscapes and fronts them with Sean Cook's hushed croon. "One Day My Baby Will Leave You" explores Phil Spector's heartbroken gothic pop; "The Usual Unusual" takes an ambient soundscape and gives it a T.Rex stomp; other tracks negotiate the boundaries between VU drones and Walker Brothers-style balladry. What could be empty pastiche is lifted by some detailed production and elegant orchestrations.

JOHN LEWIS



REVELATIONS

Singer Mark Fry peers through the prism of his psych-folk past

➤ "It was so long ago now that it's like looking through a prism," sighs English singer-songwriter Mark Fry, thinking back to his days in Italy in the '70s, where he recorded his psych-folk classic, *Dreaming Of Alice*. "I found myself living in a beautiful 17th-Century palace in the middle of Florence, where I wrote most of the songs... I would ride down the autostrada to Rome with my guitar strapped to the back of my Ducati and have to spend days tuning it up again."

It may have gone unnoticed in its time, but *Alice* is a heavy deal among heads now, with original copies going for up to £2,500. After its release, Fry went traveling, eventually heading off to West Africa – "one of the highlights was playing for a Tuareg chief and his entourage on the banks of the Niger under a full moon," he recalls – experiences which fed into recent song "River Kings". Fry moves between visual art and music, but the latter still carries narrative compulsion for him: "It's about creating a short story. A song can be about anything. It's really about trying to open windows in my imagination and walk through them."

JON DALE



FLOWERS

Do What You Want To, It's What You Should Do

FORTUNA POPI

6/10

Dreamy pop songs, looking for an edge

For their debut album, London gang Flowers signed up Bernard Butler as producer. While he may be best known these days for his work on Duffy's first album, Butler feels more at home here, working with a trio trying to transcend their indie roots and write intimately spacey pop. It works, in fits and starts, the more naked the songs, the better: the short, bittersweet "If I Tell You" peels things back to just guitar and voice, Rachel Kennedy's voice nestling between the sweetest of strums. Overall, though, there's a little too much preciousness here: bring back those rough edges!

JON DALE



THE FREE FALL BAND

The Münster Sights

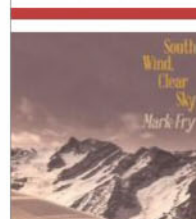
EL SEGELL DEL PRIMAVERA

Strong second album from frisky Spanish five-piece

7/10

The horn-hued chamber pop of *The Münster Sights* betrays little of The Free Fall Band's Spanish heritage, with the quintet instead inspired by classic Northern European bittersweet sounds like The Zombies or The Smiths allied to the droll wit of a Jens Lekman or Neil Hannon. The wonderful "Oh, What An Awkward Day" and whimsical "I Want To Know" are fine examples of an album that is impish and adventurous throughout, and you can also detect the playful hand of producer Darren Hayman, particularly on the rollicking "Fontana" or the winning "Lonesome Cowboy, Solitary Peggy Sue", part country jig/part Weezer punk-pop anthem.

PETER WATTS



MARK FRY

South Wind, Clear Sky

SECOND LANGUAGE

Quiet, shivering folk songs, set in amber

7/10

Another understated lifer, much like Bill Fay, Vashti Bunyan and Linda Perhacs, it took Epping's own Mark Fry 35 years to follow up his classic 1972 psych-folk album, *Dreaming With Alice* (released, naturally, in Italy only). *South Wind, Clear Sky* is his third album since his return, and like its predecessors – particularly the gorgeous *I Lived In Trees*, his collaboration with Plinth and Directorsound – it's autumnal and graceful: perhaps a little too much so at times, as *South Wind, Clear Sky* risks an overly sophisticated, genteel chamber-folk lassitude. But understated songs such as "Aeroplanes" and "River Kings" are gorgeous as ever.

JON DALE



GAZELLE TWIN **Unflesh**

ANTI-GHOST MOON RAY

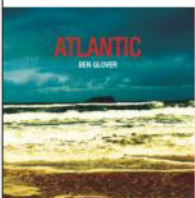
Dark masterpiece from the Francis Bacon of carnal gothtronica

Brighton-based Elizabeth Bernholz deserves to be a cult star on a par with

8/10

Fever Ray, Portishead or PJ Harvey. These are just a few musical parallels suggested by her second album, a moody masterpiece of surrealist artwork, body-horror lyrics and noir-ish artisan electronica. The half-submerged spectral moans and crafted spookstep textures of "Good Death" and "I Feel Blood" are actually Bernholz showing her tender side. But she also does carnal menace with lethal precision, from the Prince-meets-Prodigy blast of "Guts" to the torrid S&M punishment beats of "Exorcise". This is a rich, dark and gorgeous album, bristling with sonic challenge and literary depth.

STEPHEN DALTON



BEN GLOVER **Atlantic**

CARPE VITA CREATIVE

Former law student makes compelling Deep South-Irish connection

8/10

County Antrim-raised and Nashville resident since 2009, Ben Glover makes his fifth album a bringing-it-all-back-home beauty. Recorded on the Donegal coast it looks to, and finds, inspiration in the land beyond the great divide of the album title. From the lucid rumination of "Oh My Soul" (co-written with Mary Gauthier) to the pedal steel wanderlust of "True Love's Breaking My Heart", themes of redemption, loss and pain loom large. Glover's fully rounded artistry is equally at home channeling The Pogues on table-thumping exile return "Sing A Song Boys", as purveying Townes Van Zandt gothic on the Gretchen Peters duet, "Blackbirds".

GAVIN MARTIN



GRUMBLING FUR **Preternaturals**

QUIETUS PHONOGRAPHIC CORPORATION

Luminous third effort from psych-pop duo

The latest album from Daniel O'Sullivan and

7/10

Alexander Tucker – the follow-up to last year's highly praised *Glymmaestra* – finds the London pair refining their avant-pop sound with clear confidence and a keen eye for detail. Flirting with folk and electro-pop, *Preternaturals* nevertheless refuses to nail its colours to either mast, instead existing in a sphere somewhere in between. "Lightinsisters" is a perfect marriage of earthy vocals and clinical grooves, while the sublime "All The Rays" draws a line between Kraftwerk and Depeche Mode. Elsewhere, curious samples and effects lend the proceedings a satisfying air of oddness.

FIONA STURGES



GUT UND IRMLER **500 Meter**

TAPETE

Cosmic doodling from the German old guard

7/10

Between them, Faust's organist Jochen Irmrler and Berlin post-punk collagist Gudrun Gut have operated at the frayed edge of German music for some 80 years, yet the impish spirit of this freestyle collaboration – their first – suggests they've barely got started. While Gut is known for her work with loops and edits, Irmrler is guided by Krautrock's impulse to explore, and so here Gut's cut-and-paste technique brings a sense of rhythm and order to Irmrler's improvised meandering. *500 Meter* takes time to find its feet, but by "Noah" and "Auf Und Ab" the scuffed, dubby groove they carve proves fairly irresistible.

PIERS MARTIN



HALF JAPANESE **Overjoyed**

JOYFUL NOISE

American primitivists trip delight fantastic

Not a bit Japanese, Maryland brothers Jad and David Fair took the artless abandon of Jonathan

7/10

Richman to its logical conclusion with 1980's *Half Gentlemen/Not Beasts* – the six-sided *Trout Mask Replica* of twee. Giddy, ecstatic and blissfully uninhibited as ever, *Overjoyed* – produced by Deerhoof's John Dieterich – is the first Half Japanese outing since 2001. Anti-musicianship, but not anti-melody, "Our Love" and "Tiger Eyes" are sterling additions to Jad Fair's loved-up canon, while the close-mic'd mental static of "Do It Nation" reveals something of the beast within. A little over-joyous for most, but a Fair achievement regardless.

JIM WIRTH



IMOGEN HEAP **Sparks**

MEGAPHONIC RECORDS

Innovative concept album from Essex's answer to Bill Gates

This Grammy-winning singer-songwriter's trailblazing reputation

7/10

owes as much to her skills in harnessing technology as her musical output. Heap's fourth LP takes these skills up a notch, inspired as it is by the aural submissions of fans, friends and strangers, from the striking of a match on "Lifeline" to the sounds of Hangzhou skateboarders in "Xizi She Knows", along with a pair of hi-tech gloves that allows its wearer to create music through hand gestures. All of which adds up to a somewhat disjointed but nonetheless fascinating work that is full to bursting with ambition and heart.

FIONA STURGES



KIM HIORTHØY **Dogs**

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

Interdisciplinary Norwegian hones in on the piano

Hiorthøy is best known for his art and graphic design which graces all

6/10

of the releases by Norwegian label Rune Grammofon, but he's also released numerous records of bucolic but often anxious electronica. Here he nicely pares back his palette to solo piano, overlaid with the occasional creak of electronics, the tentative patter of rhythm and, most beautifully, barely perceptible recordings of human chatter bursting quietly into the songs' corners. The piano is naïve and teeters on underwritten, but there are some passages that creep towards the modestly anthemic – and are certainly remixable into actual house music.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



INSPIRAL CARPETS **Inspiral Carpets**

CHERRY RED

Cutting a new rug two decades on

From the opening rush of "Monochrome",

7/10

underpinned by Clint Boon's spicily psychedelic organ, it initially seems as if nothing much has changed in the Inspiral Carpets' world since their last album, *Devil Hopping*, 20 years ago. The major change is the return of original singer Stephen Holt, following the 2011 departure of Tom Hingley, adding a poppier croon to "A To Z Of My Heart" and "Flying Like A Bird". As reassuringly familiar as it all sounds, the high point comes courtesy of an interloper, John Cooper Clarke shoe-horning suitably rant-like poetry into the six-minute garage groove of "Let You Down".

TERRY STAUNTON



INTERPOL **El Pintor**

SOFT LIMIT

Still black of wardrobe and sound on fifth LP

More than a decade on from their striking debut,

7/10

Turn On The Bright Lights, Interpol have perhaps been encouraged by its recent reissue to retrench in their classic sound. On their fifth album, it's back to icy, slightly gothic basics: Daniel Kessler's guitar providing a bed upon which Paul Banks' vocals uneasily lie – their songs ever a place where romance is undone by circumstance. "My Desire" and the fine "Tidal Wave" reach new heights of anxiety: the riffs now have a jazzy circuitousness to them, but the supple rhythm section controls things nicely: both result in lunatic climaxes.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



HOLLY JOHNSON
Europa
PLEASUREDOME

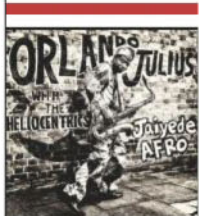
Frankie frontman's guest-star-studded return

7/10

Johnson's prolonged break – it's 15 years since his last

solo LP, time spent studying art and exhibiting his paintings – has left him in refreshed and expansive form. Working with writer-producer Mark Ralph (Hot Chip, Franz Ferdinand), this electronica-centred return focuses on the power of love, unrequited on the swirling, tear-stained "So Much It Hurts" and the tsunami of heart-break that is "Lonesome Town". But Johnson's surging positivity gets full vent on the Phil Manzanera-featuring "Dancing With No Fear" and the endorphin pump of "Heaven's Eyes". The grandiloquent title track, a long-in-gestation hook-up with Vangelis, fulfills the conceit with a backward glance at Bowie's motorik '70s.

GAVIN MARTIN



ORLANDO JULIUS WITH THE HELIOCENTRICS
Jaiyede Afro
STRUT

Crate-digging phenomenon alive and kicking 50 years on

8/10

Long before Fela Kuti, Julius was pioneering the fusion of Nigerian rhythms and US funk that came to be known as Afrobeat. His classic 1966 album *Super Afro Soul* made him a star in Africa but was not released internationally until 2000. Most assumed he was long dead, but at seventysomething it turns out he's in thrillingly rude health on an audacious, psyched-up set of dubby, contemporary Afrobeat cut in London last year with world-jazz-funk collective The Heliocentrics. Reworking earlier songs beside new material and a cover of James Brown's "In The Middle", it's a stunning comeback that whets the appetite for an autumn tour.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



KARMA TO BURN
Arch Stanton
FABA

Reassuringly familiar stoner rock from veteran Virginians

6/10

This West Virginia outfit have been churning

out high-quality instrumental stoner rock since 1997, and – in the best and worst ways – it all kinda sounds the same: grinding guitar riffs are played in unison with a stabbing bass, while a drummer flails entertainingly behind them. This is their sixth album and, as is customary, all the tracks are numbered in the order that they were written. "57" is a galloping, hard-swinging, episodic groove, "53" and "55" are a tangle of Black Sabbath devil chords and Nirvana-style swinging drums, while "54" sounds like Status Quo morphing into Mogwai.

JOHN LEWIS



ALLY KERR
Viva Melodia
MUCH OBLIGED

Quietly confident third album from Glasgow pop-folkie

8/10

In the 10 years since his debut long-player, *Calling Out To You*,

singer-songwriter Ally Kerr must have grown used to comparisons with Simon and Garfunkel and Belle And Sebastian. No change here – the sound is defined by the marshmallow sweetness of his voice, and the fluffy melodies which mask a bleak worldview with wisps of cinematic wistfulness. So while there is a bit of Paul Simon on the opening "Everything I've Learned I Have Forgotten", there is no denying the deeper sadness that pervades "5 am" or the emotional resilience of "The Bitter Part", which hints, quietly, at Ennio Morricone.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

REVELATIONS

ORLANDO JULIUS invents Afrobeat, and gives Fela his start



► "I started out playing highlife, and was the first to modernise it with rock, jazz and R'n'B," says Orlando Julius. "It was Afrobeat but my record company named it Afro-soul."

The sound was a great influence on the young Fela Kuti, recently returned to Nigeria after studying in London. "Fela came to my club every week and when he formed his own band in 1964, I gave him four members of my group to get him started."

Julius became a star with local hits such as 1964's "Ijo Soul," a song that bears a striking similarity to James Brown's mighty 1965 hit "I Got You (I Feel Good)": "When he came to Nigeria, I gave him my LP. We liked and copied each other. Nobody sued."

By 1974, Julius had relocated to America, where he recorded with Hugh Masekela, Lamont Dozier and The Crusaders. He eventually returned to Nigeria in 1998 and watched with astonishment as reissues of his 1960s recordings found a new international cult following. "People want to hear my oldies but we've refreshed them," he says of his latest recording with The Heliocentrics. "I'm doing what makes me happy. That's the secret of longevity."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE KOOKS
Listen
VIRGIN/EMI

Ungainly restyling for Brighton-bred rockers' derivative fourth outing

5/10

The Kooks have made new direction a career

speciality but this latest borders on the derisory. Frontman Luke Pritchard shares production duties with young rap newcomer Inflo, the click tracks and rhythm loops turning a band who started life as Libertines lite into a pallid, Brit Maroon 5. With the focus firmly on Pritchard, he's exposed at his most unctuous and toe-curling on "See Me Now". Guitarist Hugh Harris can still finesse a scintillating riff ("Sweet Emotion"), but derivative would-be hipster anthems with hip-hop bolt-ons "Around Town" and "It Was London" suggest a band aware that their time has come, and gone.

GAVIN MARTIN



LARKIN POE
Kin
RH MUSIC

Punchy debut from bluesy sister act

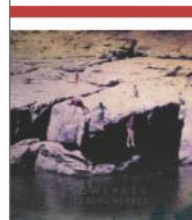
Rebecca and Megan Lovell, distant

6/10

descendants of Edgar Allan Poe, started

out as two-thirds of a bluegrass trio, but their full-length debut (they released a collaborative album with Norwegian singer-songwriter Thom Hell last year) is a somewhat derivative blues-rock affair, dominated by a sinewy blend of lap steel, electric guitar riffs, blunt rhythm and their tightly knit vocal harmonies. "Jailbreak" is a meaty glam stomp which nods to *El Camino*-era Black Keys, "Dandelion" is a swampy strut, and elsewhere there are echoes of The Pierces, 1980s Fleetwood Mac, Suzi Quatro and Sugarland. Accomplished rather than inspired, it's a fun, energetic ride nonetheless.

GRAEME THOMSON



LOWLAKES
Iceberg Nerves
KUNSTHAUS/CARGO

Dense prog-rock from Alice Springs debutants

6/10

While many of the bands currently coming out of Australia favour a garage/

slacker rock aesthetic, Alice Springs four-piece Lowlakes prefer to take their inspiration from proggy elements, channelling everything from Pink Floyd to Mike Oldfield, and constantly eyeing the big picture. Debut album *Iceberg Nerves* is a solidly written and well-crafted work, filled with shimmering shoegaze tracks like the alien "Fauna", the gothic title track or the ambitious "Belle". Atmosphere is everything for songwriter Tom Snowdon, and at times it can become a little cloying, making more melodic interventions like "Bigblood" and the percussive "Newborn" particularly welcome.

PETER WATTS

SHOVELS & ROPE

Swimmin' Time

DUALTONE

Confident confirmation that *O' Be Joyful* was no fluke.

By Andrew Mueller



7/10

CONFRONTED WITH THE bewildering heritage of country music, there's always a temptation to pretend that there was a cut-off point, by which everything worth singing had been sung, beyond which little worth being influenced by

was produced. The artwork of *Swimmin' Time* places Shovels & Rope's end times precisely. The lyric sheet is wrapped in sepia stills of flooded American cities and towns in Shovels & Rope's native Carolinas, one captioned April 1963.

The inner sleeve shows Shovels & Rope's Michael Trent and Cary Ann Hearst adrift in a rowboat, again in black and white, looking like refugees from some mythical shipwreck, soon to be immortalised in a 70-verse ballad by Henry Clay Work – as well as from any trappings of modernity. Another datestamp appears in the closing track, "Thresher", a bleak, stately hymn to the US Navy submarine of the same name, which sank with all aboard in what was clearly the bad month of April 1963 (and was previously commemorated in song by Phil Ochs).

Shovels & Rope, it seems safe to assume, recorded *Swimmin' Time* utterly unconcerned by the prospect of suggestions that the album is something of a period piece. The only question, then, is whether or not *Swimmin' Time* – the apostrophe, we may be sure, is intended as another harbinger of down-home authenticity – is a convincing and beguiling period piece. The answer is – a qualified – yes. Shovels & Rope largely manage that rare and difficult balancing feat of honouring the heritage to which they've subscribed without becoming piously curatorial. At its best, *Swimmin' Time* is a warm, giddy, rumbustious hoot, whose relative disdain for the last half-century or so sounds much more like correct aesthetic judgement than any fear of the present.

It all gets very Old Testament as early as the opening track. "The Devil Is All Around" presents initially as a solemn hymn over a portentous organ drone – which, deliberately or otherwise, cannot but evoke the beginning of The Louvin Brothers' 1958 gothic classic *Satan Is Real*. Shovels & Rope, however, swiftly shift up a couple of gears from the Louvins' abject pleading into something strangely celebratory, an incongruous frolic bequeathing an image of subjection that might have fallen from the pen of Surfer Rosa-era Black Francis ("When the Devil is all around/And got you crawling on the ground/On your hands and your knees with an apple in your mouth").

This early statement that Shovels & Rope see little need to budge from the template established on last year's splendid breakthrough album *O' Be Joyful*. *Swimmin' Time* is largely comprised of similar stomping country gospel, from the insistent "Bridge On Fire", which glories in that Gram/Emmylou trick



SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Our House studios and "on the open highway"

Produced by: Michael Trent

Personnel: Michael Trent and Cary Ann Hearst (all instruments and voices), Nathan Koci (horns)

of turning up the female harmony a little louder than the male lead, to the bitterly hilarious devotional duet "Pinned", to the finger-snapping silliness of "Fish Assassin", which recalls The White Stripes at their more whimsical.

The signature combination of upbeat music and somewhat gruesome lyrical themes works so well for Shovels & Rope that a few leaks spring when they commit themselves to a dive to the depths. The Louisiana funeral dirge of "Ohio" doesn't quite come off – a shame, as the couplet "When I lined up to talk to God/I kinda didn't like the looks of the firing squad" deserved better. The oblique murder ballad

"Evil" has commendable ambitions of resembling Tom Waits backed by 16 Horsepower, but would have benefited from the counter-intuitive light touch that Shovels & Rope

bring so deftly to bear on similarly themed material elsewhere.

At their best, though, Shovels & Rope are a joy, a treasurable combination of DIY musical virtuosity and a rare gift for wry storytelling. When someone starts a song – and they do – with the lines "Mary Ann was a waitress at the circus/Dan was a writer for the Delaware Locale Observer", you'd be a fool not to be interested in what happens next.

Q&A

Shovels & Rope

Give or take the horns on a few tracks, how important is it to you to keep the music down to what the two of you can play?

Neither of us are virtuosos at any instruments. When we record it's more about the personality than technique. In the studio we give ourselves the freedom to include whatever sound we hear that suits the song even if we have to bring someone in to do something we can't (like play brass). In a live setting we pretty much have to depend on what we can play to get the job done.

How difficult is to separate the creative relationship from the personal one? It's all we've known so it's really not a big deal for us. We like each other and communicate well. Plenty of married folks run mom-and-pop businesses. Ours just happens to be a little more fun.

It's hard to miss a certain aquatic motif recurring throughout *Swimmin' Time* – was that deliberate? It became clear that there were variations of the underlying theme as we assembled the song lists for possible record cuts. We just surrendered to the damn thing. 'Oh, look dear! They are mostly all about water! Well, that will do I suppose. How 'bout we call it *Swimmin' Time*?!" INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER



**PAUL
MCLINDEN**
Head Happy
ONEINCHPUNCH

Full-length debut from highly touted Scots troubadour
7/10 Championed by such diverse radio DJs as Don

Letts, Lauren Laverne and Frank Skinner, Glaswegian singer-songwriter McLinden mines a seam of winsome and melodic pop that occasionally recalls the early Postcard releases of his home town. It's especially evident on the whisper and strum of "Out Of Sight" and the sparse jangle of "Green Eyed Monster", like lost pages from Roddy Frame's teenage scrapbook. A classically trained violinist with the Scottish National Orchestra, McLinden plays every instrument heard on the record, genre-hopping from the Velvets-like sneer of "Cheer Up" to the sun-dappled pop of the title track.

TERRY STAUNTON



**MARCONI
UNION**
Weightless
(Ambient Transmissions Vol 2)
JUST MUSIC

8/10 Exactly what it says on the tin

Those finding ambient music too aimless will revel in this Manchester trio's seventh release. Two years after its opener was commissioned by Radox and conveniently declared "the most relaxing tune ever" by unidentified 'scientists', they've delivered five further, equally calming pieces worthy of men once asked to remaster Eno's back catalogue. Comparable to – but less twitchy than – Boards Of Canada, and more melodic than Biosphere, these somnolent, balmy tunes may drift, but there's enough structure in their hypnotic repetition, understated rhythms and padded basslines to engage the mind, as well as soundtrack a hot bath.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



MOIRÉ
Shelter
WERKDISCS

Debut from Actress-anointed techno talent

8/10

As garage, grime, techno and dubstep all converge on a wonderfully plural 'UK bass' sound, this country continues to produce moody and rich dance music that makes Berlin sound hopelessly straightjacketed. A case in point is Moiré's debut. There's ghetto-house vocals on "Dali House", but the rest throbs with arid delay; "Infinity Shadow" has the cheesy fake organs of deep house, but clanks with the industry of Andy Stott's techno; "Stars" lifts the reversed female vocals of Orbital and, latterly, Daniel Avery, wed to a tight disco-house loop. It may not quite reach the phantasmagoria of his early champion Actress, but this is a serious talent.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



**MUSIC
GO MUSIC**
Impressions
THOUSAND TONGUES

Björn this way; Los Angeles enigmas get the ABBA habit
7/10 The stretch-nylon fetish alter ego of Secretly

Canadian exoticists Bodies Of Water, Music Go Music's second outing is another beautifully weighted homage to ABBA, circa "Voulez-Vous". Blissful *Pebble Mill At One* disco on "People All Over The World"; ominous *Chess* psychodrama on "Part Of Me"; 'Gala Bell' may not quite conjure up the Valkyrie angst of Agnetha Fältskog in her doomy pomp, but – pitched somewhere between Sarah Brightman's "I Lost My Heart To A Starship Trooper" and Andrea True Connection's "More More More" – she provides a pleasantly nutrasweet alternative. *Douze points*, for effort at least.

JIM WIRTH



MUTUAL BENEFIT
Cowboy's Prayer EP
OTHER MUSIC

Reissue of 2011 EP proves winsome capitalisation on debut's unexpected success

6/10

Following Fleet Foxes' 2008 debut and Mumford & Sons' *Sigh No More*, the prevailing wind in alt.folk only got windier, keener to act like it had swept in from a civil war battlefield. Bucking the trend are Mutual Benefit, whose 2013 debut, *Love's Crushing Diamond*, proved a refreshingly intimate take on the genre, weaving wind chimes, banjo, kids' toys and a preciously creaky vocal into one of 2014's more quietly profound records. Newly reissued, 2011's "Cowboy's Prayer" is a sketchier little suite that traces a road trip, full of awed observations and magical sounds: the confluence of a piercing synth whistle and deep cello on "Passenger", the title track's pixelated river burble.

LAURA SNAPES



**MY BRIGHTEST
DIAMOND**
This Is My Hand

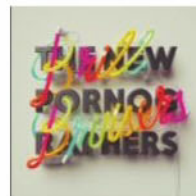
ASTHMATIC KITTY

Bold and idiosyncratic art-rock from Detroit-based singer

8/10

Former frontwoman for AWeY, and known for providing backing vocals for Sufjan Stevens, The National and David Byrne, Shara Worden (aka My Brightest Diamond), has, over the past seven years, built a name for herself as a solo artist of rare versatility and invention. Her fourth full-length album effectively showcases the breadth of her sound, from the marching band intro on "Pressure" to the corrosive guitar line on "I Am Not The Bad Guy", and provides a terrific framework for her semi-operatic vocals that are a little bit Liz Green and a little bit Natasha Khan, but mostly just her own.

FIONA STURGES



**THE NEW
PORNOGRAPHERS**
Brill Bruisers
MATADOR

AC Newman makes good on his promise of a "sparklier and faster" LP
8/10 The winking title of the Canuck indie ensemble's

sixth refers less to a bygone era of pop formalism than to the cult of cerebral craftsmanship, aggressively attacked. Once again making the most of his cast of all-star collaborators, AC Newman has fashioned a crisp collection of tart, hard-candy powerpop confections like Dan Bejar's pulsing "Born With A Sound", featuring scintillating dual vocal by fellow Vancouverite Amber Webber (Black Mountain), and elaborate chamber-pop set pieces like the Neko Case/Kathryn Calder duet "Champions Of Red Wine". The music is unapologetically optimistic in its architectural intricacy, like the Arcade Fire songbook interpreted by the cast of *Glee*.

BUD SCOPPA



KAREN O
Crush Songs
CULT

Defiantly lo-fi curios from Yeah Yeah Yeahs star's personal archive
6/10 Reviewing Karen O's debut solo LP feels like judging someone's private diary.

These 15 unfettered songs were written in 2006/7 as part of "an ever continuing love crusade," as she puts it, and recorded under cover of night. They rarely last two minutes and are so primitively arranged (acoustic guitar and the odd perc/synth effect – demos, essentially) and recorded, they make K Records' catalogue sound robust. It's for fans only, but that's where *Crush Songs*' power lies: O shelves her extroverted side and uses her indoor voice to sing of co-dependence ("Rapt"), distance ("NYC Baby") and pleasing yourself ("Body"), offering a hand in the dark for those to whom she represents an emotional talisman.

LAURA SNAPES



**CHRISTOPHER
OWENS**
A New Testament

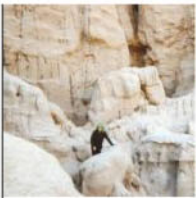
TURNSTILE

Beware the indie singer in a cowboy hat

4/10

The reason so many solo careers falter is that there's no longer anyone around to quash indulgences like this. Following his dabble with medieval folk on last year's *Lysandre*, the former Girls frontman has now made his country gospel album, complete with gratuitous pedal steel and vague entreaties to the Lord. Owens has never been afraid to bare his soul on record, using his lyrics to come to terms with his troubled past, but here those stories are slathered in such clichéd schmaltz that it's hard to empathise. Gorgeously restrained final track "I Just Can't Live Without You (But I'm Still Alive)" shows what this album could have been without the rhinestone.

SAM RICHARDS



PC WORSHIP

Social Rust

NORTHERN SPY/DULL TOOLS

Heavy-rocking New York collective will make your ears bleed

Brooklyn's PC Worship trade in the sort of invigorating, atmospheric

8/10

sludge that makes the head spin but does little for the nerves. This is their sixth (at least) album since 2009, and it's a scuzzy Swans-like behemoth, unsettling from the off with "Odd", all screams, drills and chugging Stooges beat that sounds like the worst trip to a dentist since *Marathon Man*. Other than acoustic mood-breaker "Baby In The Backroom", the tone remains ominous throughout – even the unexpectedly groovy "Rust" sounds like a Satanic liturgy while "Paper Song (Dig)" is a wickedly exhausting dirge and "Behind The Picture" a genuine ear bleeder.

PETER WATTS



PERE UBU

Carnival Of Souls

FIRE

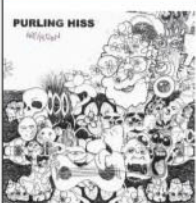
Punky beatniks send in the clowns to thrilling effect

"A complex sensual response to living in a

8/10

world overrun by monkeys and strippers who tickle your ears," according to a typically cryptic communiqué, the Ohio bailing men's 16th studio album stays true to their vision of Raymond Chandler-style art-noise. "Golden Surf II" is a thrilling proto-punk lap of honour, with the customary *Most Haunted* spook tingle on "Bus Station" and "Carnival" lent an oddly Van der Graaf Generator pallor with the addition of a Dixieland-loving clarinetist-singer (Darryl Boon) that frontman David Thomas found on the off-chance, playing in a pub in Hove. Déjà 'Bu, but a thrill worth experiencing again.

JIM WIRTH



PURLING HISS

Weiridon

DRAG CITY

Prolific mates of War On Drugs tighten up

Purling Hiss are back round again just a year

7/10

after their last album, *Water On Mars* – but whereas that was full of gigantic scuzzy riffs and psychedelic noise, this is quicker, sleeker and punkier. It's full of singsong melodies delivered pleasingly flat, and on "Sundance Saloon Boogie", there's Parquet Courts' sense of dinkiness and wit (the latter via a terrible English accent). There's also a couple of gloomy acoustic numbers, utterly offset by the album's bookends, a pair of uplifting rockers with brilliant solos that move with the directionless intent of the professional slacker – you can hear a tinge of their friend, Kurt Vile.

BEN BEAUMONT-THOMAS



ROYAL BLOOD

Royal Blood

WARNER BROS

Guitar-less duo's gargantuan first

They seem to have sprung from nowhere (in fact, near Brighton) and been hurled into the spotlight almost

8/10

overnight, but Royal Blood spent a year writing songs and playing to half-empty venues before winning props from Jimmy Page and Arctic Monkeys. It's easy to see why heads have been turned – theirs is a thrillingly meaty racket, favouring distortion and high-contrast dynamics and stuffed with vicious bass riffs and blues-rock grooves. They're clearly admirers of QOTSA, The Black Keys and Jack White ("Ten Tonne Skeleton" leans on The Dead Weather's "I Cut Like A Buffalo", and they've jokingly called themselves "The Black Stripes"), but to dismiss the pair as copyists denies their songs' precision-tooled impact and exhilarating power.

SHARON O'CONNELL

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Royal Blood



► "Being in a two-piece is something we never intended," declares Royal Blood's singer and bassist, Mike Kerr. "It's the same reason Nirvana 'decided' to be a three-piece: a combination of friendship and music that works – it's not to be messed with." Kerr's confidence is justified. He and drummer Ben Thatcher have been playing together as RB only since late 2012, but their blowtorched alt.blues rock has already won them both high-profile fans in Arctic Monkeys (who they supported at two massive London shows in May) and comparisons to The White Stripes and The Black Keys. Of that, Kerr says, "Fortunately, we only seem to get compared to bands and musicians we love. Their music inspired me, so I'm fully aware that those influences will bleed through what I do." His opting for bass, rather than the guitar, was just as accidental. Early on, Kerr once fronted up for some session work, minus experience. "I just blagged the whole session," he admits. "From then on, I didn't put the bass down and began experimenting more with amps, drugs and distortion. I was listening to lots of early Muse, Hendrix and Led Zeppelin. Before I knew it, my bedroom was a riff laboratory."

SHARON O'CONNELL



RUSTIE

Green Language

WARP

Scottish electronic producer cranks up the super-saturated euphoria on second LP

A digital maximalist with a wide-open sound,

8/10

Glasgow's Russell "Rustie" Whyte understands that left-field electronica can be as shiny as David Guetta, as thunderous as Skrillex and as euphorically noisy as My Bloody Valentine – all at the same time. The young Scot's ultra-vivid second album virtually erupts out of the speakers during shimmering confetti starbursts like "A Glimpse" or the explosively melodic post-dubstep turbo-trance monster "Raptor". A couple of indifferent guest vocal tracks seem to dampen Whyte's rainbow-bright sound, but otherwise *Green Language* is a gloriously overstuffed banquet of synthetic textures and super-saturated flavours.

STEPHEN DALTON



LAETITIA SADIER

Something Shines

DRAG CITY

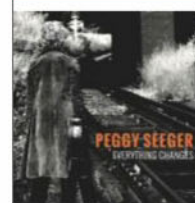
Classy chansons plus class-war sermons

Kudos to Laetitia Sadier for partly basing her third post-Stereolab solo album on Guy Debord's legendary

7/10

Situationist text *Society Of The Spectacle*, even if her past radical critiques often came clothed in overly conservative indie-rock. The good news is that *Something Shines* also enriches her puritanical sonic palette with lush instrumentation, mid-song tempo shifts and free-jazz digressions. Although the stern austerity-age sermon "Obscuridad" is probably Sadier's most nakedly political song ever, "Then I Will Love You Again" is a warm-blooded chanson in prime-time Stereolab mode while the romantic ballad "Release From The Centre Of Your Heart" has the sumptuous classicism of vintage Bacharach and David.

STEPHEN DALTON



PEGGY SEEGER

Everything Changes

SIGNET

Deft meditations on transience from octogenarian folk icon

Peggy Seeger often

8/10

comes across as a wily old soul, but to help celebrate her 80th year, she has delivered a record of disarming frankness. The title track is a song for her mother, long passed away, while "Flowers By The Roadside" and "We Watch You Slip Away", a Kate St John co-write, also stare mortality full in the face. Though atmosphere is provided by the arrangements of her son, Calum MacColl, the songs are contemplative rather than maudlin, lent grace by airy vocals that belie the years. There are lighter moments – a lullaby, a childhood rhyme – but Seeger has earned her right to gravitas. A triumph.

NEIL SPENCER



HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

Lateness Of Dancers

MERGE

Another step forward for this stately, down-home duo. *By Jon Dale*



7/10

EASING YOURSELF INTO “Lucia”, the opener on *Lateness Of Dancers*, the fifth album from MC Taylor and Scott Hirsch’s Hiss Golden Messenger, is a comforting, comfortable experience – even if the organ riff and drum tattoos might, momentarily,

have you flashing back on the J Geils Band’s “Centerfold”. Acoustic guitars jangle understatedly in the background, the wooden thunk of the drums plots the course of the rhythm, wah-wah guitar flecks in the sidelines, before Taylor’s voice sidles in: “Lucia’s on the skin of the river, the wise old river.”

In that opening minute, you’ve got as good an indication of the expanse of Hiss Golden Messenger: Taylor’s signposted the parameters in numerous interviews, and you can certainly hear the artists he’s mentioned in there, such as Traffic, the Grateful Dead, Ronnie Lane and Richard & Linda Thompson.

Taylor’s fandom courses through his songs, and it works perfectly until, well, it doesn’t. Americana suffers more than many genres from an overly semiotic turn, each production flourish and arrangement touch signifying back to older, mostly better records. So, listening to *Lateness Of Dancers*, you can hear, again, the simple, folksy lilt of Ronnie Lane and Slim Chance; an upturn in the vocal like Dylan at his least ornery; flourishes that remind of Tom Petty, the Dead circa *American Beauty*, or The Band’s self-titled LP. So far, so many boxes ticked.

The very good thing about *Lateness Of Dancers* is that, for significant stretches of the album, it doesn’t matter. “Lucia”’s opening leap and lift frames the album’s heart, a run of songs from the following “Saturday’s Song”, where Taylor really knuckles down and pins to his chest an almost atavistic, rural American vision. “Saturday’s Song” itself builds

from understated beginnings to a beautifully scored ending, where the guitar figures that have intermittently punctuated the song form a filigree cascade of notes which recalls, of all things, the psychedelic coda to Shuggie Otis’ “Strawberry Letter 23”.

Move through “Mahogany Dread”, whose bittersweet inevitability, tangles of tremolo guitar and closely tracked backing vocals trace lines around your ears reminiscent of The Jayhawks’ “Wichita”, and Taylor enacts a kind of unilateral disarmament of his songs. On “Day O Day (A Love So Free)” and the following title track, the arrangements strip things to their very core, “Lateness Of Dancers” peeling back to acoustic guitar, piano and the buzzing of the outside world, the song’s muted drama underscored by the sudden appearance of backwards guitar, humming organ and female backing vocals.

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** MC Taylor and Scott Hirsch
Recorded at: Down Yonder Farm, Hillsborough, and Sound Pure, Durham, North Carolina
Personnel include: MC Taylor (guitar, vocals), Scott Hirsch (bass, mandolin, pedal steel), Chris Boerner (guitar), Bobby Britt (fiddle), William Tyler (guitar)

From there, *Lateness Of Dancers* mostly picks up either its pace or its mood, for a run of pleasant, though slightly underwhelming songs, before the closing “Chapter & Verse (Ione’s Song)” and “Drum” float out on acoustic guitars, piano and fiddle, essaying an American variant on Slim Chance’s roots music. While these two songs don’t pack the emotional punch of, say, “Saturday’s Song” or “Lateness Of Dancers”, they sign the album off with grace and understated humour.

But there’s still something nagging away at the back of the mind: Taylor’s very believability. This is neither the time nor the place for an extended riff on authenticity, and yet there are moments on *Lateness Of Dancers* where it’s hard to take his lyrics seriously, with Taylor singing about leaving his “mandolin in the rain”, or unconvincingly drawling “I might get a little crazy”, as though he’s about to head down the shop for the evening’s supplies.

Perhaps it’s to do with reinvigorating cliché. Those who do this well – Dylan circa *The Basement Tapes*, for example – inject new life into base material through alchemy. Taylor’s no alchemist – not yet at least – though *Lateness Of Dancers* suggests he can write songs that transcend the everyday by hymning its subtleties.

Q&A

MC Taylor

I’m interested to know what you see as the connective forces across the album – what themes were you taking on? Part of *Lateness* is about the lies that we tell ourselves in order to make it through sundown without cracking up or losing control; it’s about making peace with self-deception. There’s a line in “Mahogany Dread” that goes: “The misery of love is a funny thing/ The more it hurts, the more you think you can stand a little pain.” I’m interested in our thresholds, and how we convince ourselves

to surpass them. *Lateness* is an album that continues my search for a spiritual home and a position on faith, and reckons with what our obligations are to others and to ourselves.

What did recording in Hillsborough bring to the sessions, and how do you find your environs feed into your work? The last several albums we’ve made were recorded either in old houses or barns. There is something aesthetically and artistically appealing about holing up in a place that feels secluded. I knew this was going to be an album for the fall; we recorded it as all the leaves were turning and the air was mellowing, and I worked with Merge to make sure it was released on the cusp of autumn. *INTERVIEW: JON DALE*



BRIAN SETZER
Rockabilly Riot!
All Original
SURFDODG

Stray Cats frontman purrs again

After the genre-hopping of 2011's *Goes Instru-Mental* and the jazz-jump

6/10

boogie of his big band recordings, Brian Setzer returns to the spirit of The Stray Cats with a fizzing recreation of a mid-1950s Sun session. "Stiletto Cool" thunders like the Pirates and "The Girl With The Blues In Her Eyes" nods pleasingly to the music's country roots, but for the rest it's straightahead rockabilly revival time. With his trademark twang backed by a simple bass/drums/piano combo, the dozen sly and witty songs are all Setzer originals, but it takes little suspension of disbelief to imagine "Calamity Jane" and "Cock-a-Doodle Don't" could've been authentically written 60 years ago.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



SHE KEEPS BEES
Eight Houses
BB*ISLAND

Brooklyn duo's lustrous fourth

She Keeps Bees have developed their intense, heat-hazy alt.blues over three albums, with Jessica

7/10

Larrabee's voice the sultry focus, and underplayed guitar and spare drums the atmospheric keys. It's a sound that's often (not unreasonably) drawn comparisons to Cat Power and PJ Harvey, but their latest set makes what might seem like contradictory shifts in gear; piano, organ and sax warm Larrabee's soulful explorations of love, desire and let-down, while at times (notably "Both Sides") her guitar rages filthily. She's branched out lyrically, too – the oppression and exploitation of Native Americans is explored in "Wasichu" and "Greasy Grass" – while Sharon Van Etten guests on the lusciously desolate "Is What It Is".

SHARON O'CONNELL



SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO
Whorl
ANTI-

Techno guv'nors' desert rave-up

Seasoned pop producers James Ford and Jas Shaw regularly pay their bills

7/10

working for other people (Ford helmed Arctic Monkeys' fifth album, *AM*) and so their work as Simian Mobile Disco increasingly tends to reflect their true passion – in this case, old-fashioned analogue techno. Constructed from springtime jam sessions in the Californian desert, uplifting fourth album *Whorl* evokes the misty-eyed optimism of a mid-'90s live set by Orbital or Aphex Twin, captured on tape: chunky house rhythms clatter into twinkling acid rushes on the likes of "Calyx" and "Hypnic Jerk", while the closing "Casiopeia" wraps up this solid offering in a drizzle of bleeps.

PIERS MARTIN



SINKANE
Mean Love
CITY SLANG

Slinky, heartfelt third from Sudanese funkmaster

As musical director of 'Atomic Bomb!', the roving all-star show celebrating

8/10

the songs of William Onyeabor, Sinkane's Ahmed Gallab has been knee-deep in exuberant synth-funk. With *Mean Love*, however, the Brooklyn-based Sudanese singer/multi-instrumentalist delivers a more contemplative, intimate offering that in its own heavy and soulful way is just as thrilling. Gallab draws on West African funk and the superfly vibe of '70s Motown for *Mean Love*'s backbone, over which, in dreamy falsetto, he lays down the sweetest melodies, which give sultry cuts such as "Moonstruck", "Hold Tight" and "Yacha" – each a tale flushed with romance – a curiously timeless quality.

PIERS MARTIN



TENDER GAMES
Tender Games
SUOL

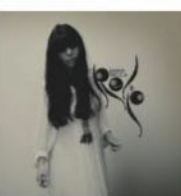
Berlin DJ duo try a little tenderness with their club-friendly sound

Berlin's smooth, slick, commercial house music scene inevitably gets less

6/10

critic-love than the city's minimal techno and left-field electronica underground. *Tender Games*, the collective studio alias of Ulrich "HRRSN" Harrison and Marlon Hoffstadt, are unlikely to reverse that imbalance with this polished debut album. But it still contains some agreeably soulful and lightly experimental grooves, from the manicured Pharrell-tronica of "Make Believe" to "Freak In The Sheets", which reimagines Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing" as a European coldwave synth-pop anthem. The best track here, "In Her Bed", leaves clubland behind altogether for a smouldering retro-blues waltz cooed by sultry guest vocalist Miss NatNat.

STEPHEN DALTON



EMMA TRICCA
Relic
FINDERS KEEPERS

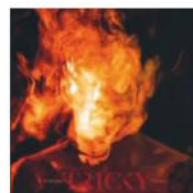
Deep, gently autumnal, folksy drift-songs

Relic is the second album for Italian-born, England-based singer-songwriter Emma Tricca.

7/10

Her story is a good one, following her chosen path after early encounters with John Renbourn and Odetta; with the pre-faded, delicately applied production colours that gently will her songs into being, her gentle folk aesthetic sits nicely within the mystique-merchant collector-itis of the Andy Votel, B-Music, Finders Keepers crew, who have released both of her albums. Sometimes the songs on *Relic* edge toward preciousness, but thankfully Tricca navigates that rocky territory with poise; the fragility in her performances is delivered with just the right amount of internal integrity.

JON DALE



TRICKY
Adrian Thaws
FALSE IDOLS

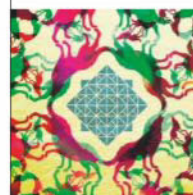
Another solid semi-comeback from former trip-hop titan

Despite spending years sabotaging the high critical standing he earned with

7/10

his sublime 1995 debut, *Maxinquaye*, Trickyr's recent work has been pretty strong, making a partial return to his classic sultry trip-sound with last year's lush, slinky *False Idols*. Billed as a "club album", *Adrian Thaws* is another decent entry in the latterday Trickypedia, rolling along on circular bluesfunk grooves and furtive whisper-croak boy-girl vocals. Between smouldering duets like "Sun Down" and "Nicotine Love", Trickyr delivers a Russell Brand-style political sermon in "The Unloved" and adds an agreeably sympathetic version of Janet Kay's sleepy reggae classic "Silly Games" to his ever-growing list of unorthodox covers.

STEPHEN DALTON



TRWBADOR
Several Wolves
OWLET MUSIC

Bucolic Welsh electro-duo invent farm house

An attempt to cross the Welsh rural folk-pop of Cate Le Bon and Euros Childs with the trendy

7/10

house revival should grate. But girl singer Angharad Van Rijswijk and boy guitarist Owain Gwilym make it all sound as natural as the rural idyll they share in Carmarthenshire. Their co-produced electronica sprouts organically from Gwilym's gentle acoustic strums, but the star is Van Rijswijk's gauche, stark, Welsh-accented voice, eerily childlike on the disco-fied "Start Your Car" and earworm ballad "Come To Me, Tomorrow"; beautiful on the bossa nova-flecked "Love And Folly". Essa's lachrymose rap poetry on "Breakthrough" is an urban mis-step, but elsewhere the playful eclecticism keeps *Several Wolves* packed with pleasant surprises.

GARRY MULHOLLAND



MIDGE URE
Fragile
HYPERTENSION

First album of new material in a decade

Toying around with all manner of technology

6/10

and studio trickery, Midge Ure liberally leafs through his own back pages for a collection of songs that leave the listener with the overwhelming temptation to use the phrase "Ultravox lite". Synthesisers and an air of melodrama dominate, but there's little in the way of heft to the polite electropop of "Bridges" or "Are We Connected", several of the tracks sounding only part finished. However, there's a pleasing grandeur to the widescreen pomp of the title track, and the minimalist bleeps and buzzes of the Moby collaboration "Dark Dark Night".

TERRY STAUNTON



VARIOUS ARTISTS/BECK Song Reader CAPITOL

Stars take on Beck's sheet music project
Back in 2012, Beck released a volume of sheet music: encouraging people to

7/10

record and upload their own versions of the songs. For this latest iteration, he has invited other musicians to bring the material to life. In the absence of original recordings, it's hard to know what to judge these against. Are they covers? Or is this technically 'new music'? At any rate, Norah Jones' breezy "Just Noise", the agreeably understated "The Wolf Is On The Hill" by Tweedy and Beck's own Beatles-y "Heaven's Ladder" are early highlights. Elsewhere, Jack White is subdued on "I'm Down", while Jarvis Cocker is typically arch on "Eyes That Say 'I Love You'". David Johansen essays Tom Waits' oompah vibes on "Rough On Rats".

MICHAEL BONNER



JOHNNY WINTER Step Back MEGAFORCE

Texan bluesman's sign-off set

Johnny Winter's final album is part two of 2004's *Roots*, the point

8/10

where he came back from drug limbo to claim his heritage as blues giant. Again, there's a platoon of guests to help Johnny revisit tunes that fired his teenage soul; numbers by Howlin' Wolf, Bo Diddley, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Uncle Ray and more. It's a blazing set for a 70-year-old, but Winter gains traction from his fretboard duets/duels with Eric Clapton, Billy Gibbons, Joe Bonamassa, Joe Perry, Brian Setzer et al. It's flashy, exuberant stuff, relieved by a (slightly messy) acoustic "Death Letter" (from Son House), with Winter raging hoarsely but spiritedly against the dying light.

NEIL SPENCER



YE NUNS Nun More Black TUFF ENUFF

All-female Monks tribute band dressed as nuns? An immaculate concept...

You'd need a heart of stone

6/10

not to dig the notion of Ye Nuns, a seven-piece all-female semi-supergroup Monks tribute band that dress as nuns while whacking out proto-punk classics barely embellished by electric banjo. Former members of Curve, Echobelly and Thee Headcoates are involved in the fun, thrashing 13 no-frills Monks covers like "Complication" and a brilliantly whacked "Pretty Suzanne" to within an inch of their lives. The album was recorded in a couple of days and has enough zingers – a vicious "I Hate You", a thunderingly primitive "Love Came Tumbin' Down" – to move it past the novelty rack.

PETER WATTS



VASELINES V For Vaseline ROSARY MUSIC

Indie-pop's golden couple glitter once more

Faintly ridiculous in vintage motorbike leathers on the sleeve,

7/10

the Vaselines may have lost something of the whiff of sexy danger that made them the bad kids smoking round the back of the metaphorical C86 youth club, but here, on their second post-reformation LP, Eugene Kelly and Frances McKee remain pretty foxy for nearly 50. Exes of 25 years' standing, Kelly and McKee's chemistry remains evident on the playful "Inky Lies", while the Glaswegians remain out of tune by approximately the same beguiling degree on unexpectedly emotional closer "Last Half Hour". No longer quite so greasy, but rewardingly slick.

JIM WIRTH

REVELATIONS THE VASELINES' Eugene Kelly



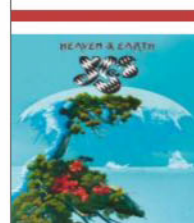
➤ "It was down to Nirvana's patronage that we had an audience, so we can't ever be ungrateful for that," the Vaselines' Eugene Kelly tells *Uncut*. "It could have been a lot worse. It could have been some band we really didn't like."

Having split up the week their 1989 debut *Dum-Dum* was released, graphic design student Kelly and trainee teacher Frances McKee might have ended up an atypically sexy footnote in shambly indie history, but Nirvana's covers of the Vaselines' "Molly's Lips" and "Son Of A Gun" gave birth to a legend – now rekindled by two low-key but high-class reformation LPs: 2010's *Sex With An X* and now *V For Vaseline*.

The harmonies remain Incredible String Band-wild, and the melodies Buzzcock-sharp, though Kelly concedes the Vaselines have moved on a little from their original 'no minor chords' ethos. "There weren't any on the early records because we didn't know how to play them," he says.

He and McKee (now indie pop's most celebrated yoga teacher) are ex-partners of 25 years' standing, but passions are still stirred when they work together. "We disagree about almost everything," Kelly says. "It's a very good working relationship."

JIM WIRTH



YES Heaven And Earth FRONTIERS

The prog-rock veterans soldier on with a(nother) new singer

Although Jon Davison, a veteran of US proggers Glass Hammer, is the high-

5/10

voiced gentleman delivering lines such as "life road metaphysical/Journey existential" on Yes' 21st LP (Davison replaces Benoît David, who took over from Jon Anderson in 2008), yet another frontman substitution hasn't altered the good ship Yes from its course. *Heaven And Earth* might be a touch more accessible than 2011's *Fly From Here*, but its eight tracks are still structurally complex, impeccably performed and, of course, a bit noodly. Business as usual, then – though any choice moments are somewhat let down by Roy Thomas Baker's sterile production and some badly dated keyboard sounds.

TOM PINNOCK



WAND Ganglion Reef GOD?/DRAG CITY

Heavy psych debut from, um, a flock of Segalls...

If Wand, a four-piece from LA, didn't exist, one suspects Ty Segall would've eventually

7/10

invented them – with the assistance, almost certainly, of White Fence, Mikal Cronin, and his bandmates in Fuzz. As it is, Segall merely signed them to his God? imprint. *Ganglion Reef* configures plenty of their benefactor's favourite modes of garage rock – brutish Blue Cheer riffs, dappled psychedelic whimsy – into moderately fresh, often terrific new shapes. So the likes of "Clearer" and the outstanding "Fire On The Mountain (I-II-III)" smuggle in fey and ornate acid pop under the cover of lurching stoner rock: Pink Floyd's "The Nile Song" feels like a useful, relatively underused reference point. Good drummer, too.

JOHN MULVEY



ZOLA JESUS Taiga MUTE

Fourth album from Wisconsin ice queen Nika Roza Danilova

Zola Jesus' initial appeal was predicated on the tension between some

6/10

faintly goth signifiers (cacophonous synths, a love of '70s Italian horror) and her booming, heart-on-sleeve delivery. Here, the weirdness has been pared back; you can hear the influence of everything from Aphex Twin to Gorecki in the hefty arrangements, but it's all in service of the big pop statement, meaning that there's no longer very much to distinguish Danilova from more conventional belters like Florence Welch or Sia – both of whom have a more nuanced gift for melody. "Dangerous Days" and "Hollow" are mightily impressive, but at times the elemental pounding can become an aural bludgeoning.

SAM RICHARDS



GOAT

Commune

ROCKET RECORDINGS

Afro-noise jams, via Germany, the Sahara and Sweden. Masked festival favourites continue their worldwide masquerade.

By Tom Pinnock



7/10

PSYCHEDELIC, REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC has often gone hand-in-hand with communal living. Take what seem like Goat's two main poles of influence: from Nigeria, Fela Kuti and his Kalakuta Republic, out of which the Afrika 70 collective would

regularly pump their 15-minute Afrobeat monoliths railing against government corruption and army brutality; and from West Germany, the Amon Düül commune, a group of radicals who indulged in far-out experimentation – politically, pharmaceutically and musically.

Churning out boundary-breaking jams from a cult-like compound isn't a recipe for success in our era of cultural commodification, though. Still, Goat, reputed commune-dwellers from a village in northern Sweden that they claim has never relinquished its centuries-old pagan beliefs, have done a surprisingly good job of crossing over. After releasing their debut LP, *World Music*, in 2012, the group now draw large crowds at major festivals, are signed to Sub Pop in the US, and headline London's 1,700-capacity Roundhouse later this year.

That they sport fantastic and outlandish tribal masks and robes straight from some mythical

Nubian bazaar, and have managed to retain a haze of mystery – we still don't know the names of most of their members, or how many they number, a rarity in this age of hyper-connectivity – can only have increased their notoriety. But really, none of this would matter if Goat's music wasn't so eminently appealing.

The formula here on *Commune*, their second full-length, is similar to their debut, where they skillfully took the spiralling, sinuous jams of Kuti or Düül, and recast them in a more accessible mould. Each of the nine songs is highly listenable, streamlined (the longest track is just under seven minutes), and loaded with classic-rock vibes (wah-wah pedals take a real kicking throughout) and simple, chanted hooks from their two vocalists.

At times, the masks slip to reveal not much underneath – while their forebears sang of revolution, liberation and very real political issues, Goat are content to spoon the listener beige, quasi-mystical pronouncements. "*There is only one true meaning with life, and that is to be a positive force in the constant creation of evolution*," goes "To Travel The Path Unknown"'s prologue. You can hardly imagine soldiers murderously storming the Swedes' compound as they did Fela's, after hearing these lyrics. These missteps serve to make Goat seem like a post-modern, cartoon version of a ritualistic jam band, trawling shallow waters instead of unknown depths.

And yet, forgetting the masks and the mystical

gubbins, the songs are such thrilling journeys that it barely matters. As the listener sinks into the grooves, more diverse influences appear – Saharan guitar curlicues are still present throughout, but there's a taste of Peruvian folk music on "The Light Within", while a new purchase, a Turkish electric saz, is fed through a wah-wah on the excellent "Hide From The Sun", perhaps the most compellingly 'Eastern' Goat have yet sounded. And in more of a departure, the pulsing, jagged "Words" channels Silver Apples by way of Portishead's Apples-aping "We Carry On".

The album peaks near the end of its relatively short, 38-minute run with the heat-freckled drone-rock of "Bondye", and "Gathering Of Ancient Tribes", which comes on like Tinariwen armed with Marshall stacks and Big Muffs. It's an onslaught that suggests if Goat plan to wander further in the future, they could successfully explore the realms of stoner-metal. The album ends, Möbius strip-like, with the same Tibetan singing bowl chimes that open it.

Because we now know the nature of the beast, *Commune* is less immediately striking than *World Music*. But if Goat seem unlikely to lead you to liberation or spiritual transcendence, their compact jams, the vivid ingredients cherry-picked from disparate corners of the globe, are still as groovy and downright joyous as they ever were – devotional music for the feet. And they'll sound just as mighty on those festival stages.

Q&A

Funkmaster Goat

Could you tell us a little more about your hometown, Korpilombolo? It was founded in the 16th Century by Samish travellers. Later they were joined by travellers from Western Africa and together they created a spiritual commune based around openness towards the different cultures and people of the world. Through travelling and collectivism we have always managed to preserve and develop this commune and its beliefs.

What is living in a commune really like?

We all live in various collectives or communes. Society is nothing but a big collective. Your job, your family, your friends are others. So you tell me. What is important is that you recognise this and try to take a positive role in your collectives.

How do you think *Commune* differs from *World Music*? Both albums were mainly created in our own studio, but this time we could use the studio better. So we have experimented more with sounds. We have also brought in a wider range of influences and instruments – some new flutes, a saz and a lot more percussion instruments.

INTERVIEW: TOM PINNOCK

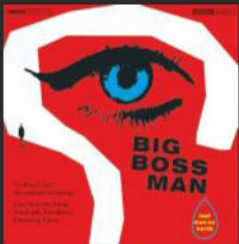


HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

LATENESS OF DANCERS

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Hiss Golden Messenger's highly anticipated Merge Records debut "Rarely does dark doubt sound quite so inviting." Pitchfork

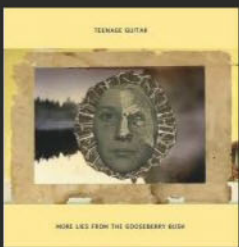


BIG BOSS MAN

LAST MAN ON EARTH

BLOW UP LP / CD

A hip hybrid of Rhythm & Blues, Funk, Latin, Jazz, Soul & Psych. Brand new sonic and rhythmic explorations from the UK's premier Beat quartet: "Double Groovy!" Craig Charles, BBC 6Music.



TEENAGE GUITAR

MORE LIES FROM THE GOOSEBERRY BUSH

FIRE RECORDS 2CD

Robert Pollard, head lunatic of the Guided By Voices' asylum, has a surfeit of original thoughts. The album is a true delight, a timeless gem and cabinet of wonder.



NIAGARA

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

MONOTREME LP / CD

Second album from Torinese post-electronic duo whose off-kilter take on experimental pop incorporates elements of electronic, psychedelic, Eastern and dance music.

RYL: Notwit, Gonjasufi, Liars.



CYMBALS EAT GUITARS

LOSE

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

LOSE is the 3rd - and best - album from NYC-based 4-piece, Cymbals Eat Guitars. Recorded with John Agnello (Kurt Vile, Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr.), LOSE is the record they've always threatened to make, tracing a line through American alt.rock history & establishing a new standard for what indie rock records can be.



PERE UBU

CARNIVAL OF SOULS

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

The album is Pere Ubu's 18th album over a forty year career that has seen them break rules, confuse and continue to divide music critics globally.



FURTHER

WHERE WERE YOU THEN?

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Further was an indie rock band formed in Los Angeles in 1991 whose members went on to form Beachwood Sparks & The Tyde. This record compiles the best of the singles & EP tracks from 1991 to 1997 all re-mastered from the original vinyl.



MOON RELAY

MOON RELAY

FYSISK FORMAT LP / CD

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A focused, yet evocative album, that touches in on nowave, kraut and even surf-rock.

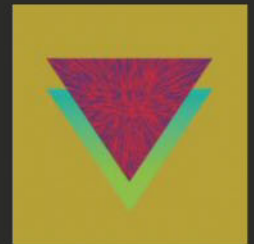


FLOWERS

FLOWERS

FORTUNA POP! LP / CD

Produced by Bernard Butler, Flower's debut album captures the intensity of being young across fourteen haunting, mesmerizing and intense pop songs, elevated by Rachel Kennedy's extraordinary voice.



GOAT

COMMUNE

ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

Goat's highly anticipated follow-up to the voodoo-psych-groove smash of World Music is here...

Join the Commune.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

HYPERDUB 10.3

HYPERDUB CD

10.3, is third episode of Hyperdub's 10th anniversary celebrations, transects and extrapolates forward the label's catalog from yet another angle, this time following the melancholy vapour trail mapped out by Burial's numerous atmospheric beatless moments.



SPIKE

100% PURE FRANKIE MILLER

LIVEWIRE CD

Spike's (The Quireboys) sparkling celebration of long-time pal and inspiration Frankie Miller is a very special album indeed - Feat. Ronnie Wood, Andy Fraser (Free), Simon Kirke (Free & Bad Company), Ian Hunter & more.



BLACK MOTH

CONDEMNED TO HOPE

NEW HEAVY SOUNDS LP / CD

The long awaited second album by Black Moth surpasses their first. Blistering stoner rock with a dark vibe, metal edge, big riffs and great songs.

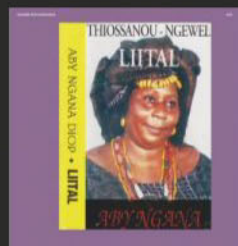


HALF JAPANESE

OVERJOYED

JOYFUL NOISE LP / CD

Overjoyed, the first album in 13 years from legendary punk band Half Japanese. One of the most influential bands of all time. Overjoyed was recorded and produced by John Dieterich of Deerhoof.

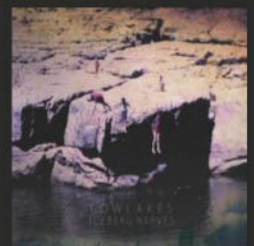


ABY NGANA DIOP

LIITAL

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA LP / CD

Intense, fiery vocals backed by frenetic percussion from Senegalese diva Aby Ngana Diop on her first and only 1994 release. Massively popular on Awesome Tapes From Africa blog.



LOWLAKES

ICEBERG NERVES

KUNSTHAUS RECORDS LP / CD

Lowlakes wrote and recorded their debut album Iceberg Nerves around its title track.

The song embodies elements special to the band and is indicative of their sound as a whole with its sense of other-worldliness and space.

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THE BEATLES

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APPLE

The catalogue, to 1968, remastered for vinyl. *By John Robinson*

9/10 ABBEY ROAD'S Studio Three has seen some unusual stuff. In 1966, on an April day busy with cutting and splicing tape, it was the birthplace of "Mark I" – which eventually became "Tomorrow Never Knows". On this sunny July morning 48 years later, something no less odd is taking place. Inside, a group of 30 or so journalists and technical staff are seated in the facility's wood-panelled interior. We're hunched forward in our seats, listening to a vinyl record of *Beatles For Sale*: somewhere after "Rock And Roll Music" but before "I'll Follow

The Sun", scrutinising the space between them.

The object of this exercise is to demonstrate the magnificent pressing achieved for this newest Beatles event. This is the vinyl companion to *The Beatles In Mono*, the CD boxset released in 2009 – a project which has necessitated all-new analogue remasters. All the 180g records have been pressed in Germany, a million of them, taking up – as Guy Hayden from Universal proudly observes – that country's entire pressing capacity. When a tiny click is heard through the \$85,000 system, brought over from New York by



→ McIntosh, (the company that supplied the PA for Shea Stadium), a certain relief passes through the room.

Otherwise, things might have been a little too perfect. With whatever delight fans might have listened to mono Beatles recordings when they were first released (each album 'til *Yellow Submarine* had a unique mono mix; later “fold-down” mixes, in which the stereo channels were combined, of *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road* were released in some territories) audio perfection was not high on their list of expectations. You'll never find them in good nick second-hand. The albums weren't revered, they were loved: played at parties, danced to, written on, enjoyed. Today, they bear the marks of a life well-lived.

A word much used to describe this magnificent new set of records (it comes in a box; there's a nicely illustrated book by Kevin Howlett) is “authentic”. True enough, there's a pretty inarguable case that The Beatles laboured more intensively on mono mixes. Nor should there be any quibble with the idea that by going back to the original tapes the listener is getting “nearer” to what the artist heard and intended. But as we nod approvingly at the lovingly recreated laminated “flipback” covers (right down to the Garrod & Lofthouse printing credit – a company which, like Parlophone, has no present-day relationship with The Beatles), the Emitex logos, and the *Sgt Pepper* moustache set, “authentic” isn't necessarily the first word that springs to mind.

The process of bringing the new set about began five years ago. The mission – says Steve Berkowitz, the American who supervised this project as he has recent Dylan remasters – was to be “led by the work of art”. This meant close listening: sourcing original vinyl albums, and compiling reference multitracks of these, alongside digital copies of the original tapes. New machines mean that, with real-time, hands-on engineering, more information can be read from the tapes and delivered to the new cut. Guided by the original engineers' notes, Abbey Road's Sean Magee was able to reveal more of what The Beatles intended us to hear.

Though it sounds like spin, mono is the open secret in The Beatles' recording career. In the band's official recording history, reference upon reference piles up: long toil into the night on the mono with all four present; stereo mixed with “not a solitary Beatle” in sight. In 1966, Geoff Emerick was put to manufacturing an ersatz stereo *Please Please Me* (for which the track tapes were missing) by shaving off treble from one side, and bass from the other. As Steve Berkowitz puts it today, mono was



Monomaniacs: The Beatles in 1968, right at the end of the mono era

“the predominant carrier of the time”.

For all the efforts of the engineers and the guy from the record company, however, it's Leif from Ortofon, the Danish audio company, who best defines what that might sound like. Of course, it's a matter of common sense that Beatles records were mixed to sound good through transistor radios, dansettes and mum and dad's radiogram. It is, says Leif, “a solid, powerful, central image”. It is, he says, “less width. It's more focused.”

As Berkowitz plays selections from the catalogue, from the “1-2-3-Faw!” of “I Saw Her Standing There” to “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” (all about the keyboard part, as it turns out), it certainly proves to be that, but predominantly provides huge freshness and novelty. As the book points out, there are empirical differences between The Beatles in

HIDDEN TREASURES

FOUR BEATLES SONGS THAT SOUND VERY DIFFERENT IN MONO

YESTERDAY

Maybe inevitably, it's the most familiar songs that sound different in these new/old versions. You'll be interested to hear more rhythm guitar in “All You Need Is Love”. Or here, to discover new reverbs in the mix of this Paul solo number.

I'M DOWN

If you thought the Shea Stadium version was demented, well, you were right. But the mono mix sees Lennon's hammering of the Vox organ jostle unignorable to the front of the picture, the song's joyful momentum threatening to spill over into the room.

TAXMAN

Mono mixes are great for bringing to the centre elements you may have missed. Percussion elements are the unlikely beneficiaries of this. “I Wanna Be Your Man” on *Mono Masters* is all about the handclaps. Here, you suddenly say: “Cowbell! Of course!”

HELTHER SKELTER

“I've got blisters on my fingazzz!” Not in mono you don't. The main difference here is that the mono mix misses off that whole end segment and final clanks. It's a heavy number, of course, but you feel robbed of a favourite moment.

stereo and in mono. The aircraft noise is different on “Back In The USSR”, the tape loops on “Tomorrow Never Knows” fade in and out more quickly, to name but two. The listener without notes, however, is prey more to impressionistic view – the room essentially the same, but arranged in such a way the eye is drawn in a different direction.

Listened to at leisure at home, the remaster proves particularly strong on guitars, which chime with renewed brightness on tracks like “Getting Better” or “Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me And My Monkey”, and chug heavily on the more primitively chorded likes of “Thank You Girl”. In mid-range, say on “And Your Bird Can Sing” or “Taxman”, bluesier tones reveal themselves. You can't fail to be struck by their new and complex relationships or sheer crunchiness.

All round, mono is great on physical impact. Listening to “Within You Without You” is extraordinary, the tablas sounding like a fall of hailstones, while the laughter at





the conclusion sounds weird, loud and completely new.

Sgt Pepper has, of course, been making people say something like that for nearly 50 years. To listen in mono, however, is to hear a different set of decisions being privileged, alternate colours brought to the foreground. "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" builds to the chorus with a heavily flanged bass. "Fixing A Hole", not necessarily the first place you'd look for them, proves to be a hotbed of precisely engineered, interwoven guitars. As "Lovely Rita" moves towards its close, the song feels stranger somehow for confronting you there in the room, rather than as a sonic experience into which you have stereophonically wandered.

The same freshness and changed emphasis reveal themselves through the catalogue. You find yourself wondering at new reverbs on "Yesterday", a new vulnerability and tenderness to "Here, There And Everywhere", to what sounds like more of George Harrison reading the paper in "Revolution 9". Harrison, as the book reminds us, was no fan of stereo – he thought it left you "naked", which seems like an odd choice of words. It's mono, after all, which leaves you with no place to hide.

In the scheme of things, it might seem strange that only four years after its appearance on iTunes, the next big development in the availability of Beatles music should be a big box of old records in an outdated format. Really, though, in that time, the world has changed again. What was once the mass-market choice has now found a valuable niche in the collector/audiophile market. Mono has replaced stereo as the point of exploration for the deep listener, for whom vinyl has never anyway been satisfactorily replaced. Now, as in their lifetime, The Beatles are simply ahead of the curve.



Q&A

Sean Magee, Abbey Road mastering engineer

HOW DO THESE differ from the 2009 remasters? This is a vinyl cut directly from the master tapes with an all-analogue signal chain, no digital involved. You're getting nearer the tape, that's the thing. With vinyl and audio files the desire is to get back to the original master without any digital nonsense. We did it on the monos because the stereos were a different kettle of fish.

How so? To recreate the stereo masters from the tapes just wouldn't have been possible. It's a real-time process. With the stereos there was different EQ on the left side to the right side. Different EQ in the intro... you couldn't physically adjust that while the tapes were going. With the monos there was very little done, so you could put them on, hit play and cut without much interference from the engineer.

What's the story of Beatles stereo vs mono?

It's a quirk of history that stereos have become the de facto voice of The Beatles. The stereos were sometimes cut weeks after. The important thing was the mono one. Most of the work sonically would have been done in the studios so the work that was presented to the cutting engineer was "get that onto vinyl as loudly and cleanly as you can".

Are you a mono fan? What's the appeal?

For me, sonically, they're far more focused – they've had more time spent on them – and wherever you stand in the room, it all sounds the same. As to why it's become a thing, it's nostalgia and it's getting back to the original – if that was in mono, that's how people want to hear it. The mono mixes in this case, they are the ones the artist and producer signed off on.

Your new machines pick up more information from the tapes. What is the azimuth?

It's the tilt of the tapehead. It's imperative to get the angle of the tapehead the same as it was when it was recorded. They weren't tilted deliberately – it's a quirk that sometimes happened. But when you line up a tape machine, you need to restore it to the condition it was when it recorded that tape and the azimuth is an important part of that. There's a microscopic gap – if you tilt too far to the left or right, because of the very small wavelengths, the high frequencies start to cancel each other out.

How did you fix it? The issue was addressed when the transfers were done for the 2009 remasters: they tweaked the azimuth for every single one so we knew there was a slight variation. This time, in the best tradition of improvisation, we made a Heath-Robinson adjuster, a knob with a dot on the top of it. We worked out a way that we could do this in real time while it was cutting in the spaces between tracks – it was a mad scramble to adjust the EQ and twiddle the azimuth and get things done in time for the next track to start – about five or six seconds.

You didn't have to "bake the tapes" or anything like that?

They were made from EMI stock which has always been fairly well-behaved. *Please Please Me* we had to make a new master for. The tape itself wasn't shedding but the glue that holds the edits together had seeped through various layers of the tape. The tape was playing and it left a sticky sludge on the playback head which isn't very good. We thought rather than have it do that, we'll make a new one.

Sgt Pepper sounds great... It sounds beautiful, doesn't it? We didn't do anything at all – that's how it came off the tape. It said on the box, "please cut flat", which means, "don't do anything to it." It's mentioned in *[Beatles engineer]* Geoff Emerick's book, I think. The head of production at that time,

pushed him against the wall and said, "How dare you tell my engineers what to do" sort of thing. But he said, that's how they wanted it.

Do you hear new stuff in the records?

There's an awful lot of sound in there. It was my introduction to The Beatles in mono in 2009 – you start to think, "this is slightly different to what I remember". Having worked

on these vinyls since 2009 – which is when we started, every time you put the tape on, you hear something new.

How nerve-wracking is the live cut? You have to do it in real time so you have to be watching the counter on the tape machine, you've got your stopwatch going and you're referring to your notes because to alter two banks of EQ – you've got to get the fader down, get the fader up, get the spread, make sure the EQ's right, then sit down wait for five minutes and then do it all over again.

INTERVIEW: JOHN ROBINSON

"Having worked on these vinyls since 2009, every time you put the tape on, you hear something new"



TRACKLIST

DISC 1

Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround Part One

- 1 The Contenders
- 2 Strangers
- 3 Denmark Street
- 4 Get Back In Line
- 5 Lola
- 6 Top Of The Pops
- 7 The Moneygoround
- 8 This Time Tomorrow
- 9 A Long Way From Home
- 10 Rats
- 11 Apeman
- 12 Powerman
- 13 Got To Be Free

Previously Unreleased

- 14 Anytime
- 15 The Contenders (Instrumental Demo)
- 16 The Good Life
- 17 Lola (Alternate Version)
- 18 This Time Tomorrow (Instrumental)
- 19 Apeman (Alternate Stereo Version)
- 20 Got To Be Free (Alternate Version)

DISC 2

Percy

- 1 God's Children
- 2 Lola (Instrumental)
- 3 The Way Love Used To Be
- 4 Completely
- 5 Running Round Town
- 6 Moments
- 7 Animals In The Zoo
- 8 Just Friends
- 9 Whip Lady
- 10 Dreams
- 11 Helga
- 12 Willesden Green
- 13 God's Children (End)

Previously Unreleased

- 14 Dreams (Remix)
- 15 Lola (Mono Single)
- 16 Apeman (Mono Single)
- 17 Rats (Mono Single)
- 18 Powerman (Mono)
- 19 The Moneygoround (Mono Alternate Version)
- 20 Apeman (Alternate Mono Version)
- 21 God's Children (Mono Film Mix)
- 22 The Way Love Used To Be (Mono Film Mix)
- 23 God's Children (End) (Mono Film Mix)



THE KINKS

Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround Part One/Percy

SANCTUARY

They were there first – again. Man vs record business, the opera. *By Andy Gill*

7/10

BY THE TIME Ray Davies wrote the songs that made up *Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround Part One*, it was as if he couldn't stop himself thinking in broader, conceptual terms. His muse seemed to take an idea and run so far with it that song after song poured forth on a particular theme – an expansion process paralleled by the way his band's LP titles had grown into mission statements: *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*, followed by *Arthur (Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire)*.

Disgruntled by the comparatively poor sales of those albums, and by the way that the *Arthur* TV pop-opera project had been held up so long by

business problems (before being cancelled) that The Who's *Tommy* leapfrogged it to be hailed as the first "rock opera", Davies' new batch of material was driven by disaffection with the music business. While not exactly an opera, it loosely follows the callow newcomers of "The Contenders" as they contend with publishers, agents and the industry's arcane accounting system, before ultimately taking solace, on "Got To Be Free", in personal freedom and ethical purity, by opting to "stand up straight, let everybody see I ain't nobody's slave".

It's a journey mapped out across varied musical terrain, from the good-timey jugband feel of publishers' domain "Denmark Street",

Q&A

Ray Davies



Was "Lola" the first time you used the National steel guitar? Yes. On "Lola", I wanted an intro similar to what we used on "Dedicated Follower Of Fashion", which

was two Fender acoustic guitars and Dave's electric guitar; so I went down to Shaftesbury Avenue and bought a Martin guitar, and this National guitar that I got for £80, then double-tracked the Martin, and double-tracked the National – that's what got that sound.

That album was one of the earliest expressions of disaffection with the music business. What was your experience?

We had three managers who led us to believe we were signing the best deal possible, but it was a young industry in Britain, and people would take advantage of you. We just wanted to make a record, and a three-single deal with Pye was the only deal available. We were going to be dropped before the third single, which was "You Really Got Me".

Lola Versus Powerman... was made during a transitional period for The Kinks, when John Gosling joined. What was the intention behind that? The bass end of the keyboard is

really quintessential on all those early Kinks records, but we didn't have a keyboard player on tour until John Gosling joined during the *Lola...* album. We got an unusually effective combination of music-hall piano and National steel on several tracks, including "Apeman", which was recorded after the album was finished. At the time, I intended it to be something powerful and dominating, after "Lola" had caused people to ask, "What's this group about?"

Did you get started on the rumoured Volume Two of *Lola Versus Powerman...*? Yes. *Lola Versus Powerman...* was good versus evil, obviously, and in Volume Two, I sketched out how you become your worst nightmare, how the good man goes so far he becomes the evil person he always fought against. But we had to do another tour, we had the RCA deal, and we had other recording projects that we had to work towards, and it got lost, unfortunately.

Were the songs on *Percy* specifically written for the film, or did you have them already in the bag? Again, it was a masterpiece of mismanagement! "Lola" had been a worldwide hit, and America was crying out for us to go back there, but our managers decided it would be nice if we did the soundtrack to a film! There were a few songs already written, like "The Way Love Used To Be", but most of it was done to fit the themes of the film.

INTERVIEW: ANDY GILL

through the music-hall mock-jollity of "The Moneygoround" – still the most acidly accurate summation of showbiz financial finagling – to the chunky riffing of "Powerman", the eventual realisation of the gulf separating artists from businessmen. While the album was being recorded, keyboardist John Gosling was added to the band lineup, and his piano and organ bring depth and texture to songs like "Get Back In Line", a session-man's plaint at the power wielded over his career by the Musician's Union, and "Top Of The Pops".

The latter, ostensibly a celebration of how "life is so easy when your record's hot", is cunningly undercut by a darker tone. The very riff itself seems drenched in cynical disillusion, while the concluding churchy organ greeting the agent's declaration, "Your record's just got to number one – and you know what this means?/It means you can make some real money!", sounds like a bitter revelation.

Short and sweet, "The Moneygoround" packs more useful information into two minutes than a course of seminars about how industry types carve their undeserved percentages from a writer's income, seasoning reality with regret ("I thought they were my friends... I can't believe I was so green"). The album's two hit singles, though, were only tangentially connected to the album concept. One of the most accomplished examples of Davies' witty wordplay, the gender-bender tale "Lola" was set to a tangy timbre of unison National steel and Martin acoustic guitars, fattened with piano, maracas and classic Kinks guitar/bass/drums chug. Ironically, in view of the lyric change required to get BBC

airplay, one of the outtakes included here finds Davies singing not "C-O-L-A, cola", but "I hate Coca-Cola" – though whether that would have circumvented the Beeb's prohibition on advertising remains doubtful.

Adding tack piano to the National steel for another distinctive timbre, "Apeman" again showcases Davies' neatly crafted lyricism, while its theme of hankering after a simpler, prelapsarian state is taken up in songs written for the following year's film soundtrack *Percy*, paired here with *Lola Versus Powerman...* "God's Children" boasts a similar back-to-the-garden sentiment as "Apeman", but not as amusingly, its blend of piano, strings and ringing guitar arpeggios irresistibly recalling The Byrds of "Turn Turn Turn". But the standout track is the beautiful, melancholy ballad "The Way Love Used To Be", which again finds the narrator wistfully hankering after lost innocence. Elsewhere, "Completely" is a slow blues boogie instrumental in Fleetwood Mac style, and "Dreams" an escapist fantasy, while "Just Friends" employs harpsichord and strings behind Davies' caricature British croon.

Among the various alternative versions and remixes, the only actual *Lola...* outtakes are "Anytime", a maudlin reassurance of support in plodding "Hey Jude" manner, and the swaggering, Bolan-esque boogie "The Good Life", with promises of "wine, women and song, if you sign on the dotted line". In this context, its concluding message that "if this is civilisation, I'd rather be uncivilised" offers another link cementing the anti-modernist spirit linking these two undervalued entries in the Kinks Kanon.



BORIS BLANK Electrified

BLANK MEDIA

Swiss cheese: Yello fella's soundtrack work unveiled

With his designer suits, slicked-back hair and swarthy demeanour, Boris

Blank, the musical force behind Swiss avant-pop goofballs Yello, has always looked more Hollywood producer than film composer, but this new box of unreleased soundtrack material would argue that Blank has often written with the silver screen in mind. Indeed, Yello owe much of their success to the careful placement of '85's "Oh Yeah" in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. A 60-track, multi-format affair spanning 37 years, *Electrified* is the result of a fan-funded Kickstarter project that comfortably exceeded its £50,000 goal – for the top £5,000 pledge (sold out), Blank escorts you around Zurich – and though many of the cuts could be, and probably were, Yello cast-offs, there are enough flashes of Blank brilliance here to make it worthwhile. Most intriguing, perhaps, is Blank's earliest output, the cosmic Eurodisco recorded between '77 and '83 at Yello's Rote Fabrik (Red Factory), which reveal a vulnerability and melodic flair that would soon be streamrollered by cocksure bombast and an addiction to zooming sound design as Blank honed his slightly kitsch Art Of Noise-meets-late-period Kraftwerk technique. From widescreen tearjerkers to futuristic car chases, it seems Blank left no scene unscored.

EXTRAS: Full box includes three LPs, two CDs, 7/10 one MC, a DVD and a 36-page booklet.

PIERS MARTIN



MARC BRIERLEY Welcome To The Citadel/Hello

(reissues, 1968, 1969)

CHERRY TREE

Overly style-conscious folk pop

After releasing an initial EP for Transatlantic, Brierley recorded these two genre-hopping albums for CBS in 1968 and 1969. Vocally he's reminiscent of label-mate Al Stewart, but the largely successful musical template for *Welcome To The Citadel* is Donovan's flirtations with chamber folk and baroque pop.

"Matchbox Men" is a little too close for comfort but the title track is altogether more alluring and intimate. *Hello* doesn't exactly ring the changes and despite some misguided Lovin' Spoonful goofiness – the awful "O Honey" – Brierley's more deeply felt personal songs such as "Today I Feel Like Leaving You" and "The Room", falling somewhere between Procol Harum and Pearls Before Swine, display a depth that suggests he was trying to impose a more individual voice. Hampered by overzealous arrangements, both LPs are very much of their time and, depending on your outlook, all the better or worse for that. Curiously appealing nonetheless.

EXTRAS: Non-LP singles, his '66 Transatlantic 7/10 EP and previously unreleased '73 demos for Island until the label suddenly reneged on its offer; Brierley withdrew from music altogether. MICK HOUGHTON

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked

Alice Gerrard in Japan, circa 1971 - photo taken by her then-husband Mike Seeger



ALICE GERRARD

Follow The Music

TOMPKINS SQUARE

8/10

Bear me away! At 80, a spooked bluegrass pioneer continues her quest

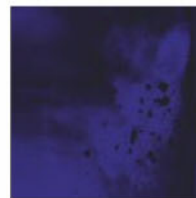
"She's a riot, man, talk about a wanderer." MC Taylor, the busy frontman of Hiss Golden Messenger, is discussing Alice Gerrard, an uncanny bluegrass singer whose new album he has produced. "She's in her eighties now," he continues, "and she's still going

on tours and sleeping on people's couches. She's a pretty small lady, and she wears triple-XL fleece sweatshirts and ripped-up sweatpants and oversized Crocs. I'm like, 'Alice, what? You're dressed like a seven-year-old boy right now.' She just doesn't care. She's an amazing person."

In the 1960s and '70s, Gerrard and her duetting accomplice Hazel Dickens (1935-2011) made a series of stark, striking folk recordings that were compiled on 1996's aptly titled *Pioneering Women Of Bluegrass*. While Dickens sang high and forlorn, Gerrard (then married to Mike Seeger) was a deeper, darker, more austere presence. Listen, for instance, to her take on Bill Monroe's "The One I Love Is Gone", which transcends conventional country melancholy and moves into a more spectral zone.

It is this atmosphere which pervades the start of Gerrard's new album, *Follow The Music*. The traditional "Bear Me Away" begins with a low viola drone, closer to John Cale than orthodox folk, and Gerrard incanting a dirge of unnerving potency. The intensity is sustained through the weird folk of Gerrard's own "Strange Land" but, gradually, the album becomes warmer and more relaxed, if still somewhat gothic in tone. Gillian Welch is revealed as a strong descendant, while the brackish invention of the playing (by members of the extended Hiss Golden Messenger family, mostly) sometimes recalls the instrumental flights of fellow Piedmont adventurers The Black Twig Pickers.

Follow The Music was conceived by accident, when Taylor was chatting on the phone to Tompkins Square head Josh Rosenthal, just as Gerrard was paying one of her regular visits to scan pictures in Taylor's office at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina ("She has the most insane fucking photo collection, like a photo of Clarence White backstage at a Byrds show in 1971"). Recorded in a barn, the prevailing vibes might appear homely and convivial. But it's the gravity of these songs and timbres which are most resonant and enduring – the intimations of ancient doom that led Emmylou Harris to recently note, "She is the real deal with the right stuff. She hasn't forgotten where country music came from." **JOHN MULVEY**



THE DEAD C

The Twelfth Spectacle

GRAPEFRUIT RECORD CLUB

Epic live slabs of deceptively primitivist avant-rock

8/10

Given the recent wave of nostalgia around the "Dunedin sound", that strain of jangly, erudite guitar pop from New Zealand in the early '80s, best exemplified by The Clean, The Chills, The Verlaines and The Bats, it's timely that The Dead C should arrive back on the scene with their own take on the nostalgia industry – *The Twelfth Spectacle* features four live recordings from across the last decade. Timely, too, because The Dead C stand as a potent reminder of what else can be done with classic rock instrumentation, a will-to-DIY, and dogged persistence. Across the eight sides of *The Twelfth Spectacle*, a very human music unfolds, where you can hear the three members of the group wrestling with their instruments, teasing moments of great conviction and group-mind from the simplest of moves: the clang of a down-strummed chord, the untutored scream of an amplifier protesting via feedback, the hypnotic pleasures of a metronomic beat appearing from behind a dense cloud of amp-buzz and drone. If anything, *The Twelfth Spectacle* really takes flight when The Dead C desert structure and genre altogether, intuitively carving new architectures from the most basic of rock instrumentation: two guitars and a drum kit.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE



DEEP PURPLE

Hard Road: The Mark I Studio Recordings 1968-9

PARLOPHONE

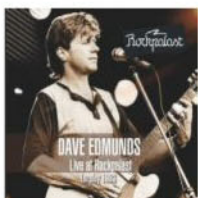
Not so much underground as under par

7/10

A by-product of old-school '60s pop, beat and R'n'B, the fledgling Deep Purple drew its personnel from the likes of The Outlaws (Ritchie Blackmore), The Artwoods (Jon Lord), and Johnny Kidd & The Pirates (Nick Simper). Small wonder the 'mark one' lineup was hamstrung by mixed aspirations and a schizophrenic approach that's more cabaret circuit Vanilla Fudge than hard-riffing heavy metal. This five-disc box gathers up *Shades Of Deep Purple* and *The Book Of Taliesyn* – in stereo and mono versions – plus the stereo-only *Deep Purple*, each bolstered by singles, alternative takes and mixes. Overly reliant on covers that produced pleasing enough prog-pop hits in America with "Hush" and "Kentucky Woman", other selections are let down by the smooth-voiced Rod Evans, who just didn't have the pipes to power "Hey Joe", "Help" or "River Deep Mountain High". There's certainly enough evidence of the possibilities of Blackmore and Lord's exhilarating guitar/Hammond organ interplay, notably "Fault Line/The Painter" and "Bird Has Flown" on *Deep Purple*. It's the best this particular bunch had to offer but Evans and Simper's days were already numbered.

EXTRAS: Stereo/mono mixes on *Shades* and *Taliesyn*. All feature extra tracks.

MICK HOUGHTON



DAVE EDMUNDS Live At Rockpalast REPERTOIRE

Vintage TV gig in sound and vision

Edmunds' post-Rockpile LPs *DE7* and *Information* were underwhelming affairs, overly clinical and

lacking the spontaneity of what went before. Thankfully, his live shows were rich in the ramshackle vibes of yore, such as this 1983 set for the long-running German TV show. Fronting a band that includes Rockpile compadre Billy Bremner on guitar and pianist Geraint Watkins (who, incestuously, has been part of Dave's old mucker Nick Lowe's band for the last 20 years), Edmunds' retro rock credentials are front-and-centre on Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis covers and a no-nonsense charge through "From Small Things (Big Things One Day Come)", the song Springsteen wrote for him. The party atmosphere dips dramatically, however, on the numbers from the Jeff Lynne-produced *Information*, synth backing tapes necessitating more rigid performances from the players. The democracy of Rockpile returns when Bremner takes over on vocals for "Loud Music In Cars" and "Trouble Boys", the latter distinguished by its maniacal twin harmony lead-guitar break, while Edmunds delivers a fiery Nashville-via-Monmouth vocal twang on "Sweet Little Lisa". It's not all note-perfect (always part of the live Rockpile charm), the fluffed chords and fumbled lyrics to Jim Ford's "Ju Ju Man" undeniably endearing.

EXTRAS: DVD of the full show.

7/10 TERRY STAUNTON



LITTLE MILTON ...Sings Big Soul KENT

The best of the soul belter's latter years

Mississippi-born James Milton Campbell cut his teeth on the American blues scene of

the 1950s, thanks to a fluid guitar style that owed a sizable debt to BB King. Mentored by Ike Turner, he made a handful of singles from Sun Records in Memphis before heading north to sign to Chess in Chicago. What became apparent along the way was that Milton also possessed a powerful and emotive soul voice, pitched somewhere between the plaintive testifying of Bobby 'Blue' Bland and the smoother croon of Brook Benton, and after leaving Chess at the tail-end of the '60s his guitar took an increasingly supporting role. These 18 tracks are taken from the albums he made for the Malaco label during the last 20 years of his life (he died in 2005, aged 70); perfectly pitched odes to adulterous liaisons such as Isaac Hayes' "Can't Trust Your Neighbour" and Frederick Knight's "This Time They Told The Truth". The blues/soul hybrid is in full effect on "I'd Rather Go Blind" and "Rainy Night In Georgia", both of which Milton imbues with his own character despite their familiarity, but for sheer undiluted soul passion it's hard to top the menacing groove of "You're Gonna Have A Murder On Your Hands".

EXTRAS: None.

TERRY STAUNTON



OASIS (What's The Story) Morning Glory? (reissue, 1995)

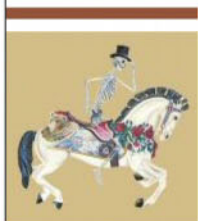
BIG BROTHER RECORDINGS

Oasis: The Imperial Years chronicled on three-disc set

The arrival of *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* in October 1995 began a three-year reign over the British music scene. As the ubiquity of "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back In Anger" proved, Noel Gallagher had refined the art of the arms-in-the-air-at-closing-time chorus he'd established on *Definitely Maybe*. In 2014, the new remaster doesn't address the trebly, compressed production of the original, but nuance was never Oasis' strong suit. Disc Two collects assorted B-sides and non-album tracks from the era; one wonders where Gallagher had the time to write material of this standard. Six of the 14 tracks here have appeared on *The Masterplan*; the rest include Beatles and Slade covers and their Stevie Wonder lift, "Step Out". Of the originals, "Acquiesce" and "Talk Tonight" are career highs; the rush and comedown, respectively, of a big night out in the period. Disc Three assembles demos and live cuts. The former are the most tantalising: "Some Might Say", especially, has field mouse timidity next to the leonine roar of the final version. The live tracks find the band accompanied by those huge crowds: rousing testaments to the shared experience of Oasis live at their peak.

EXTRAS: B-sides, demos, live tracks.

7/10 MICHAEL BONNER



GRATEFUL DEAD Spring 1990 (The Other One) RHINO

Branford Marsalis joins them on one last cosmic jam...

By the time the Dead undertook their 25th

anniversary tour, they had already released their final studio album (1989's *Built To Last*) and a crumbling Garcia had only five years left to live. Yet despite heroin addiction, most nights he could still summon up the spirit, as this 159-track, 23-disc set featuring eight complete shows from the tour proves. Garcia reserved his best chops for when he was challenged by a similarly heavyweight musician sitting in with the band – in this case, jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis, who joined them for a concert at Long Island's Nassau Coliseum and jammed for most of the set. The performance takes up three discs and provides the undoubted pinnacle of this sprawling boxset. The guitar/sax trade-offs between Garcia and Marsalis are as cosmic as you'd imagine on "Dark Star", but it's a measure of the fresh impetus he inspired that such lesser-regarded studio tracks as "Eyes Of The World" and "Estimated Prophet" are even more audaciously stellar. Afterwards, Marsalis sent Garcia a thank-you note saying, "I had the best time I've had in my entire life." You can hear why. If 23 discs is too daunting, the Marsalis performance is available separately as the three-disc set *Wake Up To Find Out* 3/29/90.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

REVELATIONS

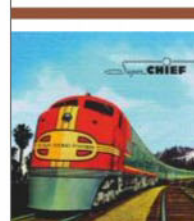
IAN PAICE explains how Purple's first hit broke the MKI lineup



► "There was a deal for a new English band on a US label set up by Bill Cosby – the first album had a lot of push in the US because of this new label. "Hush", the single, everyone knew and whatever we did to it, they seemed to like, and it became a big hit. We went over there for our first tour and thought we'd made it – only to discover that it's not quite that easy.

"Looking back, there was a feeling that where Jon, Ritchie and I were going, Rod [Evans] as a vocalist, couldn't come with us. He had a nice voice, but a balladeer's voice, so it was didn't work when he had to sing hard songs. Nicky [Simper] just wasn't happy: he was happier with what had come before, than with what was coming. He was a fine bass player and a lovely bloke, but you could see three of us moving in one direction. One couldn't come with us, and one didn't want to."

JOHN ROBINSON



VAN DYKE PARKS Super Chief BELLA UNION

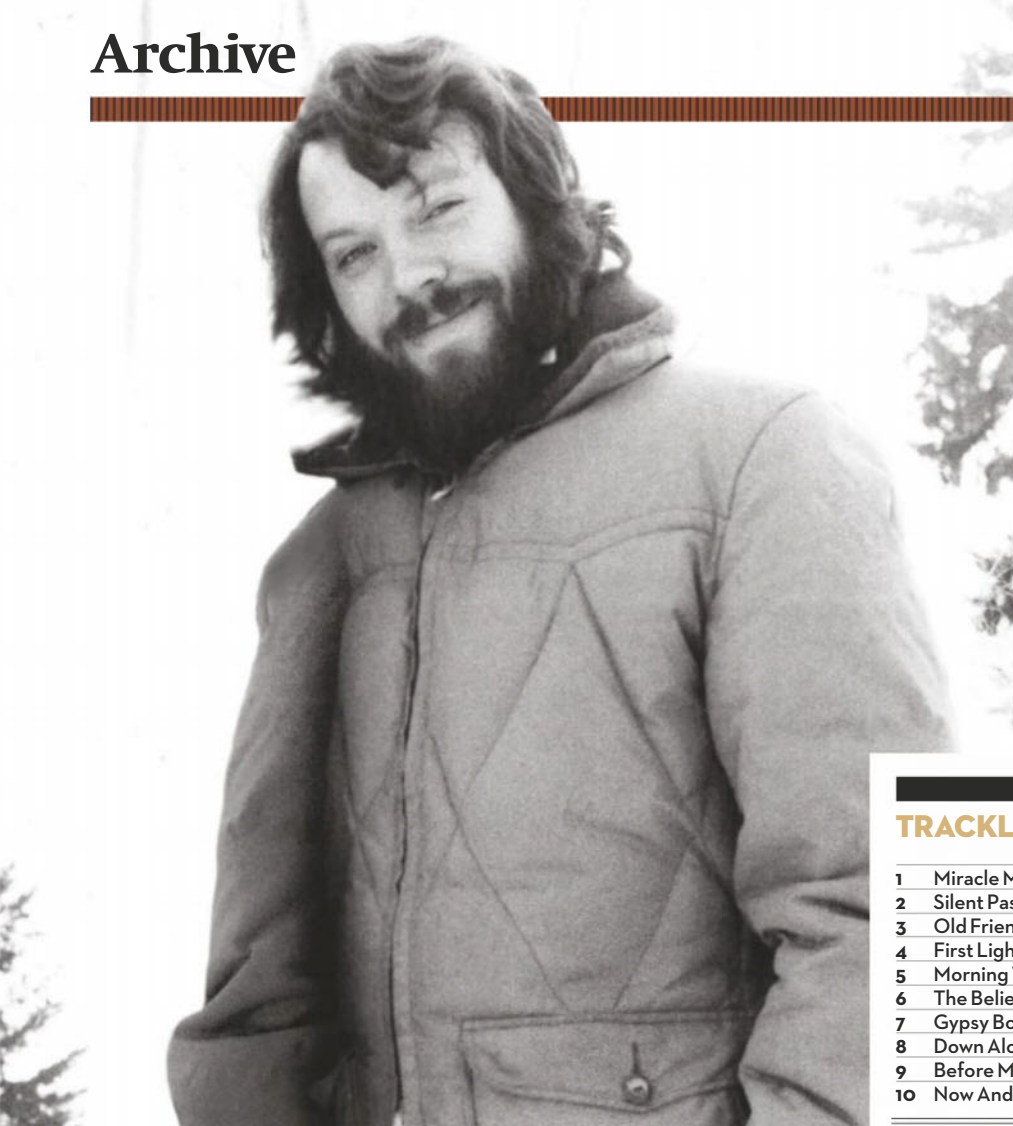
VDP's sonic representation of a 1950s train journey

Ever since he assisted Brian Wilson with *Smile* –

that fabled musical voyage from Plymouth Rock to Hawaii – Van Dyke Parks' albums and soundtracks have explored the myriad folk forms of the American continent. "However," he tells *Uncut*, "this album predates my interest in film, records or music journalists." It's inspired by a train journey from Princeton to Hollywood he made in 1955 as a 12-year-old child actor, travelling to appear alongside Grace Kelly and Alec Guinness in *The Swan*. Originally released last year on vinyl for Record Store Day, it features 30 re-recordings of Wild West orchestral miniatures which were written for film soundtracks but ended up on the cutting-room floor. Strings cascade, flutes chirrup, brass chuckles and banjos hiccup. Some tracks, like the title piece, go for bombast; others sound like they're underlining a Bugs Bunny skit ("Crossing The Colorado"); others tug at heartstrings ("I Ride An Old Paint Horse"); while there are delicious tangos, boleros and cowboy themes. In some ways it's more like one of those KPM library compilations of incidental music than a stand-alone suite, but it's certainly packed with beautiful orchestrations – and proof that this sprightly 71-year-old could still write a magnificent Hollywood score.

EXTRAS: None.

JOHN LEWIS



BOB CARPENTER

Silent Passage

NO QUARTER

An LA country-folk masterpiece from 1974, unearthed. *By Allan Jones*



8/10

IF *SILENT PASSAGE* had come out as originally planned in 1974, bearded Americana types might even now be touring a live version of it, much like Robin Pecknold and others have recently been performing Gene Clark's *No Other*, an album it much

resembles. Warner Bros actually had copies pressed and ready for distribution when a contractual stand-off between Carpenter and producer Brian Ahern saw the album's release first postponed and eventually cancelled – introspective singer-songwriters no longer so much in vogue by the time the disputed contract had expired. Apart from a limited 1984 release on the small Canadian independent label Stony Plains Records, *Silent Passage* has therefore not been widely heard in 40 years, Carpenter subsequently pretty much giving up on music, devoting his life to religious studies and becoming ordained as a Buddhist monk even as he was dying in 1995 from inoperable brain cancer.

Who was Bob Carpenter? According to a brief 1977 biography, he was part-Ojibway, born into the First Nations tribe at the Temagami Reservation in

Northern Ontario and from a young age brought up in foster homes and orphanages, grim circumstances he escaped by joining the navy. Some years of vagabond itinerancy followed, Carpenter eventually in the mid-'60s fetching up in Toronto, where he was inspired by Neil Young, Joni Mitchell and Gordon Lightfoot, regulars then in the city's Yorkville folk clubs. During a hostile winter spent alone in a ramshackle log cabin on a remote British Columbia commune, he started writing the unique songs that brought him to the attention of Neil Young producer David Briggs,

with whom he began an album for Capitol, soon abandoned after the pair fell out. This was a hint perhaps of difficulties to come when he was signed by Brian Ahern, a young Canadian producer who'd recently launched Anne Murray's solo career, although he may be even better known to *Uncut* readers as producer of Emmylou Harris, who appears here as backing vocalist on several tracks.

Ahern took Carpenter to LA, where he'd assembled a crack band to back him that included LA session veterans Lee Sklar on bass and Russ Kunkel on drums, with Little Feat's Lowell George and Bill Payne on guitar and keyboards, with further appearances from Ben Keith and Buddy Cage on pedal steel. Carpenter later complained Ahern gussied up too many tracks with unwelcome strings, woodwind, horns and backing singers. He would perhaps have preferred a starker sound, the better to accommodate the wounded intimacy of his songs, which were much preoccupied with a prevailing disillusion, not uncommon as the halcyon utopianism of the '60s gave way to the violent inclemency of the '70s (Carpenter's big on unsettled weather as a metaphor for universal turbulence).

TRACKLIST

- 1 Miracle Man
- 2 Silent Passage
- 3 Old Friends
- 4 First Light
- 5 Morning Train
- 6 The Believer
- 7 Gypsy Boy
- 8 Down Along The Border
- 9 Before My Time
- 10 Now And Then

To an extent, *Silent Passage* is a requiem for an era of betrayed promise, hence the grieving tone it shares with *No Other* and also *After The Gold Rush*, Jackson Browne's *Late For The Sky*, Joni Mitchell's *Blue* and Paul Siebel's *Jack-Knife Gypsy*, all of them glum reflections on the hippy diaspora of the era. This was after all a time of break-up and disintegration. What had become known as the counterculture was fragmenting, its chastened membership variously embracing desperate hedonism (the "acid, booze and ass/Needles, guns and grass" of Joni's "Blue"), religion and terrorism. As many of the songs on *Silent Passage* recognise – conspicuously the handsome title track and "Morning Train" – at least until the fog lifted you were now pretty much out in the darkness on your own.

The album opens almost jauntily with "Miracle Man", a country-rock gem in any circumstances, something of The Band's rustic funkiness further enhanced by the bittersweet sting of a typically elegant Lowell George slide-guitar solo. Carpenter's voice, however, a grainy rasp occasionally reminiscent of Richie Havens, inclines more to the desolate woe and fretful uncertainty that consumes the bulk of the record, notably the brooding remorse of "Down Along The Border" and "Before My Time", the eerie visions of "Gypsy Boy" and "First Light", a dramatic anticipation of approaching apocalypse, the rapture to come, which on the closing "Now And Then" is embraced with startling fatalism.

Q&A

Brian Ahern



What can you tell us about Bob Carpenter and the hopes you had for his career?

With the great songs, heavyweight recording talent and Warner Brothers powerhouse behind him, I felt Bob Carpenter's *Silent Passage* could not miss.

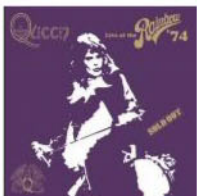
Why didn't the album come out as planned?

Bob could be gullible. I remember a phone call from Mo Ostin, the Chairman of the Board, describing hostile attempts to renegotiate the terms of Bob's already signed contract. Mo felt the woman [negotiating for Bob] was operating with "unclean hands" because the deal had been made and 20-30,000 albums manufactured. We decided to melt them down.

What do you think of it, 40 years on?

Bob's performances still impress. This project was one of my favourites from the lush analogue days. I still enjoy hearing the Beauty and the Beast!

INTERVIEW: ALLAN JONES



QUEEN Live At The Rainbow '74 VIRGIN

The funky metal years

This box documents two gigs at the Finsbury Park Rainbow from a pivotal year in Queen's history,

8/10

when the single "Killer Queen" transformed these much-derided glam metal also-rans into a chart-topping, piano-based studio rock outfit. The first concert accompanied the *Queen II* LP tour of March '74 and, throughout, Freddie Mercury hardly touches the "jangle box" (as Brian May describes the piano before "The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke"). Instead, this is a metal band dominated by May's monstrous riffs: from the Black Sabbath-sized sludge rock of "Son And Daughter" to the Hendrix-isms of "Great King Rat". The second gig, recorded just after the launch of *Sheer Heart Attack* eight months on, sees Mercury's piano starting to occupy centrestage (especially on "In The Lap Of The Gods") and adding a vaudevillian touch to "Bring Back Leroy Brown". Both gigs also prove that those operatic harmonies weren't just studio creations – "Ogre Battle" shows all four bandmembers interspersing the galloping doom metal with squealing, pitch-perfect chorales. They hadn't quite mastered the arena rock swagger showcased on 1979's *Live Killers*, but this is a more satisfying collection.

EXTRAS: Seven packages, some of which

7/10 include a DVD/Blu-ray of the November gig. A Super Deluxe Box features a 60-page hardback book and reproductions of tickets, brochures and memorabilia. **JOHN LEWIS**



LOU REED/ ZEITKRATZER Metal Machine Music

ZEITKRATZER

**New music ensemble's
acoustic reading of
noise classic...**

8/10

"It can't be done. It's impossible!" was the late, great Lou Reed's response, when contacted by new music ensemble Zeitkratzer, who were seeking permission to perform his legendary noise suite, *Metal Machine Music*, live. It's not surprising: *MMM* is Reed's legendary double-album opus of electronic noise, originally read by many as his response to or protest against his then-label RCA, often considered an attempt to sabotage his career, but subsequently rediscovered by generations of heads, freaks, and – evidently now – avant-garde and modern composition heavyweights. Given their track record of performing with artists like Keiji Haino and Whitehouse, Zeitkratzer were the perfect ensemble to take on *MMM*. They have been performing the piece, on rare occasions, across the past decade, sometimes with Reed joining them on guitar. He doesn't appear on this performance from 2012, but in many ways, he's not needed: Zeitkratzer have 'got' the internal dynamics of *MMM*, and truly understand that the deceptive monotony of the piece conceals moments of beauty and almighty clangour. It's a staggering feat, feeling very much like a final unveiling of the depths hidden in one of popular culture's more misunderstood by-ways.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

The Specialist

Metal



King 810: metal
memoirs from
'Murdertown' aka
Flint, Michigan

➤ THE NATURAL HOME of the concept album used to be progressive rock, where records about intrepid wizards and futuristic dystopias flourished in a landscape of expensive synthesisers and complicated time signatures. Today, though, it's metal that can lay claim to the high concepts, and groups like Chile's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* can build a career on interpreting the horror fantasia of HP Lovecraft through the medium of ferocious death metal:

see the untiring *Baphomet Pan Shub-Niggurath* **IRON BONEHEAD** 6/10.

Not all modern metal, though, is based in such outlandish concerns. *King 810's Memoirs Of A Murderer* **ROADRUNNER** 7/10 is all about their experiences growing up in Flint, Michigan – once a centre for automobile production, now nicknamed "Murdertown" for its eye-watering crime statistics.

There's something of the pugilistic heft of Pantera to the rusted-metal riffs and bulging-vein intensity of "Killeme All" and "Fat Around The Heart". David Gunn's theatrical, enunciated vocals reach for a grisly sort of social commentary, meanwhile – albeit, one that, like the '90s gangsta rap wave, embodies the ugliness of his surroundings, rather than seeking to transcend it.

Illustrating the permeability between metal and prog is Sweden's *Opeth*, who began in

1990 as an extreme metal group, but have slowly morphed over time to adopt the mores of prog. Mixed by Steven Wilson of Porcupine Tree, the group's 11th album, *Pale Communion* **ROADRUNNER** 8/10 is a florid thing even by their standards, showing off Mikael Åkerfeldt's spry songcraft through the lilting vocal harmonies of the acoustic "Elysian Woes", and the band's willowy flexibility through the Yes-like flourishes that wave "Cusp Of Eternity" to a close.

The English midlands has long been a breeding ground for metal, and few bands were more influential than *Godflesh*, a group whose claustrophobic dread and harsh industrial rhythms offered a new way for metalheads seeking escape from hair metal hell.

Reformed in 2009, it's taken until now for new material to make it to record; yet new EP *Decline And Fall* **AVANTAGE** 8/10 compares well to past

touchstones such as 1989's *Streetcleaner*, the guttural vocals and drum machine crunch of the title track as bracing as a shot of battery acid. The legacy of Godflesh's Brummie kin Black Sabbath, meanwhile, continues to reverberate. Exhibit one this month: *Pallbearer*, a quartet from Little Rock, Arkansas whose

Foundations Of Burden **PROFOUND LORE** 8/10 takes up Sabbath's template of downtuned sludge and doomy gesticulation and elevates it into something of spiritual grace. See especially 11-minute closer "Vanished", which grapples with mortality in the face of the infinite on a rocky sea of chanted vocal harmonies and desperate, soul-searching leads. **LOUIS PATTISON**





JIM REEVES The Complete Abbott Recordings, Plus

BEAR FAMILY

**Gentleman Jim
in the raw**

7/10 Before he became a
country-politan cash

cow with RCA, Jim Reeves was signed to a couple of small Texan labels and Hollywood's Abbott Records. This fascinating 3CD set, issued to mark the 50th anniversary of his death in a plane crash, maps Reeves' modest career with Macy's in 1949 and then with Abbott, beginning in 1952 and ending when RCA came calling three years later. The tidy baritone may have already been in place, but he's still to make the transition to unabashed fireside crooner. Instead these songs have more grit, with a spread of styles that span Western swing, honky-tonk and hillbilly blues. He's positively frisky at times, especially on songs like "Tahiti" and "Red Eyed And Rowdy", while the itchy fiddles of "Gypsy Heart" provide an added airiness to his delivery. A couple of tunes – "Bimbo" and "Mexican Joe" – are key to Reeves' progress, landing Abbott their first hits and plonking him at the top of the country charts for the first time. There's certainly plenty to love, though the demos'n'all nature of this comp (four versions of novelty "Beatin' On The Ding Dong") is clearly designed to appeal to completists only.

EXTRAS: 3CD mini-boxset with

6/10 100-page booklet.

ROB HUGHES



ROC ROC (reissue, 1995) METAL POSTCARD

**'90s fringe dwellers'
tag-averse first**

7/10

Even with hindsight, it's
hard to fathom what ROC
were up to with their debut

album. Were they instinctual miners of a deeply idiosyncratic, alt-pop seam or smart-arsed post-modernists masquerading as outsiders? Their anti-career suggests the former, but whichever – the trio belonged to Britpop like cats belong in the sea. Disco Inferno and AR Kane might have shared their experimental drive, but neither had the same pick-and-mix approach to modern pop or their habit of casually skewering expectation with every song. It's easy to imagine Virgin (who dropped ROC after one LP) hearing the Luscious Jackson-style funk of "Hey You Chick" or "La Heredia" (baggy grooves scribbled over with My Bloody Valentine noise) and predicting chart success, but listen to the distorted ranting in "Excised" or "Clouds" – where a sweet, fairground giddiness is offset by Fred Browning singing, "and that's why I became a cold-hearted, motherfucking selfish son of a bastard" – and you wonder if they'd really thought the signing through. The trio seemed finished by 2000, but released an album on a US independent in 2006. This reissue precedes the delivery later this year of a new EP; that ROC really could play it any way only amps up expectation.

EXTRAS: None.

SHARON O'CONNELL



THE SHANES Let Them Show You: The Anthology 1964-1967

RPM INTERNATIONAL

7/10

**R'n'B, psych, pop,
blues and proto-prog
from Swedish '60s**

longhairs in debt to The Beatles

Listening to this anthology, The Shanes takes you on a neat tour of '60s music, progressing from the rough-necked R'n'B of "Let Me Show You Who I Am" to the softly psychedelic "Chris Craft No 9", a splendid piece of late-'60s pop heavily indebted to "Penny Lane" and even recorded at Abbey Road – The Shanes were the first Swedish band to record in the studio. That was fitting, as like many bands of the era, The Shanes were transformed by The Beatles, having previously been an instrumental band, scoring Top 10 hits on a Western theme (their name came from Alan Ladd's *Shane*) in imitation of The Shadows. By 1964, they'd added vocals, embraced the blues and grown their hair. Soon The Shanes were being called "degenerates" by the local media but that didn't stop them from enjoying chart success throughout the 1960s thanks to great songs like the shout-and-shake single "I Don't Want Your Love", a bone-crunching cover of "Roadrunner", the swinging "Where Can She Be" and the Who-like "When Love Is Gone". This anthology contains 22 songs from their four-year career, culminating in the proto-prog "I've Got It Bad".

EXTRAS: None.

PETER WATTS

HOW TO BUY... SUN RA



SUN RA & HIS SOLAR ARKESTRA *The Magic City* SATURN RESEARCH, 1966

The mid-'60s were Sun Ra's finest period and this pulses with mantric energy. "The Shadow World" is a peak: frenzied percussion, jangling vibes, blurts of brass, before Ra splits the skies with his piano, the wind instruments hustling riffs and jagged, sour melodies out of the deep blue sky.

9/10



SUN RA & HIS ASTRO INFINITY ORCHESTRA *Strange Strings*

SATURN RESEARCH, 1967

Give a bunch of Sun Ra's regular musicians string and homemade instruments they've never played before, and cut an album based on first encounters... It shouldn't work, but the collective were playing at such a higher-minded level, the music is riotously untethered, the orchestra at a peak of lateral thinking.

8/10



SUN RA & HIS MYTH SCIENCE ARKESTRA *Cosmic Tones For Mental Telepathy* SATURN RESEARCH, '67

With a canon of several hundred LPs, it's hard to say, "If you only buy one Sun Ra record...", but it may as well be this one. Here you get a near-perfect sense of both the freedom and the glorious melody inherent in his music.

9/10

JONDALE



SUN RA AND HIS ARKESTRA In The Orbit Of Ra STRUT

**If you find Earth boring,
Sun Ra has the answer**

He came from Saturn –
try to disprove it – one
hundred years ago, and by

9/10

the time he left this world, in 1993, Sun Ra and his various Arkestras created some of the most gorgeous, puzzling and forward-thinking jazz you're likely to hear. During his creative peak, across the '60s and '70s, he and most of the Arkestra were living communally in New York and Philadelphia, which meant they could rehearse at a moment's notice: the records they mostly self-released during that time (on the El Saturn label) are full of beguiling free improvisations, melodic chants, tunes that verge on nursery-rhyme simplicity, hallucinatory Moog solos, all underpinned with Sun Ra's individualistic swing. *In The Orbit Of Ra*, compiled by current bandleader and Arkestra veteran Marshall Allen, is an excellent introduction to the world of Sun Ra: it highlights that behind the layers of mythology, Sun Ra had a true melodic gift, something you can hear on the heartbreaking soul vamp of "Somebody Else's World", and the group chants of "Rocket Number Nine" and "Have You Heard The Latest News From Neptune". It also doesn't skimp on the Arkestra's more out-there moments – "Astro Black" is giddy, unrestrained, drifting in its own orbit.

EXTRAS: None.

JONDALE



VARIOUS ARTISTS *No Seattle: Forgotten Sounds Of The North-West Grunge Era 1986-97*

7/10

SOUL JAZZ

No Kurt. No Eddie. Some tunes, though
A curveball from the Soul Jazz label, best known for their elegant reggae and post-punk collections, this double-CD set focuses on the lost groups of the Pacific North-West. The informative sleeve notes confirms this was a tight scene: every one of 23 bands collected here contain a member that performed on a bill with Nirvana, with many boasting more intimate connections. The Ones, who turn out the garagey rock'n'roll of "Talk To Me", feature on bass Jack Endino, later to produce *Bleach*. Bundle Of Hiss, who caterwaul chaotically on "Wench", would later morph into Nirvana tourmates Tad. Thrash rockers Attica formed in the Melvins' basement, and feature drummer Aaron Burckhard, who Nirvana fired before recording their first demo. These are not, in short, made-its, or even almost-made-its. Luckily, *No Seattle, Forgotten Sounds...* does confirm that the best songs of a bunch of also-rans still pretty much rocks. Of special note, the raw grlrl snarl of Calamity Jane's "Magdalena" and the Minor Threat blast of Vampire Lezbos' "Stop Killing The Seals", which might be tongue in cheek, but equally, might not.

EXTRAS: A 44-page booklet.

8/10 LOUIS PATTISON



VARIOUS ARTISTS Night Walker, The Jack Nitzsche Story Vol 3

ACE

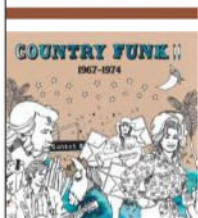
7/10

More hits, curios
and unheards from
production maestro

Like a pop Zelig, the late Jack Nitzsche wandered between genres, eras, artists and screen scores, writing, arranging, producing and playing. Ace Records' third collection of his work proves as entertaining and oddball as its predecessors. Nitzsche's years riding shotgun to Phil Spector account for much of it, with minor hits from The Crystals, The Ronettes and Darlene Love, the last describing Jack as "a cross between a beat poet and a chemistry nerd". There are classics too; Buffalo Springfield's "Expecting To Fly" (Nitzsche was an early champion of Neil Young), sleek, intelligent pop like Jackie DeShannon's "Try To Forget Him", class rock like Mink De Ville's "Just Your Friends" and oddities like the Modern Folk Quintet's psych-sprung "Night Time Girl". Nitzsche understood weird. His own "Night Walker" is symphonic LA noir, "Lower California" more loopy still (alas, Jack was no lead vocalist). "Poor White Hound Dog", a wailing blues concocted with Ry Cooder for the *Performance* soundtrack, still casts a spooky spell, and while we're rooted in the 1960s here, CC Adcock's gnarly Johnny Otis cover "Castin' My Spell" from 2001 shows Nitzsche retained – or recovered – his mojo to the end.

EXTRAS: None.

NEIL SPENCER



VARIOUS ARTISTS Country Funk 1969-1975 (Volume II)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

8/10

More strange,
down-home grooves,
expertly compiled

In the liner notes for the first volume of *Country Funk*, Jessica Hundley correctly divines the parameters of this mysterious, unexpectedly pliant genre: "The elation of gospel, the sexual thrust of the blues, country hoedown harmony with inner city grit". But it's also about that extended moment in the '70s, when the music industry, shaken up by the cultural ruptures of the late '60s, were caught unawares, trying to figure out exactly what was going down: unsure of what would work in the market, the industry let all kinds of weirdness and wildness fly under, and sometimes straight across, its radar. What's most compelling about this second volume of *Country Funk* is the surprises, the outliers that make a different kind of sense in this context, like Jackie DeShannon's beautifully deep cover of The Band's "The Weight", or the way Townes Van Zandt's lordless desperation plays as the chink in the armour of the dark groove of "Hunger Child Blues". Saving the very best for last, though, with Willis Alan Ramsey's classic "Northeast Texas Women", a clattering anti-epic, from Ramsey's lone, self-titled album from back in 1972. Now, there's a record someone needs to reissue, as soon as possible.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



PAUL WELLER Classic Album Selection: Vol 1

ISLAND

First five solo albums
in one handy box

Of the many Dr Who-like
regenerations Paul Weller
has enjoyed, the one that

8/10

marked his emergence as a solo artist in the early 1990s is arguably the most significant. Recorded when he was aged between 34 and 42, these five LPs that mark Weller's meteoric trajectory from the post-Style Council wilderness to platinum-selling artist. *Paul Weller* (1992) mixed soul, rock, funk and acid jazz with a trickle of electronic trickery courtesy of Brendan Lynch (Weller's key collaborator during this run of albums). *Wild Wood* (1993) was soulful, reflective and folksy, drawing from the pastoral vibes of Traffic and John Martyn. Meanwhile, its successor, *Stanley Road* (1995), suggested Weller was ageing too comfortably: "You Do Something To Me" became the stuff of first dances at weddings. Indeed, *Stanley Road* did more to define Weller in the public's mind as 'the Modfather', supposedly presiding over conservative notions of British guitar music. *Heavy Soul* (1997) had fire in its belly, and found Weller experimenting with sitars, zithers and harmoniums, but lacked a strong suite of songs. Opening the new century, *Heliocentric* leant towards an introspective, acoustic soul (he worked here with Nick Drake's string arranger Robert Kirby) and still feels like a significant component in his maturing repertoire.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER



WIRE Document And Eyewitness

PINK FLAG

Bottle-throwing and
belligerence from 1981
Wire live reissue

8/10

Document And Eyewitness
could be filed alongside

other unlistenable live albums like Suicide's 23 *Minutes Over Brussels* and Dylan & The Dead, but this double-album reissue attempts to give an awkward offspring some deeper context. It features Wire, a band that thrived on defying expectations, at the Electric Ballroom in 1980 giving a performance of art school mindfuckery and wilful antagonism that had the audience hurling bottles. The band were playing new, under-rehearsed material that was avant-garde theatre as much as music – they whacked gas cookers, dressed as beekeepers and bashed out tracks like "Zegg HOQP", which sounds like Stomp for meth-heads. Rough Trade spliced this footage with audience interviews ("How long did it last for?" "It seemed like bloody hours.") and added "conventional" tracks from equally intense 1979 concerts in London and Montreux. While much of the Electric Ballroom show is bonkers, the crowd response is adrenalinising, giving tracks like "Piano Tuner" and "And Then ...Coda" a thrilling, unmanageable velocity.

EXTRAS: Remastered from the original tapes,

8/10 restoring the 1981 tracklisting (altered in a 1989 CD release). Includes a second CD of singles (the brilliant "Our Swimmer") and so-so rehearsal recordings. There will also be digital-only "legal bootlegs" of full recordings of all three shows. STEPHEN DALTON

COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ Anticipated?
Someone who would
know a bit about building
up suspense for a record
is **Vashti Bunyan**. As
recently as 15 years
ago, the writer of the
enchanting album *Just*

Another *Diamond Day* was something of a myth: missing, presumed vanished into some kind of bucolic family bliss. Her gradual rediscovery then culminated in the release of new album *Lookaftering* in 2005. Now, boasting again Bunyan's tightrope walk between twee and otherworldly, is *Heartleap*. Again, it's been worth waiting for.

Rather more prolific a musician is **Thurston Moore**. After the surprising, acoustic songs of 2011's Beck-produced *Demolished Thoughts*, his new album *The Best Day* finds him returning to an electric template more familiar to fans of his work with Sonic Youth and Chelsea Light Moving – yet retaining an impressive experimental edge. Along that edge, it seems Moore might meet with **Scott Walker**, whose new work is a collaboration with Stephen O'Malley's experimental metallers **Sunn O))),** Held over from last month, we're hoping that whatever obstacle which presented itself to the pairing will now have been cleared. Elsewhere, you will enjoy the return of **Caribou**, the reissue of **Underworld's** classy *Dubnobasswithmyheadman*, and the Television-like tropes of **Chris Forsyth And The Solar Motel Band**.

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A truly mad series... Victoria Williams in *The Changes*

to the post-apocalyptic futureshock. After nine episodes more or less realistically exploring what life in a fallen agrarian Britain run by self-appointed fanatics might be like, the final explanation for everything that has been going on is truly mad, rooted deep in gnarly national mythology.

In this, the series is emblematic of that feverish strain of weirded-out British children's TV that blossomed like a fungus across the late-1960s and 1970s, then withered away in the early 1980s, never to be seen again. The likes of *Children Of The Stones*, *The Owl Service* and semi-Satanic/Nigel Kneale-influenced *Dr Who* stories such as "The Daemons".

Dabbling in the occult, green pagan vibes and trippy psych sci-fi, these were the kids' TV counterpart to the British folk-horror cinema cycle that briefly flourished in the same period in films like *The Wicker Man*, *Blood On Satan's Claw* and Kneale's *The Witches*. All seemed to come bubbling up out of the landscape and divine currents then mingling in the air – the back-to-nature movement, in both its idealism and bullying militancy; the attractions and dangers of denying progress; ITV scare documentaries about suburban devil cults. Back then, when

kids were much more likely to be out playing by themselves, it was easy to turn the corner of some derelict lane and find yourself in the cover of a Dennis Wheatley novel.

Adapted by writer-producer Anna Home, the woman who brought everything from *Jackanory* through *Grange Hill* to *Teletubbies* into our lives, *The Changes* doesn't have *Children Of The Stones'* psychedelic narrative ambition, nor its present-day hauntological cult following. But, arriving on the heels of the candlelit nights and government-imposed powercuts of 1974's Three-Day-Week, it was more urgent about reflecting contemporary social concerns.

Home excises some of Dickinson's weirder touches – notably a morphine-addict wizard – but marshals his trilogy into a compelling parable positively crawling with the anxieties of its age. Alongside societal breakdown and ecological fears come religious fundamentalism, sexism and racism; broadcast when National Front marches were making the headlines, the only reasonable people Nicky meets are a band of Sikhs, dubbed "the devil's children" by the superstitious white folks. Home's ending, too, seems wilfully ambiguous: when, finally, machines start running again and the roads fill up with traffic belching pollution, it's hard to tell whether this is supposed to be a happy outcome.

The Changes attempted something unimaginable in children's TV today: it actually tried to disturb children, in order to make them think. These days, kid's TV drama seems preoccupied more with encouraging children to consume. That's the truly disturbing thing.

EXTRAS: 8/10 Lovely booklet, 1983 public information film about the experience of British Asians, stills gallery.

THE CHANGES

BFI

Transmission from the weird lost world of British children's TV. By Damien Love



8/10

IT'S EARLY EVENING, just another day in the eternal boredom of British summer. In the front room of their terraced house, a schoolgirl does her homework while Mother knits and Father sits smoking his pipe. A television flickers quietly. Almost time for dinner. Suddenly, a weird, piercing, pulsing noise begins. Face contorted, Dad lurches to

his feet, grabs a heavy metal ashtray. Then, swinging it like an axe, he starts smashing the TV to pieces, grunting, pipe still clenched between his teeth. The girl and her mother look on. Their limbs spasm. Their faces shudder as though their heads might explode. The migraine noise screams on around them. Now, they are all on their knees in the kitchen, lost in an animalistic family fit, tearing apart the cooker, the Hoover, the fridge. Outside, it continues, the street filled with their maddened, rioting neighbours, throwing TVs from windows, burning cars. Destroying everything.

Everyday folks in a sudden, unexplained orgy of violence against domestic appliances. Some

smoking pipes. It's a Ballardian scene that would not be out of place in some early-David Cronenberg sci-horror. But we're far from the realm of late-night cult movies here. In fact, we're in our living room, and it's teatime. The sequence is the mind-meltingly unsettling opening to *The Changes*, a BBC children's drama that went out on Mondays at 5.20pm in early 1975. It tends to be the only part of the 10-part series people remember, if they remember it at all. But what follows is equally strange, as, following the cataclysm of *The Noise*, our schoolgirl heroine Nicky Gore (the pensive Victoria Williams) is left alone in a silent Britain that has strangely rejected electricity and modernity – pylons and their "bad wires" become sinister markers in the landscape – and returned to the fields for a new Dark Age, superstition, witch hunts and all. At one point, she is sentenced to be stoned to death.

Cannily adapted from a trilogy of novels by Peter Dickinson, *The Changes* bears striking similarities to another bleak BBC series from the same year – *Survivors*, by Dalek creator Terry Nation. Both present a Britain where the cities have been abandoned and feudal fascist groups enthusiastically spring up among the hedgerows, as though the seeds were always there, waiting. But *The Changes* gives a magical Arthurian twist



HOMELAND SEASON 3

20TH CENTURY FOX
HOME ENTERTAINMENT

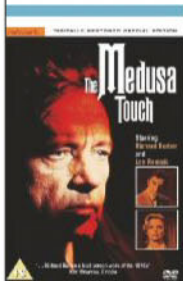
What seemed like most of its original audience had given up on *Homeland* by the end of its second series, complaining it had become too far-fetched, as if earlier it had been notable for its documentary veracity

8/10

and adherence to nothing but hard fact. God knows what they would have made of its audaciously plotted third season, which after a brilliant slow-burn build-up accelerated into violent overdrive, Brody on a suicide mission to Tehran that might have been scripted by John Milius in episodes directed by Walter Hill.

EXTRAS: Audio commentary, deleted scenes, two featurettes.

ALLAN JONES



THE MEDUSA TOUCH

NETWORK

Richard Burton wrecks London with his mind

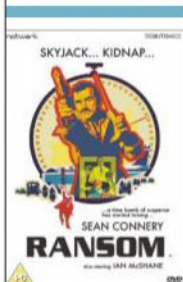
From 1978, one of the best of that post-*Omen* apocalyptic horror wave starring huge classy Hollywood names. Why has someone beat bitter author Burton's brains in? As he lingers in a

8/10

charismatic coma, dogged Euro-detective Lino Ventura assembles the terrible answer in flashback: Burton is possessed of mad, Scanner-like telekinetic powers, capable of raising fire, pulling planes from the sky... and worse. Mad cheese, but with a genuine strange, piercing power.

EXTRAS: Director's commentary, trailer, behind-the-scenes footage, gallery.

DAMIEN LOVE



RANSOM

NETWORK

Sean Connery is a shtern Shcandinavian security shpeshialist AKA *The Terrorists*, this forgotten 1974 thriller sees Connery moving away from Bond action for something (slightly) more rooted in genuine international security concerns. Filmed in

7/10

Oslo, Connery's "Norwegian" security man is forced to deal with twin terrorist operations: the kidnapping of the British ambassador, and a plane hijacking at the airport. Low-key, but spare, slow and engrossing, with Ian McShane leading the bad guys, and chill atmosphere courtesy of Bergman cinematographer Sven Nykvist.

EXTRAS: Trailers, promo material, gallery.

DAMIEN LOVE

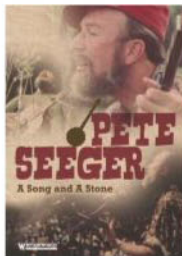


The "great American patriot" himself

PETE SEEGER

A Song And A Stone

WIENERWORLD



7/10

Vintage doc following the folk hero for 18 months

1969 PROVED A vintage year for Pete Seeger. Marking his personal half-century, the year also witnessed Seeger's return from the wilderness imposed back in the mid-'50s, when he was blacklisted by Congress as 'Un-American'. He led a march of half a million people in Washington

demanding an end to the Vietnam War then, the following year, his appearance on Johnny Cash's TV show marked his rehabilitation on the airwaves. For the folk icon, it was sweet validation.

If Seeger's re-emergence owed something to the times – the Peace Movement was at its zenith – the championship of Cash was significant. As the film opens, Seeger is en route to Nashville for his TV spot, sore that he won't be able to sing about Vietnam but prepared to 'compromise' – "I have spent my whole life compromising," he smiles. The backstage scenes are among the most arresting here, the Man In Black playing gracious host, describing him to camera as

"one of the greatest American patriots I know". The duet on "It Takes A Worried Man" is anodyne, but the sense of triumph palpable.

The offstage Seeger proves a more freewheeling character than one might expect from his reputation as po-faced folk purist; more dapper, waggish, Billy Bragg-ish. Indeed, one problem is that Seeger the activist is more impressive than Seeger the musician with his rudimentary banjo licks and well-worn setlist – this was, after all, the year of Zeppelin's debut. He could perform, though, whether charming children clustered at his feet or leading the protesting thousands. He exudes genial certainty even when making statements that were toxic to the establishment: "The American nation is going to be judged as criminals after this Vietnam incident."

Seeger's energy was simply unstoppable. His 50th birthday coincided with the maiden voyage of Clearwater, a sloop built by Seeger and his wife Toshi, and he never looks happier than when helping to haul the boat's mainsail alongside young volunteers. When Seeger's father is asked to list his son's faults, he responds, "There nothing bad about Peter... except he's getting bald."

A Song And A Stone itself is no classic. It's often poorly shot, and its didactic tone now appears clumsy – the juxtaposition of Boy Scouts and marching troops, for example – but it's a fascinating time capsule, and a glimpse into the soul of a Great American.

EXTRAS: None.

NEIL SPENCER



THE SOPRANOS: THE COMPLETE SERIES

HBO

Deluxe, 28-disc Blu-ray debut for the complete saga You'll have heard of the show, so how do the three-hours-ish of new extras shape up? By and large, excellent: laudatory lead

10/10

documentary *Defining A Television Landmark* has contributions from everyone, including Steve Buscemi and, in archive, the late James Gandolfini; *Alec Baldwin Interviews David Chase* is as entertaining as it sounds; *Supper With The Sopranos* sees Chase at dinner with various veterans, chewing over subjects like the (in)famous final episode; and *12 Lost Scenes* adds a little more Tony to our lives.

EXTRAS: As above.

9/10 DAMIEN LOVE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

One For The Road: Ronnie Lane Memorial Concert

ANGEL AIR

Townshend, Ron Wood and Weller turn out at Royal Albert Hall

This concert allowed old muckers and earnest imitators to belt out 40 or so of the Faces man's most memorable tunes.

6/10

Lane's band, Slim Chance, reconvened for the occasion, and provide fine backing for some of the choicest moments – Pete Townshend doing "Stone" and Paul Weller's lovely "The Poacher". Ron Wood plays a raucous "Stay With Me" alongside Kenney Jones' The Jones Gang, who also back Townshend's gorgeous take on "Heart To Hang Onto". Decent viewing, if you can stomach Glen Matlock's mauling of "Debris".

EXTRAS: Photo gallery.

PETER WATTS

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

Jesse Eisenberg blows up a dam, Philip Seymour Hoffman shines in his final leading role, and Fela Kuti's tale is messily told...

FINDING FELA Seventeen years on from his death, Fela Kuti remains a complex figure of thorny contradictions. Born into the Nigerian elite, he was an outspoken opponent of his home country's oppressive government; a flamboyant musician, he was the pioneering forefather of Afrobeat. Yet he also a polygamist with over 25 wives who denied his HIV status right up until his death, and a Western-educated thinker who travelled in the company of a spiritual advisor. Recently, his life and times have been turned into a high-profile Broadway musical, produced by no less than Will Smith and Jay Z.

Trying to corral such a zesty, eventful life into a documentary form was never going to be an easy task for director Alex Gibney. Arguably, there's enough here to fill several riveting biographies, let alone this film's two-hour running time. But Gibney slips up. His decision to use the Broadway show as a way into the story seems on the surface a potentially sensible idea. However, the film ends up, quite literally, with too many Felas. There is – most interestingly – the real Fela Kuti, but we are increasingly distracted from his tale by the presence of Sahr Ngaujah, the actor who plays Fela in the musical. Gibney cuts between archival footage of Fela along with fresh interviews with collaborators and family members; but alas also insists on returning to the Broadway musical. Is this a biographical documentary, or a meta-account that tries to explore the subject's life through the work going on in another medium? Neither track goes deep enough to get a satisfying result.

Gibney adopts a literal-minded approach to the biographical aspects of the film. The best material is the archive footage of Fela live, though frustratingly, Gibney only lets us briefly glimpse these vibrant, politically charged songs, many of which lasted 20 minutes or more. Among the talking heads are Fela's former manager Rikki Stein, lover and friend Sandra Izadore and children Femi, Seun and Yeni, bandmates Tony Allen and Dele Sosimi, and former *New York Times* West Africa correspondent John Darnton. The latter is arguably the best of the bunch; a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, he gives a robust account of life in Fela's semi-autonomous rebel compound, the Kalakuta Republic. Elsewhere, Bill R Jones (director of the Broadway musical) articulately attempts to reconcile the opposition aspects of Fela's character. "Maybe that's why I don't like musical theatre," he says at one point. "It feels like everything is so cursory. Now we put this, now we put this, so we can get this." Very much like this film, in the end.



➤ **Get On Up** "You cats ready?" Chadwick Boseman's James Brown asks the audience directly early in *Get On Up*. It's a surprisingly audacious move for a rock biopic. Cinema has always enjoyed telling a good life story, and you could be forgiven for assuming that the ones accompanied with lashings of sex and drugs and a profitable spin-off soundtrack album would be among the best. But – as recent biopics of Ray Charles and Johnny Cash have proved – even the most transformative of performers can have their life story rendered in the most banal fashion. Todd Haynes' *I'm Not There* at least took a novel approach as it addressed the mass of contradictions Bob Dylan embodies by casting six different actors as the musician, including a young black boy and a woman. Now, it's James Brown's turn in the movie spotlight. Under the auspices of producer Mick Jagger, *Get On Up* carves out the usual Hollywood story arc of affliction, transcendence and – for the true believers – unadulterated affirmation. But, surprisingly, it is delivered – in the early stages, at least – with a welcome lightness of touch. The story opens in 1988, with the Godfather Of Soul, wearing a dapper green Velour tracksuit, blowing chunks out of the ceiling at his corporate offices with

a shotgun. Anyone familiar with Pop Will Eat Itself's "Not Now James, We're Busy" will doubtless be aware of the events that follow, as the police chase Brown from South Carolina to Georgia. It's a lively start, for sure. From there, the film loops back and forth, trying to unburden itself from the shackles of genre convention by breaking the fourth wall, shooting the early scenes of his hardscrabble childhood like weird, elemental Southern Gothic. But, alas, it doesn't sustain the lively momentum. Before you know it, Basil Exposition has taken over ("If you stand up Lyndon Johnson and suck up to the Panthers, you ain't going to be playing Vegas anytime soon") and the film begins to stumble through all the usual genre pitfalls. Chadwick Boseman is charismatic as Brown – a violent, manipulative perfectionist who is emotionally disconnected from those around him. The script, by British playwright Jez Butterworth and his brother John-Henry, is driving, constant, fluid; like Brown's music. But director Tate Taylor – who gave us the woeful Oscar-bait of *The Help* – doesn't quite seem able to grasp the liquidity of Boseman's performance or the wit of the Butterworths' script.

Reviewed this month...



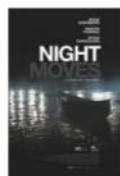
FINDING FELA
Director Alex Gibney
Starring Fela Kuti
Opens September 5
Certificate 12A
7/10



GET ON UP
Director Tate Taylor
Starring Chadwick Boseman, Dan Aykroyd
Opens September 26
Certificate 12A
7/10



A MOST WANTED MAN
Director Anton Corbijn
Starring Philip Seymour Hoffman, Robin Wright
Opens September 12
Certificate 15
7/10



NIGHT MOVES
Director Kelly Reichardt
Starring Jesse Eisenberg, Dakota Fanning
Opens August 29
Certificate 15
7/10



LIFE OF CRIME
Director Daniel Schechter
Starring John Hawkes, Jennifer Aniston
Opens September 5
Certificate 15
7/10



Fela Kuti with a few of his 'Queens', 1984

► **A Most Wanted Man** It's been a good year for spies. The BBC have given two further outings to Bill Nighy's elegantly crumpled Johnny Worricker as well as the gnomish utterances of Stephen Rea and his fellow spooks in *The Honourable Woman*. *A Most Wanted Man*, however, comes laced with an extra level of pathos: it is the last leading role Philip Seymour Hoffman filmed before his death in February this year (though there are two further *Hunger Games* instalments still to come). It brings together Hoffman with a strong supporting cast including Willem Dafoe, Robin Wright, Rachel McAdams and Daniel Brühl. The source material, too, is robust: a 2008 novel by John Le Carré about counter-espionage in present-day Hamburg. Hoffman plays Günther Bachmann, a German intelligence officer investigating the trail left by an escaped Turkish prisoner – a devout Muslim – who has arrived in the city to claim his late father's inheritance from a German bank for purposes unknown. The dishevelled Bachmann is a post-9/11 iteration of George Smiley, a long-game player who instinctively understands the complexities of the human condition, but nevertheless is committed to his pursuit of the truth. Hoffman's work could be variable: he was prone to ham, especially in films like *The Master*. He's good here, arguably because he responds to the downbeat atmosphere of the material and dials down his performance accordingly. Of course, Le Carré has a successful track record on film – memorably, *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*, *The Constant Gardener*

and most recently, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. All these have understandably had to work hard to pare back Le Carré's dense plots; largely with great success. But here, for all its acting merits, *A Most Wanted Man* is a rather shapeless film. Much of the responsibility for that lies with director Anton Corbijn. While strong on mood – the colour palette is steely blue and muted gold – he still has much to learn about pacing and narrative. For all its rich storyline and high-level acting, *A Most Wanted Man* is a bit boring.

► **Night Moves** Not to be confused with Arthur Penn's excellent 1975 noir, this is a psychological thriller about a trio of eco-activists in the Pacific Northwest – Josh (Jesse Eisenberg) and Dena (Dakota Fanning), who live and work in agricultural collectives, and Harmon (Peter Sarsgaard), an ex-Marine – who blow up a hydroelectric dam on an Oregon river. Their plan is nebulous at best: to make people think. "Killing all the salmon just so you can run your fucking iPod every second of your life," says Josh. As with Penn's film, there is a boat called *Night Moves*, which the trio use to plant explosives at the dam. Director Kelly Reichardt is good on the procedure. A scene in which Dena tries to buy a large quantity of ammonium nitrate from a farm supplies shop, suddenly discovering she doesn't have the required ID, is brilliantly tense. But Reichardt is equally concerned with the events following the bombing, how her three eco-warriors live with the repercussions of their actions. Often, Reichardt's films are studies of people who have consciously removed themselves from traditional life – 2006's *Old Joy*, for instance, found Will Oldham as a transient stoner camping in the Oregon woods with his more responsible best friend. Meanwhile, *Meek's Cutoff* followed a group of settlers lost on the Oregon Trail in 1845. In *Night Moves*, her subjects are yurt-dwelling bohemian radicals. With his pinched face and ferret-eyes, Eisenberg gives a restrained performance as a humourless ideologue; Fanning is equally good, as a rich girl who can't quite live with the consequences of her actions; Sarsgaard, you suspect, is just happy to watch things blow up.

► **Life Of Crime** From a 1972 novel by Elmore Leonard, *Life Of Crime* – published as *The Switch* – introduces two low-rent career criminals, Ordell and Louis, who also feature in another Leonard novel, *Rum Punch*. Filmed as *Jackie Brown* by Quentin Tarantino, it featured Samuel L. Jackson and Robert De Niro in the roles; here, their younger selves are played by Mos Def and John Hawkes. They kidnap the wife of a corrupt property developer, intending to ransom her for \$1m. However, things are not as

they seem: with a mistress in Miami and divorce papers just filed, the developer is less keen on getting his wife back. All of which cues up some very typically Leonard double-crosses. Making use of the late-'70s Detroit setting, director Daniel Schechter stays away from the glossier end of

Leonard adaptations like *Out Of Sight* or *Get Shorty*, preferring instead to invoke the spirit of '70s caper films. The movie's casting is note perfect: Hawks is good-natured in contrast to the shrewder Def. As their mark, Frank, Tim Robbins is pleasingly vile and Isla Fisher is ruthlessly pragmatic as his mistress, Melanie, who sees her rival's kidnap very much as a window of opportunity. Props, though, to Jennifer Aniston as kidnap victim Mickey, whose excellent comic timing is well-served here. It doesn't quite all work, sad to report: unlike Le Carré, Leonard isn't a writer who has entirely successfully translated well to cinema.

Trying to corral such a zesty life as Fela Kuti's into a documentary was never going to be easy

Also out...

M

OPENS SEPTEMBER 5

Peter Lorre excels as a child murderer in Fritz Lang's legendary 1931 German thriller, remastered for this re-release.

THEY CAME TOGETHER

OPENS SEPTEMBER 5

Two comic talents – Paul Rudd and Amy Poehler – bring their big guns to bear for rom-com parody.



Paul Rudd and Amy Poehler in *They Came Together*

HERMITAGE REVEALED

OPENS SEPTEMBER 9

Remember *Russian Ark*? A bit like that. Film celebrating the State Hermitage Museum's 250th anniversary.

A DANGEROUS GAME

OPENS SEPTEMBER 12

Follow-up to *You've Been Trumped* doc; director Anthony Baxter continues his pursuit of Donald Trump's golf plans.

AT BERKELEY

OPENS SEPTEMBER 12

Veteran documentarian Frederick Wiseman's latest, an immersive film about the titular campus of the University Of California

DOWN BY LAW

OPENS SEPTEMBER 12

From 1986. Jarmusch lines up Waits, Lurie and Benigni for prison break indie. Worth seeing on the big screen.

20,000 DAYS ON EARTH

OPENS SEPTEMBER 19

A day in the life of Nick Cave, brilliantly envisaged by Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard. Reviewed last issue.

WISH I WAS HERE

OPENS SEPTEMBER 19

Kickstarter-funded project from Zach Braff as a thirtysomething at a crossroads in his life; echoes of *Garden State*.

NIGHT WILL FALL

OPENS SEPTEMBER 19

Intriguing story of a 'lost' documentary by Hitchcock and Sidney Bernstein about German concentration camps.

THE EQUALIZER

OPENS SEPTEMBER 26

Denzel Washington is Edward Woodward! Remake of the old TV series, with more violence and fast-edits.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

Still got the glory:
(l-r) Fred Smith, Tom
Verlaine, Billy Ficca
(obscured), Jimmy Rip

TELEVISION

SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE, LONDON, JULY 27, 2014

See no evil! Tom Verlaine and co let rip at *Marquee Moon*

AS THE TOTE bags and T-shirts at the merch stall proclaim, this is set to be a performance by Television of their landmark 1977 album *Marquee Moon*. As the group take the stage to the meditative droning of Tibetan prayer bowls, and begin an ad hoc modal jam, however, it's clear that this will not simply be a by-rrote rendering of their most famous work, but a rather more divergent trip through their history.

There are some obstacles to this, of course. After years spent as the on-again, off-again guitar romance of Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd, in 2007 Television lost the services of Richard Lloyd, to play with Rocket From The Tombs. As the opening "See No Evil" attests, though, his replacement Jimmy Rip – a man as much Television song title as Television member – provides a startling replica of Lloyd's original lead lines.

Not that doing things the same way over and over has

ever been a quality that Television have much prized, theirs being music as much about the journey as the getting there: on the record, "Marquee Moon" ends with a fade, because it would otherwise discover new iterations forever. While Rip tears through Lloyd's parts in magnificent style, it is Tom Verlaine – his bearing giving him the air of an august political journalist – who steers the evening away from nostalgia, and towards a new place.

True enough, his vocals have become tentative with age. On "Torn Curtain", however, his upper body writhes as his guitar playing searches to express his intellectual dislike of stating the obvious. As with Richard Thompson, Verlaine's talent is a balancing act between jagged expression and endless sustain, the kind of music that will remain irresistible in whatsoever form he should supply it, for as long as he makes it. On "Friction", Rip provides the riff, while Verlaine, as he has for 40 years, arrives hotfoot from the souk, never

SETLIST

- 1 See No Evil
 - 2 Prove It
 - 3 1880 Or So
 - 4 Torn Curtain
 - 5 Friction
 - 6 I'm Gonna Find You
 - 7 Elevation
 - 8 Little Johnny Jewel
 - 9 Venus
 - 10 Guiding Light
 - 11 Marquee Moon
- ENCORE
- 12 Glory
 - 13 Psychotic Reaction



Tom Verlaine's talent is a balancing act between jagged expression and endless sustain

quite taking the same route twice.

It's a welcome policy of rejuvenation, which extends to the running order itself. Rather than motoring from first song to last, Television play *Marquee Moon* in an abstract version, dropping in on relevant diversions along the way. This can have amusing consequences for those fully signed up to experience a legendary album. When they play as track three "1880 Or So" (the opening song on 1992's belated third album, *Television*), one audience member turns round and says worriedly, to no-one in particular, "I don't know this one."

Really though, this and other diversions (into "Little Johnny Jewel", say) make complete sense. Even the most ardent fan would have to concede that *Marquee Moon* is a record that gives away most of its prizes on Side One, and so the show benefits from an artificially applied dynamic. Here, the gumshoe drama of "Prove It" ("This case is cleuzed...") Verlaine sings, a hybrid of Bob Dylan and Peter Sellers) is well-placed as track two, while "Elevation" and "Guiding Light" enjoy a new role in the big-finish context of

"Venus" and the closing "Marquee Moon".

Among early diversions is "I'm Gonna Find You", introduced by Verlaine as "our earliest song" and one which "flew off *Marquee Moon*". A soulful number about two runaways (as such possibly a romantic reading of Verlaine's own flight from a Delaware boarding school, in the company of Richard Hell), it provides a pleasant change of tempo, and also serves as a DVD extra to the main event.

In this featurette, we're taken back to a time when Television weren't so much part of a blank generation as a parenthetical one. Someone checking out Television at CBGB in 1975 could expect "(I Look At You And Get A) Double Exposure"; "(I Belong To The) Blank Generation", not forgetting "(The Arms Of) Venus De Milo". Another tune of the period helped capture some of the band's disdain for convention: "Fuck Rock'n'Roll (I'd Rather Read A Book)".

Rather than punk as a break from the past, Television exercised punk as ruthless selection from it. We're here, after all, listening to music from an album produced by a guy who five years previously was mic'ing up *Exile On Main St*, and whose sleeve tells you who played which guitar solo. Television's music takes its place on a long, hip and often folksy line that runs from Dylan, Coltrane, via "Eight Miles High", *Nuggets* and Fairport's "A Sailor's Life" and out the other side to Mercury Rev, Chris Forsyth and Steve Gunn.

Rather than a done deal, Television relate to their own material much as the Grateful Dead did theirs – as gateway, not destination. Their encore features not only "Glory" from *Adventure* (hard to hear without perceiving intimations of REM's coming *Fables Of The Reconstruction*), but also The Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction", a song the band would play earnestly in 1974 but which they now additionally deconstruct, adding a restrained final third.

The show has very occasional misfires, but ultimately retains the drama of a real-time creative event, and grows in momentum the longer it goes on.

At one point, a punter shouts that things are "warming up nicely", which prompts some fairly low-level verbal engagement from Verlaine, but the guy is right. During "Guiding Light", looks are exchanged between Verlaine and drummer Billy Ficca which seem to suggest that the guitarist is prompting the drummer to accompany him off-piste in a way he's never quite done before, while Jimmy Rip's strong take on Lloyd gathers some real momentum.

"Marquee Moon" is, inevitably, the arch finale to the main show – a song which, in an era of celebrating the gutter, was unique for finding a psychedelic revelation in the sky above it. Verlaine's solo continues to plot new routes to enlightenment there. Of course, we're impressed by his continuing search. But we should probably respect Verlaine more for the fact that he thought there might be something worth finding in the first place.

JOHN ROBINSON

Public Enemy

METROPOLIS STUDIOS, LONDON, AUGUST 6, 2014

It takes a roomful of dozens to hold them back... Chuck and Flav, up very close and personal!

"I FEEL LIKE muthafuckin' Robert Plant," announces Chuck D. "Doing it for the BBC in 1971." Anyone who's seen Public Enemy is used to some odd experiences – Chuck D preaching the benefits of Nation Of Islam-inspired black separatism to largely white audiences, for one, or spending 10 minutes listing his favourite basketball players – but few have been as thrillingly odd as this.

The band are playing in a Chiswick recording studio that's around half the size of a tennis court, to a crowd of only 100 people, who've paid upwards of £250 for the experience. At some points it seems like Public Enemy outnumber the audience: not only do they have their retinue of oddly camp SiW dancers-cum-bouncers, but they now have a drummer, bass player and guitarist bolstering the chaotic turntablism of DJ Lord, literalising the metaphor of PE being "the black Clash" and performing more exploratory versions of the studio songs.

This is no corporate showcase, but a full-on, three-hour gig, with Chuck D and Flavor Flav trading rhymes, rousing the rabble and gently ribbing the high-rolling VIPs. This could be a small, sweaty Bronx block party circa 1983, albeit one filled with fortysomething men pogoing as they recite the words to "Bring The Noise".

Flav has always been Chuck's clownish counterpoint – the id to his superego, the Groucho to his Karl Marx. But the relationship is now more nuanced. On a wonderfully chaotic, blues-drenched version of "You're Gonna Get Yours", Flav borrows Davy DMX's five-string bass, which he plays like Peter Hook; later he bashes the drumkit like an enthusiastic novice. When Flav asks us to remember the victims of international terrorism, it's Chuck who breaks the embarrassed silence with a bathetic quip. After Chuck has left the stage to hang out with his Nation Of Islam buddies, Flav takes the mic and asks everyone to "fuck racism" and, more revealingly, "fuck separatism".

But it's a remarkable occasion. If this is like a Robert Plant gig, it's one that features only the best songs from the first four Led Zeppelin albums, played with a teenage intensity.

JOHN LEWIS





A wonder to behold...
Van saxes things up
in Edinburgh



VAN MORRISON

FESTIVAL THEATRE, EDINBURGH, JULY 22, 2014

“A very, very, very, very funny man?” A blues mystic confounds once again...

“A FRIEND OF MINE had dinner with Billy Connolly the other week.” Van Morrison is not only deigning to talk to us, he is smiling and clutching a ukulele, like some pre-war vaudevillian. “Billy said, ‘Van is a very, very, very, very funny man’ – so I must be.” ‘Funny’ might be pushing it, but the legendarily grouchy Ulsterman certainly seems in relatively good spirits for his headline show at the Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival.

Perhaps in recognition of the festival’s orientation, tonight’s two-hour set is peppered with the workmanlike blues which has tended to define recent albums. The likes of “Close Enough For Jazz”, “Choppin’ Wood”, “Too Many Myths” and “Talk Is Cheap” would not, it’s fair to say, feature on most people’s dream Van setlist, but these sturdy pillars prop up a show which steadily becomes far more than the sum of its parts.

Partly it’s down to the fact that his terrific seven-piece band – including daughter Shana on backing vocals – manage to fuse proficiency, versatility and improvisatory skill.

Mainly, though, it’s because on a good night Morrison could sing the East Belfast electoral roll and make it seem magical.

Tonight turns into one of those nights. Things start off unostentatiously enough with Morrison wandering onstage in his

As the band play softly, Morrison loses himself in a torrent of memories

dark grey suit, shades and fedora – part uniform, part disguise – to add saxophone to the instrumental “Celtic Swing”. He barks his way somewhat impatiently through the opening numbers but, by the time he settles into a gorgeous “Queen Of The Slipstream”, Morrison has found both his voice and his timing. “Philosopher’s Stone” is a deeply

satisfying country-soul stroll, while “Rough God Goes Riding” – one of his finest songs from the past 20 years – climaxes with Morrison clamped onto the mic-stand and launching into a singularly unlikely impression of Clint Eastwood.

From here, he hits top gear. “Moondance” is a fluid, quicksilver glide, the singer prowling the stage and clicking his fingers at his band, demanding solos, riffs, instant alchemy. Finding what he needs in Paul Moran’s muted trumpet refrain, Morrison picks up his sax and they embark on a glorious extended duel. For his next trick, he reaches a more than satisfactory truce with “Brown Eyed Girl”, replacing its youthful pop bounce with a more seemly swing.

At 68, Morrison’s voice remains a wonder to behold. It’s taut and malevolent on a ferocious “Baby Please Don’t Go”, yet astonishingly tender on “In The Garden”, his most beautiful song, at least in tonight’s rendition. The piano ripples, the band play as softly as a summer breeze, and Morrison truly loses himself in a torrent of transcendent memories, ending up rapt “*among the angels*”. Next comes “Ballerina”,

SETLIST

- 1 Celtic Swing
- 2 Close Enough For Jazz
- 3 Back On Top
- 4 So Quiet In Here
- 5 Queen Of The Slipstream
- 6 Keep It Simple
- 7 Choppin’ Wood
- 8 Who Can I Turn To?
- 9 Philosopher’s Stone
- 10 Too Many Myths
- 11 Talk Is Cheap
- 12 Rough God Goes Riding
- 13 Moondance
- 14 Brown Eyed Girl
- 15 Baby Please Don’t Go/
Parchment Farm
- 16 In The Garden
- 17 Ballerina
- 18 Into The Mystic

light as a feather, Morrison growling “*here come the fuzz*” while repeatedly punching the microphone. Following an extended meditation on that “*lonely 22-storey block*”, he finally shuffles offstage, returning for a rare tilt at “*Into The Mystic*”. Reconfigured as a showcase for the band, Morrison’s questing classic provides a fitting final destination on a night of powerfully transformative music.

GRAEME THOMSON



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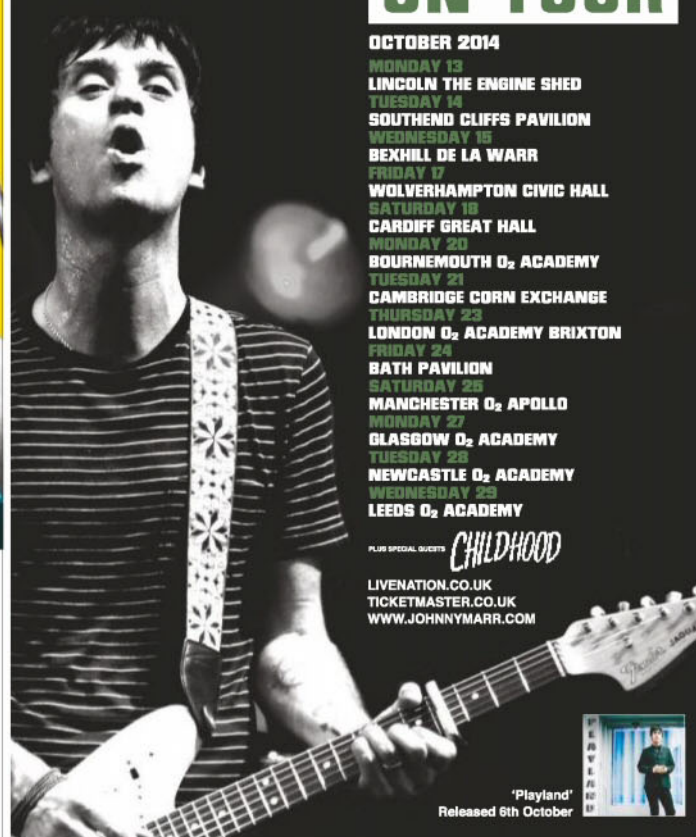
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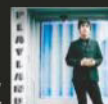
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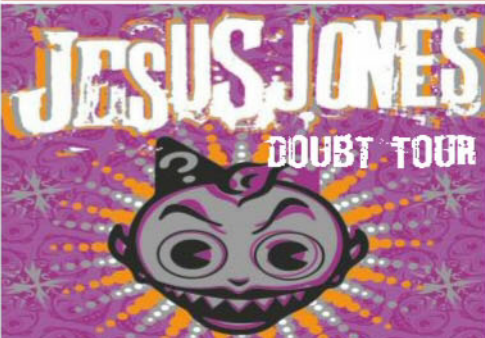
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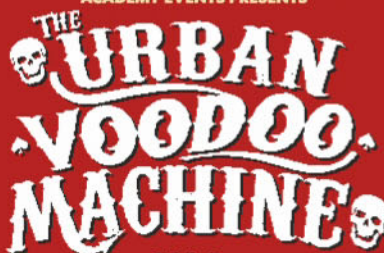
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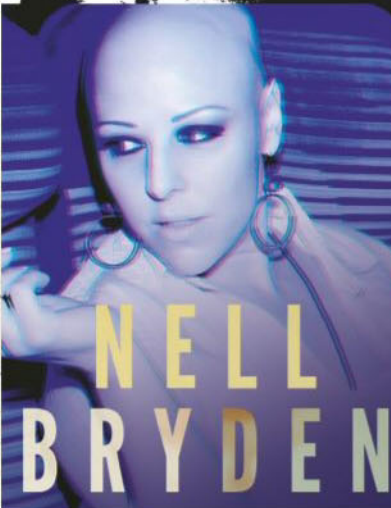
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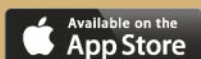
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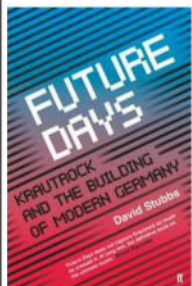


Books



'K-rock' experimentalists Can: haunted by Germany's unexplained past

Reviewed this month...



Future Days: Krautrock And The Building Of Modern Germany

David Stubbs

FABER

8/10

BEFORE HE'S ABLE to give his full attention to the German experimental music of the late-'60s and early '70s that's the main topic of this book despite the overstatement of its subtitle, David Stubbs first has to address the contentious issue of the generic term by which it continues to be most widely recognised.

Krautrock was a phrase coined by the UK music press that was sloppily applied to bands as diverse and unlike each other as Can, Amon Düül II, Kraftwerk, Neu! and Faust. Stubbs thinks it may have first been used by *Melody Maker* writer Richard Williams, or possibly *NME*'s Ian MacDonald, both influential early champions of new German music. Despite Richard Williams' noble willingness to take the rap if he inadvertently – as he puts it – introduced the word to the critical lexicon, I think it may have been *NME* in which it originally appeared, thus pointing the finger at MacDonald, or perhaps his friend, Tony Tyler.

The term may have been intended as nothing more sinister than an irreverent joke, meant even perhaps to be affectionate in some way. But further headlines in *NME* and even the much-stuffier *Melody Maker* now inspire only much squirming embarrassment. A 1975 Lester Bangs interview with

Kraftwerk in *NME* was printed on a backdrop of a Nuremberg Rally, under the headline: 'KRAFTERWERK: THE FINAL SOLUTION TO THE MUSIC PROBLEM?' As late as the 1990s, Stubbs was mortified at the original headline for a *Melody Maker* feature he'd written on Kraftwerk that read: 'STRENGTH THROUGH JOY'.

If these were supposed to be jokes, they were no laughing matter for the young West German musicians being written about, however enthusiastically their music was embraced here, where in Germany it had found little critical favour, with many German music critics still baffled by the appeal of these bands to their Anglo-American counterparts. This wasn't a matter of German humourlessness – another stereotypical assumption that would have insulted the musicians involved. If there had genuinely been a funny side to the Krautrock tag, it might have been amusing to all parties. But there was a smack about it of Germanophobia, a post-war inclination to reduce all Germans to ridiculous caricature, goose-stepping Nazis.

The offence taken was deep and permanent. Amon Düül II's John Weinzierl has such loathing for the term and those who use it – "criminals", in his opinion – he made it a condition of being interviewed by Stubbs that the term Krautrock would not be applied to Düül, in any of their incarnations, or the music they made. Stubbs bravely makes the case for his use of it, however, in *Future Days*, refusing the polite abbreviation of K-rock and preferring it to the more cumbersome 'Teutonic Railroad Rock'n'Roll', an alternative option that unsurprisingly gained little popular purchase. "Over the years, the word 'Krautrock' has lost the accidentally pejorative connotation it once had," he writes, with possibly optimistic conviction. "It's become systematically cleansed with the wash of time."

So, Krautrock it is, and what a good book Stubbs has written about it. An impressive prologue of nearly 100 pages sets the music in the historical

context of a post-war Germany, traumatised, conquered and occupied. "It wasn't just the towns that were in ruins," as Can's Irmin Schmidt tells Stubbs, "it was the culture that was in ruins. Minds were in ruins. Everything was ruined." The generation known as "Hitler's Children", many of whom would soon become radical opponents of authority of any kind, grew up in the ruins of a war their parents, sharing a kind of national amnesia, refused to talk about, as if it had never happened. This generation were, however, as Stubbs puts it "haunted by the unexplained past", that part of Germany's history not even mentioned at school, the years of Nazi dominion wholly off the curriculum. The more they found out about the horrors attached to the Third Reich, the more urgent became their need to cast themselves in opposition to a society and government that still had too many former Nazis in positions of prominence for their liking.

The book is at its very best here. Stubbs diligently tracks the parallel emergence of radical activists like Kommune 1, whose original Yippie-inspired pranks soon gave way to more direct revolutionary action and eventually the Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang, otherwise known as the Red Army Faction. Most of the so-called Krautrock bands were broadly sympathetic to student protests against the government and were similarly keen to reject the Americanisation of German culture, to start again, as it were, the links between them and the political radicals tenuous, if they existed at all. Nor did their music – free as it usually was of conspicuous narrative – glamorise to any extent the terrorist groups. It's unlikely anyone ever spotted Michael Karoli, Ralf Hütter or Klaus Dinger in the kind of Red Army Faction T-shirt sported once by Joe Strummer. Their revolution – sweeping, with international consequences on the shape of modern popular music – was cultural, a momentous if fleeting creative blossoming, whose many and disparate achievements are fittingly celebrated in this admirable book.

ALLAN JONES

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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

JOHNNY WINTER

Blues guitarist, singer, songwriter and producer

1944-2014

JOHNNY WINTER IDENTIFIED with the blues more than most. An albino afflicted by severe visual impairment, his schooldays in Texas were formative times. "People teased me and I got in a lot of fights," he said in Mary Lou Sullivan's 2010 biography, *Raisin' Cain: The Wild And Raucous Story Of Johnny Winter*. "I was a pretty bluesy kid." It was a situation that provided an insight into the lives of the black bluesmen whose music he adored: "We both had a problem with our skin being the wrong colour."

As with his younger brother Edgar, also born with albinism, Winter opted to pour his emotion into his own strain of firebrand blues. He became one of the primary guitar heroes of the counterculture, his fluid playing marking the confluence point between Southern rock and traditional hard-time blues. Winter was capable of carrying an elegant melody with a flashing intensity, creating flurries of licks at burning speed. It won him the approval of fans and contemporaries alike. Even Michael Bloomfield, a man with an unerring touch for urban blues, would call him "the baddest motherfucker".

It was Bloomfield who helped Winter get his big break. Invited up onstage during the guitarist's Fillmore East gig in 1968, Winter laid waste to BB King's "It's My Own Fault". The CBS suits in attendance were so impressed that they swiftly signed him to a deal worth \$600,000, supposedly the largest advance in the history of the music business at that point.

The key albums that he and his band cut for Columbia, from 1969's *Johnny Winter* to 1973's *Still Alive And Well*, mixed originals with searing interpretations of Sonny Boy Williamson, Bob Dylan, Lightnin' Hopkins and others. In the late '70s he even found time to produce one of his idols, Muddy Waters, on a trio of Grammy-winning albums that gave the blues veteran a huge popularity spike.

Yet Winter's status as an arena draw was undermined by a growing dependence on heroin and alcohol. His addictions continued, off and on, through the decades. By 2005 he seemed almost impossibly brittle, his weight reduced to less than six-and-a-half stone.

He eventually cleaned up and, in 2011, released *Roots*, a highly charged 'comeback' that suggested he'd recovered some of his old moxie. Winter's final album, *Step Back*, is released this month and features guest appearances by longtime admirers Eric Clapton, Billy Gibbons, Joe Perry, Dr John and Leslie West (review p80).

Whitelighting:
John Dawson
Winter III in
the early '70s



LIONEL FERBOS

New Orleans trumpeter

1911-2014

Trumpeter Lionel Ferbos may not have been a prolific recording artist, but he was a much-admired regular on the New Orleans live circuit. Generally considered to be the oldest working jazz musician in the city, he began playing in famous '30s nightspots like the Pelican Club and the Pythian Roof Garden. The same decade also saw him perform with bandleader Walter 'Fats' Pichon, blues singer Mamie Smith and celebrated alto sax player, Captain John Handy. He made eight tours of Europe as part of jazz revival troupe the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra, but was always reluctant to leave home. In 1978 he and the band featured on the Oscar-nominated soundtrack of Louis Malle's Crescent City drama, *Pretty Baby*.

DICK WAGNER

Alice Cooper guitarist

1942-2014

"Some of my biggest singles were ballads that I wrote with Dick Wagner," Alice Cooper said in the wake of the guitarist's death. "There was just a magic in the way we wrote together. He was always able to find exactly the right chord to match perfectly with what I was doing." Wagner's long association with Cooper began on 1972's *School's Out* and lasted well into the '90s. Perhaps their most enduring co-write was "Only Women Bleed", a powerful commentary on domestic abuse from '75's *Welcome To My Nightmare*. Alongside another of Cooper's great guitar players, Steve Hunter, Wagner was also a highly distinctive presence on Lou Reed's *Berlin* and subsequent concert albums, *Rock 'n' Roll Animal* and *Lou Reed Live*.

IDRIS MUHAMMAD

Jazz drummer

1939-2014

Leo Morris was just 14 when he played on "Mardi Gras Mambo", the 1954 debut single from Art Neville's Hawketts. Two years later he landed the job of session drummer on Fats Domino's "Blueberry Hill". Before long he was touring with Sam Cooke. It was an auspicious start that led to him becoming an in-demand figure as Idris Muhammad (having converted to Islam in the '60s), recording with the likes of Nat Adderley, George

Benson, Lou Donaldson, Pharoah Sanders and many more. Intoxicated by the rhythms of New Orleans street music, Muhammad's style merged elements of R'n'B, funk and jazz. It was an eclectic mix that led to over a dozen albums under his own name and countless collaborations.

MANNY ROTH

Café Wha? owner

1919-2014

Folk hangout Café Wha? was crucial to Bob Dylan's early development. It was his first port of call on arriving in Greenwich Village in January 1961. After asking owner Manny Roth if he could play there, Dylan duly marked his New York debut with some Woody Guthrie songs. Aside from Dylan, Café Wha? played host to various folk luminaries and rising hopefuls. Among them were Jimi Hendrix (then trading as Jimmy James), Bruce Springsteen's '60s band The Castiles and comedian Richard Pryor. Roth, uncle of Van Halen's David Lee Roth, even became Pryor's first manager. He ran the coffeehouse from 1959 to '68, after which he sold up and bought another New York venue, the Village Gate, in the early '70s.

DORA BRYAN

Actress and singer

1923-2014

Actress Dora Bryan was best known for her British film roles of the post-war era, most notably 1961's *A Taste Of Honey*, in which she gave a BAFTA-winning turn as the dysfunctional mother of Rita Tushingham. But she first made

her name in stage musicals. 1955's West End production of *The Water Gypsies* was a huge hit, with Bryan tackling showcase tunes "Why Did You Call Me Lily?" and "You Never Know With Men". By the end of 1963 she was taking on the pop charts with shameless novelty single, "All I Want For Christmas Is A Beatle". It was enough of a success for Fontana to bankroll an album, *Dora*, which balanced further novelties with monologues and comedy sketches.

MIKE SMITH

DJ and presenter

1955-2014

Paying tribute to his former colleague, DJ Simon Mayo said that Mike Smith "was the guy who had it all. His breakfast show was a shiny, sparkly thing, a must-listen." Essex-born Smith, who has died of complications after major heart surgery, joined Radio 1 as a regular DJ from Capital Radio in 1982. The next four years saw him graduate from an early-bird weekday slot to presenter of the station's flagship breakfast show, replacing Mike Read. His easy enthusiasm clearly struck a chord with Diana, Princess of Wales, who declared Smith her favourite DJ. The interim also saw him host TV's *BBC Breakfast Time* and coverage of *Live Aid*. For the past 11 years he ran a company that supplied aerial shots for UK TV programmes.

JAKE HOOKER

Guitarist and songwriter

1953-2014

Joan Jett first chanced upon "I Love Rock 'N'

Roll" in 1976, when she saw the song performed by its creators, The Arrows, on British television. Written by singer Alan Merrill and guitarist Jake Hooker, initially as a Mickie Most-produced B-side, it became a monster hit for Jett six years later. It's since been covered by Britney Spears, among others, and has topped up sales in excess of 30 million. Formed in 1974, The Arrows scored a UK Top 10 success with "A Touch Too Much" and eventually landed their own TV series, *The Arrows Show*, on Granada. Hooker's marriage to actress-singer Lorna Luft roughly coincided with the break-up of the band, after which he retired to Los Angeles to become her manager.

JON 'FAT BEAST' DRISCOLL

Promoter, Carter USM warm-up act

1962-2014

Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine's 'Jim Bob' Morrison always retained a vivid memory of his first encounters with Jon Driscoll in the late '80s. As promoter of indie night Timebox, held at Kentish Town's Bull & Gate, Driscoll "would sit in his lighting booth at the back of the venue and heckle us between songs. He even had his own microphone." Driscoll, who has died after contracting septicaemia, went on to tour with Carter USM as their MC. His was a personality every inch as large as his frame. His speciality as a provocative warm-up act was to bound onto the stage in his underpants, a slogan scrawled on his chest, and begin exchanging obscenities with the crowd, notably the chant of "You fat bastard!"

ROB HUGHES



Lionel Ferbos performs in New Orleans, aged 100



Dora Bryan and poodle, 1955

Feedback...

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WATT'S THE STORY...

I've just read the Mike Watt/Minutemen piece in *Uncut* 207 again. I first heard something from Watt in the late '80s, when returning REM's *Document* LP to Rat Records in Glasgow and exchanging it for Firehose's *If'n* on a bit of a hunch. The guy at the desk was approving in the sweetest and most genuine manner. It turned out to be Stuart Murdoch before Belle And Sebastian were even a twinkle!

I quickly followed the trail back to Minutemen's *Double Nickels On The Dime*, which became a kind of Rosetta Stone for me, reading back from it and forwards through time. It touches on so many sounds including punk, funk, rock, Creedence, folk, Mexicana and even little flourishes of musique concrète.

So fertile was this purple patch that it spilled onto four sides of vinyl.

I also loved the fact that they were a trio and that they looked so ordinary. No posturing or posing, no strange clothes. Actually a little odder than that. A little goofy, like a punk rock Three Stooges. To me, their music was funny, ferocious, political and absurd. It could be artful, but with real heart. Unfortunately, it couldn't last.

After D Boon's death, Watt has continued to plough his own furrow and I would urge your readers to check out any one of his punk operas. Now here's someone who's really trying, pushing and searching for a strong and true means of expression. The ferocious live gigs also convince. He plays like his life depends on it. Serious as a heart attack!

Your approach to publishing Watt's almost stream-of-consciousness spiel was pitch perfect for capturing the spirit of the man and that of his former band. It jammed econo, fast and loose straight through. Just like the records, I had to go straight back to the start and go again.

Mike Watt's music has been with me for the longest time and it's for keeps. To paraphrase "History Lesson Part II", "*This band could be my life, real names'd be proof.*"

Andy Foley, Unst, Shetland

DOWN BY THE RIVER SERPENTINE

Just to say that, having been privileged to be at one of the



Hammersmith gigs as well as last year's O₂ outing, your review of Neil Young [*Are We Rolling, Take 208*] is the only one I've read that captures the fabulous experience of last Saturday in Hyde Park. On a sadder note, I'm disappointed to say that the fuckwittery count was disappointingly high where I was (about 20 rows from the front), but regrettably feel that this should probably be taken as an occupational hazard on attending gigs in my dotage!

Christopher Gregory, via email

...Couldn't agree more with your spot-on review/critique of the Hyde Park gig, Neil never goes through the motions, each gig is an event and he gives his all, incredible bearing in mind his age. I followed Neil up north to his hometown the next day and he literally blew the roof off the Liverpool Arena. Very similar set; we lost "Down By The River" as the encore, but got a killer "Like A Hurricane" and "Don't Cry No Tears" instead of "Only Love Can Break Your Heart". Good mix in the audience, old and young, and he got a typically warm response from the crowd. One very small disappointment is that he kept the Dylan song ["*Blowin' In The Wind*"] in, rather than do a Beatles song, "A Day In The Life" being an obvious example. Luckily, I still have vivid

memories of five years ago, when he did it at Hyde Park with McCartney!
Ken, via email

...Myself and my husband travelled down from Rotherham on the day, and we were blown away at the energy that such a, dare I say, elderly bunch of guys can create. The vibe was one of utter reverence for Mr Young and his accomplished cohorts. I was very impressed with the sound quality but it seemed strange to have a 'them and us' divide with the special viewing area. Wonder if Neil had endorsed that himself? Not so peace and love, methinks.

Joanne Klawikowski, via email

...Great review of the Hyde Park concert. I too thought it was astounding, especially once he got past the first three 'songs'. Not sure the majority if the crowd were really up for that! But Young was laughing, enjoying the guitar, loving the crowd as he hit us with some hits. The best bit? The amazing version of "Down By The River"; part rolling solo, part Can-like freak out, part gospel screech. Absolutely first class.

Phil Sharp, via email

...Just read your *Uncut* review of Neil Young and Crazy Horse at Hyde Park. I was there last year at the O₂, loved that, but loved this one even

more. Absolutely, spirit-liftingly brilliant, I thought. And, not being a casual observer, one of the many highlights for me was "Goin' Home". Its tub-thumping, raucous, emotional beauty makes it one of my favourite Neil songs and I was on cloud nine when he played it after the opening song. I remained, at least, on cloud nine for the rest of the show. Absolutely brilliant, the whole thing!

Tom Austin, via email

I WANT TO SEE THE REWRITES TONIGHT!

Good magazine, great issue [*Take 208*], but two serious problems – at least serious to me, as I really feel our version of history should be as accurate as economic or political history. In the Richard And Linda Thompson feature, "[Thompson's] sweet duet with [Sandy] Denny on Buddy Holly's 'When Will I Be Loved'". Buddy Holly was dead before Phil Everly even wrote the song. The song was a Top 10 hit for the Everlys in the United States and went to No 4 in England. Linda Ronstadt's cover version in 1975 was No 2 on the US pop charts, No 1 US country and the most played country single of the year in the US, for which Phil Everly was most grateful.

Page 90. The inference from the 'Revelations' text about the Levon



Helm Band is that the woman pictured in the photograph is Amy Helm. Not so, it is the wonderful Teresa Williams, Larry Campbell's wife, who played rhythm guitar and sang both lead and background vocals in Levon's band. (Why she has never made a solo album is one of the disgraces of the record business.) Also, Levon Helm's Ramble band did tour – viz the Nashville Ryman show in 2008, their recording from which won a Grammy, and I certainly saw them at MerleFest, also 2008. There is a fine Festivalink.com recording of the Merlefest gig still available. As far as I remember, they toured up to late 2011. Also, Levon did not take lead vocals on all the tracks on the first two Ramble recordings. Among other traits, he was the most generous of musicians.

Sandy Harsch, via email

ALLAN JONES: THE TRIBUTES KEEP COMING

I'd like to thank Allan Jones for all he's done for music journalism down the years. I'm old enough to have read his writings when he was with *Melody Maker* and have always enjoyed what he has to say, even if I haven't always agreed with it. He was a music journalist when the 'Inkies', as they were then called, (*MM*, *NME*, *Sounds*) were an essential part of the music fan's life. There were several great writers around at that time, notably Charles Shaar Murray, Nick Kent, Mick Farren, Geoff Barton and Chris Welch, to name a few, and Allan's writing was at least on a par with these people. Which is why I was pleased when he became editor of *Uncut* and I was able to continue reading his work.

Now he's stepping down, there's no reason why he can't put together a book of his collected writings down the years and get it published. Murray's book, *Shots From The Hip*, and Kent's *The Dark Stuff* are excellent collections of great music journalism and I'm convinced anything Allan Jones can offer would be at least as good.

Laurence Todd, via email

...I've never written to *Uncut* before. I have, though, enjoyed every edition and Allan Jones' mug has grinned at me in various locations in the sky around the world. If I planned to fly, my copy of *Uncut* would be saved for the impending journey. The loss of one of the good guys in music rarely involves retirement, so I suppose you came out winning, Allan. Happy holidays. But not fade away.

Ronan Hennessy, via email



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Nick Drake. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* October 2014 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: Monday, September 22, 2014. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Robyn Hitchcock is known for his recordings being made at a high level (3-3-8)
- 9+25D Bob Dylan's recordings made at a much lower level (3-8-5)
- 10+4D+9D "I've seen _____, a little part of it in everyone/But every junkie's like a settin' sun", Neil Young (3-6-3-3-6-4)
- 11 Their albums include *Daisies Of The Galaxy* and *Wonderful, Glorious* (4)
- 12 (See 3 down)
- 13+26D Album that showed a return to peak form for Van Morrison (4-2-3)
- 16 Reggae band that had No 1 hit with "Don't Turn Around" (5)
- 18+17D Bluesman whose compositions included "Little Red Rooster", which was a hit for The Rolling Stones (6-5)
- 19+22A Singer who formed Kilburn And The High Roads in early '70s (3-4)
- 20 "Life's A _____" by T Rex or "_____ Panic" by Oasis (3)
- 21 (See 33 across)
- 22 (See 19 across)
- 23 Set in disarray as Blondie's guitarist shows up (5)
- 24 He collaborated with Leon Russell on 2010 album *The Union* (5-4)
- 27 "Thunder only happens when it's raining/Players only love you when they're playing", Fleetwood Mac (6)
- 30 Tracks on this Biffy Clyro album are all on the other side (9)
- 33+21A My IOU taxes arrangement with UK rock band (3-2-2-3)
- 34 'Easier Said Than Done' to name this '60s US R&B group using a UK map (5)

ANSWERS: TAKE 207

ACROSS

- 1 A Letter Home, 7 AM, 11 Left Banke, 12 North, 13+8D Taj Mahal, 14+22D Clem Burke, 15 Reveal, 17 Tug Of War, 19 Sulk, 23+27D Ringo Starr, 24

Metal Guru, 26 Boys Don't Cry, 29 Laine, 32 Lazaretto, 35+38A AC/DC, 36+37A Starry Eyed.

DOWN

- 2 Life Journey, 3 Tobacco Road, 4 Ernie, 5 Hues, 9 Slits, 10 Free, 16+6D Arctic

35 The Breeders perform their album in The Hippodrome (3)

36 Paul McCartney album is actually last year's thing (3)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 And The News is they've given him their backing (4-5)
- 3+12A He was born Marvin Lee Aday in 1947 (4-4)
- 4 (See 10 across)
- 5+23D Their ninth studio album, released last year, was *Crimson/Red* (6-6)
- 6 Band that's featured the three Porcaro brothers (4)
- 7 "The better, better, better it gets, the more those girls forget", Squeeze (2-4-4)
- 8 Take a view on album by The (Young) Rascals (3)
- 9 (See 10 across)
- 14 A Bruce Chamel song to persevere with (4-2)
- 15 Scottish indie-pop band are a bit rubbish (3)
- 17 (See 18 across)
- 18 There was one in UFO and two in My Chemical Romance (3)
- 20 A big smile as Nils Lofgren's old band appears (4)
- 23 (See 5 down)
- 25 (See 9 across)
- 26 (See 13 across)
- 28 Casey Chaos gets the last word in band names (4)
- 29 Kate Bush had '50 Words For _____' on her last album (4)
- 31 Stereophonics' album *Language*. _____. *Violence. Other?* (3)
- 32 A bit of a busy day for Pink Floyd man (3)

Monkeys, 18 Woman, 20 Loud, 21 Tribal, 25 Layla, 28+34D One By One, 30 Acid, 31 N.E.R.D., 33 Art.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Same Old Blues"

XWORD COMPILED BY:
Trevor Hungerford

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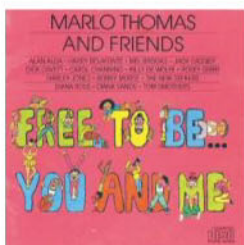


MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Tune-Yards

The eclectic tastes of Merrill Garbus...

“There’s a whole world of music out there!”



The album that shaped my childhood

Various Artists

Free To Be... You And Me 1972

This was an album made for kids. Marlo Thomas and a bunch of celebrities would read their poems, and there were these massive

funk songs that had loads of messages, of a diverse and multicultural world. It had some super-hit songs in my world as a six-year-old. It was of the '70s for sure, teaching kids tolerance, and I certainly feel like a product of that time.



The album I always go back to

Nowell Sing We Clear

Nowell Sing We Clear 1977

I'd make my family put this on the record player every Christmas. It's English folk songs all about Christmas, quite intense

seasonal folk songs. I think they've been around for a very long time and don't necessarily have anything to do with the baby Jesus. It's one of those albums that brings a tear to my eye. It's totally weird, but my family still play it – we still sing “and it's your wassail” and stuff like that!



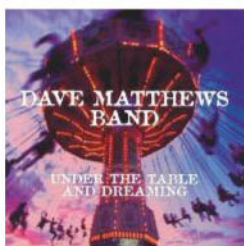
The album that changed my musical ear

Duke Ellington

The Okeh Ellington 1991

At the age of 13 or 14 I really got into this. My dad had become obsessed with jazz, but he was like, “I don't listen to this as much

anymore”, so I would pull it out of the cassette rack and put it into my Walkman. These tunes were all recorded in the late '20s, and have that late-'20s sound. The recording just has this amazing quality that I really loved as a teenager.



The soundtrack to suburban Connecticut

Dave Matthews Band

Under The Table And Dreaming 1994

As soon as I learnt to drive, this was in my car. I feel like a lot of bands today are ashamed of their attachment to Dave Matthews Band.

But compared to what I had been exposed to musically, especially in pop music, it was really creative – there was a violin, there were strange arrangements, it sounded different to a lot of music that was around. But no, I don't go back to this anymore... I'm afraid of going back to 17!



A song I will always love

Michael Jackson

Stranger In Moscow 1995

I will always love this, and I don't care what anybody says... This is a Michael Jackson song that isn't really talked about much.

It's so beautifully produced – it starts off with the sound of rain, I think, and it's so wonderfully clear in the way that only digital music can be. I just think it's really beautiful. I have many times wept to this song, as cheesy as that sounds.



The album that made me want to start a band

Deerhoof

The Runners Four 2005

Listening to Deerhoof, I realised how much creativity there could be in a rock band, which I don't think I was really aware of before. That

was the time freak folk was around, and that seemed creative, but to have a real rock band looking back to Sonic Youth, but that had real musical talent, precision and ability... it didn't seem like anything I'd ever heard before. It's such an amazing album. It makes me wanna run!



A song that still kills me

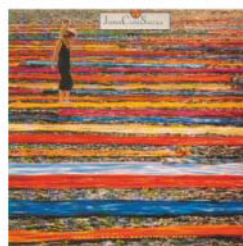
Simon & Garfunkel

The Only Living Boy In New York

1970

I used to listen to *Bridge Over Troubled Water* on family trips over and over again. When

I saw this song in that movie, *Garden State*, I was so disheartened by it. It's a song that plays upon your heartstrings on its own, and to attach it to some other narrative seems so wrong. That's one of the reasons I've been selective with what music of mine gets used in advertisements.



The song that inspired me to travel the world

Johnny Clegg & Savuka

Vezandlebe 1989

I still haven't been to South Africa, but

back in the 1980s hearing those sounds and hearing other languages being sung, whether it's Zulu or Xhosa or whatever, it calls on you to dance. As a kid I was just like, oh my God, there's a whole world of music out there! This is one of those key songs that led to the rest of my life.

Tune-Yards plays London Electric Brixton (September 3 & 4) and Isle Of Wight Bestival (September 4–7).

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT:

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